



THINGS TO DO and PLACES TO GO

We've set out below some thoughts on things to do and places to visit. It's by no means a definitive list and much of it is based on our personal preferences.

In Beaully

Visit our local shops – we have two award winning gift shops and many others are destinations in their own right, such as Campbell's of Beaully and Iain Marr's Antiques. For information about angling or other field sports, visit our fabulous traditional ironmongers Morison's.

Enjoy a coffee, snack or lunch in Corner on the Square deli, or Café Biagiotti who serve light lunches and also takeaway Italian dishes to heat up in the microwave.

Our historic Priory is looked after by Historic Environment Scotland. It may now be a ruin, but it is still an impressive structure and well worth a look.

Take a walk around Cnoc na Rath (pronounced Croch). You can walk from Station Road, along the burn and go right around the shinty pitch and playpark through the woodland. When you reach the end of the path take a right and head back down to the Square. We have a free audio walking tour of the village which takes about an hour – if you'd like to try it just e mail and we'll send you the link.

Watch a game of shinty if there's one on during your visit – they usually have a sign on the main road near Braeview Park with details of matches. A sort of fierce type of hockey!

Go visit the Highland cattle at Robertson's Farm Shop. Head out of the village towards Muir of Ord and it's just a few hundred metres from the village. They have alpacas too.

Short drive away (hour or less)

Glen Affric and Tomich Glen Affric is rightly considered one of the most stunning glens in Scotland. Head west out of the village and there is a turning to the right less than a mile out, marked Aigas and Cannich. Glen Affric is home to some of the last remnants of the ancient Caledonian pine forest which once covered much of the country. If you go out in that direction you should also visit Tomich – a lovely little planned village where the Golden Retriever was first bred. There are two waterfalls in this area which are both worth a visit – Plodda Falls and the Dog Falls. Plenty of walks.

If you want to do a circular driving route, follow the signs to Drumnadrochit and you will eventually reach Loch Ness then take the road north up the loch. On your way to Drumnadrochit, keep an eye out for a sign pointing right to the Corrimony Cairn – worth a stop and quieter than the Clava Cairns which have become a bit of a victim of their own popularity. We can give you a picnic with an audio tour which you download to your phone and it guides you around the route. E mail for details.

Cromarty and the Black Isle Another relatively short trip out of Beaully is across the Black Isle to Cromarty. Dating back to Georgian times, it was once an administrative centre of great importance. The birthplace of renowned geologist Hugh Miller, it has a courthouse museum you can visit. But just wandering around the town is like travelling back in time. Down near the shore the small fishermen's cottages are laid out in a traditional pattern with the gable end to the sea.

There's a terrific bakery in Cromarty and various other interesting shops. It has an excellent restaurant – Sutor's Creek – and there's always the possibility you will catch sight of the dolphins. To get to Cromarty, drive East out of the village towards the A9. When you reach Tore roundabout, take the 3rd exit signposted Fortrose and Cromarty. On your way you will pass the Cloutie Well (it has its own car park) and drive through Avoch (pronounced Och), Rosemarkie (which has a beautiful beach) and Fortrose (which has great restaurants – IV10 and The Anderson – as well as an interesting cathedral). We have a picnic tour of this area too – e mail or call for details, or check our website.

Full days out

Most people take a trip to the **Isle of Skye** – go across on the “top” road via Garve and Achnasheen (A835) and come back along the road through Invermoriston (A87) then back north along the side of Loch Ness. You will pass Eilean Donan Castle and can take a short detour to Plockton which has to be one of the prettiest places in the Highlands. The really stunning parts of Skye are quite a distance in from the bridge across the island, so you need to allow extra time for travel once you're on Skye. One of our favourite trips is to go across to Skye on the bridge and then take the small community owned ferry back across from Kylerhea to **Glenelg**. An eccentric vessel, it takes you across a small channel from where you can travel back to Beaully via the A87. It initially takes you through the Five Sisters of Kintail - truly breathtaking. But check if the ferry is running – it's seasonal.

Favourite spots on Skye are Dunvegan and Waternish. Both have excellent restaurants.

