

THE TAMING OF NATURE

DISCOVER THE CASTLES, GARDENS & ESTATES OF
NORTH EAST SCOTLAND WITH DAVID MITCHELL
STAYING AT MARYCULTER HOUSE

13TH TO 18TH JULY 2025



NOBLE CALEDONIA

Join us for a magical midsummer break at Maryculter House on the banks of the River Dee. Each day features a programme of short excursions, designed to help you discover and enjoy the region's unique history and celebrate its art, architecture, gardens and historic collections.

Our explorations begin with a short drive into the heart of Angus to Glamis Castle, the childhood home of HM Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother and the inspiration for William Shakespeare's Macbeth. From here a further five hundred years of Scottish history, excellence and craftsmanship unfold with a visit to Drum Castle, one of Scotland's oldest Tower Houses which is now famed for its vast library and collection of historic roses.

The formal garden at Pitmedden; originally laid out by Sir Alexander Seton in 1675 and recreated by the National Trust for Scotland in the 1950s, provides an opportunity for a leisurely morning stroll before a look at the Museum of Farming Life which brings the area's significant agricultural past to life. Our tour also takes in the Scottish Baronial masterpiece of Fyvie Castle which has links with William the Lion 1214, King of Scotland; it contains a vast collection of lavish art works by Raeburn, Batoni, Romney, Gainsborough and others, as well as Flemish Tapestries, fine furniture, armour and antiquities. Here, outside you will have time to discover the walled garden with its collection of Scottish fruit and colourful borders.

Visits to Leith Hall with its walled garden and spectacular views, and Castle Fraser, one of Scotland's finest stately homes will undoubtedly be highlights, and on our last day we will visit the magnificent turreted Crathes Castle, which was lived in by the Burnett family for over 350 years. Today it is famed for its artworks, fine furniture, delightful 16th century painted ceilings, oak panelling and treasures such as the 'Horn of Leys' linked to Robert The Bruce. We will also explore the internationally renowned colourful walled garden; framed by ancient yew hedges it contains many rare and unusual plants. After lunch we drive westward through the heart of beautiful Royal Deeside to visit Balmoral Estate; the much-loved private home of the Royal Family since 1852 when it was purchased by Prince Albert and Queen Victoria.

Each daily outing has been carefully designed to include something for everyone with a careful mix of the region's finest castles, significant art collections and antiquities, all set within stunning gardens and estates. During your stay you will have time to soak up the grandeur and the atmosphere of the landscape as well as encountering a mixture of garden styles including formal, woodland, walled and kitchen gardens; many containing historic plant collections, colourful herbaceous borders plus splendid trees and shrubs.



Crathes Castle



18th century bridge at Leith Hall



Balmoral Castle and Gardens

YOUR HOSTS

David Mitchell – Guest Speaker



David Mitchell was previously a Curator at the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh; he is currently Deputy Chair of the National Trust for Scotland. He is also Director-Curator at Muddy Feet Consultancy, his own environmental education company specialising in landscape assessment, project development, horticulture, and interpretation. His knowledge as curator is augmented with over thirty years' experience working as a consultant in the private and public sector, supporting organisations that include The National Archives of Scotland, The National Galleries of Scotland, The National Trust for Scotland and the Royal Zoological Society for Scotland. He has extensive broadcasting experience in television and radio with the BBC, STV and Channel Four; augmented by global involvement as an Expedition Lecturer for Noble Caledonia, the National Trust for Scotland and the American Ivy League Universities of Harvard, Dartmouth, and Brown. A Fellow of the Chartered Institute of Horticulture and the Royal Geographical Society he has a passion for nature and the land.

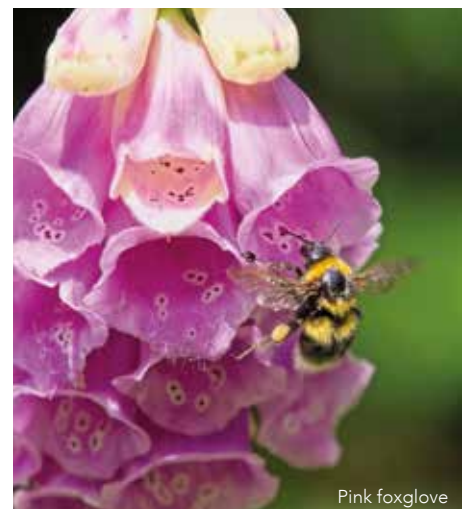
Chantal Cookson – Tour Leader



Chantal was born in Suffolk very near the sea and now lives in Northumberland where her husband farms. Chantal has been associated with Noble Caledonia since the company was founded in 1991 and has led tours, be it cruising or land, all over the world. Chantal's initial experience of cruising in British waters was in 1991 when Noble Caledonia undertook its first cruise around the British Isles, which was a groundbreaking voyage and led to a very successful and popular concept. Though her main job over the last 25 years has been working for Sotheby's, she is now a Travel and Fine Art Consultant intertwining in her busy life still working periodically as part of the Noble Caledonia field staff team. Chantal is a Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society.



