

## TRAVEL

## ENJOY A LUXURY BREAK IN THE PERTHSHIRE COUNTRYSIDE

# MAINS STREET

## THEME PARKS, SCOTS STYLE

CLARE PHILLIPS

WHEN it comes to planning short breaks in Scotland, travellers are pretty much on their own.

We don't really 'do' theme parks north of the border, while the likes of Center Parcs have yet to see fit to locate here.

The weather has probably played a big part in the absence of such one-size-fits-all monoliths, but the result is that anyone looking for a few days away usually has to pull together their own plans, with a bit of help from the likes of visitScotland's website.

But that's the beauty of staying local when looking for a mini-break - you get to tailor-make your time, finding your own accommodation, from a cheap wee B&B to grand, luxurious lodges (more of which later), and picking and choosing where you eat, drink and make merry.

It was just such a custom-made trip that took us to Taymouth, less than two hours

drive up the A9 into beautiful Highland Perthshire.

There, our first smart move was to choose the small conservation village of Kenmore as our base - and, in particular, to set up temporary home at Mains of Taymouth.

The estate is one of the best examples of a local company taking relatively sparse facilities in a beautiful part of Scotland and investing in them to create somewhere luxurious enough to complement the surroundings.

The result is a wide range of properties to let and buy, but the highlight is a square of converted farm buildings which sit in a peaceful courtyard.

All seven cottages have been beautifully fitted-out but the jewel in the crown is Mains Park Court. It is, in a word, stunning.

Five beautiful en-suite bedrooms? Check. Open-plan living area warmed by a log burner? Check. Mezzanine TV room to segregate the kids? Check. Hot tub? Sauna? Full-size pool table? Check, check



NATURE TRAIL: The splendid Loch Tay at Kenmore, and below left, a bathroom with sauna at a Mains holiday property

and check again. It seems a cliché to say that the cottage was so good we didn't want to leave it, but the bottom line is that if a rainy day had come along it would have been no hardship to stay indoors, open a bottle of wine and read a book. (With the kids packed off to the mezzanine, of course...)

But we were lucky enough to get fair enough weather to explore the near-by towns of Aberfeldy and Pitlochry. The latter's famous salmon ladder seems smaller and duller than childhood visits recall, but the growth and development of the town's Festival Theatre more than compensates.

Most curious of all, though, is Kenmore itself. A slightly surreal one-street town with

the kirk at one end and the entrance to the Mains Castle grounds at the other, it seems to have been preserved in aspic, with only the roars of four-by-fours breaking the idyll.

It should be said, too, that Mains of Taymouth does offer some of the convenience we may associate with a holiday camp, though without any of the associated tackiness.

There is an excellent restaurant and bar on-site, run by friendly South African couple Jake and Kim Schamrel.

The Courtyard specialises in local produce but often cooked with a fusion twist, and it has a well-stocked delicatessen and gift shop attached.

For those looking to burn off rather than take on calories, there is also a good nine-hole golf course, while horses and riding lessons can be organised at the Mains of Taymouth Stables, which is run by the well-travelled and well-informed Katy Bennett. There are also bikes and boats to hire in the area.

That's if you can tear yourself away from the log fire and the hot tub, of course...

## LATE DEALS

### ROSYTH MINI CRUISE:

Picknucruise (0131-443 0766) has cabins from £378p/p on a four-night Fred Olsen cruise leaving Rosyth on 10 September, visiting Kirkwall & Bergen in Norway, with a day at sea, before docking at Newcastle where a complimentary coach return will be provided. Ideal for families/groups because with four sharing a cabin the price falls to £263.

**CRETE:** Flight and five nights at the three-star Kastro, £478pp with cold buffet breakfast, departing Edinburgh on 15 February. Visit [www.ebookers.com](http://www.ebookers.com)

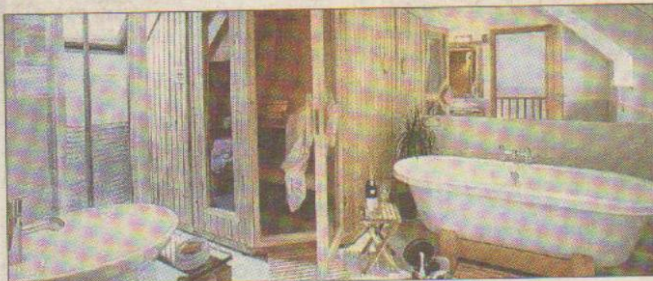
**TORONTO:** Flight and five nights at the three-star Clarion Hotel & Suites Selby Downtown costs £544pp from Edinburgh on 21 February with [ebookers.com](http://www.ebookers.com).