An alternative is to head over to **Applecross** – initially taking the same road as the trip to Skye. You get some beautiful views of Skye and other islands as well as parts of the West Highlands. And the Applecross Inn has seafood that is hard to beat in terms of quality and freshness. You can go across the Pass of the Castle (Bealach na Ba) which can be quite tricky– only go if you are a confident driver and comfortable reversing round bends. Lots of hairpin bends and mainly single track roads. You can come back via Shieldaig - longer in distance but not that different in terms of time, because the road is so much better. If you like plants, **Inverewe Gardens** in the west is definitely worth a visit.

Orkney It's possible to go to Orkney and back in a day, although it's a long day! You drive up the East Coast through Sutherland and Caithness until you reach Scrabster and get the ferry across. It is home to some of the best examples of archaeology you will find in the world – Skara Brae and Maeshowe are exceptional. On your way home try the fish and chip shop at Helmsdale – the Mirage – it's a bit of a legend. If it's not open the one at Golspie is pretty good too. Orkney has a lot of things to see – hard to do in one day – including Kirkwall, the capital of Orkney and home to St Magnus Cathedral and some lovely local craft and jewellery shops. Personally I would opt for an overnight stay.

Speyside If you're into whisky, you should take a trip across to Speyside. Almost half of Scotland's whisky distilleries lie in this region. Drive down the A9 and take the turning to Carrbridge. At Carrbridge take the left fork on A938 to Grantown on Spey and then follow the signs for Keith and Dufftown on the A95. Aberlour is a pleasant little town with some interesting shops and pleasant walks along the Spey. It's home to Walkers Shortbread and Aberlour distillery. Take a side tour to Dufftown to visit Glenfiddich, Balvenie and Mortlach. Or just continue on this road and you will eventually arrive in Elgin. You will pass many distilleries along what is known as “the whisky road” – Macallan, Glenlivet, Glenfarclas – lots of big names are in and around this area.

A visit to the Gordon & MacPhail whisky shop in Elgin is not to be missed (although the whisky shop in Dufftown is also impressive). From Elgin you then head west on the A96 back towards Inverness. When passing through Forres stop at Benromach distillery – one of the smaller distilleries and run using traditional methods – no computers here. It's probably our very favourite whisky.

Sutherland Heading North up the A9 you can visit the handsome town of Dornoch with its magnificent cathedral and a lovely selection of shops. It attracted the world's press when Madonna married Guy Ritchie at nearby Skibo Castle (former home of steel magnate Andrew Carnegie) and had their son christened at the cathedral. You can then head up to Golspie and visit Dunrobin Castle, then travel to Helmsdale to look at the clearance statue and see a traditional fishing village. Over on the west coast is Lochinver and Suilven – surely one of the best shaped mountains in Scotland. If you get this far take a quick detour to Achmelvich beach with its pristine white sand.

If you continue the drive up the A9 you reach **Caithness**. The two main towns Thurso and Wick are worth a look, the latter for the amazing Pultneytown designed and built by the legendary Scottish civil engineer, Thomas Telford, who also created the Caledonian Canal as well as many bridges. Lybster is an interesting little village with an excellent glass workshop. Other places to see are the Whaligoe steps and the Camster Cairns. Many of the place names here Occumster, Lybster, Camster are evidence of the Viking roots of this part of the world. Badbea village, just north of the Berriedale Braes is fascinating. Park in the layby on the A9 and follow the path. Around the Highlands you will come across many Clearance villages – settlements that were abandoned when the people were cleared off the land to make way for sheep. Badbea is the opposite – a village built to house the local people cleared off the land and it is a bleak, windy and inhospitable place.

The north coast is where you will find John O' Groats, not nearly as tacky as it once was. Go west and you will find the best hot chocolate in the land at Durness (a somewhat eccentric craft village), some magnificent beaches, Lotte Glob's workshop and Smoo Cave. On the Eastern side are even more beaches as well as the intriguing Mey Castle, former home of the Queen Mother.

Lochaber A drive to **Fort William** will take you through the magnificent Great Glen, with its string of beautiful lochs and towering mountains, the first of which is the legendary Loch Ness.

