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▲ View from a highland layby

Islands and Highlands: Part 2

Overview

In the second of our two-part series on Scotland, we chose to take a trip to the Highlands to see what the area has to offer. The Scottish Highlands is famous for its spectacularly undisturbed beauty, owing largely to its being so sparsely populated.

You will find The Highlands surprisingly easy to navigate without a car. To experience some of the most awe-inspiring landscapes you may want to put on those walking boots and wonder along one of the clearly signposted walking trails.

The weather in Scotland is predictably unpredictable, so never set off without the right variety of clothing and gear!

What To See on our round trip from Glasgow

Loch Lomond Loch Lomond is simply breathtaking, and if you're travelling from Glasgow, you will certainly want to make it your first stop. This fresh water lake is 36km long and 8km wide and rests just thirty-five minutes from Glasgow's City Centre.

Towards the east of Loch Lomond is the Loch Lomond and Trossachs National Park. The national park is the fourth largest national park in the UK, and includes 21 munros, two forest parks and 57 conservation sites.

The patriotic song heard at the start of the podcast features a local's rendition of Andrew Lang's "The Bonnie Banks O'Loch Lomond", published in 1876.

Inverary The picturesque town of Inverary can be seen perched on the side of Loch Fyne from a mile away. Though hardly a bustling metropolis, it does have a few sights that maybe be of interest. The most famous is Inverary Castle, seat of the Campbell Clan and the Duke of Argyll. The castle was first constructed between 1720 and 1789 for John Campbell and his wife.

Inverary is a popular tourist destination and a key stopping point for many of the scenic tours organised by CityLink. The white houses on the shore of Loch Fyne makes the town a particularly charming place to stop for lunch.

Oban This town, found in Argyll and Bute, is a strategic stopping point for those interested in boat trips or visits to the nearby islands. Known as the 'Gateway to the Isles,' (because of its excellent ferry connections), it is easily accessible by mainland trains.

Visitors should bear in mind that this is a resort town, making it either a unique cultural experience or a place to avoid, depending on your perspective. The town has a

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population of 12,000, which swells to as much as 25,000 during the touristy summer months. Caledonian MacBrayne is the primary ferry operator, with service to Lismore, Colonsay, Coll, Tiree, Kerrera, Craignure on Mull and to Castlebay in Barra.

Getting there

We hired a car from Glasgow with Enterprise (www.enterprise.co.uk) who rents to young drivers under 25. We made a figure-of-eight tour of Loch Lomond and the Lower Highlands. We set out from Glasgow on the A82, crossed the Erskine Bridge (which is now free) and went up the western bank of Loch Lomond.

After a few hours whiling away the day on the shores of Loch Lomond, we headed west at Tarbet on the A82, which took us along a number of fresh and salt water lochs to Inverary. We then navigated our way to Oban, alongside Loch Linnhe, where you can visit the Seal Sanctuary. The road eventually leads drivers into the official Lower Highlands, an amazing drive through vast barren landscapes. It ultimately rejoins the road at Loch Lomond. This trip will take the whole day, so make sure you set-off early.

Rail

Glasgow has two main railways stations; Glasgow Central and Glasgow Queens Street. Glasgow is well connected with most major cities in England by GNER and Virgin services which both terminate at Glasgow Central. For those who want a more leisurely journey, the Caledonian Sleeper will take you from London to Glasgow overnight with bargain berths from £19.

To get into the heart of the Highlands by public transport you should to to Glasgow Queen Street Station where you will find frequent services operated by First ScotRail. From Glasgow Queen Street you will soon notice that railways stations are all signposted in Gaelic as well as English, reminding visitors of Scotland's important cultural heritage.

Bus

There are a variety of long and short distance bus services connecting Glasgow with all the major and small towns in Scotland. Buchanan bus station is located near Queens Street station. City Link (<http://www.citylink.co.uk>) is the main provider of services in Scotland and they also provide affordable tours of the Lomond national park.

Air

Glasgow is the main international airport for Scotland and most major European and World cities are connected with regular flights.

The airport is connected with two competing bus services which cost approximately £5 to reach the city centre and take 20 minutes.

More recently, budget airlines have started using Prestwick Airport, all the way out in Ayr. easyJet were



▲ Emotive fresh & salt water lochs create spectacular landscapes

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then your message to
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famously taken to court by British Airways for an advertising slogan aimed at snubbing Ryanair for using the Ayrshire airport. The advertisement referred to the airport as "Ayr Miles" for its actual distance from Glasgow.

Air Miles was incidentally a trade mark owned by BA, who weren't very happy about the pun and so ironically took easyJet to court for their anti-Ryanair advertising.

The judge threw the case out of court after ruling that the feud between the two airlines was immature and pathetic. (Don't quote us on the accuracy of that story!)

Budget Airlines serving Glasgow & Prestwick:

BMI & BMI Baby, FlyGlobespan, Sterling, Flybe,



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Visitor Links

Scotland National Tourist Board

<http://www.visitscotland.com>

Argyll, the Isles, Loch Lomond, Stirling and the Trossachs Tourist Board

<http://www.visitscottishheartlands.com>

Oban and Lorn Tourist Board & Webcam!

<http://www.oban.org.uk>

Inverary Jail

<http://www.inveraryjail.co.uk>

Inverary Castle

<http://www.inverary-castle.com/Pages/content.asp>

Highland Flag Site - campaign site for recognition of the highland flag

<http://www.highlandflag.org.uk>

Exploring the Highlands

Walking

Walk Scotland

<http://www.walkscotland.com>

Walkabout Scotland - Organisers of walking holidays

<http://www.walkaboutscotland.com>

Walk in Scotland - Comprehensive guide from the Scottish tourist board

<http://walking.visitscotland.com>

Wildlife

Royal Society for the Protection of Birds - Birdwatching in Scotland

http://www.rspb.org.uk/scotland/birdwatching_Scotland/index.asp

Sealife Adventures - organisers of Whale watching, wildlife and whirlpool boat trips.

<http://www.sealife-adventures.com/index.html>

Wildlife Scotland - another excellent official visitor site - comprehensive stunning site.

<http://wildlife.visitscotland.com>

Scottish Sealife Sanctuary - charity - seal rescue centre.

<http://www.sealsanctuary.co.uk/oban1.html>

Links

► Rail

Virgin Trains

<http://www.virgintrains.co.uk>

GNER

<http://www.gner.co.uk>

First ScotRail

<http://www.firstgroup.com>

The Train Line (For rail bookings and timetables)

<http://www.thetrainline.com>

► Bus

National Express

<http://www.nationalexpress.com>

Megabus

<http://www.megabus.com/uk>

Eurolines

<http://www.eurolines.com>

CityLink

<http://www.citylink.co.uk>

► Air

Glasgow Airport, Edinburgh and Aberdeen airport

<http://www.baa.com>

Glasgow Prestwick Airport

<http://www.gpia.co.uk>

Skyscanner (low cost airline price search)

<http://www.skyscanner.net>

British Airways

<http://www.ba.com>

easyJet

<http://www.easyjet.com>

Ryanair

<http://www.ryanair.com>

BMI

<http://www.flybmi.com>

Flybe

<http://www.flybe.com>

Globespan

<http://www.flyglobespan.com>

Sky Europe

<http://www.skyeurope.com>

Central Wings

<http://www.centralwings.com>

Globespan

<http://www.flyglobespan.com>

Wizz

<http://www.wizzair.com>

"The Bonnie Banks O'Loch Lomand", Virgin Trains from London.

