

Ednam House Hotel

Genie Houlder and her dog, Sir Robert, enjoy a relaxing
break in Kelso, just over the Scottish border →



Tried & tested Scottish Borders

Blast Beach, as seen from Nose's Point, Seaham



I am a certified crazy-dog-lady. You will be familiar with this condition; symptoms include the crossing of a busy road to say hello to a handsome hound, the remembering of a pup's name into adulthood – the owner's name long forgotten – and, of course, the obsession with my own dog, Bobby, or Sir Robert as he likes to be addressed. I have a forgiving (so far) boyfriend of six months, Stuart, and it was time to train him on the needs of a sophisticated pooch and his crazy-dog-lady.

We needed dog-friendly, luxury, romance and we needed some lovely photographs to remember our first trip away together. So, off we went to the stately Ednam House in Kelso, just over the Scottish border, where we had also booked a professional dog photography session with Richard Aspinall.

We live in West Yorkshire and wanted to make the journey as interesting and memorable as possible. We planned a route along the Durham coast, a visit to Durham, then a meander in land via Hadrian's Wall and Kielder Water before we reached our final destination in Scotland, at the luxurious Ednam House.

Bobby, or Sir Robert as he likes to be known



The beautiful Kielder Water



JOURNEY

Our first walkies was on Blast Beach, near Seaham; a horseshoe pebble beach sheltered from the wind with interesting coves and plenty of wildlife. We liked the tranquillity of the beach and walked back through the nature reserve enjoying the artwork and poetry set out by the National Trust. Durham was a delight. We parked easily and cheaply near the historic centre and walked a short distance to a doggie pub – The Boat Club – on the river Wear. We didn't have enough time but would have loved to

take Bobby on one of the rowing boats; the boat master gave Bobby a fuss and said that dogs sailed for free, which did make us feel welcome.

Our second walkies, was at Hadrian's Wall and Housesteads Fort. Bobby was very interested in the history, or perhaps it was just the sheep pooch. Dogs are allowed in the grounds of the fort and along the wall but not inside the small museum, although there is an area to tie dogs up. Stuart went into the museum while I stayed with Bobby, reading about the history on the outside displays.

Kielder was beautiful. The tall trees and the immense space left Stuart pining for

The hotel offers views over the river Tweed



a return visit, dreams of forest adventures and sailing on the reservoir. My wish is to return and see the night sky from Kielder Observatory, and if I am lucky, witness the Northern Lights.

We turned northward for our final approach to Kelso and Ednam House. The drive was enjoyable with gentle rolling hills, green fields, blue skies and sights of birds of prey. We arrived quickly at Kelso and found the hotel easily in the centre of the bustling little town; we were immediately impressed by the

grandeur of the entrance and excited to get inside.

WELCOMING LUXURY

The reception was large and hospitable with thick tartan carpet, traditional furnishings and in the winter months a fireplace fit for a King. The friendly receptionist, Louise, greeted us for our two-night 'Gourmet Getaway', with the emphasis on making Bobby feel relaxed with plenty of kisses and cuddles.



Dogs are allowed in all parts of the hotel excluding the Riverside Restaurant, but can dine with you in the Lounge bar. Our room was number 42, a classic room with the most enchanting view overlooking the hotel's grounds and the river Tweed. Bobby pulled me to where there was a welcome note from the manager and some dog treats. Once he'd gobbled down the titbits and had a good sniff round, he settled into his bed – I'd brought his own. There was enough room for us to spread out and not feel crowded with a dog bed, other dog accessories, and two suitcases. We refreshed ourselves in the large bathroom and dressed elegantly for our first evening meal in the Riverview restaurant.

We were excited to be having a romantic meal, just the two of us in the restaurant's stunning setting: pristine white linen, candlelit, and a view directly over the river. While reading the menu we were brought an amuse-bouche of tempura prawns, pea and ham soup and Aberdeen Angus mini burgers. ➔



Tried & tested Scottish Borders

Bobby enjoyed being the centre of attention



The fireplace in reception is fit for a king



Kelso is a market town in the Scottish Borders

To start, I ordered twice-baked cheese soufflé with a pear salad. Stuart had seared scallops and said they were delicious. For main, I chose Lobster tortellini in a delicious sauce. Stuart had Ednam House pie; it was rabbit and mushroom which he found delicious and his first taste of rabbit. We were too full to enjoy the puddings and vowed to try them on the next night.

