

# A guide on Inverness and Loch Ness for international media

Edition 1 - January 2016

Loch Ness  
Inverness



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*Edition 1, January 2016*

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## Quick facts about Inverness and Loch Ness

- Canoeing, cruising, gorge-walking, hiking, biking and yes, even walking on water; there's many an outdoor adventure to be had in and around the shores of Loch Ness. *Find out all the places to enjoy in this adventure playground on page 3.*
- From converted-church art galleries and alfresco Shakespeare performances throughout the region to the rich array of art, music and theatrical happenings in the vibrant city of Inverness, the region's arts and culture scene is a thriving one. *For ideas on where to immerse yourself in this scene, turn to page 6.*
- From bloody battles to the first Loch Ness monster sighting, the history of Inverness, Loch Ness and the surrounding region is a fascinating and varied one. *Step back in time to explore Highland heritage at these ten great attractions on page 8.*
- Whether you have a special occasion, want to treat yourself or have a substantial holiday budget, there are many ways to enjoy a life of luxury in Inverness and Loch Ness; catch a helicopter, charter a boat for some private Nessie spotting, enjoy Michelin-star dining, kick back with a game of golf or simply be pampered in a luxurious spa. *Discover how and where on page 11.*
- With its memorable landscapes and historic buildings it's no wonder the region of Inverness and Loch Ness has frequently starred on big and small screens across the globe. *Find out where to find the key locations on page 13.*
- From exciting rock concerts and lively military bands to foot-tapping Ceilidhs with their Scottish folk songs, bagpipers, fiddlers, acoustic guitars and dancing - music is ringing throughout the Inverness and Loch Ness region. *For more details turn to page 16.*
- Luxury eco-friendly lodges, purse-friendly hostels, charming bed and breakfasts, comfortable hotels, glamping, camping and, naturally, castles, Inverness and Loch Ness tick all the accommodation boxes. *Find out about accommodation options on page 18.*
- From cosy pubs with roaring log fires to fun activities to get your adrenaline pumping, there's plenty to see and do during the Highland autumn and winter months. *Discover how the region is destination for all seasons on page 22.*
- Bring an appetite, because the dining scene in this part of Scotland is fantastic. With cosy pubs offering hearty Highland dishes, fine dining riverside restaurants, whisky distilleries and cocktail bars for when you need a wee dram of something warming, your taste buds are in for a treat. *For suggestions on where to book turn to page 24.*
- Whether you're coming by air, rail, car or bus, getting to Inverness and Loch Ness is easy - as is travelling around the area. *We show you how on page 27.*
- Meet the local stars - people who really know the region. *For information on people to interview about Inverness and Loch Ness turn to page 28.*
- Let's get going! Itineraries to get you started. *Turn to page 31.*

## Your very own adventure playground

Walkers, riders, wildlife-watchers and white water sledgers - start planning your action-packed trip to the Inverness and Loch Ness region! Beautiful it may be, but Inverness and its surrounds aren't just there to be admired - you're invited to use this part of the Scottish Highlands as your very own adventure playground.



*Experience the beauty of Loch Ness, not just as a feast for the eyes, but as a wonderful place to experience the great outdoors year round - walk, ride, cycle, canoe and much more in and around these breathtaking waters!*  
©VisitBritain Andrew Pickett

### Hiking, walking and cycling

There are hikes and walks to suit all ages and abilities, from short riverside strolls in the Highland capital, Inverness, to long-distance multi-day trips such as the Great Glen Way. Many waymarked walking routes are also suitable for cyclists, so if you prefer to coast along on a bike and cover more ground in a day, you can.

The **Great Glen Way** is challenging yet rewarding, with some of Scotland's most dramatic scenery along the way. At 73 miles (117km), it follows the entire length of the Great Glen, from Fort William in the south up to Inverness in the north - approximately five to six days' walking. Those wishing to cycle can hire bikes at Fort William and drop off at Inverness, or vice versa. From Fort William, you begin by skirting the delightfully-named Loch Lochy before meeting Loch Ness, where the sweeping panoramas will give your camera a solid workout. For amazing views over the Great Glen - as far as Ben Nevis, on a clear day - add on a six-mile (9km) hill walk at **Meall Fuar-mhonaidh**, which rises above the village of Drumnadrochit on the Loch's north western shore; if you're not planning to take on the whole Great Glen Way, this makes a good standalone short walk. The southern side of Loch Ness tends to be less busy than the north, making **The South Loch Ness Trail** an enticing option on foot, bicycle or even horseback. It covers 28 miles (45km), starting at Loch Tarff (near Fort Augustus) and going to Torbreck near Inverness.



*Pull on those walking boots and head out to discover gorgeous Glen Affric; pinewoods and lochs await!* ©VisitBritain Andrew Pickett

One of the most beautiful glens in Scotland is **Glen Affric**, whose upper reaches are designated as **Glen Affric Nature Reserve** ([www.nnr-scotland.org.uk/glen-affric](http://www.nnr-scotland.org.uk/glen-affric)). The landscape here is all majestic native pinewoods, shimmering lochs and busy birdlife - magical walking terrain. From Cannich, the only village in the area (approx. 27 miles/43km

from Inverness by road), it's possible to walk all the way to Glen Shiel on the west coast in two days as part of the newly waymarked **Affric-Kintail Way** ([www.affrickintailway.com](http://www.affrickintailway.com)). Alternatively, the circular walk around **Loch Affric** is a satisfying 11-mile (18km) day out among pinewood and moorland, with show-stopping views of the mountains above. Three miles (five km) southwest of Cannich is **Tomich**, a cute conservation village, and three miles beyond that is the small hamlet of Cougie. From there, two waterfall walks head to the marvellous **Plodda Falls**. A restored Victorian viewing platform extends over the top of the falls, giving a thrilling view straight down the cascade. Keep your eyes peeled for red squirrels (far rarer than their grey counterparts).

Not really a hiking-boots-and-backpack person? Enjoy a gentle stroll or morning run around the **Ness Islands**, a pretty park in the middle of the River Ness and connected to land by suspension bridges. You can pop into the lovely Botanic Gardens and St Andrew's Cathedral on your way. ([www.highlifehighland.com/inverness-botanic-gardens](http://www.highlifehighland.com/inverness-botanic-gardens), [www.invernesscathedral.co.uk](http://www.invernesscathedral.co.uk))

For more walking information see [www.visitinvernesslochness.com/explore/walking.aspx](http://www.visitinvernesslochness.com/explore/walking.aspx).

### Water-based adventures

**Boots n Paddles** organises adventurous activities across Scotland, many of which take place in Inverness and on Loch Ness, including some of its more wacky activities such as **walking on water** and **white-water sledging** ([www.boots-n-paddles.co.uk](http://www.boots-n-paddles.co.uk)). The former sees you climb into a WOW (walk on water) ball - a giant inflatable sphere - and be pushed out onto the water. From there, it's up to you to try and 'walk' on water, though it's likely you'll end up upside down at many points. White-water sledging is for the real adrenaline lovers - you get a river sledge, a wetsuit, helmet, buoyancy aid and some fins, and then attempt to negotiate strong currents, waterfalls and rapids on the River Garry near Loch Ness. Fancy something calmer? Boots n Paddles offers five-day **canoeing trips** on the Great Glen Canoe Trail starting at Fort William and ending at Inverness, plus half day and taster sessions around Fort Augustus on Loch Ness and in scenic Glen Affric. Choose to just hire the equipment, or go with a qualified Boots n Paddles guide. Back on land, there's great **gorge-walking** in Culloden Gorge near Inverness, which is a fun activity suited to children and adults alike.



*A perfect way of soaking up the atmosphere on Loch Ness; aboard a Boots n Paddles canoe*

If you want to see Loch Ness at top speed, head on a RIB (Rigid Inflatable Boat) Ride with **Cruise Loch Ness**, the only company on the loch to provide this high-octane boat trip ([www.cruiselochness.com/rib-trips](http://www.cruiselochness.com/rib-trips)). Bounce over the water at a top speed of 40 knots, feeling the wind in your hair and keeping your eyes peeled for Nessie... Or maybe you want to go slower, and see the Loch at a more leisurely pace? **Jacobite Cruises** offers stylish Loch Ness boat trips ranging from one to seven hours long, with options to get off and visit Urquhart Castle or the Loch Ness Visitor Centre ([www.jacobite.co.uk](http://www.jacobite.co.uk)). **Highland Free Spirits** runs luxury cruises with fantastic food and even an on-board bagpiper (on request), for a true Scottish experience ([www.highlandfreespirits.com](http://www.highlandfreespirits.com)). For a longer boating trip, **Caley Cruisers** offers motor cruisers for short break or weekly rental, with boats in varying sizes accommodating between two and eight people ([www.caleycruisers.com](http://www.caleycruisers.com)).

## Wildlife watching and horse-riding

While Nessie may elude you, there's plenty of wildlife you can get right up close to in the Loch Ness and Inverness region. For water-dwelling creatures, head north of Inverness to the Moray Firth. **Ecoventures** promises to provide customers with a 'wildlife encounter' in the Firth, be it **bottlenose dolphins, harbour porpoise, pilot whales** or **basking sharks**, and you're guaranteed to spot plenty of **seabirds** too ([www.ecoventures.co.uk](http://www.ecoventures.co.uk)).



*Natural forest-dweller, the red deer, roams the open ground of Glen Affric; a real treat for wildlife lovers.  
©VisitBritain Andrew Pickett*

Glen Affric is home to birds and animals unique to the pine forest. **Red deer**, which are natural forest-dwellers, roam on the high, open ground in the summer and come among the trees for food in the winter; the best time of year to see them is autumn when the glen is ablaze with red and orange leaves. Here, and elsewhere in the region, you're likely to spot **red squirrels** and **pine martens**. **Golden eagles** nest in Glen Affric, as do **ospreys** and **Scottish crossbills**, who are said to sing in a 'Scottish accent!'

If you're an experienced horse-rider, a satisfying way to see Loch Ness and the surrounding countryside is with **Loch Ness Riding** ([www.lochnessriding.co.uk](http://www.lochnessriding.co.uk)). The company organises private and group tours and lessons, and you can go out for any length of time from one hour to three days. Located on the 50 mile (80km) **Trail of the Seven Lochs**, excellent terrain for horseback adventures, the riding centre is ten miles (16km) south west of Inverness. Loch Ness Riding are organising a Man vs Horse contest in April 2016, as well as a 'Scottish Horseshoe' endurance ride on 21-22 May, for hard-core horse-riders (or horse racers!).

## Golf

Scotland is, of course, the home of golf, and this Highland region offers great places to tee off. Start with championship links course **Castle Stuart**, which will host the Scottish Open in 2016. Overlooking the Moray Firth, and with clear views of iconic Inverness-shire landmarks like Kessock Bridge, Chanonry Lighthouse and Fort George, it's one of the country's most spectacular courses ([www.castlestuartgolf.com](http://www.castlestuartgolf.com)).

Another stunningly sited course, **Royal Dornoch**, is a natural links course divided from Dornoch Firth by a gorgeous white sandy beach ([www.royaldornoch.com](http://www.royaldornoch.com)). There's a challenging championship course and the 18-hole course the Struie, suitable to families and lower-handicap players. It's 45 miles (72km) from Inverness. On the shores of the Moray Firth, just 11 miles (18km) from Castle Stuart, is the **Nairn Golf Club**, a traditional Scottish links course encompassing a Highland wilderness of gorse and heather, which will test the talents of professional and amateur golfers alike ([www.nairngolfclub.co.uk](http://www.nairngolfclub.co.uk)).

## A region of arts and culture

Inverness offers a rich array of art, music and theatrical happenings, while beyond the city there's plenty to entertain, from converted-church art galleries to alfresco Shakespeare performances.

Base yourself in Inverness, the cultural capital of the Highlands, and make a beeline straight for **Eden Court** ([www.eden-court.co.uk](http://www.eden-court.co.uk)). Opened in 1976 with a design that was strikingly modern for the time, it remains the only large-scale theatre in the Highlands and one of Scotland's biggest and best arts venues; its horseshoe-shaped auditorium seats 830. So popular was Eden Court, it had to grow bigger to accommodate the many visitors hungry for art, theatre, ballet and cinema, and the venue expanded in 2007 to include a second theatre, two new cinemas, extra dance and drama studios and three floors of purpose-built dressing rooms. See a concert, watch a movie or join in a drumming, clowning or dance masterclass.

