



BACK TO THE FUTURO!

LAURA MILLAR HAS AN OUT-OF-THIS-WORLD EXPERIENCE JOINING THE JETSONS SET IN SOMERSET....

I'm walking down a muddy path between towering trees in a patch of woodland when, suddenly, I catch sight of it through the foliage. A strange turquoise pod looms above the ground, with a small set of white steps leading up to its mysterious interior. I'm drawn to it like ET to a phone, slowly ascending into the epicentre - what will I find within? Will aliens ask me to take them to my leader?

Thankfully what I do encounter is some rather groovy, 60s-style, white, grey and mustard decor. There are five lounge-like seats, a circular table with four matching chairs, a stand containing stylish coffee-table books on architecture, two tiny, tucked-away cabins, each with a double bed, and a cubby area with tea, coffee and biscuits - not a little green man in sight.

Welcome to the Futuro House, which this summer has touched down in the beautiful grounds of Marston Park, several acres set around a peaceful lake, in Somerset.



Space-age style: Laura tries out some retro-futurist relaxation. Left, entering the Futuro House

The park opened as a glampsite last summer, the brainchild of Charlie Bonham Christie, whose family owns the land, and his co-founder Michael Fenna. Already home to 30 plush bell tents, this year they upped their accommodation game.

'Futuro Houses were invented by Finnish architect Matti Suuronen in the 60s,' says Charlie at the lakeside bar, The Terrace, as ducks wander around our feet. 'They were meant to be for families to use as a holiday home. The idea was that you could tow it, or even fly it by helicopter, to your destination.'

Fewer than 100 were made after being greeted largely with indifference and some hostility by the public. It's estimated only 68 remain. Many are in museums, or privately owned, which is how Charlie and Michael got hold of one. It belongs to artist Craig Barnes, who came across it in South Africa. He brought it to the UK and spent several years restoring it to its former fibreglass-moulded glory.

As the sun sinks, I tuck into grilled sea bass, hot chilli dog and burnt Basque cheesecake from on-site chef Gareth Oakes.

The sound system cranks up, People dance, firepits are lit, and we have a spaceship to spend the night in. Jetsons-style windows welcome us back, and, thanks to the underfloor heating, we're toasty. Next morning, I see campers gawp at our grounded flying saucer - at least this means we've not taken off in the night. As we climb down the steps for the last time before breakfast, I heave a sigh. I've come back down to earth with a bump.

From £400pn, sleeps four, marstonpark.co.uk



Great lake: The Futuro House is found in the grounds of Marston Park



Alien adventure: The Futuro House features groovy 60s-style decor, including this vintage magazine featuring a familiar-looking object...

THREE FUTURO FACTS

- 1 The Futuro is composed of fibreglass-reinforced polyester plastic, polyester-polyurethane and poly(methyl methacrylate). It is 13ft high and 26ft wide.
- 2 Museums you can see a Futuro House in today include the Boijmans in Rotterdam (boijmans.nl), Die Neue Sammlung design museum in Munich (dnstsdm.de/en) and WeeGee in Helsinki (kulttuurispoo.fi/en).
- 3 Several Futuro Houses were constructed in New Jersey, USA, in the 1970s to 1980s. However, many did not last past the 1980s and were demolished. These pods were mostly installed in mall parking lots, while a couple served as small-scale bank branches.

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