

GETAWAYS

UK/IRELAND

■ THAMES BOATING:

Waterways (01252 339 023) offers seven nights' self-catering on Upper Thames narrowboat (sleeping six) from £1,055, saving £100, in May/June, with highlights on voyage downstream ex-Radcot incl Kelmscott Manor, Buscot House, Priory at Godstow, Cotswold and Wildlife Park.

■ YORKSHIRE DALES: Yorkshire Cottages (01228 406 701) offers converted weaver's cottage mid-terrace (one double, one single) on a cobbled lane at Barnoldswick for £240, saving £40, from May 7.

■ JERSEY: Modern Hotels (01534 735 511) offers two nights' B&B at Mayfair or Metropole in St Helier for £79, saving £20, on stays until May 6. Ferry crossings/flights extra.

■ GLASGOW: Best Western Eglinton Arms Hotel (0845 330 0120), a 19th century coaching inn outside city with 34 bedrooms, offers doubles for £40.50.

■ POWYS: Lake Vyrnwy Hotel & Spa (01691 870 692) offers three-night champagne picnic break (Sunday-Friday) until May 13 for £231, incl B&B, garden view room, five-course dinner on first two evenings, walking trail map activity discount vouchers and picnic.

■ SOUTH-WEST CORNWALL: Cornish Cottages Online (01326 240 333) offers three-bedroom

home sleeping six near village of Coverack for total £290, saving £94, from May 7, 14 or 21.

■ SCOTLAND WEST COAST:

Unique Cottages (01835 822 277) offers Hayfield Cottage, sleeping six, in extensive gardens with views across water near shore of Loch Sunart for £575, saving £120, from May 7 and 14.

MAY HALF-TERM

■ GASCONY: Gascony Secret (0844 800 1637) offers seven nights' self-catering in house on banks of Gers River sleeping up to eight from May 28 for £1,250, or £156 per person at full capacity (rental only).

■ CORNWALL: Carbis Bay Holidays (08000 122 241) offers seven nights' self-catering at 19th century converted barn for eight close to St Ives from May 27 for £1,300, or £163 each based on eight sharing.

■ ARTS & CRAFTS IN CUMBRIA: HF Holidays (0845 470 7558) offers seven nights' full-board at Monk Coniston Country House Hotel at Coniston Water from May 28 for £699 incl five full-day excursions, admission to places of interest and tour leader.

■ BARCELONA BREAK: Corona (01582 390 939) offers three nights' B&B at two-star hotel in city centre for 11th Primavera Sound Festival (May 25-29) for £318, ex-Stansted May 25.

Dip into the delights on your doorstep

With the teenagers away and on a last minute impulse, **Eamonn O'Neal** and his wife treated themselves to a short break in Newby Bridge

I took American tourists to remind us just how lucky we are to live in the north west of England. Sheila and I were taking afternoon tea on the banks of Windermere, sharing the lapping shore with a Canada goose and a mallard. Our bone china cups were gently clinking as we raised our little fingers and tried not to slurp.

At the next table, an American couple were marvelling at the very Englishness of the moment, after having travelled 4,000 miles specifically to see the famous Lake District.

We, on the other hand, had left home barely an hour earlier and, after a trouble free journey up the M6, had checked in at the Lakeside Hotel for the weekend. We really should not take this for granted.



➤ **TRAVELLERS RETREAT** The Lakeside Hotel on the southern tip of Lake Windermere boasts four AA stars

Situated on the southern tip of Lake Windermere, the privately owned Lakeside Hotel started life as a 17th century coaching Inn. It has grown elegantly over

the years and now boasts four AA stars. It clearly attracts visitors from around the world as well as those from closer to home who want a classic mini

break. Our American friends were delighted to learn of the hotel's history as a resting place for travellers working in the thriving cotton trade of Lancashire in the 1900s. Guests stayed here en route to their jobs in the local bobbin mills. Exactly the type of heritage that goes down well with overseas visitors.

The Lakeside has a number of contemporary claims to fame including being named Cumbria Tourism's Large Hotel of The Year and possibly even more impressively, Hotel Loo of the year five times running. Perhaps I should have taken more notice when I paid a visit.

