



DOMINICAN REPUBLIC  
Tourists visit the Colonial Zone in Santo Domingo

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## News..

**WHEN** in Rome, do as the Romans do. But don't forget what the Romans did, too.

That's the beauty of the Eternal City – one of the most vibrant, modern and commercial of all European cities – yet with awesome, iconic symbols of past civilisations and, of course, one of the most important religious sites in the world.

So is it Modern Rome you're after? With its designer shops, high fashion and catwalk cool. Or maybe, it's ancient Rome, the hub of what was once the most powerful political empire in the world, that excites you.

Whichever is for you, it'll be an unforgettable trip.

### ● Nightlife

Rome's nightlife starts late. It is not unusual for locals to meet for dinner at 10pm. Then they'll decide where to head to for the night.

As the weather is mild for most of the year, every square often turns into a big outdoor bar. The locals love their evening "passeggiata" (slow walk through the old town) and enjoying a beer while chatting with friends outside a bar or sitting at a table outside a café.

The area around Piazza Navona and Via della Pace is quite chic, with wine bars and cafes, while Campo de' Fiori is loud and the music pulsating – the place to mingle with the young set.

### ● Shopping In Rome

Rome can be an expensive city, nevertheless, window shopping is a joy.

# Luxury



HOLIDAY Live the good life in Rome

As as a wedding venue, it has been recognised in the hotel 'Oscars' – Ballathie is Scotland's Rural Wedding Venue of the Year 2011.

It has also won awards for its restaurant. And the chefs, headed by Andrew Wilkie, only use the best of ingredients, sourced locally, for their art.

Scottish salmon, scallops, pork belly, duck and steak were all on the menu and were creatively presented with a new take on old classics.

After a blissful night's sleep in the tranquil surroundings, we were ready for our first full day at large in Perthshire. And there is no better way to do it than in an open-topped sports car.

Andrew Still, who owns Open Road Hire, is extremely enthusiastic and knowledgeable about his cars – a clutch of Caterham 7s and a Porsche Boxster – and the local countryside.

The Caterhams are for the real driving enthusiasts. I prefer windows, doors and a proper roof if the rain comes, so we

opted for the Porsche. But with 0-60 in just over six seconds and 245bhp, it is certainly no slouch.

As novices, both in terms of the Porsche and Perthshire, we had to rely on his expertise to map out a route.

To be honest when he suggested driving 120 miles along country roads, I thought he was insane.

My idea was to drive about 20 miles to the nearest country pub and soak up the atmosphere in front of a roaring fire.

However, Nick had ideas more in keeping with Andrew's so, armed with his very detailed turn-by-turn map, we set off with my mind firmly fixed on just finding our way back.

But, wow, the Perth countryside looks different in glorious Boxstervision.

As the weather was kind to us, the roof came down and stayed that way for all 120 wonderful miles, albeit that many of them were on roads that would have had Newton questioning gravity.

We set off from Perth towards Killin

and our first stop at the Falls of Dochart via Crieff, Comrie, St Filans and Lochearnhead, all of which are worth visiting in their own right.

And while the Falls were not fully in spate, the constantly babbling river still made a picturesque spot for coffee.

Fully refreshed, we set off for Forthingall to visit the oldest living thing in Europe – no, not Sir Bruce Forsyth.

The Forthingall Yew is situated in the churchyard of the village but it outdates the Christian settlement by a few thousand years.

It is claimed the yew is between 2000 and 5000 years old, although recent scientific tests suggest that the more recent date is probably more accurate.

According to local legend, Pontius Pilate was born in its shade and played there as a child.

There is little proof to authenticate that but, nonetheless, it is a tale worthy of an area known as Big Tree Country.

With little else of note we were soon on our way to Kinloch Rannoch along the treacherous road, via Schiehallion.

It is a proper "driver's road" so, needless to say, not one on which I was going to be let loose.

We turned back via Dunalastair and Tummel Bridge before heading for Kenmore. The Kenmore to Amulree stretch is very narrow at first and climbs and twists severely with hairpin bends on the way down.

Once out of the shade of the trees there are glorious views – but I swear it was so high even the sheep were wearing crampons.

Heading back towards Perth you pass through the scenic Sma' Glen – a great backdrop for any photos to help you remember the breathtaking beauty of this splendid slice of Scotland.

We drove back to the glorious Ballathie for our second night of luxury with smiles firmly fixed and Nick trying to work out how he can afford a Boxster.

The area around Piazza di Spagna is where to find the boutiques – Prada, Valentino, Gucci, and Fendi.

The more prestigious antique shops are found in Via Margutta and contemporary designers and stylists in Via del Babuino.

There are also several colourful and lively markets.

One of the ways to make clothes shopping in Rome affordable is to visit some of the city's second-hand clothes shops.

Here you'll find "dead stock" – clothes that have never been worn. The real thing at a bargain price.