The **Inverness Museum & Art Gallery** was founded at the foot of Castle Hill in 1880, and was extensively refurbished in 2008 to offer new displays and better show off its collection of historic weapons, Pictish stones and exhibitions of contemporary Highland arts and crafts ([www.highlifehighland.com/inverness-museum-and-art-gallery](http://www.highlifehighland.com/inverness-museum-and-art-gallery)).



*Contemporary arts mixed with historic collections makes the Inverness Museum & Art Gallery a must-visit on the region's cultural trail. ©VisitBritain Andrew Pickett*

There are numerous small galleries to potter about in - the **Riverside Gallery** has pride of place on the eastern banks of the River Ness and within is **Scottish Flair**, a family run gallery that specialises in Edwardian and Victorian Art ([www.riverside-gallery.co.uk](http://www.riverside-gallery.co.uk), [www.scottishflair.com](http://www.scottishflair.com)). For a taste of something contemporary, head just outside Inverness to the **Kilmarrock Gallery**, a buzzing arts space in a converted 18th-century church that draws interesting artists to exhibit and curious art aficionados to admire and buy ([www.kilmorackgallery.co.uk](http://www.kilmorackgallery.co.uk)). It's scenically located 13 miles (21km) west of Inverness by road, on the way to Glen Affric.

Back in Inverness, a museum well worth visiting is the **Scottish Kiltmaker Visitor Centre** in the Highland House of Fraser ([www.highlandhouseoffraser.com/exhibition.asp](http://www.highlandhouseoffraser.com/exhibition.asp)). Find out about tartan dress through the centuries and see outfits worn by Mel Gibson in *Braveheart!*

A night out is essential in Inverness; it's home to a fantastic music scene. Both locals and visitors converge at the well-known venue **Hootananny**, whose programme straddles folk, rock, big-name bands and lively traditional Scottish music nights ([www.hootanannyinverness.co.uk](http://www.hootanannyinverness.co.uk)). If you've always wanted to be flung about as part of a ceilidh - a Scottish group dance - now's your chance.

Sip local beers from Black Isle Brewery and dine on site if you get peckish. **Ironworks** is another central live music venue and attracts the biggest name bands, plus popular comedy and DJ nights ([www.ironworksvenue.com](http://www.ironworksvenue.com)).



*Eco-friendly, quirky and some of the biggest bands playing; plenty of reasons to book a ticket to the Belladrum Festival!*

Festival fans should book tickets to **Belladrum Tartan Heart Festival**, in its 13th year in 2016 and returning to Beauly, just outside Inverness, with the theme 'Superstition' ([www.tartanheartfestival.co.uk](http://www.tartanheartfestival.co.uk)). 2015 saw the Kaiser Chiefs, The Proclaimers and the Manic Street Preachers play the eco-friendly festival, so the stakes are high for the next line up!

Tartan plays an integral part in Scotland's traditional **Highland Games**. The Inverness Highland Games (16 July in 2016) and the Nairn Highland Games (15 August 2016) offer the chance to immerse yourself in Scottish culture, from bagpiping to a mass Highland fling, ([www.invernesshighlandgames.com](http://www.invernesshighlandgames.com), [www.nairnhighlandgames.co.uk](http://www.nairnhighlandgames.co.uk)). Sporting events include Scots Hammer, Tossing the Caber and the Tug o' War. Nairn is just 15 minutes by train from Inverness. Nairn also hosts a great **Book and Arts Festival** that sees top authors, comedians, musicians and more descend on the pretty seaside town at the end of the summer; in 2016 it'll be held from 30 August - 4 September ([www.nairnfestival.co.uk](http://www.nairnfestival.co.uk)).

Cawdor is a familiar name to Shakespeare fans - Macbeth was famously told by the Weird Sisters in 'The Scottish Play' that he was destined to become Thane of Cawdor, a prophecy that came true. Macbeth never actually lived at Cawdor Castle though; it was built in the 14th century and he was born in about 1005. Nevertheless, **Cawdor Castle** does celebrate Shakespeare today with summer performances of his works in its garden, with the castle providing a majestic backdrop to the action



*Marking the 400th anniversary of Shakespeare's death in 2016, Cawdor Castle will welcome performances of some of the Bard's finest plays*

([www.cawdorcastle.com](http://www.cawdorcastle.com)). 2016 will see *A Midsummer Night's Dream* performed by the London Contemporary Theatre on 29 July and *Much Ado About Nothing* by the Lord Chamberlain's Men on 28 August, fittingly in the year that marks the 400th anniversary of Shakespeare's death. You can also admire the contemporary art sculptures in the castle gardens from 1 May 2016, when the castle reopens after the winter.

Inverness and Loch Ness, meanwhile, offers plenty of opportunity to step into the footsteps of artists and authors. Robert Burns' poem *Lines On The Fall Of Fyers Near Loch-Ness* tells you exactly where to go, so head to the Falls of Foyers, on the south eastern side of Loch Ness where 'Among the heathy hills and ragged woods / The roaring Fyers pours his mossy floods' ([www.walkhighlands.co.uk/lochness/Fallsoffoyers.shtml](http://www.walkhighlands.co.uk/lochness/Fallsoffoyers.shtml)). It's not uncommon to find people reciting the poem by the roaring waterfall! Another poet who immortalised the Falls of Foyer in words was William McGonagall, largely considered 'the

worst poet in the history of the English language!. Compare his *Loch Ness* with Burns' poetry and see whether you agree with this judgment!

2016 will be celebrated across Scotland as the Year of Innovation, Architecture and Design and there are plenty of places in Inverness and the surrounding area to appreciate the Scottish flair for all three. To the east of Inverness is the awe-inspiring **Culloden Viaduct**, while **Fort George**, built in the wake of the battle of Culloden, remains a feat of architecture to this day - it took 21 years to complete the imposing fortification. Visit the **Highlanders' Museum (Queen's Own Highlanders Collection)**, which covers three floors of Fort George and is the largest regimental museum in Scotland outside Edinburgh ([www.thehighlandersmuseum.com](http://www.thehighlandersmuseum.com)). And what could be more innovative than a beach full of knitted Nessies? This world record attempt will be part of the Loch Ness International Knitting Festival, to be held as part of the Year of Innovation, Architecture and Design and boasting a packed programme of crafty events, with everything from knitting themed exhibitions, lectures and film screenings to fashion shows and workshops ([www.lochnessknitfest.com](http://www.lochnessknitfest.com)).

## Immerse yourself in history and heritage

From bloody battles to the first Loch Ness monster sighting, the history of Inverness, Loch Ness and the surrounding region is a fascinating and varied one. Step back in time to explore Highland heritage at these ten great attractions.

### Urquhart Castle

The greatest castle in the Highlands, Urquhart Castle has prime position right on the banks of Loch Ness. Though in a ruinous state, it's an impressive sight, particularly when you learn something of its history; during a bloody 500 years it was invaded by King Edward I



*Urquhart Castle's position on the banks of Loch Ness made it a much sought-after fortress through the region's history. Explore its fascinating visitor centre to gain a true insight. ©VisitBritain Andrew Pickett*

of England, was a prominent location in the Scots' independence struggle of the 1300s, and then raided in the 1400s and 1500s by the ambitious MacDonald Lords of the Isles. Little wonder it's not totally intact in the 21st century! The visitor centre brings the castle's past to life through its exhibition, audio-visual display and showcase of medieval treasures that were found at the castle. There's always time for a bit of Nessie-hunting too, so head to the Grant Tower for beautiful views over the Loch. More views can be enjoyed from the onsite café. [www.historic-scotland.gov.uk/urquhartcastle](http://www.historic-scotland.gov.uk/urquhartcastle)

*Getting there: Urquhart Castle is in Drumnadrochit, approximately 17 miles (27km) from Inverness by road.*

## Inverness Castle

Inverness Castle's turrets and towers rise up from a hill above the city centre and overlook the River Ness like something from a fairy tale. The 19th century Baronial design replaced the medieval version that stood before it, which was blown up in 1746 by the Jacobites. Today, the castle houses a working court so you can't go inside, however you can visit the surrounding gardens, which offer lovely views. From Easter 2016 visitors will be able to scale the North Tower and see a sweeping panorama over the whole city.



*Dominating the city skyline, Inverness Castle offers fantastic panoramic views*

*Getting there: Inverness is approximately 3 hours 20 minutes by rail from Edinburgh and accessible by rail from London (8 hours or an 11 hour 40 minute sleeper train). It is 155 miles (250km) from Edinburgh by road.*

## Cawdor Castle

Cawdor Castle was built in the 14th century and the Cawdor family stills lives there to this day. Explore living history at this magnificent attraction, filled with things to see - fine portraits, beautiful tapestries, stunning gardens - as well as things to do. Every summer the castle's gardens host Shakespeare plays performed by touring theatre companies such as the Lord Chamberlain's Men, the name of the original company the Bard himself wrote for. Next year they'll put on *Much Ado About Nothing* (28 August), while the London Contemporary Theatre will perform *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (29 July). Shakespeare fans come to Cawdor for its Macbeth connections too - crowned the 'Thane of Cawdor' in the play, Macbeth would have lived here while plotting his ambitious ascent to the crown. But in fact, he couldn't have. The castle was built about 400 years after he was born! [www.cawdorcastle.com](http://www.cawdorcastle.com) (The castle reopens on 1 May 2016 following winter closure.)

*Getting there: Cawdor Castle is approximately 15 miles (24km) from Inverness by road. There's also a bus from the city to the castle.*

## Culloden Battlefield and Visitor Centre



*Discover moving and insightful historic tales from the staff at the Culloden Battlefield and Visitor Centre*

The last pitched battle ever fought on British soil was a bloody one: 16 April 1746 saw 1,200 Highlanders slaughtered by government forces, bringing an end to the old clan system, the defeat of Bonnie Prince Charlie and the start of the Clearances, which saw huge numbers of Highlanders displaced from their land. Visit the sober moorland where the 68-minute battle took place and learn all about it at the impressive Visitor Centre, where you can take part in a Living History presentation that brings the battle to life. [www.nts.org.uk/Culloden](http://www.nts.org.uk/Culloden)

*Getting there: Culloden is six miles (10km) east of Inverness by road and connected to the city by direct buses.*

## Fort George and the Highlanders Museum

Following on from Culloden, visit Fort George, the impregnable fortress that was built in the wake of the famed battle of 1746 as a base for King George II's army. By the time it was finished - 21 years after building began - the Jacobite threat had almost completely disappeared. The sheer scale of the architecture is impressive; the main rampart encloses an area the size of five football pitches. Within the boundary walls there was accommodation for a governor, officers, a 1,600-strong infantry garrison, a Brewhouse, a chapel and more. In the 1700s, the fort became a recruiting base and training camp for the British Army. The Regimental Museum of the Highlanders (Seaforths & Camerons) is there today, housing probably the largest regimental display outside London. Fort George will form a spectacular backdrop to the Highland Military Tattoo (9-11 September 2016), an extravaganza of fireworks, flypasts, piping and more. [www.historic-scotland.gov.uk/fortgeorge](http://www.historic-scotland.gov.uk/fortgeorge), [www.thehighlandersmuseum.com](http://www.thehighlandersmuseum.com), [www.highlandmilitarytattoo.com](http://www.highlandmilitarytattoo.com)

*Getting there: Fort George is approximately 13 miles (21.5km) from central Inverness by road.*

## Clava Cairns

Arrive at sunset or sunrise to see Clava Cairns, the sacred prehistoric site that draws fans of the TV series *Outlander* as much as history buffs and romantic wanderers. Dominated by three well-preserved burial cairns, each enclosed by stone circles, and located in a small wood, the site is fairly mysterious to historians. The remains within were cleared out long ago, but it's thought that they date back 4,000 years and could have been constructed for the burial of tribal chiefs; only one or two bodies were thought to be buried in each. Clava is thought to have inspired the fictional Craigh na Dun in the *Outlander* books and TV series, and fans flock to see the 'Split Stone' through which Claire Randall might have tumbled, into the year 1743.

