

# The great escape

For a fraction of the price of an ordinary package holiday you could be stalking, fishing and chasing grouse in spectacular surroundings. Scottish lodges offer cracking value, says **Alexandra Henton**

**S**UTHERLAND may be about as far as the south of France but, with no euro, friendly natives and first-class sport, the Scottish lodge is the perfect place to go this summer. From glamorous Highland and lowland estates with all the knobs and whistles to remote havens where children can be turned out to grass or friends can chip in and go *en masse*, the joys of kicking back Caledonian style are plentiful.

Of course, house parties can be taken all over the country. In Scotland it is the sporting nature of the lodges that sets them apart. Fishing, stalking and shooting are the order of the day, and picking the right lodge makes all the difference. Sporting agents can guide you through the extraordinary choice, and personal recommendations are helpful. But comparing these lodges is about as easy as cat herding. Sport

can never be fully guaranteed – it is the nature of the beast – but catch and bag records can steer the keen sportsman in the right direction.

While the sport is essential, the lodge must meet expectation. Not all of the lodges mentioned are fully catered but most can accommodate a cook and there are many agencies that supply staff. It is sometimes a safer option than expecting a girlfriend or wife to act as honorary chef. Room for a billiard table and entertainment space can provide a haven if the weather turns unfriendly, and some might make you think twice before heading off on the hill... just don't let on.

Some of these lodges are listed by multiples agents. We have given the details of chosen packages. Other agents may offer other packages. Where an agent is not mentioned, information comes directly from the lodge.

## SOVAL, ISLE OF LEWIS, SLEEPS 8-15

£3,660-£8,500, incl VAT, minimum six to eight, fully catered, fishing, walked-up grouse. Stags, £320 each

A new, modern lodge has just opened at Soval on its own 500-acre farm. "It sits right on top of Loch Erisort with stunning views," say owners Marie and Richard Kershaw. Views aside, it is varied and excellent sport that recommends Soval.

"A party can split up in the morning, fish, stalk or shoot grouse over pointers and then have different tales to tell in the evening," says a satisfied guest. The estate owns the whole of the Laxay river and caught 117 salmon in 2010. Shooting rights are held over 70,000 acres and 2010 saw 215½ brace of grouse shot and 165 woodcock. Stalking can be made available and last year 18 stags were taken.

