

THE
Sun

3 PAGES
OF HOLIDAYS

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Edited by
LISA
MINOT

A vine choice, sir

GO Rhine

GETTING THERE: Ryanair fly to Frankfurt Hahn from £45 return, per person. See ryanair.com.
STAYING THERE: Zum Krug in Hattenheim and Moselschild in Moselufer are both family hotels with restaurants serving Rhine specialities. For details, see hotel-zum-krug.de and moselschild.de.
MORE INFO: To experience any of the wines we sampled, check out The Winery, 4 Clifton Rd, London W9 1SS, call 020 7286 6475 or thewineryuk.com.

GREEK BREAK: Seven nights' all-inclusive at 3* Pela Maria Hotel in Hersonissos is from £269. Departs from Manchester May 12. Call 0800 1116271 or see lowcostholidays.com.

HONG KONG HEAVEN: Four nights' at the 3* Eaton Hotel is from £529. Departs from Heathrow April 30-May 28. Visit virginholidays.co.uk or call 0844 5573 3870.

TURKISH GULET: A seven-night full-board gulet cruise along the Turkish coastline is from £349. Leaves Gatwick May 2. Call 0845 365 1011 or see anatoliansky.co.uk.

GO MONTENEGRO: Seven nights' half-board at 3* Slovenska Plaza Beachside Complex is from £514. Leaves UK airports May 24.

Includes excursions and tour manager. Call 0800 987 5112.

CRACKING KRAKOW: Three nights' B&B at the 5* Sympozjum Hotel is from £185. Leaves Stansted May 6. Call 0808 909 8063.

TENERIFE TRIP: Two weeks' half-board at 4* Bouganville Playa in Costa Adeje is from £565. Leaves Gatwick May 8. Call 0871 231 5595 or see thomson.co.uk.

SEE SARDINIA: Seven nights' B&B at 3* Rina Hotel, Alghero in Punta Cana region is from £259. Leaves Gatwick May 9. Go to thomson.co.uk or call 0871 231 5595.

MAJORCA CORKER: Seven nights' self-catering at 4* Pins Aparthotel in Alcudia is from £159. Leaves Gatwick Airport April 29. Call 0800 1116271 or see lowcostholidays.com.

HOT IT'S 34°C in DUBAI – five nights' B&B at the 5* Hilton Dubai Jumeira is from £549. Departs from Heathrow May 8 – July 15. Pay a visit to virginholidays.co.uk or call 0844 5573 3870.

SPOT

AIRLINE passengers would pay for a seat in the cockpit, according to the latest Skyscanner poll. As hidden charges become a routine part of flying, the website asked passengers what extras they would willingly fork out more cash for.

THIS year we all want value for money from our holidays.

The euro has had a bad Press lately because it has risen against the Pound, but it is falling again now.

So why not try an exciting but under-rated destination on our doorstep?

Germany's Rhine Valley is not just a gorgeous beauty spot, it is also home to one of the world's oldest wine industries. If you are looking for something different this year close to home that won't cost the earth, put the Rhine on your list.

This lovely region is quick and easy to reach. Ryanair fly cheaply from Stansted to Frankfurt Hahn – on the doorstep of the Rhine – or you can drive from

GERMANY CAN OFFER REAL VINTAGE VALUE

the ferry ports in a few hours on excellent roads.

The steep banks of the river are heavy with history and vineyards. Ancient towers and romantic ruined castles dot the tops of the banks while below, in vineyards first planted by the Romans, grow the grapes for some of the world's finest white wines.

Majestic

My trip started in the Rheingau region, a 12-mile south-facing slope overlooking the majestic Rhine west of Frankfurt.

Here the riesling grape is king, producing a range of whites from steely dry with mineral undertones to astonishingly long-lived sweet vintages that rival anything France can boast.

It was from here that the "hock" beloved of Queen Victoria came. Today growers take huge pride in quality, emphasising the difference that even a few yards can make to

the wine depending on which patch of slate and stone soil has supplied the grapes.

Germanic attention to detail and rigorous standards ensure consistent quality and superb value for money.

These wines come in three main categories: the Kabinetts and Trockenens are dry to medium-dry with steely, crisp and aromatic flavours, brilliant with food but also superb on their own. Next are the Spatleses, rather sweeter and delicious with meals. And finally the ultra-sweet Trockenbeereenauslese wines (try saying that after a glass or two). A rarity worth trying if you get the chance is Eiswein – ice wine, made in tiny quantities from grapes that have been left on the vines to freeze so that their overwhelming richness is concentrated into a wine like alcoholic nectar.

Fine wines are also made in the Mosel region next to the Rheingau. Here are fruity, bouncy wines that smell and taste of spring.

A holiday here is good value for

money. Hotels in every price range are friendly and dependable, and eating out much the same price as here but with bigger helpings and better quality.

