



◀ **LAKE GARDA**
A popular
tourist hotspot

Late deals

■ Flying from Glasgow on August 15, 18 or 22, seven nights in Lake Garda, Italy, staying at the two-star-plus Hotel Palme, on half board from £399 per person.
■ Flying from Glasgow on August 14, seven-night Med Cruise on the Island Escape, on full board from £647 per person.

■ Flying from Glasgow on August 18, seven nights in Jersey, staying at the Hotel de Normandie, on bed and breakfast from £479 per person.
■ For these and other deals log on to www.barrheadtravel.co.uk or call 0800 298 7214.

News..

BULGARIA has a thriving mountain and coastal tourism industry, but there is a whole world beyond the Black Sea and mountains.

Sofia is not a well-known capital but is a great city-break destination.

Unlike the archetypal city breaks such as Rome, Paris and London, this Balkan city is easy on your bank balance, as well as the eye.

With the picturesque Vitosha mountain and national park providing the backdrop to Sofia, it is a mixture of cityscapes and sprawling countryside.

Sofia lives up to its motto, "ever growing, never ageing", emanating a dynamic vibe that is reflected in modern galleries and a lively bar and restaurant scene.

One of the best places to start a holiday there is the National History Museum, which is one of the biggest in the Balkans.

With admission only £4 and the information panels in English, it is an inexpensive and informative way to get an overview of Bulgarian history.

The Alexander Nevsky Cathedral, with a capacity of 7000 worshippers, is one of the world's largest Eastern Orthodox churches.

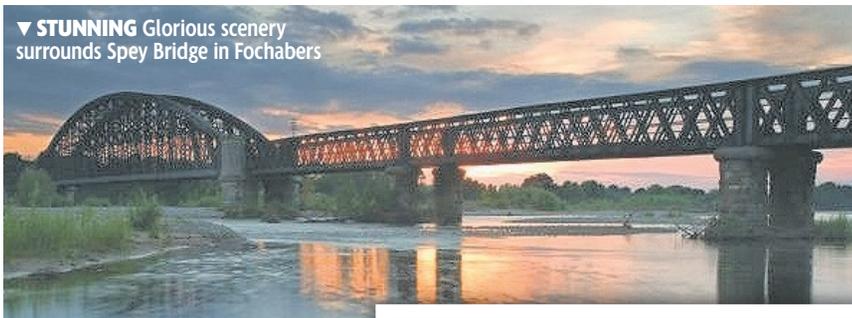
After finding out about the past, why not get into the present with a strong, black coffee at one of the many cafés and restaurants in Alexander Nevsky Square?

The daily flea market located at the square provides a perfect souvenir hunting ground. Russian-style hats, badges, flags and other curiosities from the Communist era are sold alongside local crafts.

Spit-roasted lamb is a particular classic in Bulgaria, but meat-lovers will be



▲ **HOOK A BEAUTY**
Fly fishing on the Spey



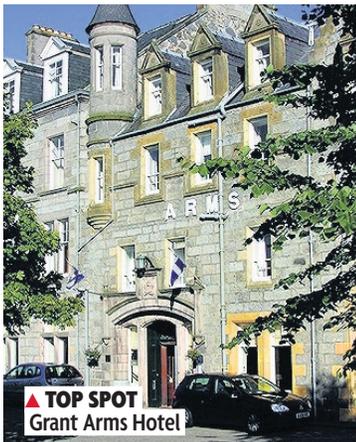
▼ **STUNNING** Glorious scenery surrounds Spey Bridge in Fochabers



▼ **ELEGANT**
The Knockomie Hotel



▲ **HOP ON** Strathspey Steam Railway



▲ **TOP SPOT**
Grant Arms Hotel

Factfile

■ Ian travelled courtesy of Scotland's Golf Whisky Trail

■ Package Prices: Three-Day packages include three nights accommodation and three rounds of golf starting at only £240. Five-Day packages with five rounds of golf commence at £395. There is a £10 supplement for a round on Moray Old

■ Visit www.scotlandsgolfwhiskytrail.com for further information

■ We chose Arnold Clark Car Hire for our nine-seater. For more information, or to make a booking, phone 0845 607 4500 or check out www.arnoldclarkrental.com

■ To book you and your friends on to the Golf Whisky Week in September, call Steve Crane, the secretary at Moray Golf Club on +44(0)1343 812018 or email him at secretary@moraygolf.co.uk

■ Call any of the three participating hotels or visit www.scotlandsgolfwhiskytrail.com

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THE KNOCKOMIE HOTEL
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Elgin might not be everyone's cup of tea, or should that be glass of malt, but I found it fascinating to tour through all the processes involved in making my favourite tippie.

Not content with that, our host took his wee gang of gowfers to the Gordon & MacPhail shop in Elgin for another supervised tasting with an accent on how malts can be enjoyed with various types of food.

The shop is truly an Aladdin's cave for the malt worshipper. By the time I got to Elgin Golf Club I was ready to break the course record - for malts consumed I'm ashamed to say, not strokes under par.

Though my swing was more Donald Duck than Luke Donald, I thought the course was superb with some of the toughest par fours I've

come across in Scotland. We stayed overnight in the Sunninghill Hotel in Elgin, where the food and the accommodation were quite simply nothing short of outstanding.

After breakfast we enjoyed a tour of the world famous Johnstons of Elgin cashmere factory and shop.

Tour guide Kirsty looked as though she had just stepped out of a Chanel advert for her product and was worth the trip north alone.

She took us through the various processes involved in producing some of the most beautiful, and expensive, fabric used by top fashion brands all over the world.

One word of warning, though.

If you're taking your good lady don't let her loose in the shop with

your credit card. You could end up in a worse financial state than Greece.

I really enjoyed playing the superb heathland/parkland courses throughout the week, but the jewel in the crown for me was the tremendous links at Moray Old.

From the traditional old school but relaxed clubhouse, to the best stretch of finishing holes I've come across, this course really is a class act.

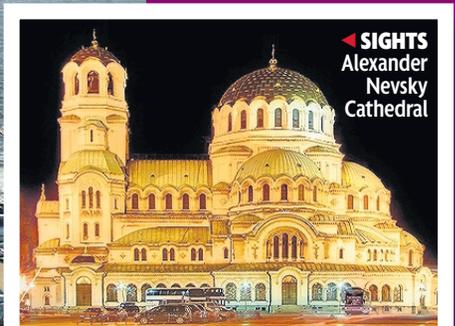
The hospitality was outstanding and our hosts were more than generous, especially when it came to pouring drams of their very own malt out on the course.

September is the perfect time to indulge in all that Speyside has to offer - and enjoy golfing and some whisky too.

◀ **FIRST CLASS** The links at Moray Old



holidays



◀ **SIGHTS**
Alexander Nevsky Cathedral

satisfied with other specials such as meatballs and kebabche sausages.

Every hour outside the Presidency building, you can watch the changing of the guard - an intricate event that's so rewarding.

For those with an interest in the nightlife of Sofia, the south-east of the city is home to the 'students town'.