Herbaceous borders of Crathes Castle gardens



Pink foxglove



The Itinerary

Day 1 Aberdeen to Maryculter House, Scotland. Meet at Aberdeen Airport or Railway Station in the mid afternoon for the transfer to Maryculter House where the attentive staff will assist you on arrival. Settle into your room or explore the grounds before meeting this evening for drinks and a welcome dinner. (D)

Day 2 Glamis Castle & Drum Castle. After breakfast at the hotel, drive to Glamis Castle, one of the world's most famous and romantic castles. Glamis was the birthplace of the late Princess Margaret and the childhood home of her mother Elizabeth, the late Queen Mother. The property of the Earls of Strathmore and Kinghorne since 1372, the castle was largely reconstructed in the late 17th century. One of the most famous rooms in the castle is Duncan's Hall, the legendary setting for Shakespeare's Macbeth. Enjoy a guided tour of this truly spectacular castle before enjoying some free time to explore the gardens. Transfer to Stonehaven for lunch before we continue to Drum Castle, one of the oldest tower houses with a fine collection of portraits and Georgian furniture. After a guided tour of the house enjoy a walk in the historic scented Rose Garden. (B, L, D)

Day 3 Pitmedden Garden & Fyvie Castle. Drive to Pitmedden, surely one of Scotland's finest gardens. After a brief introduction take time to explore and enjoy at your own pace the silence and elegance of this unique Scottish Renaissance walled garden famed for its colourful parterres. In the late morning a short drive will bring us to Fyvie Castle and after lunch in the Victorian Kitchen join a guided tour of the 800-year-old castle including the impressive art collection. Later, join David Mitchell for a walk in the two acre walled garden with its abundant collection of Scottish Heritage fruit. (B, L, D)

Day 4 Leith Hall & Castle Fraser. Travel northwest from the hotel this morning through rural Aberdeenshire to Leith Hall, a traditional Scottish laird's residence brimming with family treasures and featuring a wonderful walled garden. The current structure dates back to the 17th century and was used as a hospital during the First World War before being sold to the National Trust in 1945. After a light lunch we continue on to the impressive Castle Fraser, one of Scotland's largest tower houses and home to a large portrait collection. Explore the castle and its grounds on a guided tour before returning to Maryculter House in the late afternoon. After dinner we will enjoy a relaxing Scottish traditional music night. (B, L, D)

Day 5 Crathes Castle & Balmoral. The highlight for many will be our visit to Crathes Castle and Garden, regarded by many as the finest historic castle and garden in Scotland. Steeped in history, it is famed for its exceptional 16th century

painted ceilings, oak panelling, and other antiquities. Enjoy the wonderful plant collection including herbaceous borders and a wide variety of exotic shrubs surrounded by a magnificent ancient yew hedge. We will take lunch at Crathes and then continue westwards through Royal Deeside to visit Balmoral. Stroll through the formal garden before exploring the vegetable gardens, the ballroom and the stable exhibitions. Driving back to Maryculter, we will stop at the historic borough of Ballater, famed for its Royal warrant holding shops and distinct architecture. This evening enjoy the farewell dinner at Maryculter House. (B, L, D)

Day 6 Maryculter House to Aberdeen. After a hearty Scottish breakfast transfers will be provided to Aberdeen Airport and Railway Station. (B)



PRICES PER PERSON

Based on double occupancy

Category	TWIN	SOLE USE
Classic Room	£2495	£2795
Classic Riverview Room	£2595	£2895
Classic Terrace Room	£2695	N/A
Heritage Double Room	£2795	£3095
Heritage Riverview Room	£2895	N/A
Junior Suite	£2995	N/A
Classic Four Poster	£2995	N/A

PRICE INCLUDES: Five nights hotel accommodation at Maryculter House
 • Meals as indicated (B – Breakfast, L – Lunch, D – Dinner) • Tour Leader
 • Guest Speaker • Excursions as described with entrance fees • Transfers.
Not Included: Travel insurance.



MARYCULTER HOUSE, ABERDEEN

For the duration of our tour we have taken over one of Aberdeenshire's most historic hotels, nestled on the banks of the graceful River Dee. Only twenty minutes from Aberdeen, this beautiful property can trace its history right back to the time of the Great Crusades, when the Knights Templar were granted part of the land of Culter, on the south side of the River Dee by King William the Lion in 1187. Between 1221 and 1236, the powerful Bisset family, the Lords of Aboyne, founded the Preceptory, or College, of the Knights Templar on the site of Maryculter House.

