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CLASSIC CORNWALL

Bedruthan Steps Hotel & Spa (01637 860 860) in North Cornwall offers reduced price of £260 per night (dinner, B&B) for two adults and up to two children (aged 2-11) on dinner from April 4-18. Guests can use hotel leisure facilities or join free activities incl Easter Egg hunt, food-foraging walks, dancing lessons and others.



DIVINE DEVON

Woolacombe Bay Holiday Parks (01271 870 343) offers three-night break from April 10 for £105 (total price for family of four) and same price for four nights from April 13. Accom in fully-equipped two-bedroom caravan holiday homes with extensive on-site facilities.



GORGEOUS GUERNSEY

Channel Islands Direct (08444 937 486) offers three nights' B&B at four-star Ferran Valley Hotel, five mins drive from St Peter Port, for £259, saving £81, until April 30, incl flights ex-Gatwick and other reg fees.

BY KEN BENNETT
Travel Correspondent
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‘EXCUSE I’m a little late,’ she says with a disarming frankness.

“I’ve been mucking out the horses with the children.”
Not your average aristo, our Emma. Very much a smiling, highly industrious hands on girl.
We are taking lunch of sublime pheasant and lordly sticky toffee pudding at Belvoir Castle, the wonderful cocoon she shares with husband, their four children and a heritage stretching back a thousand years.

From the noble heights of Belvoir – its French for beautiful view and they pronounce it Beaver here – you could, at one time, look out 38 miles in any direction and you’d still be viewing the Rutland estate.
We had arrived in gentle, unharried style by coach, toddling over the border from Lincolnshire which was our base for a three-day visit to appropriately-titled Hidden England.

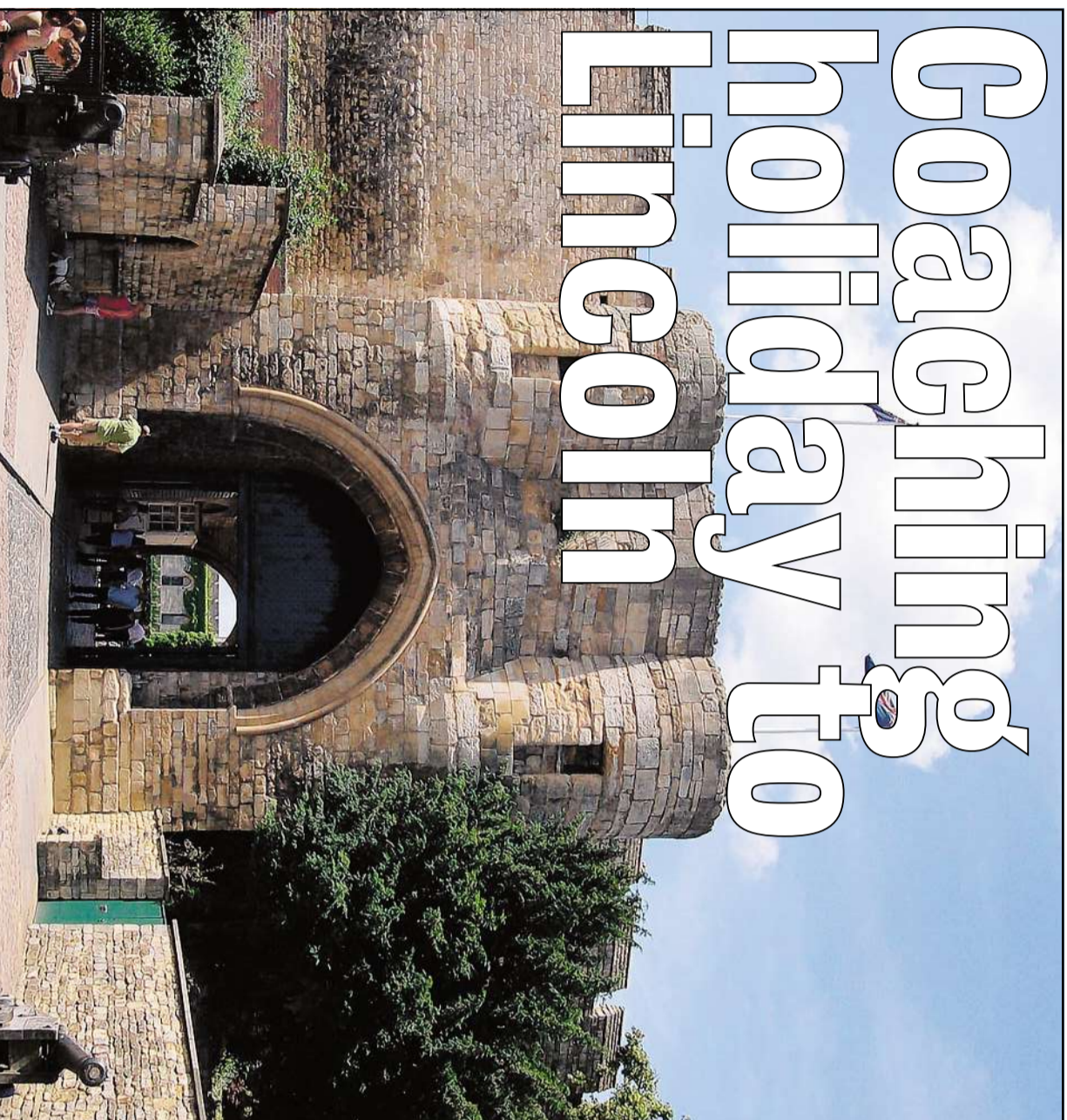
Coaches here are the new train – restful havens where you chat to fellow travellers over a cup of coffee, safe in the knowledge the cavern-sized boot has more than enough room for any amount of luggage.

