

FREE

Issue 29 Spring 2020



London Mums

**Travel
Special**



Josh Gad

**Star
Dad!**

**CBeebies presenter Nigel Clarke
on bringing up babies, TV
stardom, Dadvengers and Stomp**

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Editor's letter



Photographer Simon Williams

Hello...

Holidays, holidays ... My mental scrapbook is filled with the blue of the Italian sky, the white of a fresh and soft snowfall in the French Alps, the green of the Dutch countryside, the yellow of the saffron in a Valencian Paella. Can you tell I'm missing a holiday? Welcome to our travel issue.

If you are about to book a getaway for the summer, then plunge into these pages for a dose of escapism and inspiration. As an Italian, I have always unashamedly been an advocate of travels to Italy but I have a constant *Wanderlust* that takes me anywhere I can discover new places and cultures.

So, check out my trip to the Isère region, where social skiing meets city break. Resorts in the French Alps such as Grenoble, Vaujany and Les 2 Alpes are catering more and more for après-ski attractions, night-clubbing and premium shopping.

For a special holiday with kids, we take a look at Efteling Theme Park, The Netherlands' World of Wonders, a destination with a storybook atmosphere, natural surroundings, thrilling rides and shows.

For mums with young children in need of a relaxing break, we explore the most welcoming villas in central Italy: Villa Pia in Umbria and La Radicata in Tuscany, where you can learn how to cook Italian dishes while enjoying *la Dolce Vita*.

My cover interview is with CBeebies TV presenter and star dad Nigel Clarke, who talks to us about bringing up babies in London, TV stardom, *Dadventers* and the West End.

At the launch of Disney's *Frozen II*, I recently enjoyed a chat with another super dad, Josh Gad, best known for voicing the affable snowman Olaf.

Happy reading and travelling, London Mums!

Spread the word – London Mums is totally and utterly FREE!

Monica Costa



Editor in chief, Founder of London Mums & mum of 13-year-old Diego
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tickets for West End shows and lots of London attractions.



THE BIG INTERVIEW NIGEL CLARKE

Editorial

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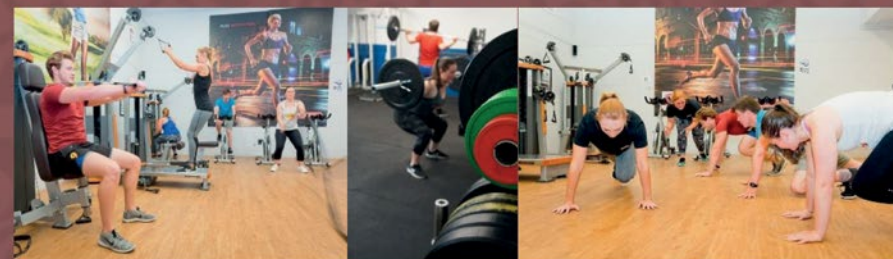
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CBEEBIES PRESENTER NIGEL CLARKE ON BRINGING UP BABIES, TV STARDOM, DADVENGERS AND THE WEST END

BY MONICA COSTA

I met Nigel Clarke for the first time a few years ago at the top of the Shard when we were both there to interview Hugh Bonneville and the filmmakers behind *Paddington 2*. Nigel is not just a super talented presenter but also a very down

to earth guy and an amazing father to his two children. I caught up with him to discuss his career so far and plans for the future. He can currently be seen on Cbeebies as the co-presenter of *The Baby Club* alongside Giovanna Fletcher.

Star
DAD

Monica Costa (MC): Your new project is *The Baby Club* and you've got a book there, right there, that is also from the Cbeebies's program. Tell me about this.

Nigel Clarke (NC): Last year we aired *The Baby Club* for the first time. It's a show that's aimed at people who've just had a baby and might not know how much play can help their babies' development. We're trying to encourage people to learn together with their babies. Now off the back of that, we've got a lovely book published by DK that supports the series. It's called *Play & Learn With Your Baby – Simple Activities with Amazing Benefits* and we love it. I wrote the foreword for it and am proud to have been asked. It's been a few years since my kids were babies, but I have to confess that when they were little, I didn't really tap into baby clubs. I lived in a family bubble and assumed that clubs weren't that beneficial. How wrong I was! It's only now, having led and studied baby groups, that I appreciate their enormous benefits.

Like the show, *Play and Learn With Your Baby* is for babies and toddlers aged 6-18 months, and gives parents and carers ideas for interactive games, activities and songs to enjoy with their child.

Using everyday objects featured in the show, songs to sing together and tips on every page, this must-have parenting book is fun, accessible and easy to follow. It also helps build confidence by giving parents and carers lots of great ideas to help their baby develop. There is also advice on how you can modify each activity, as your baby gets older.

What makes this book unique is that it includes the psychology and child development theory that underpins each activity, and shows you how to apply the same principles to almost everything you do with your baby.

There is no need for expensive toys when trying the different activities, everyday items such as a rolled-up sock, an empty box, or a stick from the park will do. A cardboard box is great for pretend play, whether you turn it into a car or make an obstacle course for your baby to crawl through, tying bits of material to a stick or a toothbrush to turn it into a magic wand is also a great way to spark their imagination.

MC: The book includes a lot of songs. Is that's what you do during the show as well?

NC: In the show we sing a hello song where we get to know the baby's names. We have a 'what's in the bag' section, a bubble section, a story time, we do a song and sort of dancing time. They're all set parts of the show. What a lot of people don't realise is that while that's happening, you're actually teaching and educating your baby, and this book explains some of



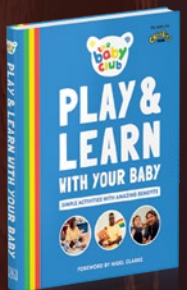
that. An audiobook will also accompany the print title with bonus content including me performing songs from the show.

MC: Obviously you like babies because you've got two of your own, although not babies anymore. What kind of dad are you? You seem so cool. Are you as cool as we imagine?

NC: My babies are big now: 12 and 10. I'm very involved in their parenting and I'm a hands-on dad. I enjoy it. I like spending time with them. I like being involved in their life. So, that's led to the way it is. I want to give them opportunities, I want to share the things I've learnt. We spend a lot of time together, we do everything together. I take them to whatever clubs and things they're doing, whether it's gymnastics or dance or singing. And we just have a really good relationship where we communicate a lot.

