

# FROSTY FROLICS



TRAVEL

A red squirrel  
at Callater

Cosy up and experience a perfect winter wonderland in the Cairngorms National Park

## IN THE CAIRNGORMS

Winter getaways are about wonderful contrasts. Bracing winter walks, followed by relaxation in

front of a roaring fire, high-octane outdoor sports celebrated with a hot toddy, touring the grounds of frost-bejewelled winter wonderland castles then curling

up with a good book, or family snowball fights exhausting the little ones before tucking them up in warm and cosy accommodation.

The Cairngorms National Park offers such contrasts in abundance, tempting families, couples, adventure seekers and gentle explorers to its stunning terrain. The park is home to Britain's highest mountain range. The vast plateau, which reaches 3,000ft, centres around Loch A'an, and incorporates Lochnagar and Glas Mhol; challenging enough for the most intrepid explorer.

It's also a draw for families, photographers and ramblers, thanks to the extensive picturesque Caledonian forestry, rivers, wildlife and moorland that, in the frost or snow, are truly a winter-wonderland spectacle.

While the park is vast (the largest national park in the UK), its Deeside and Donside region offers a variety of gentle and more intense activities.

As well as being a gateway to ski-ing, hill walking and adventure, it's home to an extensive Whisky Trail, on which you can visit a range of globally recognised distilleries, a Victorian Heritage Trail which follows in the footsteps of Queen Victoria and her beloved Albert, a Castle Trail, with its highlight being the regal Balmoral Castle, and a rich variety of fine dining and snug accommodation.

For genuine hospitality, warmth and tradition, the Darroch Learg, just outside Ballater, is the epitome of good service and tradition. It's special.

With tastefully decorated tartan-chic bedrooms, often complemented with four-poster beds and antique furniture, this privately owned hotel has been run by the Frank family for more than 40 years.

On the doorstep is stunning countryside: Craigendaroch is literally just outside and ready to be climbed, while Lochnagar, Mount Keen and Morven are relatively close by. Built in 1888, this atmospheric mansion house is warm and welcoming.

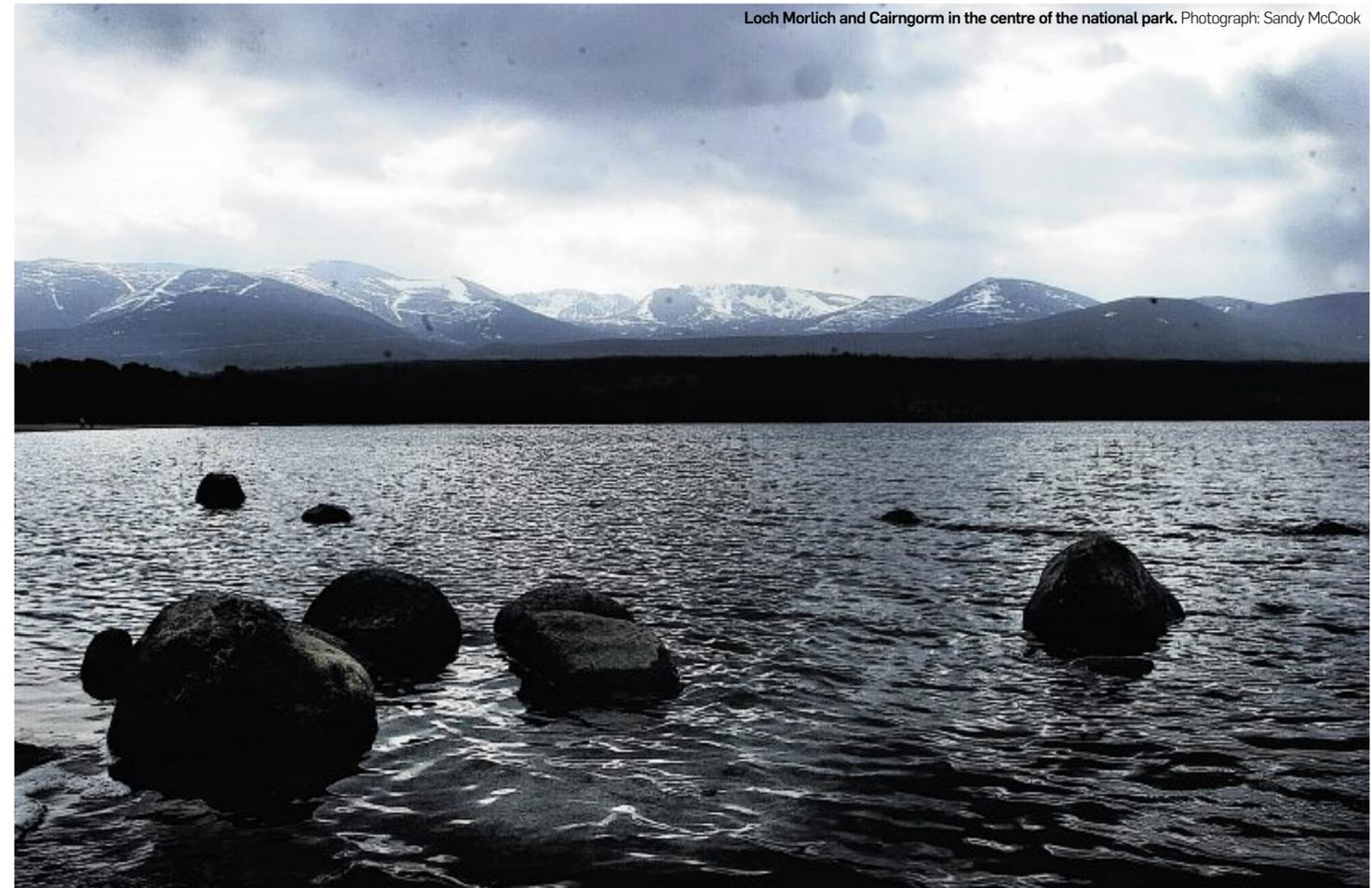
The Darroch Learg stands out further thanks to its excellent restaurant and tasting menu, available on request, which are truly delectable. Local and Scottish produce such as sea scallops with Stornoway black pudding or fillet of Aberdeen Angus beef with celeriac, asparagus, wine and oxtail sauce are examples of the menu. After dinner, guests are encouraged to retire for a digestif, and to read, play board games or simply relax in front of the log fire.

