



Enjoy being great Scot in grand house



Scotland is a land of many delights for the tourist. For city lovers Edinburgh and Glasgow offer a wealth from the arts to history, entertainment and great eateries from traditional fayre through to Michelin-starred. Then there the Highlands and Islands which are simply stunning. And the Borders, an area that many just pass through or one which does not appear on the radar. And that's a pity because the Borders also have so much to offer. A great coastline, rolling countryside, delightful towns and villages and so much history.

There are many lovely places to stay and none more so than Cringletie House, just a short distance out of the historic town of Peebles.

Cringletie has substantial grounds with 28 acres of beautiful gardens and woodlands for hotel guests to enjoy along with their pooches as the hotel is very pet-friendly even giving your dog a present when you leave. That was much appreciated by hound Jack who relished his treats when we returned home, as well as enjoying his forays in the grounds.

The hotel is warm and welcoming, as are the staff, rather like going to stay in a wealthy friend's house. There's an impressive staircase reaching out of the hall to the other floors, although there is a lift too. We had a room on the second floor, with views across the grounds to the front, and every amenity, including a small decanter of single malt whisky! The king size bed was extremely comfortable and the linen top quality. Down some steps and we had a dressing area with wardrobes and on to the large bathroom with a fabulous shower and free standing roll-top bath along with quality toiletries, large fluffy towels and robes.

There's a small bar and a larger bar where bar lunches are served in an impressive dining room. There are views out over the grounds from most tables and, very important for me, plenty of space between them. This is a place for fine dining and I really don't want to be squashed in listening to conversations close by.

The seasonal menu shows all that is good about produce in the Scottish borders and the chef works closely with local suppliers. There's plenty to see and do in the area, from walks to suit all abilities, to fabulous gardens and castles. Peebles itself is well worth a day meandering around.

The hotel itself can organise experiences inside and outside from Scottish cocktail making, learning about whisky to kilt making, and Alpaca treks to learning the art of fly fishing.

● **Cringletie House, Peebles, Scotland. Call 01721 725750 or visit www.cringletie.com**

Sharon Walters



Venice down to a fine art

VENICE

By Sarah Marshall

Eyes greedily fixed on leftovers from the night before, seagulls swoop along narrow, brick-walled canals, their wings casting monstrous shadows as dawn begins to break.

Reflected in the water, golden prows of gondolas look doubly resplendent and a gentle glow illuminates halos crowning marble saints bowing from church facades. Along Fondamente Nove, two artists peer from behind their easels, working with swift brushstrokes to capture waves lapping wooden bricole and racing to beat the sun's syrupy ascent above gravestones on Poveglia, an island of the dead.

For centuries, writers and painters have been captivated by Venice. Grandiose art, elaborate architecture and seductive courtesans have all contributed to its allure. But above all, it's the light that makes this floating city so special – a quality shining just as brightly as it did during the Renaissance centuries ago.

All of the grand masters who lived in this history-strewn labyrinth, only one can be called a true son of the city, starting and finishing his life in this network of 118 islands erected on wood pilings in the Adriatic Sea. And with celebrations for the 500th anniversary of his birth starting this month – and continuing into 2019, Jacopo 'Tintoretto' Robusti should receive the mainstream international attention he deserves.

"We're certain of very little about the artist's personal life," explains Paola Marini, director of the Accademia Gallery, as we walk through new exhibition *Il Giovane Tintoretto*, a project linked with a second display of works in the Doge's Palace focusing on his later years. But she hopes the new shows will communicate his 'modernity, mental freedom and use of light'.

Not since 1937 has Venice hosted a solo exhibition on Tintoretto, and there have been only a handful of monographic displays around the world – largely due to the challenge of transporting his expansive canvases, which measure up to 22 metres wide.

The son of a dyer, he grew up in an environment dominated by Titian, Raphael and Michelangelo. Muscular figures in oversized proportions float, fight and prostrate in his paintings – a style clearly inspired by Michelangelo's revered Florentine sculpture, David.

Bursting with energy and movement, many of Tintoretto's epic narratives are snapshots, and his use of what would now be described as cinematic techniques – such as reflections and symmetry – prompted French



The miracle Of The Slave by Tintoretto

What a view – the canals in Cannaregio at sunset

philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre to call him the 'first film director of our time'.

