

COTTAGE INDUSTRY

Taking four kids on holiday might sound like hard work but Laura Wood finds it's not so taxing at Mains of Taymouth Country Estate in Kenmore

“Look at the size of the paddling pool... it's epic!” exclaimed child number one as we opened the patio doors of The Stables and he laid eyes on the hot tub. A quick run around the property with little sis in tow and the pool table, sauna and TV in every room garnered just as much enthusiasm — not to mention a bout of delirium that could only be mustered by a five-year-old boy.

As for the adults in the group, we were equally thrilled by the accommodation choice for the weekend; a four-bedroom traditional cottage on the Mains of Taymouth resort by the banks of Loch Tay. Kitted out to 21st century tastes, our cottage was luxurious, but without stuffiness or pretence, and not so immaculate that you suddenly become



unnerved by the 2:4 parent: child ratio of your party. After all, our weekend was predominantly about the kids and for a family holiday, the independence of a self-catering cottage gets the thumbs up all the way.

However, the real beauty of Mains of Taymouth as a destination (apart from the natural beauty of the surrounding area, of course) is that it's a family-run, 120-acre estate with the facilities of a country house hotel. The resort is made up of 43 self-catering properties, all of an excellent standard and furnished with style and individuality. It's not sprawling and busy, it's well thought out and unimposing, with a gift shop, bar and restaurant acting as a meeting point, and beautifully maintained nine-hole



“KITTED OUT TO 21ST CENTURY TASTES, OUR COTTAGE WAS LUXURIOUS BUT NOT SO IMMACULATE THAT YOU SUDDENLY BECOME UNNERVED BY THE 2:4 PARENT: CHILD RATIO OF YOUR PARTY”

golf course if a bit of golfing action is on the agenda. There's also a new riding school at the end of the road where our three older kids loved every minute of the half hour pony trek astride Lucy, Chezzy and Angel.

After their equestrian adventure, we spent our last night enjoying dinner al fresco in the Courtyard restaurant, each course punctuated with a play in the park. There followed a much later than usual bedtime but when all four kids were finally sleeping sound, two excited mummies crept out onto the patio to enjoy blissfulness of the grown-up kind — a chilled bottle of fizz in a 'giant paddling pool'.

Prices from £1248 for seven nights. For a 10 per cent discount on a minimum three-night stay during 2017, simply quote i-on upon booking. 01887 830 226. taymouth.co.uk

THE HEIGHT OF LUXURY

New mum Nicky Howden embarks on her first holiday en famille at the rather grand Aikwood Tower in the Scottish Borders



The wish list was admittedly pretty long: a luxurious, atmospheric boutique-style home-from-home that catered for adults who liked to have fun, but also had babies in tow. Character was a must, but not too dated or run down and, by contrast, bursting with mod cons. It also had to have the tranquillity of the countryside, but within easy reach from Edinburgh. To be honest, we were startled when we found somewhere that ticked all the boxes.

Nestled within the Scottish Borders and just over an hour's drive from Edinburgh, Aikwood Tower is an imposing and historic building standing tall atop a pretty leafy hill on the outskirts of Selkirk. Built in the 1540s, the Grade A listed building is brimming with authentic charm thanks to the work of David Steel (now Lord Steel of Aikwood) and his wife Judy ▶