

# WEEKENDING: THE PIERHOUSE HOTEL



Weekend escapes with a swimming opportunity – this month Ella Foote heads to Scotland for loch dips and serious seafood

Scotland is one of my favourite places for a swim trip. Endless swim opportunities, mountain views, ever-changing landscape and vast open space to explore. Rivers, lochs, the sea, mountain pools and ponds – Scotland has it all.

The Pierhouse Hotel sits on the shore of Loch Linnhe. It has an award-winning restaurant, a waterside location and mountain views, which makes an appealing combination. But what makes it even more special is the team that welcomes you. The business philosophy to offer fair and transparent employment with decent perks on top of the community commitment to support local farmers, fishermen and suppliers, creates a place that is warm, comforting and excels in service.

## THE HOTEL

The hotel is small, just twelve rooms, but that is part of its charm. I had a loch view room, which had a huge window to watch the Scottish skyline throughout my stay. The Pierhouse was once residence of the Port Appin Pier Master. The pier was built to service steamboats that travelled up and down Loch Linnhe between Oban and Fort William. The pier remains today with a



passenger ferry operating to the island of Lismore across the water. As well as decent size rooms, some that are dog-friendly, the hotel is home to an incredible seafood restaurant which was awarded Scotland's restaurant of the year in 2023. Being on the water made it perfect for swimming and dipping throughout my stay, despite the typical changeable weather.

## THE SWIMMING

Loch Linnhe is a sea loch, so it is good to understand what the tide is doing before you swim. As well as this, there is an incredibly fast current that flows between the island of Lismore and Port Appin shoreline, so care and attention is needed.

Ella and Dan Coyle, AKA Dan the Merman

I found swimming at slack tide when the water was high was the best, but there is plenty of water to swim in throughout the tidal movement. The passenger ferry is constant to Lismore, so swimming off the shingle beach is best, but with the current and tide I found it easier to get a decent swim off the pier, I just ensured the boatmen knew what I was doing and swam along the shore away from the main boat channel. Of course, there are plenty of swim spots a short distance away from the hotel, so if the conditions don't allow there is always another swim opportunity. While I was in the area, I also swam in an emerald green pool at the foot of Ben Nevis and with Dan Coyle,



Swim at slack tide when the water is high



Delicious local seafood



Not bad for a swim spot!

**“I found swimming at slack tide when the water was high was the best, but there is plenty of water to swim in throughout the tidal movement”**

AKA Dan the Merman, who is a swim coach and guide in the area. We had a brilliantly bouncy swim in Loch Melfort.

## THE FOOD

Local, fresh, well thought-out, brilliantly prepared and incredibly delicious is the best way to describe the food. The seafood is plucked from the water metres away from the restaurant, so I would recommend eating it. The mussels were plump and juicy. The creel-caught langoustines sweet and delicate. The Caledonian oysters were fried and served with venison chorizo. Fresh-made bread, salty butter and crisp-cool wine were all on offer. Each morning fresh orange juice, hot coffee and Scottish breakfast was served with haggis, black pudding and smoked bacon. Of course, there were vegetarian options and local lamb, beef and venison if fish isn't your thing. Despite visiting mid-week over a couple of grey days in March, the restaurant each evening was packed and buzzing. Locals like to eat and drink here, which says a lot about the team and welcome.

## BEST OF THE REST

There is so much to do in the area you won't ever be bored. As well as endless swimming opportunities there are endless walks and hikes in the area. The hotel itself offers experiences like guided cow-whispering walks with Highland Cattle (the ice cream is incredible), or seaweed foraging. Port Appin is north of Oban where you can pick up ferry connections to Mull, Skye and the Outer Hebrides.

## OUR FAV THING

Sipping hot tea with a Tunnocks, looking out onto the mountain skyline after a cool dip in Loch Linnhe.

With thanks to The Pierhouse Hotel. For more information and to book the hotel visit: [pierhousehotel.co.uk](http://pierhousehotel.co.uk) for swimming with Dan the Merman visit: [swimdanthemerman.com](http://swimdanthemerman.com)