

# Make a Pit stop

**DOWN BY THE RIVERSIDE...**  
There are lots of activities on offer on the Tummel

Quaint town of Pitlochry is perfectly placed to enjoy the food, drink and culture in glorious Perthshire countryside

BY CRAIG MCQUEEN

**S**ituated right in the heart of Scotland, Highland Perthshire isn't far away wherever you happen to be.

Steeped in history, it's a beautiful part of the country that can keep even the fussiest of holidaymakers happy, regardless of what they're looking for.

And so it was the perfect location for a midweek spring break as the memories of winter melted away.

We stayed in the picturesque town of Pitlochry at the magnificent Pine Trees Hotel, a former mansion house set in 10 acres of woodland which dates back to 1892, and which now boasts 20 rooms.

We slept in the hotel's impressive Molyneux Suite with four-poster bed and a huge living room, and dined in the exquisite garden restaurant.

Given the location, the restaurant naturally offers the best in Scottish produce and, if you fancy being adventurous, there's lots to choose from.

Starters such as the haggis tartlet, sweet-cured Orkney herring and venison terrine were delicious, while for mains you can opt for favourites such as roast chump of Perthshire lamb or pan-fried fillet of sea bass, or you can try something a little bit different.

I was intrigued by the pigeon in sherry sauce which lived up to its billing, and so I followed it the next night with pheasant, which was just as special.

My only regret was not being around long enough to sample the guinea

fowl. But the quality of the hotel and its food wasn't the only plus point. The town of Pitlochry itself is also a great location to while away a few hours.

Atholl Road, the town's Victorian-style thoroughfare, features a mix of shops including knitwear, outdoor gear, gifts and souvenirs. Among the more quirky outlets are The Christmas Shop, selling festive decorations all-year-round, and The Sheep Shop, which stocks all things woolly and ovine-related.

If you get the chance, stop off at Hettie's Tearooms and order a slice of triple-layered Signature Cake. Just make sure you leave enough time before dinner.

Pitlochry is also well-placed if whisky is your poison. The Edradour Distillery revels in its title as the smallest whisky distillery in Scotland, with three men working to produce just 12 caskets of the spirit a week, which is then aged for 10 years.

Then there's the Blair Athol Distillery, one of Scotland's oldest, dating back to the 18th century and now owned by Bell's.

However, the Pitlochry area isn't all

about food and drink. Lovers of the great outdoors will be in their element.

The town itself has eight marked trails that take in woods, rivers and hills, while a popular climb for the more energetic is the 2759ft Ben Vrackie, which offers commanding views of Pitlochry and the surrounding glens.

Fans of watersports should head to the town's Nae Limits adventure centre, where there's everything from white-water rafting to canyoning, as well as abseiling, bungee jumping, clay pigeon shooting and quad biking.

Other famous attractions include the Pitlochry Dam and Fish Ladder, where salmon negotiate the specially-constructed ladder allowing them to bypass Pitlochry Dam into the man-made Loch Faskally.

And if it's culture you're after, Pitlochry Festival Theatre lies on the banks of the River Tummel and has a great reputation for offering a selection of drama and comedy, especially during the festival months of May to October.

Further up the A9, Blair Castle is worth a visit. The famous landmark is the seat of the Dukes of Atholl and

home to Britain's only private army, with 32 rooms open to the public displaying a wealth of arms, porcelain, paintings and other works.

Just north of there you'll find The House of Bruar, the prestigious country store offering everything from fine cashmere clothing and the best in Scottish produce to contemporary art.

Another fascinating day out can be had at the Scottish Crannog Centre at Kenmore on the banks of Loch Tay. Featuring a unique reconstruction of an early Iron Age loch-dwelling, the centre offers a glimpse into life in Scotland some 5000 years ago.

And with so many options of different things to do within such a short area, it was just as well that the Pine Trees Hotel was the ideal place to relax afterwards.

Not only is a meal in their Garden Restaurant a highlight in itself, but afterwards you can sink into one of the big sofas in front of the log fire with a whisky. It's no surprise to learn past guests have fallen asleep there.

And after a hard day's exploring in the Perthshire countryside, who can blame them?



## Factfile

- Craig stayed at the Pine Trees Hotel, Strathview Terrace, Pitlochry. For bookings and more information, call the hotel on 01796 472 121 or visit [www.pinetreeshotel.co.uk](http://www.pinetreeshotel.co.uk).