



AllWays

Fonab Castle Hotel & Spa, Scotland

[www.allwaystraveller.com](http://www.allwaystraveller.com)



## A setting so suiting Fonab's style

Fonab Castle Hotel & Spa, also known as Port-na-Craig House, is a Scots Baronial property located above Loch Faskally on the edge of the bustling small town of Pitlochry.

Built in 1892 as a family residence and now a five-star hotel and spa it offers rooms in the original castle or in a newer built lodge and two on-site restaurants.

The nearby Blair Castle, which dates back to the 13<sup>th</sup> Century is the ancestral home of the Clan Murray.

It has undergone expansions and renovations over the centuries to become the grand stately home we can visit today.

Fonab Castle Hotel & Spa is a member of the Luxury Scotland and provides a luxury base for touring Perth and Kinross.

<https://www.fonabcastlehotel.com> and

<https://www.luxuryscotland.co.uk/hotels-experiences/fonab-castle-hotel-spa/>

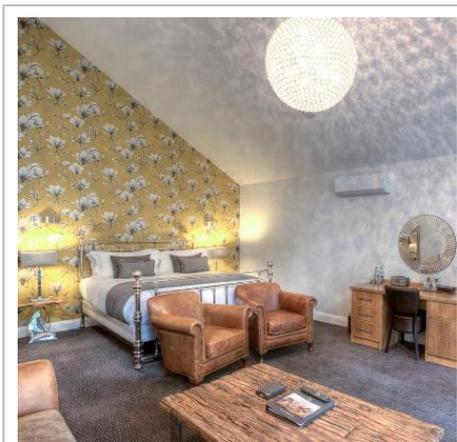
**Ashley Gibbins**  
Commissioning Editor  
*AllWays traveller*



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 A personal view of Fonab Castle Hotel & Spa
 

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## The warmest of welcomes and luxury throughout

The welcome one receives on arriving at Fonab Castle is indicative of everything that will follow.

By Ashley Gibbins

We are met by Arthur Middleton, one of the hotel's 'top of the form' concierge team.

Kitted out in black and grey tartan (to avoid alienating any particular clan) he helps us with the luggage, acquaints us with what the hotel offers us as quests and, once we have settled in, advises us on what to do and see around Fonab Castle.

A very short walk down and over the Pitlochry Dam gets us into the bustling market town it was named after.

For something a little more strenuous we can take a walk around Loch Faskally, which the hotel overlooks.

Blair Castle is less than a 15-minute drive away and all three will fit nicely into our two-night stay.

As for what is on offer at Fonab Castle, the stunning Loch views that make their impact as soon as one pulls into the hotel grounds.

### 1892 On The Loch

They can be taken in, to best effect, when taking breakfast, afternoon tea or dining in *1892 On The Loch*, the hotel's casual brasserie restaurant and bar/lounge.

When the weather permits, the outdoor terrace offers the experience alfresco.

### Sandemans

Fine dining is also available in the *Sandemans* that offers a menu based on local produce including deer and salmon.

### The Fonab Pods

Fonab's two new pods, in the grounds next to the hotel, have the same great views while offering the chance for up to six guests to take breakfast, lunch, afternoon tea or dinner.

The experience is enhanced with mood lighting, personal music choice and service button.

(Ann writes more about these below)

### The Woodland Spa

The hotel's Woodland Spa is an integral part of a Fonab visit.

In addition to the spa treatments themselves, it offers a 15-meter swimming pool and resistance and spa pools, along with a sauna, aroma relax and steam rooms and fitness centre and outdoor hot tub.

When staying at a 'five-star', one must look to make as much use of the facilities as possible.

This is certainly what will reward a visit to Fonab Castle.

Finally, and to end where we came in, I was looking at a dramatic sculpture of a bird of prey standing in dramatic fashion in the grounds, when Arthur Middleton walked up.

Though it looks to be made of wood, Arthur told me it is, in fact, a metal sculpture found in a Manchester scrapyard and is probably of a bald eagle.

Arthur then gave me a fascinating history of Fonab Castle and offered to send me his notes on this.

It is all part of the service at Fonab, and I am more than pleased to publish these below.

