



The safari lodges have breath-taking vistas and sea glimpses

A touch of the wilderness

Fancy escaping it all? SARAH HOWELLS visited the magical Longlands near Combe Martin to experience a touch of the wilderness – with some home comforts

GROWING UP, camping for me was an experience mainly summed up by a lot of rain, soggy sleeping bags, and beans cooked on a gas ring. Longlands luxury glamping, however, was quite the opposite: a comfortable bed, our own wood-burning stove, and hearty, home-cooked meals.

As we turn off the main road on the edge of Exmoor, the valley below us opens to reveal five safari lodges nestled into the hillside.

We park outside our lodge – cars are only allowed on site for unloading – and hurriedly run to unlatch the lock on our own lodge, revealing a cosy home-from-home inside. Owner Bella deftly gets the woodburner going, explaining to us how best to light the fire ourselves from our own stack of logs, to ensure we stay warm.

And not only that – a second stove in the bathroom is our only source of hot water. Suddenly the lure of a warm shower seems even more satisfying, knowing you have stoked the fire yourself, and I'm filled with a child-like sense of adventure.

There is something about Longlands which instantly relaxes you. Perhaps it's the comforting interior of the lodges, filled with trinkets and new discoveries in every corner. Every aspect of your stay has been thought of – from freshly ground coffee



The lodges all have comforting interiors



Watch the sun go down from the hillside hot tub

and board games to solar-powered torches, eco-friendly toiletries and the all-important bottle-opener for the bottle of bubbles we had chilling in the cool-box. Or maybe it's the breath-taking vistas of sweeping green and sea glimpses, which you can admire from the decking outside your lodge, or up the steep slope, sat around the barbecue.

You can do as much, or as little, as you like here. Down by the lake you can play on the rowing boats, and there are a couple of sun-beds for those not intrepid enough to get on the water.

The most magical experience of all, perhaps, is the Longlands hot tub – perched on the hillside, with glimpses of the sea and the perfect vantage point for a sunset viewing.

Bella's home cooking is also not to be missed. We placed our order at the Longlands Larder before we arrived, and our food was ready and waiting for us to cook. Of course, for full authenticity, the wood-burning stove is the ultimate goal, but hunger and impatience got the better of us – something Longlands was expecting, as each lodge has its own mini gas ring ready and waiting.

With the perfect balance of home-comforts and an edge of the wilderness, Longlands was a magical experience – and I think I could be a glamping convert. ♦