"This is an artist who invites you to jump inside the painting," enthuses Marini, citing *Miracle of the Slave*, Tintoretto's breakthrough work and a highlight of the show, as the perfect example. "He was completely involved. No day of his life was spent without painting."

This second exhibition, *Tintoretto 1519-1594*, features many portraits, including a self-study showing the 77-year-old man with hollowed cheeks and heavy eyes, described by Manet as one of the most beautiful portraits in the world. It also illustrates the artist's mastery of light and shade, a technique way ahead of its time.

"Tintoretto wasn't really bothered with colours," explains museum guide Giulia Pasdera. "He preferred to have a workshop without windows and would move a candle around a tableau of small sculptures to study the effects of light."

Dedicated, determined and prolific, his works appear in more than 25 churches and confraternities. The grandest of all found can be found in the Scuola Grande di San Rocco, dubbed the Sistine Chapel of Venice thanks to its neck-cracking ceiling of monumental biblical scenes.

Although guided by religion, Tintoretto was hugely inspired by his city. Elbowing my ways past cruise ship crowds and overloaded gondolas, I'm keen to find where that magic exists today. It's true Venice is suffering the

blight of overtourism; traditional bacari (taverns) are closing, out-priced Venetians are leaving, and the world's greatest al fresco museum is at risk of becoming a relic – a shell without any soul.

But away from the honeypots of St Mark's Square and Rialto Bridge, there are quiet canals, campos, and calles – most notably in the sestiere of Cannaregio. Arching protectively over the top of the city, where sea water washes long promenade Fondamente Nove, this humble residential district was Tintoretto's home.

In recent years, bohemian bars and restaurants have opened along Fondamenta della Misericordia, which turns into an impromptu street party on a summery Saturday

night. Ordering a glass of velvet-red barolo and a plate of codfish and meatball cicchetti (the Venetian equivalent of tapas) from *Vino Vero*, I sit cross-legged along the canal and listen to chatter clipped and sliced by the distinctive razor-edged Venetian dialect. One of the most exciting additions to the area is *Hotel Heureka*, which opened in a renovated 16th century house in October 2017. A passion project funded by an Austrian couple who fell in love with the city, it's a paean, featuring just 10 rooms in a space that could easily host twice as much.

A blend of old-meets-new interiors is brazenly eclectic but seamlessly stylish all the same. Heavy brocade curtains by Venetian family-owned company Rubelli drape



Enjoy a piece of luxury – the lobby at Hotel Heureka



The church of Madonna dell'Orto



The Merchant Of Venice boutique

windows as if they were a theatre stage, and flouncy Murano glass chandeliers twinkle above whimsical wall panels by Christian Lacroix. An act of architectural genius, one bedroom features a bathroom in a cube behind the bed, with shower, sinks and toilet separately occupying each wall. The pièce de résistance is a garden filled with sprawling olive trees and an ancient well – a rarity in Venice where green spaces are usually locked away.

Located a few doors down from Tintoretto's parish church and burial place *Madonna dell'Orto*, Heureka's links with the artist are obvious. But aside from physical connections, there's also evidence of a shared spirit in a desire to celebrate beauty and break away from the norm.

Close by, on *Fondamenta del Mori*, a plaque recognises the house Tintoretto purchased in 1574 and a neighbouring stamperia rumoured to have once been his atelier. I'm struck by the notion that centuries ago, these windows would have opened onto the same view of tethered row boats and humped bridges; although far from being static, some things in Venice never change.

Because beyond the wild brushstrokes decorating apses and altars, Tintoretto's inspiration still ripples through watery reflections and lingers in shadows cast by candyfloss sunsets. Get lost and take a wrong turning. You'll probably find it there.