# A brief history of Fonab Castle Hotel & Spa

By Arthur Middleton

Fonab Concierge

The name Fonab comes from the Gaelic meaning abbots land, having been in the possession of the Coupar Angus monks in the 12th century.



The castle was built in 1892 in the Scots Baronial Style by Lt. Colonel George G Sandeman, who had purchased the Port-na-Craig Estate two years earlier.

The distinctive red sandstone used for the building was transported to Pitlochry from Dumfries by steam train.

From 1915 to 1918 the house was a British Red Cross auxiliary hospital where 926 war casualties were cared for.

During the second world war evacuated children lived in the basement and attended school in Pitlochry.

In 1946 the castle was sold to the North of Scotland Hydro-Electric Board, at which time the name reverted to the name Port-na-Craig House.

The company built the dam that still operates just below the hotel in 1952 creating Loch Faskally in the process.

When the Electric Board vacated the property, it fell into disrepair and was on the 'buildings at risk' register for many years.

The castle could well have been lost had Jed and Joanne Clark, a couple from Saddleworth moor, not visited the then derelict property and fallen in love with it.

After buying it they cut down the forest to give Fonab the stunning views we enjoy today and created their ideal wedding venue for the wedding of their daughter Becky and, after the happy day it was opened as a 5 Star hotel in 2013.

In 2022 Fonab was sold to Blantyre Capital and Fairtree Hotel Investments and has now entered the exciting next chapter in the life of this wonderful place.

As a Fonab Concierge I have spent many happy years at the castle and take great pride in ensuring all guests and visitors have a memorable time.

## More information

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# Fonab finally finds its true calling

The baronial Fonab Castle Hotel & Spa certainly looks the part.

By Ann Mealor



Strong in stature with fairytale turrets, the impeccably restored redbrick mansion stands proud and tall in a glorious setting on the shores of serene Loch Faskally.

Surprisingly young, Fonab was originally built as a private residence in 1892 for Lieutenant Colonel George Glas Sandeman, founder of the Sandeman port and sherry empire.

It has been many things in its lifetime including a hospital and business headquarters, but eventually it was abandoned and fell into disrepair.

Fortunately, before it might sadly have crumbled away, Fonab was rescued and beautifully restored as a sumptuous hotel for all to enjoy.

There are easy walks around Loch Faskally and into the pretty town of Pitlochry. The chance to explore this stunning landscape is a great incentive to get out, stretch your legs and blow away the cobwebs after breakfast or before dinner.

It would be a shame not to make the most of this spectacular Highland location.

## Our room



We were welcomed by Mark, one of the expert concierge team at Fonab, who looked very smart and distinguished in his tartan kilt and full Scottish attire.

He gave us a quick tour of the Castle before showing us to our room.

We were located on the ground floor in the tranquil, contemporary Woodland Wing – more traditionally furnished bedrooms with antiques and original features can be found in the Castle itself.

However, all rooms are spacious, with fine fabrics, plump pillows, a very comfortable bed, luxurious Temple Spa toiletries, a hospitality tray with tasty Tunnock Tea Cakes and wonderful views.

We had a cosy sitting area with French windows that opened onto a small patio looking over the gardens-an ideal place to enjoy our sweet treats and coffee.

## Dining at Fonab Castle



### Dinner

Fonab has two restaurants.

Sandemans, which offers sophisticated, fine dining and has 3 AA Rosettes and 1892 on the Loch, the brasserie which is more casual and relaxed.

There is also luxury Pod Dining, ideal for small groups of family or friends looking for something a bit more intimate and different.

Each Pod comes with adjustable heating, mood lighting, personal music system and service button.

And of course, an amazing outlook.

We dined in the brasserie which makes the most of the Highland scenery and has expansive views from every angle, across the water and over to Ben Vrackie.

We started our evening with a warming leek and potato soup and an earthy mushroom ravioli in a parmesan and butter sauce.

For the main event, we both went for fish, an oh so succulent monkfish fillet with brown shrimps, capers and tomato served on a bed of mixed green vegetables, and a sweet and delicate Loch Etive trout with crushed potatoes, samphire and broccoli in a lemon chive butter sauce.