MC: You've also launched recently the Dadvengers project. What is it?

NC: Off the back of *The Baby Club* and my parenting experiences, I realised that there are a lot more dads in 2020 getting involved like I am with my kids, and there's a much higher number of dads getting involved than maybe in the 70s. But, reflecting that, there isn't as much support for them, and sometimes they want a place to go to say what I do with my kids? Am I doing this right? They just want some advice and a place where they can communicate with other dads. We've got lots of mummy bloggers, but we don't have as many resources for dads. So 'Dadvengers' is a sort of online community that I'm starting, and a resource where we're going to champion and help dads specifically. That said, we do want mums involved as well. We want mums helping the dads, because you guys know what you're doing. Your help with dads is essential. ►





MC: Looking back at your career so far, there's a lot of variety in there. Talk to me about your career highlights.

NC: I got into TV presenting and Stomp at the same time, back in 1999. So since then I've done quite a few things. I've presented shows for many kids' channels, like Nickelodeon, Disney Channel, and Cartoon Network. But as well as that, I was Stomp, so I've been able to do lots of things with that. I did the Olympics closing ceremony in London. That was a big highlight. Recently, I did the CBeebies prom, which was fantastic. Hans Zimmer came to see us, as the orchestra was playing a specially composed piece. There are so many cool things that I've been able to do. Travelling has also been a big part of it. I've managed to see the world, visit places I probably would never have visited, like South Africa, Tokyo, Venezuela, all through work.

MC: What's the best place you visited?

NC: There are different places for various reasons and you have meaningful experiences in each. I don't think I could have a favourite. I enjoyed Japan for the incredible food. I probably had the best meal of my life ever in Japan. It was like a 23-course meal. You only get these tiny bits, but literally your taste buds were doing somersaults. Incredible. But then somewhere like Venezuela or the Philippines, the people were just so lovely and warm and welcoming.

MC: Stomp is fascinating. It used to be a West End musical. Where is Stomp at the moment and do you think we could see it again in UK at some point?

NC: We've been all over the place with Stomp. Stomp is always going. We have currently three, sometimes four companies around the world. We've got one in New York, one touring America, one touring Europe, and then sometimes we'll put in a fourth one somewhere else in Europe or the world. I just got back from Naples. We were out there performing for Christmas and New Year. And I was in Athens at the end of last year as well. I only fill in from time to time when we're putting that fourth group together. I'm sure that at some point it will be back here in the UK and you'll be able to see it.

MC: What are you up to next? Because we know you always pull something new out of the bag.

NC: One of the things that I've been working on is the new CBeebies ballet. That's going to be coming very soon. And then Baby Club Series 3 later this year. There are a couple of other things as well. Through Dadvengers, I've got a top, top secret project and part of that is a podcast, a Dadvengers' podcast where I speak to hands-on dads that are out there doing it. I've got a list of people that I want on the show. Dads like Rio Ferdinand, Joe Swash, Ashley Banjo, Ore Oduba or Josh Gad. Those are the kind of dads that I want on the Dadvengers' podcast. Hopefully you'll be seeing that later this year. I'm having a good time at the moment. 2019 was really good, and 2020 promises to be another good year as well.

MC: Fantastic, Nigel. That's good. A good start to the year.

NC: Thank you so much for having me here talking to London Mums.



PLANET MERMAID ARE FISHING FOR CALENDAR MODELS!

Planet Mermaid are very excited to announce that they have recently paired up with WDC Whale and Dolphin Conservation to launch a 2021 calendar later on this year! It may be only the Spring but as the UK's leading supplier of swimmable mermaid tails, they have started fishing for models. Yes, the best news is that they are looking for 11 mermaids or merboys – aged between 3 and 14 years – to showcase their amazing tails and accessories. Mermazing, right?

Can you see yourself as the next mermaid June or merboy August, in a gorgeous Planet Mermaid tail? If your answer is yes, read on...

Each winner will be treated like the king and queen of the ocean with full makeovers, a delicious lunch, a Planet Mermaid Deluxe set to take home and a special digital photograph from the photo shoot. All you have to do is be free for the photo shoot on 2nd September 2020 from 9am-5pm. You must also be able to independently travel to the chosen location within the UK (this does include with an adult!).

Disclaimer: We will potentially use any photographs or video sent to us for any future commercial purposes. We consider receipt of any images as confirmation you are happy to comply with this. Please visit www.planetmermaid.com for our full terms and conditions.

On top of this, you need:

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1. Upload a 30-60 second video on anything relating to the ocean via WhatsApp to 0736 500 9780
2. Send a close-up portrait and full-length landscape image of the prospective mermaid/merboy to support your video
3. Include your name, age and email address in the WhatsApp message
4. Closing date for entries is 4pm on 20th August 2020

Good luck and don't forget to keep on flapping those beautiful fins!



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Slumbersac are excited to announce the launch of SlumberOrganix environmentally friendly sleeping bags. Made from 100% organic cotton, they are exceptionally soft, protecting babies sensitive skin, especially those prone to allergies or eczema.

The sleeping bags are available with or without feet, in five gorgeous designs, featuring hand-embroidered appliques for girls and boys. Each design is packaged in a matching drawstring bag made from 100% organic cotton - great for storing your sleeping bag, but can also be used for toys, clothing and other useful nursery items.

The award-winning, innovative sleeping bag with feet design is perfect for active babies and toddlers who are beginning to crawl, or learning to take their first steps, allowing them freedom to move around, whilst still enjoying the comfort of a sleeping bag at night.

SlumberOrganix sleeping bags are made for mums, by mums and are handmade in Germany using GOTS (Global Organic Textile Standard) certified fabrics. Not only are the inner and outer material made from 100% organic cotton, the sleeping bags also have an organic cotton fleece lining for extra comfort.

The 0-6 month sleeping bags have an exclusive patent, where the back of the sleeping bag is only padded from the waist down, allowing babies to sleep safely and comfortably without the risk of them overheating. SIDS is a big worry, especially for new parents, and so SlumberOrganix sleeping bags provide a safe sleeping environment, ensuring babies and toddlers remain at a constant temperature, eliminating the need for any other blankets or duvets.

