

YOUR WEEKEND... AWAY

Need to unwind? Recharge your batteries? Have fun? Well, take a break... on your doorstep

6 OF THE BEST LUXURY BREAKS

Scotland Live like 007 with a James Bond Package on the Isle of Eriska. You'll drive through Glencoe, the setting for the final scenes of Skyfall, in an Aston Martin DB9 before settling in to a spa suite with a hot tub. From £1,365 per person for two nights full board, www.eriska-hotel.co.uk.

Wales The Pentre Mawr Hot Tub Safari in Denbighshire is all about five-star alfresco living. The canvas lodges come with underfloor heating, bathrooms, kingsize beds and even hot tubs. From £520 per room for two nights full board, www.hottubsafari.co.uk.

County Durham Get a taste of the jet set lifestyle with a VIP experience at Seaham Hall, including a helicopter trip to the Aviemore distillery for a whisky tasting, gourmet dinner at the Hall and a night in the Penthouse Suite. £3,499 per couple, www.seaham-hall.co.uk.

Yorkshire Built in 1906, Crathorne Hall in Yarm once played host to royalty, but now anyone can stay. While there you can tour the Moors in a chauffeured Range Rover then enjoy a decadent picnic, £150 for up to four. Doubles from £170 per night B&B, www.handpickedhotels.co.uk.

Cornwall Stay on a tiny island reached by a footbridge at the House In The Sea near Newquay. A three-night High Life package includes a chauffeured trip to Jamie Oliver's nearby Fifteen restaurant where you'll enjoy a five-course tasting menu. From £1,580 per couple, www.uniquehomestays.com.

London Find out how the other half lives with a night in the Penthouse Suite at The Park Tower, Knightsbridge, where a butler will tend to your every need from booking activities to ironing. From £4,200 per night, www.theparktowerknightsbridge.com.
Ursula Hirschhorn



FAMILY DAY OUT St Michael's Mount, Cornwall

St Michael's Mount, a rocky island off the coast of Marazion in Cornwall, is said to have been where fishermen sighted Michael the Archangel in the 5th century, which led to the founding of a monastery on the island. This made it a magnet for pilgrims, who once trod the granite causeway that at low tide links it to the mainland.

Now you can follow in their footsteps and find out more about the island's fascinating history as it celebrates the 60th anniversary of its gift to the National Trust by the St Aubyn family, who had owned the island since the 17th century and still live and work there.

Special events include free half-hour tours which take in the historical buildings. From 18-20 April, there's an Easter Egg Trail (£2 per child) in which children can hunt for clues and win a sweet treat.

St Michael's Mount also has a military past and its castle, which dates back to the 12th century, has a collection of armour and weapons. There are also several WWII pill boxes dotted around the island. And don't miss the sub-tropical gardens, with exotic plants thriving on the granite cliffs. Entry to the castle and gardens combined is £10.50 for adults, £5 for children. Tours: Tuesday and Friday at 11am and 2pm. www.stmichaelsmount.co.uk.



The museum. Right: Shaun Evans in Endeavour. Below right: the Randolph hotel

LOCATION, LOCATION

Visit the sets starring on TV. This week: Oxford's Natural History Museum

LOCATION The Oxford University Museum Of Natural History is the setting for a vicious murder in tomorrow's episode of crime drama Endeavour (8pm, ITV), which features a cameo from Morse's creator Colin Dexter.

WHAT TO SEE The museum, designed as a 'Cathedral to Science' in the mid-19th century, houses an impressive collection of artefacts including a 40ft T. rex, the world's most complete remains of a dodo and a 33,000-year-old human skeleton. Open 10am-5pm; admission free. www.oum.ox.ac.uk.

HOW TO GET THERE Take the M40, then the A40; the museum is on Parks Road in the city centre. It's also a short taxi ride from Oxford railway station.

WHERE TO STAY The five-star Randolph hotel in the city centre has a state-of-the-art spa and The Morse Bar, in recognition of Oxford's most famous TV show. Rooms from £136 a night. www.smoothhound.co.uk.



The Caledonian Canal at Dochgarroch, near Inverness



Janet Street-Porter's WALK ON THE WILD SIDE

A stroll along a Scottish canal featuring fine forest and river views

Inverness makes a great base for walks and day trips. You can take a cruise along the Caledonian Canal – built by Scottish engineering legend Thomas Telford – to Loch Ness, but I walked the canal's first section to the locks at Dochgarroch, a good picnic spot. Started in 1803, the canal links the North Sea to the Atlantic coast near Fort William, connecting four lochs over 62 miles. It never made much of a profit because railways took over freight transport, but it's now a popular tourist attraction. This section runs alongside the River Ness

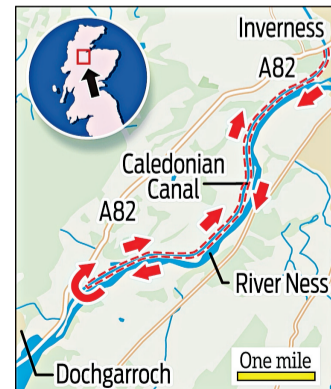
and the light on the two water courses is sensational. Take the towpath on the eastern bank of the canal by the bridge over the A82, opposite the Loch Ness cruise boarding point. You're walking through pleasant countryside with wooded hills to your right. After just over an hour, you reach pleasure boats moored at the locks. Cross over, returning on the opposite bank, which is a slightly rougher path. Where the main track veers left, keep on a smaller one following the bank until you reach your starting point.

WALK NAME A stroll along Thomas Telford's magnificent Caledonian Canal.

DISTANCE Out and back, a total of 7½ miles; allow 2½ hours.

HOW TO GET THERE Take the A82 to the west of Inverness and park where the road crosses the canal, or catch a bus from the city centre.

EATING AND DRINKING Oakwood Restaurant, on the main road just up from the lochs at Dochgarroch, serves delicious meals. Booking is essential at weekends: 01463 861 481. Bring your own bottle.



MAP: OS Explorer 416



ILLUSTRATION: DAVID SEMPLE, PHOTOGRAPHS: ALAMY

GET AWAY Travel to Amsterdam by first-class rail for a seven-night luxury tulip cruise. £1,399pp, www.planetrail.co.uk