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1066 and all that in **Hastings**

HELPING YOU SAVE WITH LOW-COST GETAWAYS AND FAMILY FAVOURITES



Enjoy long, mild days away from the crowds on islands with abundance of history

British Break

By Adrian Caffery

■HE sun was beating down on the wide stretch of pristine, white sands.

The still, turquoise waters looked so inviting that I just couldn't resist the urge to strip off and take the

Then reality struck.

This may have been a kind of paradise - but it certainly wasn't a tropical

This wasn't Jamaica or Antigua. It was Tràigh na Beirigh beach in the Outer Hebrides – and the water

Tràigh na Beirigh was one of many seemingly undiscovered beaches that my wife Jayne and I visited on not uncommon.

the Hebridean isles of Lewis and Harris during four days of unbroken sunshine in May.

We couldn't believe how blessed we had been with the weather but, appar- and more rain, we had

ently, long (daylight can extend to 11pm at the height of summer), warm days are

Deserted: The sun beats down on a beautiful Hebridean beach – but there's not a soul to be seen

Winters can be mild, too, thanks to a warm sea current known as the North Atlantic Drift, which originates in the Caribbean.

Anticipating rain, rain

booked five nights at a luxurious holiday home in a quiet street on the edge of Stornoway, the capital of

Our timber-clad lodge, Metagama, was named after the ocean liner on which hundreds of islanders emigrated to North

prosperous existence 100

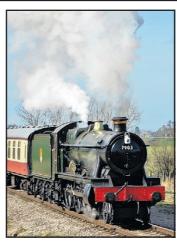
years ago. The lodge had a living flame fire, a large TV with full Sky package, a DVD library, a PlayStation and books that we were encouraged to take home if we didn't finish reading them

Best of all, there was a whirlpool bath for two and a sauna where guests can close their eves and pretend they are on that Jamaican beach, if it is pouring down outside.

The five-star property one of several from Hebri dean Luxury Holidays, had two double bedrooms and a mezzanine loft space off a minstrel gallery suitable as a play area for children. Built in an environmentally-sensitive manner, it

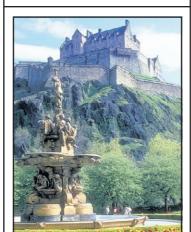
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Inside



ReaderOffers Kids go free on Santa

steam train weekend



Holiday Deals Two nights in Edinburgh

with flights for £155



GreatEscape

Family holiday on quiet side of southern Spain

FROM PAGE 25

Tweed furnishings and sofas.

including a Tesco and a Co-op.

guise of a Scottish baronial tower,

its stature reflecting the scale of

the tragedy that struck

islanders on New Year's

The Admiralty yacht

HMS Iolaire, which was

bringing sailors home at

the end of the First World

War, struck a notorious

reef as it approached

Stornoway harbour and

Although the stern of

the boat was at one

point just 20ft from

land, the men were

weighed down in the

water by their heavy

uniforms and boots

205 losing their

With such a cruel

lives.

Day, 1919.



A journey through time: Traditional blackhouses, Stornoway's war memorial (left) and Calanais Standing Stones (below

surprise to learn that the Outer Hebrides is one of the most religious places in Britain.

Trave Edited by Edward Stephens, 0121 234 5215 / edward.stephens@birminghammail.net

Break in the isles

The islands fall silent on Sundays. The swimming baths, many playgrounds and most shops remain shut while carwashing and the hanging out of

laundry is frowned upon.
Although Sunday flights to Stornoway started six years ago. islanders were able to resist plans for a mainland ferry cossing on the Sabbath until July this year. Just days after the start of

the service, Stornoway was freak tor-



which unturned cars and boats. leading some locals to claim it was a sign of God's displeasure.

I disagree. Surely, if it was the Almighty's doing, the twister

Wizard of Oz-style, then dropped it back on the mainland!

But no matter how many ferries bring holiday-makers to Lewis and

GettingThere

■ Flybe (www.flybe.com / 0871 700 2000) flies to Stornoway from Glasgow and Edinburgh. Caledonian MacBrayne (calmac.co.uk / 08705 650000) operates daily crossings from Ullapool to Stornoway (two hours 45 mins) and Monday to Saturday crossings from Uig in Skye to Tarbert in Harris (one hour 45

■ Hébridean Luxury Holidays (www. hebrideanluxuryholidays.co.uk / 0800 234 3271) will greet you at the airport or the harbour and can arrange car hire for your arrival.
Lodge prices start at £500 for seven nights but short breaks are also available. All bed linen and towels are included, as is the cost of gas and electricity. Dogs are welcome for an additional, small cleaning charge. ■ For more information on the Outer Hebrides see www.visithebrides.com





LEWIS FACTFILE

LEWIS is the largest and most northerly of the six Outer Hebrides.

Harris to the south are one and mass, although the landscapes are very different with the former being mostly peat moorland dotted with freshwater lochs and the latter being quite

The Outer Hebrides are separated from mainland Scotland by The Minch, a channel frequented by dolphins and whales (one swam right past our ferry!)

The friendly locals allegedly breathe the cleanest air in Europe. Most speak Gaelic as well as English.

Lewis is probably most famous for the Calanais 'isles' which make up the Standing Stones, which predates Stonehenge and Confusingly, Lewis and Egypt's pyramids.

The ring and lines of 50 stones, up to 13ft tall, are ing them visible for miles around.

Visitors can delve into more recent Hebridean history at the 300-year-old Gearrannan Village.

The traditional, thatched crofting houses were restored after the last remaining residents of Gearrannan were moved out in 1974.

Other blackhouses are dotted around the islands.

Explore the homeland of Dracula

WITH the new sequel to fans of all things spooky may be inspired to visit Dracula's homeland – Transylvania.

Waiting to whisk passengers on a voyage of discovery of the region is the Danube Express' brand new Transylvanian journey

Passengers will experience a Transylvanian journey very different to that of Jonathan Harker's in Dracula, with deluxe twin compartments offering lower beds and er suite shower and WC facilities, breakfasts cooked to order and delicious dinners served each evening. Travelling in the comfort of a gleaming hotel-on-wheels, passengers encounter stunning scenery and ancient architecture as they embark on a journe

En route quests explore Sighisoara, one of the best preserved medieval towns in Europe and rumoured birthplace of Dracula, and Brasov, home to Bran Castle, one of many locations in Romania linked to the Dracula legend. Journeying through the Carpathian Mountains further highlights ahead of arrival in Istanbul include the ancient capital city of

from Budapest to Istanbul

Veliko Turnovo. The Transylvanian Journey includes an 8-day Fully Escorted holiday or a 4-day Journey only trip. The latter Journey includes three nights on board the Danube Express. The Fully **Escorted holiday** additionally includes air travel, two nights' half board accommodation in both Budapest and Istanbul in 4-star hotels.

Price: A Danube Express Transvlvanian Journey costs £2,490 per person An eight-day Fully Escorted holiday costs £3,390 per person. Prices based on two sharing a deluxe compartment.

Lufthansa voted best

TRAVEL professionals from around the world have voted Lufthansa "Europe's Leading Airline" in the 2009 World Travel Awards for the second consecutive vear. The awards were announced in Obidos, Portugal following the largest ever poll in the World Travel Awards' 16-year history. More than 170.000 industry professionals cast their