

THE MODERN HOUSE



Tangasdale Beach, Isle of Barra
£1,500,000 Freehold

Isle of Barra Beach Hotel

Set on the southern tip of Scotland's Outer Hebrides, this special and award-winning hotel embraces its truly magical position on Barra's Atlantic west coast. Overlooking Tangasdale Beach and with panoramic views of the surrounding rugged hillsides, the architectural design is characterised by striking sculptural forms simulating the hulls of upturned ships. Tempered by a love of place, traditions and materials, the flowing and lofty communal spaces and 39 guest rooms are set in artful contrast with invitingly cosy interiors. Enveloped in around 7.75 acres of grassy slopes and replete with two self-contained managers' apartments and a self-catering apartment, the hotel's orientation has been cleverly devised to capture its compelling beachside location, seven miles from the cockleshell beach airport, An Traigh Mhor.

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The Tour

Perched between craggy peaks, machair and moor and overlooking panoramic sandy shores, the Isle of Barra Beach Hotel is enveloped by mesmerising backdrops and has unparalleled access to the wild Hebridean coastline. With a design language fusing simplicity with richness, clarity with depth and elegance with robustness, the hotel received a Europa Nostra Diploma of Merit in 1979 for its 'admirable design and harmonious blend with the rugged coastline and countryside.'

The 'jewel island', Barra, is accessed from the mainland by both air and sea; a 75-minute flight from Glasgow or a five-hour ferry ride from Oban via a short causeway separating it from the start of the Hebridean trail at neighbouring Watersay.

The approach to the hotel is from a beachside single-lane road serving the island's crofts, agricultural buildings and hamlet settlements. Set back from the road, simple post and wire fencing creates a softened boundary to the surrounding wild meadow garden and generous parking area. Combining the materiality of the local vernacular with dramatic interventions, the hotel's design is aesthetically arresting and takes an exacting approach to the play of light and space. It is defined by a strong visual relationship to the landscape.

The hotel is composed of a linked chain of three distinct structures. A pair of two-storey buildings house the guest suites and staff accommodation. In contrast, within the most northerly building, a dynamic juxtaposition and sweeping combination of communal spaces adjoin with seamless fluidity.

A secluded doorway provides the primary entrance, leading to the reception area. Beyond an array of welcoming, sociable spaces to relax and eat, take their cues from the impressive external geometric elevations. Soaring high-vaulted ceilings follow the dramatic pitch of the roofline, and natural light and evocative shadows spill from all sides. Throughout, the focus rests upon tantalising views of pink sands and refulgent sea, care of swathes of glazing and carefully positioned windows framing breathtaking panoramas. There are many perfect spots to chat, read, paint and mull.

Ground and first-floor arterial corridors snake to strings of guest rooms. All are en suite, and most have distinctive sea-facing aspects. Staff accommodation and an assemblage of ancillary rooms are located on the eastern fringe, together with a self-catering apartment with independent access.

A second recessed public entrance sits at the rear, giving way to private sandy paths and onwards to the beach and sheltered rock pool swimming spot.

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The current owners have worked with Scottish architect Stuart Bagshaw of the award-winning SBA Architects to develop designs to further enhance and alter the hotel with a view to turning it into a luxury destination. Additional design proposals investigated include adapting the existing guest rooms to form self-catering suites replete with balconies and direct access to the beach. SBA has also explored expansion to build new Icelandic turf-house-inspired lodges set in the dune landscape on the southern edge of the hotel grounds. The costing of these schemes has been carried out, and details will be shared on request. The implementation of all these plans will require planning permission.

Outdoor Space

The hotel, the most westerly in the UK, sits on a grassy plateau between backdropping hills and rocky cliffs that drop to the mesmerising and idyllic Tangasdale beach. Grassy meadows, awash with daisies and buttercups and often scattered with wandering sheep, wrap the natural garden, interspersed with many lovely spots to rest easily.

In warmer months, the interiors open to a dining terrace, perfectly positioned for morning coffees, alfresco dining and continually rewarding bird watching. Golden and sea eagles, migrating ducks, gannets and buzzards fly overhead, and in the distance, seals, sea otters, dolphins and basking sharks pass by in the sea.

The hotel flows seamlessly to the adjacent beach, where afternoons can be spent walking, beachcombing, or partaking in an invigorating sea swim. The grounds have stabling for several horses and a garage for gardening equipment. There is ample parking for cars and coaches and a convenient helicopter landing spot.

At night, the sky is ablaze with stars and, on occasion, the compellingly beautiful aurora borealis and the Milky Way.

The Area

Lying on the western edge of Barra, the hotel has easy access to convenient village facilities of the island's main town, Castlebay, two miles south and a stunning backdrop for terrific outdoor adventures. A five-minute boat ride docks by the medieval Kisimul Castle, the 'Castle in the Sea', which sits dramatically on a rock islet in the bay. This three-storey tower house is the ancient seat of the Clan MacNeil and gives great views from the battlements.

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The hotel is also ideally located for walking and hiking, the surrounding landscape awash with inspiring flora and fauna and an extraordinary array of wildlife, including wild Eriskay ponies. Barra is a magnet for cyclists venturing the Hebridean way or touring the radial route around the whole island in one afternoon. Sea-kayaking trips, exploring sheltered bays and coves, running from Castlebay, and daily voyages venture to the beautiful, deserted island of Mingulay in the Bishop's Isles, a haven for sea birds. There are several excellent places for loch and sea angling to successfully land a catch of the day, and the island has the most westerly golf course in the UK for an exhilarating nine-hole round.

Barra has a wealth of archaeology covering at least 6000 years of human settlement, from Brochs and tombs to standing stones, with the deserted village of Boldnabodach all well worth visiting. The Heritage Centre in Castlebay has fascinating exhibits, photos and records of past island life.

The island has constantly drawn authors, poets and artists to its shores. Herges' Tintin adventure 'The Black Island' was set on the island, also the last resting place of Compton Mackenzie, author of the romanticised story Whisky Galore, based on the 1941 shipwreck of the SS Politician and subsequent salvage of 240,000 bottles of whisky by the islanders of neighbouring Eriskay. Barra has regularly appeared in films; Whisky Galore, Tropic of Sheep (Winner: Berlin Film Festival) and Visit Scotland's A Perfect Day.

Delicious, locally sourced fare is readily available, with plates of lobster and scallops on many menus. Local cafes serve bowls of homemade soup and lots of baked goods and confectionary, including the favourite Scottish sweetie, tablet.

Caledonian MacBrayne (CalMac) runs the five-hour ferry journey from Oban to Castlebay. Loganair operates a light aircraft service that lands on the cockleshell beach (an experience in itself and often included on many 100 things to do in lifetime lists!) with daily flights from Glasgow. There is also a ferry service from Eriskay to Barra with up to five daily crossings. The journey takes around 40 minutes across the Sound of Barra.

Council Tax Band: The hotel is liable for commercial rates of approximately £17,430 per annum Domestic rates: (applying to manager's flat) Band A

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About

The Modern House is an estate agency that helps people live in more thoughtful and beautiful ways. We believe in design as a powerful force for good. Inspired by the principles of modernism, we represent design-led homes across the UK which celebrate light, space and a truth to materials. Esquire credits The Modern House with “rewriting the rulebook on estate agency” and GQ voted us “one of the best things in the world”.