



LITTLE EDEN

Period charm meets modern-day luxury in this renovated mill house on the banks of Loch Lomond

Photography Unique Homestays Words Adrienne Webster



We've known about the healing properties of water for centuries. The act of bathing in streams, lochs and rivers can provide peace or exhilaration – or a mixture of the two. Just ask your wild-swimming pals. That instant magic, plus the sublime scenery, of course, is what draws many to Loch Lomond every year. Outside the village of Balmaha on the eastern shore is an ancient holy well, St Maha's Well, named after an 8th-century widow who preached the gospel in Scotland; legend has it that this was a place of healing for the local community. Hundreds still visit to dip in the water and reset their equilibrium.

Ironically, it was through the smirr and drizzle of a wet April morning that I found myself on a drive to the bonnie banks, in deep need of rest myself. I was on my way to the aptly named Little Eden, between Rowardennan and Balmaha. Photos promised Beatrix Potter-style charm, with a pond, gardens and ivy rambling over the old stone walls, plus a fireplace and cosy armchairs. It looked like just the place to shelter from the dreich Scottish weather.

Once I'd settled in and got my bearings, I was struck by just how close Little Eden is to ►

Left There's a well-maintained garden to explore, with a pond, a stream and colourful shrubs all year round adding to the peaceful vibes. **Above** The kitchen and dining area centres around the original stove. Just out of shot is the staircase to the two bedrooms in the attic



Above A twin bedroom under the eaves has a view to the garden and woods beyond. The soothing sounds of a stream can be heard if you sleep with the window open. There's a double bedroom too, also in the attic space. **Bottom right** Wooden deck chairs with a vista of the loch invite lounging. **Far right** A generous amount of light pours in through the windows. The palette is cool, soothing and pared-back, allowing you the mental space to unwind

the lochside – a mere 105 steps from the front door to the water's edge, if you're wondering. Yes, I did count. The visitors' book was full of stories from families who enjoyed swimming, canoeing and paddle-boarding, and I could visualise how glorious it would be to wake up on a bright morning, have a bite to eat and then head out on the calm water.

I'd love to say I was just as adventurous, that I took full advantage of the loch and the well-trodden trails of the West Highland Way, which passes the cottage, but the crackle and warmth of the fire, combined with the allure of a good book and a couple of boxsets in the TV cabinet, convinced me otherwise. I gave myself permission to be well and truly lazy. How often can we say we have absolutely nothing on the to-do list?

Little Eden (or Mill of Ross, as it was previously known) was built around 1800, and the ghosts of its past are still evident and celebrated. Much effort has been made to preserve the original stove fire, the panelled doors and stone steps down to the bathrooms. But this is no off-grid bothy. The usual downsides of an older home – draughts, creaking floorboards – aren't found here. The cottage has been lovingly restored, with the previous owners connecting it to all the services – electricity, water, sewerage, phone – and cultivating the lovely garden.

Plush bedding, cosy bathrobes, Nespresso coffee pods and a hamper filled with local eggs, milk and biscuits are all provided. There is underfloor heating too, a welcome relief for your feet even if you haven't spent the day out

walking; this may be a rural Scottish getaway, but it's one that can be done in luxurious style.

The decoration is simple but effective, with a colour palette that reflects the calm of the water and skies beyond – cool greys, taupes and creams combine for a sense of peace and serenity. Woven baskets, woollen blankets, fabric lamp shades and reclaimed timber picture frames and cabinets provide a case study in the importance of texture. And there's a definite nod to the surrounding countryside, without ever straying into cliché. There are subtle touches of tartan and an antler light fitting, but the overall design pares back on the visual clutter and lets the cottage's charm (and the lush garden views) do the talking.

On my last morning, I opened the blinds to find the clouds had miraculously parted, the sun-speckled loch beckoning me. I pulled on my boots and wandered down to the shore to enjoy a cup of coffee, feeling totally reset.

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