THREE MORE WAYS TO SAMPLE TINTORETTO IN VENICE

Eat. . . at Vecio Fritolin. A cavernous restaurant in the belly of Santa Croce, with original 18th century features. Albanian chef Najada Frasherri modernises Venetian classics, and attentive owner Irina insists on democratic prices for dishes worthy of high praise. A set three-course lunch menu costs €38. Visit veciofritolin.it

Drink. . . at Paradiso Perduto Where off-kilter artists have dined at communal tables and listened to jazz for 20 years. If there's no space inside, order a paper plate of fried fish and sit on the pavement. Visit ilparadisoperduto.wordpress.com

Shop. . . at The Merchant Of Venice A family-run perfumery with flagship stores in former apothecaries in San Marco and Cannaregio. Inspired by the former Republic's trading prowess, scents are created using ingredients from international destinations once connected to the city. Visit themerchantofvenice.it

HOW TO GET THERE

● **Hotel Heureka** offers a Venice With Tintoretto package from €740 (£660), including two nights in a Junior Suite with breakfast, two tickets for the Tintoretto exhibition at the Doge's Palace and two tickets to visit the Church of *Madonna dell'Orto*. Available until December 21. Visit hotel-heureka.com.

● **Gilda Zaffagnini** from Nexa Events & Travel Designers organise visits to the two Tintoretto exhibitions (running until January 6, 2019) and other sites connected to the artist. Visit nexasave.org

Travel wise buys

WHAT IS IT? LifeProof FRE Case, £54.95, www.amazon.co.uk

HOW USEFUL IS IT?

When traversing deserts or climbing mountains, it's always a worry that our phones may sustain damage.

But with the LifeProof FRE phone case, this worry can be made a thing of the past. It features a built-in screen cover that's so discreet you barely notice it's there – until you're glad it is. Equipped with an AR-coated optical glass lens, FRE transforms your device into an on-the-go action cam. The front-facing camera stays exposed for victory selfies, and the back camera is protected to ensure that every shot comes out crisp.

Every case is engineered with the Sound Enhancement System that amplifies your built-in speaker, while also giving you full access to your charging port, headphone jack and all other controls.

This case is available for a variety of different phone models, and is certainly worth the hefty price tag. Never worry about your adventure impacting your phone's lifespan again with this rock solid case built to withstand the elements.



A lab-our of love for lodge

Ecuador's Mashpi Lodge has launched a range of new conservation projects. A year since launching their on-site lab and having recently attached cameras to the forest canopy, guests at Mashpi Lodge can now visit the newly opened Entomological Museum and Exhibition of Insects.

Located in the on-site laboratory and curated in collaboration with the Florida Museum of Natural History, the exhibition displays scientific information on 150 species of local insects and provides guests with an introduction to what they may be able to spot on their explorations in the forest. The team at Mashpi, in collaboration with various national and international NGOs, are also in the early stage of creating a 'conservation corridor' to connect the reserve with the Cotacachi-Cayapas National Park. For more information and to book, visit www.mashpilodge.com



Sunny autumn

Make Summer last with a visit to Mexico's Pacific Coast.

Autumn is an ideal time to visit Puerto Vallarta: the sun continues to shine, yet the temperature begins to fall and the rains are on their way out. Autumn is also a vibrant time filled with celebrations and festivals, including the Day of the Dead.

From late October, the streets come alive with the tradition of remembrance. More beautiful than haunting, colourful processions overflow with mariachi bands, sombreros and plenty of skeletons. Besides the festivities, releasing sea turtles is well worth a visit to Mexico's Pacific Coast all the way through to November. Six of the world's seven species of sea turtles arrive here to lay their eggs, and you can be a part of their journey back into the sea. For information and to book, visit www.visitpuertovallarta.com.



Oh deer! Don't get stuck in a seasonal rut

Deep in our forests, the seasons are changing, signalled by shorter days, carpets of crimson leaves and the unmistakable clatter of horns, locked in battle.

The deer rut is a sight – and sound – to behold, as testosterone-fuelled stags vie with one another to impress their females, and it's starting to happen right now. There are three key species of deer found in the UK – Red, Fallow and Sika – and they all rut in the autumn. Although activity is typically most intense after dawn and best observed from a safe distance, witness the spectacle first-hand at one of these spots.

1. BEINN EIGHE, SCOTTISH HIGHLANDS

Watch rutting stags battle in this 10,000-acre National Nature Reserve, where hills are ablaze with colour throughout October. All three main species of deer can all be viewed against a mountainous backdrop. The Torridon Resort offers a mixture of luxury and more

LUXURY GETAWAY

economical inn accommodation. Rooms at the inn from £70 per person per night; rooms at the hotel from £132 per person per night. Prices based on two sharing and inclusive of breakfast. Visit thetorridon.com or call 01445 791 242.

