



MAKE TRACKS TO RAMBLERS' REST

**MERCURE THAME LAMBERT, WATLINGTON, OXON**  
**WHAT'S IT LIKE?** The Mercure Thame Lambert is a traditional coaching house, extended at the back to include a large, modern hotel with spacious rooms. The well-priced B&B is also conveniently located just off the M40.  
**ROOMS ANY GOOD?** Very nice. Traditional decor, comfy beds and free high-speed fibre broadband.  
**ANYTHING ELSE?** We met a pair of ramblers at the hotel who were walking The Ridgeway. This hiking route through the North Wessex Downs and Chilterns has been used since prehistoric times by travellers, herdsman and soldiers. It passes right by the hotel, making the Mercure Thame

check in check it out

Lambert the perfect stop for walkers or cyclists travelling the route.  
**EAT HERE OR GRAB A PIZZA?** Eat here. The Kite Restaurant & Bar has British a la carte dishes as well as pub classics. We enjoyed a pint in the large beer garden then sat in the cosy dining room, where my wife tucked into sausage and mash with onion gravy while I went for the lovely lamb shank. Don't turn in for the night without tasting the sticky toffee pudding.  
**SO YOU'D GO BACK?** Yes. It is a well-priced stopover, whether travelling via the M40 or at a slower pace on the ancient Ridgeway.  
**WHAT'S THE DAMAGE?** One night, room only, costs from £36pp based on two sharing. Find out more at [accorhotels.com](http://accorhotels.com).

JACOB LEWIS

hot spot

**IT'S 29C in IBIZA – and seven nights' self-catering at 4★ Ibiza Sun Apartments in Catania**  
Playa d'en Bossa is from £571pp, including flights departing Gatwick on September 29. See [loveholidays.com](http://loveholidays.com) or call 0203 870 6844 to book.

hot spot

**SICILY is 27C – seven nights' B&B at the 4★ Ibis Styles Catania**  
Aciarele is from £435pp, including flights departing Luton on August 22. See [easyjet.com](http://easyjet.com) or call 020 3499 5232.

ROCK UP FOR THIS SMASHING BREAK



**TRASHING** hotel rooms was a privilege reserved for drunken rock stars – until now. Thomas Cook wants guests to smash up a room. Holidaymakers visiting Cook's Club Hersonissos in Crete can book the Rage Room from £12pp, where for up to 40 minutes they can destroy bottles, vases and more with a variety of tools. As part of a range of new activities aimed at millennial holidaymakers, the hotel offers escape rooms, VR video games and a private disco for small, exclusive parties.

news

In the three escape rooms, guests must complete tasks and solve puzzles to free themselves in a given time. It is the first Cook's Club hotel Thomas Cook launched, and opened in April. There are plans to open between ten and 15 more by next summer. The Cook's Club brand is for 18 to 35-year-olds who have never booked a package holiday before. It is not yet clear if Thomas Cook plans to add an authentic "Throw A TV Out Your Window" package.

CANADIAN PORT THAT BECAME THE

WITH sunglasses perched on her head, the woman knelt and put a bunch of flowers at the gravestone marked J Dawson.

Kissing the tips of her fingers, she tenderly touched the top of the headstone before walking back to the waiting tour bus. Everyone who saw the movie *Titanic*, released in the UK in 1998, remembers handsome Jack Dawson, the romantic liner passenger played by Leonardo DiCaprio. Twenty years on, many of the cruise-ship crowd and other tourists who visit Halifax, Nova Scotia, on Canada's eastern coast make a beeline for the J Dawson

grave in Fairview Cemetery – where 121 victims of the 1912 maritime tragedy are buried.

There is just one thing, though. It was erected in memory of a different Dawson – Joseph, rather than Jack. But a local tour guide friend later advises me over a drink in a downtown bar: "If you spot a female fan of the fictional Jack Dawson putting flowers next to the J Dawson headstone, my advice is, 'Keep shtum!'" For anyone interested in RMS *Titanic* – the supposedly unsinkable ship that hit an iceberg on its maiden voyage and sank in the North Atlantic with the loss of more than 1,500 passengers and crew – a trip to Halifax is a must.

The one-time British garrison town has a good claim to be the place with the strongest link to the doomed ship. Not

GO: HALIFAX, CANADA

**GETTING THERE:** Air Canada offers return flights from Heathrow to Halifax from £616.77. See [aircanada.com](http://aircanada.com) or call 00 800 6699 2222.  
**STAYING THERE:** Rooms at the Westin Nova Scotian in Halifax are from £125 per night. See [thewestinnovascotian.com](http://thewestinnovascotian.com) or call 001 902 421 1000.  
**OUT & ABOUT:** See [novascotia.com](http://novascotia.com)

only was it the nearest major seaport to the site of the sinking, about 400 miles off the Canadian coast, but it is the final resting place for more *Titanic* victims than anywhere else. There are 150 in all, buried in three cemeteries.

The excellent Maritime Museum of the Atlantic, on the downtown harbourfront,

RESTING PLACE FOR TITANIC VICTIMS

should be your first port of call if you want to learn more about the sinking.

