

Impressive: The house's timber-clad rear extension



HOW I CREATED THE PERFECT SCOTTISH HIDEAWAY

A Place In The Sun's Danni Menzies tells **Oliver Stallwood** about renovating the home of her youth

THIS is one of the most picturesque places I've ever been and I've travelled a lot, says Danni Menzies at her family home-turned-holiday home. As the latest presenter of *A Place In The Sun*, Danni does know a thing or two about the more beautiful corners of the globe and has visited almost 40 countries in her 28 years. Despite the sun not always shining up here in Kilmorie, in the Scottish Highlands, Danni assures me that it does appear more frequently than you might think. It's hard to argue with the beauty of the location, though, rain or shine. Coming down the valley between Aberfeldy and Kilmorie, you then go

over the crest of a hill where the view opens up – and that's when you can see the property at the end in the grounds of Taymouth Castle. 'When you have good weather there is nothing like it,' she continues. 'But having grown up in the hills of Scotland and being a bit of a country bumpkin, I like being out in my wellies with the horses getting my hands dirty – I find it quite therapeutic.' The farmhouse dates back to 1860 and was bought in 1992 at auction by Danni's great-great-grandfather. Danni lived there from the age of ten to 20. It has only recently been renovated, bringing huge changes including a giant extension to the back, adding a master

bedroom and vast living room. The rest of the house has been fully modernised and it now serves as a holiday home rental and a countryside escape for the family. 'It is a sanctuary,' says Danni, who is just back from filming in the Caribbean. 'It's amazing how your body just relaxes as soon as you walk through the door. I love the Italian leather sofa [from Sterling Furniture in the nearby town of Tillycoultry] – it's probably my favourite part of the whole house. It's huge and you can fall into it and stay as long as you like – the dogs come over for a cuddle from time to time.' The farmhouse, which housed surgeons during the war when the castle was turned into a hospital, has now been extended front and back, with a timber-clad section at the rear. These features the same red gable

decorations seen on the original part of the building. The inside is designed as a neutral and modern take on the traditional country style. This means organic materials and only the odd splash of colour, some of which was provided by local painter Maryann Ryves. The look is purposefully no-fuss. 'I spent a good bit of time stressing over the twoed curtains, because we were working around the huge black sofa, which had to stay put as it was bespoke for that huge lounge. I had to make the curtains tie the kitchen and lounge together, so in the end went with the dark brown tweed with black velvet detail. But I've always

loved tweed and was really excited to be able to incorporate it into the interiors.' The curtains also help to bring cosiness to the room, which is largely glass to enhance the views. Danni was inspired to take up design having watched her dad sketch out plans for buildings around the farm and was able to work with him on ideas for the layout when initial plans were made with the architect. The house is now part of a five-star luxury resort that has been expanded from a humble caravan park to an estate, housing 50 holiday homes, a golf course and stables. All the downstairs rooms in the farmhouse have access

to the garden, hot tub and summer house – Danni's den when she was a youngster. The main entrance hall leads into the huge open-plan kitchen, which is fitted with a 35-year-old original Aga and on to the lounge area with its wood-burning stove. Off to the right there is a large bedroom with an en suite. To the left is a snug with Wii and games, which leads to another large bedroom with

an en suite and a further twin room with an en suite shower. The master bedroom with its accompanying wet room and private balcony is on the first floor. This is flanked by two further double bedrooms. 'It's very modern and simple, but with organic touches to keep everything in touch with the surroundings,' says Danni. 'It's relaxing and cosy – but really wasn't before the renovation.' Danni started

renting the property out as a holiday home about a year ago, but when it's not let, she stays there. 'I love being here,' she says laughing, 'so hopefully it won't get too popular!'

Danni is co-founder of PitchIt, a new dating app that makes it easier for people with common interests to meet, available on iOS, pitchitapp.com. The property is available to rent via taymouth.co.uk



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Back to her roots: Danni Menzies with one of her dogs and, left, the vast living room in her farmhouse



Distinctive detail: The front of the house features unique red gable decorations



Place in the sun: The modern-looking living room allows in plenty of daylight



Simple pleasures: This cosy twin room is an example of the house's no-fuss style



Compact thinking: The sleek kitchen features this breakfast bar



Super-swish: The master bedroom boasts handsome wooden beams



Modern addition: The master bedroom's stylish en-suite wet room

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