



Historic hotel The Royal has been re-established

BY DAVID WHYTE

The long and winding road to the Mull of Kintyre

What do I like about Machrihanish and the Mull of Kintyre? Absolutely nothing.

There's nothing to do – except stroll aimlessly along beaches or watch gannets dive-bomb gullible fish.

There's nothing to see – except ocean seascapes and distant isles.

There's no traffic, no noise, no hassle, no tension. Nothing, pure, unadulterated nothing.

In a chaotic life like mine, that stuff's dangerous. After a couple of days, it seeps into your soul and turns you into a "radical".

"I'm gonna stop checking e-mails every three minutes. In fact, I'll turn the damn thing off. I think I'll play another nine holes of golf after dinner. I'll just climb up that hill and sit on a rock."

You can please yourself in a place like this – and that's exactly what you should do.

It has something to do with the air I reckon. What's that stuff called? Ozone – negative ions. You get an overdose here. I've never slept so well in years.

The village at Machrihanish Dunes is a phenomenon on the Mull of Kintyre. An American company, Southworth Development, came in a couple of years ago and unearthed Machrihanish Dunes Golf Club, the "most natural golf course in the world".

I say "unearthed", but there was very little earth moved, so sensitive were they about course construction. "Scottish Natural Heritage were concerned about the effects of a golf course on bio-diversity," director of golf Keith Martin told me. "But they were delighted to discover that the areas of rough we cut back sprouted 28 different plant species, as opposed to the six that existed in the uncut areas."

I've played the course several times now. At first, it was absurdly penal – certainly on golf balls – with snarling rough tight

against super-slim fairways. But now that the rough has been cut back, it's a genuine links joy in a coastal strip of breathtaking beauty.

Machrihanish Dunes is more or less next door to the much-lauded Machrihanish Golf Club, another links super-course that many fail to sample because of its far-flung proximity to the rest of the world.

Now there's no excuse. You can add in the utterly delightful Dunaverty Golf Club – just 15 minutes away on the southern tip of Kintyre – along with the two

Big Macs and you've got yourself a regular golf Shangri La with all the added amenities you could ever need.

The American company has re-established two historic hotels; The Royal, overlooking Campbeltown harbour, and The Ugadale, in Machrihanish. Both of these luxurious establishments have been fully restored to their former glory, complete with fashionable, fine-dining restaurants and a level of service you would expect in Boston or Boca Raton.

There is also a set of "cottages" on the shores of

Machrihanish Bay, a pitch-shot away from the 1st tee at Machrihanish Golf Club and a medium putt away from the Old Clubhouse Pub.

I took the family down last visit and while the boy and I took to the links, the girls sampled a treatment in the Serenity Spa in the Ugadale Hotel.

The cottages were ideal for us and I noticed a fair few other families with the same bright idea. Another thing is you don't really even need your car – as there's an on-demand shuttle service that links up all the different facilities.

If you don't fancy taking the car at all, you can fly across Arran from Glasgow International into Machrihanish, taking around 40 minutes.

Some things in life are worth going the extra mile for.

Fact box

For more information visit www.machrihanishdunes.com

Kintyre can also be reached by ferry. See CalMac's website for details: www.calmac.co.uk



The Ugadale Hotel in Machrihanish



Campbeltown harbour

TRAVEL SCOTLAND



Above: Machrihanish Dunes Golf Club
Top: The Ugadale Hotel



The Old Clubhouse Pub at Machrihanish Dunes Golf Club

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