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Would Alton Towers theme park live up to expectations for the whole family? Read our review

By Ursula Hirschorn, Jun 30, 2012
Filed under: [Places to Go](#), [Holidays](#)

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Alton Towers & Splash Landings Hotel review

Review of Alton Towers and Splash Landings Hotel for the family.
Written by: Ursula Hirschorn
Alton Towers & Splash Landings Hotel
Date published: 06/30/2012
5/5 / 5/5 stars



Zach and Max meet Sid from Ice Age 4

As veterans of the [Florida theme parks](#) we weren't sure what to expect from the UK's most popular theme park, [Alton Towers](#). Would it meet our high standards and would it provide enough variety to keep the whole family aged from 40, me; 36 (going on 16), my husband Mike; Jacob, eight, Max, six and twins Jonah and Zachary, three, amused for a whole weekend break?

We were lucky as although Alton Towers is in Staffordshire, which is not know for its sunny climate, the weekend we visited was almost Floridian. The sun shone and we had a strange sense of déjà vu of our American holidays as we slapped on sun cream before boarding the

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train that takes you to the park gates.

I think Alton Towers had our twins from the moment they spotted the train with its livery of giant jellybeans.

They would have been happy to travel around on that all day, but despite their excitement this didn't prove to be the high point of the day.

We started our day in Adventure Land, which is one of the areas of the park that offers the most for younger children. We boarded the Squirrel Nutty Ride, which trundles you around above the park at a stately speed, another hit with the twins.

But their big brother Jacob had to be appeased by a spin on the Sonic Spinball rollercoaster, which my thrill-seeking husband declared the best ride of the day.

Younger children will also enjoy the tractor ride that allows them to 'drive' through a farmyard and Old MacDonald's singing barn filled with warbling animated animals. The other area that is designed to keep the little one's happy is Cloud Cuckoo Land.

There is a great soft play area, Wobble World, which would be a good place to shelter in bad weather. There is also a mini driving school with electric cars, which Jacob and Max enjoyed, and several gentle rides for all ages.



Max at driving school

This is also where one of Alton Tower's latest attractions is sited, the Ice Age 4D Experience. This is a short 3D film based on the movie, with added extras like 'snow' falling from the roof. But while the children enjoyed the show and it was a chance for us to sit down for a few minutes, what they really wanted to do was get back on to the rides.

All the serious roller coasters have height restrictions, which is worth bearing in mind if you are visiting with younger children. Jacob was very frustrated that he came up 1cm too short for the scariest rides.

He watched enviously as his daddy was spun around on Nemesis, Air, Rita and Oblivion and vowed to come back to try them as soon as he is tall enough.

Mike also gave the new Nemesis Sub Terra a go, but as a die-hard roller coaster fan this more experience-based ride was lost on him. That said, I am such a coward, one glance at the attendants dressed like paratroopers left me too scared to even give it a try.

But if both parents do want to go on a ride that isn't suitable for the children you can do a parent swap, which means you only have to queue up once, then as soon as one of you has finished, the other can jump the queue and have their turn.



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Max and Ursula in a spinning barrel

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The other useful thing that we had was a [Fast track](#) ticket. There are various levels of Fast track that allow you to skip the queues on the most popular rides. The tickets start at £10 (on top of your entry ticket), which allows you to skip the queue for a single turn on three specified rides, right up to £85 for unlimited fast track access to all the top rides. It is expensive, but the alternative could be spending most of your day queuing.

There is easily enough to keep you busy for the entire day at Alton Towers, particularly as the park closes at 5:30pm, unlike the American theme parks that stay open till late. But with this in mind make sure that you come wearing comfortable clothes suitable for the weather.

If you plan to go on the wetter rides like the Congo River Rapids, The Flume or Ripsaw, either save them to the end of the day, or bring a change of clothes as walking around in wet clothes is no fun.

There are plenty of options to eat in the park from sit down restaurants to the typical burger, fried chicken and chips options. You could also bring a picnic as Alton Towers has preserved the beautiful gardens of the old house so there is plenty of space to lay out a rug on the grass on a sunny day.

Because we were visiting from London we'd booked into the [Splash Landings Hotel](#) for the night. It is the perfect base for a large family or group of friends as our room slept six in comfort.

