

# SAMPLE TOUR 1 DAY EXTRACT

**How to Use the Guide:** In this Guide you will find all the information you need to plan a great holiday in Scotland.

- We provide route directions that are punctuated with attractions that we recommend for visiting.
- We give local knowledge guidance to the best places to eat and drink.
- We suggest alternative quieter roads and detour options that you may choose depending on your schedule.
- And at the end of each day's travelling you will find a Stopover Sheet with notes on the local attractions, best restaurants and major events.

Our aim is to provide honest information and local knowledge so that you avoid the tourist traps and get the best value holiday experience for your time & money.

We have endeavoured to ensure that all road directions are accurate, but these Guides are intended to be used in conjunction with a Road Atlas.

## Itinerary Layout:

**Route from Fort Augustus to Spean Bridge:** - indicates a new section of route directions and states the start and finish locations.





**Travel time: 30 mins / 23 miles** - an estimate of the time taken to drive the route without stops.

**ALTERNATIVE Route from Fort Augustus to Spean Bridge:** denotes an alternative route for travelling between destinations. Alternative routes provide the option to travel on quieter back roads.

**DETOUR:** - places of interest that are not along the path of the main route are indicated by "**DETOUR:**". Details about the detour and route directions to it are written in *Italics*.

- ✓ – When the route directions take you near a place of interest, it is indicated by a "✓" symbol.
- ✓ **Killiecrankie Pass** - Attractions written in bold brown letters have facilities for tourists such as information boards, guide leaflets or staff.
- ✓ **Achmelvich Beach** – Attractions written in bold green letters are places of natural beauty.
- ✓ **Cawdor Castle** – Attractions that are written in this format have a hyperlink which will open the accompanying Information Sheet on the Secret Scotland™ website.

## Symbols:

-  - Denotes a recommended pub.
-  - Denotes a recommended restaurant / café / tearoom.
-  - Denotes a recommended viewpoint
-  - Denotes an attraction or facility that is not recommended

**STOPOVER SHEETS:** For each of the stopover locations where we have recommended accommodation, there is an accompanying information sheet with details of Historic Sites & Castles, Scenic Spots, Tourist Attractions & Wet Day Activities, Outdoor Activities, Events and recommendations on Where to Eat & Drink.

**Please note:** Our itineraries recommend things to see and do along each route. We do not propose that you attempt to visit all of these attractions, so it is necessary for you to choose what you want to do. To help you do this we have provided estimates of travel times along the route so you can plan your schedule. These travel times are only estimates of the time taken to drive the route and do not include additional time for stopping to visit attractions or to take photographs.

**Accommodation:** Save time trying to find accommodation along your route by buying the Secret Scotland™ list of Recommended Accommodation that matches this Tour. All Recommended Accommodation has been personally visited and honestly described in the guides.

# DAY 8: Ullapool to Inverness

Today's recommended route heads north from Ullapool and into the dramatic landscape of the Inverpolly Nature Reserve. This is a landscape of moors, small lochs, lonely clusters of rowan, hazel and birch trees and the spectacular peaks of the magnificently isolated Cul Mor (849m), Cul Beag (769m), Suilven (731m) and Stac Polly (613m), which rise like columns from an otherwise barren landscape. You may choose to take a short detour into the Inverpolly Nature Reserve by following the road signposted to Achiltibuie. This route is detailed in Day 7 as the "[Route from Ullapool to Lochinver via Inverpolly Nature Reserve](#)".


The route then heads east towards Lairg, where you can choose to take a more direct route south to Inverness via the Falls of Shin, or a slightly longer route via Golspie and Dunrobin Castle.

Your route will also pass the Glenmorangie Distillery, which you may want to visit to find out why it is the most popular Malt Whisky with the Scots. And should the sun be shining, we recommend taking a short detour to the very pretty coastal village of Cromarty, which sits on the peninsula known as the Black Isle.

