

A family affair

Any parent will tell you that holidays are less stressful if the younger members of the family are having fun. So check out these family friendly breaks and win brownie points with the bairns



Bona Lighthouse, Loch Ness

Reviewed by Tracey and Ryan Faulds from Edinburgh

Travelling from Edinburgh up to Inverness on a Saturday morning, we drove through scorching sun, sleet, hailstones and snow to arrive late afternoon at the beautiful Bona Lighthouse – situated at the entrance to Loch Dalfour, at the northern end of Loch Ness. It was at one time the smallest manned lighthouse in the UK.

Bona Lighthouse has now been refurbished into a beautiful cottage, while still retaining many of its original features. The stunning master bedroom upstairs, with ensuite bathroom, has a breathtaking view overlooking the loch. Our seven-year-old son loved watching the boats sailing up and down, whilst at the same time looking out for the Loch Ness monster!

Downstairs comprises a beautiful country style kitchen, lounge with wood burning fire and another double bedroom with two very comfortable single beds. The house is spectacular, everything is very plush and has been fitted out to a very high standard.

On Sunday morning, after a very pleasant evening, we left the lighthouse for a five-minute drive along the road, which takes you to the Loch Ness Centre and Exhibition, which is great fun for both children and adults – the hi-tech multi-media presentation takes you through seven themed areas and 500 million years of history, natural mystery and legend, revealing the unique environment of Loch Ness and the famous Nessie legend.

Following this, and after lunch in the nearby cafe, we headed along the road for a Jacobite Cruise on Loch Ness – a two-hour tour, departing from Dochgarroch Lock, where you hear about all the history of the loch, taking in the sights of Bona Lighthouse, Urquhart Castle and the crash site of a World War Two Wellington Bomber. Our son particularly enjoyed the cruise as he'd never been on a boat before – and, of course, he spent most of his time looking out the window for Nessie!

We thoroughly enjoyed our stay at Bona Lighthouse. Inverness is a beautiful part of the country – there's plenty of activities for kids and it's great to be able to take in some of the history. We'll definitely be going back.

Prices from £85 per night

The Plockton Hotel, Plockton

Reviewed by the Ferguson/Scratcherd family from Haddington

We arrived at the Plockton Hotel having experienced four seasons on the way up the road, and were very much looking forward to our holiday. On arrival, we were shown through to a small reception area by the friendly staff. There were a selection of books available, which had seen better days. As a family with a six-year-old and 13-year-old, we felt this area could have benefited from a bit of an update and a stock of more interesting books, activities and pictures. We were then shown to our room, which was large and comfortable, and had wifi connection to provide entertainment for the children.

We decided to opt for dinner in the bar area. It had a good lively atmosphere and was clearly popular. The service was excellent. The menu was extensive, offered a range of local seafood and other options. Our six-year-old opted for a cowboy burger, which looked decent and appeared to taste good. Our 13-year-old, commented that her salmon was very nice and 'just how salmon should taste'. Dad had venison pie, which was stuffed full of succulent meat and was devoured in minutes. I had the fish platter. It was fantastic – fresh with a good range of fish and sauces. The meal was excellent value for money and could compete with, if not better, many high-end fish restaurants. Pudding did not disappoint either. A particular favourite was the dark chocolate tart, which was homemade, light and sweet. Breakfast was good, offering a range of healthier options rather than just the usual cooked breakfast. In summary, a rewarding culinary experience!

Plockton is a vibrant community with some interesting nooks and crannies and a developing arts and crafts community – watch out for Jane McKenna a local artist. The Plockton Hotel is situated on the waterfront and provides a great base to explore, walk or cycle around this area.

Prices from £90 per room per night



Treescape, Elie, Fife**Reviewed by The Bailey family and friends from East Linton**

It is rare to find a property that looks as good as Treescape that doesn't make me nervous. Little hands are unbelievably adept at smashing, trashing or covering in random sticky substances, anything remotely aesthetically pleasing. But Treescape is extremely child friendly and it looks good. So good in fact, that I spent a lot of time photographing the design features in every room in the vain hope that one day I may have a home that looks half as stylish. And while I was coveting the fixtures and fittings, the children were having a ball with the toy box full of dressing up clothes, the massive 3D TV, the shed full of bikes and outdoor toys and the beautiful garden grounds.

Treescape is an orangery style property surrounded by glass and full of warm oak, set in the grounds of Elie House, where herons fly overhead and deer gather in the field at the bottom of the garden. It is a short walk from the pretty village of Elie with its stunning beach and delectable deli.

We loved the welcome hamper full of local goodies



which awaited our arrival and the well equipped and stylish kitchen which made self-catering a joy.

The house comfortably sleeps ten people with Tempur mattresses on every bed, the children's room with oak bunk beds, more toys and snugly dressing gowns proving a particular favourite. And once the little ones had exhausted themselves in the fresh air and were tucked up in the bunks, the grown ups enjoyed a glass of wine on the sunny patio and later relaxed in the Bo Concept loungers. Bliss for little and large people alike, what more could you want from a holiday?

Prices from £1850 per week

**FIELD FACTS****1) Bona Lighthouse**

Tel: 0870 010 0034
www.canalsidecottages.co.uk

2) The Plockton Hotel

Tel: 01599 544274
www.plocktonhotel.co.uk

3) Treescape

Email: info@treescapeelie.com
www.treescapeelie.com

4) The Bay Hotel

Tel: 01592 892222
www.thebayhotel.net

5) The Highland Club

Tel: 020 3478 3897
www.thehighlandclub.co.uk

**The Bay Hotel, Kinghorn, Fife****Reviewed by the Brewer family from Perthshire**

On arrival at The Bay Hotel we were allocated a family suite. The accommodation was a modern, well-appointed split-level room. The best feature, however, was a large balcony, providing a vista that stretched from the Forth Bridges right along the coastline.

Our children, Rana, 13, and Cole, 8, represent very different tastes in entertainment requirements and interests. While the large snooker room and gym were better suited to active adults, a choice of swimming pool and water facilities, soft play area, arcade and outdoor play park were more than adequate distractions. In the summer, access to the large sandy beach opposite will add to that attraction. In-room high speed internet access was also available.

The hotel excels at breakfast, notably the full Bay Scottish. The evening meal balanced the type of menu that appeals to children, with a full range for the adults. Finally, a special mention for the staff, who were exceptionally welcoming, accommodating and friendly, especially to our children.

Prices for the Executive Family Suite from £142 B&B

The Highland Club, Fort Augustus**Reviewed by Sharon Keane, James Corrigan and family from Glasgow**

The Highland Club is set on the shores of Loch Ness in 20 acres of beautiful land and faced with a spectacular, Grade A, gothic-style fortification, which was later transformed into St Benedict's Abbey.

The pool, sauna and steam room are set in the original chapel, which has views across the Great Glen. The Highland Club lounge, formerly the monks refectory, holds a full-size snooker table, large games cupboard and comfy sofas to relax in.

We stayed in the Alexander Suite, which was a spacious apartment with glorious views across the gardens up Loch Ness. Our suite slept six people, with plenty of room for the kids to sleep in their twin beds and play just outside the patio doors. We even had our very own Mr & Mrs Pheasant who came right up to the window.

The master bedroom with en suite was decorated to a very high standard. The living area – dining with open-plan kitchen area – was also beautifully decorated, with many modern conveniences.

The Highland Club is a truly magnificent, breathtaking place with plenty activities for the kids, including tennis courts, badminton, croquet, boules, cricket, football or giant chess on the cloistered lawn. I would thoroughly recommend this for your next family break.

Prices for Alexander Suite from £520 per week

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