

**The Journal** READER TRAVEL

5 DAYS FROM £199.00

Code 05777

## Isle of Wight Winter Warmer

Departs 25 March 2012

With a unique atmosphere and cosy intimacy like nowhere else, the Isle of Wight is the perfect location for a relaxing break.

**The price includes:**

- Private coach travel throughout
- Return ferry crossing from Southampton to the Isle of Wight
- Four nights' dinner, bed and cooked breakfast on the Isle of Wight
- Entertainment every night
- Coach tour along the south coast
- Visits to Yarmouth, Cowes, Newport, Ryde, Godshell, Shanklin and Sandown
- Services of our tour driver



2 DAYS from £155.00 for 2 people

Code 90536

## Edinburgh & Glasgow

Departs 5 February 2012

Experience the splendour of Scotland's two favourite cities - enchanting and elegant Edinburgh and cosmopolitan Glasgow. This is a great opportunity to explore these fascinating destinations at a great price.

**The price includes:**

- Private coach travel throughout
- One night dinner, bed and cooked breakfast
- Visit to Glasgow and Edinburgh
- Services of our tour driver



2 DAYS FROM £119.00

Code 95310

## The John Smith's Grand National

Departs 14 April 2012

This is an event that captures the hearts and imaginations of millions around the world, thanks to the amazing stories and thrilling finishes created as horse and rider give it their all against the mighty Aintree fences. The course is like no other, the racing incomparable and the atmosphere is electric.

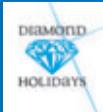
**The price includes:**

- Private coach travel throughout
- One night dinner, bed and cooked breakfast
- Entrance to the Steeplechase Enclosure
- Visit to Chester
- Services of our tour driver

Book or request your FREE brochure now at:  
**www.diamondhols.co.uk**

Or for a brochure or to book call:  
**0844 544 6670**

Quote advert code NC



Operated by Diamond Holidays of Market Harborough ABTA W0552

From **<<35** Like all good restaurants, the head chef uses local suppliers and the best seasonal Scottish produce he can lay his hands on.

There is an excellent and straightforward choice of beautifully-presented traditional mains ... roasted Ayrshire pork belly, sea bass fillet, as well as classics like fish and chips, bangers and mash, in addition to grills, salads and a variety of steak options.

All the staff have a friendly approach where they make you and your children feel at ease.

Diners can enjoy a premium experience. Mum's beer battered fish and chips were perfectly cooked and full of flavour.

I tried the belly pork with mash and cumin roasted carrots. The meat was melt-in-the-mouth tender, with delicious crispy crackling. You can see why belly pork is a popular menu choice at the moment.

The children went for mini versions of the burger and both were very happy.

To end our meal Mum and I shared a cheese board and the kids tried some ice-cream.

And finally there was the call of a very comfortable bed, with muscles gently aching from all that stomping.

In the morning we enjoyed a hearty breakfast, options included porridge and kippers if desired, surely a must on a Scottish hotel menu.

I sampled scrambled eggs and salmon while my mum and the children collapsed under the weight of their full Scottish breakfast.

Advice on where to visit was plentiful. So it was off to nearby Pitlochry, which has been a tourist destination for over 150 years, counting Queen Victoria among its visitors.

We walked through the town, discovered lots of wonderful shops, a little amusement park for the kids and a putting green.

The splendidly restored Victorian buildings of Atholl Road offer a wide range of restaurants and specialist gift shops.

At Heathergems, the crafts people can be viewed turning the stems of the heather, pulled from the Perthshire hills, into attractive and unusual jewellery.

Pitlochry is also home to two whisky distilleries - the Bell's Blair Athol Distillery and the Edradour Distillery, the smallest whisky distillery in Scotland, producing only 12 casks of whisky a week.

An unusual attraction is the salmon ladder, by Pitlochry Dam, which helps the fish by-pass the dam and get into Loch Faskally.

And there are walks along the River Tummel and through the woods around Loch Faskally.

