

My favourite
Holiday
 with Ian Rankin

I don't like packing a big suitcase

BY ALAN SHAW

IAN RANKIN is Britain's best-selling crime novelist. Born in Fife in 1960, he lived in London and rural France before settling with his wife and two sons in Edinburgh, the setting for his hugely successful Rebus books.



■ Ian Rankin.

I GET around, mainly to a lot of the book festivals.

Recently I did St Malo in Brittany one day, Paris the next and then Lochgelly the day after that.

I mean, who can tell which is the nicest out of the three of them? It's a tough call.

I grew up three miles from Lochgelly and have very fond memories of it as my dad ran a shop there. I took a walk past the shop while I was visiting.

That was back in the '60s when our summer holiday was a caravan in St Andrews for two weeks.

We borrowed it off a mate but didn't have a car so we had to get somebody to drive us up or take the bus loaded with the beach balls and everything else.

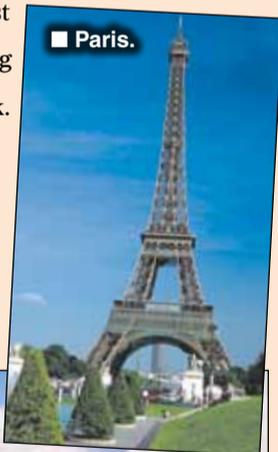
I don't know why we took the beach balls because it always rained for the fortnight. A pack of cards and a box of matches for the betting, that's all we needed!

My holiday of choice hasn't changed much now, actually.

We go up to the Black Isle where it still tends to rain from time to time but you can see dolphins off Chanonry Point, you get great local beer from the Black Isle Brewery and terrific seafood up in Cromarty.

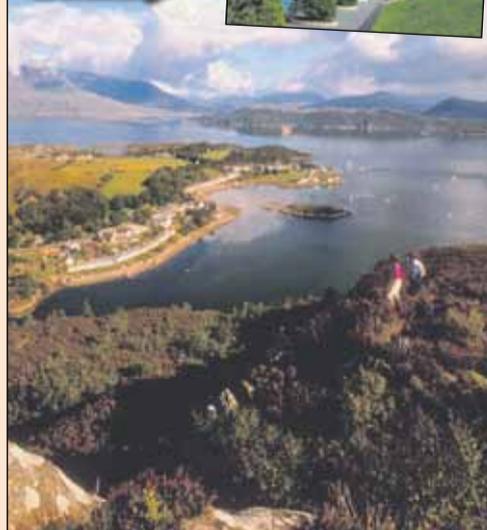
Culbokie has a terrific restaurant, or it certainly had the last time I was there.

I don't like packing a big suitcase and going for a long trek. I'd much rather go somewhere that, if I've forgotten my toothbrush, I can drive back and get it. That's still my idea of a good holiday.



■ Paris.

■ Cromarty.



THE SUNDAY POST GUIDE TO

SELF-CATERING is on the rise with British holidaymakers, but for some it still remains uncharted territory — so here's an insider's guide to holiday lets for those who think it's all shopping and cleaning!

Self-catering holidays are booming as we search for value for money, but according to recent research by the UK's top self-catering agency — Holiday Lettings — a third of British people (31%) still refuse to consider DIY breaks.



SELF-CATERING

BY KATIE WOOD

When asked why, 39% said they didn't want to do housework while on holiday and 28% said they'd just never really thought about it.

With one in five holidaymakers spending less money on accommodation in light of the current economic climate, there's never been a better time to embrace DIY travel.



Golden rules

1. Indulge in the experience — every self-catering holiday is unique because every villa, gite or apartment is individually owned or managed. Invariably you're booking with the homeowner who is keen to provide their own experience and service — so make the most of their passion and knowledge of the local area.

2. Communication is the key — don't make assumptions about the property or rely on email. Before booking pick up the phone to talk to the property owner or manager to find out everything you need to know about the property and area, including what will be provided on arrival, nearest shops and markets, directions to the property, etc.

3. Location, location, location — use online tools like Google Maps, available on each Holiday Lettings listing, to pinpoint exactly where the property is and what it looks like to avoid any surprises on arrival.

