

SCOTTISH FIELD

FEBRUARY 2010

Romantic breaks

The warmth of a roaring log fire, a delicious menu, candlelight, superb wines and a golden dram or two, a beautiful room, interesting places to explore. All these are vital ingredients for a romantic break, and with Valentine's Day falling this month, now is the time to plan the perfect getaway with your best beloved

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Whether you choose a castle or a scenic cottage, or the glowing intimacy of a hotel, the most important thing is getting right away from your everyday environment and making sure that every minute is special.

Opting for a self-catering cottage scores high on togetherness. With your own front door, you can shut out the world, please yourselves about mealtimes and not see another soul if you don't wish to.

But do make sure that the cottage you choose is well looked after and in a lovely spot. Nothing kills passion like a noisy road outside or the need to fix a dripping tap when you arrive. And a touch of luxury doesn't go amiss either. Omar Khayyam may have felt that all he needed was 'a jug of wine, a loaf of bread – and thou beside me singing in the wilderness' but nowadays most of us would quite like a decent kitchen and bathroom too.

Main: Getting away from it all to a roaring fire and a glass or two. ▶



The four and five-star Mains of Taymouth cottages fulfil all requirements of comfort, and their location in the heart of Scotland is spectacular. Loch Tay stretches out nearby in all its magnificence, with the Grampians as a backdrop, and not far away you can find the magical hidden kingdom that is Glen Lyon, and the market towns of Aberfeldy and Dunkeld, with their art galleries and interesting shops to explore.

Making it special

If your loved one is usually the family cook, however, you might want to consider a hotel. For her, or for him, the ultimate in romance might mean getting away from the stove for a few days and luxuriating in menus put together by a master chef. Many hotels, like the historic Kenmore Hotel close to the Mains of Taymouth, offer special romantic breaks – perhaps with a bottle of champagne to greet your arrival, and the promise of breakfast in bed. At the Ardenaig Hotel and Restaurant, also on Loch Tay, there is the option of arriving by sea-plane or vintage car, and there are mountain bikes you can use for the duration of your stay.

Travelling to the Outer Isles is guaranteed to lift you out of ordinary life, and for city dwellers, especially, a holiday in the far north-west can be the most romantic getaway of all. There's the slow beat of the ferry as the mainland recedes, the hills in the distance, the first sight of sea lochs and long white beaches. No option but to relax, when you have left the hustle and bustle so far behind you.

The island of Harris offers the ultra-special treat of staying at Amhuinnsuidhe Castle, standing guard on the edge of the Atlantic, with its superb cuisine and dedicated staff. Choose a room with a sea view, and you may never want to leave it, though there are many outdoor activities to enjoy if you do. **SF**

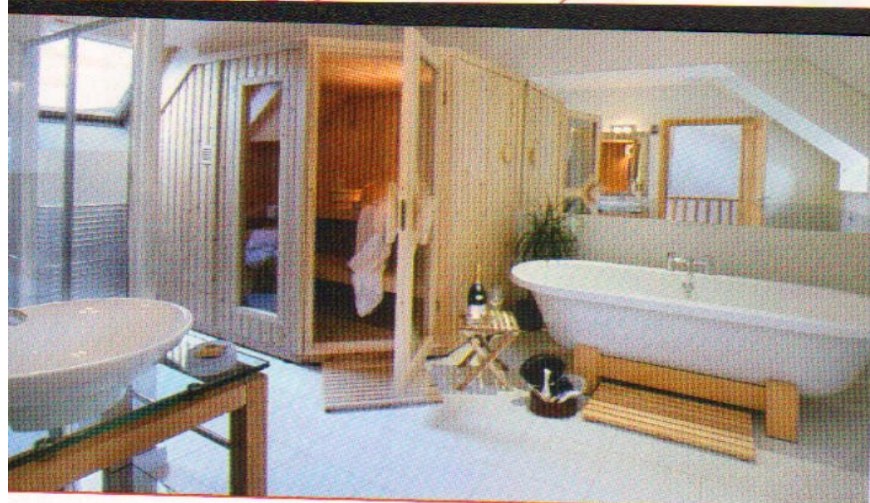


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Clockwise from top left: The seductive white beaches of the Outer Isles; Hand in hand on the sand; Food for lovers; Champagne to mark the occasion.

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