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Travel: The Village at Machrihanish Dunes, Argyll



The Village at Machrihanish Dunes



KIRSTY McLuckie checks into the Village at Machrihanish Dunes, Argyll, a dream getaway for golfers or anyone who loves pampering

THE Village at Machrihanish Dunes in Argyll advertises that there are three ways to get there. The well-heeled can fly into the tiny Campbeltown Airport with what appears to be a shed for a terminal building. Flights come from Glasgow twice a week. Those coming from the central belt can take Paul McCartney's Long & Winding Road; he wrote the song about the drive over the Rest and Be Thankful pass and down the east coast of the Kintyre peninsula. Or in summer, the adventurous can come by sea, hopping on the Kintyre Express fast RIB which connects Campbeltown with Troon in Ayrshire and Ballycastle in Northern Ireland.

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HAVE YOUR SAY



The Village at Machrihanish Dunes

We did none of these, tootling across instead from the Cowal Peninsula on the Portavadie Ferry for a late autumn weekend break.

The Village at Machrihanish Dunes describes itself as the quintessential Scottish seaside resort. It is a collection of properties and facilities spread over a couple of miles; at its heart is the Machrihanish Dunes golf course, but there are also two historic hotels, beautiful stone guest cottages, a spa and five restaurants and pubs. It is tucked into the southwest corner of the Mull of Kintyre in a alternately rugged and rolling landscape, where you are never far from the sea. From points of the peninsula you can see the Ayrshire coast, Arran, Bute, Jura, Islay, Gigha and Northern Ireland.

WINING AND DINING

The key to the Village at Machrihanish is choice, so you can go formal or pubby and still get the same quality. There is a light lunch available at the golf club but for an evening meal, both the Ugadale and the Royal Hotel have traditional pubs as well as more formal dining rooms. The restored Old Clubhouse Pub at Ugadale is a great place to start with a post-round, pre-dinner drink but we moved on to The Kintyre Club to eat. It has a very exclusive feel – but then it is only open to members of the historic charitable club or guests at the hotel or cottages. The room is late Victorian grand with wood panelling and rich wallpaper and the food is beautifully cooked and presented. We dined on local steaks, fresh halibut and seafood linguine, served by charming staff. Breakfast the next morning was of particular note, again the quality of the local ingredients shone through and the deliciousness swept away any guilt at eating so much food in the same venue twice in 12 hours.



The Village at Machrihanish Dunes

The Royal Hotel's restaurant is another beautiful room, overlooking Campbeltown harbour. Here there is a more relaxed atmosphere and menu – there are steaks but also burgers and fish and chips.

BUDGET OR BOUTIQUE?

Although you can take your pick of accommodation, ranging from hotel to self catering, every choice is high quality although not necessarily expensive depending on the time of year. Picking between the two sites, The Royal Hotel offers Campbeltown on the doorstep with stunning views of its harbour, while the Ugadale site is quieter and more self contained. Both have transport between them and the golf course laid on.

ROOM SERVICE

We stayed in the Ugadale Golf Cottages which are charming stone properties equipped with all mod cons. Two en suite bedrooms in each means they would be equally suitable for two couples or a family. The decor is 'tasteful Scottish' tweed and natural fibres and they are very well equipped, with three TVs, a kitchenette and walk in double power showers.

WORTH GETTING OUT OF BED FOR

Machrihanish Dunes has been described as “the most beautiful natural golf course in the world” and there is the older Machrihanish Golf Club next door too. The other half enjoyed an exhilarating 18 holes at the back end of the season but now that the resort is quiet there are some good deals to be had and still plenty to do. The spa is a fabulous treat, whether you have played golf or not. We also walked the tidal causeway to Davaar Island to see its lighthouse, meet its herd of resident goats and discover the Victorian cave painting – a magical place.

GUESTBOOK COMMENTS

Whether you are planning a golf getaway or a pampering treat, Mach Dunes has the perfect package.

• *Winter offers at the Ugadale Hotel till 31 December or the Royal Hotel until 29 February include a choice of accommodation, a bottle of wine, daily breakfasts and a second person for just £1 more, starting at £89 per night. Call 01586 810000, or visit www.machdunes.com*