## [Route from Ullapool to the A837:](#)

[Travel time: 30mins / 18 miles](#)

1. Starting from Ullapool, head north on the **A835**.
2. About 9 miles after Ullapool, you pass a road on your left that is signposted to Achiltibuie.

***DETOUR: to Stac Pollaidh**  – for the best views of the dramatic mountain of Stac Pollaidh you should take a short drive along the road to Achiltibuie which passes close by the mountain. It is also possible to follow this road around to Lochinver and then return on the **A837** to Inverness, but this detour would require around 2hrs to travel the extra 40 mile distance. See directions at the end of Day 7 for the [Route from Ullapool to Lochinver via Inverpolly Nature Reserve](#)*

3. Continue on the **A835**
  - ✓ **Knockan Cliff Visitor Centre** – about 3 miles after the turn off to Achiltibuie. Stop here for a visit if you want to understand how the geology of the region formed.
4. Continue on the **A835** and it comes to a junction with the **A837**.

## [Route from the A837 via Lairg and Dunrobin Castle to Tain:](#)

[Travel Time: 2hrs 10mins / 65 miles](#)

1. Starting from the junction between the **A835** and **A837**. Turn right onto the **A837** and follow signposts to **Lairg**. This section of road is mainly single track and so takes longer to drive than you may expect from looking at a road map.
2. Continue on the **A837** for ~18 miles and, after crossing a stone bridge, you arrive at a Y junction with a Stone Cross Memorial. Take left onto the **A839** signposted to **Lairg**.
3. At the end of the A839, turn left onto the **A836** to **Lairg**. After a short distance, turn right onto the **A839**, signposted to Rogart. The A839 takes you through Lairg.
4. From Lairg, continue east to the end of the **A839**.
5. At the end of the A839, turn left onto the **A9** signposted to **Thurso, Wick**.
6. Continue on the **A9** to **Golspie**.
  - ✓ The large statue on the hill to your left, as you enter Golspie, is of the 1<sup>st</sup> Duke of Sutherland. This Duke is an unpopular figure in Scotland for his active role in the Highland Clearances of the 1800's.

7. Continue through Golspie and the entrance to Dunrobin Castle is on your right.
  - ✓ **Dunrobin Castle** – the most northerly of Scotland's great houses, it is a Fairytale Castle with amazing French gardens. A great number of rooms can be visited. The staircase with its many hanging portraits is reminiscent of a "Harry Potter" movie. One of our favourites castles, well worth the visit especially on a sunny day when you can take time exploring the gardens.
8. From Dunrobin Castle, head south on the **A9** following signposts to **Inverness**.
9. Cross the bridge over the Dornoch Firth.
10. After crossing the bridge you come to a roundabout. Take the 1<sup>st</sup> exit onto the **A9** signposted to **Inverness**. About 1 mile after the roundabout you pass the Glenmorangie Distillery.
  - ✓ **Glenmorangie Distillery** - Just before Tain you see signposts to Glenmorangie Distillery. This distillery has the tallest stills in Scotland and these are claimed to give a purer spirit. Perhaps this is true because Glenmorangie is the most popular malt with the Scots.
10. Continue on the **A9** and it by-passes the town of Tain. If you need to refuel, there is a petrol station on the road that leads from the A9 into Tain.

**ALTERNATIVE Route from the A837 via Falls of Shin & Glenmorangie Distillery to Tain:**  
**Travel time: 1hr 35mins / 48 miles**


1. Starting from the junction between the **A835** and **A837**. Turn right onto the **A837** and follow signposts to **Lairg**. This section of road is mainly single track and so takes longer to drive than you may expect from looking at a road map.
2. Continue on the A837 for 18 miles and, after crossing a stone bridge, you arrive at Y junction with a Stone Cross Memorial. Take right onto the **A837** signposted to **Inveran, Bonar Bridge**.
3. Continue on the **A837** to the T junction with the **A836**.