The detachable long sleeves have slightly less padding, allowing little ones to move their arms freely without restricting them. If your baby is too hot you can quickly and easily remove the sleeves, then re-attach them when needed, making this a truly versatile product.

What's more, for every sleeping bag bought, Slumbersac will plant one tree in the Borneo rainforest, through their continued partnership with the B1G1 (Business for Good) charity, who they have been working with since 2016.



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NEW

FIVE MINUTES WITH JOSH GAD

By Monica Costa

Last November I was delighted to meet Josh Gad, best known for voicing the affable snowman Olaf in Disney's *Frozen* and *Frozen II*. *Frozen*, which opened in 2013, is the highest grossing animated film of all time. Six years later, Walt Disney Animation Studios' *Frozen II*, created from the same Academy Award®-winning team — directors Chris Buck and Jennifer Lee, and producer Peter Del Vecho — and featuring the voices of Idina Menzel, Kristen Bell, Jonathan Groff and Josh Gad, and the music of Oscar®-

winning songwriters Kristen Anderson-Lopez and Robert Lopez, was received with equal enthusiasm.

Josh has a special talent to play sweet animalesque characters. In 2017 and 2019, Gad voiced the dog Bailey (and other dogs' characters) in *A Dog's Purpose* and sequel *A Dog's Journey*, films that celebrate the special connection between humans and their pooches.

Josh Gad attends the European Premiere of Disney's "Frozen 2" on 17 November 17, 2019 in London, England. (Photo by Gareth Cattermole/Getty Images for Disney), 2019 Getty Images



Monica: Josh, my son is a big fan of your movies. Specifically, the ones where you voice little doggies.

Josh: My little doggy movies...

Monica: You like voicing hilarious characters. What's the most exhilarating moment for Olaf in *Frozen II*? He's always the funny guy, right?

Josh: The most exhilarating moment.... I don't want to spoil anything, but let's just say that there's a little bit of a recap of events from the first *Frozen* film, that Olaf gets to act out. It's pretty fun. He brings everybody up to speed in a matter of about 30 seconds. So that's pretty exhilarating. But I think the most exhilarating moment for me in doing these films is to spend so much time in solitary environments. You're recording in a booth alone with our brilliant creative team. We never really worked together, the full cast and I. Then you see all of it come together. And it is one of the most breath-taking experiences, because it's the work of hundreds of brilliant animators, who are spending three years working on something that is beyond your wildest dreams. They take what we do, and they add so much to it. You think you know how powerful the song *Into The Unknown* is, and then you see the movie, and you appreciate what they've done with Elsa's character. I dare you not to just wipe away tears of joys. Joy in plural.

Monica: Two eyes, two joys.

Josh: Yeah, two joys. Wipe away both joys, I dare you. I think it's such an exhilarating experience to see how the collaborative effort comes to life.

Monica: Olaf seems more grown up in this movie.

Josh: Yes, there's a little story about this. There was a video that I took when my daughter Ava was 5, before I even went into the booth to voice Olaf in *Frozen II*. I managed to capture this unbelievable moment on video where Ava was laughing, and then all of a sudden, she looked at my wife and myself with tears in her eyes, and she said, "What if I don't want to grow up? What if I don't want to be a grown-up and I don't want to have to do all of the things that a grown-up does like live by myself and have a job?" She started to list all these things, so my wife and I told her that there's a long time before she has to worry about that. But I thought it was such an interesting perspective, and I showed it to *Frozen II* directors Chris Buck and Jennifer Lee, who both had smiles on their faces. They both felt that it was time for Olaf to grow up. In the first film, he was new to the world as he had just been created. Now, we thought it would be really interesting to take him from a toddler to more of a fully-grown child.

FROZEN II IS AVAILABLE ON DVD AND BLU-RAY.



Josh Gad & the cast of Disney's 'Frozen 2' attend the European Premiere of on 17 November 2019 in London, England (Photo by Gareth Cattermole/Getty Images for Disney)



HOW TO HELP SOMEONE WHO HAS BEEN STABBED

Every day we are faced with news reports telling us horrifying stories of people who have been killed or injured from violent attacks. This violence appears to permeate across all communities and we only hear a fraction of the incidents. In fact, it has been revealed that the police and courts in England and Wales are dealing with the highest number of knife crimes in a decade. It's a very real threat within our society.

We know that prompt and appropriate first aid saves lives.

Would you have the skills to someone who has been injured and is seriously bleeding?

In London alone, there were more than 15,000 offences last year. Stabbings are happening in all neighbourhoods around the country, and people want to know the best way to help.

Recently, a normal high street in Streatham, South London was the scene of a terror attack as a man stabbed innocent passers-by before he was shot down by the police. 3 people were severely injured and passers-by were able to give first aid.

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Our courses specialise in empowering people with the skills and confidence to keep themselves and others that bit safer.

We work with young offenders, youth workers, school staff and prisons across the country to help prevent street crime. For young people, we explain that they are 3 times more likely to be stabbed if they themselves are carry a weapon.

Written by Emma Hammett for First Aid for Life www.firstaidforlife.org.uk

First Aid for Life is a multi-award-winning, fully regulated first aid training provider. Our trainers are highly experienced medical, health and emergency services professionals who will tailor the training to your needs. Courses for groups or individuals at our venue or yours. First Aid for Life provides this information for guidance and it is not in any way a substitute for medical advice. First Aid for Life is not responsible or liable for any diagnosis made, or actions taken based on this information.

Our new eBook on first aid for stabbings is a vital guide to ensure people know exactly what to do if they are first on scene where someone is bleeding profusely. Catastrophic bleeding is a common result of stab wounds, but it is not just confined to crime. It can happen anytime, anywhere and any place, such as in the kitchen, the garden and from DIY injuries. The techniques we teach such as how to deal with major loss of blood, recognising and treating shock and using a tourniquet are important life skills that could save someone's life.

If you are first on scene and someone is bleeding profusely:

- Keep yourself safe from danger. If necessary, Run, Hide and Tell. You will be unable to help anyone if you are injured yourself!
- Protect yourself from blood if possible, using plastic bags, gloves or clothing.
- Talk to the casualty if they are conscious and explain you are ready to help them.
- If there is serious bleeding, help the person lie down and check for the origin of the bleeding. There may be more than one wound.
- Use a non-fluffy cloth and apply pressure to stop the bleeding.
- If the bleeding will not stop with extremely firm pressure, you may need to use a tourniquet or pack the wound.
- If the casualty becomes unconscious and stops breathing, prepare to start CPR.



