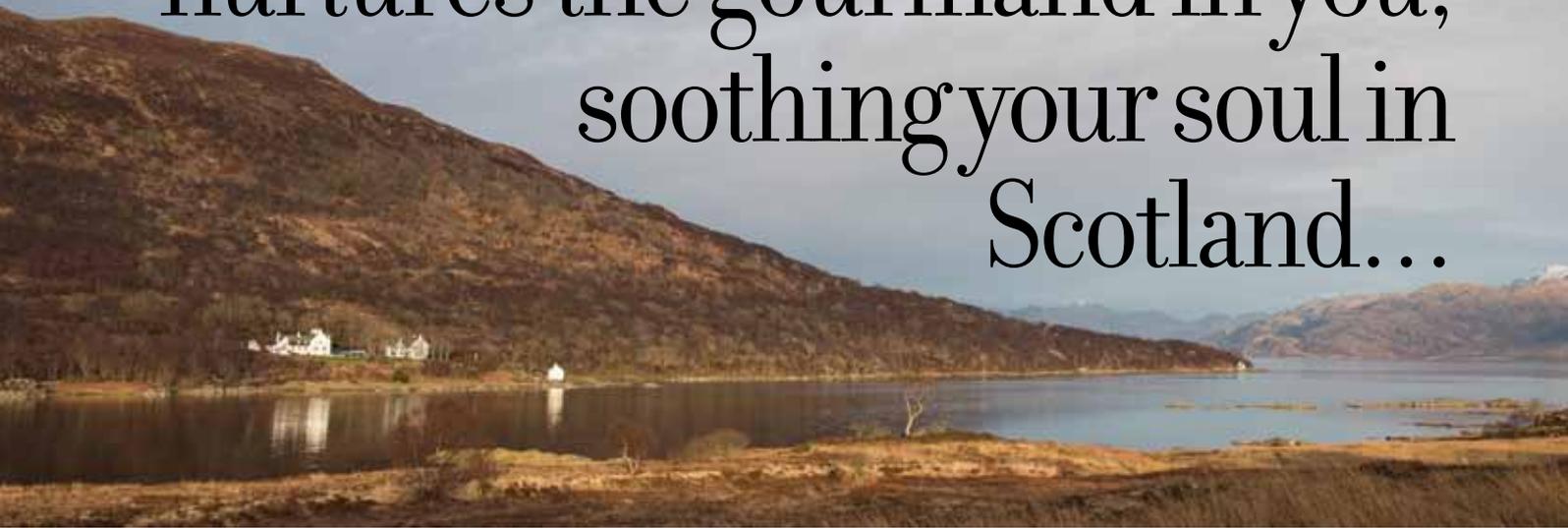


Other-worldly Kinloch Lodge nurtures the gourmand in you, soothing your soul in Scotland...



In a long while, nothing has conjured up cosy quite like my recent luxurious Michelin gourmet stay at Kinloch Lodge. The boutique hotel enviably sits within the stunning Isle of Skye scenery. Founded by the MacDonald family, whose family house it originally was, that homely feeling remains. As Claire MacDonald succinctly summarises herself in her acclaimed book *Lifting the Lid*, “guests can choose to walk, snooze by one of our three log fires, relax and generally recharge their batteries for their busy lives”. I certainly did. Having flown into Inverness, I must admit as I sat, mindlessly staring out the train window from Inverness to Kyle of Lochalsh (thankfully the internet was so rotten work wasn’t an option), I was grateful for the train conductor’s advice, “sit on the right hand side for the best views”. I suggest you do the same, for the striking ethereal vistas leave you dumbfounded and thankful to be alive.



A short taxi ride from the station, past the famed black and red mountains or Cuillin, with the tip of the red Beinn Na Caillich being home to the fabled ashes of a Norwegian Princess, along the controversial previously tolled, now free, Skye bridge, you feel you are entering a fairytale land, culminating in reaching Kinloch Lodge. With my feet barely through the door, I was welcomed by a beaming smile from Isabella, the MacDonald daughter at the helm of the lodge and the epitome of ‘hostess with the mostest’, as she offered me homemade, local Orkney butter infused sublime Scottish shortbread. The melt-in-the-mouth sensation set the benchmark for the mouthwatering meals yet to come, all crafted and cooked by Michelin starred chef Marcello Tully. Whether you choose his set menu or go à la carte, fresh, locally sourced produce presented impeccably are guaranteed. Every mealtime is an experience to be relished, but for me, having eaten umpteen breakfasts in hotels around the world, I shan’t be forgetting the Kinloch breakfast anytime soon. The first round brought to the table by well mannered staff showing just enough interest to be friendly but not too much to be irritating, comprised freshly squeezed orange juice, a range of Claire’s homemade jams – the lime marmalade is a winner – decent grainy toast, delectable local butter, scrumptious crumbly warm straight-from-the-oven scones and then whatever you choose as a main event. I chose Kedgeree, one of my all-time favourites; I can sincerely say, this creamy, perfectly balanced in spice, and generous haddock filled rice delight, was the best I have ever devoured.



Keen cooks and aspirational chefs will be delighted to know they can book a one-to-one cooking class with the affable Marcello. Albeit in a working kitchen, he cheerfully and calmly showed me the ropes around his top-notch cuisine, so confidently; I am sure I can replicate it at home – luckily you are given recipes from your class to take away. Although it is tough to tear yourself away from Kinloch, it is worth using spare time between meals to explore the fruits of the surrounding area. Try the nearby ‘The Oyster Shed’ literally a shack on a hill, looking out over the sea in which the fresh lobster, mussels and of course oysters on offer, have just been caught. Explore the oldest continuously inhabited castle in Scotland; Dunvegan Castle and spot the seals on neighbouring Loch Dunvegan’s rocks. Take a dip (weather dependent) in the renowned healing pools of Skye or treat yourself to an afternoon tea only Claridges would be competition for, followed by a walk at Watnish Farm.

As well as romantic recollections of Kinloch, as I left they also left me with a packed lunch for the journey home. As I opened my smoked salmon and cream cheese sandwich parcel, I vowed both to visit the gym and book a return flight soon...

Written by Yasemen Kaner-White