***DETOUR: to Falls of Shin** - Just before the T junction with the **A836**, you pass through the village of Inveran where you can turn left onto the **B864**, signposted to the Falls of Shin. The visitor centre is about a mile up this road. It was developed for the waterfalls which are a well-known spot for watching salmon leap. There are also forest walks, an adventure playground, "Harrods" shopping outlet and a restaurant selling simple snacks.*

4. Turn right onto the **A836** following signposts to **Bonar Bridge**.
5. Continue on the A836 into Bonar Bridge and you arrive at a T junction. Turn right to cross the bridge and stay on the **A836** signposted to **Tain**.
6. Continue on the **A836** and you come to a roundabout. Take the 2<sup>nd</sup> exit onto the **A9**, signposted to **Inverness**. About 1 mile after the roundabout you pass Glenmorangie Distillery.
  - ✓ **Glenmorangie Distillery** - Just before Tain you see signposts to Glenmorangie Distillery. This distillery has the tallest stills in Scotland and these are claimed to give a purer spirit. Perhaps this is true because Glenmorangie is the most popular malt with the Scots.
7. Continue on the **A9** and it by-passes the town of Tain. If you need to refuel, there is a petrol station on the road that leads from the A9 into Tain.

**Route from Tain to Inverness:**  
**Travel time: 1hr / 34 miles**

1. From Tain, take the **A9** following signposts to **Inverness**.

***DETOUR: to Tarbat Ness Lighthouse**  - This Lighthouse, at the end of the B9165, offers bird spotting and panoramic views over the North Sea and the Dornoch Firth. On clear days you might*

even be able to see Dunrobin Castle. A lonely windswept peninsula with a photogenic Red & White striped lighthouse.


**Directions:** From Glenmorangie at Tain, head south on the A9 for ~4 miles and look for signs to Portmahomack. Turn left onto the **B9165** follow the road to **Portmahomack** and then to Tarbat Ness Lighthouse.

2. About 5 miles south of Glenmorangie Distillery, the **A9** arrives at a roundabout with an exit signposted to the Nigg Ferry.

**DETOUR: to Cromarty & Black Isle via Nigg Ferry** – The Nigg Ferry is a small ferry that can only carry 2 cars on the short crossing from Nigg to Cromarty. Cromarty is a very charming place and worth a visit on a sunny day.

**Directions:** Take the 1<sup>st</sup> exit, signposted to the Nigg Ferry. Follow this road for ~6.5 miles and you arrive at the car ferry. From Cromarty you can then get to Tore Roundabout, on the A9, by following the A832 to Fortrose, Inverness.

**Please Note:** This route takes about 1 hour and 23 miles and is equivalent in time & miles to travelling via the A9, but you may have delays when waiting for the ferry. The ferry runs from the end of May to the end of October including Sundays. Operates from 8:00 am to 6:15 pm, and until 7:15 pm in July and August.

3. Continue on the **A9** following signs at roundabouts for **Inverness**.
  - ✓  Recommended Pub – **Culbokie Inn**. Shortly after crossing the bridge at the Cromarty Firth you see signposts for the B9163 to Cromarty. Take this exit and then take the next right for the road to Culbokie. The Culbokie Inn is at the end of this road. A simple pub with excellent beer.
4. Continue on the **A9** to **Inverness** and, 11 miles after the Cromarty Firth bridge, the road crosses the Moray Firth on the **Kessock Bridge**.
5. At the first roundabout (Longman) after crossing the bridge, take the 3<sup>rd</sup> exit for the **A82** signposted to **Inverness**
6. At the Harbour Road roundabout go straight on, following the **A82** signposted to **Town Centre**.
7. At the Rose Street roundabout (with the multi storey car park on your left) take the 2<sup>nd</sup> exit for the A82 to **Town Centre**.
8. At the Shore Street roundabout take the 1<sup>st</sup> exit for the **B865** signposted to the **Town Centre**.
9. Continue on this road and you can find signposts to car parks. After the East Gate Shopping Centre, there is a Morrison's supermarket where customers can park for free for a limited period of 2 hours.