[www.historic-scotland.gov.uk/propertyresults/propertydetail.htm?PropID=PL\\_067](http://www.historic-scotland.gov.uk/propertyresults/propertydetail.htm?PropID=PL_067)

*Getting there: The Clava Cairns are approximately seven miles (11km) by road from Inverness.*

## Loch Ness Centre and Exhibition

Since an article published in 1933 wrote of a 'Strange Spectacle on Loch Ness' - more specifically a creature that was 'rolling and plunging for fully a minute, its body resembling that of a whale, and the water cascading and churning like a simmering cauldron' - it's been impossible to say the words 'Loch Ness' without immediately thinking 'monster'. At the Loch Ness Centre and Exhibition, travel through seven themed rooms, tracing the mystery as far back as 500 million years. Watch underwater films, see photos, hear eye-witness accounts of sightings and make your own mind up about whether there's more to the loch than meets the eye...[www.lochness.com](http://www.lochness.com)



*Is the mystery unravelled at the Loch Ness Centre and Exhibition? There's only one way to find out...*

*Getting there: Loch Ness Centre and Exhibition is approximately 14.5 miles (23.5km) from central Inverness by road.*

### Nessie-Serry Independent Research

Surely as much a part of the Loch Ness Monster story as Nessie herself (for some reason, the common belief is that the creature is female), Steve Feltham has devoted himself to spotting the Loch Ness Monster since 1991. His base is a campervan near to the Dores Inn pub on the Loch's southern shore, and from there he sells Nessie products and dispenses Nessie lore to those interested in finding out about his research over 15 years. Feltham owns the Guinness World Record for 'Longest Continuous Vigil Hunting for the Loch Ness Monster'. [www.nessiehunter.co.uk](http://www.nessiehunter.co.uk)

*Getting there: The Dores Inn pub is eight miles (13km) from central Inverness by road, and the Nessie-Serry Independent Research van is parked nearby.*

### The Clansman Centre

At the Clansman Centre in Fort Augustus, you can immerse yourself in 17th-century Highland life by learning to put on a plaid - an early version of the kilt - and finding out how the claymore, a Highland sword, was made and used. You can even buy yourself a 'Braveheart Sword', should yours need replacing. [www.scottish-swords.com](http://www.scottish-swords.com)

*Getting there: The Clansman Centre is in Fort Augustus, approximately 33.5 miles (54km) from Inverness by road.*

### The Caledonian Canal and Visitor Centre

The Caledonian Canal was designed and built by notable engineer Thomas Telford, opening in 1822 and covering 22 miles (60km) with a grand total of 29 locks. Queen Victoria took a trip up the canal in 1873, and it still serves as a gentle and scenic way to explore the Highlands. Learn about its history and see photos of the construction in action at the small but informative Visitor Centre. [www.scottishcanals.co.uk/canals/caledonian-canal](http://www.scottishcanals.co.uk/canals/caledonian-canal)

*Getting there: The Caledonian Canal Visitor Centre is in Fort Augustus, approximately 33.5 miles (54km) from Inverness by road.*

## Live a life of luxury in Inverness and Loch Ness

From helicopter rides and deer-stalking to whisky tours and Michelin-star dining, here's how to experience Loch Ness in luxury.

Stunning enough at ground level, Loch Ness looks even better when seen from 5,000 feet. Departing from Nairn, a fishing port 15 miles east of Inverness, **HG Helicopters'** half-day 'Loch Ness Tour' flies over craggy coastline and Inverness before the loch sprawls into view, long and dramatic. The route then surveys picturesque Cawdor Castle - fictional home of Shakespeare's character Macbeth - before returning to Nairn, where dolphins are sometimes glimpsed in the North Sea waters. **Aldourie**, an exclusive private-hire castle, can also arrange helicopter rides over the Loch for visitors. [www.hghelicopters.co.uk](http://www.hghelicopters.co.uk), [www.aldouriecastle.co.uk](http://www.aldouriecastle.co.uk)



*Sit back and relax (for some Nessie spotting) in luxurious surroundings on a Loch Ness by Jacobite's private charter boat*

But hang on - what's that down there on the Loch? No, it's not a monster, but rather one of Loch Ness by Jacobite's **private charter boats**, on which the five-star experience includes live Scottish music, professional storytelling, photographers, whisky-tasting, gourmet Highland foods and, of course, the picturesque scenery. Voyages can also take in tours of Urquhart Castle, and boats depart from Tomnahurich Bridge in Inverness.

[www.jacobite.co.uk/charter](http://www.jacobite.co.uk/charter)

Jacobite isn't the only local company offering whisky-tasting. With Northern Scotland revered for its malts, the Inverness and Loch Ness area boasts some of the country's finest - and oldest - producers. At the **Glen Ord Distillery**, positioned atmospherically on the edge of the Black Isle, the unusually in-depth Experience Tasting Tour allows visitors to watch coopers at work, and then sample varieties of Glen Ord's exclusive Singleton range. Afterwards, browse the shop and stock up on vintage Scotch. [www.discovering-distilleries.com/glenord](http://www.discovering-distilleries.com/glenord)

A second regional staple is golf, with Scotland's links courses globally renowned. A prime example awaits near Inverness in the form of **Castle Stuart**, found beside the Moray Firth east of Inverness. Host of next July's Scottish Open, it was crafted six years ago by London 2012 Olympics course designer Gil Hanse and immediately acclaimed as a world-class challenge. The club can arrange bespoke packages for big spenders. Past examples include whisky-tasting dinners organised by another local brewery, Tomatin, or group days with Ryder Cup-format tournaments, putting on competitions and post-dinner prize-giving ceremonies in the handsome Art Deco clubhouse. [www.castlestuartgolf.com](http://www.castlestuartgolf.com)



*Golf players can enjoy bespoke packages at the elegant Castle Stuart golf course. @VisitBritain Andrew Pickett*

Golf can be tiring, so how about some spa slumber? Inverness has two excellent options. Using three fully-equipped treatment rooms, including a couple's chamber, rubs at the **Kingsclub Spa** range from sports massages to specialist LUX candle treatments. The **Bannatyne Spa**, meanwhile, majors in beauty therapies and de-stress rituals in partnership with feted skincare brand Elemis. [www.kingsmillshotel.com/hotel/spa](http://www.kingsmillshotel.com/hotel/spa), [www.bannatyne.co.uk/spa/inverness](http://www.bannatyne.co.uk/spa/inverness)

It's also possible to rejuvenate along the banks of Loch Ness. A range of luxurious treatments are available at **Escape**, the spa and therapy-suite for residents of the

upmarket guesthouse Loch Ness Lodge, as are a Scandinavian-style sauna and a hot tub. [www.loch-ness-lodge.com](http://www.loch-ness-lodge.com)

Yet more pampering can be found at **The Lovat** hotel, occupying a beautiful Victorian building in Fort Augustus at the lake's southern tip, and offering hot-stone massages and various facials. But save those until you've first experienced The Lovat's luxury shooting break, on which guests can stalk red deer, sika and hinds with the estate's sage gamekeeper. Practice time on a rifle range is also included. [www.thelovat.com](http://www.thelovat.com)

Over at **Boath House's** cosy, Michelin-starred restaurant on the Moray Coast, discerning diners enjoy canapés and aperitifs in the lounge before being 'asked' to their table and let loose on highly-imaginative menus. Chef Charlie Lockley not only uses local growers, breeders, producers and even foragers whenever possible, but also raids his own kitchen garden. True VIPs reserve the restaurant's oval-shaped private-dining room, relishing sensational watery views through floor-to-ceiling windows. [www.boath-house.com](http://www.boath-house.com)

In Inverness, **Abstract** is the Glenmoriston Town House Hotel's acclaimed restaurant. To best understand its modern approach to traditional Scottish dishes, book the Chef's Table and receive insider commentary as fine meals are prepared using seasonal produce. Featuring a glass of wine per dish, seven-course tasting menus typically star locally-caught scallops, halibut, pork bellies and chocolate fondants. [www.glenmoristontownhouse.com](http://www.glenmoristontownhouse.com)



*Unwind in charming surroundings at Culloden House hotel's Library Bar after a sumptuous feast in its restaurant*

The next night, after dining on sweet Orkney crab at the **Culloden House** hotel's restaurant just east of Inverness, retreat to its Library Bar for a tour of Scotland's six whisky regions. Having more than 120 malts in stock - some unavailable anywhere else - explains why the country house is classed as a Malt Whisky Embassy by the Scottish Malt Whisky Society. [www.cullodenhouse.co.uk](http://www.cullodenhouse.co.uk)

If you prefer to cook your own fabulous creations, then stay at **Eagle Brae**, set in wilderness ten miles northwest of Loch Ness. The luxury log cabins' owners keep their own rare-breed Berkshire pigs and traditional

Hebridean four-horned sheep for premium pork and lamb, while the estate offers wild venison sourced from surrounding forests and hills. [www.eaglebrae.co.uk](http://www.eaglebrae.co.uk)

## Star of the screen - step onto a film set in Inverness and Loch Ness

With its memorable landscapes and historic buildings it's no wonder the region of Inverness and Loch Ness has frequently starred on big and small screens across the globe. Here's a few key locations that you might want to check out yourself but, before you go, be sure to pick up a copy of VisitScotland's free new 72-page guide book *Set in Scotland: A Film Fan's Odyssey* or download its *The Highlands & Skye Movie Map*. [www.visitscotland.com](http://www.visitscotland.com)

### 1. *The Queen*, 2006

The **Glenfeshie Estate** on a south-west corner of the Cairngorms National Park doubled as the exterior of Balmoral in the historic drama starring Helen Mirren as Queen Elizabeth II. Located an hour's drive south of Inverness, the estate's 50,000 acres include wild Caledonian pine forests, glens, moorland, lochs and rivers, and wildlife such as golden eagles and peregrine falcons. The area is close to the small town of Kingussie and boasts hotels and hostels, the Loch Insh Watersports Centre and country pursuits including grouse and red deer stalking, as well as salmon fishing on the River Feshie, a tributary of the River Spey. [www.glenfeshie-estate.com](http://www.glenfeshie-estate.com)

### 2. *Loch Ness*, 1996

The freshwaters of **Loch Ness** are famous from folklore. Whether you believe in 'Nessie' or not, you can't deny the Loch's enigmatic beauty that has been utilised for a number of film and TV shows. Just 30 minutes' drive southwest of Inverness, Scotland's second largest loch has been explored by more than 100 TV documentaries including Leonard Nimoy's *Search for the Loch Ness Monster* (1977), *Arthur C. Clarke's Mysterious World* (1980) and *Incident at Loch Ness* (2004). It's also starred in big screen blockbusters such as *The Water Horse* with Emily Watson (2007) and *The Evil Beneath Loch Ness* with Patrick Bergin (2001). Arguably, though, Nessie's most famous on-screen appearance is in *Loch Ness*, the 1990s adventure film in which Ted Danson, Joely Richardson and Ian Holm scoured its 755ft deep waters... where anything could be lurking.



*Always ready for its close up; Loch Ness has had many a starring role in TV shows and films.*  
©VisitBritain Andrew Pickett

### 3. *The Private Life of Sherlock Holmes*, 1970

Billy Wilder's controversial comedy focusing on the dysfunctional side of the fictional sleuth used several atmospheric Highland locations as a backdrop, including the ruins of **Urquhart Castle** by Loch Ness and nearby **Drumnadrochit**, a pretty village at the foot of Glen Urquhart on the western shores of Loch Ness, 25 minutes' drive from Inverness. Starring Robert Stephens and Christopher Lee, the big name actors had the breathtaking Highland scenery as their co-stars. [www.urquhart-castle.co.uk](http://www.urquhart-castle.co.uk)

### 4. *Three: Love Lies Betrayal* (2009)

Bollywood stars have also succumbed to the charms of the Highlands. Nousheen Ali Saurdar, Akshay Kapoor and Aashish Chaudhary filmed scenes for this tense supernatural thriller (also known as *Purple Lake*) in a range of locations including Loch Ness and **Ness Bank Footbridge**, a pretty suspension bridge crossing the River Ness in Inverness city centre.

### 5. *A Lonely Place to Die*, 2011

This nail-biting thriller about mountaineers in peril is shot in a number of Scottish locations, but it reaches its climax as the heroine (Melissa George) faces her pursuers at a Highland festival filmed in the historic town of **Dingwall**. Situated 25 minutes' drive north of Inverness, it's also where Scotland's Macbeth, made famous by Shakespeare's tragedy, was born in the Middle Ages.

### 6. *Finding Bigfoot*, 2015

Nessie isn't the only legendary creature said to reside in the Highlands and recently the investigators of America's Bigfoot Field Researchers Organisation, who have their own reality TV series, came to the Highlands to investigate the many reports of a Scotland's 'Big Grey Man'. This British sasquatch, or yeti, is said to be living on the Cairngorms' **Ben MacDhui**. The second-highest mountain in Britain looms over the Glenmore Forest Park and the slopes of Aviemore, a town and ski resort about an hour's drive south of Inverness.