2020 VISION MILL HILL SCHOOL ENTERPRISES LOOKS FORWARD

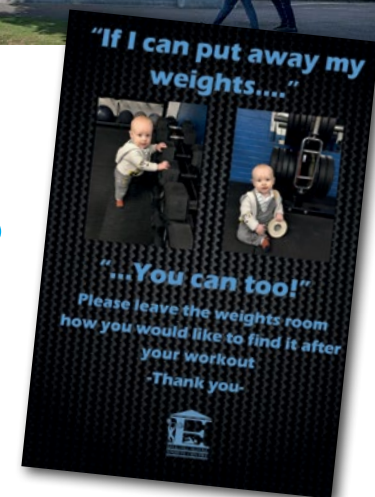
There have been a lot of changes here at Mill Hill School Enterprises. As one of the first gyms to partner with Pay As U Gym, we are privileged to have been with them as they have transitioned into HUSSE with an exciting new look and TV ads. We have given both our gyms a refresh as well. We renewed our contract with Core Health and Fitness in August 2018 to kit out the fitness suite with some lovely new equipment including a Leg Press that had been requested by our customers. The Free Weights Room benefitted from some of the new equipment as well – the SkiErg and HIIT bike have both proved popular additions even though workouts on them usually end in a sweaty mess on the floor! We have re-arranged the existing kit which has given the room a new feel and our Gym Baby posters have been encouraging our members to keep the rooms tidy for others while providing the 'awwww' factor! And our Lifeguard course continue to run at our Swimming pool, anyone can book on a course and details can be found at <https://www.millhill.org.uk/hire-the-school/sports-centre/>

We have exciting developments happening over at Belmont too. The new Sports Hall is almost up and running and what a lovely space it is! There is a main Sports Hall, which has a climbing wall, cricket nets, and basketball nets and a 'Wellness Room' that is a lovely, calming space that lends itself perfectly to Yoga and Pilates. Our partnership with Middlesex Ladies Cricket continues and they were the first to book a regular Sunday afternoon slot in the new facility. Future Stars Theatre Arts will join us on Saturday mornings and we are hoping to have some

Bounce and Pilates classes coming soon. All details for the new space is up on our website so please visit www.millhill.schoolhire.co.uk to see more information.

Last but certainly not least, we are excited to announce that we have a new day camp operator working with us. Barracudas Activity Day Camps are the UK's number 1 multi-activity camp and will be bringing their Ofsted rated excellent programme to Mill Hill from Easter 2020. They take children from 4½ – 14 year olds and provide energetic activities to engage their brains as well as having huge amounts of fun.

More details of the camps and booking information can be found at www.barracudas.co.uk



TRAVEL WITH KIDS: EFTELING THEME PARK – THE NETHERLANDS’ WORLD OF WONDERS

By Monica Costa

Efteling, a fairytale theme park located in The Netherlands, is a wonderful destination for a short family break from the UK with its storybook atmosphere, natural surroundings and enchanting attractions, thrilling rides and shows. I recently visited it with my 13-year old son Diego during a promotional press trip to mark the opening of a new attraction called Fabula, a lovely 4D movie produced in collaboration with Aardman Animations. Although not made of plasticine, Fabula has lots of Aardman DNA in terms of relatable and very memorable characters. The 4D special effects make it a very immersive experience suitable for audiences of all ages.

I grew up with the classic Grimm brothers’ fairy tales among others and watched all their Disney movie adaptations but I never experienced the storytelling in person before visiting Efteling.

The enchanted forest is truly magical. The classic fairy tales come alive with characters (animatronic figures) inside their castles or houses representing scenes from the traditional family-favourite stories.



It’s an immersive experience in a real forest as if you’d walk into the film set of Disney’s Into the woods. My favourite scenes include Pinocchio, Rapunzel, Sleeping Beauty and Hansel and Gretel. Although the Fairytale Forest is designed with the little ones in mind, it really appealed



to myself and Diego. This is also the original attraction of the park since it opened its doors in 1952. Efteling has recently added a new ride based on the Grimm Brothers’ fairytale ‘The Six Swans’. The attraction is the 30th tale to join the forest and the first ever to include a ‘mini’ ride. The scene features six boat-shaped swans aimed at younger visitors.

Efteling has a lot to offer from high-speed rides, cross-country skiing, skating, spectacular fountain shows, theatrical representations like Caro and Fabula.

Caro is a dazzling colourful show resembling the Cirque du Soleil with the magic of a beautiful moving story about life memories, friendship and family that brought me to tears. Kids can watch unicorns and forest animals come to life on Droomvlucht. There are daily shows including a spectacular water show



Aquanura for parents and children alike. I have seen fountain shows many times before, but this one is really magnificent.



For tweens and teens looking for a half-term with adventures, Efteling is the place to visit. From imaginative dark rides such as the award-winning Symbolica, Palace of Fantasy and the adrenaline fuelled Baron 1898, which plunges riders in a 37.5 metre free-fall, there is no shortage of thrills!

The Villa Volta attraction was my favourite while Diego loved the wooden roller-coaster ride which was super fast. Villa Volta is an illusion-based ‘ride’ in which the room around you turns upside down similarly to one scene from Alice in Wonderland. I have never experienced anything like that before.

Park’s accommodation include Loonsche Land where we stayed, featuring a village with a hotel, holiday houses and themed rooms, including tree houses built on stilts, cabins overlooking a lake, and lodges hidden within sand dunes. Designed with families in mind, the village has a ‘back to nature’ theme surrounded by forests and heather fields, with an on-site farm where children can care for animals and play in the barn. Our lovely hotel room was entirely made with natural wood and materials. We flew KLM from Heathrow airport (London) to Amsterdam (Prices from £99). Efteling is one hour train-ride away from Amsterdam airport.

