

Two for one Hotel Breaks



More than 150 UK hotels



This offer allows you to book unlimited 2-for-1 hotel accommodation for 12 months

Send just £9.99 to receive a Classic Breaks brochure listing more than 150 hotels and inns of character and all the information you need to book these great deals. Individual hotel prices in the brochure are based on two adults sharing, and include free breakfast with no obligation to buy other meals.

Choose from 150 Classic Break destinations including inns, family-run hotels and large country mansions in England, Ireland, Scotland and Wales. Then use the vouchers provided with the brochure to book unlimited breaks for 12 months, and get two nights for the price of one at each and every featured hotel.

HOW TO CLAIM: Post the coupon above or phone 0161 8293139 to pay by card (call centre open Monday-Friday, 8.30am-5.30pm). You will receive a colour brochure and voucher (allow 10 to 14 days for delivery). Please book rooms directly with the hotel. This offer is based on two people sharing a room. For terms and conditions of this offer please contact Silver Fox Promotions on 0161 8293139.

TERMS & CONDITIONS: Promoter is Silver Fox promotions. Northcliffe newspapers do not own or operate any of the hotels. All rooms are subject to availability and certain dates may be excluded from the offer. £9.99 covers the cost of your participating hotel directory and your 12-month voucher. Bookings are made directly with each hotel and you must present your voucher on arrival to claim the 2-4-1 offer. Only original vouchers will be accepted, no photocopies. Individual hotel terms and conditions apply. Offer subject to full terms and conditions shown in the hotel brochure. The offer is as stated. There is no cash alternative. No correspondence will be entered into.

HOTEL BREAKS READER HOLIDAYS OFFER

Please make cheques payable to Silver fox promotions. To order by phone call 0161 829 3139 quoting code XWDP1. Send this coupon with your payment to Northcliffe Hotel Breaks offer, Silver fox promotions, PO Box 98, Whitefield, Manchester M45 7GS

Please send me the classic breaks brochure and booking voucher.

I enclose a cheque / postal order for £9.99 for my copy of the classic breaks brochure and voucher. REF: XWDP1

Name.....

Address.....

Postcode.....

Daytime Tel.....

Email.....

Do you have your local newspaper delivered? Yes No

At Northcliffe Media Ltd and our associated companies, we take your privacy seriously. When you respond, you agree that we may contact you with relevant offers and services by post, email, SMS and telephone.

Please tick the box if you do not wish to be occasionally contacted by our carefully selected partners by post or telephone

Western Daily Press

www.thisbristol.co.uk

Families

Helping those who know more than how to save a life



Julia Vickers was working as an accountant when her son Alex was born three months early. She tells **Suzanne Savill** how he changed her life – and how she is now trying to repay the nurses that helped her

Like any lively three-year-old, Alex Vickers can't resist investigating anything that looks interesting.

To him, the stones that he has found in a wooden box are merely interesting playthings, and the mirror in which he is looking at his face is just a type of toy.

He is young to realise that the stones are used for hot stone massages at his mum Julia's beauty salon, and that the mirrors are used by her customers.

And he certainly has no idea that if it were not for him, his mum would probably still be working as an accountant for the NHS.

Alex was born three months prematurely in 2007 at Southmead Hospital in Bristol, and was so fragile that Julia couldn't hold him until he was three months old, and was only able to take him home after six months. He was on an oxygen machine until he was about a year old.

"I didn't go back to work after my maternity leave finished. Alex was still on oxygen and I was really anxious about leaving him with anybody," says Julia.

"I sat down with my manager and I said: 'I can't do this'. My mind wasn't focused on the job and I knew I'd have to give up work."

Julia, 40, had also studied beauty therapy as a hobby while she was working as an accountant, and after leaving her job in the NHS she began working from home at weekends and in the evenings, specialising in doing hair removal by threading.

"We were living in Avonmouth and I was driving backwards and forwards to the hospital for Alex's appointments, and in July 2009 I saw this little empty shop for rent in Westbury-on-Trym High Street," she says.

Julia decided to rent the shop, and turned it into a salon called The Beauty Box, which she opened when Alex was two years old.

"It was just myself and I had one treatment room. Then I got busier and busier and after a couple of months I had to employ another therapist," she says.

Now Julia has two salons and employs ten therapists, after recently opening a second Beauty Box salon, after she saw a shop for rent near the entrance to Clifton Down Shopping Centre.

She will be celebrating the opening of the new branch – and Alex's fourth birthday – by holding an event to raise funds for charities connected with the neo-natal intensive care unit at Southmead Hospital.

"The nurses at Southmead are just

fantastic – they couldn't have done any more for us," she says.

"They made us feel so welcome, and we could go there at any time. There were nights when I couldn't sleep and I'd get into the car and drive there at 12 at night."

"It's amazing to think that Alex will be four on April 1 and starting school in September. So much has happened over the past four years that it doesn't seem real."

Alex was not due to be born until July 18 2007, but instead Julia began going into labour in late March, and Alex was born on April 1, weighing just two pounds.

"I was at work on Friday, and on Monday I had to call into the office to say I'd had a baby," Julia recalls.

"I was 25 weeks and four days pregnant. I still don't know why it

'I still didn't feel like I'd had a baby, as my bump had been so small'

Julia Vickers

happened. They tried to stop it when I got to the hospital but they couldn't and he was born 15 weeks early.

"He didn't make any noise at all when he was born. They whisked him away and I didn't see him until probably eight hours later when he was stable."

"He was linked up to tubes and wires and looking red because his skin was so transparent. I felt so bad because he shouldn't have been there, he should have still been inside me."

