

# A delight for dogs on Dartmoor



**DOG FRIENDLY:** Set in nine acres of stunning and tranquil grounds, the Moorland Garden Hotel in Devon offers accommodation to suit adults, children and their canine companions. Right, Archerton B&B in the heart of Dartmoor

## FACTFILE

**A Spring break at the Moorland Garden Hotel costs from £99 per room per night (two sharing) including two course dinner, bed and Devonshire breakfast. Stay during May from just £75 per room per night (two sharing) including cream tea on arrival, bed and breakfast. Children 14 years and under stay for £5 in a cot or £15 in an extra bed, when sharing a room with two adults.**

**Take the whole family: Dogs are welcome in the Dartmoor Bar and Lounge, and there are eight dog friendly bedrooms on the ground floor with garden views. Dogs stay from £10 per dog per room per night, beds and bowls are available on request.**  
[www.moorlandgardenhotel.co.uk](http://www.moorlandgardenhotel.co.uk)

**Rooms at Archerton B&B in the heart of Dartmoor cost from £95 per night.**  
[www.archerton.co.uk](http://www.archerton.co.uk)

**For more information on Dartmoor see [www.visitdartmoor.co.uk](http://www.visitdartmoor.co.uk)**

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IT'S been said that leaving the house with a baby can be something of a military operation. Try that with the added complication of three excitable little dogs in tow.

Yes, we must have been mad to even consider it, but off we went on the M5 southbound with our furry friends tagging along for our weekend break in Devon.

Located in 'War Horse' country, on the edge of Dartmoor National Park, our destination was the Moorland Garden Hotel.

Just minutes from Plymouth city centre, Tavistock and close to the border with Cornwall, the hotel is set in nine acres of tranquil moorland garden – ideal for play-fighting mutts and a baby with a penchant for turbo-charged crawling.

Our dog-friendly room was on the ground floor with a garden view. It had six (yes, six) dog bowls, plush doggie towels and beds, while adults and baby Sofia were well catered for and the free wifi was a bonus.

The dogs were welcome in the Dartmoor Bar and Lounge at the hotel, but we left them to sleep as we tried the Wildflower Restaurant on the first night of our stay.

With views of the moorland garden and its own al fresco dining terrace, the restaurant offers a traditional three-course British menu with plenty of choice. I tried the curry cured salmon with pickled cucumber and natural yoghurt for starters while my other half Anna went

*By Chris Vaughan*

for the Devon Crab Fishcake with spiced brown crab meat mayonnaise.

It has to be said they were presented superbly, and they were gone in the time it took our little one to chew the corner of the children's menu.

The main course also came and went swiftly - my choice was the 8oz sirloin steak with chunky chips, grilled tomato, flat mushroom, balsamic roast onion and rocket leaves. Anna polished off the Devon pork belly with coleslaw, salad and sweet potato fries, fondant potato, braised baby gem, crab apple, pancetta and baby onions.

Dessert wasn't difficult to say yes to - they were delicious. Anna enjoyed the white chocolate cheesecake with chocolate popcorn and vanilla yoghurt while I polished off a sticky toffee pudding with butterscotch sauce and clotted cream ice cream.

It's worth sparing a thought for the waitresses: all were very attentive and made us feel welcome, despite the added pressure of an anniversary party in the room next door - not easy with our restless baby and many other diners to cater for.

In fact, throughout our stay at Moorland Garden, the staff were a real plus point - all made a fuss of our little girl and the

dogs were made to feel at home.

More hearty British food was on offer at the breakfast buffet the next day before we headed to Plymouth, taking in a visit to the National Marine Aquarium in Sutton Harbour, next to the Barbican and fishmarket.

The fun starts with the largest native exhibition in the UK, followed by the UK's largest single-tank viewing panel (just like watching a fishy cinema screen).

If British beauties aren't enough, the Atlantic Ocean tank is home to large nurse sharks, sand tiger sharks, lemon sharks and three species of ray. There are also fantastic smaller displays of lionfish, clownfish and smiley pufferfish, which our little one was entranced by.

After the fishy fun, we enjoyed lunch in the spring sunshine overlooking the magnificent natural harbour by Plymouth Hoe, where it is said Sir Francis Drake once played bowls and the Pilgrim Fathers set sail for America in the Mayflower almost 400 years ago.

But if Plymouth doesn't take your fancy, it's easy to venture into Cornwall in search of sandy beaches, coastal paths and picturesque fishing villages, while the elegant market town of Tavistock is only a short drive from the hotel.

The next stage of our break was in the spectacular Dartmoor National Park, quite a contrast to the previous day's sightseeing. Perfect for dog

walking and cycling, there are many lovely open spaces where children can run to their heart's content and a huge number of child friendly and dog friendly places to stay, eat and attractions to visit.

We stayed at Archerton, a tranquil, family-run boutique B&B nestled in Postbridge, in the centre of Dartmoor.

Set in over 20 acres of grounds, Archerton boasts sumptuous bedrooms and is another great base to explore both Dartmoor and Devon.

Our woofers were well catered for here as guests can book the dog house - a light and airy, central-heated room with space for three large dogs.

After an hour's walk on the moors to wear them out, and a fantastic British breakfast to boot, it was off to the Miniature Pony Centre in Newton Abbot to keep Sofia amused.

The centre is an animal lover's idea of heaven, and is great for children and adults alike.

Anna took no persuading to nip into the paddock and make friends with the miniature ponies and tiny foals while there is also the chance to ride a pony.

With indoor and outdoor play areas, trampolines, the Paddock View Café, and other animals to meet, this is a real must for families. Yes, Sofia was a tad young for most of the activities, but it was a great end to a fun-filled weekend away.

And the dogs loved it too.