





A beautiful mind

Our latest TV advert has hit the screens, embracing the wonders of the imagination. As we introduce you to the brand new characters that will be joining our Villages, we delve into the imagination to discover why creative play is a great way to learn and have fun as a family

Imagination has the power to transport us to the realm of fantasy, to develop ideas, to solve problems, and to see objects, events, people and places in our mind's eye. And although it's mostly still a mystery to science, the benefits of this 'mental workspace' are clear – especially for children.

In fact, education expert Sir Ken Robinson believes the imagination is "the source of all human achievement", because through imaginative play and storytelling during childhood we learn valuable lessons to build our personalities, vocabulary and communication skills.

"...they don't realise they're learning because they're having so much fun"

DISCOVERING NEW ADVENTURES

In our busy modern world, how can we ensure that our children's creative minds are sufficiently nurtured? It's a theme that we explore in our new campaign, which demonstrates the huge value of spending time together as a family, exploring the forest and making the most of the adventures to be found around every corner.

The almost limitless power that children seem to possess to interpret visual cues in fantastical ways was an important part of the development of our latest advert. The characters of the forest whale, the robot and the colourful woodland creatures have sprung to life in scripts, on your screens and deep within the forests at all of our Villages. These wonderful characters are sure to get your ⇒

Inspiring you at Center Parcs

One person who understands the importance of engaging children's imagination is Sherwood Forest's Nursery Nurse, Sharnee Wilson.

Sharnee is involved in all sorts of activities and explains that there are many ways to encourage your little ones to get creative: "We always ask children questions to get their input, so they are coming up with suggestions. For example, the children make up their own actions to the chants we do. When the parents come to collect them, it's not all: 'We've taught them this' – they've come up with it themselves."

The benefits of this type of play are clear to see: "The children really enjoy the creative activities and it helps them with other areas, too. They grow their communication and social skills and they make new friends as they go along. It's educational as well, but they don't realise they're learning because they're having so much fun."



Top tips for encouraging creativity

- Reading books with your children is a great way to develop their imagination, but why not try making up your own stories together too? Use the chalkboard in your Lodge to draw characters or make up a story by taking it in turns to say a line.
- Try a new activity together like Den Building and Decorating, foraging in the forest for the perfect accessories and essentials.
- Turn the everyday into something fantastical. Explore the forest and turn simple objects you find into amazing props for a story.
- Get scribbling. Simply provide pens, paper and some key words of inspiration and your little ones could come up with some great characters. See **page 15** to enter their artwork into our competition.



family conjuring their own little friends as they explore among the trees, plunge into the pool or make their own crafty creatures.

CREATION AND IMAGINATION

"I mostly lived in my imagination as a child," says author and needle felter Karin Celestine, who readily admits to having apologised to furniture if she bumped into it, because, to her, "everything had a character and a life to it".

Today, through the world of her creation, *Celestine and the Hare*, Karin's felted animals and the stories that accompany them in her social media posts, calendars and books capture the imaginations of children and adults alike.

As is the case for most adults working in creative roles, Karin has managed to retain her

childlike inventiveness, but many of us lose that sense of wonder as we grow older.

"I think we're trained out of it by being told to 'grow up'. But I believe it's still inside every single one of us – it's just hidden," she says.

David Litchfield, author and illustrator of *The Bear and the Piano*, and creator of the special illustration that marked the opening of Woburn Forest in 2014, agrees with this sentiment. "It's so easy for creativity to become buried when other issues like paying bills and relationships get in the way," he concedes. "But I do believe that anyone can be creative if they choose to be. I think we are born to create."

This ability to channel the child's mind is often the key to sparking the imaginations of a whole new generation of young people.

"I like it when children are

given the opportunity to interpret things," says puppet maker and director Joy Haynes. "In one of our shows for young children there was a dancer putting on a conical dress; it was blue and swirly. One of the children in the audience said, 'It's a witch's hat!' and then another one said, 'No it's not, it's an ice cream cone!'"

Whether you're visiting one of our Villages or at home with your little ones, getting them outside to play and explore, taking part in activities and enjoying a bedtime story are great ways to help young and old alike access fantastical worlds, where you just might meet a forest whale.

+ READ MORE FROM THE ARTISTS, AUTHORS AND CRAFTSPEOPLE IN THIS STORY – AND DISCOVER MORE ABOUT OUR NEW CHARACTERS – AT OUR ONLINE VILLAGE LIFE VILLAGELIFE.CENTERPARCS.CO.UK/ISSUE45

WIN

A family break to Center Parcs in February half term 2017

Create a

CREATURE



We're giving away **THREE** family breaks to Center Parcs Woburn Forest in February half term 2017. To be in with a chance of winning all you have to do is let your imagination run wild...

We want you to create a creature. Draw a magical, fantastical, outlandish creature – it can be as weird and wonderful as you like. There are no rules, as long as it's colourful, imaginative and just the right amount of wacky.

But that's not all! To get a good idea of your creature, we also want to know...

- What's your creature's name?
- What does it eat?
- Where does it live?
- What's its magical power?

Send us a picture of your creature – by post or by email – by midnight on Sunday 15th January 2017. Our panel of judges will choose their three

favourites and the winners will be contacted by Wednesday 25th January 2017.

HOW TO ENTER

You can email your entry to your.story@centerparcs.co.uk or send it by post to: Create a Creature, Center Parcs, One Edison Rise, New Ollerton Nottinghamshire, NG22 9DP

T&Cs: Entries must arrive by Sunday 15th January 2017. Winners will be contacted by Wednesday 25th January 2017. There are three prizes of a four-night Center Parcs break in a three-bed Woodland Lodge at Woburn Forest, beginning Monday 13th February 2017, subject to availability. No cash alternative is offered. Responsibility cannot be accepted for entries arriving after the closing date. The judge's decision will be final and no correspondence will be entered into. Entries accepted from the UK, Republic of Ireland and Channel Islands. This competition is not open to employees of Center Parcs, Archant or their families. One entry per household.