

# 'KING OF THE CASTLE'

Six Scotland locations that might be recommended by your favourite tailor, where you simply could not arrive without your tweed hunting jacket!



Turnberry golf course

© Westin Turnberry Resort

There's no more Scottish an image than that of a castle surrounded by swirling mist, and most of Scotland's castles ooze a colourful and turbulent history — the stuff of swashbucklers, legends and ghost stories. All the classic imagery can be found in abundance — secret passageways, spiral staircases, dungeons, haunted rooms, four-poster beds, aged oil paintings, chandeliers, suits of armour, stuffed game and roaring log fires — and the good news is that you can spend the night at many of these castles.

Generally there are two types of castle hotels — those operated as regular hotels with rooms rented individually by the night and castles that must be rented on an exclusive basis, where your group will have sole occupancy. These are usually smaller luxury castles, with several guest bedrooms, and that perhaps offer the most personal castle experience of all.

## MOST CASTLES HAVE CLASSIC OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES SUCH AS GOLFING, DEER STALKING, GAME SHOOTING AND FLY FISHING RIGHT ON THEIR DOORSTEP OR A SHORT DRIVE AWAY

Most castles have classic outdoor activities such as golfing, deer stalking, game shooting and fly fishing right on their doorstep or a short drive away. Here are six recommendations for a made-to-measure stay in Scotland:

### CULZEAN CASTLE/AYRSHIRE

There's a sense of anticipation as you drive along the twisting wooded lane towards the front door of this storybook castle. In a truly spectacular setting, Culzean stands dramatically on a rocky promontory on the Ayrshire

coast commanding views across the sea to the mountains of Arran and the Mull of Kintyre. Designed by noted Scottish architect Robert Adam, Culzean is considered one of the finest examples of a Georgian castle in the country, the Oval Staircase and Circular Saloon being standout features of his work. The castle has strong US connections, and the Scottish people donated the top floor to General Dwight D. Eisenhower after World War II, as a token of their appreciation for his role in the victory. Besides Eisenhower memorabilia and fine 18<sup>th</sup>-century furniture, there's an extensive collection of armour and weapons dating from the 17th century.

The luxury Eisenhower apartment has six double/twin bedrooms that are available as either individual accommodation or for groups of up to 12. Fine Scottish cuisine is served in the dining room and guests can relax in the drawing room, which offers dramatic sea views. Culzean is a unique choice for the discerning traveller. A few miles down the coast awaits the world-class links of Turnberry, home to the British Open Championship 2009, and polls now regularly acknowledge the 'Ailsa' as one of Britain's top three courses, with regular rankings within the world's top 20.

The ninth (Bruce's Castle) is a contender for Turnberry's trademark hole. Adjacent to the famous lighthouse and the remains of Robert the Bruce's Castle (Scottish King from 1306-1329), this 452-yard par-4 has no bunkers, yet is a daunting par-4, especially from the Championship tee which is perched on a rocky promontory on the edge of the sea.

Culzean Castle & Country Park  
Maybole  
Ayrshire  
KA19 8LE  
T: +44(0) 8444 932149  
[www.culzeanexperience.org](http://www.culzeanexperience.org)

### FENTON TOWER/EDINBURGH REGION

Originally built in the mid-16th century, this ancient monument was in virtual ruins when Ian Simpson and his life-long friend John Macaskill, decided to start the Tower's restoration in 1998. Because it's a listed ancient

monument and a Grade A-listed building, Historic Scotland supervised the meticulous restoration, which included using materials identical to those with which it was originally built.

Today, the tower combines five-star luxury and sophistication with the informality of a private home and is available for exclusive rental for 8 to 12 guests, or individually rented rooms on a nightly basis. Located just 20 miles east of Edinburgh, Fenton Tower is the castle of choice if you are interested in playing Muirfield or any of the fifteen or so other courses within a ten-mile drive.

If game shooting or fishing is more your thing, then goose, partridge and pheasant shoots (when in season) for up to eight guns and river and loch fishing including salmon fishing on the famous River Tweed can also be arranged.

Fenton Tower  
Kingston  
North Berwick  
EH39 5JH  
T: +44(0) 1620 890089  
[www.fentontower.co.uk](http://www.fentontower.co.uk)

### ETHIE CASTLE/EAST COAST

An ancient sandstone keep dating from the 14<sup>th</sup> Century, Ethie Castle is reputed to be Scotland's second oldest permanently inhabited castle, and was immortalized by Sir Walter Scott as 'Knockwinnoch' in the novel *The Antiquary*. In recent years it has been meticulously restored and maintained and is currently the residence of the de Morgan family.

"First and foremost, this is a family home, but we have three rooms available and can accommodate up to eight people," says Kirtsin de Morgan. "We are well positioned for outdoor pursuits and when it comes to fly fishing for salmon and brown trout you can take your pick from the North Esk and South Esk rivers and there's plenty of estates in the area where we can also arrange shooting trips," she adds.