After finishing our wine, we took Bobby on a moonlit walk of Kelso. It was idyllic, with Scottish bunting and festoon lighting decorating the square.

Quirky boutique shops line the cobbled streets of the town while faint music from the dog-friendly bars and pubs serenaded our stroll. With the barmy weather, this little Scottish town could well have been a ville in northern France; a night to remember with my two favourite boys.



LITERARY PILGRIMAGE

After a comfortable night's sleep in our super

king-sized bed, we had a Scottish breakfast including haggis and smoked salmon.

After breakfast we took a short drive to Abbotsford House near Melrose. The house was the home of Sir Walter Scott, the novelist, poet and collector, famous for his works such as Ivanhoe and Rob Roy. The house is charming and has a lovely café

and visitor centre. Dogs are allowed in the grounds and the estate. We chose a woodland walk next to the river, where we found a shady spot on the banks of the Tweed and set out our picnic. We saw kingfishers, wading birds and plenty of fish in the river. Bobby had a paddle while Stuart practiced skimming stones.

STAR IN THE MAKING

Later that day we returned to Ednam House for Bobby's photographic session. Richard had sent a questionnaire before our visit to get to know us a little: what did Bobby like,



would he play, was he good with commands. Through the questionnaire and our emails it felt like Richard had a good understanding of what we wanted from our session. I wanted to capture Bobby at his cutest most inquisitive self, and a really good clear photograph for me to treasure. Richard was accompanied by his wife Angie, who I could tell immediately was a fellow crazy-dog-lady. She gave Bobby lots of cuddles and spoke to him telling him he was a handsome boy and gaining his trust. Richard wanted to know if Bobby had a favourite toy, I had to confess Sir Robert has to be in the mood for play, but he is always in the mood to eat, so with a little bribery he behaved well for the camera. We spent two hours in the lush grounds of the hotel, taking action shots, close-ups and reportage style shots. Bobby loved the attention and being asked to do things in return for treats. He stayed, he sat and he ran.

LAST SUPPER

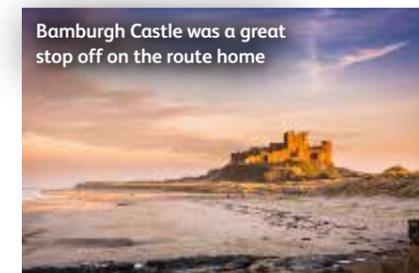
Our last evening at Ednam House was spent in the Lounge bar where Bobby could stay with us while we ate. The food in the bar



is more relaxed but no less tasty than that in the restaurant. Bobby had sirloin steak, with mushroom and tomato followed by fish and chips, he did let us have a bit and it was yummy. Stuart had banana split and I had warm chocolate brownie with ice cream.

RETURN

We enjoyed another delicious breakfast before our departure, Stuart having smoked haddock with a poached egg while I enjoyed fresh pastries. On our way home, we stopped at Bamburgh to visit the castle and the immaculate white sandy beach. It was worth the short detour from the A1 as we enjoyed a paddle in the sea.



Bamburgh Castle was a great stop off on the route home



Bobby gets in on the action with a spot of running

FACT FILE



Ednam House
ADDRESS Bridge Street, Kelso, Roxburghshire TD5 7HT
CONTACT 01573 224168, ednamhouse.com
PRICE Two night Gourmet Break – including cream tea, and five-course taster menu with complementing wine flight on your first night and full Scottish breakfast each morning. Your accommodation is in a Superior bedroom, from £239 per person.

Richard Aspinall Photography
 60 to 90-minute photo shoot with professional photo editing.
 Prices from £175 (including £100 credit towards an album or prints).
 Website: www.richardaspinall.com