

win a VIP break in Hydro's new 'spa suite'

Be among the first to sample Peebles Hydro's ultra-luxurious new 'spa suite'.

'Spoiled for Choice' readers are being given an exclusive opportunity to win dinner and breakfast plus a night's stay in the suite - culmination of the Hydro's 125-year experience in providing the best in health and beauty.

The winner will not only have the finest accommodation in the house and enjoy all the facilities of the Hydro's leisure centre but will also be pampered with a spa treatment in the suite's own private treatment room.

To enter this competition, only open to readers of this newsletter, simply book a stay of at least two nights at any McMillan hotel before the end of March (Quoting 'Spoiled for Choice') and take it before 30 April.

All bookings will be entered into a free draw with the prize given to the first name drawn at random. The winner will be announced in the next edition of 'Spoiled for Choice.'

The winner of the competition in newsletter no.2 was Mrs S. J. Winchester from Skipton in North Yorkshire, who receives a two nights break at the North West Castle Hotel plus curling tuition from former World champion Hammy McMillan junior.

Still sounding great at 100

Katherine McCurrach's 100th birthday party hit the right note - It was held at Peebles Hydro and she played the piano for the occasion!

An enthusiastic and talented musician, she still plays every day, starts each morning with a singing exercise and teaches the instrument - with her eldest pupil being 87 years young.



Photo: William Brodie

making dinner parties child's play

Cooking for friends and family can be stressful, says **Matt Weedon, Head Chef at Glenapp Castle**. Here he offers some tips for home entertaining and a recipe for a mouth-watering dessert to round off that memorable meal:

Keep it simple! Over-complicating dishes can take too long. By the time you've finished the last dish the first one may be cold.

Use the freshest and best ingredients available. Local farm shops are fast becoming a readily available top quality source at competitive prices. More often than not they are cheaper than most supermarkets and - more importantly - the taste is 10 times better.

Try different cooking methods. Sometimes space can be an issue when cooking for more than four people so a quick scallop salad as a starter is ideal while the main course is in the oven.

Do some of the work the day before. The dessert (like the posset) can usually be made in advance.

Lemon posset with Scottish raspberries and shortbread (Serves 6)

900 ml double cream
280g caster sugar
Juice of 6 lemons
3 punnets of raspberries (or Griottine cherries)
750g plain flour
500g diced butter
250g caster sugar

It is best to make this the day before it is required. Put the cream and sugar in a large saucepan over a medium heat, bring to the boil, then add the lemon juice and boil for a further 6-8 minutes. Pour the mixture into ramekins and refrigerate. For the shortbread place the flour, butter and remaining caster sugar in a food mixer and slowly mix together until a dough forms. Clingfilm the dough and rest in the fridge for 1-2 hours. Cut the dough in half and roll out 1cm thick and cut-out discs. Place on a baking tray and cook at 170c for 5-6 minutes until golden brown.

To serve, place a layer of raspberries or cherries on top of the posset and serve the shortbreads on the side.

As a dinner party starter Matt suggests salad of roasted scallops with artichoke hearts and hazelnut dressing, and as a main course rump of Ayrshire lamb with fondant potato, roasted vine tomatoes and tapenade.

For the recipes call Glenapp Castle on 01465-831212.

Want this newsletter emailed?

The McMillan guests' newsletter is also available in electronic format.

If you would like us to send it this way just email action@scotpr.com or telephone Scot PR on 0131-473 2388.

Include you out?

We hope you enjoy this newsletter which has some of the latest inside information from Scotland's Hotel Group of the Year and trust it helps you plan your next holiday break.

If you do not wish to remain on our distribution list please write to 'Spoiled for Choice,' North West Castle Hotel, Stranraer, Wigtownshire DG9 8EH.

spoiled for choice

in Scotland's beautiful south

The newsletter of McMillan Hotels - Scottish Hotel Group of the Year

Suite dreams as Hydro creates the ultimate in luxury

Renowned as a health resort for almost 125 years, Peebles Hydro is set to pamper guests with the hotel's most luxurious-ever suites - one with its own health and beauty treatment room.

The 'Spa Suite' will be the Hydro's most grandiose accommodation, commanding breathtaking views over the Tweed Valley. Decorated in a contemporary classical style, it will feature top of the range furnishings, dressing room, and a magnificent bathroom with heated floor and double walk-in shower.

The hotel, which currently has 128 rooms, is also introducing its first-ever 'Honeymoon Suite' with the same panoramic views, four poster bed, luxurious bathroom with double walk-in shower and its own sitting and dining room and fireplace.

Due to be ready in the Spring, the suites are being designed by Borders-based interior designer Alison van Dijk, daughter of former Hydro General Manager Pieter.

The 'Spa Suite' will have its own private health and beauty room where guests can be pampered with treatments specially created by Hydro Health and Beauty Centre Manager Sally Doherty and Finders International whose range uses natural compounds from the Dead Sea. They will include Japanese massage, treatments using hot mineral stones blessed by Hawaiian Gods, and warm spa mud envelopment of the feet.

