

travel



▼ SUITE DREAMS
A bedroom at Ballathie

Facts

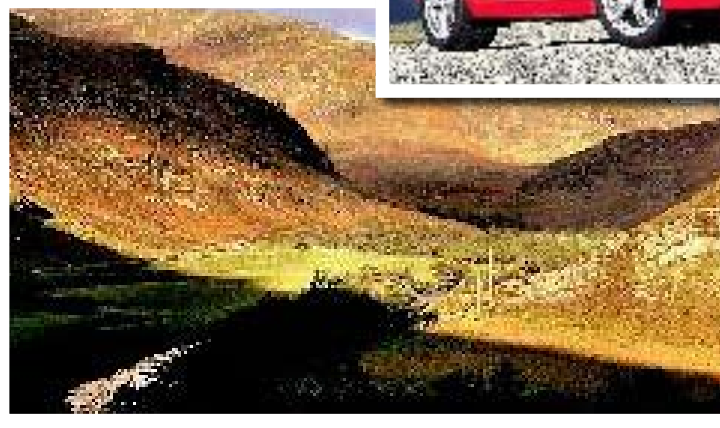
■ Two nights stay for two, based on dinner, bed and breakfast in a suite at Ballathie House Hotel, is around £740. Contact www.ballathiehousehotel.com

■ A day's driving in either the Porsche Boxster or a Caterham 7 is £200 from www.openroadhire.co.uk, which includes insurance. Fuel is extra.

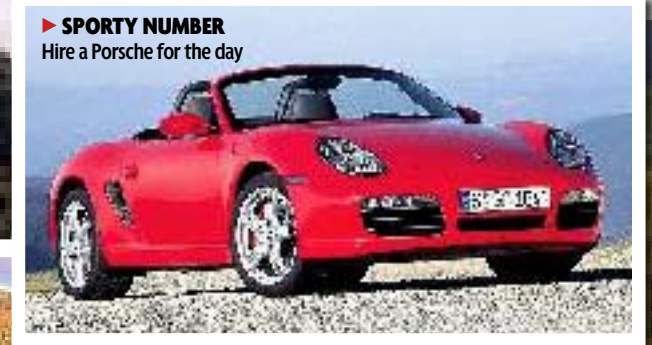
▼ SNOWY SLOPES
Grab your gear and get skiing on real snow in the Sno!zone



▼ PRETTY Below, the River Almond meanders through the scenic Sma' Glen. Main picture, Viv visited Kenmore on banks of Loch Tay



► SPORTY NUMBER
Hire a Porsche for the day



▼ PERFECT Ballathie is an idyllic setting for a weekend getaway break



Take flight at Xscape

By Annie Brown

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AFTER a day out at Xscape in Glasgow, my 11-year-old niece Chloe said she would like to live there.

It's not like we would starve, she assured me as she tucked in to fish and chips at the new Harvester at Braehead.

She had thought it through after all. I admit I was a little nervous when we arrived at Xscape. This was down to the prospect of the Climzone.

It boasts a state-of-the-art aerial adventure course, which is 60 metres long, and includes a zip slide, traverse wall, hanging logs, jigsaw, swinging rungs, swinging platforms, cargo net, Burma bridge and rope ladders.

At 15 metres – or 50ft – above the ground, it seems high in both metric and imperial measurements.

It didn't help that my brother had turned up to mock me and photograph the event, in the hope that I might fall.

Unfortunately for him, the trained staff don't let that happen.

Fortunately for him, I did freeze halfway across, giving him the picture and material he could use to make me feel small later. Lovely chap.

But whizzing down the zip wire came a young instructor who proceeded to coax me round, never leaving my side and making me feel so at ease and confident that I couldn't wait to do it all again. Having done too many dodgy



things in my life and my own sense of mortality hitting me of late, I realised I had lost sight of the daredevil in me.

She was back with a vengeance by the time we got to the Fandrop.

Clipped to a rope, you jump off a platform, flying freefall most of the way until the twin fan slows you to a gentle landing 50 feet below. If you don't

feel like Lara Croft by the third drop, then you need to sign up for a course of electric shock therapy.

The kids will love the experience. But I kid you not, if you are an adult who has become way too scared of life, do this one thing to rejuvenate yourself.

Next came the highlight for me – sledging in the Sno!zone.

I can't think why but I never went sledging as a kid. Maybe it was the protruding rocks barely covered by a dusting of snow.

But in the Sno!zone there's real snow, crunchy, deep and cold and the sledging will bring out the child in you, much to the bewilderment of the many actual children you crash in to.

After stuffing our faces with some yummy delights, served with a smile at the Harvester, we decided to stuff our faces some more in the cinema.

I can't remember the last time I had so much fun without having to get on a plane first.

If you need to escape, Xscape is as good a place as any.

▼ COOL STUFF Kids enjoy sledging in the Sno!zone with a feathery friend



Shire

By Vivienne Aitken

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TO my eternal shame, I had never visited Perthshire in her glorious autumnal coat before.

Indeed, I could count any trips to the Big Tree Country on one hand – with a few fingers to spare.

But after a glorious two days, my husband Nick and I now plan to be regular visitors.

We stayed at the magnificent Ballathie House Hotel.

It has spectacular grounds and you are guaranteed a real Highland welcome whether you are part of the hunting, shooting and fishing set or just on a get-away-from-it-all break.

Our Riverside Suite was more of a self-contained luxury flat than a mere hotel bedroom.

There is a comfortable bedroom

We rev up the sports car to take in glorious autumnal landscape of Big Tree Country

suitably decorated in country style, a sumptuous bathroom and along the hallway a delightful little kitchen for chilling your champers or making morning coffee.

The lounge itself looks out on beautiful gardens. Open the French doors and you step out to the springy, manicured lawns – the closest you'll get to an outdoor shagpile.

The temptation to slip off my stilettos and run barefoot across the great, green expanse was only tempered by the wild bunnies.

Thoughts of what else could squidge between my toes was enough for me to re-buckle my shoes.

The lush green grass leads to a path where there is a short drop down to the Tay, shimmering in the sun.

This is a truly an idyllic setting for a romantic weekend break.

And romance is definitely a major theme at the hotel.