BARONIAL RESTRAINT AND GEORGIAN REFINEMENT DEFINE COOL IN EDINBURGH. JANE RAFFAN GETS THE LOWDOWN ON WHERE TO STAY, WHAT TO DO AND WHERE TO DINE IN THE HISTORIC SCOTTISH CAPITAL.
The dramatic natural setting and calibre of its period architecture combine to make Edinburgh one of Europe’s most beautiful cities, a fact recognized by a UNESCO World Heritage listing in 1995. It was established as Scotland’s capital in 1429 by King James IV but Edinburgh’s lineage as a royal city dates back to the 12th century when the first of the castle enclaves was completed in 1492 by King James IV but Edinburgh’s status as a royal city dates back to the 12th century when the first of the castle enclaves in suite 552 of the Balmoral Hotel regularly features in the Edinburgh Advertiser and is renowned for its service, which includes a concierge staff of twenty who bury themselves arranging “anything for everybody.” Bespoke services include curbside check-in, VIP personal shopping, access to distilleries and guaranteed tee-times at one of many nearby golf courses. Balmoral Hotel, 1 Princes Street, Edinburgh EH2 2EQ, Scotland

WHERE TO STAY
Built in 1902, the five-star grand-scaled Victorian Balmoral Hotel is situated at the east end of the Princess Street Gardens, adjacent to the main shopping district. Aesthetically referred to as the Dame, the Balmoral Hotel contains 188 rooms and 20 generous suites, many with captivating views of Edinburgh Castle and the Old Town. The hotel’s appointments and decor exude understated elegance. Furnishings are in subtle hues reminiscent of Scottish moors, mists and heathers, accented by antiques and sumptuous fabrics and florishers.

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WHAT TO DO
Edinburgh’s picturesque historic centre invites an easy day’s stroll. The city boasts important historic collections of art and cultural heritage, and aside from the Castle exhibits, including the Crown Jewels, it’s well worth taking time out to explore the Museum of Scotland in the Old Town and the National Gallery. Nearby Balmoral Hotel the Princes Street Gardens, a vast sprawl of green that divides the Old Town from the New, is a favourite meeting place for locals and an ideal spot for footloose flaneurs to rest a while on benches that offer spectacular views of the castle and the many multi-storied houses that clinging to the hillsides.

The city hosts acclaimed international film and comedy festivals every year, which are usually complemented by colourful fringe events that tend to attract controversy.

For those attracted to the dark side of the city, the Balmoral Hotel’s Michelin-starred Number One restaurant offers a range of Fish Picnics, with perfect packages for hilltop lookout locales such as Rosslyn Chapel or Arthur’s Seat, or a luxury hamper for the drive to historic St Andrews, the golf Mecca of Scotland.

The game of golf purportedly originated in Scotland from local shepherds in the 13th century; now its birthplace attracts the biggest factor influencing travel to Scotland is weather. The northern hemisphere summer. The High season is the month of August which is during the Fringe Festival which will be staged from June 15 - 29, 2009. The popular literary festival is part of the Edinburgh Fringe Festival which will be staged from June 15 - 29, 2009. The biggest factor influencing travel to Scotland is weather. The High season is the month of August which is during the northern hemisphere summer. The temperature is around 20 degrees. During the low season, which is the rest of the year, the weather is colder however, there is less rainfall than in summer. It doesn’t often snow during winter in Scotland, and winter temperatures hover around five degrees.

WHERE TO EAT
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