"The Hydro has enjoyed a tremendous reputation for its health and beauty treatments for well over a century so it's natural that we should take our spa facilities to an even higher level," said Douglas McMillan, Director of McMillan Hotels.

The two suites can be reserved together or separately.

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Relaxing rambles and coast-to-coast treks

Put Spring in your step with these special offers

Meet Mine Host at Kirroghtree House

The Head Chef's home cooking tips

Win a break
in the Hydro's
new luxury
spa suite!

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Spoiled for choice - Exploring the beautiful south of Scotland

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www.callypalace.co.uk

Fernhill Hotel
Portpatrick
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Glenapp Castle
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The Park Hotel
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Walk this way, please!

Some of the great bonuses of McMillan hotels are their settings.

Many have beautiful gardens and woodland in their own right but the hotels' attractions for nature lovers are even wider.

Fascinating walks often start from the front door - and some of Scotland's most famous public gardens are within easy reach.

Spring is the perfect time to stay at a McMillan hotel. Enjoy peace and quiet, fine food and first class accommodation - and take advantage of special low rates.

See inside for details.

follow these paths to unwinding breaks

Fancy a gentle stroll around your hotel's grounds?

Like walking in wonder around Scotland's best public gardens?

Or want to tackle the UK's first official coast-to-coast long distance route?

A McMillan hotel can put you on the path for them all.



Many have splendid gardens of their own.

The 30 acres of grounds at **Glenapp Castle**, Scotland's Hotel of 2005-6, are among its most stunning attractions, containing many rare and unusual plants and shrubs including magnificent specimen rhododendrons.

Paths wander round an azalea pond and through established woodland, leading to a wonderful walled garden with listed 150 foot Victorian glasshouse. Scores of varieties of vegetables, fruit and fresh herbs from the garden are used every day in the castle kitchen, and freshly cut flowers adorn every room.

At **Kirroughtree House**, azaleas create a riot of colour for a month from April, followed by flaming rhododendrons. Stay there for the Newton Stewart Walking Festival from 12-14 May - 17 guided and self-led walks in the Galloway hills plus evening social events.

Peebles Hydro's 30 acres of beautiful woodland and gardens are so packed with interesting birds, flowers, trees and insects they have even had a booklet written about them!

The Nature Trail Book by Heather Thom, who has also written a history of the Hydro, is described as suitable for everyone 'from a five-year-old city child to an experienced naturalist' and gives fascinating details on two walks around the hotel: the garden trail and the hillside trail which begins by climbing the lower slopes of the Ven Law (325 metres or 1,066 feet).

According to the authoress, an advantage of the Hydro's trails is that they are accessible in the evenings. "When most nature trail visitors have a drive ahead of them to get home, they do not linger as dusk approaches so they always miss the twilight worlds of moths, fragrant honeysuckle and singing blackbirds," she wrote.

If you take walking more seriously, the **Fernhill Hotel** is the perfect to start or finish the Southern Upland Way.

The UK's first official coast-to-coast long distance route starts just a short distance from the clifftop hotel in Portpatrick, stretching 212 miles to Cockburnspath on the east coast. Climbing to 2,378 feet, the Way offers real challenges for the serious long distance walker as well as many short sections and circular walks perfect for a weekend afternoon stroll.



Photo: Andrew Shennan



Peebles Hydro and the **Park Hotel** are great venues for visiting Dawyck Botanic Garden (above) which has a stunning collection of trees and shrubs. Benefiting from the cooler continental environment in the heart of the Scottish Borders and from over 300 years of tree planting, Dawyck is one of the world's finest arboreta.

Treat the **Cally Palace**, **Fernhill**, **Kirroughtree House** or **North West Castle** as your base to look round the famed Threave Gardens at Castle Douglas, Glenwhan Garden and Nursery and Castle Kennedy and Lochinch Gardens near Stranraer, Dunskey Gardens near Portpatrick, Galloway House Gardens at Garlieston, or Port Logan Botanic Garden.

going up

Facilities for McMillan guests continue to be improved. Latest developments include construction of four rooms for disabled people at the Hydro, installation of a new reception desk at Cally Palace and completion of the bathrooms' refurbishment programme at the Park Hotel.

Three for two puts Spring in shoppers' steps

Three nights dinner, bed and breakfast for £142 throughout February and March - that's the ultra-hospitable offer from the Park Hotel (left) in Peebles - recently voted **Scotland's best local shopping town**.

The third night of any stay is free with additional nights charged from just £47 per person. Rates are based on two people sharing. Single accommodation costs from £156 for all three nights, again including dinner and full breakfast.

rest assured with **LOWER RATES**

Spring is one of the best times to get out and about in the Scottish countryside and coasts.

Nature is waking up, the roads are quiet - and **McMillan Hotels are offering great rates** to help you enjoy the scenery to the full.

Here are just some of the deals available from March through April. Call your favourite hotel (Details on back page) to make a reservation or for more information.

Cally Palace Hotel

From 3-30 March the Cally is offering **free golf** on its course, reserved exclusively for McMillan guests.

Weekend rates in March from £81 pppn for dinner, bed and breakfast.

Over-50s midweek breaks from £74 pppn.