For more information about Efteling please visit: www.efteling.com/en

SOCIAL SKIING MEETS CITY BREAK IN THE FRENCH ALPES

FAMILY AND SOLO FUN IN GRENOBLE, VAUJANY AND LES 2 ALPES

By Monica Costa

During a recent ski trip to the Isère region, I coined the term Social Skiing. As a non-confident skier, socialising on the slopes becomes almost more important than racing down the mountain. Every opportunity to meet people during social activities is essential to the success of a week in the snow. Even the most experienced skiers would agree that modern ski technology allows people to be faster than ever. After a couple of hours exploring all slopes, you really want to do other things. Resorts in Isère are catering more and more for apres-ski attractions, such as ice skating, snow trails, pétanque, gourmet tasting, cultural activities, night-clubbing and premium shopping

Grenoble is surrounded by three mountain chains, Vercors, Chartreuse, Belledonne with romantic views and the light that changes with the hours. Native Stendhal used to call the Chartreuse mountains “the Emerald of the Alps”, and they’re especially known for the namesake liqueur that has been produced here for more than 900 years. Families can do lots of outdoor activities, in winter and summer alike: hiking trails, orienteering courses, winter sports resorts, ropes courses, woodworking, and more.

The Oisans mountains and their six valleys are easy to get to from Grenoble. They lead straight to great ski resorts like Alpe d’Huez and Les Deux Alpes. Along with skiing, sports like hiking or climbing, are deeply ingrained in the traditions of these mountains. Whether it’s with friends, family, or alone, to explore new territories, relax in preserved nature, or rise to athletic challenges, it’s all there, in and around Grenoble.

The Isère region is now closer than ever to the UK thanks to additional routes to Grenoble. Return direct flights from London Stansted to Grenoble Airport (www.grenoble-airport.com) with either Easyjet or Ryanair cost from as little as £26.

Grenoble is a pretty city with a great cultural and historical heritage that is worth visiting with kids who are learning the French Revolution. Le Musée de la Révolution française, the only museum in the world dedicated to this key period in history, is the very same place where the Assembly of the Three Orders of the Dauphiné took place on 21 July in 1788.

Grenoble is overflowing with delicious restaurants run by particularly creative and innovative young chefs such as Stéphane Froidevaux who runs contemporary restaurant **Fantin Latour** from the 2020 MICHELIN Guide France. I had a superb dinner there: every dish was a taste sensation and an artistic delight. Lots of spices and aromas were sourced directly from the restaurant’s private garden or local suppliers. It was one of my best dining experiences ever. The meal included an entree of Christmas spices-flavoured butter served with home-made bread, a creamy Pumpkin velute’ with Grenoble walnuts, cod with truffle sauce, biscuit sable with goat milk ice-cream, and Chartreuse liqueur.

My highly recommended souvenirs from the region include home-made honey from Le Fantin Latour restaurant, Les Trucs à la Noix de Grenoble (praline walnuts), La Liqueur Chartreuse, a precious-guarded secret for centuries. The green liqueur made by monks since 1605, also called “the liqueur of health” was perfected by monks in 1764, is made with more than 130 plants, for around 55% of alcohol.



While in Grenoble I stayed at 4-star **Hotel OKKO** (a 2-night stay is priced from £83pp with breakfast, based on two sharing – **23 rue Hoche** – www.okkohotels.com). I love its cutting-edge design and simplicity of the décor overlooking a park opposite the de Bonne eco-neighbourhood. There’s no welcome desk, no breakfast room but a single living area, the Club, inspired by airport lounges and open 24 hours a day.



Skiing is just 20 minutes away from the city. In just over one hour I transferred with **Actibus** cars to the old village resort of Vaujany (www.vaujany.com/en/ since 1663), a skiing location at 1250 m (the peak Blanc at 3300m) that was created in 1989, which is the ideal mountain destination for families. It's a resort where you can truly rest and eat good food after skiing. Highlights of Vaujany include convenient escalators that connect all facilities (swimming pool, ice skating, game of pétanque on the ice rink, restaurants, shops) and lifts to the slopes. I loved the variety of slopes available there, particularly the easy and safe beginners' and children's areas. Skiers of all levels can enjoy over 250km slopes thanks to the lift links to **Alpe d'Huez**.

In Vaujany I enjoyed a 2-night stay at the luxury 4-star chalet **La Perle de Oisans** (priced from £103pp, based on two sharing) including a balcony with spectacular views, a spa, comfortable beds with fluffy cushions, a cosy lounge with a fireplace and kitchen where a fresh and abundant breakfast was delivered every morning. Here I had the best locally sourced baguette, butter and jams.

For skiers of all skills there's a great variety of slopes and my personal highlight was reaching the peak (the highest mountain in France at 3600 metres) to enjoy 360 degrees panoramic view of the Ecrins Massif even at minus 21 degrees Celsius. With the cold wind blowing on my back at my highest point and the lowest temperature in my life, my joyful tears froze on my cheeks. It was an emotional moment that I will never forget. To keep the momentum, I ate a huge omelette with black truffles on the slopes at **Le Diable au Coeur** at 2400 metres. Afterwards I chillaxed on their sun-bathing terrace with stunning views at the rhythm of '80s classic anthems. In the afternoon it's fun and quirky to take part in disco dancing with friendly people in ski gear.

Les 2 Alpes extends like a strip filled with cool and premium shops, restaurants, bars and night clubs. For someone like myself who has no ski equipment, **Ski Hire** was the easiest solution – I went to **Jacques Sports**. Les 2 Alpes is the ultimate party town. I can hardly remember having so many fun nights out until the break of dawn mingling with the friendliest locals at the Windsor pub then at Le Cafe Bresilien nightclub. I'll be going back to Les 2 Alpes even just for partytime.

For lunch and tea breaks on the slopes I stopped twice at **Les Airelles Restaurant** where I had a delicious pumpkin velute' and a warming vin chaud as well as a gourmand coffee (including a selection of pastries).

In the evening I dined at gourmet restaurant **Ida** which served lovely original cocktails and a delicate fish-based nouvelle cuisine prepared in an open kitchen.

To experience a completely different resort in the Isère area, I visited **Les 2 Alpes** which is less than one hour away from Vaujany and the perfect destination for the social skiing experience, popular with singletons, party-goers and those who like apres-ski entertainment as much as the skiing itself.

I stayed 2 nights at the basic but comfortable 3-star **Le Souleil'Or** hotel (priced from £433pp for a 5-night stay with breakfast, based on two people sharing). The best feature of this accommodation (and most hotels in Les 2 Alpes) is that you are at walking distance from the chair lifts.

