

ESCAPE CHAPELTON COTTAGE

Long days and bright skies may feel out of reach, but this cottage on Glenkindie Estate serves as a portal to summer all year round

Photographs Angus Bremner Words Natasha Radmehr

You know that feeling you get when you step off a plane in a hot country and that first blast of sun grazes your skin? I experience it in reverse walking into Chapelton Cottage. It's November, it's dim, the country roads that led us here were glossy with ice and bordered by snow. I push the cottage door open an inch and a narrow bolt of gold light shoots out from a yellow-painted kitchen. In we bundle, my mum, son and I, trading slush for heated Moroccan floor tiles and scarves for a warm stove. Nice knowing you, winter.

"On a dark, gloomy day, or when it's wet and miserable, you want to stay somewhere uplifting," says Joelle Reid, the interior designer behind the decor. She has renovated

four of these self-catering cottages (and has another two to go) at Glenkindie, a slice of rural Donside close to Alford that belongs to the owners of the nearby Kildrummy Inn (which Joelle redesigned a few years ago). "We wanted the cottages to feel relaxing and inspiring places to write and draw in, or cosy down without having to venture out."

That's exactly what we decide to do, even cancelling our dinner reservation the night we arrive because we'd rather hang out in the house. With the floral blinds drawn, we can pretend it's summer; much of the two-storey, three-bedroom cottage is awash with cheerful colour and botanical-patterned textiles, and the ground-floor tiles, overlaid by jute rugs, remind us of a Portuguese villa. Apple-green stools are tucked into a pink kitchen island, and the Morris & Co sunny yellow Willow wallpaper running ▶



Above In someone else's hands the exposed stone walls in the open-plan kitchen and dining space could have looked medieval. In Joelle's, they're more Mediterranean, thanks to the yellow-painted tongue-and-groove panelling and Ca' Pietra's Cabana floor tiles. **Right** The cottage sleeps six people across three bedrooms, where the designer's mastery of print and pattern is best seen. **Below** Joelle worked with Peden & Pringle on the bespoke kitchen cabinetry, painted in Little Greene's Yellow-Pink (and Hellebore on the island).





up the stairs and into the landing is like a field of ripening wheat. “People tend to think of a Scottish palette as oppressive purples and browns, but when the broom is out it really is a vivid yellow, and the grass in summer is such a bright, fresh green,” says Joelle. “We also sourced local materials and artwork for the cottages, so they are very Scottish – just not in a way we’re accustomed to.”

One of her biggest hospitality bugbears is when practicality takes precedence over beauty. “I’ve been to so many holiday properties where there’s been a drab beige kitchen with a laminate worktop, or pleather sofas. I grudge paying money for accommodation with poor quality interiors,” she says. “I wanted the cottages to feel aspirational. The design and layout of each one is different, but they all have a thread of luxury running through them, containing features that guests might not have in their own homes so that they come away with ideas and inspiration.”

Cooking doesn’t feel a chore, for instance, because we have the thrilling novelty of an Everhot range cooker (in powder pink, naturally). Joelle, who trained in textiles, turned to brands such as

Cole & Son and Osborne & Little for richly patterned wallpapers and fabrics. The bathrooms are kitted out with Burlington sanitaryware and Laura Thomas Co toiletries. The bedding from The Fine Bedding Company skips straight to the top of my January sale wishlist. Even the washing machine is Miele, a detail that would have passed me by in my twenties but is now the equivalent of a petrolhead getting to road-test a Bugatti.

It feels more like someone’s home than a holiday rental, especially because the owner has generously styled it with her own pieces. A framed Hermès scarf, a collection of Dog & Dome china plates... I always feel nervy unleashing my toddler in such environments, but he’s too preoccupied by an Etch A Sketch and a typewriter to wreak his usual trail of havoc. Adding to Chapelton’s analogue charms are a record player with a stack of vinyl – we spin ELO to match the endorphin rush of the decor – and shelves lined with board games and books. There’s a telly and WiFi too, so plenty to busy ourselves with by the log burner in the sitting room.

Just as well, because the snow is keen to keep us indoors. It’s a

shame; this part of Aberdeenshire is relatively untapped and I was hoping to explore. “There are plenty of places to go if you’re staying a while,” says Joelle, who has travelled to Donside every fortnight for the past four years. “I like to drive up over Glenshee and stop in Ballater to pick up supplies, and the Kildrummy Inn [which is in the Michelin Guide and was named Best Hotel Experience at the 2025 Scottish Thistle Awards] is lovely for a meal or a drink.”

When the weather picks up, the owners intend to provide electric bikes and a kit room where guests can borrow boots and coats if they haven’t brought the right gear with them. “They’re developing the estate all the time,” says the interior designer. In addition to another two cottages, plans are underway to transform Glenkindie Castle along the road into an exclusive-use venue, which Joelle promises will be “special”. I don’t need any convincing; the evidence is right here before me. And as we step out of borrowed sunshine and back into the bleak midwinter, a bright side emerges – we are spoiled for reasons to return. ■

From £495 for two nights (sleeps six), glenkindiecottages.co.uk



Top left A striped stair runner and knotted rope banister add to the holiday vibe. **Left** The generous windows in the sitting room overlook the surrounding countryside. There is a working farm on the estate, and guests are encouraged to explore the land. A sliding door on the other side of this room opens out to a decked area with seats – a tranquil spot for morning coffee. **Below** The single beds in this room on the ground floor can be zipped together if required. Even when the blind (made from Osborne & Little’s Moroccan-inspired Tarbouche fabric) is lowered, there are still flowers to be admired in Morris & Co’s Marigold wallpaper