Both dishes were excellent and reflected the chef's ethos of sourcing fresh, local Highland produce.

We kept just enough room for dessert, a spectacular Banana Souffle with a spiced rum gelato. I savoured every light and airy mouthful, not wanting it to end.

We finished with coffee in the very comfortable Lounge Bar, again with a stunning vista and a vast range of whiskies to send you to sleep if you fancied a night cap.



### Breakfast

Breakfast in the Loch Brasserie is worth taking your time over.

While it's a pleasure soaking up the scenery first thing in the morning, there was plenty on the menu to keep guests occupied.

The first course consisted of a choice of three small plates served on a tiered cake stand, choosing a selection of cheese, fruit and yoghurt topped with granola.

We then had a hot dish each of grilled kipper topped with soft poached eggs.

Other options included porridge (always in Scotland), a traditional full Scottish breakfast, smoked salmon and scrambled eggs and more.

It was a very pleasant and relaxing way to prepare for the day ahead.

Fonab Castle provides the ideal starting point for discovering the dramatic Highlands.

### More information

<https://www.fonabcastlehotel.com>



## A great deal to do in a small area

### Pitlochry



There's the chance to take the easy, twenty-minute stroll from Fonab Castle into the small, Highland Perthshire, town of Pitlochry.

Doing so takes one across the Pitlochry Dam, which was built between 1947 and 1951, damming the River Tummel and whose two turbines now supply electricity to around 15,000 homes in the area.

Next to the dam itself is its fish ladder, which has 34 pools and sees 5,000 salmon bypassing the dam each year in order to travel upstream to spawn.

The Pitlochry Dam Visitor Centre has an exhibition showcasing the history of hydroelectricity in Scotland and its café offers panoramic views over Loch Faskally.

Pitlochry itself has real character and is a magnet for tourists.

Its Victorian heritage town centre thriving with independent shops offer Scottish arts and crafts and any number of cafes, restaurants and pubs.

The Blair Atholl Distillery, which is one of the oldest working distilleries in Scotland, offers a range of tours and whisky tastings.

The town's 'pride and joy' is the Pitlochry Festival Theatre which hosts a range of top-quality productions and performances throughout the year.

Loch Faskally, which was the result of the damming of the River Tummel and sits some two miles long and 800 yards wide, steeply wooded hillsides.

The circular walk from the Fonab Castle goes over the Pitlochry Dam and down one side of the Loch to the Pitlochry Boating Station.

Then it's across a metal suspension bridge and back the other side of the Loch to the hotel.

The walk takes about 80-minutes and, on a good day as we had, provides delightful exercise.



Johnnie Walker & Whisky Experiences in Scotland (Luxury Scotland) : <https://www.malts.com/en-gb/tours>

### More information

<https://www.pitlochry.org/>

<https://www.pitlochrydam.com/>

<https://www.malts.com/en-gb/distilleries/blair-athol>

<https://pitlochryfestivaltheatre.com/>

<https://www.highlandperthshire.org/enjoy-outdoors/outdoors-fishing/2752-Loch-Faskally>

## Blair Castle



## Spanning seven hundred and fifty years of history

Blair Castle is a fascinating must when staying at Fonab Castle

Blair Castle is an historic castle standing in formal grounds and woodland in the Perthshire village of Blair Atholl.

Built in 1269 by John I Comyn, the first Lord of Badenoch, it has been the ancestral home of the Clan

Murray and the seat of their chief, the Dukes of Atholl, for over seven hundred and fifty years.

The Castle has been enlarged and adapted over the centuries and today is a mix of Medieval and Scots Baronial architecture with Georgian and Victorian influences.

Visiting the Castle today one gets to walk through 30 rooms resplendent in 18th century décor, including the sumptuous Victorian Ballroom, State Dining Room and the Picture Staircase.

The contents of the rooms in Blair Castle reflect the lives, history and interests of the dukes of Atholl, particularly from their 'grand tours' around Europe, so popular in the 18th and 19th centuries.

The furnishings and painting they collected, and which are now displayed give a real insight into castle life.

Along the way one also gets to learn about the key role members of the Clan Murray played in Scottish history, particularly during the Jacobite uprisings and the Battle of Culloden.