Easter weekend: Arrive Friday 14 April for three nights - Rates from £90 pppn and from £106 including golf, and dancing on the Saturday night.

Kirroughtree House Hotel

From 9 March until end-April - Three nights dinner, bed and breakfast for just £70 pppn.

Park guests benefit from Shingler's list

Guests at **The Park** now have outstanding information about Scotland's attractions - thanks to one of the hotel's greatest fans.

Roy Schingler, a retired accountant and company secretary from Lincoln who has been a regular guest at the hotel since the late 1980s, has donated four bound indexed volumes of articles on the country's 100 best walks plus tourist information, places of special interest and nature information.

A keen walker himself, he first began staying at The Park with his late wife when they broke their journey to visit friends on Deeside. "The hotel is very relaxing and I get pampered," he said. "I know all the staff by name and they know me and my little fads. The food is just right because I can order small portions when I want."

Park Manager Lawson Keay added: "We are very grateful to Mr Schingler for donating these splendid volumes which will be enjoyed by our guests for many years to come."

Peebles Hydro

Rates from £65 pppn on **midweek dates** in March, including four course table d'hote dinner, full Scottish breakfast and use of the Hydro's leisure facilities (Minimum two nights stay).

Special rate for Saturday 11 March - £85 pp.

'New You' package until 13 April: Two nights in front-facing twin or double bedded room including half-a-bottle of champagne, two table hote dinners, two breakfasts, unlimited use of recreational facilities, and an aromatherapy treatment to the value of £35 - Inclusive rate of £255 per person

Easter packages (Includes entertainment): From £385 for three nights and £432 for four nights; Rates for children sharing parents' room from £25 for three nights.



Fernhill Hotel

Spring golfing breaks: From £75 pppn for 3-5 nights from 24 March to 20 April; from £85 from 21 April. Includes dinner, bed and breakfast plus one round of golf a day on the Stranraer, Glenluce, Dunskey or Cally Palace courses.

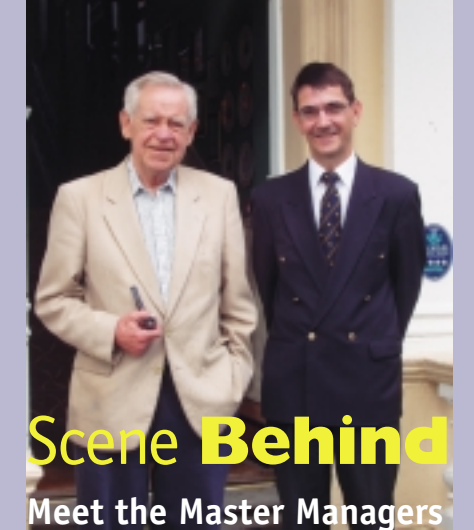


North West Castle

Full Board breaks - Two nights dinner, bed and breakfast plus buffet lunch from £120 per person based on two people sharing or £150 for a single room.

Winter midweek golf breaks to 20 April (Includes one round of golf at Stranraer, Glenluce or Portpatrick golf courses); 2 to 5 nights from £78; Single from £93.

Curling weekend breaks to end-March: Two nights Dinner, Bed and Breakfast with buffet lunch and a minimum 3 games of curling: From £120; Single room - £150.00.



Scene Behind Meet the Master Managers

The wide experience of its managers is one of McMillan Hotels' great strengths.

In this series we will profile some of the people who give McMillan momentum. First up - Jim Stirling, Manager of the Kirroughtree House Hotel (Pictured here with recent guest Magnus Magnusson, author and host of the BBC TV series 'Mastermind').

Jim has worked for McMillan Hotels for 23 years, the last 13 as Manager of Kirroughtree. Previously he was Assistant Manager at Cally Palace and before joining the McMillan team was Assistant Manager at the Newton Hotel, Nairn, and Drumossie Hotel, Inverness.

He lives in nearby Newton Stewart with his wife Heather and children Louise (16) and Christopher (12).

Career highlights? - Winning a series of awards with Kirroughtree including three red stars, the Customer Care Thistle Award and, in hindsight, getting job with McMillan's.

Main change in the hotels business since you began your career? - Upgrading of accommodation for guests such as private facilities in all rooms. We are also beginning to win recognition as an industry.

Main hobby? - Golf

Ideal meal - Food, location, companions? - Anything cooked by Kirroughtree Head Chef Rolf Mueller! Anywhere on the west coast of Scotland; Family and friends.

Favourite holiday destination? - Scotland. I'm a home buddy and hate hanging about in airports.

Why holiday in Scotland? - Scenery, quiet(ish) roads, no airport hassle

Favourite author - Ian Rankin (A regular guest at Peebles Hydro)

Favourite singer - Bob Dylan

Favourite band - The Who

Favourite TV programme - Monty Python's Flying Circus

Favourite actor - Bruce Willis (I'd then have been married to Demi Moore!).

Most embarrassing moment - Too many to mention. I embarrass easily!

Four reasons to stay at Kirroughtree House - Personal service from friendly staff, food, comfort, peace and quiet

Three terms which sum up McMillan Hotels' philosophy? - Customer care, customer comfort, customer satisfaction.