

● THE political landscape has changed in Zimbabwe and the country is now being lauded as one of the go-to destinations for 2018.

If you want to check it out then try Africa Albida Tourism (AAT).

The leading Southern African hotel and lodge operator offers a range of accommodation options in Zimbabwe, including Victoria Falls Safari Club, *pictured*. In

between daily morning and evening game drives, unwind at the Safari Health and Beauty Spa, soak up the sunset from your private balcony, enjoy a dip in the swimming pool or sip a sundowner at the bar while looking out over the Zambezi National Park.

Rooms are from £184pp per night B&B. For more information check out africaalbidatourism.com



● JERUSALEM is set to welcome the Giro d'Italia bike race next month — making it the first Grand Tour to begin outside Europe.

The route combines intense athletic endurance with striking natural scenery.

The May 4 stage will showcase Jerusalem's highlights, guiding riders past the Knesset (parliament) and the historic old city walls.

There will be three stages in Israel, including a 167km sprint from Haifa to Tel Aviv and the 229km ride from the city of Be'ersheva to the resort town of Eilat on the Red Sea.

The 21-day race then moves to Catania in southern Sicily on its way to the penultimate stage in Rome on May 27.

See giroditalia.it/eng and itraveljerusalem.com

Planet Heather

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5 PAGES OF HOLS WITH SCOTTISH SUN TRAVEL EDITOR HEATHER LOWRIE



PIER WE GO . . . Lynn loved the views, her stunning stay at the Pierhouse, left and centre, and Castle Stalker

Fun Appins all the time in Argyll

RETREAT IS PERFECT FOR WILING AWAY TIME

IN this busy, modern world there is nothing like going off the grid.

And for me there's no nicer place to do this than on our very own doorstep.

My husband and I decided to escape the madness of city life for a couple of days and headed to Port Appin, in Argyll.

The first lovely thing about this location is the drive to get there, which takes you through Tyndrum then right across Glen Coe.

I am not a fan of driving — but this journey could even convert a petrol-phobe like me.

We stopped several times to take in the breath-taking views and take photos, with every twist in the road revealing another majestic peak or herd of beautiful deer.

After the windy journey, we finally arrived at The Pierhouse Hotel, which is perched right on the banks of Loch Linnhe.

And the next lovely thing about the break became immediately apparent — there is zero mobile phone signal and only a trickle of internet. Bliss. We got checked into

GO: PORT APPIN

STAYING THERE: A mid-week (Sunday to Thursday) stay for two in a double room, with king-size bed, en suite shower room and full Scottish breakfast, costs from £125 per night during April, which is a 40 per cent saving. May breaks start at £160 per room per night. See pierhouse-hotel.co.uk/stay/book-your-stay/breaks

our beautiful room, which was cliff-facing with an extra little treat — bird feeders right outside the window.

We spent a good hour watching little blue tits helping themselves to nuts rather than watching the telly.

Our room was also next door to the hotel's sauna, which is free for guests to use.

We had a lovely heat up before heading to the bar for dinner on the night we arrived.

I opted for the starter portion of langoustine which, along with some chips, was more than enough for a delicious dinner, while Ryan chose the Highland game pie with tender pieces of pheasant, venison and beef

in a rich red wine gravy. Full tummies and our earlier sauna meant a top night's sleep — and this was followed by a fantastic brekkie with an equally lovely view over the water.

To work off our eggs and black pudding, we decided to head out to explore the area. What started as a wander turned into a six-mile trek — because there was just so much to see. A couple of miles from the hotel is Castle Stalker, a private keep set in the water on Loch Laich, an inlet off Loch Linnhe.

The castle is open for private tours from this month, but it's also just beautiful to view it from the shore. Around the castle, there are tidal marshes with a beautiful wooden crossing — Jubilee Bridge — stretching across it.

The marshes are the perfect spot for nature watching, with lots of creatures and birds making it their home. We caught sight of a couple of statuesque herons and I'm sure I heard the tell-tale plop of a water vole too.

