



QUAINT The charming Kirkstyle Inn in Dunning has four gorgeous guest rooms

BY GARRY McCONNACHIE

Been there, Dunning that

SIX weeks of trying to keep a four-year-old entertained during the summer holidays can leave parents with little time to do anything else.

So, with nursery having returned, it was time for mum and dad to enjoy some much-needed R&R.

We packed our bags in the car and enjoyed a leisurely drive to Dunning, just outside Perth.

Nestled in the heart of this picturesque little village is the Kirkstyle Inn. What was once simply a welcoming little pub now boasts four gorgeous rooms in a quaint house just yards away.

Once we'd dropped the bags off in our room, we took a stroll through the village before returning to the inn for an afternoon bite to eat and a refreshing drink.

The menu consists of delicious offerings in impressive portion sizes.

I opted for the charcuterie, while Allyson chose the goat's cheese salad. We tossed in an extra portion of triple-cooked chips with Parmesan shavings for good measure and settled in for a relaxing yet filling lunch.

Attentive staff were always on hand to answer any questions and ensure our glasses were never empty for long.

Got a question about the whiskies available? What about the gin of the month? Not a problem, with knowledgeable bar staff willing to recommend the best on offer.

As the day wore on, the inn became a bustling hub filled with locals and tourists.

With dinner just around the corner, we returned to our room to freshen up. Avoid relaxing on the comfy bed - you might lose the rest of the evening with the best sleep of your life.

The rooms come with a television and espresso machine (with pods provided) while some of the original features from the 200-year-old house

have been retained - including a smaller than average doorway leading from the bedroom to the bathroom.

If you pay more attention than I did, you'll avoid the painful collision of your head with the solid wooden door frame.

The standalone bathtub in the cavernous bathroom comes with an old-style shower attached to the taps, adding to the quirky nature of the stay. Alternatively, you can go for a soothing soak in the tub, with salts provided by the hotel.

With dinner now upon us, we returned to the restaurant and, after mulling over the menu, I went for the steak frites (medium rare) and Allyson chose the "small" proper fish and chips.

The menu may say "small" but the portion size of the fish (complete with perfect crispy batter) was anything but. And that's not a complaint because it was quickly demolished, as was my succulent steak.

After a well-presented cheeseboard, with a glass of wine and beer to wash it down, we looked forward to some live music before topping off the evening with a nightcap in the upstairs snug, complete with a roaring fire.

A continental breakfast of muesli, yoghurt, fresh fruit, hot croissants and ice-cold milk got the next morning off to the perfect start.

But before we knew it, our stay was over and we were making our way out of Dunning.

The trip may have been over but we'll definitely be returning. And next time, we might even bring the little one. Or maybe not.

●Garry and Allyson stayed courtesy of the Kirkstyle Inn. A night's stay with dinner, bed and breakfast costs from £115 to £155, depending on which day of the week you visit. For more information and to book, go to thekirkstyleinn.co.uk or call 01764 684248.



UP AND AWAY Brian enjoys a tippie and a trip aloft with Flo

Wright at the start..

Brian Hancill explores the coastline of North Carolina and hears stories of the first English settlers and aircraft pioneers

DRIVE across North Carolina to the islands of the Outer Banks and it feels more like you're heading for the Outer Limits.

US Highway 64 crosses a 40-mile stretch of forest where the largest black bears in the world roam wild.

Then there's a three-mile bridge over the Alligator River, a five-mile bridge to Roanoke Island, and, finally, a two-mile bridge to the chain of islands known as OBX. It's all breathtakingly scenic.

One of the first things you notice is that someone called Virginia Dare is a big name.

A whole county, that five-mile bridge, a small airport and even a brand of vanilla extract are named after her.

Why? Because on August 18, 1587, Virginia became the first child born to English parents on American soil. No one knows what became of her. On her third birthday, her grandfather John White returned from a three-year mission to England to find the pioneer settlement he had established on Roanoke's north-eastern shore silent and deserted.

