

INVERNESS AND AROUND THE GREAT GLEN

Updated by
Joseph Reaney



 Sights

★★★★☆

 Restaurants

★★☆☆☆

 Hotels

★★☆☆☆

 Shopping

★★★★☆

 Nightlife

★★☆☆☆

WELCOME TO INVERNESS AND AROUND THE GREAT GLEN

TOP REASONS TO GO

★ **Castles, fortresses, and battlefields:** Hear stories of the Highland people, learn about famous figures like Bonnie Prince Charlie, and absorb the atmosphere at local castles and battlefields, including Culloden Moor, Cawdor Castle, Fort George, and Glencoe.

★ **Outdoor activities:** The Great Glen is renowned for its hill walking, with some of the best routes around Glen Nevis, Glencoe, and on Ben Nevis, the highest mountain in Britain.

★ **Wild landscapes and rare wildlife:** Spot rare plants and beasts, including tiny least willow trees and golden eagles, in the near-arctic tundra of Cairngorms National Park.

★ **Whisky tours:** The two westernmost distilleries on the Malt Whisky Trail are in Forres. Benromach is the smallest distillery in Speyside and has excellent tours; Dallas Dhu is preserved as a museum.

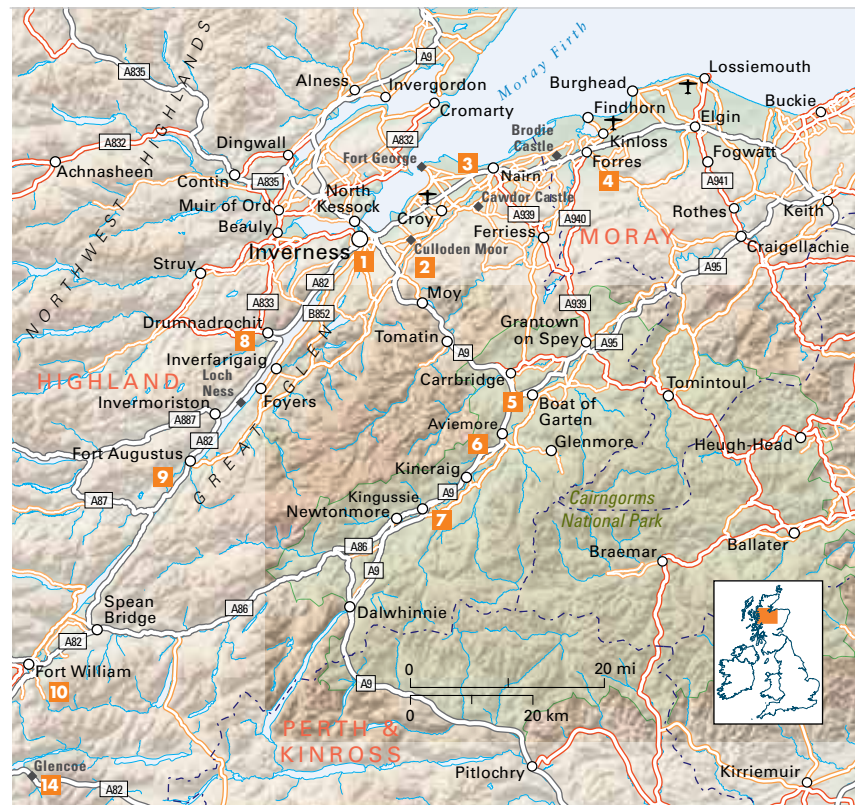
If Inverness is the center point of a compass, the Great Glen spreads out to the east, south, and west. To the east, the A96 stretches along the Morayshire coast, which is populated with castles, beaches, and famous battlegrounds. Head southeast on the A9, and you pass Tomatin Distillery on the way to the Cairngorms National Park and other nature preserves. The A82 heads southwest from Inverness and hugs the western bank of Loch Ness, passing the contemplative ruins at Urquhart Castle and the interesting locks of the Caledonian Canal. Farther southwest, Fort William can be a good base for day trips to the foreboding and steep mountain pass of Glencoe. West from here on the A830 (Road to the Isles) lies Glenfinnan, Arisaig, and Mallaig.



1 Inverness. The biggest city in the Highlands and a popular base for the region.

2 Culloden Moor. The scene of one of Scotland's most famous battles.

3 Nairn. A former fishing village now famous for golfing and nearby Cawdor Castle.



4 Forres. A perfect Scottish medieval town and a key stop on the Malt Whisky Trail.

5 Boat of Garten. A peaceful village home to a famous steam railway.

6 Aviemore. The gateway to Cairngorms National Park.

7 Kingussie. A pretty, more low-key base for the Cairngorms.

8 Drumnadrochit and Loch Ness. Nessie's stomping ground.

9 Fort Augustus. A good base to explore the lochs of the Caledonian Canal.

10 Fort William. Once a military outpost and now the gateway to the Great Glen.

11 Glenfinnan. Famous for its Jacobite history and photogenic viaduct.

12 Arisaig. A gateway to the smaller Scottish isles.

13 Mallaig. The gateway to Skye and the Knoydart Peninsula.

14 Glencoe. One of Scotland's most beautiful regions with plenty of Highlands history.

Defined by its striking topography, the Great Glen brings together mountains and myths, history and wild nature—then lets you wash it all down with a dram of the world's finest whisky. Inverness is the gateway to an area where the views from almost every twist and bend in the circuitous roads can take your breath away.

