



Lowland highlife

Latest 7 discovers **Muirhall**, stylish holiday cottages with that five star touch

Muirhall lies in the heart of the Scottish countryside close to the historic towns of Biggar and Lanark, and yet is only 40 minutes from Edinburgh and Glasgow, both of which you can fly to from Gatwick. Once there the choices are to hire a car, or take a train to either West Calder or Carstairs railway stations, both within eight miles, and a pick-up service is available.

If you're thinking self-catering cottages with basic facilities, then think again. The Muirhall experience is entirely on a higher plane. Traditional farm buildings lovingly restored and renovated, and then stylishly furnished. No expense has been spared, and the look is akin to croft meets boutique hotel.

The Muirhall has its origins in the early 16th century having been granted, under Royal Charter by James IV of Scotland, to the Somervell family, when the farmhouse and cottages would have housed the laird and farm workers. The farm has now been regenerated and Muirhall offer luxury holiday cottages with the equivalent of five star facilities. Many of the remarkable features have been renovated, including the massive, solid oak trusses and beams throughout, by carpenters Oak and Woodland who have appeared on *Grand Designs* three times. In addition the original stone has been used in the refurbishment. Add to this underfloor heating,

"The emphasis at Muirhall is on relaxed luxury and on getting away from it all"

unique log and coal fires in stone fireplaces that have been rebuilt using finely finished sandstone and South African granite. Donald McIntyre, an award-winning stonemason, spent six months here constructing all the fireplaces and other stonemasonry. There are remote control Velux roof windows, en-suite facilities, hairdryers, fully-equipped kitchens, satellite TV, DVD, and music, and there are even handmade log beds by Woodend Carpentry. Dunkeld and Hebden Renovation handcrafted all the oak doors and kitchen work surfaces.

The emphasis at Muirhall is on relaxed luxury and on getting away from it all. That said, there is a huge range of facilities to take advantage of, both at the farm and locally. There is a sauna, a Huxley international putting green, mountain bikes, garden barbecue, and internet access if you really need to stay in touch. Mobile phones can be provided, there is a DVD library, daily dishwashing service, a laundry/24 hour return laundry service and even a gourmet chef by arrangement. In your cottage there will be a welcome basket to greet you.

They are more than happy to assist with travel arrangements: a car and driver can be organised, maps provided, a baby cot if needed – even pet facilities. In short, nothing is too much trouble in their bid to make your holiday as relaxed and luxurious as possible

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