In one of history's most enduring mysteries, all 117 settlers, including his granddaughter and her parents, had vanished. Most of

the buildings had been flattened but there were no graves, no bodies and no signs of a struggle.

More than 400 years later, the woodland where the settlement stood has an eerie calm. A short film at the visitor centre explains the story and every day in summer, a play called The Lost Colony is performed at an open-air theatre down by the waterfront.

Five miles across the water is the region's other main claim to fame. On December 17, 1903, a pair of bicycle mechanics from Dayton, Ohio, made the world's first aircraft flight above a stretch of windswept sand at Kitty Hawk. North Carolina number plates still carry the words First in Flight to honour brothers Wilbur and Orville Wright.

At the Wright Brothers National Memorial, a granite monument stands on the small hill where they began their trials.

Four marker stones show you how far their biplane flew on each attempt that day. A visitor centre tells the story and there's a full-size replica of the Wright Flyer.

The next day, we took our own flight in a little Cessna

BRIDGE OF SKIES Historic Corolla Park



facts

American Airlines flies daily from Heathrow to Raleigh Durham, fares from £731 return. See aa.com. Rooms at Guest House Raleigh start at £161 a night. See guesthouseraleigh.com. B&B at The Tranquil House Inn in Manteo from £88 a night. See tranquilhouseinn.com. Rooms at The Jarvis at 220 in New Bern from £121 a night. See thejarvisat220.com. Tourist info: visitnc.com

HISTORIC Honouring pioneers

from OBX Airplanes at

Dare County Airport. Just me, girlfriend Flo and Carl the pilot, who let

me take the controls for a few minutes after we passed over the flight monument. It was a memorable way to see the Outer Banks on a beautiful sunny day.

The night before, we had visited a bar called Poor Richard's in the Roanoke town of Manteo. A young man called Grant Tate heard our accents and insisted on buying drinks. He turned out to be descended from the brother of William Tate, the Kitty Hawk postmaster who encouraged the Wright Brothers to go there and hosted them when they arrived.

"They wrote to 101 postmasters all over the US and Bill was the only one who replied," Grant told us proudly.

You need to rent a car to get around the Outer Banks and north of the Roanoke bridge there are 36 miles of road. The first 12 are a four-lane highway and, although everywhere is bright and clean, you could be anywhere in America



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SOUTH Africa is one of the most dynamic and exciting countries in the world and it's a place where you can tick off many incredible bucket-list experiences.

Whether it's a safari to spot the "Big Five" game animals, a self-drive along the Garden Route, a tour of world-class vineyards, or walking in history on Robben Island, South Africa caters for everyone.

First of all, there are the incredible safari options. Kruger National Park boasts lions, leopards, rhinos, elephants, buffalo and hundreds of other mammals, as well as diverse bird species, including vultures, eagles and storks.

After your safari, you can return to one of the incredible cosmopolitan cities. Cape Town is home to a modern waterfront, a world-class sporting venue, gourmet restaurants and the magnificent Table Mountain National Park.

Not far from the city, you'll find delicious vineyards, marine safaris, and Robben Island, where Nelson Mandela spent 18 years behind bars.

Then there's South Africa's largest city, Johannesburg, which is home to many of the country's top museums,



SPECTACULAR View of Cape Town

including the Apartheid Museum, Constitution Hill, Liliesleaf Farm, Museum Africa and the Johannesburg Holocaust and Genocide Centre.

The city of Durban is known for its African, Indian and colonial influences, as well as being home to the largest concentration of people of Indian descent outside of India. The Asian influence can be felt across the city, with marketplaces and Indian-style streets.

And you can't visit South Africa without exploring one of its many world-famous vineyards. Stop off in the Winelands, where the mountain ranges around Stellenbosch and Franschhoek provide ideal micro climates for the vines.

You'll find numerous vineyards to cosy up in, many of which include on-site restaurants.

