

# Seafood And Scenery Is Scotland At It's Best

West coast road trip takes in two of the country's top restaurants

by ROBERT WIGHT

**T**HERE are loads of things Scotland does really well. Two of the very best are scenery and seafood. We do them so well, that I reckon we're world beaters.

And that's not just my opinion. Internationally-renowned hotelier Gordon Campbell Gray firmly believes it to be true.

So much so, that last year the Scots-born businessman returned to his homeland to found the Wee Hotel Company. Since then he's bought two of Scotland's most remote and iconic restaurants with accommodation – The Pierhouse Hotel at Port Appin and the world-famous The Three Chimneys on Skye.

I was lucky enough to visit both properties recently, an incredible road trip that show-cased the very best of Scotland – our stunning west-coast landscape, the

warmest hospitality and, of course, world-class cuisine made from the very best Scottish ingredients.

Even the journey to the first stop – The Pierhouse Hotel – was something special. Port Appin lies just north of Oban but I opted instead to drive through Glen Coe, turning off at the old slate quarry village of Ballachulish.

For scenery and atmosphere Glen Coe never disappoints – especially on what was a beautiful clear-sky day. The sun might have been shining but the famous Three Sisters somehow maintained a menacing feel as they glowered and hunched over the twisting road.

The chill in the air was thawed by the warmth of the welcome that awaited at Port Appin. The tiny village is home to the ferry terminal for Lismore – which translates from the Gaelic as “big garden”.

*“Our room overlooked that incredible loch view – the sunset was spectacular”*



The Pierhouse, Port Appin



**Above: Fresh oysters**

**Left: The Pierhouse**

**Below: Scotland's famous seafood**

Warmed by the Gulf Stream, the area is a verdant paradise. The Pierhouse Hotel sits right at the ferry terminal – it's a beautiful spot.

The island lies directly opposite, in fjord-like Loch Linnhe. Beyond that is Ardgour and the Morven peninsula, with their peaks that rise seemingly direct from the sea.

We admired the view from porthole windows in front of a roaring fire, eating freshly baked scones with jam and cream while drinking lapsang souchong tea – it all felt very decadent!

Accommodation has just been refreshed for 2020. It has a modern-traditional feel and was very comfortable. Our front facing room overlooked that incredible Loch Linnhe view – the sunset was nothing short of spectacular.

We chatted to general manager Fiona McLean, who took up her position last year. For her, the key to The Pierhouse's success is simple – fantastic produce and the

highest standards of service, two elements for which the eatery has long been renowned.

She said, "We pride ourselves on the freshness of the produce we use. Our langoustines are provided by local fisherman Hughie MacLeod – straight from the sea to the kitchen. They're the best you'll get anywhere!"

As you'd expect, the food was divine. To start, I had scallops, seasoned with sesame, seaweed and ginger, steamed in their shells, which were sealed with a pastry crust. It was delicious and very unusual – a real highlight of the meal. My main

was a shellfish vongole paparelli, with razor and surf clams, mussels and seaweed pasta. And for dessert – I can never resist a cheeseboard!

Next day was the long drive to Skye, through some of Scotland's most breath-taking scenery.

Skye is the largest of the Inner Hebrides – and the journey shows just how big the island is. After crossing the bridge from the mainland, The Three Chimneys is still around an hour away.

The restaurant truly is world-class – and world-famous. I'd stayed before, >>



## CONTACT

[www.pierhousehotel.co.uk](http://www.pierhousehotel.co.uk)

Tel: 01631 730302

[www.threechimneys.co.uk](http://www.threechimneys.co.uk)

Tel: 01470 511258





when it was owned by founder Shirley Spear.

Not much has changed since the Wee Hotel Company took the helm last year – and that’s good. Because there’s nothing that needs to be changed!

The accommodation, at The House Over-by, is as luxurious as ever, but it’s the food that really draws people from around the globe.

The restaurant’s nine-course taster menu is legendary. We enjoyed it with a matching wine flight – a package put together with the utmost consideration.

I won’t go through the entire menu, but highlights for me were Myreside goat with radish, pickled cauliflower and sauce reform, and Dunvegan crab, with beetroot, smoked almond and yoghurt.


The goat was a revelation. When I’ve had it before it

was usually curried and best described as “cheuch”. This, though, was tender, succulent and delicious.

Head chef Scott Davies describes working at The Three Chimneys as “a way of life”. He said, “In many cases, young chefs in the cities get used to deliveries of boxes of fish or meat from a central supplier.

“Here, they build relationships with the people who catch or rear the produce. They buy direct, whatever’s in season, and see the care that goes into the produce.

“It’s a new way of thinking about food – and I know that passion and dedication is obvious in our menus.”

In buying both The Pierhouse and The Three Chimneys, the Wee Hotel Company now has two of the country’s finest eateries – it’ll be interesting to see what’s added next to the exciting portfolio. 



The Three Chimneys