It is also home to the Alton Towers waterpark, an indoor and outdoor extravaganza of slides, toddler pool, bubble pools and a lazy river. Sadly as we had four young children and only two adults to supervise them we weren't able to try it out for safety reasons, but it looked like a lot of fun.

The hotel is bright, clean and comfortable with a buffet style restaurant that caters to a family clientele. There is a bar area upstairs where parents can relax with a glass of wine while their children play with the mountains of Lego in the play area. There is entertainment laid on the evenings as well as character visits from the Ice Age cast.

The train to the park departs from just outside the hotel and guests can get early entry to the park an hour ahead of other visitors. It's a good idea to take advantage of this because the queues for the train in the morning are huge. But you can walk to the park from the hotel in around 10 minutes.

For me the proof of any theme park is in how much the children beg to return stacked against how much I dread returning with them. On this scale Alton Towers scores maximum marks.

The children are still talking about the rides and asking when we can go again several weeks



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after our trip, and I enjoyed our weekend there enough to be considering booking it for a birthday treat for Jacob later in the year.

Top rides for toddlers:

- Charlie and the Chocolate Factory
- Squirrel Nutty Ride
- Old MacDonald's Tractor Ride
- Wobble World
- Ice Age 4D

Top rides for children:

- Runaway Mine Train
- Frog Hopper
- Congo River Rapids
- Heave Ho

Top kids' thrill rides:

- The Flume
- The Blade
- Sonic Spin Ball
- Submission

Top thrill rides:

- Nemesis
- Air
- Rita
- Oblivion
- Ripsaw

Details: Ticket prices start from £19.50pp for a family of up to six with a maximum of two adults, adult tickets start at £26.10 and child tickets at £20.85, if booked in advance [online](#).

Family breaks start at £33.75pp for a midweek break, including breakfast, free parking and free entry to the water park for under-12s.

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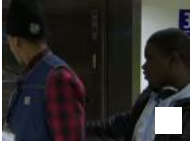
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gsafawcett

-1

Never been, got no interest in going, don't want to stand in queues for hours waiting to be treat like a dodo, much better, much cheaper, far more enjoyable go into the lakes and have a nice walk, all sorts of adventures, Whinlatter Adventure playground, tea, scones, meals, ices, you name it and if you want crowds go into nearby Keswick. Or try Yorkshire Dales, Ayesgarth falls, and Palmers Flatts Pub, great fun and great meals and your in the middle of the dales.

July 14 2012 at 12:04 PM

[1 reply to gsafawcett's comment](#)



heskki

I also love standing in cow manure and catching my trousers on styles and barbed wire fences, and also all that lovely British weather that soaks you to the skin, and leaves the children soaked, freezing and miserable. I did all that back in the 70's when my parents used to drag us around the lakes and other dreary places. That's the reason I like to go to places like Alton Towers because there's a lot more to do to have fun.

July 30 2012 at 3:34 PM



terrysarajordan

+2

its expensive enough but dont agree with fast track tickets to jump the queues, just because some people have the extra cash that others dont, i think its degrading, hence once visited never to return

July 14 2012 at 9:39 AM

[1 reply to terrysarajordan's comment](#)



heskki

You don't have to buy fast track tickets, we don't get them, but sometimes we go in the single seater queue, which means you might not get to sit together or sit exactly where you want, but you get to get on the rides a lot faster. These work by letting people sit in seats that are empty such as when there are 4 seats but there is only a party of 3, so there would normally be a vacant seat, so they are filled up by people waiting in the

single seater queue. This moves the queues along a lot faster and also you are not out of pocket.

July 30 2012 at 3:07 PM



heskki

We've done Alton Towers resort for the last 2 years and both of our kids enjoyed it, their ages are 16 and 12. We had 3 days and 2 nights at the resort, and worked out that if you have an early start in the waterpark on the first day followed by 2 days in the theme park, that this is the best way to spend maximum time on everything.

I have to say, after spending time in both Splash Landings hotel and The Alton Towers hotel that the latter is the better of the two, as it is more relaxing and most of the evening entertainment is in this hotel. Both hotels are joined together and can be easily accessed through a series of corridors, but both of our kids said that the Alton Towers hotel was the more enjoyable stay.

July 01 2012 at 5:55 PM



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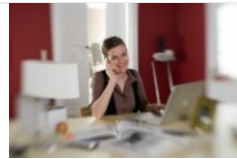
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