There's also plenty here for history buffs, including Culloden Moor, where the last battle fought on British soil ended the hopes of the tragically outgunned Jacobite rebels in 1746.

The Great Glen Fault runs diagonally through the Highlands of Scotland and was formed when two tectonic plates collided, shoving masses of the crust southwest toward the Atlantic Ocean. Over time the rift broadened into a glen, and a thin line of lochs now lies along its seam. The most famous of these is deep, murky Loch Ness, home to the elusive Loch Ness Monster.

The city of Inverness has a growing reputation for excellent restaurants, and from here nearly everything in the Great Glen is an easy day trip. To the east, the Morayshire coast offers a pastoral landscape. The 14th-century Cawdor Castle and its gardens have an opulent air, while nearby Brodie Castle has an awe-inspiring library and art collection. Impressive long, sandy beaches stretch along the coast from the towns of Nairn and Findhorn. Finally, the Malt Whisky Trail begins in Forbes and follows the wide, fast River Spey south until it butts

against the Cairngorms and the old Caledonian forests, with their diverse and rare wildlife.

Just south of the city, the ruins of the 13th-century Urquhart Castle sit on the shores of Loch Ness. In Fort Augustus, the Caledonian Canal joins Inverness to Fort William via a series of 29 locks. At the western end of the canal, Ben Nevis, Britain's highest mountain, rises sharply. The Nevis Range, like Cairngorms National Park to the east, is ideal for walking, climbing, and mountain biking amid hills and glens.

Fort William makes a good base for exploring Glencoe, an awe-inspiring region that was also the scene of another notorious episode in Scottish history: the Glencoe Massacre of 1692. It's an area where history seems to be imprinted on the landscape, which includes some of the steepest, most atmospheric hills in Scotland.

To the west of Fort William, the Road to the Isles offers impressive coastal views. The Small Isles of Rum and Eigg create a low rocky skyline across the water. Near the start of this road lies Glenfinnan, where, in 1745, Bonnie Prince Charlie rallied his Jacobite troops.

MAJOR REGIONS

Inverness. At the center of this region is Inverness, a small but appealing city that makes a useful gateway to the Great Glen. It has an increasingly strong range of restaurants and accommodations, but its cultural offerings remain more or less limited to what is happening at the Eden Court Theatre and the live music at a few good pubs. From Inverness just about anywhere in the Great Glen is a day trip.

Morayshire Coast. East of Inverness, the infamous Culloden Moor still looks desolate on most days, and you can easily imagine the fierce, brief, and bloody 1746 battle that ended in final, catastrophic defeat for the Jacobites. This thorny but colorful period of Scottish history is interwoven with landmarks throughout this entire area. The Morayshire coast also has many long beaches, some refined castles in Cawdor and Brodie, and the excellent Benromach distillery in Forbes, a taste of what you can find farther south if you follow the Malt Whisky Trail into the heart of Speyside (part of the Aberdeen and the Northeast chapter).

The Cairngorms. Defining the eastern edge of the Great Glen, Cairngorms National Park provides sporty types with all the adventure they could ask for, including walking, kayaking, rock climbing, and even skiing, if the winter is cold enough. With craggy mountains, calm lochs, and swift rivers, the park has everything for lovers of the great outdoors. And while the towns and villages of the Cairngorms are nothing particularly special, they make great bases for heading out into nature.

Loch Ness. Have a go trying to spot Nessie from the banks of Loch Ness. Compared with other lochs, Ness is not known for its beauty—although it's hardly a stain on the landscape—but it draws global attention for its infamously shy monster. Heading south from Inverness, you can travel along the loch's quiet east side or the more touristy west side. A pleasant morning can be spent

at Urquhart Castle, in the tiny town of Drumnadrochit, or a bit farther south in the pretty town of Fort Augustus, where the Caledonian Canal meets Loch Ness.

Fort William and Nearby. As you travel south and west, the landscape opens up and the Nevis Range comes into view. From Fort William you can visit the dark, cloud-laden mountains of Glencoe and the desolate stretch of moors and lochs at Rannoch Moor. Travelers drive through this region to experience the landscape, which changes at nearly every turn. It's a brooding, haunting area that's worth a visit in any season. If you dare, climb Britain's highest peak, Ben Nevis. The Road to the Isles, less romantically known as the A830, leads from Fort William to the coastal towns of Arisaig and Mallaig, with access to the Small Isles of Rum, Eigg, Canna, and Muck.

