

GETAWAY

Exquisite luxury in the far north for a family stay

NATALIE FAHEY was looking for a good spot for a short break with her young family. She picked Oban on Scotland's west coast

IF you're looking for a trip to blow the cobwebs away and take in some fresh sea air, a break in the small Scottish port town of Oban could be for you.

Tucked away in a natural harbour, with shops nestled around a small bay, Oban is the perfect base for exploring the west coast of Scotland and the Highlands.

It's also only just over an hour away from Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park, and we made a point of stopping in the conservation village of Luss as we journeyed towards our final destination.

There's several gift shops and coffee stops here, as well as a pier with boat trips around the loch.

We stayed in the Perle Oban hotel for our two nights in Oban, and the cosy reception area could not have been more welcoming after many

long hours in the car. Originally built to accommodate Victorian travellers who came to the town by rail, then also for those waiting for ferries to the Highland islands, Perle Oban is anything but old-fashioned once inside.

Guests can expect luxurious rooms, with large, comfortable beds and sweeping sea views across the harbour.

Thoughtfully-positioned chairs by high sash windows offer the perfect place to sit with a drink and watch the boats go in and out by day and the multi-coloured strings of lights at night along the seafront.

All rooms have powerful rain showers, complete with L'Occitane toiletries.

Widescreen televisions, Bose sound systems and a Nespresso coffee machine complete the modern touches in this beautiful hotel.

We stayed in a junior suite, and even with a travel cot and extra single bed for our two children, there was more than enough room to stretch out and relax.

There are plenty of eateries for all tastes in Oban, but for our first night we opted for a meal in Perle Oban's BAAB Meze and Grill restaurant.

Eastern Mediterranean cuisine is probably not the first type of food that springs to mind when visiting a Scottish harbour town, but BAAB does it so well it's probably worth the trip for the food alone.

We ordered a number of items from the menu which we all shared - including different types of kebabs, prawns, tzatziki, freekeh and courgette fries.

Everyone (including the toddler) enjoyed the food and it was the perfect close to our long day.

Well-rested after our journey, breakfast the next morning was a treat.

As well as an extensive buffet with pastries, fruit, yoghurt, cereals, meats and cheese, you can order hot meals from the menu.

The full Scottish breakfast went down a treat and there were kip-



The Perle Oban Hotel, a landmark in the Scottish port of Oban

pers, eggs benedict and, of course, porridge on offer too.

We spent the day exploring Oban, visiting the famous McCaig's Tower for spectacular views across the bay, and popping into the town's

famous whisky distillery - home to one of Scotland's oldest sources of single malt Scotch whisky.

We also visited the War and Peace Museum (free) and took a stroll around the harbour shops where

I'm wishing for more reasons to be merry.

Wish upon a COSTA

Winter Roast Cappuccino

Black Forest Hot Chocolate

Hazelnut Praline Latte

Shimmer Cortado



The view from the Perle Oban Hotel

fresh seafood dishes were for sale from small cabins.

There's also a shop selling produce from the Highland islands, including cheese from Tobermory on the Isle of Mull.

This is a place you'll be very familiar with if you've got young children - it's the setting for the CBeebies show Ballamory.

A day trip to Tobermory or any of the islands is possible from Oban.

And if we'd had longer in the town it's something we definitely would have done.

Our second night in the town we opted for fish and chips, and of course a deep-fried Haggis. It wouldn't be a trip to Scotland without it!

We returned home well-rested after our short break in Oban, already thinking of when we could return to take a ferry across to the islands dotted just off the coast.

■ Natalie and her family stayed at the Perle Oban Hotel.

Rates are from £119 for a standard double room (B&B).

See www.perleoban.com or www.baabgrill.co.uk for the restaurant.

Tel: 01631 700301

Some of the Eastern Mediterranean food available at BAAB at the Perle Oban



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