There are lots of interesting places on the way – Drumnadrochit and Fort Augustus are both popular although parking can be a bit of an issue. Nearer Fort William you will go past the Commando Memorial at Spean Bridge – set here because this was their training ground during WWII. The tall mountain at the back of Fort William is Ben Nevis, the UK's highest mountain.

If you've got this far, you might fancy heading west a little further to **Glenfinnan**, where you will see the railway viaduct made famous in the Harry Potter movies. It was always a popular place, even before the films, as the site of the Glenfinnan monument dedicated to the Jacobite Clansmen who fought with Bonnie Prince Charlie in the 1745 rebellion. It's also a stunning location, at the end of a fantastic drive. You can go even further west to Mallaig, passing the pretty coastal village of Arisaig and the wonderful silver sands of Morar. The journey from Beaulieu to Mallaig is about 2.5 to 3 hours in total, so it's a long day. Fort William would be about 1.5 to 2 hours, depending on traffic.

Badenoch and Strathspey is one of the most popular tourist destinations in the Highlands. Aviemore is not the most interesting place but some of the other towns - Grantown on Spey, Kingussie and Newtonmore are worth visiting, particularly for their attractions. The Highland Folk Museum is fascinating, with Highland buildings rebuilt on site to show what life used to be like in the Highlands. The Highland Wildlife Park with its tigers, arctic monkeys and polar bears is also worth a trip, as is the Landmark Centre at Carrbridge and the Strathspey Steam Railway - all particularly good for kids.

Beaches

If you like stunning beaches you are spoilt for choice on the West, East and North coasts. On the west coast, our favourite is at Gairloch and in the same vicinity Big Sand. On the East Coast,

Dornoch, Golspie and Brora all have terrific beaches. There are stunning beaches all along the north coast – Durness, Strathy and Melvich. Sandwood Bay in the North west near Kinlochbervie is considered to be the most remote beach in the UK. It's a stunner.

Slightly closer to home is Rosemarkie beach across the Black Isle, as well as Nairn – go back to Inverness and then head East on the A96. It's about 30 miles from here.

Golf

There are many iconic golf courses within easy distance – Royal Dornoch, Nairn, Nairn Dunbar. Castle Stuart, not far from Inverness airport, was home to the Scottish Open for a number of years. Close by is Muir of Ord Golf Club, as well as a 9 hole course at Aigas, about 5 miles up the road to Cannich.

Wildlife

There is plenty of it from Moray Firth Dolphins at Chanonry Point on the Black Isle to beavers on the Beaully (allegedly). You can spot plenty of red kite and various other birds of prey, including golden eagles, osprey and sea eagles. deer, otters and even puffins on the North Coast and in Orkney.

Distilleries

Ord Distillery is just a mile or two along the road and Tomatin is just south of Inverness. Further north is Dalmore at Alness and Glenmorangie at Tain. Or head over to Speyside...

Castles

I mentioned a few earlier, but also worth a visit are Cawdor, Brodie, Urquhart Castle (albeit it's a ruin), Dunrobin and Ballindalloch.

Walks

There is plenty of walking nearby, including a number of Munros. Glen Affric and Glen Strathfarrar are both excellent for those looking for a long walk and there are a multitude of gentler forest walks nearby including the delightful Reelig Glen about 2 miles away and the Rogie Falls north of Garve on the road to Ullapool. Let us know if you want more detailed information about walks as it very much depends on your level of fitness and how far you want to walk.

Shopping

There are a number of small towns with plenty of independent shops – Beaully, Dornoch and Ullapool are all good. There are some lovely antique shops – Old Town Curiosities in Inverness, Objet D'Art in Dingwall and Antiques and Salvage at Daviot, south of Inverness and Auldearn. For art galleries, Castle Gallery in Inverness and the Kilmorack Gallery towards Aigas are both excellent.

Outdoor Activities

There's an abundance of places to go mountain biking, open water swimming, kayaking, paddleboarding, white water rafting, archery – the list is endless. We can give you some advice on places to go – just ask. Or look at www.visitinvernesslochness.com for more information.

On the water

A trip down Loch Ness on Jacobite Cruises is hard to beat, particularly if the weather is good. Or try one of the Beastie Boats for a more exhilarating journey! Dolphin and wildlife cruises are available from Inverness, Avoch and Cromarty.