4. Cover off all the booking basics — this includes a booking contract, which should be supplied by the owner and

signed by both parties, full contact details of the owner and details of how you will obtain keys.

5. Plan ahead when it comes to food — if you're holidaying in the UK why not arrange a food delivery timed for your arrival? If you're going abroad consider stocking up at a large supermarket en route, that way you won't have to think about shopping when you arrive. And don't forget, in many countries shops don't open on Sundays.

6. Keep meals simple — anything from BBQs and cold platters to picnics and bulk portions of easily prepared foods like spaghetti bolognese you can eat over several nights. And instead of taking a jar of Marmite with you, try sampling the local delicacies for a new experience.

7. Team work — make sure everyone helps out with any shopping and prepping food, and that means the kids too. Just because you're the usual homemaker doesn't mean you have to shoulder all the responsibility while

on holiday (mind you, that's my theory, funny how it never seems to happen in practice when I go away!).

8. Live like a local — shop for food where the locals shop, eat a typical local breakfast, go to bars and restaurants where the locals go etc. There may not be a concierge to answer your questions about the local area, but maybe the owner or neighbours can help? This is one of the best aspects of self-catering!

9. Relax, you're on holiday — don't approach a holiday home in the same way as your own home when it comes to tidiness. Who cares if the beds don't get made or the living room gets a bit messy? Leave the daily grind behind and concentrate on enjoying yourself.

10. Make sure you provide feedback to the owner after your stay and review the property, so that other holidaymakers can benefit from your experience.

■ Research by One Poll, November 22-24, 2011, 3,000 UK adults.

Your home from home

THE BEST SELF-CATERING HOLIDAYS



Five of the best!

Lakeview 5, Troutbeck Bridge, Windermere, Lake District.

JUST a few metres from Lake Windermere, this lovely lodge is located on the White Cross Bay Leisure Park and Marina with on-site facilities including a bar, restaurant with takeaway service, shop, a children's play area and tennis courts.

Accessed by a small flight of steps, the stylish lodge



features an open-plan lounge and dining area and outside there is decking with table and chairs.

Sleeps up to four (two bedrooms), from £450 per week. [■ holidaylettings.co.uk/164105](http://holidaylettings.co.uk/164105)

Fearnag Lodge, Farr, Inverness.

STYLISH, eco-friendly and well equipped, this log cabin is nestled in the foothills of the beautiful Monadhliath Mountains, a short distance from Loch Ness, Culloden and the Cairngorms.

It's ideally located for walking, touring and mountain



biking and you can even bring your own horse! Sleeps up to five (three

bedrooms), from £375 per week. [■ holidaylettings.co.uk/183593](http://holidaylettings.co.uk/183593)

September Cottage, Moretonhampstead, Dartmoor, Devon.

THIS delightful cottage combines modern comforts, including under-floor heating, a well-equipped kitchen and Wi-Fi, with traditional cottage must-haves like window seats, a log burning stove, original beams and inglenooks.

Outside there are professionally landscaped gardens, a small courtyard and amazing views over



the local village, with dramatic moorland beyond. The perfect country getaway. Sleeps up to six

(three bedrooms), from £1,000 per week. [■ holidaylettings.co.uk/191227](http://holidaylettings.co.uk/191227)

Moulin almond Cottage, Almondbank, Perth.

LOCATED just outside the city of Perth, this cottage is part of the independent wing of a stunning 19th-Century mansion, set in 14 acres of beautiful private gardens and woodland, including a walled Victorian garden. Entrance is via a private courtyard



and the cottage is comfortable and well-equipped. Sleeps up to four

(two bedrooms), from £325 per week. [■ holidaylettings.co.uk/211333](http://holidaylettings.co.uk/211333)

Yew Tree Cottage, Westow, Yorkshire.

THIS delightful, family-friendly country retreat has all the comforts you need, from roaring fires and comfy beds to baby gear, a pretty enclosed garden and a great pub just a few yards away.

It's located in the centre of a picturesque Yorkshire village, with Kirkham Priory close by and Castle Howard just five miles away.



On arrival you'll find fresh bread, butter, milk, eggs and even a complimentary bottle of wine.

Sleeps up to four (two bedrooms), from £590 per week. [■ holidaylettings.co.uk/214551](http://holidaylettings.co.uk/214551)