

## We recommend the whole experience to people of all ages at Southend-on-Sea

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September 15, 2017



As always the South London Family Camp turned out to be as magical as ever. The weather helped with very little rain (and mainly sunshine) through out the 5 or so nights that we spent at the famous Belchamps Scout Camp in Essex (near South End). My family got down there early in the afternoon of the arrival day and got our tent sorted out, and enjoyed catching up with people as they began to arrive.

What makes our time down there so special every year is really down to a mix of different ingredients. There is of course all the preparation and well worked out plans from the staff team, there is Toby Warren's edgy humour, that always goes right to the edge when he takes a turn as MC. The short drama productions (can't really call them skits anymore – it wouldn't do them justice) are always a highlight with some zany plots & nail biting sequences, and then there is Ajay Rai's 'Review & feedback' slot that just adds an extra bit of class and is probably why the quality of the performances seems to trend upwards each year.



Then there is the fact that this is not just a bunch of teenagers or kids at a workshop with some older young people, or a bunch of relatively elderly people at a conference or a seminar, but instead it is everyone from the cradle to ...the retired. And that seems to bring a balance to the energy in the group which allows for a very cosy and warm spirit. The kids hang out with the kids, and parents hang out with each other but we are all together at the same time.



A lot of the main organisers despite doing a lot of organising still find time to hang out and talk with friends and be very present. And there is generally a very social atmosphere.

But there is, at least for me, a very special ingredient to the South London recipe, which is that, regardless of my doubts about whether it is going to be any good the 7th time around, I invariably meet with God in a very personal and profound way. This time round it was after the first early morning program (which most of the adults go to) and which is always, as with so much at the camp, so well prepared. I just had a deep sense of seeing myself and my efforts over the last 6 months of the year as God sees them: 'not great, but at least he is trying...'. Anyway not to get too personal, and long winded about it, but suffice to say I had to go off to our tent for a little while to be by myself, and shed a little tear of thanks. I can always identify those experiences, as after I tend to see everyone quite differently for a while before the ego creeps back in.



Back to the camp: we had a great trip to a lake where everyone went kayaking, a windy trip to the beach, the camp fire night, the BBQ, the races, the archery, wall climbing, and all the other usual fun things. I enjoyed helping out in the forest as one of the 'hunted'. There were moments when a team of 8 people trying to track and chase me down meant that I could relate to Jason Bourne...and I've always wanted to be able to do that.

One of the other new things this year was the Tai Chi classes with Zeuzin

Would really recommend the whole experience to people of all ages. Single, married, families with small kids, families with older kids, teenagers, grandparents, seriously all ages. It really is, in my view, the best program our UK community runs.



So, drop Simon Rosselli a short email and tell him you might like to come next year. You won't regret it. (Oh and there are 'dorms' for those who don't like tents.)



...and a testimony by Bernadette:

Dear Simon

I hope you are well. We are all well. I wanted to email you and say THANK YOU THANK YOU THANK YOU for an amazing summer camp experience. It was the first time I drove the distance by myself and the first time I took the children away by myself. So it was all a bit daunting. But I had lovely Sigrun and Amabeth to keep me company!!!

I have never been to a place where I have had such strong feelings of being at home. It was like I was staying with my family. Everyone was so welcoming and friendly. Everyone was so polite and helpful. The kids felt a sense of peace and so did I. I loved the way that you organised for everyone to take part and participate, to do their fair share and to support each other when there was someone struggling. When Lailah had her head injury, the sense of concern was overwhelming. Uncle Simon offered to drive us to A and E, but I knew how the kids would react. The next day I was unwell, and Cecillie arranged for someone to take over my duties in the kitchen. Everything from the accommodation to the food, to the activities was well thought out and planned with precision. I especially loved the Daddy Day Care concept. Even though I only met Farad Ajay and Uncle Simon a few days before, I felt the kids would be safe enough to go with them and that they would look after them very well.

I hope you will invite our family back next year. I would appreciate as much notice of the dates as being self employed I have to let the parents know so that I can book time off and they can book time off as well. Savio will come with us next time, as like other fathers, he is isolated and needs to socialise more with other fathers and share experiences and struggles.

Thank you once again. You have been given an amazing gift to reach out to all those amazing families on the camp and give them time to be together and to make amazing friends.

Abel drew a picture of you in the scout hut. I must find it and scan it to you.

With much love

Bernadette and my three munchkins xxx

Link to summer camp video: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=Cvx8vLEQPw](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Cvx8vLEQPw)