Getting to South Africa is easy. The direct flight is only 12 hours from London and there are three international airports.

To book your dream adventure to South Africa, phone Barrhead Travel's Worldwide Team on 0141 222 2223.

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Freewheeling Raleigh is just capital

as the strip malls, discount stores and diners roll by.

Breaking the pattern on the western side is an immense system of dunes called Jockey's Ridge State Park.

We spent an hour traversing its shifting sandy slopes but had to abandon our mission to reach the distant sea as rain clouds gathered and lunch beckoned. So we pulled into the Outer Banks Brewing Station, billed as America's first wind-powered brew pub.

After a nature reserve at Kitty Hawk Woods, the main road veers off to the mainland and the route north becomes quieter, greener and more upmarket.

The town of Duck has quirky shops on a waterfront boardwalk. It's also worth taking a long walk around Historic Corolla Park, with its redbrick lighthouse and picture-perfect village.

Beyond Corolla, 4x4s can carry on north to a stretch of beach and woodland where wild horses roam.

We'd hoped to drive 60 miles through the southern strand and rejoin the mainland via two small car ferries and the tiny island of Ocrakoke. But the island-hopping route would have taken a whole day and we didn't have the time.

Anyway, it's a good excuse to go back.

OUR trip to North Carolina was topped and tailed with stays in Raleigh, the state capital, and New Bern, a small town near the coast.

Raleigh is by no means a small town but it feels like one. Everyone you meet seems to know everyone else and nearly everything is within walking distance.

After flying in, we ate at the Garland, a pan-Asian restaurant owned by husband-and-wife musicians Paul and Cheetie, who play in the rock band Birds of Avalon. After an excellent meal, Paul took us to a local bar, greeting nearly everyone we passed by name, and he knew Matt and Nicole, owners of our hotel, the wonderful Guest House Raleigh.

Next morning, we had breakfast in City Market, an area of quaint cobblestoned streets, before hitting the North Carolina Museum of History, then the Museum of Art. Set in a vast park with outdoor exhibits, the latter has everything from Old Masters to modern sculptures.

Back in town at the multi-storey Beer Garden, we met owner Niall Hanley, a genial giant from County Mayo who has built up a chain of 10 food and drink venues since opening the city's first Irish pub 20 years ago. His Beer Garden holds the world record for the most ales on tap - an incredible 366.

Along the way, we lunched at

Brewery Bhavana and Beasley's Chicken & Honey, both typical of a town where local owners are the rule, not the exception.

New Bern, around 110 miles south east, was Raleigh's predecessor as state capital until 1792.

It was hit hard by Hurricane Florence in 2018 but has bounced back so well that we didn't notice any effects until we took a river cruise and saw cabin cruisers stuck in trees.

On our Cruise The Neuse trip, we passed an osprey's nest (complete with egg-sitting female) and the palatial home of Nicholas Sparks, author of weepy bestseller *The Notebook*.

New Bern is also the birthplace of Pepsi-Cola, invented in a local drugstore in 1893 as Brad's Drink.

The building is now a Pepsi shrine and even though I'm fizzy pop phobic, a huge float with ice-cream proved irresistible.

Pepsi apart, this is another town that thrives on unique local

businesses, from quaintly traditional stores such as Mitchell's Hardware (motto: if we don't have it, you don't need it), to first-class restaurants like the Persimmon Waterfront, new Cypress Hall, plus lunchtime favourite Captain Ratty's.

We took a trolleybus tour and found the jewel in New Bern's crown - streets full of antebellum homes lovingly preserved and restored.

Like those in Savannah, Georgia, they escaped being destroyed in the civil war.

We stayed in one such building brought back to life by husband-and-wife owners Michael and Denise, who retired early to create luxury B&B The Jarvis at 220.

Denise, an Anglophile former flight attendant, even serves PG Tips tea.

Both towns were great places to visit and we thought they'd be wonderful places to live, too.

If I were young again I'd be looking for a job in Raleigh right now.