All that remains of these buildings today are the stone vaulted chambers located underneath the Great Hall, and the burial grounds and chapel ruins in the grounds next to the hotel. Dating back to 1460, the atmospheric Great Hall is the most ancient part of the hotel and is redolent with historic grandeur. Home to the prominent Jacobite William Menzies in the eighteenth century, the building was ravaged by fire in 1720 but has been respectfully rebuilt, restored and further developed since then, with the latest works adding the Terrace rooms back in the 1990s.

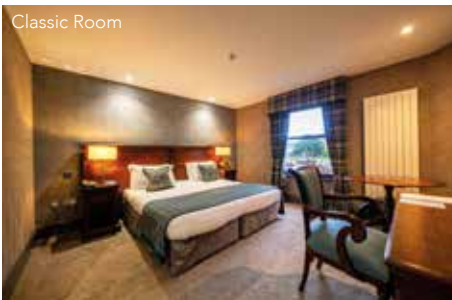
Many of the property's 40 bedrooms boast stunning views, and all feature contemporary Scottish interiors that have undergone a recent refurbishment. Relax in the comfortable beds, luxuriate in the stylish bathrooms and enjoy the personal touches of Scottish hospitality, all in a wonderfully calm and restful property that is the perfect base for our exploration of this beautiful part of Scotland. The hotel's restaurant which serves the finest in local, seasonal produce expertly created by a team of talented chefs, overlooks the river and provides a wonderful setting for your meals each evening.



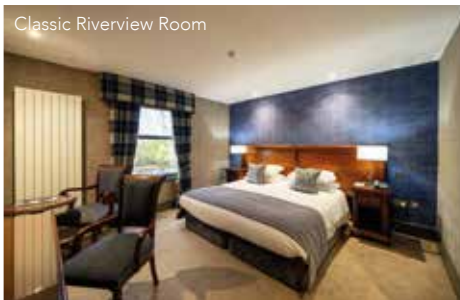
Great Hall



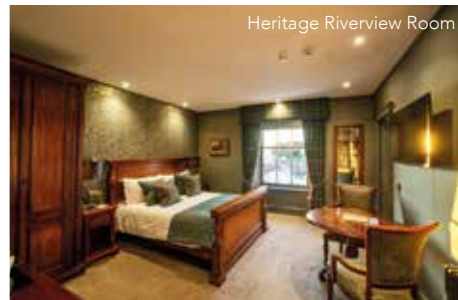
Courtyard



Classic Room



Classic Riverview Room



Heritage Riverview Room



Classic Terrace Room



Four Poster Room



Poachers Brasserie



View from Peterculter Golf Course

YOUR ACCOMMODATION

There are seven categories of room located across the property. All feature complimentary Wi-Fi, satellite TV and tea and coffee making facilities.

Classic Rooms

Each of the Classic Rooms features views across the grounds of the property. Spread over the ground and first floors, the bathrooms feature either a bath and separate shower or a shower only. Twin or double beds are available.

Classic Riverview Rooms

The Classic Riverview Rooms on the ground and first floors overlook the stunning banks of the River Dee, a mesmerizing view that will not disappoint. These rooms feature double or twin beds, and all have a walk-in shower in their newly refurbished bathrooms.

Classic Terrace Rooms

The Classic Terrace Rooms are located on the ground floor and benefit from access onto a terrace which overlook the beautiful grounds of the Hotel. Rooms are modern yet maintain the character and history of the hotel. These rooms feature fixed double beds and the en-suite bathrooms have a bath with separate walk-in shower.

Heritage Double Rooms

The Heritage Double Rooms are located on the first floor and overlook the grounds of the property. These rooms feature fixed double beds and the en-suite bathrooms have either a bath with a shower above, or a walk-in shower only.

Heritage Riverview Rooms

These luxurious larger rooms on the first floor overlook the banks of the River Dee are individually decorated and feature a fixed double bed and bath with a shower above.

Junior Suite

The hotel's two Junior Suites are on the ground floor, benefit from a larger footprint and overlook the grounds of the hotel. Beautifully furnished, the ground floor rooms feature patio doors to a terrace. Both Suites feature a fixed double bed and the en-suite bathrooms have either a bath with a shower over or a walk-in shower only.

Classic Four Poster Suite

The hotel's first floor Four Poster Suite commands views out over the courtyard and the River Dee. This large, sumptuous suite benefits from a stunning en-suite bathroom which offers twin sinks, roll top bath and separate shower.

Please note: There is no lift at the property, and access to rooms on the first floor involves climbing up to 19 steps.



NOBLE CALEDONIA

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Our current booking conditions apply to all reservations and are available on request.
Cover image: Pitmedden Gardens.