If the Cairngorms tempt you because of the outdoor lifestyle, a log cabin may seem a more adventurous or authentic experience. Cabins can also be the self-catering solution for families and those looking for more-flexible accommodation options.

The Royal Deeside Woodland Cottages, set in the small village of Dinnet,



A snowy Royal Deeside Woodland Cottage



Loch Morlich and Cairngorm in the centre of the national park. Photograph: Sandy McCook



A Royal Deeside Woodland Cottage

overlook the Muir of Dinnet Nature Reserve and are situated on the eastern side of the Cairngorms National Park.

The two-bedroom log cabins sleep up to four people, and each cabin has its own private decking to take in the scenery. Once inside, the living space and bedrooms are centrally heated to ensure even the tiniest toes are cosy at night.

The nearby Lock Kinord Hotel welcomes non-residents, so self-catering at the lodges can be interpreted as openly as you wish.

For a comfortable mid-range base, there are ample B&Bs and guesthouses in Deeside and Donside. The Callater Lodge Guest House stands out as a Victorian villa of 1861, set in its own grounds and newly refurbished for the winter season.

It is homely and cosy and guests can relax in front of the log-burning stove in the residents' lounge or watch the red squirrels frolicking outside in the gardens. But for the more-active travellers, the guesthouse offers a drying room – excellent for preparing hiking gear and ski wear for the next day's exploration – and a shed for bicycle and ski storage.

So load up the car with sledges, skis, mulled wine and walking gear, gather together your friends and family, and prepare yourself for a Cairngorm winter.

### FACT BOX

● The Cairngorms National Park is renowned for its natural beauty and is made up of five different areas – Aviemore and Cairngorms, Angus Glens, Atholl and Glenshee, Tomintout and



Callater Lodge Guest House

Glenlivet, and Royal Deeside and Donside. It is easily accessible from across the UK by road and rail. Visit [www.visitcairngorms.com](http://www.visitcairngorms.com) to find out more about what's happening in Scotland's winter wonderland this

season, and for accommodation information.

● Darroch Learg: [visitcairngorms.com/dbaccommodation-Darroch\\_Learg\\_Hotel/2198.html](http://visitcairngorms.com/dbaccommodation-Darroch_Learg_Hotel/2198.html)  
● Royal Deeside Woodland Lodges:

[visitcairngorms.com/dbaccommodation-Royal\\_Deeside\\_Woodland\\_Lodges/2288.html](http://visitcairngorms.com/dbaccommodation-Royal_Deeside_Woodland_Lodges/2288.html)  
● Callater Lodge Guest House: [visitcairngorms.com/dbaccommodation-Callater\\_Lodge\\_Guest\\_House/2412.html](http://visitcairngorms.com/dbaccommodation-Callater_Lodge_Guest_House/2412.html)