



Stories from Connoisseurs Scotland Hotels Are Real Page-Turners: Luxury Hotels Throughout Scotland Have Fascinating Literary Ties

Vacation is the perfect time to relax with a good book, and in support of that concept, the Sheraton Grand Hotel & Spa in Edinburgh has introduced a new form of room service called “Books in Bedrooms,” aimed at giving its guests the chance to buy signed editions from some of the city’s most celebrated contemporary authors. The hotel’s “Book Menu” includes selections from Kate Atkinson, Alexander McCall Smith and Ian Rankin, but also a range of classic Scottish books, children’s books by local authors and guide books to the city. The hotel worked with a local independent bookshop owner, Gillian Robertson, to ensure that guests in any of the Sheraton Grand’s 269 bedrooms can order a book that will be delivered within minutes. But the Sheraton Grand isn’t the only member of the Connoisseurs Scotland collection of luxury properties to tempt guests with a literary experience. Among the group’s 31 members are properties that have been the settings for books, some that pay tribute to great Scottish authors, and those that have offered a home away from home when writers needed a source of inspiration.

Knockinaam Lodge in Dumfries and Galloway, for example, is featured in the John Buchan novel *The Thirty-Nine Steps*, a classic murder mystery that was made into an Alfred Hitchcock movie in 1935. One of the hotel’s suites is named in honor of the story’s hero, Richard Hannay, who has a special knack for getting himself out of sticky situations. Modern guests won’t want to escape from Knockinaam, however ... particularly if they opt for the second-floor Hannay Suite, which boasts a panoramic view of the bay that overlooks the Irish Sea and the Mountains of Mourne. The king-bedded room has a separate lounge area that extends nearly the entire length of the hotel, and its bathroom – which, among other features, has special underfloor heating – is home to a Victorian roll-top bath with a window right above it. In an area known for its stargazing (in fact, this region is home to the United Kingdom’s first-ever “Dark Sky Park”) this is a truly significant feature.

Buchan’s approach to the mystery novel has been said to have inspired Ian Fleming, another Scottish writer who certainly knew his way around a spy story. Cromlix, owned by tennis star Andy Murray near his hometown of Dunblane, has paid tribute to Fleming and other great Scots by naming each of the hotel’s 10 bedrooms, five suites and gate lodge in their honor. Literary luminaries who are celebrated here include Fleming, Robert Burns, Arthur Conan Doyle and J.M. Barrie. The rooms at Cromlix are subtly decorated in individual styles and feature 400-thread count Egyptian cotton bed linens, 32-inch televisions disguised as mirrors,

and iPod docking stations. Each suite boasts a freestanding gold-, silver- or copper-finished bath ... which, come to think of it, is the perfect place to dive into a great Scottish novel.

On that list of great works in Scottish literature, one is sure to find the Robert Louis Stevenson classic *Kidnapped*, which was inspired by true events that took place near Appin in the Scottish Highlands. Tensions were high in this part of the country after the famed Jacobite Rising of 1745, and a great mystery still surrounds the murder of Colin Roy Campbell, the local tax collector who was shot in the back while walking in the woods here. Though the chief suspect in the “Appin Murder” of 1752 was a man named Alan Stewart, whose clan had recently been evicted at the hands of the Campbells, Alan fled the area ... leaving another member of the Stewart clan, James, to be arrested instead. Though there was much evidence to the contrary and James had what many considered an airtight alibi, he was nonetheless found guilty by a hastily assembled jury that included many Campbell sympathizers eager to retaliate against the Stewart clan. The incident went down in Scottish history as one of the greatest miscarriages of justice and today, more than 250 years later, the murder has never truly been solved. Airs Hotel & Restaurant is located in Port Appin, and its guests can hike through Lettermore Woods just off the coast road between Appin and Ballachullish to see a small memorial that marks the site of the murder that Stevenson made so famous in his 1880s historical adventure novel.

Creativity requires inspiration, and the Crinan Hotel on the west coast of Scotland – a property that happens to be owned by an artist – has hosted several writers over the years. It started in the 1940s with George Orwell, author of *1984*; it’s said that when he was a guest at a farmhouse that can be seen from the hotel, Orwell would occasionally visit the hotel as he struggled to finish his novel. As the story goes, he narrowly escaped death in this area, as he took a small row boat through the Corryvreckan Whirlpool, which today can be visited (safely!) on a daily boat trip that the hotel offers on its own classic boat. More recently, esteemed physicist Steven Hawking vacationed here with his wife and daughter in the 1980s as he worked on *A Brief History of Time*; the long-time hotel staff says he tried to explain to “big bangs and black holes” on those trips. Other authors who have found time to relax here include journalist and broadcaster Andrew Marr, historical fiction writer Dorothy Dunnett, and international best-selling author Frank Delaney.

Whether or not the property has a direct tie to literature, visitors who want to curl up with a good book in Scotland will find plenty of cozy places to do so at Connoisseurs Scotland member hotels. The group’s members include five of the world’s finest golf venues: The Old Course Hotel, Golf Resort and Spa at St. Andrews; The Gleneagles Hotel; Cameron House on Loch Lomond; Trump Turnberry; and Macleod House and Lodge at Trump International. In addition, there are three castles, one of which was voted to be the best hotel in Europe; city-center properties; country house hotels; exclusive-use properties; a range of world-class spas; an all-suite hotel; the ultimate luxury train, Belmond Royal Scotsman; and the only cruise ship in the world with a Royal Warrant from HM The Queen, Hebridean Princess. Five members boast Michelin-starred restaurants, including Gleneagles, which has the only two Michelin-starred restaurant in Scotland. Information about Connoisseurs Scotland, its members, partners and special offers can be found at www.luxuryscotland.co.uk.

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