

Groups of people played sports and games, sang joyfully and there was even

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the hot sun beating down. Our guide, by the way, had on thin tennis shoes

The sight of a Chinese worker taking a break smoking a cigarette

# A touch of luxury set in a rugged Highland landscape

Lorna Paterson sets off through the snow to experience a weekend break relaxing in the glow of log fires at the Torridon Hotel

I HAVE to be honest, as the snow came down, I wasn't entirely sure our decision to get in the car and drive across the Highlands was the best one we'd ever made.

But still, we arrived in one piece after a slow and cautious drive, with only one or two near misses with oncoming cars, sheep and a stag.

We were expecting peace and tranquillity coupled with fine dining, luxury and quality.

Sounds good doesn't it? And it was.

We were staying at the newly-refurbished Torridon Hotel — a grand Victorian shooting lodge on the shores of Upper Loch Torridon on the west coast.

It was perfect. And as for the snow, our opinion of that soon changed too.

At first we thought it might have blighted our trip, but in fact it made it all the more wonderful.

The crisp white of the surrounding snow-covered mountains glistened in the crystal water, a perfect fairytale setting.

We were welcomed with a selection of homebakes and fresh pots of coffee and tea in the grand drawing room.

The hotel itself comprises 19 ensuite bedrooms and has recently been revamped by owners Daniel and Rohaise Rose-Bristow.

They have created a

fresh and contemporary place to stay, but at the same time have been careful to retain much of the building's traditional style.

With plenty of space to relax, burning log fires to cosy up alongside and a whisky bar showcasing 320 single malt whiskies, we were starting to wonder what more you could want.

Well, how about an award-winning restaurant, activity centre, self catering lodge and, for those on a budget, accommodation to suit the more modest of purses.

We soon realised we didn't need to look any further to find just that.

It was all here at the Torridon — the inn, the restaurant, the boat house and activities. Not quite all under one roof, but certainly all within the 58 acres of parkland at the head of the loch and all just 65 miles from Inverness.

It was the right place to be, whether just for one night away, a weekend stay, week-long break or just dinner.

After just over an hour in the car and bellies full of delicious tea and cakes we were ready to try something a little more active.

We had fancied trying our luck at kayaking, just one of the activities on offer. Others include rock climbing, gorge scrambling, falconry, clay pigeon shooting and fly fishing, to name but a few.



□ The Torridon Hotel — a base from which to enjoy the great outdoors.

While neither of us mind getting wet, we did however, soon agree that our lack of boating skills combined with temperatures which had now dipped well below freezing it was perhaps not the best day to attempt a relaxing paddle.

Instead, we wrapped up warm and opted for a gentle stroll around the loch to admire the spectacular scenery.

After that it was back to the hotel to get warmed up and ready for dinner.

First, it was drinks and canapés in the drawing room, followed by a five-course meal in the restaurant and then to the whisky bar to get sampling. Well, it would be rude not to.

We don't claim to be foodies, in fact far from it, with our usual weekend away normally involving a camping stove. That aside, however, I'd like to think we know when we've tasted truly divine food, prepared and cooked with only the greatest of care and attention.

And that was what we got. One of the best meals we've ever tasted.

The following day, we were treated to much of the same at breakfast, but sadly that meant our trip was coming to an end.

There was just time for one more relax in front of the log fire, before packing up.

As we departed, so did the snow and melting with it was our fairytale weekend.

## Holiday facts

ONE night's stay at the Torridon Hotel from £125 per room, including dinner, bed and breakfast.

One night's stay at the Inn from £40 per person, including continental breakfast.

Five course menu at the restaurant from £40 per person.

For details look up [www.thetorridon.com](http://www.thetorridon.com)

**Forthcoming events** — Glorious Cheese Weekend on 22nd and 23rd February to celebrate The Torridon's success at winning Best Cheese Board at the recent British Cheese Awards. The cheese master class will be led by author, aficionado and leading authority on cheese Juliet Harbutt. For more details contact the hotel on 01445 791242.

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