

# Staycation at Karma Lake of Menteith

There are times I long to be religious. Wouldn't it be pleasant to truly believe a deity was looking out for you? My only belief is that the fortunate parts of my life are due in no small part to sheer luck and it would be arrogant to think otherwise.

I'll tell you who was blessed though, the Minister who occupied the Manse at the Lake of Menteith. The church: lovely. The congregation: I Imagine easy to marry, christen and bury. The Manse House? Glorious! When The Men Of The Cloth were preaching that God took care of his subjects, he must have been thinking. "And He's got a real soft spot for me!"



Sadly for the clergy the Manse house has now been a hotel for over 100 years. Recently taken over by the Karma Group who own hotels all over the world, it's become what you might describe as the boutique side of the hospitality spectrum accommodating up to 48 guests. With a fresh bar, a cosy and relaxed lounge space featuring plenty of board games, not to mention an intriguing Malt Vault, the hotel, although small, boasts some lovely areas to suit your mood. We would also have enjoyed the outdoor seating and loungers overlooking the lake had the weather been on our side.

A homely feel and warm welcome was on hand for our arrival and we were more than delighted with our room overlooking the lake and so vast it certainly had the wow factor. Room 1 was verging on a suite with a dressing space leading to a vast bathroom with walk in shower, roll top bath and twin sinks. The decor throughout is luxurious and has clearly been thoughtfully curated with tasteful style accents. Touches such as a proper coffee machine and lovely toiletries really made us feel special. More so when we donned the fluffy white bathrobes and tucked into a complimentary Tunnocks Tea Cake.

When I say 'we' I'm referring to me and my ten year old daughter. Whilst this room is probably designed for lovers or people on their seventh wedding anniversary looking for a revival of sorts, I see nothing wrong with introducing my daughter to the finer things in life and she was most impressed with the whole experience. You could easily have fitted a family of four in the huge bed we had.

The crowning glory of the hotel's public spaces is the conservatory where the restaurant and breakfast service are situated. To enjoy dinner with the stunning view of the vast lake and rolling hills was incredibly special. The menu here caters for large appetites. I enjoyed an extremely generous roast dinner on our first night but my favourite part of the meal was a delicate Ham Hock Terrine to start. The service is incredibly warm and friendly particularly to the younger guests which is always appreciated.



After a terrific nights sleep we partook of breakfast which featured a beautiful selection of continental treats, fruit and pastries along with whatever you'd like cooked. The misty view of the lake was incredibly relaxing but we were eating early as there is so much to do in this area it would be a shame to miss it.

For our day trip we opted for Blair Drummond Safari Park, an attraction I haven't visited for over 30 years. My how things have changed there. It definitely has the feel of a safari park rather than a zoo., the enclosures being pretty vast and at each an opportunity to meet the keepers and ask any questions you like. Naturally there's an emphasis on conservation and the keepers share their knowledge with great knowledge and enthusiasm. We were especially taken with the giraffes and sea lions, who put on a great display but every trained move was demonstrating behaviour in the wild. Unfortunately the weather wasn't playing ball that weekend but on a good day a family could certainly get their money's worth. One really nice addition is the picnic tables that have

a barbeque attached. We did the wild enclosure drive-through a couple of times and it was special to get up close and personal with the wildlife although we were mildly disappointed the Macaques didn't fancy climbing on our car, yet relieved the lions appeared to have been well fed that day.

Next time we'll definitely check out the birds of prey displays but due to the rain we thought we'd simply head back and enjoy our room for a few hours. Dinner that night was another relaxed affair and I was lucky enough to sample some grilled trout and hollandaise fresh from the lake. We spent some time in the bar after dinner, particularly because some visitors had come in with their three golden retrievers. Although the weather was dreich it was still warm but I'd love to return in winter and see the spectacular fire on in the bar.

We were rather sad to be leaving during our last breakfast and could easily have stayed another couple of nights. Karma, Lake of Menteith have a superb location for the views and relaxation alone but if you're the more active types there are plenty of good walks and of course, fishing. There are also plenty of places to visit if you fancy exploring wildlife or something more historic like Doune Palace or Stirling Castle. We took the opportunity to see The Kelpies on our return journey to Edinburgh which was well worth stopping off for.

However we did linger over our last breakfast: that tranquil view. For my daughter and I, there was one thing we could both agree on: there is a Deity: Mother Nature delivers and we can all bask in her glory here.

The Karma group have a membership option where a couple can join for three years at the cost of £2,995 which gives you 21 nights accommodation at some of their resorts over India, Europe, Uk, Africa and Southeast Asia, along with other discounts and member benefits.