Among the many exhibits are a deck chair from the liner and the original transcript of the ship's distress call, all of which help bring to life the full horror of the disaster.

Handsome city

But a visit to Halifax is not all about doom and gloom. There is much more to this handsome city than its *Titanic* link.

You are just as likely as in *Glasgow* or *Edinburgh* to see a kilt being worn or the bagpipes played, as the locals are proud of their *Anglo-Scottish* roots.

Head up to the Citadel, the mighty star-shaped fortress above the city's old town, which is now "guarded" by actors dressed in period uniforms worn by troops 200

years ago. The views from the top are magnificent, though it can be pretty blowy on some days.

The Pier 21 immigration museum is also well worth a visit. It is housed in a former immigration terminal which hundreds of thousands of British people passed through from 1928 to 1971 en route to a new life in Canada. They included my dad, who later returned to the UK after several years across the pond.

Halifax also has much to recommend it on the food and drink front, with more pubs and clubs per head than almost any other city in Canada.

Try a warming seafood chowder at the Five Fishermen restaurant, enjoy a pint of Halifax-brewed Alexander Keith's beer at the Old Triangle Alehouse and, last but not least, sample a delicious Cows ice-

cream on the waterfront boardwalk. The waterfront also has plenty of shops. You can hop aboard the oldest running saltwater ferry service in North America to head along the harbour shore to Dartmouth, with its own quaint shops, galleries, restaurants and pubs.

Farther afield, *McNabs Island* at the mouth of *Halifax Harbour* is a hidden gem with hiking on secluded trails and a beautiful beach to relax on.

But for all Halifax's historical and culinary charms, it is the *Titanic* connection – and the thought of all those lives snatched away by the unforgiving Atlantic more than a century ago – that is most likely to linger in your mind as you wait for your flight home.

God bless their souls.

YORK MEMBER



PADDLE DREAMERS... fun in the harbour

PROMOTED CONTENT

VALLETTA CALLING

Few cities offer history, great food, fun festivals and sunshine guaranteed, but Malta's capital Valletta has the lot...

**PERCHED** in the Med with more than 300 days of sunshine a year, Malta's capital Valletta is perfectly placed for a cheeky weekend away – though spend longer and you certainly won't be disappointed.

Families, couples, mates and solo travellers will find something for everyone in this picturesque mecca for selfie lovers. And it's just three hours from the UK.

Whether you're after fine dining at the Grand Harbour, fun with the kids at the interactive science hub Esplora, in nearby Kalkara, or shopping in quaint boutiques, your biggest problem will be squeezing it all in. Don't panic, with highs of 21C in November, there's still plenty of time, and when you're there, make sure to:

1 Go selfie mad

Valletta is stuffed full of photogenic churches and fabulous architecture dating back to the 16th century when it was

founded by the Knights of St John. The city has Unesco world heritage status and is great to explore on foot – you can get lost in the pretty streets and still have energy for a night out. A "must see" is St John's Co-Cathedral, a baroque delight dripping in gold leaf and marble.

2 Travel back in time

From medieval knights to brave locals plotting their resistance during the Second World War, Malta has centuries of fascinating history. Let your imagination run riot in the Lascaris War Rooms, underground tunnels crucial to Malta's war effort. Then go to enjoy the Malta Experience's video about the island or visit Malta 5D, with its fun surprises such as water sprays that bring history to life.

3 Eat your fill

There's no shortage of mouth-watering restaurants in Valletta, often reflecting the

island's Arabic, French, Italian and British influences – feast on freshly caught tuna, swordfish and lobster. If you're feeling flush, treat yourself at the swanky Panorama restaurant or the Harbour Club, set in the city walls. Alternatively, look out for smaller places where you can tuck into giant breads, pizzas, stews and kapunata, a Maltese version of ratatouille. Wash it all down with Maltese wines.

4 Be a culture vulture

Valletta is the 2018 European Capital of Culture, and is celebrating with Valletta18, a huge programme of events involving more than 1,000 artists, designers and film-makers. There's everything from solar cinema and street theatre to opera – the Maltese

composer Mario Sammut has written a work to honour the city. Before you go, check out [valletta2018.org](http://valletta2018.org).

5 Join the party

The Maltese love any excuse for a festival, and there are plenty in Valletta. The biggest of all, the summer carnival, is this month with two weekends of colourful parades, but there's fun all year round. In September, Malta Pride will turn the whole city rainbow, while in

October sports fans can head to Mdina for the Malta Classic car event and, back in Valletta, watch the start of the Rolex Middle Sea Race. Music fans should look out for September's quirky Bewyld music festival at Gzira. Then, in November, there's the premiere of *City of Humanity*

– *Behind the Fortifications*, the first of three specially commissioned operas exploring Malta's identity.

6 Dance to the beat

Malta has an enviable music reputation, with MTV's annual summer festival drawing big names. There's always clubbing action at Paceville, a short taxi ride out of the city, or top venues such as Liquid and Café del Mar. Expect guest DJs and plenty of excitement. Fly with easyJet from £34.99pp, one way\*

WORDS BY SAMM TAYLOR



To find out more, go to [maltauk.com](http://maltauk.com)

\*Based on two flying. For travel to 24.3.19. Correct at 31.7.18