The [Recommended Accommodation](#) for tonight is in Inverness, the Black Isle and Strathpeffer.

For information about the best attractions and restaurants in the area, please consult the Stopover Sheets for **Inverness Area**.

Despite its city status, Inverness is not large so we don't recommend taking the £6 City Sightseeing bus tours, as the 45 minute trip doesn't represent value for money.

Inverness has a wide choice of pubs and restaurants for dinner and you'll find lots of them by taking a walk along the river. In general, Inverness is quite expensive for eating out so we recommend that you try to dine between 5pm – 6:30pm when you may get a cheaper "pre-Theatre" dinner. For ideas on where to eat on your first night you should consult the Stopover Sheet for Inverness and Black Isle. If you have also bought the Recommended Accommodation List for this Tour, you will find a choice of recommended restaurants in the neighbourhood of the accommodation.

For a bit of night life, try the pubs Hootanany's or Blackfriars in Inverness. These pubs have live music most nights, and it's often traditional Celtic music. Blackfriars also hosts a Ceilidh on Tuesdays and Thursdays. On the A862, near the outskirts of Inverness, you will find the Clachnaharry Inn which is recommended for its choice of Real Ales. Another favourite country pub of ours is the Culbokie Inn on the B9169 to Cromarty.

# Stopover Sheet: Inverness Area

Although recently awarded city status, Inverness is still just a town in size. It is, however, one of the fastest growing towns in Scotland and it is certainly the capital of the Highlands. The town centre is a confused collection of different periods of architecture and it cannot be described as a particularly pretty town. In some side streets you will find traditional houses dating back to the 1700's, but then you turn a corner and find a square concrete office block from the 1970's.

Inverness is a vibrant and busy tourist town as it is a focal point for visitors to Loch Ness, Culloden and the Northern Highlands. On Friday and Saturday nights it also becomes the focus for the social scene in the Highlands, and the town's bars get busy with locals on their weekend nights out. For a quieter pace of life you may prefer to stay on the nearby Black Isle, which is not an island, but a peninsula between the Moray and Cromarty estuaries.

## Historic Sites & Castles:

- **Cawdor Castle** - A privately owned castle with attractive gardens and historical links to the Macbeth's made infamous by Shakespeare.
- **Culloden Battlefield** – The site of the last major Battle on UK soil has been preserved to appear much as it would have done on the tragic day of 16<sup>th</sup> April 1746.
- **Clava Cairns** – Near to Culloden Battlefield are the curious and carefully arranged circles of stones that are believed to have been used for ancient burial rituals. An atmospheric place.
- **Fort George** – An impressive fortress that was carefully designed for defense by artillery, Fort George has exhibits that tell the story of how Highlanders were recruited into the British Army to then become their most respected soldiers.
- **Urquhart Castle** – Famous as one of the most frequent sites for Nessie appearances. We recommend that you don't pay to enter the castle as it is over-priced for a visit to a ruin and you can get good photos from the car park.
- **Elgin Cathedral** – This was the second largest cathedral in Scotland and one of the most impressive, but fires, raiders and post-Reformation neglect have resulted in the ruin you see today. Still impressive, but you need to use some imagination to picture its past glory.
- **Dunrobin Castle** – This is a castle with real WOW factor. You don't expect to find castles like this in the Scottish Highlands and we strongly recommend this attraction. The entrance hall could be a scene from a Harry Potter film.
- **Spynie Palace** – The once grand residence of the Bishops of Moray, but now a ruin. One of the palace's buildings has been re-roofed and there is an internal walkway giving access to the roof.
- **Pluscarden Abbey** – founded in 1230 by Alexander II for French Benedictine monks, it is a unique example in Britain of a medieval Abbey still inhabited by monks. Set in the countryside South West of Elgin, it is a fascinating place to visit, and you can learn about how the monks live and what they do.
- **Brodie Castle** – Originally a defensive tower house, this castle was extended over the years to become a luxurious residence. The castle is still fully furnished and there is a lot to see.