And to discover why the Atholl Highlanders at Blair Castle, which was created following a visit by Queen Victoria, remain Europe's last private army,





### The grounds at Blair Castle

The castle grounds include the Hercules Garden, a serene nine-acre walled garden that has been restored to its original Georgian design.

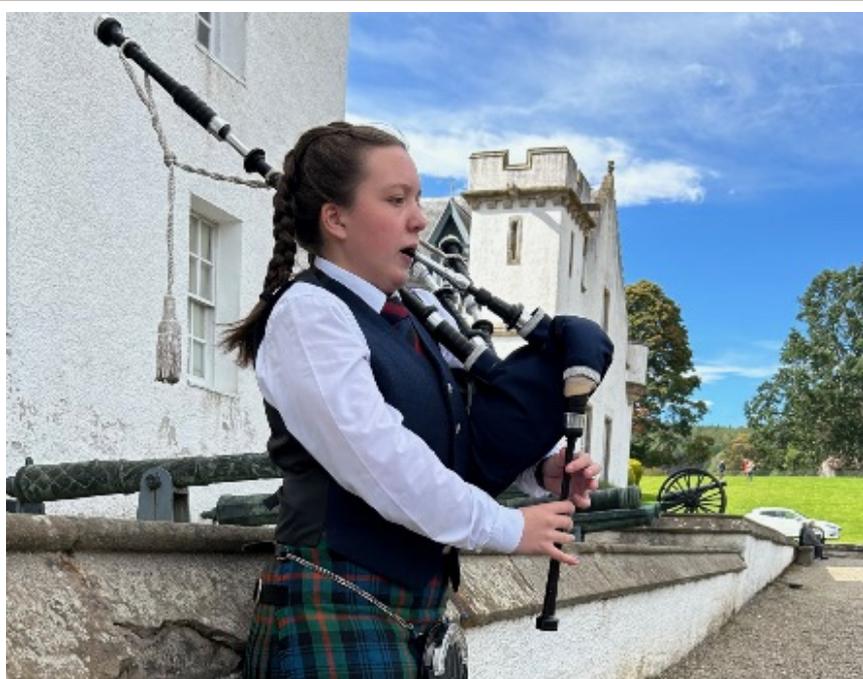
There are ponds, a folly and Chinese bridge and an orchard of more than 100 fruit trees.

A delight year-round, the garden hits a peak in summer when the herbaceous borders that run along the 275m south-facing wall come into bloom.

Diana's Grove, is a two acre wooded area with some Scotland's finest and tallest trees.

The Castle grounds also have a wooded grove, red deer park, ruined Kirk and a gothic folly.

Finally, Highland cattle graze in fields nearby and there is the chance of spotting the native red squirrel.



### Special events and activities

Blair Castle stages an annual calendar of special events and activities in the castle itself and throughout the grounds.

A daily highlight is the piper at Blair Castle, which is a cherished tradition.

It has a piper performing traditional Scottish tunes at set times throughout each day and at special events and ceremonies.

The Glenfiddich Solo Piping Championships, held at Blair Castle every October, attracts some of the world's best pipers.

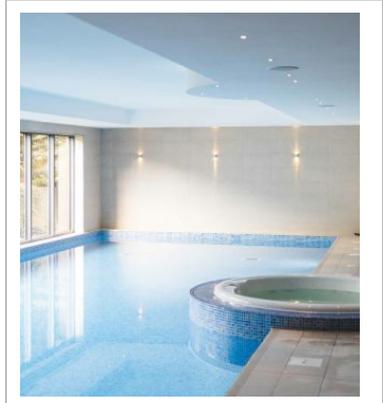
<https://www.glenfiddich.com/uk/explore/latest-events/glenfiddich-piping-championship/>



More information

<https://atholl-estates.co.uk>

A snapshot of Fonab Castle Hotel & Spa



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 Luxury Scotland
 

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Belmond Royal Scotsman



Crinan Hotel



Cringletie



Crossbasket Castle



Douneside House



Fingal

## Luxury Scotland comprises a collection of 23 properties that offer the best in Scottish hospitality

In addition to Finab Castle, the portfolio comprises :

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### Belmond Royal Scotsman

The Belmond Royal Scotsman is one of the world's most luxurious train journeys.