My favourite local French restaurants for the finest dining in Les 2 Alpes are **Chamois Lodge**, a gourmet bistro offering delicious seasonal homemade cuisine made from fresh produce with the chef's grandmothers' recipes, and **Le Rouge et Le Noir**, specialised in mountain and cheese dishes.



For more information about Isere Tourism visit
www.isere-tourisme.com

MUMS AND BABIES LOVE VILLA PIA IN TUSCANY

Our all-inclusive family villa offers a home away from home and a proper break for mums!

Villa Pia is a spacious 17-bedroom residence, formerly a 15th century manor house with converted barn, that provides an idyllic escape for families. The award-winning villa is in Lippiano, a charming village right on the border of Umbria and Tuscany (closest airport Perugia). Described as 'heaven on earth' by guests who return year after year, Villa Pia boasts sun-soaked communal courtyards, five acres of grounds to explore, and breath-taking views of the Italian landscape.

On site, you'll find adult and child swimming pools (heated year-round), tennis courts, table tennis, trampoline, kids' playroom with books and toys, children's play area with swings, rides and slides, and soft play. You can leave excess baby equipment at home as Villa Pia provides baby monitors, high chairs, cots, baby food and bottle-warming, plus on-site babysitting.

Villa Pia was named one of the Top 20 Family Summer Holidays in Europe by *The Guardian newspaper* in February 2018, especially recommended for their 'epic feasts of pasta and Tuscan fare'. You will never run out of food or drink as the villa provides all-inclusive catering, for all tastes including vegan, organic, gluten-free and other 'free from' diets. The food at Villa Pia has been described as 'out of this world'.

The complimentary breakfasts, delicious lunches, afternoon cakes and fantastic 4-course dinners are all cooked from scratch with fresh ingredients by Villa Pia's beloved chefs. Enjoy communal dining in the courtyard or the dining room. Guests also have free access to the fridge for yoghurt, juices and milk, as well as to the bar for a refreshing beer, wine or aperitif.

At Villa Pia, you can book cookery classes for kids to make their own pasta, pizza and sweet treats. Adults

can also learn from the chefs to whip up fresh pasta dishes, tiramisu and other Italian delicacies. Spoil yourself after with a massage or beauty treatment. Or why not try one of their art classes? Villa Pia hosts regular retreats with various companies offering anything from yoga to writing to philosophy lectures. The villa's popular Wildflower/ Gardening and Escape Painting Holidays retreats inspire guests to hone their creative talents, in the home of the Renaissance. This is also a wonderful location for family celebrations including anniversaries, birthdays and weddings.

You will never want to leave the villa! However, if you wish to venture further afield, it's easy to take a day trip to nearby historic sites and influential cities like Pisa, Siena and Florence.

Testimonials

'Remember my ever-thwarted-by-children dream of lying on a sun lounger with a book and a G and T? Well, sorry-not-sorry but it actually happened, and I didn't have to abandon my kids or enrol them in a kids club to achieve it.' – Rebecca Schiller (Charlotte Philby blog)

'...the idyllic 15th-century Villa Pia's two swimming pools, sand pit, trampoline and indoor soft play, plus kids' cookery and art classes, mean the nippers will barely notice you're MIA, snoozing on the terrace with an Aperol spritz.' – The Guardian

'Every evening we enjoy a fantastic five-course feast along a long table with a wood burner blazing in the corner. The beer and wine flow freely, the sun shines every day and there is no washing up to do. Truly we have found the big rock candy mountains – but with a lot of culture thrown in.' – Tom Hodgkinson, (The Idler magazine)

'When I told a friend I was going to 'some kiddie-friendly place in Umbria', she said: 'You're not going to Villa Pia are you?' in the sort of hushed, reverential tone normally reserved for religious idolatry. This is the effect the hotel has on in-the-know breeders. Its online testimonials heave with grateful parents proclaiming: 'I actually had a holiday!' – Absolutely Kensington Magazine

Discount offer

Set on the Umbria/Tuscany border, Villa Pia is a spacious 17-bedroom converted barn that offers an idyllic break for families with young children. Sun-soaked courtyards, five acres of grounds to explore, heated adult and child swimming pools, and stunning views of the Italian landscape.

"It's the first time since I had the children that I came home feeling I'd actually had a holiday."

There's on-site babysitting, baby monitors, high chairs, baby food, tennis courts, trampoline, children's indoor and outdoor play areas, plus art and cookery classes for kids (and parents), massage and beauty treatments. Made with love by their Italian cooks, the food at Villa Pia has been described as 'out of this world'.

The villa provides all-inclusive catering (including vegan and other 'free from' diets) with food, beer and wines on tap! To discover more about Villa Pia and snap up one of their fabulous early-bird holiday offers, visit www.villapia.com for further details and booking enquiries.

Quote discount code **LONDONMUMS** for a £100 discount from off-peak bookings.
For bookings contact us at
+39 075 850 2027 or villapia@villapia.com



FAMILY COOKING AND YOGA WEEKS AT LA RADICATA IN TUSCANY FOR ALL THE FAMILY

By Rita Kobrak

At Villa Radicata mums can relax knowing their kids are having fun and being looked after with the addition of learning something, whether it be pizza or pasta making, a nature walk, Zumba or a few words in Italian!

Mums can do yoga, fitness classes, cooking lessons or just relax by the pool or shop in the local markets knowing that the kids are having fun with their Italian 'nonna' in a very family friendly villa complete with pool, large garden, play area and plenty of toys.

One of the days we make homemade pasta (no pasta machines on site!) Easy and fun to do with the kids. It takes time but you are rewarded with delicious pasta.

Pasta recipe

Ingredients (Serving 8 people, you can also freeze the pasta and cook when needed):

- 1 kilo 00 flour
- Pinch of salt
- 8 eggs
- Olive oil
- Extra four for rolling
- Quick sauce
- Fresh Plum tomatoes
- Olive oil
- 2 cloves of garlic
- Handful of basil
- Pinch of salt and sugar



Method:

Pour flour into a large wooden board, make a well and break eggs in the middle of the flour (you can whisk eggs before if you want)

Bind together with a fork combining the flour with eggs.

Once all the flour is incorporated bring the dough together with your hands and knead until smooth. Coat in oil and wrap in cling film and let rest for half an hour.