**FRANCE SKIING:** For just £334pp a family of four (two adults and two children aged 2-11) can ski the sunny and snow-sure family resort of La Rosière, high above the Tarentaise valley in the French Alps. Esprit Ski ([www.espritski.com](http://www.espritski.com) 01252 618 300) is offering a week in the Chalet Camelia for £1336 for a family of four. Price includes return flights from Edinburgh to Geneva on 6 February,

transfers, seven nights' catered chalet accommodation and free ski hosting three days a week.

**FRENCH ALPS:** Ski Total ([www.skital.com](http://www.skital.com) 01252 618 333) is offering Chamois in Tignes, France for £484pp (was £908). This chalet is close to three of the main ski lifts and boasts a sauna and large screen TV/DVD. Price includes Edinburgh-Geneva flights on 6 February, transfers, three days free ski hosting and seven nights' catered chalet accommodation with complimentary wine with dinner.

**TALL SHIP CRUISE:** Star Clippers is offering up to 20 per cent off 2011 cruises in the Mediterranean for bookings made by January 31, and 2011 sailings in the Caribbean and Central America for bookings made before April 30. Save £177 per person on a six-night Caribbean pre-Christmas cruise on the 170-passenger Star Clipper, departing St Maarten on December 17. Now from £708 per person, including all meals. A seven-night Costa Rica sailing on the Star Flyer, departing Puerto Caldera on December 19 costs from £824. Call 0845 200 6145 or visit [www.starclippers.co.uk](http://www.starclippers.co.uk)



Evening News

THE EDINBURGH PAPER

READER HOLIDAY

## Italian Riviera

Flying from Edinburgh & Prestwick

8 days from £649pp

May, June, September & October 2011

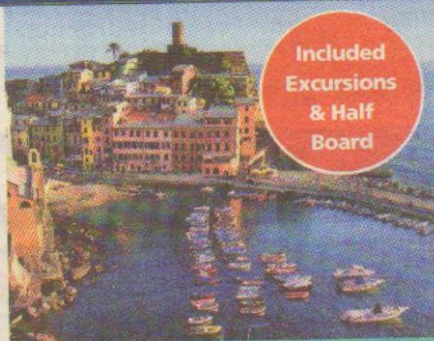
Extend your stay for an extra 7 nights from £325pp

- Return flights and hotel transfers
- 7 nights dinner, bed & breakfast in a 3 star hotel on the Versilian Riviera in the resorts of Marina Di Pietrasanta and Lido Di Camaiore
- Included excursions to Florence, Pisa, Portofino, Santa Margherita, Lucca and the Cinque Terre
- Services of a Mistral Holidays Tour Manager

Organised by Mistral Holidays ABTA V0669 ATOL Protected 6900

[www.holidays.scotsman.com](http://www.holidays.scotsman.com)

Call 0131 620 8400 Lines open Mon - Fri between 9.30am - 4.30pm Answer machine at all other times.  
Email [holidayoffers@scotsman.com](mailto:holidayoffers@scotsman.com)



### ITALY BY AIR

Combine the fragrant olive groves, terraced vineyards and stunning sun-soaked coastline of the beautiful Italian Riviera with the fascinating Cinque Terre. Discover many of its historical sites and exclusive resorts including visits to the wonderful cities of Florence and Pisa and exclusive resorts of Portofino and Santa Margherita.

Included  
Excursions  
& Half  
Board

## Being there

Mains of Taymouth, Kenmore, Perthshire  
[www.taymouth.co.uk](http://www.taymouth.co.uk)  
01887-830226

## YOUR GUIDE

The Evening News reader holiday service offers a wide range of holidays to suit all tastes and budgets. For a brochure call:

0131-620 8344