

# Weekender Travel



By Paul Ford

**C**RIEFF has been a popular holiday destination since Victorian times thanks to its idyllic setting in the hills of the Strathearn Valley.

The quaint little Perthshire town spills from the wooded hill Knock down to the scenic River Earn and James Square with its fountain marking the centre of Crieff.

There are a number of tourist attractions such as the visitor centre, Glenturret Distillery — Scotland's oldest — and the Knock Castle Hotel and Spa.

Formerly the 19th century baronial home of Scottish shipping magnate Lady MacBrayne, the Castle is now beautifully restored into a small luxury hotel and enjoys uninterrupted views across the beautiful Perthshire countryside.

Last Sunday, the castle scooped four honours at the Scottish Hotel Awards including prizes for its local food and hospitality.

The friendly owners have recently opened their rooftop restaurant — the Stag's View — which enjoys panoramic



views of the breathtaking Strathearn Valley.

Apart from the great food, visitors can also unwind with a stroll through three-and-a-half acres of wooded grounds, a spa treatment or a swim in the indoor pool. At present, the

hotel has a number of special deals and discounted rates for summer. From the castle, the town is a straight walk down the hill. Macrosty Park is one of the most picturesque in Scotland, with a fine collection of mature trees and the Turret Burn flowing through it. The Victorian bandstand also holds brass band concerts in summer.

A beautiful beech-lined avenue — Lady Mary's Walk — runs alongside the River Earn for about 1500 metres and is a relaxing way of taking in some of the town's sights.

The Caithness Glass factory is located at the Crieff Visitor Centre and offers free tours.

Crieff was a well-used crossroads in the 18th century for cattle drovers and you can follow in their footsteps with an interesting exhibition also set in the visitor centre.

Three miles south of Crieff, the A822 makes a sharp zig-zag through the scenic village of Muthill built mostly from a reddish stone. The early settlement in the area owes much to the Romans' brief occupation, and this probably

explains the straightness of the road from Crieff.

It's worth taking the detour here to walk down the picturesque main street and visit the village museum and 1,000-year-old church.

Legendary Scottish poet William Topaz McGonagall — mocked for much of his work — wrote of Crieff: "Ye lovers of the picturesque, if ye wish to drown your grief, take my advice, and visit the ancient town of Crieff."

I couldn't have put it better myself.

## FACT FILE

**Knock Castle Hotel and Spa**  
Drummond Terrace,  
Crieff,  
Perthshire,  
PH7 4AN

[www.knockcastle.com](http://www.knockcastle.com)  
[info@knockcastle.com](mailto:info@knockcastle.com)  
01764 650088