*The scenic Glen Affric provided many of the atmospheric filming shots for the 2002 movie Dog Soldiers. ©VisitBritain Andrew Pickett*

### 7. *Dog Soldiers*, 2002

Although much of this soldiers vs. werewolves horror flick was actually shot in Luxemburg, its haunting Highland setting was established with lots of evocative shots of the unspoilt loch, moorland and mountains around **Glen Affric**. Part of the Caledonian Forest Reserve, a National Scenic Area and a National Nature Reserve, it lies one hour and 20 minutes' drive south west of Inverness.

### 8. *Salmon Fishing in the Yemen*, 2011

Ewan McGregor, Emily Blunt and Kristen Scott Thomas starred in this romantic comedy about an Arab sheikh's somewhat impractical bid to bring fly-fishing to his people. Much of the film was shot on **Loch Laggan** and the **Ardverikie Estate** - 90 minutes' drive south west of Inverness. The region might also be familiar from BBC TV period drama *Monarch of the Glen* (2000-2005). Local landmark, the 1870 Ardverikie House, is baronial in style and looks like something from a fairy tale. Queen Victoria and Prince Albert stayed there before they bought Balmoral.

### Film festival fun!

Film fans have a wealth of annual festivals with fun locations where they can catch a movie in the Highlands. Here are just a few of the favourites:

#### **Cromarty Film Festival**

See films projected onto **Cromarty Lighthouse**, ships' sails and more at this annual festival of cinema, taking place each December in this quaint coastal village on tip of the Black Isle peninsula, just 40 minutes' drive north east of Inverness.

[www.cromartyfilmfestival.org](http://www.cromartyfilmfestival.org)

## The 14th Inverness Film Festival

Taking place annually amid the modernism of Inverness city centre arts complex **Eden Court**, November's Inverness Film Festival features European film premieres, film classics, world cinema, documentaries, shorts and special events. [www.invernessfilmfestival.com](http://www.invernessfilmfestival.com)

## Kingussie Food on Film Festival

Taking in **Kingussie High School** and other venues around town, the festival features an exciting line up of foodie films, creative events and a Food Hall selling artisan-produced food. Find Kingussie in the Cairngorms National Park, an hour's drive south of Inverness, from 4 - 7 February 2016. [www.kingussiefoodonfilm.co.uk](http://www.kingussiefoodonfilm.co.uk)

## Loch Ness Film Festival

Screening a diverse range of independent films from comedy features to documentaries and arty shorts, the Loch Ness Film Festival takes place in quaint venues near the famous lake such as **Glen Urquhart High School** in Drumnadrochit and **The Loch Ness Backpackers Lodge** in Lewiston. Both villages lie half an hour's drive south west of Inverness. The festival is home to The Nessie Awards, which encourage new talent and take place each July. [www.lochnessfilmfestival.co.uk](http://www.lochnessfilmfestival.co.uk)

## Lyrical Inverness and Loch Ness - live music

From exciting rock concerts and lively military bands to foot-tapping Ceilidhs with their Scottish folk songs, bagpipers, fiddlers, acoustic guitars and dancing - music is ringing throughout the Inverness and Loch Ness region.

### Gig and Concert Venues

#### **Eden Court**

You'll find a range of concerts and gigs year-round at the Highlands' main cultural hub, Eden Court in Inverness city centre, but one to watch out for is The Big Burns Stramash, a day of happenings celebrating the work of Scottish poet Robert Burns on 23 January 2016. The day culminates with a party featuring traditional Scottish music, dancing and food called The Big Burns Ceilidh. [www.eden-court.co.uk](http://www.eden-court.co.uk)

#### **IronWorks**

A purpose-built 1,000 capacity live music venue, the IronWorks has played host to the likes of Kasabian, Van Morrison and Babyshambles. Situated in Inverness city centre it not only hosts famous names but also up-and-coming local talent such as Scotland's Red Hot Chilli Pipers, who fuse traditional Scottish music and rock anthems into a genre they call 'Bagrock', using bagpipes, guitars, drums and attitude. [www.ironworksvenue.com](http://www.ironworksvenue.com)

## Festivals, Ceilidhs & Musical Events

### **Belladrum Tartan Heart Festival**

This outdoor music festival of alternative, indie and folk music is held near Beaulieu on the Belladrum Estate about 45 minutes' drive east of Inverness and takes place every August. Family friendly, it features a diverse range of music spread over several stages, plus alternative therapy tents, barbers, yoga and dancing. Fans of traditional Celtic sounds should head for the Grassroots Tent, which is dedicated to small acoustic and folk acts. The 2016 Festival marks its 13th year with a



*Last year's Belladrum Tartan Heart Festival finished in a spectacle style by rock sensation Kaiser Chiefs; 2016 is likely to have just as epic a line-up*

'Superstition' theme and revellers are encouraged to dress up as witches and warlocks.

[www.tartanheartfestival.co.uk](http://www.tartanheartfestival.co.uk)

### **Blas Festival**

Autumn's Blas Festival takes place at a range of venues across Inverness and the Highlands. This annual festival celebrating Gaelic music, language and culture runs for nine days every September and boasts Scottish sounds, from traditional songs to the haunting music of bagpipes, fiddles, whistles and acoustic guitar. [www.blas-festival.com](http://www.blas-festival.com)

### **Brew at the Bog**

Each year since 2012 Bogbain Farm in the hills above Moray Firth, ten minutes' drive from Inverness, has provided a two-day showcase for music from some of the best new bands and singers. Boasting craft beer and street food stalls, three stages, room for 3,000 revellers and music ranging from rock to folk, BBC Radio Scotland called it "The best new music festival in Scotland." The next Brew at the Bog takes place from 3 - 4 June 2016.

[www.brewatthebog.com](http://www.brewatthebog.com)

### **Highland Military Tattoo**

Held at Fort George, Britain's largest military fort, half an hour's drive from Inverness, this annual pageant is a show of military muscle and culture with musical highlights including military, pipe and ceilidh bands, hymns and soloists. [www.highlandmilitarytattoo.com](http://www.highlandmilitarytattoo.com)

### **Inverness Highland Games**

Founded in 1822, the annual games held close to Inverness city centre at Bught Park on 16 July is a celebration of Scottish sporting prowess and culture. Not only will it host traditional sports such as wrestling, but also live music competitions from bag piping soloists and bands. [www.invernesshighlandgames.com](http://www.invernesshighlandgames.com)

### **Speyfest**

Celebrating its 21st year in 2016, Speyfest is an annual festival of traditional and contemporary Celtic music. Taking place in July in Fochabers village on the River Spey,

about one hour and 20 mins drive north east from Inverness, it offers three days of concerts and ceilidhs. [www.speyfest.com](http://www.speyfest.com)

### Bars and Pubs With Live Music



*Sit and enjoy the music, join in a ceilidh later in the evening, or even head upstairs for live rock music - Inverness' Hootananny is a music institution. ©VisitBritain Andrew Pickett*

#### **Hootananny**

Situated a short walk from Inverness station, Hootananny is an award-winning Scottish pub, restaurant and live music venue in the heart of the city centre. Here you'll find a warm welcome, a traditional Scottish folk music programme and weekly ceilidh parties. Upstairs is its sister venue Mad Hatters, which specialises in live rock music.

[www.hootanannyinverness.co.uk](http://www.hootanannyinverness.co.uk)

#### **Gellions Bar**

The Gellions Bar is home to one of longest-established Saturday Ceilidhs in Inverness city centre. Established back in 1841, you'll find entrances on both Church Street and Bridge Street and nightly live music. Lap up the local culture and enjoy a few drams of fine Scottish whisky as you listen to Gellions' resident ceilidh band, Schiehallion - one of the most popular Scottish folk bands in the region. [www.gellions.co.uk](http://www.gellions.co.uk)

#### **Johnny Foxes & The Den**

A traditional Scottish pub and restaurant on the banks of the River Ness in the centre of Inverness, Johnny Foxes offers live music every night, ranging from karaoke and pop to traditional Scottish and Irish music. The venue recently added a winebar and nightclub, The Den, which also offers live music alongside DJs and dancing until 3am. [www.johnnyfoxes.co.uk](http://www.johnnyfoxes.co.uk)

#### **The Market Bar**

This small but legendary music venue lies close to Inverness city centre station and that other great live music city venue, Hootananny. Downstairs is a popular local's bar and upstairs you'll find live folk music. It's here that world-famous Scottish duo The Proclaimers played some of their earliest gigs before scoring worldwide hits with songs such as *I'm Gonna Be (500 Miles)*. [www.facebook.com/TheMarketBarInverness](https://www.facebook.com/TheMarketBarInverness)

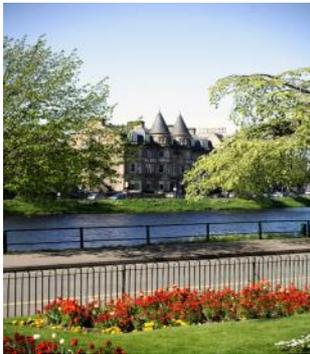
## Where to stay - find your perfect accommodation

The Scottish Highlands around Inverness and Loch Ness offer a fantastic range of comfortable and welcoming accommodation suitable for all tastes, budgets and requirements. Here are just a few suggestions:

### Purse-friendly options

#### **Inverglen Guest House**

Tucked away in a quiet residential street less than 10 minutes' stroll from Inverness city centre, Inverglen offers stylish four-star bed and breakfast accommodation at purse-friendly prices. Inside this five-bedroom guesthouse, charming Victorian-era features, a funky contemporary decor and en-suite facilities ensure a comfortable stay. Inverglen's free Wifi makes it easy to keep up with the city's events and attractions, while your traditional Scottish cooked breakfast will fuel fun excursions such as 'monster hunting' at nearby Loch Ness. [www.inverglenguesthouse.co.uk](http://www.inverglenguesthouse.co.uk)



*The Inverness Palace Hotel is ideally situated on the banks of the River Ness*

### **Inverness Palace Hotel & Spa**

Part of the Best Western chain, this three-star riverside hotel sits opposite Inverness Castle and the Inverness Museum & Art Gallery on the banks of the River Ness. Built in elegant Baronial style in the 1890s with two conical-roofed towers, the landmark hotel is clean and contemporary inside and lies within easy walking distance of Inverness station and the city centre. Guests enjoy free use of the onsite pool and gym and there's also a restaurant offering meals and a sumptuous afternoon tea.

[www.invernesspalacehotel.co.uk](http://www.invernesspalacehotel.co.uk)

### **Morag's Lodge**

A fantastic choice of four-star dormitories, doubles, twins and family rooms makes this multi award-winning Fort Augustus hostel popular with a diverse range of visitors. Set high on Bunoich Brae hill by the Great Glen Way trail, this eco-conscious lodge is a short stroll away from the River Oich and the mysterious waters of Loch Ness. Less than an hour's drive from Inverness and Fort William, it offers free Wifi, mountain bike hire, 24-hour self-catering facilities and more. [www.moragslodge.com](http://www.moragslodge.com)

### **Luxury lodging**

#### **Glenmoriston Town House Hotel**

Set on a tree-lined bank of the River Ness in the centre of Inverness, less than half an hour's drive from Loch Ness, this 30-room luxury boutique hotel offers four-star contemporary comfort and excellent Scottish and British cuisine, plus easy access to the excitements of the city or the tranquillity of the Highland surroundings. Nearby are city parks, wild moorlands, leafy glens, the dolphin playgrounds of the Beauly and Moray Firths, inlets of the North Sea, and activities ranging from hiking, falconry and horse riding to bluefin tuna fishing. [www.glenmoristontownhouse.com](http://www.glenmoristontownhouse.com)

#### **The Highland Club**

Stay amid the Victorian gothic splendour of a former Benedictine monastery at this luxe boutique hotel nestled on the southernmost shores of Loch Ness. With charming cottages and characterful apartments to choose from, you could find yourself sleeping in the Monks Chambers, a converted church Nave, or the Scriptorium, where scribes drew elaborate illuminated manuscripts. With an exterior reminiscent



*Discover a boutique hotel where there was once a Benedictine monastery - the tranquil setting of the luxurious Highland Club*

of Harry Potter's Hogwarts, this multi award-winning destination is great for romantic getaways or family holidays and boasts an indoor swimming pool, gym, tennis court, adventure playground, restaurant and spa among its many onsite facilities. Just under an hour's drive from Inverness, it has the village of Fort Augustus on its doorstep, alongside activities ranging from a Malt Whiskey Trail to water and snow sports.