Lincolnshire itself is one of those truly marvellous English counties just aching to be discovered.
And, despite being at the heart of Britain’s non-smoothed Highlands folded neatly at the side of the A1, the untrammeled miles of beautifully manicured fields hold rare secrets.
There are picture-postcard, honey-stoned villages oozing history alongside their pots of tanny homemade chutneys. Twinkling pristine towns to spend a dreamy afternoon musing over tea and crumpets.

Then, of course, there are legendary pubs, hotels and castles – just like Beaver – where you luxuriate in cosy rooms and immerse yourself in fine dining with a distinctly exclusive local flavour.
Because, alongside its burgeoning heritage, Lincoln’s far county is all about food – and lots of it.

It produces one-fifth of the nation’s needs and hosts the area’s distinctly different tastes of Lincoln Red beef, stuffed chine, plumbread, Lincolnshire sausages, Lincolnshire Poacher cheese, fresh ostrich and an extraordinary selection of fresh vegetables.

Goaaching to Lincoln Holiday



■ **FORTRESS:** The remains of Lincoln Castle is home to one of the four surviving copies of Magna Carta.

Home in on Lincoln itself and you’ll find an enthralling, hiply walkable destination city steeped in English heritage and vibrant modern waterfront. The imposing gothic Cathedral – one of the three largest in Britain – takes centre stage and featured in the Da Vinci Code. And the remains of Lincoln Castle, built by William the Conqueror, are home to one of the four surviving copies of Magna Carta.

There are events to tempt visitors most of the year with winter dominated by the legendary Christmas Market – a bewitching but well-orchestrated shopping celebration. Alternatively, glide to the land of pies, just a crust’s crimp away in Melton Mowbray across the border into Leicestershire.

Here you can feast your eyes on castles of another kind – grant, contented, hand raised pork pies with a sublime melt in the mouth taste. With exquisite ease, master pie maker, Stephen Hallam produces a round beauty you simply want to nurture rather than eat at a demonstration at Dickinson & Morris’ Ye Old Pie Shoppe, the oldest pork pie bakery in the town.

Back in Lincolnshire, The Olde Barn Hotel in Grantham in features taps of natural surroundings.

Camping holidays are growing in popularity

THE cost of a family holiday in Britain could get even lower after one of the leading camping holiday firms has announced it will offer camping holidays in the UK this summer for the first time in 15 years.

Eurocamp UK Escapes – part of short break specialist Holidaybreak which also owns Superbreak, is offering a selection of pre-erected fully equipped tent accommodation with beds, bed linen and kitchen area with four-burner hob along with crockery and utensils on nine sites in the Lake District, Snowdonia, Yorkshire, Scotland and South-West England.

The new programme is in partnership with The National Trust and Forest Holidays – operating

entirely within the Forestry Commission Estate.

Eurocamp dropped UK camping holidays in 1994 citing lack of demand. Now it clearly sees a market for keen campers scared off Europe by high living costs and as a direct sell operator will sell UK holidays through a call centre rather than High Street travel agents.

Outdoor activities available with the Eurocamp holidays include hill walking, fishing, bird watching and canoeing. Forest Rangers will share knowledge of survival skills like safe fire-making, animal tracking and shelter building.

Eurocamp’s Chris Hilton says they are rediscovering the emotional benefits of the outdoors, wildlife and



