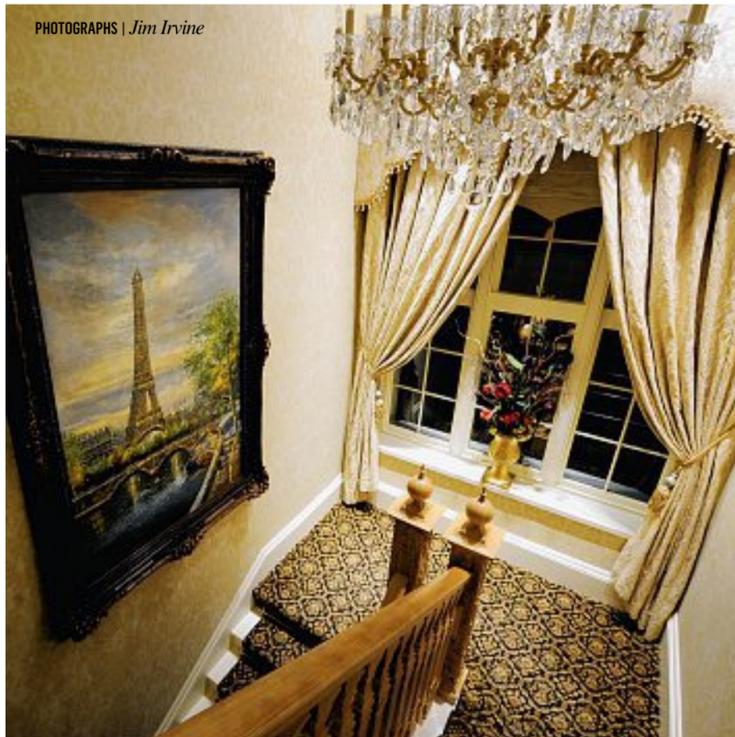


EATING OUT

Macleod House and Lodge, Balmedie



PHOTOGRAPHS | Jim Irvine



FINE FOOD AND... DONALD'S BEDROOM

It's not every day that you stroll around Donald Trump's bedroom, but I was discovering how you can live like a tycoon and not break the bank.

For around the same as paying for a night at the theatre, or a football match, you can disappear into the opulent world of fine dining at Donald Trump's magnificent Macleod House boutique-style hotel and restaurant at his golf course near Aberdeen.

We sampled a baronial slice of the good life with his Sunday lunches at £39-a-head for three courses, plus a selection of cheeses to share at the end. I can assure you that the fine-dining ethos from the evening menu has been sprinkled liberally over lunch, too.

As an added bonus, we enjoyed a guided tour of the property afterwards.

I had admired Mr Trump's manor house from afar, but now I was within its sumptuous embrace - and standing right in the tycoon's bedroom.

You could, too, as all the rooms are open to paying guests, including those which make up the Trump Suite - when he is not in residence, of course.

It was surreal but, as a reporter at heart, I was lapping up the detail as well as the fine food.

In his huge bathroom, I gazed at floor tiles,

shipped in from Verona in Italy. Back in the bedroom, I spotted a rather large slab of Trump-branded chocolate, in a nice little hamper.

Now a door in the corner was ajar - and I was peering down Mr Trump's secret personal staircase, which spiralled around in one of the impressive turrets, to a private entrance below. Staff must be on their toes because they never know where he is.

I could not begin to guess how much has been spent on gutting and refurbishing Macleod House to such a high standard, while retaining its elegant ambience of fine dining and traditional country-house quality.

It stands in splendid isolation near a sweeping drive, which dips down towards the golf course and sea. You can admire fine stonework and craftsmanship from every angle. The word "brehtaking" fits like a glove. A huge water feature at the front, a lake with swans at the back, with the attractive lodge to one side, complete the picture.

A large front door swung open before we even tapped on it - are vigilant staff watching from a monitor or does a bell go off as guests approach? I don't know, but it was an impressive way to greet people. Like all our fellow guests, we were made to feel very special from the moment we arrived.

My wife and I were guided to an impressive main room, where a roaring fire and beautiful leather sofas were awaiting us.

We studied menus as we relaxed, soaked up the elegance of our surroundings and began to unwind in the glorious peace and quiet - with just the faint hum of staff moving about.

The main reception room, bar and dining areas fit snugly into three linked rooms - with just eight beautifully-laid tables. This exclusive feel makes it advisable to book in advance.

As I had left it late, it took some juggling, and an extremely helpful young woman on reception, to fit us in.

At last, it was down to business and our first course arrived in impressive style.

Salad of duck confit with lardons, Stornoway black pudding, parmesan basket, and Arran mustard vinaigrette for my wife.

For me, Inverave cold smoked salmon and trout, with capers, shallot, parsley and lemon.

For mains, roast sirloin of beef, with horseradish mash, Yorkshire pudding, cauliflower puree, red wine and rosemary jus and roast loin of pork with pork-belly confit,



MACLEOD HOUSE AND LODGE
TRUMP INTERNATIONAL GOLF LINKS, BALMEDIE.
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(INCLUDES THREE COURSES AND CHEESES) £78.00
1 TONIC WATER £1.90
2 SODA WATER £4.50
2 DASH CORDIAL £0.60
TOTAL £85.00
GRACE LEFT £10 TIP
£95.00

pancetta, champ mash, parsnip puree, thyme and onion jus.

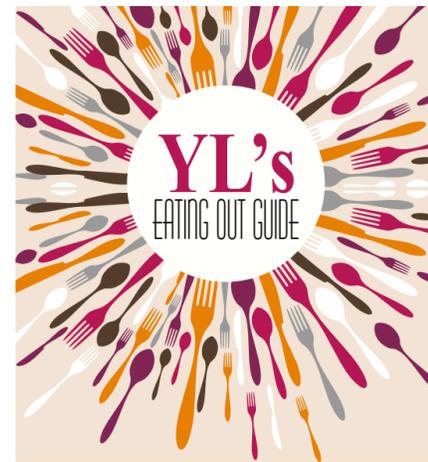
A cooling and light Champagne sorbet followed. We rounded off with a selection of British and French cheeses, including smoked cheese, with grapes, apple slices and oatcakes.

Rather than go into minute detail, it is best to sum up by saying it was as near to perfection as possible, delicious and bursting with great taste combinations from the first to last mouthful.

The highlights were the beautifully-presented parmesan basket, which contained the yummy duck and black pudding mixture, and the superb main courses, with delicious meats, roast potatoes and vegetables, and the small details - such as the chilled grapes dusted with sugar powder. A word of warning: the main courses are substantial as well as delicious.

Macleod House brings a new dimension to quality dining around Aberdeen and you do not need to have any interest in golf, for that matter, to revel in it. And the investment and commitment are clear to see.

We eventually dragged ourselves away, but not before my wife announced she wanted to stay overnight the next time. And you'll guess which room she wants.



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