[www.thehighlandclub.co.uk](http://www.thehighlandclub.co.uk)

### **Kingsmills Hotel and Spa**

Gorgeous 18th-century architecture, four-star contemporary comfort, outstanding dining and traditional Scottish hospitality is the formula that's made Kingsmills one of the indulgent retreats in Inverness. Located beside the manicured fairways and greens of Inverness Golf Club, the hotel is a ten-minute taxi ride from Inverness station and the city centre's shops and amenities. Within easy reach are Highland wonders such as Loch Ness, Culloden Moor and the waters of Beaulieu Firth, but as there's a swimming pool, gym and a range of stress-busting treatments including facials, massage and reflexology onsite, you may choose never to leave this luxurious hideaway. [www.kingsmillshotel.com](http://www.kingsmillshotel.com)

### **Eco-friendly choices**

#### **Eagle Brae**

Enjoy rustic charm, modern amenities and the freedom of self-catering at this eco-friendly log cabin village, set among the breathtaking wilds of Highland glens, pinewood forests and wildflower grasslands. Located close to the River Glass at the foot of Glens Affric and Strathfarrar, just a few miles from the town of Beaulieu, Eagle Brae is a 40 minute drive from Inverness. Powered by a water turbine and heated by biomass pellet burners, the cabins are beautifully decorated and comfortable. During your visit you can take a pony trek, husky sled-dog ride and black grouse safari, or engage in other activities ranging from salmon fishing and golf to bird watching. [www.eaglebrae.co.uk](http://www.eaglebrae.co.uk)



*Luxury log-cabin living that's also eco-friendly; the picturesque Eagle Brae. ©VisitBritain Andrew Pickett*



*Wake up, stretch, then jump straight on your bicycle to explore the gorgeous surroundings when you stay in a Wigwam Cabin at Loch Ness Shores*

#### **Loch Ness Shores**

Whether you want to stay in a tent, caravan or experience 'glamping' in one of the Wigwam Cabins built from timber, Loch Ness Shores Camping and Caravan Club offers award-winning, five-star, eco-friendly accommodation year-round. Situated by the village of Foyers on the banks of Loch Ness, 40 minutes' drive from Inverness, it offers stunning views across the Loch - a panorama of forests, woodlands and mountains. It's the perfect setting for unwinding or enjoying activities including

kayaking and canoeing, hillwalking and archery. Low-impact buildings running on renewable energy, such as solar and geo-thermal power, helps reassure visitors that they're not harming this incredible environment. [www.lochnessshores.com](http://www.lochnessshores.com)

### **The Lovat Loch Ness**

Situated at the heart of quaint Fort Augustus village, close to the southern tip of Loch Ness, The Lovat is a 30-bedroom independent hotel combining an eco ethos with elegant interiors and 3 AA rosette fine dining. This beautifully renovated Victorian hotel is less than an hour's drive from Inverness and works well for a variety of guests, from families to those in search of peaceful seclusion. Including fishing and boat trips or soothing spa treatments, there's plenty to do and afterwards you can luxuriate with a clear conscience in bathwater heated by a low-emission biomass wood chip boiler. [www.thelovat.com](http://www.thelovat.com)

### **And for something a little out of the ordinary...**

#### **Achnagairn Castle**

Stay in one of 24 luxurious bedrooms and suites inside Achnagairn Castle or in one of its individually themed new lodges within the estate grounds. Situated in Kirkhill, 20 minutes' drive from Inverness, the conical-towered castle was built in stages between the 17th and 20th centuries and has its own spa and a restaurant, but can also accommodate self-catering guests. It's a great base for visits to Loch Ness, Inverness Castle and Craig Phadrig forest. The castle is one of three boutique hotels owned by the family concern, Perfect Manors. [www.perfect-manors.com](http://www.perfect-manors.com)



*Castle luxury at Achnagairn*

#### **Hotel Barge Scottish Highlander**

For an unusual stay, cruise through Highland lochs, rivers and canals aboard a barge. European Waterways' smart eight-passenger Hotel Barge Scottish Highlander offers four ensuite cabins, tartan-clad Scottish country house decor and an on-board chef serving traditional Scottish fare such as salmon, game and seafood. It's an effortless way to see the spectacular sights between Inverness and Fort William, including Loch Ness, Urquhart Castle and Culloden Moor. [www.gobarging.com/scottish-highlander-berge](http://www.gobarging.com/scottish-highlander-berge)

#### **Aldourie Castle**

Want to feel like royalty? Hire an entire Scottish castle! Medieval Aldourie offers enough five-star accommodation for all your friends and family on the shores of Loch Ness. Available only for exclusive hire, the castle is situated a half-hour drive from Inverness airport and comes with 13 opulent bedrooms including some with four-poster beds, acres of parkland, formal gardens and four quaint detached cottages that sleep four to six guests. [www.aldouriecastle.co.uk](http://www.aldouriecastle.co.uk)

## A destination for all seasons - ten winter warmers

From cosy pubs with roaring log fires to fun activities to get your adrenaline pumping, here are some of the most heart-warming suggestions for things to see and do during the Highland autumn and winter months - demonstrating how it really is a destination for all seasons.

### 1. The Dores Inn

With its hearty home-cooked food, crackling log fire and selection of Scottish malt whiskies, The Dores Inn is the perfect place to beat the chill. Although there's a wealth of cosy pub and bars to enjoy in the region, this family run operation stands out as it's the only pub-restaurant actually situated on Loch Ness, so the views from its windows out over the loch's mystical waters are quite spectacular. Bring your binoculars to try to spot Nessie in between courses. Find it about 20 minutes' drive south west of Inverness.

[www.thedoresinn.co.uk](http://www.thedoresinn.co.uk)



*Admire the workings of the Glen Ord Distillery before tasting the rich single malt whiskies it produces. ©VisitBritain Andrew Pickett*

### 2. Whisky Distilleries

Enjoy a warming tippie at one of the area's traditional Scottish malt whisky distilleries. At the award-winning **Tomatin Distillery**, 20 minutes' drive south of Inverness, over-18s can enjoy a range of tours from sampling six varieties of soft single malt whisky on the tutored Taste of Tomatin Tour, to immersing yourself in the brand's history with a Legacy Tour looking back to 1897. Alternatively, visit the **Glen Ord Distillery**, established in 1838, half an hour's drive from Inverness on the edge of the Black Isle peninsula. It's famous

for its rich and sweet single malt whiskies and visitors can shop, take a tour and watch the distillers at work. [www.tomatin.com](http://www.tomatin.com), [www.discovering-distilleries.com](http://www.discovering-distilleries.com)

### 3. Loch Ness Cruises

Navigate the world-famous waters of Loch Ness as you take in beautiful scenery, the ruins of Urquhart Castle, or hunt for the region's most famous resident, the legendary Nessie. **Cruise Loch Ness** operates hour-long excursions from Fort Augustus at the southern end of the Loch aboard its purpose-built 120 passenger boat the Royal Scot, but for a more thrilling option, wrap up warm and take a high-speed power boat trip with its new RIB (Rigid Inflatable Boat) service operating from nearby Dochgarroch. Alternatively, climb aboard the award-winning **Loch Ness by Jacobite** at Dochgarroch, which has a guided commentary for sightseers and live sonar to help monster hunters spot anything strange lurking in the deep. [www.cruiselochness.com](http://www.cruiselochness.com), [www.jacobite.co.uk](http://www.jacobite.co.uk)

### 4. Inverness Botanic Gardens

Encounter vividly coloured bougainvillea, bird of paradise plants and orchids amid the hot and humid atmosphere of the Tropical House of Inverness Botanical Gardens, close to the city centre. It boasts exotic fauna and flora from some of the world's warmest regions and you'll also find a koi carp pond complete with a waterfall, a collection of sculptural cacti

and succulents, as well as a café where you can grab a hot drink.

[www.highlifehighland.com](http://www.highlifehighland.com)

## 5. Culloden Battlefield Visitor Centre

Find out about the 1746 Battle of Culloden, a civil war between the Scots and the British forces that was one of the bloodiest skirmishes in British history. Located on the actual battlefield on Culloden Moor, around 20 minutes' drive from Inverness, this state-of-the-art exhibition and visitor centre known as The Culloden Experience will have your heart racing as the heat of the battle is brought to life through immersive film and live presentations. You can also take a tour of the battlefield tour itself and warm up afterwards with a hot meal in the restaurant. [www.nts.org.uk](http://www.nts.org.uk)

## 6. Inverness Ice Centre

Hire skates and have fun ice skating and curling at this refurbished five-rink ice arena in the heart of Inverness. If you're new to skating or a little out of practice there are regular workshops and lessons to hone your skills, a wheelchair curling session on Tuesdays for anyone with mobility impairments and, of course, a bustling café-bar for refuelling.

[www.inverness-ice-centre.co.uk](http://www.inverness-ice-centre.co.uk)

## 7. Inverness Museum and Art Gallery

Delve into the amazing art, fascinating history, unique Gaelic language and rich heritage of the Highlands - from prehistoric fossils and Iron Age treasures to contemporary crafts - at this city centre complex. **Museum** highlights include collections of Highland weapons and costumes, a recreation of a typical kitchen from the early 1900s and taxidermy showing a range of local mammals such as a Scottish wildcat and pine marten. Meanwhile, the **Art** Gallery shows an ever-changing programme of temporary exhibitions all year-round, from historic paintings by the Old Masters right up to the very latest digital art. [www.highlifehighland.com](http://www.highlifehighland.com)



*The heritage of the Highlands unfolds at the Inverness Museum and Art Gallery*

## 8. Loch Ness Centre & Exhibition

Opened 30 years ago by English explorer Sir Ranulph Fiennes, this acclaimed attraction has been updated with lasers, digital projections and special effects, as it takes visitors through 500 million years of history, natural wonders and local legend. Seven themed areas explore topics ranging from the area's unique geological makeup to its enduring folklore including the ongoing hunt for Nessie. You can also take Loch Ness cruises aboard the centre's 12-passenger research boat known as 'Deepscan'. Situated on the banks of the Loch, just under half an hour's drive from Inverness, the centre also has a great café and shop stocking authentic Scottish kilts, cashmere and woollens. [www.lochness.com](http://www.lochness.com)

## 9. The Highlanders' Museum

Taking up three floors of the former Lieutenant Governors' House at Fort George, this museum tells the story of some of Scotland's most famous army regiments, including the Queen's Own Highlanders and the Ghurkhas. A working military garrison for more than

250 years, it currently houses the infantry soldiers of the 3rd Battalion the Royal Regiment of Scotland. The Museum itself is home to more than 5,000 gallantry awards and campaign medals among its collection, as well as uniforms, artworks, silverware, diaries and artefacts. Located on the coast half an hour's drive from Inverness, the Fort Ramparts offer superb views across the Moray Firth where you might spot a variety of seabirds, dolphins and seals plus Minky and Orca whales. [www.thehighlandersmuseum.com](http://www.thehighlandersmuseum.com)

## 10. Inverness Kart Raceway

Set your pulse racing as you battle for pole position on the track of this newly opened indoor go-karting arena, just ten minutes' drive from Inverness city centre. With karting options for all abilities from adults to juniors aged eight to 15, you'll have fun beating the clock or engaging in some friendly competition as you race in state-of-the-art karts protected from the elements on the purpose-built Grand Prix circuit.

[www.invernesskartraceway.co.uk](http://www.invernesskartraceway.co.uk)

## Eat, drink and be merry! Delicious dining in the Inverness and Loch Ness region

Bring an appetite to Inverness, because the dining scene in this part of Scotland is fantastic. With cosy pubs offering hearty Highland dishes, fine dining riverside restaurants, not to mention whisky distilleries and cocktail bars for when you need a wee dram of something warming, your taste buds are in for a treat.



*Traditions aplenty at the charming Dores Inn on the shores of Loch Ness.  
©VisitBritain Andrew Pickett*

### Pub grub

There are plenty of pubs to fuel up at with hearty meals and your choice of a whisky or beer. The only pub on the shores of Loch Ness, the **Dores Inn** is a charming and traditional country pub with delicious food, real ales on tap and paintings by local artists on the walls ([www.thedoresinn.co.uk](http://www.thedoresinn.co.uk)). Get a loch-side outdoor table in the summer or cosy up by the roaring log fires in the winter and choose the classic Highland-reared steaks for a truly local experience; you can also try haggis with the classic accompaniment of neeps

(parsnips) and tatties (potatoes). The Dores Inn is eight miles (13km) from Inverness and the Dores shuttle will take you home after dinner, to anywhere within ten miles (16km) - subject to the bus's availability!