"For months and months after he was born I was in shock. I still didn't feel like I'd had a baby, as my bump had been so small that most of my neighbours didn't even know I was pregnant, and I'd not come home from hospital with a baby."

Julia and her husband Jason, an engineer at Bristol Port Company, spent much of their time at the hospital after Alex was born, and came to appreciate the compassion of the nurses who cared for Alex and for them.

"It must have been so hard for Jason because he had to go to work. He would come home and get changed, then we would go to the hospital for the rest of the evening, then come home and go to bed – that was our life," says Julia.

"Day in, day out I was going there to see him. I would wake up and have my breakfast and stay with him and talk to him, and read stories to him, and



Alex playing in Julia's Beauty Box shop in Westbury-on-Trym, Bristol



Julia outside her shop in Westbury-on-Trym

express milk for him. The nurses think that did a lot to help him to develop so well.

"Before we were allowed to take him home they encouraged us to stay with him in the parents' room to see how we got on with the oxygen machine that Alex needed."

"It was really helpful as it gave us the confidence to look after him with the oxygen. We had a few incidents at home when he started playing with his tubes and they came out and he became quite blue."

"From being in the neonatal unit I know that they need things like furniture for the parents' room, and toys that can encourage small babies to focus their attention."

As Alex bustles around The Beauty Box, Julia admits that she finds it hard to believe how well he has progressed since his premature birth.

Apart from laser eye surgery for an eye condition called Retinopathy of Prematurity, which affects premature babies, Alex has needed relatively little medical intervention as he has developed.

"When the consultant said that there was a 75 per cent chance of the baby living, and a high chance of having some disability it just didn't sink in. It was such a roller coaster," says Julia.

"We still have to go for regular check-ups, but so far we've been discharged from the heart team and the physio, although we still have to go to the eye hospital, and for speech therapy."

"I just can't believe how normal he is. I was warned he might have difficulty reaching the milestones like walking and talking, so very single milestone was worrying for me, but he has been just fine."

Beauty Box for Babies will take place on March 31 from 5pm at Beauty Box in Clifton Down, Whiteladies Road, BS8 2NN. All proceeds will go to NICU (Neonatal Intensive Care Unit) at Southmead Hospital, and BLISS (Baby Life Support Systems). Guests will be asked to pay £10 for a ticket and then will then be able to choose from having a manicure, a pedicure, fish pedicure, threading or a back massage. Butlers in the Buff will serve light refreshments and there will also be a prize draw raffle.

To purchase a ticket for Beauty Box for Babies go to www.beautyboxbristol.co.uk, call 0117 329 7005 or email beautyboxbristol@yahoo.co.uk

Sound familiar parents? A tour of the fabled teenage bedroom



Teen Blog

With Olly Williams

My life recently has had no other purpose except for coursework deadlines so my room and sixth form are the only places that I have been. As everyone knows school is about as exciting as watching paint dry (surely that paint dry in privacy for goodness sake) so this week I shall be telling you about my room.

The teenage bedroom. There are many legends attached to this mythical land, mostly perpetuated by people who have never been to one – which is probably just as well. About the only time anyone apart from the occupant even mentions the teenage bedroom is when it allegedly needs 'tidying up'. So in my quest for journalistic truth I thought I would enlighten you about what a teenage bedroom is really like and how it came to be that way. There is the stuff you might

'There is an empty glass on a coaster and an empty mug not on a coaster'

expect – stereo, CD, cables for things long since disappeared, floorrobe.

On my desk just to my right in front of me is a plate with toast crumbs on and an apple core, remnants of a breakfast past; underneath it are three old issues of NME, notes for my English coursework, my capo (for non-musos: a device used to hold all six strings down on a guitar or almost any stringed instrument) and a *Specials* CD in a *Black Sabbath* case.

As we continue round on the edge of my desk there is an empty glass on a coaster and an empty mug (one with piano keys on that I got for Crimbo) not on a coaster. Now at a full 90 degree rotation I can see my cupboard door open proudly emblazoned with the sign "Wurzels Reserved" stuck on with gaffer tape (I'm not sure if I have told you this story before but once *The Wurzels* came to our school, for some reason I can't remember, and the school reserved a parking space for their



Not Olly's bedroom, but a likely reproduction

tractor with a cone and a sign saying "Wurzels Reserved" on it, seeing this and it causing me some great hilarity and I promptly stole it).

Beneath the sign is my electric guitar resting on my amp with a snapped tope string. It has been like that for about two months so I have inadvertently learnt how to play the guitar without a tope.

As I keep on turning I can see my book shelf containing some of the finest literature known to man... old *Beano* comics. Then in the corner of my room are my two speakers and my little PA that we use for gigs with our band and my cape. Yes I own a cape (I traded it with the drama cupboard at school for a scarf – we all know who got the better deal). Then is my stereo, yes I still have a stereo!

Atop the highest shelf above my stereo lies my hat collection featuring hats from places that I have been, Ireland (Leprechaun hat), France (beret), Glastonbury festival (mental motorbike helmet with horns coming out of the side). On my wall 180 degrees behind me is nothing but 50 odd posters that I have torn out of music magazines, a paper hat with the word Noberrrrrrrr written on it, my London tube ticket from the day I went to the London student protests (FIGHT THE POWER) and an American one dollar bill. As I carry round I can see my window which contains the world which I haven't seen for days, then is my acoustic guitar (six strings) and then back to me. Goodbye.

Olly is a regular contributor to the Western Daily Press from Somerset



Trainers, food, clothes. The all-too-familiar floor of a teenage bedroom