Meantime you can make a simple sauce by frying garlic in olive oil and adding fresh plum tomatoes and cook on high heat for ten minutes. Add a good pinch of salt and a pinch of sugar plus basil.

Back to the dough, cut in half and start rolling until transparent (a good 10/15 minutes, good arm muscle workout for mums and fun for kids)

Fold the top and bottom over to meet in the middle, repeat and cut the tagliatelle. Open them up immediately and let dry 20 min before cooking in boiling salted water for 2-3 mins. Fresh pasta cooks very quickly and will come to the top of the pan when cooked.

Add to sauce, add Parmesan and Buon Appetito!

Tirami su' recipe (literally it means pick me up)

As farmers used to have it in the morning, the coffee plus the raw eggs and sugar gave them the strength to go out and do a hard day's work. Note the Tuscan version doesn't have any alcohol!!

Ingredients (For six people):

- 2 tubs of Mascarpone
- 5tbsp sugar
- 5 organic eggs
- Espresso coffee Pavesini or Savoirdi biscuits
- Grated chocolate

Method:

Separate the egg yolks from the whites

Mix the sugar and egg yolks for about five minutes with an electric whisk. Add the Mascarpone.

In a separate bowl whisk the egg whites until stiff and add to the Mascarpone mix.

Dip the biscuits in the coffee (you could add some Marsala liqueur to the coffee if you like) and layer them in glass dish. Spoon the Mascarpone mixture on the top. Do another layer and grate Chocolate on the top.

Keep in fridge for at least two hours before serving.



Villa Radicata is close to Caprese Michelangelo, Tuscany and sleeps 10.
holiday-villa-in-tuscany.com for weekly rentals **10% OFF** Easter breaks
mum-and-baby-experience.co.uk for family retreats suitable for kids
 3 months to 10 years old. Closest airport is Perugia (Ryan air). Contact
 Rita Kobrak by email ritakobrak1@aol.com or Whatsapp 07983821282



A Stryde Ahead in the

KIDS' PARTY SCENE

A new addition to the children's party scene has arrived and is set to make an impact on those wanting something different to the usual Disney princess, clown or magician. STRYDE is a bespoke events brand for children that promotes teamwork, confidence and physical development in a fun environment.

The company has been launched by Henry Streatfeild, Filly Wadlow and Robbie Fortheringham, each of whom bring many years of experience in the health and fitness industries having worked as personal trainers, fitness instructors and within the wellness, youth training and sports coaching industries.

The Stryde team all have a dedicated interest in youth fitness and the positive effects that wellness has if introduced at a young age. They bring their experience and knowledge together to create children's parties and events that are fun whilst at the same time encouraging teamwork, physical stimulation and imagination.

Various party packages are available including ones themed to a child's favourite character or superhero or focused on a favoured sport. Each package incorporates a range of fun and interactive team games that gets kids up and active.



counties and start at £385 incl. VAT for two hours which includes staff, equipment and transport costs.

In addition to parties, within all London boroughs Stryde also produce one to one and small group training for up to four children with a focus on exam stress relief, sport specific training and correct physical development. Prices start at £65 per hour.



For more information go to www.strydetogether.com



SMART IN-CAR COMPANION HELPS DRIVERS GET HOME SAFELY



As low sun, high winds, rain, ice and snow pushes driving skills to the max, drivers are being urged to do a simple upgrade to their car to ensure they get immediate assistance in the event of an accident and throughout an insurance claim. Theo is a 4G connected 'super' dashcam utilising an effective and easy to use combination of HD video, telematics, forward collision sensors and voice. The device fits seamlessly to any vehicle's windscreen and comes with a mobile app that helps track journeys and provides personalised driving scores.

Available on Amazon and ebay, Theo warns drivers when they get too close to the car in front, records the road ahead through a HD camera and speaks to the driver in the car following an accident to facilitate immediate and on-going support.

What really sets Theo apart from conventional dashcams is the expert team that is ready to support customers following a collision.

Drivers can also download five one minute videos per month through 4G, with full access to video via SD card.

Mike Brockman, the pioneer of technology to improve road safety and creator of Theo says: "Given most collisions occur at speeds of less than 20mph in the UK", Theo will help reduce the risk of driver inattention which can lead to these accidents and have a knock on effect for the cost of insurance. As the service develops, warnings of accident black spots will be offered.

// There are a lot of factors at play at this time of year – busier roads, bad weather, poor visibility. It's crucial motorists find ways to keep calm and focused such as installing the Theo to offer an extra safeguard against the risk of collision. //

In a collision, a series of events is triggered:

- Video footage and telematics data is sent in real time to the Theo Accident Assistance Centre;
- Theo will speak to the driver to check if they are OK and alert emergency services if necessary;
- Following the initial support, the Theo team will then work to achieve the best outcome in respect of an insurance claim, using the Theo data combined with their own expertise. This applies whether the driver was at fault or not, putting them in greater control of how to move forward following a collision.



Visit www.drivetheo.com

Toy Trends 2020

London Mums discover the global toys and gaming market trends for 2020 at Toy Fair London. Here's everything your kiddos are already asking you for.

Digital goes Physical for the fluid generation

Even before they can talk properly, little ones know exactly how to move their favourite character around a tablet. But they make no difference between digital or physical play – they just want to play. Digitalisation continues to bring inspiration to the world of classic toys.

tori™ technology uses magnetic sensors in the board to track the exact position and orientation of the physical Toy. While playing using a mix of digital and physical toys, kids develop cognitive skills needed in the 21st century and learn life-decision-making in the process.



Moving away from technology

Families are looking for ways to slow down and move away from screens. Millennials' nostalgia drives their purchases when they're buying toys for their children.

Hi Lo Tambourine and percussion range from Halilit features innovative styling and amazing sounds that are perfect for studio or stage. www.halilit-hilo.com

30 seconds board game for the whole family to play. 30 seconds to describe the name on the card to your teammates.



STEM mixed with traditions

According to The Toy Association's Decoding STEM/STEAM report, toys play a crucial role in teaching STEM concepts to kids by helping develop these necessary skills and competencies through play.

Ravensburger BRIO train track combines traditional toys and digital "Smart Tech" to develop coding skills from an early age while playing with traditional trains. Physical play always win!



