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## Western Morning News

# Scotland is Ryd-ing the crest of a wave



Riders in the Commonwealth Games



the five-star Mains of Taymouth in Kenmore ([www.taymouth.co.uk](http://www.taymouth.co.uk)).

Set in more than 160 private acres of forests, river walks and scenic views over Loch Tay, this stunning self-catering estate, which is home to the Menzies family, is the perfect base from which to explore Perthshire.

Mains of Taymouth also has its own golf course, which is widely considered one of central Scotland's finest nine-hole courses.

Although it is unlikely that Gleneagles will be hosting the Ryder Cup

again in my lifetime, this trip to Scotland ensured that I will heed the advice of the Big Tree Country locals and 'Haste Ye Back'.

■ For more information on holidays in Scotland go to [www.visitscotland.com](http://www.visitscotland.com)

■ CrossCountry Trains is the largest rail network in Great Britain covering three nations and over 100 stations from Aberdeen to Penzance, Cardiff to Stansted and Manchester to Bournemouth. [www.crosscountrytrains.co.uk](http://www.crosscountrytrains.co.uk)

by Richard Jones

It has been a great year for tourism in Scotland. Before the 40th Ryder Cup arrived in Perthshire, Glasgow hosted the 'best-ever' Commonwealth Games, there were a record-breaking number of visitors at the Edinburgh Festival and Fringe, and the referendum in September had everyone considering Scotland's role both as part of the UK and on a global level.

Visit Scotland's advertising campaign promises that 'One moment you'll be watching the stars, the next you'll be looking up at them'.

Indeed, The Year of Homecoming will go down in history as a landmark one for Scots, as the eyes of the world turned to the country and prompted visitor numbers to go through the roof.

Europe retained the Ryder Cup and Gleneagles did itself proud hosting golf's premier team event, as players were cheered on by a passionate 40,000-plus crowd each day, against

the stunning backdrop of the Ochil Hills.

And yet Scotland has so much more to offer than high end golf, as I was to discover. A couple of days before Paul McGinley's men were splashing out of bunkers and sinking putts to win their third straight Ryder Cup, my friend and I were doing some splashing and sinking of our own just down the road on the shores of Kenmore.

Stand-up paddling is one of the fastest growing leisure activities in the UK and we were fortunate enough to have a lesson with Barry Wallace from Wilderness SUP on the stunningly beautiful Loch Tay.

Aside from SUP and golf, there is plenty of adventure to be had in Perthshire or 'Big Tree Country', with its tranquil glens, dramatic waterfalls and lush forests providing a perfect setting for outdoor activities such as hiking and pony trekking.

After a long day watching or playing golf, or enjoying the great Scottish outdoors, Perthshire's superb restaurants, bars and pubs are ideal

places to kick back and relax. Dine at the 16th-century Ardeonaig Hotel & Restaurant ([www.ardeonaig-hotel.co.uk](http://www.ardeonaig-hotel.co.uk)), which makes the most of the area's natural larder on the southern shore of Loch Tay.

The same can be said of Fonab Castle ([www.fonabcastlehotel.com](http://www.fonabcastlehotel.com)). Nestled on the banks of Loch Faskally amid breathtaking highland scenery, the castle's glass-fronted restaurant offers stunning loch views, along with delicious, locally and internationally inspired dishes.

For those with a sweet tooth, just down the road between Aberfeldy and Pitlochry is The Highland Chocolatier ([www.highlandchocolatier.com](http://www.highlandchocolatier.com)), which hosts special tours and tasting sessions at their shop. Legends of Grandtully Iain Burnett is the aforementioned chocolatier – an award-winning artisan who produces gourmet truffles unique to anywhere else in the Western hemisphere.

After the drama at Gleneagles, we returned to our accommodation at

### travel snippets

■ More Americans are interested in travelling to the UK, thanks to the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge, according to Cheapflights.co.uk, the flight comparison website.

There has been a sharp increase in flight searches from the US, particularly since their recent three-day New York tour.

"It seems like the US public has fallen in love with the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge," says Cheapflights spokesman Ben Rosier. "Once again the UK's royals have proved to be a major driver of travel intent, this time boosting interest from US holidaymakers in the UK as a destination."

From the date the royal couple touched down in America, there

was a massive 114% increase in searches for the UK from US holidaymakers.

■ A small backwater of Vietnam has been named 'TripAdvisor Travellers' Choice Destination on the Rise for 2015'.

Da Nang, on the eastern sea coast of Vietnam, came out top in the awards which highlight 52 spots around the world that have seen the greatest increase in positive feedback and interest from the TripAdvisor community over the past year.

Located between Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City, the developing destination is known for its tranquil beaches, culinary tours and Buddhist sanctuaries.