

# OUR HOLIDAYS: Winter Wonderlands: Ribby Hall Village, Lancashire



## It's Lapland in Lancashire

You don't need to go to Lapland to find Santa and celebrate Christmas in style — just head for Ribby Hall Village...



Santa, bearing gifts

As we travelled north from London on a chilly December evening, a smattering of snowflakes began to form into a carpet of thick white snow. By the time we reached Ribby Hall Village, just outside Preston in Lancashire, the whole area was decked in inches of the white stuff.

We could see lights twinkling on Santa's Grotto and snowmen of all shapes and sizes peeked out at us from every corner. It was magical — like being in Lapland, not Lancashire!

Wellies on, we went to reception to check in and get the keys to Poppy Cottage, our home for the next three days. We were hugely relieved to find that it was warm and toasty inside and the fabulous modern self-catering accommodation

was immaculate, clean and luxurious — no wonder the village has been given Visit Britain's highest accolade, a five-star quality holiday village accreditation for the second year running.

Set in 100 acres of beautiful landscaped grounds, unlike many holiday villages it's open

to visitors 365 days a year. Of course, Santa is here every Christmas with his team of elves, ensconced in their treehouse grotto ready to meet all the children with their lists of requests. Our son left happy with his present from the big man, convinced that in two weeks' time all his dreams

would come true.

Fully fired up to celebrate the festive season, we joined a host of other guests in the Bar & Grill for the afternoon pantomime performance. Oh yes we did! It was *Aladdin* — in 2011 it'll be *Cinderella* — and after much shouting, general hilarity, musical interludes and excitement, we were all ready for a dip in the swimming pool.

Situated in the leisure centre complex, the pool has great water slides, a toddlers' pool and two spa pools, so everyone was happy. There is also a

25-metre adult pool, exercise classes, table tennis, badminton and squash courts for hire, a gym and an indoor soft play area for the little ones.

For fans of coarse fishing there are four fishing ponds, including the main Fisherman's Reach, and fishing passes can be purchased from reception on arrival. Of course, this is as the weather allows — every lake was completely frozen over while we were there!

We were ravenous after all our day's activities, but we found it hard to choose between The Restaurant, Bar & Grill or perhaps a takeaway from Papa John's onsite pizzeria. In the end, we opted for a delicious meal in The Restaurant.

Throughout December, Ribby Hall Village is awash with festive food and entertainment to suit every taste — from Christmas Party Nights, which include a three-course dinner with live entertainment, disco and tribute bands such as Bak 4 Gud and C'est Chic, to free party nights for the over-18s in Harrison's Bar. In the Bar & Grill, family entertainer Scotty G and the entertainment team put on party games, discos and competitions for the children.

If you're staying for Christmas Day itself you can enjoy a traditional three-course dinner (vegetarian options available) with coffee and chocolates and you don't need to worry about the washing up!

If you come for New Year, you will be really spoilt for choice. In the Rowan Suite, children will enjoy fun and games with Cheeky Chappers, followed by disco band C'est Chic, who are guaranteed to wear out your little ones on the dance floor. Meanwhile, the Woodland Suite plays host to children's entertainer Steve Arnold, followed by West Life and Fake That, and in the Bar & Grill it's Scotty G and Band Destiny. You can pre-order food and dance yourself into a new year.

As we threw open the curtains on Sunday morning, a wonderful sight met our eyes — even more snow had fallen overnight and now Breakfast & Story Time with Santa at the Bar & Grill beckoned. The children were transfixed as Santa read us a Christmas story while we tucked into our plates of Full English.

There's lots for children to do during a stay here. There are festive arts and crafts on various

### Anna's tips

- You can order a fully decorated Christmas tree and festive wreath for your accommodation in advance from Ribby Hall. Prices start from £65 and ordering begins from 1 December.
- For more information about the facilities at The Spa Hotel visit [www.ribbyhall.co.uk/spa-hotel](http://www.ribbyhall.co.uk/spa-hotel) or for treatments, spa packages and vouchers call 0800 085 1717.

### Here we go!

Prices at Ribby Hall start from £13 per person per night based on six people sharing Poppy Cottage. For more details and to order a brochure call free on 0800 085 1717 or visit [www.ribbyhall.co.uk/winter](http://www.ribbyhall.co.uk/winter)  
 Santa Saturdays, Sundays and Thursdays from 26 November 2011 cost £7.50. Christmas Day menu costs £55 for adults and £25 for children. New Year's Eve entertainment costs £22.95 for adults and £14.95 for children. Santa's Story Time & Breakfast takes place every Sunday at 9am on 27 November-24 December. Adults £6.95, children £4.95, including breakfast.



The picturesque village of Wrea Green is just a short walk from Ribby Hall

dates throughout December, with activities including gingerbread decorating and making Christmas decorations, cards and calendars for next year. On Saturdays you can join in the Christmas present hunt on horseback and there's a festive gymkhana on 22 December.

For the sporty, there's also a nine-hole golf course (although we didn't even get a glimpse of it under the snow), plus tennis courts, a giant climbing wall, a children's holiday club, outdoor adventure playground, boating and mini golf.

If you fancy a stroll/slide in the crisp winter air, then the picturesque village of Wrea Green is a short 10-minute walk from Ribby Hall. The Ribble

Valley, an area of outstanding natural beauty with some of the most breathtaking scenery in Lancashire, is just a 20-minute drive away. Stop off at one of its two market towns, Clitheroe and Longridge, for afternoon tea.

Ribby Hall is also less than 10 miles from the seafront at Blackpool with its world-famous adrenaline-delivering Pleasure Beach. Here you can have a go on The Pepsi Max Big One, one of Europe's tallest roller coasters. From late November, meander down the promenade, better known as the Golden Mile, and enjoy the glitzy Christmas Lights. In the evening, you can experience the entertainment in the Tower or enjoy a show at one of

Blackpool's six theatres. The coastal towns of Lytham and St Annes-on-Sea are just 15 miles away on the Fylde coast and in 40 minutes you can be in the heart of Manchester's fabulous shopping emporium, the Trafford Centre.

In August, The Spa Hotel, a magnificent state-of-the-art multi-million-pound hotel and spa complex, opened on the Ribby Hall site, and now adults can be pampered to their hearts' content. Treatments start from £8 and what could be better on a snowy day than to sit in the outdoor sauna, watching the snowflakes fall around you? It's what they do in Lapland, isn't it?

Anna Pattenden



Left: Santa waves from his grotto  
 Above: Poppy Cottage, perfect retreat

Below: Blackpool and its Pleasure Beach. Right: wintry Lytham's landmark windmill



Photos: Alamy/Anna Pattenden/Superstock