It offers the elegance of a by-gone era with first-class accommodation and mahogany-panelled dining cars.

Departing from Edinburgh Waverley Station, the train has capacity for 24 passengers in 12 twin or double cabins.

<https://www.luxuryscotland.co.uk/hotels-experiences/belmond-royal-scotsman/>

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### Crinan Hotel

The Crinan Hotel is a family-run hotel with views of Argyll's rugged coastline.

Each of the 20 bedrooms has been designed by renowned Scottish artist, Frances Macdonald (Ryan), who is also resident artist and proprietor of the hotel.

Freshly-caught seafood is a speciality in the Michelin Recommended restaurant.

<https://www.luxuryscotland.co.uk/hotels-experiences/crinan-hotel/>

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### Cringletie

Cringletie is a historic 28 acre estate dating back to the 1660's.

It is located in a rural setting three miles from the Royal Burgh of Peebles and a 35 minute drive from Edinburgh.

Cringletie comprises a Baronial Castle hotel of 13 rooms, a two bedroom guest cottage, a fine dining restaurant and landscaped grounds, with the original Walled Garden as its centrepiece.

<https://www.luxuryscotland.co.uk/hotels-experiences/cringletie/>

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### Crossbasket Castle

Crossbasket Castle is a 17th-century castle that is now a five-star hotel some 20 minutes from Glasgow.

It has nine bedrooms, one of which is a four-storey tower suite dating back to the 16th-century, and a two-bedroom Gate Lodge.

The restaurant is overseen by Albert and Michel Roux Jr.

<https://www.luxuryscotland.co.uk/hotels-experiences/crossbasket-castle/>

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### Douneside House

Douneside House is a country house and estate set in 17 acres of grounds in Aberdeenshire.

Once owned by the MacRobert family, today it offers a luxury stay in its 11 bedrooms, apartments and holiday cottages.

<https://www.luxuryscotland.co.uk/hotels-experiences/douneside-house/>

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### Fingal

Fingal, by The Royal Yacht Britannia, is Scotland's first luxury floating hotel.

Formerly a lighthouse tender, she has been transformed into an 22 cabin boutique hotel and exclusive use venue.

Permanently berthed on Edinburgh's waterfront, Fingal is located a short distance from the city centre.

<https://www.luxuryscotland.co.uk/hotels-experiences/fingal/>



Kinloch Lodge



Glenapp Castle



Glencoe House



Glenmorangie House



Greywalls



Hebridean Princess

## Glenapp Castle

Glenapp Castle is a five-red-star hotel in Ayrshire, surrounded by sea views.

A Scottish baronial style property dating back to 1870, Glenapp has 21 bedrooms including a rooftop penthouse suite and an award-winning restaurant that boasts views across the Ayrshire coastline.

<https://www.luxuryscotland.co.uk/hotels-experiences/glenapp-castle/>

## Glencoe House

Glencoe House is a five-star mansion in the heart of Scotland's most famous Glen.

It offers suite-only accommodation with panoramic sea and mountain views.

The property is located in 10 acres of private gardens.

<https://www.luxuryscotland.co.uk/hotels-experiences/glencoe-house/>

## Glenmorangie House

This boutique Highland hotel is located close to Glenmorangie Distillery in Tain.

Located on the Moray Firth coast, this nine bedroom hotel also offers AA Rosette awarded dining.

<https://www.luxuryscotland.co.uk/hotels-experiences/glenmorangie-house/>

## Greywalls Hotel

Greywalls Hotel is a five-star Edwardian country house located on the edge of Muirfield Golf Championship Course, some 20 miles from Edinburgh.

Built in 1901 as a luxury holiday home, it combines the ambience of a private house with the style and grandeur of a first class hotel.

There are 23 bedrooms with views of the rolling East Lothian countryside and Firth of Forth and fine dining at its Chez Roux restaurant.

<https://www.luxuryscotland.co.uk/hotels-experiences/greywalls-hotel/>

## Hebridean Island Cruises

The Hebridean Princess is a luxury cruise ship touring some of Scotland's most remote lochs and bays.