In the afternoon, we headed back to Perth and as the city is renowned for its parks and gardens and with the autumnal colours everywhere, the parks were a great delight.

On our final night we dined in Opus One the main dining area of the hotel, where the food was uniformly superb, the service pleasant, and the ambience civilised.

The French chef Romuald Denesle is passionate about sourcing local produce, which he regularly uses in his seasonal dishes.

The menu is really impressive and no wonder the recently opened restaurant is already picking up awards including 'Urban Restaurant of the Year' category in the Scottish Restaurant Awards.

In the contemporary and chic surroundings I went native for my starter, enjoying Loch Tarbert mackerel tartare, boiled quail's egg and escabeche dressing.



**STREETS APART** Above, the Church of St. Leonard's in the fields at Perth, below, which was once the medieval capital of Scotland



My main course was a very generous and satisfying pan-fried, red deer liver with braised red cabbage and caramelised onions.

My Mum went for the chicken liver and foie gras parfait with pear and fig chutney and toasted walnut brioche before she tucked into butternut squash potato gnocchi with sautéed wild mushrooms, which she declared a triumph.

Meanwhile, the children, eschewing the children's menu, enjoyed homemade humous, pitta bread and Italian meats to start followed by a slightly smaller sirloin steak which the kitchen kindly cooked for them, followed by ice-cream and washed down with Diet Cola.

On our last day we decided to sample Perth leisure pool as we had brought our costumes.

It boasts lots of features and an outdoor lagoon and it was perfect as the weather had taken a turn for the worst.

It was sad to leave Perth and return home. If you want a break that offers good food, wine and relaxation all under one roof, all at very, very attractive prices then the New County Hotel offers that.

We thoroughly enjoyed a relaxing and family break and are already looking forward to our next Perthshire visit.

### THINGS TO DO

If you are a keen golfer, Perthshire has a number of 'hidden gems' which for many capture the true essence of Scottish golf.

Most of the 40 courses in Perthshire fall into this category. Ironic really, as it is thought that Perth's South Inch (from the Gaelic 'Innis' meaning island or water meadow) was the first golf course in the world and was used by Scottish Kings in the 14th Century, when Perth was the country's capital.

Perth also boasts the oldest club in the world to hold a royal charter, this being granted by William IV in 1833, a year before that of the Royal and Ancient.

Those unfamiliar with the region should explore the nearby Trossachs National Park and whisky lovers will be pleased to know the Famous Grouse Experience is just a few miles away. Many of the Scottish Kings were crowned on the Stone of Destiny at Scone Palace.

For more information on attractions try Visit Scotland on [www.visitscotland.com](http://www.visitscotland.com)

### FACT FILE

The New County Hotel, 22-30 County Place, Perth PH2 8EE, Scotland, 01738 623355

[www.newcountyhotel.com](http://www.newcountyhotel.com)  
[www.opusone-restaurant.co.uk](http://www.opusone-restaurant.co.uk)  
Angela and her family travelled with East Coast and First ScotRail to Perth, via Edinburgh.

East Coast offers standard advance returns, booked online at [www.eastcoast.co.uk](http://www.eastcoast.co.uk), starting from £16.40. Times and fares can be obtained on 08457 225 225 or from staffed stations and agents.

First ScotRail advance single tickets between Edinburgh and Perth cost

from £7.50, subject to availability and can be booked anytime until 6pm the day before travel. Book online at [www.scotrail.co.uk](http://www.scotrail.co.uk), or call 08457 55 00 33.

Families can take advantage of ScotRail's Kids Go Free ticket. The ticket allows up to two children aged between five and 15 to travel anywhere for free with each adult purchasing a Kids Go Free ticket - off-peak, all week, all year. ScotRail's Kids Go Free website offers more information on the ticket. A Kids Go Free ticket also entitles one child to free entry across a range of family attractions the length and breadth of Scotland.

Visit [www.scotrail.co.uk/kidsgofree](http://www.scotrail.co.uk/kidsgofree)



**SUPERB FOOD** The Opus One main dining area