■ **SCENERY:** enjoy the Lake District



■ **LOVELY LINCOLN:** Bailgate (above) and the stunning cathedral

Travel FACTS

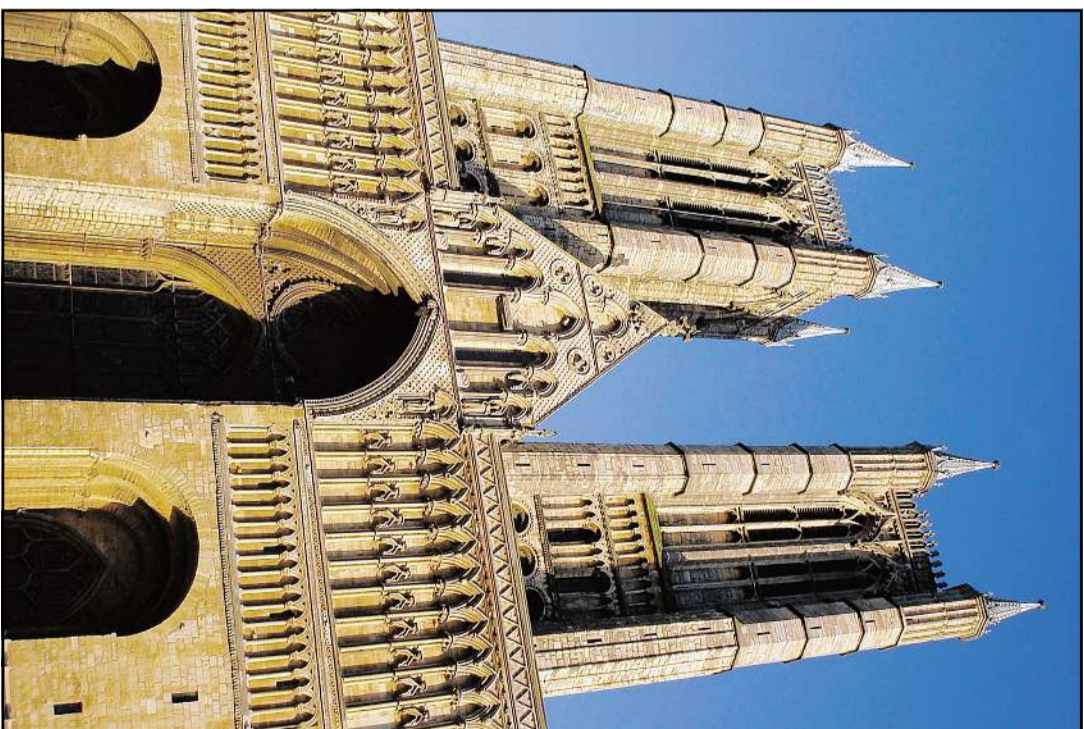
the local kind – fish balls, red beef faggots and curried roast partridges. Different, but tasty, and the toasted plum bread, apple and cream for a memorable dessert.

That set us up for a guided walk through Stamford, a lovely old town that won favour with Sir Walter Scott and, more recently, featured in Pride and Prejudice, starring Keira Knightley.

Ken Bennett travelled to England’s East Midlands as a guest of the Coach Tourism Council. The council promotes excursions, short breaks and holidays by coach on behalf of 150 coach tour operators who offer departures across the UK.

Visit www.coachtourismcouncil.co.uk to find a national or regional operator. Many operators feature tours to the region, combining a seaside break at Skegness.

He stayed at The Ramada, Grantham, just off the A1 which offers a choice of 89 en-suite bedrooms. Phone 01476 593000 or www.ramadagrantham.co.uk



Get a taste of the Highlands

BY ALISON KERSHAW
Travel Correspondent

YOU can almost taste the whisky in the air in the Scottish Highlands. This is probably because you’re never far from a distillery – especially in the region of Speyside which boasts over 50 estates dotted around the River Spey. For this small, lesser known corner of Scotland, whisky making is a serious business and one of the main industries in the area.

Which is why it was the ideal place to start a weekend tour of the finest distilleries Scotland has to offer. We based ourselves at the Craighellachie Hotel near Aberour halfway between Aberdeen and Inverness. Darning back to 1893, this cosy bed and breakfast is home to one of the finest whisky bars in the world and as we discovered, there is nothing the barenders can’t produce.

From here it’s a short distance to some of the most famous estates, such as Glenlivet and Glenfiddich. To be called Scotch whisky the drink must be aged for at least three years and a day before it can be bottled and sold.

At Glen Grant, whisky is aged for 10 years or more. Glen Grant is just one of the many distilleries open to the public at various times throughout the year. How many you can visit in the space of a day or weekend depends on your mode of transport and how much you intend to indulge at each one.

But the whisky trail isn’t just about having a “wee dram” – although it undoubtedly forms a large part of the experience. For those less inclined towards taking a “nip” or even those in need of reviving after one too many, the smugglers’ trails up at the Glenlivet Estate provide a welcome diversion.

Each of the signposted walks, (which vary in length) takes you across the hills and valleys, following in the footsteps of the whisky pioneers who illegally made and sold the stuff back in the 18th century away from the prying eyes of customs and excise.

Alison Kershaw’s visit to Scotland was arranged by Visit Scotland 0845 2255 121/www.visitscotland.com



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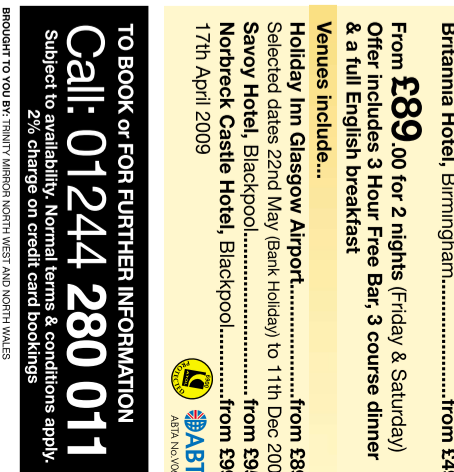
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