Themed toys and the Big anniversaries

Growing demand for themed toys and games is being driven by social and mainstream media featuring characters from Cartoons, cult TV shows and movie franchises. With blockbusters like Marvel's Black Widow, Wonder Woman, Ghostbusters Afterlife, Minions and Mulan due to be released in 2020, we can expect to see more movie-themed toys flooding the market. Watch out for big anniversaries in 2020 including Spot 40th birthday, Snoopy 70th, **Back to the Future 35th**, Rubik's Cube 40th, Pac-Man 40th, Miffy 65th, Sylvanian 35th, Pop-up pirate 45th, Scooby-do 50th, Doodle bear 25th. Pac-Man's biggest comeback is on Netflix's Stranger Things and on Amazon Alexa: ask her to open Pac-Man stories, play and learn how to make great moral decisions in life.

Marvel Avengers Black Widow Titan Hero Series Action Figures

Black Widow Bluetooth Youth Headphones have reduced volume to ensure safe listening levels for kids. Included is a built-in microphone for talking to friends and family. The signal is great even at a range of 30m from the music source.

Adult Black Widow Costume: Jumpsuit, belt and molded stinger cuffs are now available for mums who want to dress as Black Widow at a party.



Travel games

There's a massive demand for portable versions of popular board games.

Tomy Miniature version of Pop up pirate at collectible price range £6.99

Brexit card game: New card game created by teacher Patch Fordham to help his sixth-form students, the next generation of Britain's voters, understand politics while having fun. The pack of playing cards similar to Top Trumps cards feature the leading Brexit protagonists. The aim of the game is to outwit your opponents and be the first to form a cabinet.



HIPPYCHICK

THE LATEST TRENDS AT TOY FAIR 2020

By Julia Minchin

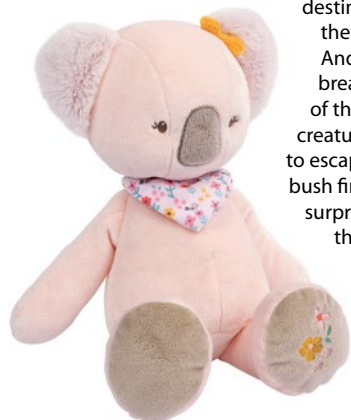
Every year, Julia Minchin, Founder of one of London Mums' favourite businesses, HippyChick, attends Toy Fair, the biggest and most important exhibition for the toy industry held in the UK. It's like London Fashion Week but exclusively for toys, where makers display their wares, giant versions of popular toy characters parade aisles and buyers travel shrewdly from stand to stand, hoping that what catches their eye will be the hottest ticket next Christmas.

Julia has the toy industry in her blood. In fact, her father used to go to Toy Fair with his wooden toy business when she was a small child. 'I remember it so vividly' says Julia. 'There he was a grown up, going off to immerse himself in toy heaven, leaving us five children at home. But at least he would bring us back a toy each, which was something we looked forward to, almost more than Christmas.'

Toy Fair is eerily devoid of children but that's what makes it unique – and fun. Adults can shamelessly play at being a big kid for the day.

There were lots of themes that really jumped out at this year's event.

For me, it was Koalas. Judging by the amount there were at Toy Fair in various incarnations, Koalas are destined to be King of the Toys this year. And given the heart-breaking images of these gorgeous creatures attempting to escape the Australian bush fires, it's really no surprise. For HippyChick this is also exciting news, as our Nattou collection of gorgeous colour-co-ordinated soft



toys and furnishings for the nursery is to introduce a koala character to the collection this year. You heard it here first, at London Mums!

Here at HippyChick, we've never been in the habit of gender stereotyping – our focus has always been solely on encouraging children to get the most they can out of a toy. Educational play value. Inclusive toys that every child can use, regardless of their gender or ability, were also very much a feature at Toy Fair 2020.

With people like David Attenborough and Greta Thunberg's forcing us all to wake up to the havoc we are wreaking on the natural world, it's no wonder that the message has really started to get through. And it's clear that environmentally conscious toys will be very firmly on the toy agenda in 2020. Wooden toys in favour of plastics were widely in evidence. But it's not just the toys themselves we need to look at. All toy manufacturers need to find ways to reduce packaging too. For businesses like ours where mail order plays a major role, this will always be a challenge but one that needs to be addressed as a matter of urgency.

HippyChick, the brainchild of Mumpreneur, Julia Minchin, is a small business with a huge reputation across the UK for its dedication to the art of parenting. See the full line up at

www.hippyChick.com

Pretty things



Joy Tech Denim & Vegan Leather Backpack

The award-winning Joy backpack by London Mums' favourite accessories' brand Kerikit, is perfect for mums with busy lifestyles who need practicality but don't want to compromise on style. The functional internal layout is great for baby items, sports gear and a 13/14" laptop. Joy is trimmed with vegan leather and light gold hardware. The hard-wearing tech denim outer is durable, lightweight and waterproof.

RRP: £145.00 Available from

<https://kerikit.com/collections/backpacks/products/joy-tech-denim-backpack>

Nattou teethingers

These stylish silicone teethingers with a wooden element are easy for the baby to grab and designed to develop senses whilst helping relieve the teething pain.

RRP £15.95

Available from

www.hippyChick.com/products/nattouteether



Boon Lawn & Stem & Twig

Boon's innovative and affordable products help parents organise the home while putting a smile on your face. Lawn & Stem & Twig holds baby accessories as they air dry on the flexible blades that resemble real grass. Great for drying, storing and look at. No mowing required!

RRP £29.99 Available from

<https://uk.tomy.com/nursery/brand/boon/hom>



Miracle® 360° Insulated Personalised Sippy Cup. Available now on Amazon for £9.99.



HippyChick Nursing and Maternity Pillow
The HippyChick Nursing & Maternity Pillow is a multifunctional, transportable feeding pillow with an ergonomic structure that you should never leave home without.

RRP £34.95

Available from www.hippyChick.com

SlumberOrganix 100% Organic Cotton Sleeping Bags

SlumberOrganix Sleeping Bags are the safe, natural alternative to care for sensitive skin, handmade in Germany. For every purchase, Slumbersac will plant a tree in the Borneo rainforest.

RRP from £59.99

Available from www.slumbersac.co.uk





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