## Scenic Spots:

- **Black Isle** – The Black Isle has several attractive villages on it, but the most distinctive and charismatic village is Cromarty. Narrow streets and traditional east coast houses by the sea.
- **Chanonry Point** – Signposted from Fortrose, drive through the Golf Course to this attractive lighthouse on a peninsula in the Moray Firth. A famous spot for dolphin watching.
- **Findhorn** – A pretty village on the coast north of Forres. Near the village there are long stretches of golden sand beaches and attractive forests of Scot's Pine trees at Roseisle.
- **Cullen Bay** – A well known sandy beach about 21 miles / 34km east of Elgin on the A98.
- **Reelig Glen** – An attractive woodland with paths and picnic spots. From Inverness, take the A862 west towards Beaully and after 8 miles, turn left onto a small road signposted to Reelig and Moniack. Continue for ~ 1 mile and arrive at a Forestry Commission car park.
- **Falls of Shin** – A waterfall that is famous as a good spot for watching salmon leaping. There is also an upmarket shop, café and adventure playground for kids here.

## Tourist Attractions & Wet Day Activities:

- **Glenmorangie Distillery**, Tain – The favourite malt whisky of the Scots. The distillery is easily found from the A9 just north of Tain. About 1 hour from Inverness.
- **Loch Ness 2000 Monster Exhibition** – not to be confused with the Original Loch Ness Visitor Centre which is to be avoided. Loch Ness 2000 is a very informative sound and light attraction about the sightings of the monster and the research that followed in the Loch.
- **Loch Ness Trail** – There is a route that circumnavigates the loch via roads along the north and south shores. If you are driving around the shores of Loch Ness don't just look for the monster. Keep an eye out for an old van near Dores with "Nessie-serry Independent Research" written on its side. This is the home of full time Nessie Hunter Steve Feltham who quit a job in England to dedicate his life to the search for the Loch Ness monster.
- **Moniack Wines**, nr Beaulieu – Tours of the winery in Moniack Castle where wines are fermented from berries, flowers and tree sap!
- **Aquadome**, Inverness – A 25m swimming pool with a variety of water rides to keep the kids entertained. Signposted from the A82 as it heads out of Inverness towards Fort William.
- **Baxters Highland Village**, Forres – A visitor centre to learn about the story of the Baxter family and their famous food company. Visitors can sample the foods & buy gifts in the several shops.
- **Strathspey Railway** – Steam trains and nostalgia can be experienced on this short train service between Aviemore and Boat of Garten (near the West end of A95). Don't confuse this attraction with the railway between Dufftown and Keith which doesn't feature steam trains. See the website for details [www.strathspeyrailway.co.uk](http://www.strathspeyrailway.co.uk)

**Speyside Whisky Trail:** There are many more distilleries in Speyside, but these are the ones that we rate highest for their visitor centres and tours. The drive from Inverness to Grantown-on-Spey and through the Spey Valley to Keith is about 75 miles long and 2 hours of driving.

- **Aberlour Distillery**, Aberlour - Tours need to be pre-booked as they involve a connoisseur's tasting session.
- **Glenlivet Distillery**, nr Tomintoul - The distillery has an excellent visitor centre with café.
- **Strathisla Distillery**, Keith - Arguably the prettiest distillery in Speyside.
- **Macallan Distillery**, nr Craigellachie - One of the most celebrated and prestigious whiskies.
- **Glen Grant Distillery**, Rothes - A distillery with an impressive woodland garden for visitors.
- **Speyside Cooperage**, Craigellachie - Just outside of Craigellachie you can visit this factory where the whisky barrels are made.

