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GREAT ESCAPE PERTHSHIRE



Characterised by its breathtaking landscape, this area of central Scotland is one of interior designer Katharine Pooley's favourite destinations. Here, she reveals the places that no visit would be complete without



STAY

Set among gently rolling hills and home to the famous golf course, **Gleneagles**, gleneagles.com, from £345 a night, also has a great spa and an exceptional whisky room. 'My family's holiday home, **Forter Castle**, fortercastle.com, is a true highland retreat. The 16th-century property, bought by my father in 1998 and painstakingly restored, is an excellent base for hiking and available to hire from £2,700 for three nights. Nearby, **Glenisla Hotel**, glenisla-hotel.com, is an old coaching inn with a warm, rustic ambience and hearty menu; from £80 a night for two b&b.

EAT

For something extra special, try **Kinloch House**, kinlochhouse.com, near Blairgowrie. It serves excellent game dishes as well as Aberdeen Angus beef, fish and fresh produce from its garden. I love the scones served for afternoon tea at **Dalmunzie Castle Hotel**, dalmunzie.com, while dinner, featuring dishes such as roast saddle of Highland venison, is always memorable. It's also perfect for a spot of golf and, although the course is quite small (nine holes), it's deceptively challenging due to its narrow fairways and elevated greens.

SHOP

Scottish country clothing and lifestyle store **The House of Bruar**, houseofbruar.com, in Pitlochry, has amazing home accessories and a wonderful collection of cashmere. Visiting it is always a part of one of my favourite days out, whenever I'm in Perthshire. Last time, I stocked up on cashmere sweaters and tartan dog beds. **Heart of Atholl**, in Blair Atholl, offers a distinctive range of ceramics, lighting, painted furniture and jewellery. It is a must-visit when dropping into nearby **Blair Castle**, blair-castle.co.uk.

VISIT

Ballater, a picturesque village in Cairngorms National Park, is a great place to visit with the family. Make sure you see the **old royal railway station**, once used by Queen Victoria. If you're in the area on a Sunday, you might even see the Queen going to church as you pass Balmoral Castle. Another wonderful destination is **Pitlochry**, pitlochry.org. The burgh lies on the River Tummel and has many shops, restaurants and distilleries. **Lunan Bay** is my favourite beach in Scotland. Framed by low cliffs, it is popular for surfing, horse riding and traditional angling.