As well as Urquhart Castle, the village of Drumnadrochit is where you'll find **The Fiddlers**, a buzzing pub with good food and an impressive whisky *and* gin selection ([www.fiddledrum.co.uk](http://www.fiddledrum.co.uk)). If you like big portions, this is the place for you - try the Fiddler's Mighty Burger if you've exerted yourself walking on The Great Glen Way.

**Classroom** in the seaside town of Nairn is a gastropub serving fantastic cocktails, including a range called 'Let's get Nessy!' inspired by local flavours ([www.theclassroombistro.com](http://www.theclassroombistro.com)). You can have a 'Cranachan' with whisky, raspberry liqueur, milk, honey and cream topped with oats, or a 'Weegee Iced Tea', which differs from the Long Island version by adding

Scotland's favourite soft drink, Irn Bru. If you need to balance the drinking with some sustenance, the food menu is just as good, with Cullen Skink a favourite.



*The freshest of Scottish ingredients are used across the dishes at elegant Inverness restaurant Rocpool*

### Stylish dining

One of the best restaurants in Inverness, **Rocpool** is a sleek and modern riverside restaurant with glass-fronted windows that look out to Inverness Castle ([www.rocpoolrestaurant.com](http://www.rocpoolrestaurant.com)). The food and service match up to the excellent views, with a creative, changing menu that utilises the best Scottish ingredients, including Shetland mussels, Cromarty crab and Speyside venison. It's ideal for a special night out, and the lunch menu offers fantastic value, with two courses for £15.95.

Another classy choice is **Chez Roux at the Rocpool Reserve Hotel** ([www.rocpool.com/dining](http://www.rocpool.com/dining)); Chef Albert Roux is famous in the culinary world and marries his culinary flair with local produce, creating an unforgettable fine dining experience. There's a lunch option of the RouXpress menu, comprising four courses on one plate for a reasonable £15.50. The ancient fishing port and seaside town of Nairn is home to the sumptuous **Boath House Hotel** and spa, which, in turn, houses a Michelin-starred restaurant and one of Scotland's top eating experiences ([www.boath-house.com/restaurant](http://www.boath-house.com/restaurant)). A daily changing menu is served in the intimate and inviting space, with room for 26 diners only. Take a stroll in the kitchen garden before your meal and you'll likely spot some of the produce that's going on your plate - the restaurant follows the principles of the Slow Food movement. The afternoon tea is a real treat; pimp it up with a glass of champagne - the splendid Regency setting calls for fizz!



*Treat yourself to afternoon tea at Boath House Hotel*

There are plenty of restaurants in Inverness that offer fantastic quality and remain easily affordable. **Café 1** is a romantic option, with candlelit tables, wonderful food and even its own breeds of Highland sheep and cows that occasionally appear on menus ([www.cafe1.net](http://www.cafe1.net)). Offering castle views from its chic, airy space is **The Kitchen Brasserie**, whose menu ranges from Sri Lankan devilled chicken to seared Highland venison via classic pizzas ([www.kitchenrestaurant.co.uk](http://www.kitchenrestaurant.co.uk)). It's purse-friendly too - two course lunches are £8.95. Sister restaurant **The Mustard Seed** offers excellent food and similarly-priced deals, and is located in a converted church ([www.mustardseedrestaurant.co.uk](http://www.mustardseedrestaurant.co.uk)).

Dining on a budget doesn't mean compromising on taste or atmosphere at the **Castle Restaurant**, something of an Inverness institution. Located on Castle Street, it serves massive portions of hearty food - think Scottish comfort food - at very reasonable prices. **Velocity Café** is a fantastic lunchtime choice, with warming soups made from organic produce and superb coffee ([www.velocitylove.co.uk](http://www.velocitylove.co.uk)). It's also a bicycle workshop, in case your wheels need fixing! Another lunch stop whose quality is reflected in how busy it can get is the **Lettuce Eat** sandwich and salad bar.

## Sweet treats

The **Botanic Gardens** are an oasis of calm in Inverness and its café offers even more refreshment in the form of delicious homemade and freshly baked cakes ([www.highlifehighland.com/inverness-botanic-gardens](http://www.highlifehighland.com/inverness-botanic-gardens)). Another place to enjoy plant life and pastries is **Simpsons Garden Centre**, whose gifted bakers create elaborate treats and patisserie, including gluten-, sugar- and dairy free options ([www.simpsonsgardencentre.co.uk/restaurant](http://www.simpsonsgardencentre.co.uk/restaurant)). There's also **Café Artysans**, for freshly baked scones with Highland roasted fresh coffee or tea, if you're feeling more traditional ([www.cafeartysans.org.uk](http://www.cafeartysans.org.uk)).

Outside Inverness, **Corner on the Square** has a reputation for excellence as a deli and its cakes and scones are worth stopping off for on your way to Glen Affric from the city ([www.corneronthesquare.co.uk](http://www.corneronthesquare.co.uk)). Next to the Falls of Foyers, on the south side of Loch Ness, visit the **Waterfall Café** for seriously chocolatey hot chocolate, or for a picturesque pit stop head to the **Cameron tea room and farm shop** for afternoon tea with a fantastic view ([www.foyersstoresandwaterfallcafe.co.uk](http://www.foyersstoresandwaterfallcafe.co.uk), [www.booklochnesscottage.com/Camerson-Tea-Room-and-Farm-Shop.php](http://www.booklochnesscottage.com/Camerson-Tea-Room-and-Farm-Shop.php)).

## Delectable drinking

You can't leave Scotland without visiting a whisky distillery. Just outside Inverness is **Tomatin**, which produces one of the softest whiskies there is ([www.tomatin.com](http://www.tomatin.com)). The Monadhliath Mountains shelter the distillery and spring water provided by the Alt-na-Frith burn becomes the award-winning 'water of life' here. Witness alchemy in action on a distillery tour and learn how Tomatin is made. You can also have tutored tastings and bottle your very own cask-strength whisky. Tomatin is 15 miles (24km) from Inverness by road.



*The wall of samples at Tomatin Distillery; which will your favourite be?*

To taste a range of whiskies - all in the name of research, obviously - visit the **Cawdor Tavern**, which has more than 100 varieties on its shelves, as well as tempting pub specials; it's near Cawdor Castle and is 14.5 miles (23km) from Inverness by road.

For beer, the **Loch Ness Brewery's** creations should be sampled, but will you go for LightNESS, WilderNESS, RedNESS, LochNESS or DarkNESS? We'll have the HappyNESS, please. The brewery began with beers made for the **Benleva Hotel** in Drumnadrochit, on the shores of Loch Ness (hence the names!) and that's the best place to head to for a taste and the annual Loch Ness Beer Festival ([www.lochnessbrewery.com](http://www.lochnessbrewery.com), [www.benleva.co.uk](http://www.benleva.co.uk)).

Another date for your diary is **The Nip**, Scotland's festival of craft spirits. Held from 29 March - 2 April 2016, it'll involve tastings, expert-led master-classes and whisky and gin city tours all around Inverness ([www.thenip.scot](http://www.thenip.scot)). Slainte!

## Travel tips: getting around the region

Whether you're coming by air, rail, car or bus, getting to Inverness and Loch Ness is easy - as is travelling around the area.

### Getting In

**Inverness Airport** is the main entry point for visitors. During summer, it receives daily direct services from Amsterdam Schiphol Airport, with an additional six services per week in winter. Summertime direct flights also arrive from Zurich, with winter connections to Dublin (daily) and Geneva (weekly).

Domestically, a new daily British Airways service from Heathrow begins in May 2016. Until then, direct flights to Inverness with Flybe and easyJet are available year-round from London Gatwick, London Luton, Manchester (all daily), Birmingham (six days a week, not Saturdays), Bristol (four days a week) and Belfast City (three days a week). Summertime services also depart daily from Jersey, in the Channel Islands.

Within Scotland, flights link to the west-coast airports of Stornoway (six days a week, not Saturdays) and Benbecula, and Kirkwall and Sumburgh (all five days a week, not weekends) to the north.

All domestic services take under two hours. [www.hial.co.uk/inverness-airport](http://www.hial.co.uk/inverness-airport)

**Coming by train?** Inverness Station receives direct, fast services from Glasgow Queen St, Edinburgh Waverley (both three-and-a-half hours) and London Euston (eight hours, or the overnight Caledonian Sleeper service). There are also regular links north to Thurso, east to Aberdeen and west to the Isle of Skye. [www.sleeper.scot](http://www.sleeper.scot)

The A9 is the main access road for those **driving** up from Edinburgh and Glasgow, with the A1 linking Edinburgh to London. After Inverness, the A9 carries on northwards to Thurso, while the A96 serves Aberdeen and the A87 connects to the west coast. For a more scenic route, take the A82 from Glasgow along Loch Ness's flanks.

Megabus and National Express both run long-distance **coach** services to Inverness from London, some of them overnight. All arrive at the city-centre Farraline Park Bus Station, from which routes depart to other Scottish destinations. [www.uk.megabus.com](http://www.uk.megabus.com), [www.nationalexpress.com](http://www.nationalexpress.com),

### Getting Around

Frequent **bus services** depart from outside the airport terminal to central Inverness. From there, services access the remainder of the region. Use [www.travelinescotland.com](http://www.travelinescotland.com)'s journey-planner tool to plot your route.

Numerous companies offer **car hire** both at Inverness Airport and in the city. Driving through Scotland's spectacular scenery is a giddy pleasure: among the region's best routes is the B862, which hugs the south side of Loch Ness and links picturesque villages. Motorbikes may also be hired. The North Coast 500 driving route also begins and ends in Inverness - it brings together a route of 500 miles of breathtaking coastal scenery, following the main roads across the coastal edges of the North Highlands ([www.northcoast500.com](http://www.northcoast500.com)).

Inverness Taxis operates licensed **taxi** ranks at Inverness's Airport and train station, and offers an additional range of chauffeur-driven tours, including ones with wheelchair access. [www.inverness-taxis.com](http://www.inverness-taxis.com)

How about sailing on Loch Ness, and trying to spy the famous monster? Two companies currently operate **boat tours**. Based in Fort Augustus at the water's southern end, Cruise Loch Ness offers tranquil, hour-long voyages aboard its main boat, the Royal Scot, plus trips on three faster RIB boats. From Inverness, Jacobite Cruises provides guided tours courtesy of a three-boat fleet. [www.cruiselochness.com](http://www.cruiselochness.com), [www.jacobite.co.uk](http://www.jacobite.co.uk)

## Local stars - the people who really know the region



[Willie Cameron](#)

**Willie Cameron - Founder of Loch Ness Marketing & Cobbs, and 'Mr Loch Ness'**

Meet 'Mr Loch Ness'. After starting a local fixing service company for visiting film crews in 1994, Willie Cameron was soon working with the likes of Werner Herzog, and hunting down Nessie with Charlie Sheen, a hook, and a leg of lamb. He later co-founded the Cobbs collection: hotels, cafés and an artisan bakery that provided cupcakes for the London 2012

Olympics. These days, tourism ambassador Willie also

finds time to discuss the monster legend on TV shows (his father having witnessed, in 1965, the longest sighting on record), arrange the International Knitting Festival or even host gala dinners. [twitter.com/mrlochness27](https://twitter.com/mrlochness27)

**Alex Sutherland - Storyteller, Fisherman & Local Historian**

Looking for Alex Sutherland? The father-of-three might be at Loch Ness Hideaways' two self-catering properties, which he manages with wife Janet. He could be regaling guests with stories about local history and lore. Perhaps he's hooking trout out on the Loch, having been a ghillie (fly-fisherman) for six decades and featured on Season 5 of Jeremy Wade's popular *River Monsters* programme. He'll possibly be burning peat, an aromatic Highlands tradition performed every spring. Or he's probably running: a former cross-country champion, the 67-year-old recorded his fastest time in three years at 2015's Baxters River Ness 10K, finishing 61st overall and beating hundreds of people half his age. [www.lochnesshideaways.com](http://www.lochnesshideaways.com)



[Alex Sutherland](#)



[Adrian Shine](#)

**Adrian Shine - Leader, Loch Ness & Morar Project**

Since 1973, Adrian has overseen the Loch Ness & Morar Project, investigating the 'Nessie' mystery while also popularising naturalist investigations of the two neighbouring lochs' dynamics and diversity. Over the years he has led over a thousand volunteers and collaborated with researchers from 20 universities on these expeditions. The best known