Most of the 75 rooms have stunning views across the lake and fells and many have four-poster beds, sunken baths and jacuzzis. There are family rooms which can accommodate up to

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DUBLIN & AROUND BRITAIN 25th Sept 2011 **from £699**
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LATE LATE READERS OFFERS

Iberia

14 nights 29th April 2011

onboard P&O Ventura NO FLYING
Departs Southampton - Cruising - Seville (Cadiz) Spain -
Cruising - Barcelona Spain - Monte Carlo Monaco -
Florence/Pisa Livorno Italy - Rome Civitavecchia Italy -
Cruising - Gibraltar UK - Cruising - Southampton.

Inside £849pp
Oceanview £899pp
Balconies £1219pp

Spain, France & Dublin

7 nights 22nd May 2011

on Cunard Queen Victoria NO FLYING
Departs Southampton - Cruising - Dublin Ireland - Cork Ireland -
Cruising - Bilbao Spain - Breast France - Southampton.

Inside £549pp
Oceanview FULL
Balconies £699pp
Princess Grill £999pp
Queens Grill £1199pp

Belgium, Holland & France

7 nights 28th August

SUMMER BANK HOLIDAY

on Cunard Queen Elizabeth NO FLYING
Departs Southampton - Brussels/ Bruges/Zeebrugge
Belgium - Rotterdam Netherlands - Paris (Le Harve) France -
St Peters Port Guernsey - Southampton.

Inside £499pp
Oceanview £599pp
Balconies £699pp

Norway

7 nights 9th July 2011

Onboard Crown Princess NO FLYING

Southampton - Cruising - Stavanger Norway -
Olden Norway - Hellesylt Norway - Geiranger Norway -
Bergen Norway - Cruising - Southampton.

Inside £799pp
Oceanview £1099pp
Balconies £1139pp

Central Med

16 nights 5th June 2011

onboard P&O Oriana NO FLYING
Southampton - Cruising - Cadiz Spain - Corfu Greece -
Dubrovnik Croatia - Venice Italy - Ravenna Italy -
Kotor Montenegro - Malaga Spain - Cruising - Southampton.

Inside £1099pp
Oceanview £1399pp
Balconies £2499pp

Norway Fjords

7 nights 13th May 2011

onboard P&O Ventura NO FLYING

Southampton - Cruising - Bergen Norway -
Andalsnes Norway - Olden Norway - Stavanger Norway -
Cruising - Southampton.

Inside £549pp
Oceanview £699pp
Balconies £869pp

An optional coach is available on all of the above cruises

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▶▶ **LAKESIDE LUXURY** The stunning views over Wastwater. Inset top, the executive suite at the Lakeside Hotel and inset bottom, Dove Cottage where history comes alive and you can see where Wordsworth wrote much of his poetry

two adults and three children in a variety of configurations.

For a very special stay, the Lodge is a self-contained retreat a few steps away from the main hotel which offers luxurious suites, panoramic lounges and private saunas.

This is an ideal location as a base for Lake District exploration. So, after polishing off the clotted cream scones in the conservatory and waving goodbye to the Beatrix Potter bound Americans, Sheila and I took advantage of the good weather and set off to see the north shore towns. The Windermere steamers leave from within a few yards of the Lakeside Hotel although as the season had yet to officially begin, the boats were not available so we took the car.

Hugging the east side of the lake we travelled along a familiar

picturesque route and drove directly through bustling Bowness, heading for Grasmere.

Having once made a television programme about Wordsworth I was keen to revisit Dove Cottage. This is where Wordsworth wrote much of his great poetry and the cottage evokes images of him sitting by the fireside with his friends, pondering life before turning his thoughts into verse. Wordsworth described this part of the world as "the loveliest spot that man hath ever found"

Round the corner, starched pinafores and white bonnets are on show in what was the 17th century village school. Nowadays it houses the famous Grasmere Gingerbread shop and although tiny, it attracts a huge crowd. The costume adds a bit of romance and underpins the importance of history and tradi-

tional values to the local tourist industry.

At the head of Lake Windermere in what is now called Waterhead, there are extensive remains of a Roman fort, first built around 90AD and added to later by Hadrian. Roads led from here to Ravenglass on the west coast and north, through Troutbeck to Hadrian's wall itself. The Armit Museum is worth a visit to get chapter and verse on how the Roman settlements shaped the future of Ambleside

Back at the Lakeside, Sheila donned the fluffy white robe and sampled the impressive spa and pool while I sipped a cold glass of wine on the patio.