## Outdoor Activities:

- **Dolphin Watching Boat Trips**, Cromarty – 2 hour boat trips in the Moray Firth. Quite expensive and pre-booking recommended. See website for details [www.ecoventures.co.uk](http://www.ecoventures.co.uk)
- **Loch Ness Boat Trips** – two companies offer cruises on the Loch.
  - ✓ **Loch Ness Cruises** in Drumnadrochit does hour long cruises starting on the hour from the Original Loch Ness Monster Visitor Centre
  - ✓ **Jacobite Cruises** have a range of cruises and tours starting at Tomnahurich Bridge in Inverness.
- **Cairngorm Mountain Railway** – A funicular railway that climbs 460m up the Cairngorm Mountains to the Ptarmigan visitor centre where there is a restaurant, exhibition and viewing areas. In summer, access to the mountain from the visitor centre is not permitted for environmental reasons. Take the A9 to Aviemore and then follow the road to Coylumbridge and the signposts to the Cairngorm Railway.
- **Landmark Theme Park**, Carrbridge – A variety of outdoor activities and rides to keep all ages of children entertained. Take the A9 to Carrbridge and the Landmark Centre is on the B9153 road that heads south from Carrbridge.
- **Speyside Way** – The full length of this walking route runs from Buckie to Aviemore, but there is a gentle section that closely follows the River Spey from Craigellachie to Ballindalloch.

## Events:

- **Spirit of Speyside Whisky Festival** – A celebration of whisky and music usually held in May & September. [www.spiritofspeyside.com](http://www.spiritofspeyside.com)
- **Glen Urquhart Highland Games**, Drumnadrochit – Held on the last Saturday of August. See the website for details [www.glenurquhart-highland-games.co.uk](http://www.glenurquhart-highland-games.co.uk)
- **Blas Highland Music Festival** – A celebration of Highland music with events throughout the Highlands and Inverness. See the website for details [www.blas-festival.com](http://www.blas-festival.com)
- **The Northern Meeting** – A major competition for bagpipe musicians that usually takes place over 2 days in early September. See the website for details [www.northern-meeting.org](http://www.northern-meeting.org)
- **Highland Feast** – A variety of food and drink events in and around the Inverness area. Held in late September - October. See website for details [www.highlandfeast.co.uk](http://www.highlandfeast.co.uk)

## Where to Eat & Drink:

Eating out in Inverness is relatively expensive so we recommend that you try to get to a restaurant between 5pm – 6:30pm as most restaurants offer a more reasonable pre-Theatre menu. A word of warning though, the pre-Theatre menu at the “Contrast” restaurant is not good value. The portions are ludicrously small and the food we chose was bland. It is, however, a lovely location for a riverside coffee or a cool drink on a sunny afternoon.

**River Café**, Inverness – an informal restaurant beside the river that always seems to be busy, a good sign! Dinner main courses from £9 upwards. Tel: 01463 714884

**Mustard Seed**, Inverness – Great riverside location, nice stylish atmosphere & Franco-Scottish cuisine. Balcony area overlooks the river. Dinner main course ~£12+. Pre-booking advised as this is a popular restaurant. Tel: 01463 220220

**Waterfront Bar**, Inverness – On west shore of River Ness. Simple Pub food, but good value. Tel: 01463 223870

**Café 1**, Inverness – Funky décor and an eclectic menu with dinner main courses starting at £9. Situated below Castle on Castle Street. Tel: 01463 226200

**Culbokie Inn**, Culbokie – An unpretentious village inn offering excellent food, friendly service and a very good pint of beer. Tel: 01349 877280

**The Anderson**, Fortrose – A vast choice of whiskys and a menu that constantly changes to make use of the best fresh local produce. Reasonably priced. Tel: 01381 620236

**Plough Inn**, Rosemarkie – Long standing hostelry in the quiet village of Rosemarkie. Seems to change owners quite frequently, but has had a good reputation for food recently. Tel: 01381 620164

**Sutor Creek**, Cromarty – Traditional freshly made pizzas in an unassuming restaurant near the harbour in Cromarty. Good choice of pizzas and a daily changing choice of meat and fish options too. Tel: 01381 600855