Golf is also well catered for, and a 30-minute drive down the Angus coastline is the town of Carnoustie and home to the renowned Championship Course. There's nothing to match the experience of playing one of the most famous and challenging courses in world

golf, and the finishing hole with the clubhouse in the background is a highlight. A scene of major drama in the 99 and 07 British Opens, this 510-yard par-4 will play as a par-5 for the majority of golfers, even from the front markers. Faced with a tee shot most likely into the wind, you must negotiate the notorious Barry Burn that winds across the fairway like an agitated snake.

*Ethie Castle*  
*Inverkeilor, by Arbroath*  
 Angus  
 DD11 5SP  
 T: +44(0) 1241 830434  
 www.ethiecastle.com

#### DORNOCH CASTLE HOTEL/ HIGHLANDS

The 15th century Dornoch Castle Hotel is situated in private and beautifully manicured gardens opposite the inspiring 12th century Dornoch Cathedral. Steeped in Scottish history with stories of witchcraft, a secret underground passageway connecting the Castle and Cathedral and a harmless ghost—an unhappy sheep-rustler by the name of Andrew McCornish who was imprisoned in the vaulted dungeons below the Tower and was reputedly seen by the Minister of Avoch towards the end of the last century. The 24 en-suite bedrooms are tastefully decorated with four deluxe rooms located in the original 15th century castle, together with the bar and reception.

Dornoch Castle Hotel is still magnificent, and is perfectly situated for playing the hallowed links of Royal Dornoch, which is only a well-struck drive and a 5-iron away.

Golf was first played here as far back as 1616, when the Earl of Sutherland ordered clubs and balls to take up the game that was becoming so popular further south, which makes Royal Dornoch the third-oldest golfing community in Scotland.

*“After the second hole, you round a corner, pass a hedge and golfing heaven breaks loose.”* These words on the club’s website are temptation enough, but once you go around the said corner, everything about this world top 20 course is right in front of you. Framed between the hills and mountains to the left and the wild North Sea is a rich tapestry of undulating fairways and plateau greens interspersed with flowering yellow gorse. Magical. Other top courses in the area worth playing include Brora, Nairn and Castle Stuart.

*Dornoch Castle Hotel*  
 Castle Street  
 Dornoch  
 Sutherland  
 IV25 3SD  
 T: +44(0) 1862 810216  
 www.dornochcastlehotel.com

#### MYRES CASTLE/FIFE

This is a five-star exclusive-use castle only a 45-minute drive from Edinburgh in the Kingdom of Fife. Set within a 44-acre estate of gardens and parkland, the original Myres Castle was a Z-plan fortress dating from around 1530 and has been altered and extended over the years. The square-tower top of grey ashlar was added in 1616, providing a striking contrast to the ochre harling of the rest of the castle.

There are nine guest bedrooms in all, and groups as small as 12 may rent the castle and all it contains for a minimum two-night stay. The full-time staff includes an award-winning chef, who is equally adept at rustling up a casual supper around the solid oak table of the cosy Victorian Kitchen to something grander in the formal setting of the magnificent dining room.

Guests can enjoy clay pigeon shooting, croquet on the front lawn, fishing, cooking lessons, a falconry display, or simply relax in the library with a good book and a glass of single malt. Myres is also well situated for playing the collection of top-drawer golf courses in the St Andrews area including the

Old Course, Kingsbarns and the Castle Course.

*Myres Castle*  
 Auchtermuchty  
 Fife  
 KY14 7EW  
 T: +44(0) 1337 828350  
 www.myrescastle.com

#### MAR HALL/GLASGOW REGION

Although it doesn’t really count as a castle, this 19<sup>th</sup>-century Gothic Mansion (built in 1828) contains as much history and romance as any ancient fortress, and holds many fascinating stories, with references made to the likes of Mary Queen of Scots and Robert the Bruce. Looking at the breathtaking views that surround Mar Hall, it’s difficult to believe that it’s only a short drive from Glasgow city centre and the International Airport.

Featuring 53 lavishly designed bedrooms (many with four-poster beds), and fine dining, five-star Mar Hall also introduces the first Aveda Concept Spa in the United Kingdom. The Spa has 12 treatment rooms, Vichy showers, hair and nail salon, swimming pool and a relaxation lounge serving healthy snacks and organic juices.

*Mar Hall Hotel*  
 Bishopton  
 Renfrewshire  
 PA7 5NW  
 T: +44(0) 1418 129999  
 www.marhall.com

*Andrew Marshall*

#### FURTHER INFORMATION & USEFUL WEBSITES

[www.visitscotland.com](http://www.visitscotland.com)  
[www.deerstalkingscotland.co.uk](http://www.deerstalkingscotland.co.uk)  
[www.safariinscotland.com](http://www.safariinscotland.com)  
[www.flyfishing-scotland.net](http://www.flyfishing-scotland.net)



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