

Travel: The Real Retreat, Duntrune
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WILLIAM Stirling Graham knew what he was doing when he sited his family home on a hill above Broughty Ferry in 1826.

Go up through celandine and wood anemone-littered woods and turn left into the gravel drive and what must rank as one of the best views on the east coast of Scotland opens up in front you.

Lording over it all is the house itself, built by architect William Burn in his classic style of interconnecting rooms, mostly now occupied by Olwyn and Barry Jack who have linked up with other locally run small businesses and artists to produce the Real Retreat.

Where else could you experience a full-body massage, take yoga instruction, learn to paint and take lessons from the in-house belly dancer?

Room service? To say Duntrune has character is a bit of an understatement. Olwyn and Barry have stamped their unique mark on the house and its eight acres of gardens.

From Olwyn's collections of straw hats in the entrance hall to the moss-covered ancient cheese press at the back of the house, there's a surprise around every corner.

Downstairs the dining room links up with the comfortable sitting room, which leads on to Burn's magnificent drawing room where previous owners would have thrown grand parties.

Up the staircase are the guest bedrooms with their views over the garden to the estuary. The rooms major in old-world charm rather than designer-boutique chic, but have everything you need for a short stay.

Olwyn's family tree adds to the sense that you are staying in someone's home and the profusion of local maps and guides help you plan any outings. Bathrooms are well-stocked with organic toiletries.

Wining and dining? Some guests choose the three-day detox packages which involve Olwyn's home-made juices at mealtimes.

But the Jacks will also provide a three-course evening meal for those who do not want to make the trek down to Broughty Ferry or Dundee. Meals are taken – collectively – in the dining room with the husband-and-wife team doing the cooking, serving and genial hosting.

One evening we dined on a hearty apple and parsnip soup followed by salmon caught by Olwyn's sister in a local river and were finished off by rhubarb crumble and custard.

Worth getting out of bed for? Duntrune has linked up with The Retreat, a small spa business that offers treatments based in an old lodge about a mile down the road.

We tried the infrared sauna – a pine box built for two which uses infrared rays instead of coals to provide the heat. That warmed us up for full body massages that left us chilled out but strangely raring to go.

Or just a short stroll from the house is the home of Liz McCarthy, a well-established artist who

offers painting classes.

She has a delightful and sunny wee studio in her back garden – to match her own cheery disposition – in which she sets about teaching even absolute beginners the rudiments of creating an artwork with a stick of charcoal and a palette of acrylic paints.

Back in the main house, the drawing room is the venue for Delia Gallagher's yoga classes. Delia gently and expertly coaxes you into positions you might have thought you could never reach and it's a grand place for your first "om".

This is also where Caroline Danso Winter pops up from the downstairs flat for her beguiling and entrancing belly-dancing sessions.

Budget or boutique? It's at the budget end of the market and unashamedly so.

Little extras? Take the laminated map from the entrance and just explore the lovely gardens. Olwyn and head gardener Barry have created their own "Woodhenge" in the nearby copse and have strategically placed seats in sunspots and viewpoints for maximum enjoyment.

Guestbook comments? The kind of place you leave with a smile on your face. Genuinely-warm Scottish hospitality at its best. One night's B&B costs £35 plus £20 for dinner.