2. HOLKHAM ESTATE, NORFOLK

A privately-owned estate covering 25,000 acres, Holkham has its own deer park a short distance from the coast. Ideal for families, a seasonal tractor trailer Deer Safari allows smaller visitors to watch the herd from close range. It's possible to stay on site at The Victoria Inn, where dogs are also welcome. Tickets for the

Deer Safari cost £5 per adult and £2.50 per child. Rooms at The Victoria Inn from £130, including breakfast. Visit holkham.co.uk

3. LOCH NESS, SCOTLAND

Red deer are spotted by walkers in the hills and forests surrounding Fort Augustus on the southern shores of Loch Ness. The Suidhe Viewpoint, which is a 10-minute drive away, is recommended for photographers wanting to capture both the deer and impressive views of the landscape. Rooms from £100 per night, with breakfast. Visit thelovat.com

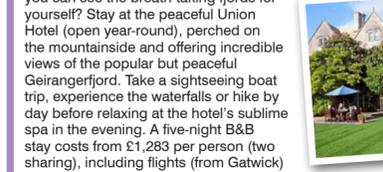
4. EXMOOR NATIONAL PARK, DEVON

One of the safest ways to observe the rut is from a vehicle, although it's better to join an organised tour. Red Stag Safari offer trips in 4x4s across Exmoor. Half-day safaris cost from £38 per person. Visit redstagsafari.co.uk



Chill out

The rugged terrain, snow-capped mountains and deep blue waters of the spectacular Norwegian fjords made the perfect setting for new Netflix supernatural romance, *The Innocents*. But why binge-watch when you can see the breath-taking fjords for yourself? Stay at the peaceful Fjord Hotel (open year-round), perched on the mountainside and offering incredible views of the popular but peaceful Geirangerfjord. Take a sightseeing boat trip, experience the waterfalls or hike by day before relaxing at the hotel's sublime spa in the evening. A five-night B&B stay costs from £1,283 per person (two sharing), including flights (from Gatwick) and car hire. Visit www.sunvil.co.uk or call 020 8758 4722.



Comfy Cotswolds

Enjoy a lavish stay at The Greenway, a 16th century Elizabethan manor house, set in rolling countryside near Cheltenham. Relax in the hotel's Elan Spa, which features stylish treatment rooms, a relaxing hydrotherapy pool and an al fresco hot tub, creating an oasis of

LATE DEALS

tranquility which is continued in each of the hotel's beautifully-designed rooms and eight acres of grounds. A one-night stay costs from £180 per person (two sharing) including full English breakfast, three-course dinner, 55-minute ESPA spa treatment per person and full use of the spa facilities. Valid Sunday to Thursday; check-in from noon. Visit www.thegreenwayhotellandspa.com or call 01242 862352.

Stay at Glenapp Castle, a luxury five-star hotel in Ayrshire overlooking the volcanic outcrop of Ailsa Craig, and enjoy a complimentary three-course dinner. Considered one of Scotland's finest dining experiences, the daily changing menu features locally-sourced ingredients from nearby farms, home-grown produce from

the kitchen garden and the freshest Scottish seafood. Activities range from star-gazing, falconry and Quoits to croquet and tennis. An overnight stay costs from £380 total/£190 per person (two sharing), including breakfast and a three-course dinner. Available September 25-30 and selected dates in October/quote 'Dine on us'. Visit www.prideofbritainhotels.com or call 0800 089 3929.

Silk Road stunner

ITV's latest travelogue, Joanna Lumley's *Silk Road Adventure* is the inspiration for this exotic trip of a lifetime. Take your own Silk Road odyssey across Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan by private train on this 13-night escorted tour. Visit the imposing Zenkov Russian Orthodox Cathedral in Almaty, enjoy lunch in a traditional Kazakh yurt, discover Timurid architecture in Turkestan, watch a local dance performance in Bukhara, plus more. Departing March 28 to October 3, 2019, Silk Road Express costs from £5,295 per person (two sharing) including flights (from Heathrow), accommodation, all meals, excursions, UK Tour Manager and the services of guides and local reps. Visit www.vjv.com or call 020 3553 3722.