Offering the comfort and service of a floating country house, every cruise is all-inclusive.

A maximum of 50 guests ensures there is a distinctly personal touch to every trip.

<https://www.luxuryscotland.co.uk/hotels-experiences/hebridean-island-cruises/>

## Inverloch Castle Hotel

Inverloch Castle Hotel is a 19th-century castle in Fort William located in the foothills of the Ben Nevis.

Each of its 17 rooms and suites and the Gate Lodge offer views of the surrounding countryside or private loch.

The restaurant 'Seasgair', which Gaelic for cosy, warm and comfortable, is headed up by chef Michael Roux Jr.

<https://www.luxuryscotland.co.uk/hotels-experiences/inverloch-castle-hotel/>

## The Isle of Eriska Hotel

The Isle of Eriska Hotel, Spa and Island is a five-star destination on a private island a few miles north of Oban.

A Scottish baronial hotel in 365 acres of private land, it has 34 bedrooms and suites and an award-winning spa and restaurant.

<https://www.luxuryscotland.co.uk/hotels-experiences/the-isle-of-eriska-hotel-spa-and-island/>

## Kinloch Lodge

Kinloch Lodge is a historic hotel on the shore of Loch-Na-Dal at the foot of Kinloch Hill on the Isle of Skye.

This family-run hotel is surrounded by still lochs and mountains and a base for Skye's outstanding natural landscape.

<https://www.luxuryscotland.co.uk/hotels-experiences/kinloch-lodge/>



Inverlochy Castle



Isle of Eriska Hotel



Murrayshall Country Estate



Knockinaam Lodge



Rocpool Reserve Hotel



Sheraton Grand Hotel

### Knockinaam Lodge

Knockinaam Lodge is a five-star former shooting lodge in Dumfries and Galloway with a private cove and views over the Irish Sea.

It once hosted Churchill and Eisenhower as they planned the D-Day landings.

The property is now a luxury hotel with 10 bedrooms and an AA 3 Rosette restaurant.

<https://www.luxuryscotland.co.uk/hotels-experiences/knockinaam-lodge/>

### Murrayshall Country Estate

Located in rural Perthshire, the historic Murrayshall dates back over 400 years.

Once the grand home of war hero Lord Lynedoch, it has 40 rooms and suites and fine food at its brasserie and bar.

Guests can explore the extensive grounds, enjoy 27-holes of parkland golf and a range of activities

<https://www.luxuryscotland.co.uk/hotels-experiences/murrayshall-country-estate/>

### Rocpool Reserve Hotel

Rocpool Reserve Hotel is a five-star Georgian mansion house hotel offering Inverness with 11 bedrooms.

<https://www.luxuryscotland.co.uk/hotels-experiences/rocpool-reserve-hotel/>

### Sheraton Grand Hotel

The Sheraton Grand Hotel & Spa Edinburgh is a five-star resort in the heart of the city.

It has 269 bedrooms, award-winning dining and the One Spa urban thermal experience.

<https://www.luxuryscotland.co.uk/hotels-experiences/sheraton-grand-hotel-spa-edinburgh/>

### The Torridon Resort



The five-star Torridon Resort is located in the Northwest Highlands on the shore of Loch Torridon.

It comprises The Torridon Hotel, The Stables and a self-catering boathouse.

A former shooting lodge, the hotel has 18 individually designed bedrooms and an AA 3 Rosette restaurant and is surrounded by 58 acres of parkland.

<https://www.luxuryscotland.co.uk/hotels-experiences/the-torridon/>

### More information



[www.luxuryscotland.co.uk](http://www.luxuryscotland.co.uk)



<https://www.fonabcastlehotel.com>

## AllWays traveller and the International Travel Writers Alliance



**AllWays traveller** is the consumer travel magazine from the International Travel Writers, providing independent travellers with views of the world from Alliance travel journalists.

[www.allwaystraveller.com](http://www.allwaystraveller.com)



**The International Travel Writers Alliance** is the world's largest association of professional travel journalists.

[www.itwalliance.com](http://www.itwalliance.com)



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