



Style and substance at THE OUTBUILDING APPLIEDORE

MY YOUNGEST IS STILL AT THAT AGE WHERE A FRESHLY PAINTED WALL VERSUS A COLOURFUL SELECTION OF SHARPIES IS STILL FAIR GAME, SO WITH THE INSTANT JOY I FELT WALKING INTO THE OUTBUILDING APPLIEDORE, A FORMER WORKSHOP TURNED INCREDIBLY GOOD LOOKING HOLIDAY HOME ON THE KENT/SUSSEX BORDER, ALSO CAME A GLUT OF ANXIETY THAT IT MIGHT JUST BE TOO WELL PUT TOGETHER FOR A FAMILY TO RELAX IN. BY POLLY HUMPHRIS

My anxiety was short lived, however. "Ooh, a bubble machine," shouted one of the small people. "Mum! There's a hammock!" – shouted the other, and with a series of urgent footsteps across the festoon-lit decking, they were gone. Well this is an excellent start, I thought.

With parquet flooring, bare brick, flashes of copper and gold, and all sorts of interesting decoration clearly liked by the owners instead of copied from a 'how to be homely, but modern' handbook, a lesson in razor-sharp style this pretty conversion may well be, but conceited it is not.

Behind the coffee-table books covering iconic 80's faces, art and history, there's comfy sofas begging to be sat on, and the cool, collectible glassware is stashed on shelves above the galley kitchen, which is kitted out with all the practical stuff people need for a weekend away. It's most definitely a home, albeit one with a big personality painted in a trendy Farrow & Ball palette.

Apart from the tiled bathroom, which has a more than a touch of the Orient in its monochrome, grey and jade green look, my favourite use of space is the hallway-cum-

second bedroom that leads there. Too wide for a simple walkway, the space along one wall has been converted into bunk beds for kids with a skylight above to let light in and a blackout cover-up to block it back out come bedtime. Clever stuff.

Families with babies, kids and dogs; walkers wanting a base near the Royal Military Canal; tourists with money to burn in nearby Rye's pricey cobbled streets; and anyone who might be after a brief digital detox – the mobile phone reception is poor, but if the addiction should rear its head, the WiFi is spot on – are all welcome here. The Black Lion pub at the end of the road is great for an early evening drink, but locals in the know head to Rye for brunch at Whitehouse, or pimped pub classics at The Standard Inn. And, should you need to entertain the kids further, Port Lympne safari park is just 30 mins away by car.

Owner/designer, Amy Maynard, is the kindest, most helpful host I've ever met, but utterly unobtrusive, and the conversion sits in the grounds of her family home, which guests are welcome to use – beautiful garden, BBQ, hammock, toys and 40-year-old tortoise included.

The combination of something both brand new and uber-stylish, and the relentless inquisitiveness of small children is something that usually strikes fear into the heart of every parent, but this place is a family sized chill pill. I pour myself a glass of wine and relax into the main bedroom's cast-iron bath which I've scented with a little bit of 'deep relax' and a dash of 'inner strength' bath oil – for all I know the kids are still happy in the hammock, but it's good to be prepared.

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