

# travel

## Late Deals

■ Flying from Glasgow on August 18, seven nights in Fuerteventura staying at the four-star Oasis Village Resort in Corralejo on all inclusive, from £495 per person.  
 ■ Flying from Glasgow on August 10, seven nights in Tenerife staying at the three-star Oro Blanco Hotel in Playa

Americas, on self catering from £1478 for a family of four.  
 ■ From Glasgow on August 18, seven nights in Majorca at three-star Hi Bouganvilla Park in Sa Coma, on self catering from £1468 for family of four. [www.airtours.co.uk](http://www.airtours.co.uk), 0844 871 6636 or visit Thomas Cook, Going Places or Co-op Travel.

## Blissful retreat is five-star paradise



▼ **LUXURY**  
The Cairn Lodge and Hotel

By Gavin McNally

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WITH a three-year-old son and a two-year-old daughter at home, my idea of a relaxing night is having *The Gruffalo's Child* read by 8pm, the baby monitor purring to the sound of snoring by 8.15pm and a plate of pasta with a glass of red on the table before the clock strikes 9pm.

A luxury break is less about sun-kissed stays in Spain these days and more often a night's camping at a muddy festival or a weekend in a static caravan, feeling grateful that there are two toilets and a breakfast bar on board.

Now, I'm not complaining – every doting parent will testify that their child's smile is worth a hundred sleepless nights. But even the most dedicated dads and mothering mums need a little time to themselves to unwind.

And if a one-night escape from the bottomless laundry basket, dinner antics and bathing routines is what the doctor ordered, the medicine doesn't come much sweeter than a visit to the stunning Cairn Lodge and Hotel.

From the second my fiancée, Kelly, and I made it past the clutch of glittering awards – including Scotland's Sexiest Hotel – on the reception desk of the Perthshire retreat, to the grudging return of the key card 24-hours later, our stay was five-star bliss.

With the kind of weather outside that had Noah digging out his tools – making sight seeing or a round of golf a non-starter – it was down to the newly refurbished venue to deliver. Which it did, in style.

Inside room five, the discovery of an embarrassingly lavish double bath with headrests, 62-inch plasma TV, top-of-the-range sound system, personal mini-bar and an espresso machine had us both pointing at different parts of the room like two excited kids who had just walked through the doors of Toys R Us.

The king-size bed looked like it had been pinched from the set of a Disney film, while the robe and slippers on offer put my favourite Family Guy efforts at home to shame.

However, the main attraction at the Cairn Lodge & Hotel is not its luxurious rooms, surprisingly, but the beautifully presented restaurant, The Grill Room.

With a blend of the Isle of Skye's Three Chimney's meticulous level of service and the cosy feel of Ayrshire's Michelin star-worthy Braidwoods, with dishes to rival both, it's no surprise to find more than 120 diners enjoying a meal at a hotel which only has 10 rooms. Not all of which were full during our stay.

The starters – scallops and pate with homemade breads – were great conversation stoppers but nothing compared to the life-changing cuts of beef delivered for our main, which we were both devastated to finish.

To accompany the eye-catching decor and sublime menu, a superbly selected soundtrack, which included classic tracks from the likes of Moby and Air, created an atmosphere that made the experience all too short.

Following the return trip down the A9 the next morning, young Niall's welcoming cheeky grin and a love-you-daddy cuddle from Cadence made sure there was no place like home... But for a short escape to paradise, there is no place like the Cairn Lodge and Hotel.

**DROP into any clubhouse from Whistling Straits to Royal Melbourne and ask anyone at the bar what are the three things for which Scotland is renowned throughout the world?**

The chances are, unless you're talking to an Appalachian banjo player, the answers will be – glorious golf courses, magnificent malt whiskies and great football players.

As my old buddy Meat Loaf used to say: "Two Out of Three Ain't Bad."

So when I got the opportunity to indulge my two favourite hobbies on the Speyside Golf Whisky Trail it was a dram come true.

I travelled from Glasgow Queen Street to Aviemore courtesy of ScotRail and the glorious scenery on the journey is just a wee taster of things to come.

My golfing buddies picked me up in a luxury Mercedes people carrier from Arnold Clark and with a designated driver taking turns at the wheel, it's the perfect way to get around in a group.

Our first game of golf was at Granttown-on-Spey and with stunning views and immaculate greens and fairways, it was a pleasure to play.

The Glenlivet Distillery is only a Bubba Watson drive away and you must take the tour and sample their special malts.

If you're still feeling sporty, the local ghillies will teach you the rudimentaries of fly-casting on the Spey and one never knows who could be fishing next to one.

The Grant Arms Hotel is ideally located for Granttown-on-Spey and Boat Of Garten golf courses, and after a huge breakfast we set off for the famous "Boat".

Not so much of a hidden gem now, the stunning views of the Cairngorms and abundant wildlife make this one of the most spectacular golf courses in Scotland. Always in magnificent condition, this heathland/Highland track is a must



▼ **OUTSTANDING**  
Sunninghill Hotel in Elgin served delicious food



▼ **MALT TOUR**  
Benromach Distillery in Forres

## Golf and whisky are perfect partners on luxury break

By Ian Taylor

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play for any golfer. Away from the gowf, you can take a trip on the Strathspey Steam Railway, which brings a new meaning to steaming after golf, or hop on the Funicular Railway to access the Cairngorms.

Feeling energetic, we kicked on to play Forres Golf Club and it proved to be another wonderful discovery. Beautifully maintained, combining

parkland and heath, it's a real test of golf with many picturesque holes stamping their own individual challenge for the golfer.

We stayed overnight at The Knockomie Hotel and I have to say it was a real pleasure.

An elegant country house hotel with individually-designed rooms, it was luxurious but very laid back and guests are made to feel right at home.

A trip to the Benromach Distillery in Forres before a round of golf at



# Driving

## Factfile

■ Gavin stayed courtesy of the Cairn Lodge and Hotel in Auchterarder near Gleneagles. It is part of the award-winning Aurora Hotel Collection.  
 ■ Telephone: 01764 662 634 or log on to [www.cairnlodge.co.uk](http://www.cairnlodge.co.uk)  
 ■ Prices range from £225 per room, per night BB, based on two people sharing a deluxe twin/double. And £285

per room, per night DBB, based on two people sharing a deluxe twin/double.  
 ■ Enjoy a special rate of only £199 per night for two people, inclusive of dinner and full Scottish breakfast. This is based on two people sharing a classic double/twin room. Valid until October 31. Call 0844 800 4000 for info, quoting 'DR2'.

