

GIVE CITY'S CELEBRATIONS A WHIRL



SEEN THE LIGHT
... Sam, Molly and Annabelle, right, on big wheel, left, and Brooks Hotel, below



Festive cheer-up

WE all know the run-up to Christmas can be fraught, so what better way to recapture its magic and sparkle than a trip to Edinburgh's winter wonderland?

My husband, Sam, our two-year-old daughter Molly and I went for the weekend – and we weren't disappointed despite the cold, wet, windy weather.

We stayed at the newly refurbished Brooks Hotel in Fountainbridge, an easy bus ride from the city centre.

The friendly staff and relaxed atmosphere at this boutique B&B proved the perfect antidote to all that festive stress.

We headed out to explore the Christmas market, warming up with hot chocolate and tasty mulled cider along the way.

Believe me, there are not many places that can rival the capital at Christmas.

And of course it's world-famous for its Hogmanay celebrations which attract tens of thousands – many of them from abroad – every year.

As soon as we got near the market, the tantalising smell of German bratwurst and fried onions was hard to resist – but deep-fried cheese won out.

Molly raced around the stalls enchanted by the wooden toys, although her Mickey Mouse balloon from the Children's Market was the biggest hit of the day.

When the driving rain got too much, it was back to our hotel where we cosied up in the lounge with its well-stocked Honesty Bar and warm fire.

I left Molly and Sam reading while I went off to enjoy some retail therapy.

Being close to stores like posh Harvey Nichols and Jenners was too big a temptation and Christmas is a time for gifts – even if they were all for me. Next up was a lovely booth

at The Living Room for our tea. It was clearly popular and full of other people enjoying Christmas meals out – but never felt too noisy.

Molly wolfed down a bowl of tagliatelle with tomato and basil sauce, followed by "delicious 'strawberry mess' – which did what it says on the tin.

Sam had an amazing pork dish while I ate rib-eye steak – both were beautifully presented on wooden boards and came with delicious sides too.

Neither of us have enjoyed a meal quite so much in years – it was perfect.

After a great night's sleep in our vast bed, it was time for breakfast, another culinary treat.

Sam and I went for the full Scottish, which included haggis and an award-winning smoked bacon, while Molly had smoked salmon and scrambled eggs.

Refreshed, we headed to the Big Wheel in East Princes Street Gardens for spectacular views over the capital.

Afterwards, we watched skaters at the ice rink – something to try next year.

Then it was time for Peter Pan, a magical panto adventure at the King's Theatre, which we thoroughly enjoyed.

The Disney film version is one of Molly's current favourites but nothing compared to seeing it on stage.

She was captivated by Captain Hook and the Smees, while we chuckled over jokes about next year's referendum.

There was something for everyone and the brilliant sets took you straight to the world of Neverland.

Our break was just what we needed – and we came home full of Christmas cheer.

ANNABELLE LOVE

GO: EDINBURGH

Edinburgh's Winter celebrations last until January 5. See winterinedinburgh.com and edinburghchristmas.com. Stays at Brooks Hotel start from £89 for a family room. See brooksedinburgh.com. Christmas dinner, £29.50 per person at thelivingroom.co.uk