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was 1987's legendary 'Operation Deepscan', a hugely thorough, 24-boat sonar sweep of Loch Ness that had numerous international TV crews in attendance. Subsequent analysis of the food chain and huge internal waves led to alternative 'Nessie' explanations. Adrian is also responsible for design of the Loch Ness Centre's public exhibition, from where he conducts media interviews. [www.lochnessproject.org](http://www.lochnessproject.org)



Steve Feltham

### Steve Feltham - Nessie Hunter

A chance encounter with the 'Loch Ness Phenomena Investigation Bureau' changed the course of seven-year-old Steve Feltham's life. Following subsequent Scottish family holidays and fascinated one-man expeditions to hunt for Nessie, the south-Englander gave up his house, burglar-alarm-installing career and long-term relationship in 1991 to begin a full-time vigil. He spent a decade roaming around the Loch's shores in a converted mobile library before parking up permanently beside the Dores Inn. Now 52 and still in his van, Steve funds his ongoing search by selling Nessie models, and has never regretted following his childhood dream. "I'm extremely happy," he says, "and that's the most important thing to be." [www.nessiehunter.com](http://www.nessiehunter.com)

### Nicol Manson - Owner, The Waterside

Local boy Nicol Manson has been involved in Inverness hotels since the age of 11, taking over the family business in his late twenties and owning current place, The Waterside, for 13 years. Having subsequently served all the Royal family's senior members plus various Prime Ministers and personalities, it's no wonder he has an OBE for Services to Scottish Tourism. Nicol's love for 'The City in the Highlands' and its beautiful surrounds still burns strongly; as for the monster, he knows "quite a number who have seen it but sought no publicity." Now 69, the hotelier combines being a director of Visit Inverness Loch Ness with local salmon fishing, wild boar-hunting adventures in Europe and supporting Inverness Caledonian Thistle FC. [www.thewatersideinverness.co.uk](http://www.thewatersideinverness.co.uk)



Nicol Manson



Colin Marr

### Colin Marr - Chief Executive, Eden Court

As Chief Executive of Eden Court, Colin Marr oversees Scotland's largest arts centre - theatres, cinemas and studios that together host 60 weekly acting, dancing, singing and film-making classes, plus opera, ballet and rock concerts - and yet he never intended to linger very long in Inverness. After a move from Edinburgh in 1997, the plan was to stay just three years. But Colin quickly fell in love with this corner of Scotland, and consequently finds himself approaching two decades as a resident. Now chair of Visit Inverness

Loch Ness, he particularly cherishes the fact that beautiful countryside is only a ten-minute cycle ride away from efficient, modern Inverness.

[www.eden-court.co.uk](http://www.eden-court.co.uk)

### Malcolm Sutherland - Director, Caledonian Concepts

As well as being the expedition leader for Prince William's 2000 expedition to Chile, Malcolm Sutherland's former life saw him flying around at 800 feet while serving as a Captain in the British Army's Parachute Regiment. Today, however, the 46-year-old's feet are firmly grounded in Inverness - "probably Scotland's friendliest and happiest place because of the quality of life" - as he arranges high-profile outdoor events. His company, Caledonian Concepts, organises September's iconic Baxters Loch Ness Marathon and the Etape Loch Ness cycle sportive in April among other spectacles. Not that life has become boring; far from it.

"Event days are incredibly hectic and adrenaline-filled," Malcolm admits, with palpable relish. [www.caledonianconcepts.co.uk](http://www.caledonianconcepts.co.uk)



Malcolm Sutherland



Freda Newton

### Freda Newton - Managing Director, Loch Ness by Jacobite

Freda Newton regularly travels the world - recent destinations include China, Canada and Australia - passionately promoting tourism to her home country. But while she adores it all, Freda reckons the Highlands is the jewel in Scotland's crown. "The beauty and mystery of Loch Ness stay with people long after they leave," she explains. When back there herself, Freda oversees cruise company Loch Ness by Jacobite; 2015 alone saw it turn 40, switch head office and launch a new 200-capacity boat, the *Jacobite Rebel*. Not that energy's a problem: Freda

completed the gruelling, 65-mile Etape Loch Ness cycle sportive last year, climbing successive huge hills around the water's flanks. [www.jacobite.co.uk](http://www.jacobite.co.uk)

### Bruce MacGregor - Musician, Composer, Broadcaster

Ever tried the computer game *Assassin's Creed 3*? Those strings you can occasionally hear were performed by Inverness born-and-bred Bruce MacGregor. Bruce's Inverness-based band, Blazin' Fiddles, has also gigged at Billy Connolly's house - "while Eddie Izzard danced, and Sean Connery played imaginary maracas." The musicians run their own label and music school, too; elsewhere, busy Bruce is also a director for wedding and events venue Bogbain Farm, weekly presenter on BBC Radio Scotland's *Travelling Folk* show and - as of next summer - proprietor of a city centre, Scottish-themed bar and restaurant called MacGregor's. Hospitality has replaced



Bruce MacGregor

hand-offs: Inverness born-and-bred Bruce previously captained the Highland rugby union team for many years. [www.blazinfiddles.com](http://www.blazinfiddles.com)



[Graeme Ambrose](#)

### **Graeme Ambrose - Chief Executive, Visit Inverness Loch Ness**

Seeking a change of career and lifestyle, former food-retailer Graeme Ambrose and his wife moved north - from the central Scottish city of Stirling - to Loch Ness 15 years ago, and began running an award-winning B&B. Though he still rents out a self-catering property, Graeme's tourism career now has him as overseeing Visit Inverness Loch Ness, and promoting the region to tourists courtesy of more than 450 local-business stakeholders. The 56-year-old's love for Loch Ness's legends, heritage and unique geological features are rivalled only by a passion for

running - explaining why he undertakes the occasional ultra-marathon!

[www.visitinvernesslochness.com](http://www.visitinvernesslochness.com)

### **Gary Campbell - Registrar of Sightings, Loch Ness Monster Fan Club**

Gary Campbell started the Loch Ness Monster Fan Club in 1996 after twice seeing an inexplicable "black creature" in the water, and subsequently realising no-one had been recording Nessie sightings since the early 1970s. Today, Gary maintains a register of credible sightings ([www.lochnesssightings.com](http://www.lochnesssightings.com)) for all Scottish monsters - every one for the past 1,450 years is listed, across 24 lochs - while debunking two-thirds of the reports as boat wakes, seals, otters or more. A chartered accountant by trade, he also presents on Ross County Football Club's online television channel and oversees an annual award for the best Nessie sighting.

[www.lochness.co.uk/fan\\_club](http://www.lochness.co.uk/fan_club)



[Gary Campbell](#)

## **Itineraries**

Pack your bags and hit the road! These three itineraries present just some suggestions of how to fully immerse yourself in the natural beauty, heritage and culture of the Inverness and Loch Ness region.

### **Itinerary One: Loch Ness - North side & South side**

#### **Day One:**

Arrive in Inverness and pick up hire car.

Travel down to Fort Augustus. This pretty village on the southern tip of Loch Ness is 34 miles / 54 km south west of Inverness.

### **Stop off: Invermoriston**

Pull up at this pretty village - park at the Glenmoriston Millennium Hall. There should be Highland cattle in the field next to the car park - a perfect photo moment! Walk to the Falls of Invermoriston and enjoy the great view of these waterfalls from the footpath, as well as a 19th-century bridge. [www.enjoyinvermoriston.com](http://www.enjoyinvermoriston.com)



*Consider making the pretty village of Invermoriston your first stop. ©VisitBritain Andrew Pickett*

### **Coffee stop:**

**Redburn Café & Gifts** (Open summer only)

Home cooking in a beautiful peaceful setting, located just seven miles west of Invermoriston; look out for osprey fishing in the nearby River Moriston!

[www.facebook.com/Redburncafe](https://www.facebook.com/Redburncafe)

Continue to the village of **Fort Augustus**.

In the aftermath of the Jacobite uprising in 1715, a fort and army barracks were built here and the village was renamed Fort Augustus. (The Jacobites opposed Britain's King George I, from the Protestant House of Hanover, and fought to restore the Catholic House of Stuart.) Enjoy a walk along the Caledonian Canal towpath, watching the leisure boats as they sail through the locks that lift them 43 feet/ 13 metres in five stages to reach the next part of the canal and the next loch, Loch Oich. [www.fortaugustus.net](http://www.fortaugustus.net)

**Late afternoon:** Arrive at hotel: Why not try **The Lovat**?

This stylish eco-friendly refurbished Victorian hotel is situated close to the centre of Fort Augustus. [www.thelovat.com](http://www.thelovat.com)

Check in and leave your bags in the room before heading out to: **Caledonian Canal Heritage Centre**.

Find out more about the Caledonian Canal, with its 60 mile/96km total length and 22 miles/35km of actual canal. The newly refurbished centre in a former lock-keeper's cottage tells the story of the canal, provides local activity information and sells a good selection of Scottish gifts. [www.scottishcanals.co.uk/canals/caledonian-canal](http://www.scottishcanals.co.uk/canals/caledonian-canal)

Walk along to the canal end to the **Loch Ness Viewpoint**, where it flows into Loch Ness. There is a fine panorama of the famous loch from this point.

**Dinner: The Bothy Bar & Restaurant**

Situated on the banks of the Caledonian Canal in a 200 year-old cottage, order Scottish dishes such as Cullen Skink (a smoked fish and potato soup) or steak pie followed by apple crumble.

### **Day Two**

**Morning:** Breakfast at the hotel and then out to experience Loch Ness.



*Start the second day with a trip to Urquhart Castle, on the shores of Loch Ness*

There is a variety of boat trips from Fort Augustus (and Inverness). Visit Urquhart Castle - and, of course, indulge in a spot of monster hunting - either cruising gently by boat or travelling at high speed on a fast RIB! Also spend time close to the shore, hearing stories about Nessie and monster-spotting.

#### **Lunch:** The Boathouse Restaurant

Discover a relaxed, family-friendly atmosphere with good food and a great location looking straight up Loch Ness. Try its smoked salmon, steak, or sticky toffee pudding.

[www.lochnessboathouse.co.uk](http://www.lochnessboathouse.co.uk)

#### **Afternoon:** The Great Glen Way

Though it may take four to six days to walk it all, you can sample the view from the Great Glen Way, north of Drumnadrochit. There, the Great Glen Way follows a track up and away from the main road, where your reward is gorgeous views of Urquhart Castle and Loch Ness. If time permits, continue further on to see the remains of a World War II lumberjacks' camp (they came from Newfoundland to help the war effort), and a little further on is the Way's highest point at 1,230ft/375m.

[www.outdoorhighlands.co.uk/long-distance-trails/great-glen-way-2](http://www.outdoorhighlands.co.uk/long-distance-trails/great-glen-way-2)

Or, if you prefer a softer adventure, visit **The Loch Ness Centre & Exhibition**.

It tells the story of the phenomenon of Loch Ness in a walk-through exhibition. Learn about the start of the sightings of something mysterious. For 30 years this centre has been generating scientific information, and exploring Loch Ness and its famous monster mythology. [www.lochness.com](http://www.lochness.com)

#### **Dinner:** The Brasserie at The Lovat Hotel

Relax in the contemporary environment of The Brasserie where you can dine on simple yet innovative dishes using seasonal Scottish ingredients.

## **Itinerary Two: Inverness Loch Ness - History and Heritage**

### **Day One**



*Inverness - one of Scotland's key centres of history and heritage. ©VisitBritain Andrew Pickett*

**Lunchtime:** Arrive in Inverness. This small city makes a good centre for discovering Scotland's history and heritage; a reminder that the area has much more than the monster legend!

**Afternoon:** Walk from your hotel and head for the **Ness Islands** - a group of small islands in the middle of the River Ness connected by attractive suspension bridges, built in Victorian times; a perfect spot for a gentle walk, run or a picnic. Paths are level and suitable for all abilities.

Walk up to Castle Hill to see the bronze statue of  
*Inverness Loch Ness* | 33

**Flora MacDonald**, erected in 1896. She was a famous Jacobite who helped Bonnie Prince Charlie escape after the Battle of Culloden. You can visit this battle location tomorrow and hear more about the Jacobite history. The large building behind the statue is known as Inverness Castle; built in 1836 it is currently the court house. There has been a fortification on this site for many centuries and it affords fantastic views over the city and down the Great Glen. Only the castle grounds are open to the public.