For dinner, we were shown into the Lakeview restaurant with its two AA Rosettes. The diners were a mixture of residents and locals, young and old

and all were impressed with the high calibre, attentive service. We enjoyed grilled mackerel and breast of pigeon followed by rump of lamb and pan fried sea bass.

With prices for the evening meal around £30 for two courses and coffee, the excellent haute-cuisine is good value.

The following morning we were woken by an unrelenting downpour. Over a full English breakfast we explained to our

disappointed American pals that this kind of weather is what makes England so beautifully green and lush. We persuaded them that the heavy rain should be celebrated and it would not spoil their stay.

Having said that we packed up and headed back down the M6. It was far too wet for us. Before the Americans had pulled on their waterproofs, we were safely back home in Manchester. It is only on the doorstep after all.

FACTFILE

Eamonn and Sheila stayed at The Lakeside Hotel, Newby Bridge. Tel: 01539 530001. Weekend Plus deals until 30 October 2011 are £290. Best value advanced rates (20 per cent discount) available on www.lakesidehotel.co.uk/advance For details on Dove Cottage visit www.wordsworth.org.uk/ For further details about the activities in Ambleside visit www.amblesideonline.co.uk The Armit Museum is on 015394 31212 or www.armitt.com

GETAWAYS

SHORT BREAKS

■ **DUBAI:** Virgin (0844 557 3870) offers three nights' B&B at five-star Hilton Ras Al Khaimah Resort & Spa from £579 ex-Heathrow May 11-25.

■ **WASHINGTON DC:** Virgin Holidays (0844 557 3870) offers three nights' room only at 4.5-star W Washington DC from £815, saving up to £110, ex-Heathrow by Virgin Atlantic June 24.

SHORT-HAUL SUN

■ **TURKEY:** Jewel in the Crown (01293 533 338) offers 14 nights' B&B at three-star hotel in Ovacik, near Oludeniz, ex-Manchester May 16, from £263, saving £131. Same operator offers seven nights' B&B at two-star hotel in Hisaronu from £197, saving £156, ex-Manchester May 2.

■ **ALGARVE:** Holiday Jewels (01293 533 338) offers seven nights' B&B at four-star hotel in Alvor for £305, ex-Luton May 21.

■ **TURKEY:** On the Beach (0871 911 0202) offers seven nights' all-inclusive at five-star Sea Life Resort Hotel, Antalya, from £307, ex-Manchester May 10.

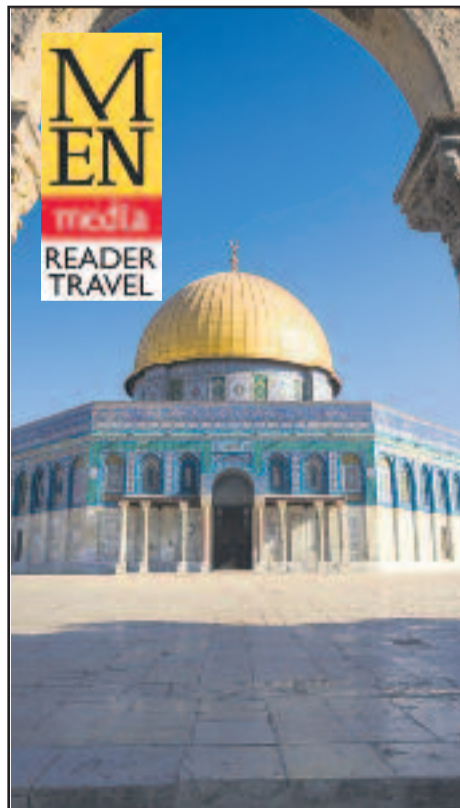
■ **MAJORCA:** On the Beach (0871 911 0202) offers seven nights' self-catering at three-star Sol Lunamar Hotel from £148, ex-Bristol May 14.

■ **KOS:** On the Beach (0871 911 0202) offers seven nights' all-inclusive at four-star Aquis Marine Resort & Waterpark from £348, ex-Glasgow May 12.

■ **KEFALONIA:** Cosmos (0844 573 4261) offers seven nights' self-catering at four-bedroom villa in old Skala for £195 (two sharing), ex-Gatwick May 22.

■ **CORFU:** Club 18-30 (0844 800 7038) offers seven nights' room-only in Kavos from £179, ex-Gatwick May 30.

■ **CYPRUS:** Club 18-30 (0844 800 7038) offers seven nights' self-catering at two-star apartments in Ayia Napa from £214, ex-Manchester June 8.



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