

Spectacular golf resort restored to its former glory

Kintyre boasts the best of Scotland

I'D forgotten how stunning the Kintyre peninsula is, it'd been far too long since I ventured to this remote and utterly beautiful part of Scotland.

As luck would have it when we visited in mid-April we were blessed by sunny, clear skies and the views over to Islay, Jura, Gigha and the Antrim coast of Northern Ireland were breathtaking.

I was there to check out one of the most exciting projects in Argyll for quite some time — the newly revamped Ugdale Hotel in Machrihanish.

A century ago Machrihanish was a bustling holiday resort, especially popular with Glaswegians who would arrive at nearby Campbeltown on one of the many steamers that serviced the area.

Although the fame of the links golf has never wavered (Machrihanish Golf Club dates back to 1876 and is widely recognised as one of Scotland's great links courses), the subsequent rise of foreign travel and a fall in the local population saw that golden era come to an end by the 1970s.

That's all about to change. Rebranded as a major golf resort, today's visitors are mainly golfers (or whisky aficionados or both), though it's a popular area for surfers and walkers too.

The great news for all is that the American company, Southworth Development, has now restored two once-loved hotels in this area — the Ugdale at Machrihanish and the Royal in Campbeltown.

The first stage of the £14 million



KINTYRE
BY KATIE WOOD

project was the new Machrihanish Dunes links golf course — opened in 2009 and the first to be built on a Site of Special Scientific Interest and it's an example of how to work with, and not against, the landscape.

Blended into the natural humps and hollows of the dunes, Hebridean sheep graze on the course (saves lawn mowing) and the rough is studded with wild flowers, including orchids.

The views are spectacular with big open skies floating down to a sea studded with islands. The course is a real challenge for even the most

accomplished golfers, with an ever-present wind teasing you away from narrow fairways and into the rough.

It's a challenge you'll love — if you can tear your eyes away from the scenery.

The final phase of the revamped golf resort was the re-opening of the Ugdale Hotel and the Royal Hotel in Campbeltown last month.

The Machrihanish Golf Club's old clubhouse has been refurbished and renamed the Old Clubhouse Pub. And eight beautifully-finished two-bedroom cottages have been built right by the shore of Machrihanish Bay.

If you love the "royal and ancient game" this is a Mecca right up there with Gleneagles and Turnberry.

The Ugdale golf cottages are traditionally designed with leather chairs and dark polished furniture. They have all mod cons, such as power

showers and flatscreen TVs and can be rented by the night or the week with prices from a reasonable £149.

The cottages can also be purchased on a fraction basis for £9,975.

The Ugdale Hotel is a bit of a Scottish legend. Once regarded as the pinnacle of luxury accommodation in this part of Scotland it's the first time the hotel has welcomed guests in more than 30 years.

It now offers 22 luxurious rooms and suites, many overlooking the Atlantic and the golf course. It features The Kintyre Club restaurant and bar, the full-service Serenity Spa and a fitness centre.

The hotel staff ensure a proper

Scottish welcome for all and it's one of those rare resorts where you can feel really proud to be Scottish.

It showcases the best Scotland has to offer without being pretentious or overly expensive.

Be under no illusion, this is the biggest thing to happen in Kintyre for decades.

In addition to bringing valuable jobs to the area, Southworth has invested over £19.3 million in the overall project, attracting additional public funding of £2.7m.

Someone has a lot of confidence in Scottish tourism!

This is very much a development in harmony with the landscape and local community.

The locals frequent the restaurant and bar on a daily basis and you'll find yourself sitting in the bar enjoying a dram (try one of the local Campbeltown Malts such as Springbank) when suddenly a guitar appears and a sing-song starts up.

Inevitably a lot of the chat centres on how well you fared that day on the golf course, and given the challenges of the links, how many balls you lost on your round.

All agree though, that both courses are among the best in Scotland and the scenery is unbeatable.

Having a comfortable hotel from which to enjoy quality golf is a treat that can be enjoyed by all.

Though the standard is 5-star the prices are not. Rooms start from an incredible £79 and you can choose to eat in the bar or the fine-dining restaurant.

The quality of food is impressive and the menus are traditional Scottish fayre, with portions big enough to satisfy you after a six-mile trek round the Dunes course (that's six miles without deviations to find lost balls).

If you don't want to drive there you have the option of flying from Glasgow (two flights daily Mon - Fri, see glasgowairportguide.com/glasgow-international-flights-glasgow-international-to-campbeltown).

That, however, would mean missing out on the drive along the beautiful Argyll and the Kintyre coast and that stunning panorama really is worth a visit in itself.



■ The decor is traditional and classy in both hotels.



■ Sea views from the hotel are unbeatable.



■ Ugdale Hotel at Machrihanish has been lovingly restored.

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We're celebrating the grand re-opening of the landmark Royal Hotel on the picturesque Kintyre Peninsula with a special offer! Now through 31 July, stay with us for two luxurious nights at The Royal, including free golf on the UK Top-100 Machrihanish Dunes links golf course, dinner and breakfast for as little as £99* per person per night.

Traveling with a group? Our golf society, corporate and group packages start at just £49 per person.

To book, please call us at: 0800 151 3701



*This special offer applies to any two-night stay that includes Sun-Mon, Mon-Tues, Tues-Wed, or Wed-Thurs nights at The Royal Hotel through 31 July 2012. Price listed is per person per night based on double occupancy & includes VAT. Guests will receive free golf at Machrihanish Dunes Golf Club and a £15 credit per person for each night of their two-night stay good toward dining charges at the Harbourview Grille, Black Sheep Pub, Old Clubhouse Pub or The Kintyre Club. Cannot be combined with any other offer.