### **Coffee stop! Cafe Artysans**

Enjoy freshly roasted coffee from their on-site coffee micro-roastery and try a scone (a traditional small sweet bun eaten with butter and jam). [www.cafeartysans.org.uk](http://www.cafeartysans.org.uk)

Check into hotel: Why not try the **Glenmoriston Town House Hotel**?

This four-star luxury boutique hotel is set on a tree-lined river bank in the city centre, close to the shops and only 20 minutes' drive from Loch Ness.

[www.glenmoristontownhouse.com](http://www.glenmoristontownhouse.com)

**Dinner:** Enjoy delicious Scottish produce served in a contemporary style in the popular restaurant **Rocpool**. Situated on the banks of the River Ness it boasts floodlit views of the river and castle. [www.rocpoolrestaurant.com](http://www.rocpoolrestaurant.com)

### **Late evening: Hootananny**

Clap, sing and dance along to some live folk music in this friendly and award-winning pub and music venue. [www.hootanannyinverness.co.uk](http://www.hootanannyinverness.co.uk)

## **Day Two**

**Morning:** Breakfast at the hotel then head out to **The Clava Cairns**. This Bronze Age site truly stands at the dawn of Scotland's story. Discover stone burial mounds of a sun-worshipping tribe from 4,000 years ago. The stones are aligned with midwinter sunset and are especially atmospheric both late and early in the day.

Then make your way to the **Culloden Battlefield and Visitor Centre**. The last battle fought on British soil (1746), the Battle of Culloden is often misrepresented as a Scotland versus England conflict - it was really the last battle in a civil war. It also had a European dimension: the British government forces were fighting against a rebel army supported by France and other European powers intent on restoring a Catholic monarchy in Britain. The aftermath resulted in the destruction of traditional Gaelic culture and way of life.

The story is vividly told in the visitor centre with multi-media and artefacts. Visitors can also walk around the restored battlefield. [www.nts.org.uk/Culloden/Home](http://www.nts.org.uk/Culloden/Home)

**Lunch:** **The Cawdor Tavern** is a traditional family run country pub and restaurant serving modern Scottish food and is located in the picturesque conservation village of Cawdor, close to Inverness. Try the locally caught fish and chips or their oven-baked haggis Scotch egg. [www.cawdortavern.co.uk](http://www.cawdortavern.co.uk)



*Rocpool's delicious menu is complemented by views of Inverness Castle and the River Ness*



*Discover more than 600 years of history at Cawdor Castle. @VisitBritain Andrew Pickett*

### **Afternoon: Cawdor Castle**

Cawdor Castle is in every way a real Scottish castle - mentioned by Shakespeare when Macbeth himself is addressed as the Thane of Cawdor (Thane means chief). The late 14th-century castle has evolved over 600 years and expanded beyond its original tower house but is still lived in by the Cawdor family. Explore the beautiful rooms, attractive gardens and walks.

[www.cawdorcastle.com](http://www.cawdorcastle.com)

Drive on towards **Fort George**. Described as the best preserved 18th-century military fortification in Europe, it was built following the defeat of the rebel forces at Culloden Battlefield, intended to ensure that the Highland clans never rose in rebellion again. The huge ramparts enclose an area bigger than five soccer pitches. The Highlanders' Museum within the fort is also fascinating. Fort George still has an army presence today. [www.historic-scotland.gov.uk](http://www.historic-scotland.gov.uk)

**Dinner: River House Restaurant** serves the finest seasonal and sustainable Scottish produce. Relax, watch the chefs in the open plan kitchen and the fantastic views of the River Ness. [www.riverhouseinverness.co.uk](http://www.riverhouseinverness.co.uk)

### **Day Three**

**Morning:** Breakfast at the hotel then head south west towards Loch Ness and the village of Drumnadrochit - only 20 minutes' drive from the centre of Inverness.

Loch Ness is one of three lochs on the Caledonian Canal, which connects Scotland's east and west coasts through the Great Glen. The Canal was opened in 1822, after almost 20 years' work. By this time, the Royal Navy's ships had become too big to use it and the threat to shipping from the Napoleonic Wars was long past.

[www.visitinvernesslochness.com/explore/caledonian-canal](http://www.visitinvernesslochness.com/explore/caledonian-canal)

Pay a visit to **Urquhart Castle**, just a four-minute drive south of the village of Drumnadrochit. Once one of Scotland's largest castles, controlling the main route through the Great Glen, it was besieged and raided many times between the 13th century and its final destruction in 1692. Today it is a popular 'monster'-spotting viewpoint and also has an extensive visitor centre with audio-visual presentations.

Head on towards **Corrimony Chambered Cairn**. This is a stone burial mound from the Bronze Age with an adjacent stone circle. It is possible to reach the centre of the burial chamber by crawling in on hands and knees!

**Lunch: The Slaters Arms** is situated in the village of Cannich in Strathglass close to Glen Affric. The village is about midway between Drumnadrochit (13 miles / 21km) and Beaully (15 miles / 24 km) on the A831 road. Try its fresh homemade soup or fish and chips.

[www.slatersarms-selfcatering-lochness.com](http://www.slatersarms-selfcatering-lochness.com)

**Afternoon: Glen Affric** is simply one of the most beautiful Highland glens in Scotland. It has extensive areas of ancient Caledonian pinewoods - Scotland's native forest of old. It is also a National Nature Reserve, with waterfalls and walking trails. This was formerly the

lands of the Clan Chisholm until their dispersal across the world following the infamous episodes of the Highland Clearances. This road is quite narrow and twisty but with a real sense of a wild highland landscape. [www.glenaffric.org](http://www.glenaffric.org), [www.nnr-scotland.org.uk/glenaffric](http://www.nnr-scotland.org.uk/glenaffric)

From **Cannich** head north along the valley of Strathglass and reach the attractive little town of **Beaully** and its ruined **priory**. The Valliscaulians were part of a Benedictine order of monks and settled in Beaully (*beau lieu* means beautiful place) from Burgundy, France, around 1230. Three hundred years later the Protestant Reformation in Scotland ended their way of life. All that remains today is the roofless abbey church containing many fine Clan Mackenzie family tombs in a secluded setting.

**Coffee stop! Corner on the Square**; this is where the locals go: it's a delicatessen and cafe that serves great coffee and has fine views of the historic square. [www.corneronthesquare.co.uk](http://www.corneronthesquare.co.uk)

Drive back to Inverness via the Beaully Firth.

**Dinner: The Kitchen Brasserie**; give the haggis sliders a try - locally produced mini haggis burgers topped with garlic mayonnaise. You can walk to this restaurant from your hotel in about ten minutes. [www.kitchenrestaurant.co.uk](http://www.kitchenrestaurant.co.uk)

## Itinerary Three: 72 Hours in Inverness

### Day One

**Afternoon:** Arrive into Inverness and check into your hotel. Why not try **The Waterside Hotel**? This family run hotel overlooks the River Ness - only a short walk from city centre bars, restaurants and attractions. [www.thewatersideinverness.co.uk](http://www.thewatersideinverness.co.uk)

**Dinner: The Mustard Seed** - based in a former church on the bank of the River Ness, enjoy a meal in this unique space, with its double-height ceiling and magnificent open log fire. Try Scottish black pudding, apple and walnut salad and a local 21-day aged rib-eye Scottish steak. [www.mustardseedrestaurant.co.uk](http://www.mustardseedrestaurant.co.uk)

**Late evening: The Ironworks** is a good stop for some late-night live entertainment as the city's purpose-built live music, club, and comedy venue. Prestige acts such as Kasabian, Runrig, Van Morrison, The Charlatans and Biffy Clyro have performed here as well as local talent from Inverness's thriving live music scene. The Ironworks also hosts popular local club nights.

### Day Two

**Morning:** Breakfast at the hotel then it's time for a spot of city sightseeing via a bus tour! Take in the historic buildings, the shopping area and the River Ness as well as the Caledonian Canal locks and visit Holm Mills shopping village. You can get on or off at any stop along the route. [www.citysightseeinginverness.com](http://www.citysightseeinginverness.com)

Jump off the bus and visit the **Inverness Victorian Market**. Situated in the heart of the Inverness Old Town shopping area, this roofed indoor market dates from 1876 and has a wide range of small independent shops and cafés. Have a look at the sandstone entrance archway in Church Street to see where fish sellers used to sharpen their knives!



*Scotland's largest second-hand bookshop - Leakey's Bookshop - is found in Inverness. ©VisitBritain Andrew Pickett*

Following the market, check out **Leakey's Bookshop** - browse in Scotland's largest second-hand bookshop housed in a former church dating from 1792. There is a cosy wood burner here too! [www.facebook.com/LeakeysBookshop](https://www.facebook.com/LeakeysBookshop)

**Lunch:** **Nourish Cafe** (formerly Riverdale Centre) is an award-winning organic vegetarian café. It serves a hearty selection of warming soups and delicious cakes. Upstairs is a complementary therapy clinic. [www.nourish-inverness.co.uk](http://www.nourish-inverness.co.uk)

**Afternoon:** Visit the **Old High Church of Inverness**, the oldest church in Inverness dating to the 12th

century. Overlooking the River Ness, it is built on an ancient hill known as St Michael's Mount. Jacobite prisoners were executed and buried here after the Battle of Culloden and visitors can explore the historic graveyard. [www.oldhighstephens.com](http://www.oldhighstephens.com)

Head over to the **Inverness Museum and Art Gallery**, where you can experience the art, history and heritage of the Highlands through unique artefacts. Modern displays and interpretation help you discover Gaelic culture and language, geology, wildlife and much more. Learn how to say some Gaelic words and even try on an 18th-century style Highland kilt! [www.highlifehighland.com/inverness-museum-and-art-gallery](http://www.highlifehighland.com/inverness-museum-and-art-gallery)

**Evening:** Enjoy an early dinner at **Riva Restaurant**, which serves classic Italian dishes in a modern setting overlooking the River Ness ([www.rivarestaurant.co.uk](http://www.rivarestaurant.co.uk)), before heading over to a performance at the **Eden Court Theatre**. Eden Court is Scotland's largest combined arts venue, showcasing theatre, cinema, arts and education performances for the Highlands & Islands. [www.eden-court.co.uk](http://www.eden-court.co.uk)

### Day Three

**Morning:** Breakfast at the hotel then it's a short walk to **Inverness Cathedral**. Constructed from local deep pink sandstone dating back to 1869, the cathedral was designed by local architect Alexander Ross (who also responsible for Skibo Castle - the Scottish home of Andrew Carnegie.) This was the first new cathedral to be completed in Britain since the Reformation of 1560. There is much to see, including 19th-century Russian icons gifted by Tsar Alexander II. The cathedral is used for many musical, civic and community events. Choral evensong is sung approximately once a month on Sundays at 17.30. [www.invernesscathedral.co.uk](http://www.invernesscathedral.co.uk)

If you have Scottish ancestry, explore your roots at the **Highland Archive Centre's** Family History Room. Accessible archives relating to the history of the Highlands from the 14th century to the present day are available and staff are happy to assist you with your family history research. [www.highlifehighland.com/highland-archive-centre](http://www.highlifehighland.com/highland-archive-centre)

Close by is the **Inverness Botanic Gardens** where you can discover the drama of plant diversity, ranging from tropical rainforests to desert plants. Be inspired by the amazing sculptural shapes of hundreds of species of cacti planted among 75 tonnes of rock. [www.highlifehighland.com/inverness-botanic-gardens](http://www.highlifehighland.com/inverness-botanic-gardens)

**Lunch:** Cobbs Cafe is at the front of the Botanic Garden building. Try its fresh soups and wonderful home baking. [www.cobbs.info](http://www.cobbs.info)



*Tour the Glen Ord Distillery then head to its shop for a special gift to take home!  
©VisitBritain Andrew Pickett*

**Afternoon:** Visit Glen Ord Distillery, 14 miles/22 km north west of Inverness. Founded in 1838, making it one of the oldest in Scotland, it malts its own barley and uses traditional distillation methods. Join a tour and watch the distillers at work while they create a sweet and malty whisky, then check out the visitor centre and whisky shop. [www.discovering-distilleries.com/glenord](http://www.discovering-distilleries.com/glenord)

**Dinner:** Clachnaharry Inn is a traditional Scottish pub only two miles/three km west of the city centre. Try a hearty Highland venison burger or a locally-made brie and beetroot tartlet followed by homemade sticky gingerbread. [www.clachnaharryinn.co.uk](http://www.clachnaharryinn.co.uk)