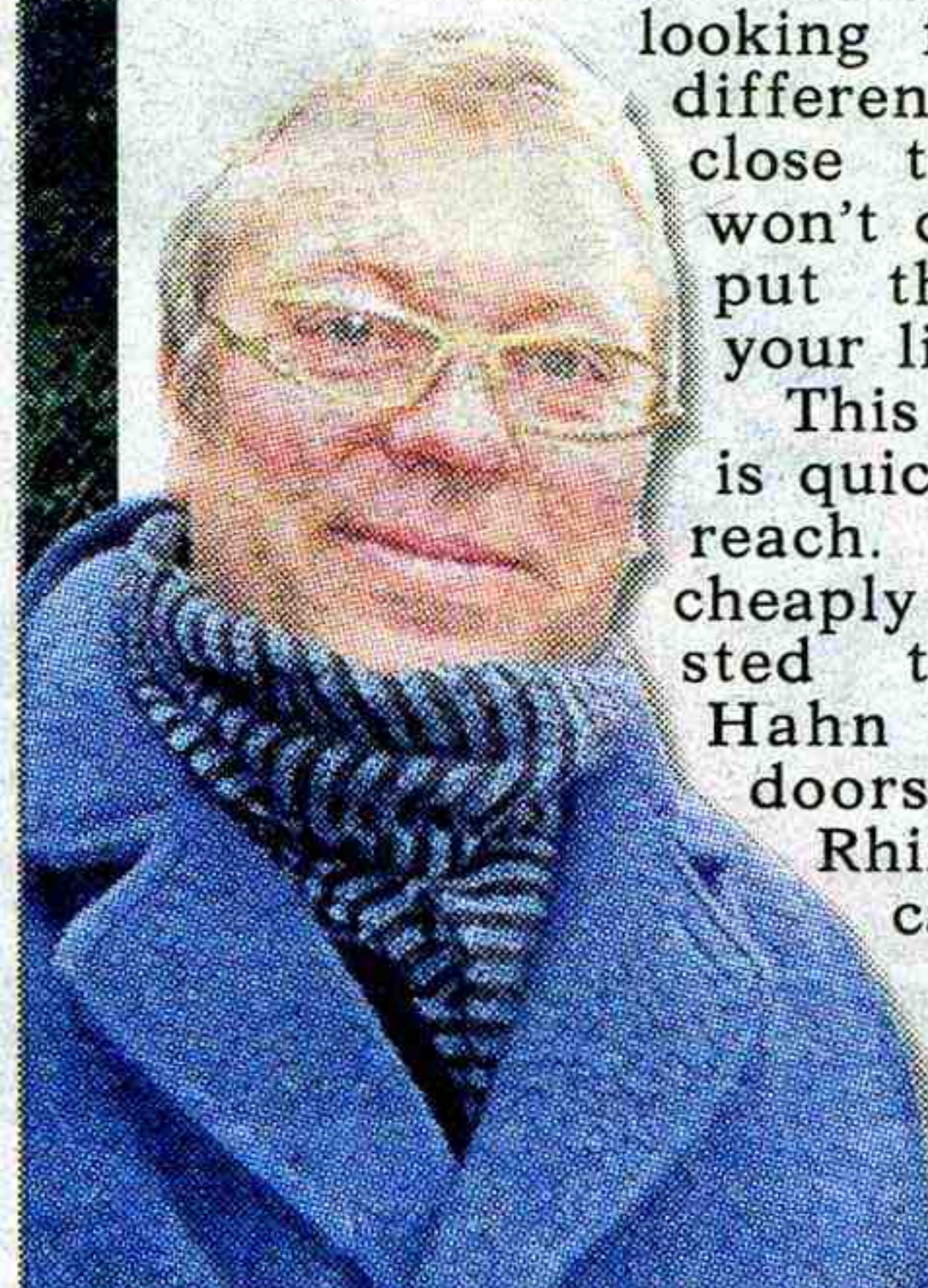
The scenery, especially in spring and early summer when the river banks are rich with blossom and alive with birdsong, is spectacular and there is a real sense of the wide open spaces that are so hard to find these days. And everybody everywhere speaks perfect English.

My host, genial David Motion who runs The Winery in Maida Vale, North West London, explains the attraction of Rhine and Mosel wines: "These vintages are as good if not better than the fine French whites, and only a fraction of the cost. If your only experience of German wine is Liebfraumilch, treat yourself to something better. You will be astonished how lovely these wines are."

Even if wine is not your thing, the Rhine Valley is still a thrill. Take a tourist boat and glide down the highway of European history.

Just a couple of hours from the UK and excellent value, this is a country to raise a glass to. Try one of David's wines (see panel, above) and you'll be persuaded.

FERGUS SHANAHAN



SUP-ER TIPS
... David