After the long trek back to base — and another relaxing sauna — we were booked into the restaurant for dinner. The meal was fantastic — fine

dining style food with a laid-back atmosphere.

I started with the moreish lobster tortellini with smooth artichoke puree and crunchy vegetable crisps and for my main I opted for the meaty fillet of monkfish with smoky chorizo and cannelloni beans with a saffron cream. It was a sensational seafood feast.

My husband started events with a crispy parcel of confit duck, bound in golden breadcrumbs and served with roasted hazelnuts and a sharp pear salad, and couldn't resist the same monkfish main as I had.

We ended the evening with a coffee and truffles in the lounge in front of a roaring fire.

After another hearty breakfast we headed back on the road for the return leg of our gorgeous drive through Glen Coe and, unfortunately, back to the land of phone signal.

The Pierhouse really is a little bit of paradise for lovers of picture-perfect views, peace and quiet — and fantastic Scottish fare.

And the fact you can't be bothered by anyone while you're there is the icing on the cake.

LYNN KERNAN

hot spot IT'S 21°C IN SPAIN — a week at the 5★ Precise Resort El Rompido's The Hotel in Costa de la Luz is from £380pp with easyJet Holidays. Room-only with flights from Edinburgh on June 7. See easyjet.com/holidays or call 020 3499 5232.

hot spot IT'S 20°C IN LANZAROTE — seven nights at the 4★ Seaside Los Jameos Playa in Playa de los Pocillos is from £648pp with Jet2 Holidays. The price is based on B&B with flights from Glasgow on June 6. See jet2holidays.com or call 0800 408 5594.

RIVER DEEP, MOUNTAIN HIGH: The cosy self-catering Rivercatcher Log Cabins on the edge of the Snowdonia National Park in North Wales feature hot tubs and sleep two. A three-night short break costs from £365. See rivercatcher.co.uk or call 01490 440 498.

THE LAKE OF LOVE: Five nights' B&B at the 3★ Hotel San Fillis in Lake Garda, Italy, is from £596pp, leaving Edinburgh on June 1. See prestige-holidays.co.uk or call 01425 480 400.

WHAT A VIEW IN CORFU: A week all-inclusive at the 4★ LUX ME Daphnia Bay Dassia in Corfu is from £1,587pp, leaving Glasgow on June 10. See planet-holidays.co.uk or call 01438 841 270.

GO WITH THE FLO IN FLORIDA: Seven nights' room only at the 4★ Hilton Orlando Bonnet Creek in Florida is from £875pp, leaving Edinburgh on April 24. See traveltrolley.co.uk or call on 0208 843 4400.

THE MOOR THE MERRIER: Daisy Cottage in Northallerton, close to the North York Moors National Park, sleeps four and costs from £309 for three nights arriving May 4. See cottages.com or call 0345 498 6900.

FRENCH FANCY: A week self-catering in a studio apartment at Le Palais des Gouverneurs in Il de Re, France, is from £631 for two arriving August 25. Flights not included. See pierre-eva-cances.co.uk or call 0870 0267 145.

UP THE ZANTE: Seven nights' self-catering at the 3★ Ionnis & Danny's in Alykanas, Zante, is from £187pp, leaving Glasgow on May 14. See barrhead-travel.co.uk or call 0141 222 2223.

GINGER CHEER: Hole up in a mini gingerbread house at Mallory Meadows in Leicestershire. Sleeps two and costs from £238 for two nights, arriving April 30. See hoseasons.co.uk or 0345 498 6130.

AZUR WAY TO GO GREEN: A week self-catering in a three-bedroom Rossini mobile home at Green Park at Cagnes-sur-Mer in the Cote d'Azur, France, is from £192.50. Book by April 26 for stays in May. See alfresco-holidays.com or call 0161 332 8900.

EMPIRE STATE: Three nights at the 5★ Barceló Emperatriz in Madrid is from £397pp, leaving Edinburgh on May 24. See eDreams.co.uk or call 0871 2777 724.