DAYS OUT IN THE UK

ENGLAND

TODAY: Unleash your inner Baldrick, when you meet the characters who did the "Mocked-Up Worst Jobs in History" at Scarborough Castle in North Yorkshire. Hear gripping tales of gruesome grave-diggers and surgeons as grim tasks and grim facts are brought to life. Open from 11am. Tickets £4 adults, £2 children, £9 family ticket. English Heritage
members free. Go to www.english-heritage.org.uk

UNTIL SEPTEMBER 26th We know about the breakfast Tupperware, but here Her Majesty entertains at Buckingham Palace. It's more Nordic than French, so treat the ballroom to a set-up for a Swedish banquet and discover secret doors behind huge mirrors. Daily 10.45am-5pm. Tickets £15, £8 adults, £7.50 under-16s and under-fives free. Family ticket (two adults and three under-17s) £28.75. For more info visit www.royal.gov.uk

SCOTLAND

TODAY: Learn how to make beads and jewellery - or just marvel at the experts doing it - at the Scottish Bead Fair at Perth Concert Hall. There are scores of exhibitors and classes running throughout the day. From 11am till 5pm, admission £4. Go to www.scottishbeadfair.com or call 0845 612 622.  

SEPTEMBER 27th If you've been inspired by the Olympics, how about joining the crowd for a four-mile hill race, tug of war or a spot of highland dancing at the Highland Games in Dingwall. Field, Dingwall and Rattray. From 11am. Tickets £5 adults, £3 concessions. For more info call 07739 837004.

TODAY: School's nearly back, but there's just time to make the most of any awks or picnics you've planned. Find out how to identify birds, trees and the other wildlife around you on a Nature Explorer Day at the National Museum, Cardiff. From 11am-4pm. Free. For more info visit www.museumwales.ac.uk or call 029 2039 7001.

YOUR HOLIDAY £

Australian Dollar 1.97
Bulgarian Leva 2.18
Canadian Dollar 1.09
Croatian Kuna 5.00
Czech Koruna 26.55
Egyptian Pound 6.45
Euro 1.11
Hungarian Forint 226.44
Indian Rupee 61.22
Mexican Peso 13.15
New Zealand Dollar 2.43
Polish Zloty 3.72
Swiss Franc 1.90
Thai Baht 56.92
Turkish Lira 2.64
Vietnamese Dong 6.26

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gator-to parc

Give Mickey Mouse and Co a miss and take a walk on the wild side in Florida

Relax on the sandy beach at Sarasota

What's the deal?

-BA HOLIDAYS (0844 481 0754, www.baholidays.co.uk) have a seven-night fly-drive to Tampa from £269pp in November, Hotels from £150pp per night at the four-star Grand Hyatt Tampa Bay and £250pp at the five-star Ritz Carlton Sarasota.
-For info on Tampa see www.visit tampabay.com or call 020 7293 2524. For Sarasota, see www.sarasotafl.com or call 0070 531 1101.

For Florida's Gulf Islands go online to www.florida-gulfislands.com or call 0070 530 3303.

Paddling along the Hillsborough River some gussy seafood with a Spanish influence. The Columbia has been a fixture here since 1905 and now has 16 different dining rooms that accommodate up to 400 people.

The black bean cakes with guacamole made a super starter, the calamari was delicious, but the real deal is the fish. Snapper Addicta is described as King of Gulf Fish and yes, he did indeed rule on my plate.

Our Tampa Bay base was the plush Grand Hyatt with its serene sea views. The food in the restaurant is out of this world too. Let's just say that when your table overlooks the sea, it's no surprise the scalloped and blackline fish are great.

Next stop was Sarasota, just over an hour's drive away. At the rather grand Ritz Carlton (lots of marble and posh napels) we were treated to a massage at the Members' Spa. Eighty minutes later, and feeling preposterously relaxed, it was impossible to do anything more than lie by the pool.

At Ceveiche, a tapas restaurant on 1st Street, they'll make you any cocktail you can imagine so our evening on the roof terrace slipped away on a crest of Molotov taboulieness and patatas bravas. After-hours entertainment came courtesy of The Gator Bar, close by on Main Street where house band GForce - collective age around 300 - belted out cool, funky soul covers.

Just about the perfect place to recover after a wild night must...
If you don't wear a seatbelt, your kids will copy you.

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