Planning

When to Go

Late spring to early autumn is the best time to visit the Great Glen. If you catch good weather in summer, the days can be glorious. Unfortunately, summer is also when you will encounter midges (tiny biting insects). Keep walking, as they can't move very fast. Winter can bring a damp chill, gusty winds, and snow-blocked roads, although many Scots value the open fires and warming whisky that make the off-season so appealing.

Planning Your Time

The Great Glen is an enormous area that can easily be broken into two separate trips. The first would be based in or near Inverness, allowing exploration of the Morayshire coast, including Cawdor and Brodie castles and perhaps a whisky distillery or two, as well as the Cairngorms.

The second involves traveling south along Loch Ness to Fort William, then either into the cloud-laden Glencoe (don't miss moody Rannoch Moor), or along the Road to the Isles. To do the whole area justice, you'll need at least five days.

For those with more time, a trip around the Great Glen could be combined with forays north into the Northern Highlands, east toward Aberdeen and the rest of the Malt Whisky Trail, southeastward to the Central Highlands, or south to Argyll.

Getting Here and Around

AIR

Inverness Airport has flights from London, Edinburgh, and Glasgow. Domestic flights covering the Highlands and islands are operated by Loganair. Fort William has good bus and train connections with Glasgow, so Glasgow Airport can be a good access point.

BUS

A long-distance Scottish Citylink service connects Glasgow and Fort William. Inverness is also well served from the central belt of Scotland. Discount carrier Megabus (book online to avoid phone charges) has service to Inverness from various U.K. cities.

Traveling around the Great Glen area without a car is very challenging and all but impossible in more rural areas. Stagecoach North Scotland serves the Great Glen and around Fort William.

BUS CONTACTS Megabus. ☎ 0900/160-0900 🌐 uk.megabus.com. **Scottish Citylink.** ☎ 0871/266-3333 🌐 www.citylink.co.uk. **Stagecoach North Scotland.** ☎ 01463/233371 🌐 www.stagecoachbus.com.

CAR

As in all areas of rural Scotland, a car is a great asset for exploring the Great Glen, especially because the best of the area is away from the main roads. You can use

the main A82 from Inverness to Fort William, or use the smaller B862/B852 roads to explore the much quieter east side of Loch Ness. Mallaig, west of Fort William, is reached via a new road, but there are still a few narrow and winding single-lane roads, which require slower speeds and greater concentration.

In the Great Glen, the best sights are often hidden from the main road, which is an excellent reason to favor peaceful rural byways and to avoid as much as possible the busy A96 and A9, which carry much of the traffic in the area.

TRAIN

ScotRail has connections from London to Inverness and Fort William (including an overnight sleeper service), as well as reliable links from Glasgow and Edinburgh. There's train service between Glasgow (Queen Street) and Inverness, via Aviemore, which gives access to the heart of Speyside.

Although there's no rail connection among towns within the Great Glen, this area has the West Highland Line, which links Fort William to Mallaig. This train, run by ScotRail, remains the most enjoyable way to experience the rugged hills and loch scenery between these two places. The Jacobite Steam Train is an exciting summer (late April to late October) option on the same route.

TRAIN CONTACTS Jacobite Steam Train.

☎ 0333/996-6720 🌐 westcoastrailways.co.uk. **ScotRail.** ☎ 0344/811-0141 🌐 www.scotrail.co.uk.

Restaurants

Inverness, Forres, Aviemore, and Fort William have plenty of cafés and restaurants in all price ranges. Inverness has particularly diverse dining options. Outside the towns there are many country-house hotels serving superb meals.

Hotels

In the Great Glen, town accommodations range from cozy inns to expansive hotels. Choices in more remote are usually limited to smaller establishments. Book as far in advance as you can: the area is very busy in the peak season, and the best places fill up early. In Inverness, you may find it more appealing to stay outside the city center or even in surrounding countryside.

Restaurant and hotel reviews have been shortened. For full information, visit Fodors.com. Restaurant prices are the average cost of a main course at dinner or, if dinner is not served, at lunch. Hotel prices are the lowest cost of a standard double room in high season, including 20% V.A.T.

WHAT IT COSTS in Pounds

\$	\$\$	\$\$\$	\$\$\$\$
RESTAURANTS			
under £15	£15–£19	£20–£25	over £25
HOTELS			
under £125	£125–£200	£201–£300	over £300

Tours

Inverness Tours

GUIDED TOURS | This outfitter runs the occasional boat cruise and Inverness walking tour, but it's mainly known for high-quality Highlands bus tours led by expert guides and heritage enthusiasts. The price is per minibus, not per person, so while it's good value for parties of six or seven, it's less appealing for small groups. It may be possible to get single tickets if another group will sell its unused space. ☒ *High St., Inverness* ☎ 01667/455699 🌐 invernesstours.com 📄 From £320.

J. A. Johnstone

DRIVING TOURS | At the more luxurious end of the scale, this company offers chauffeur-driven tours of the Highlands in air-conditioned Mercedes sedans. Excursions are completely tailored to what you want to see, and the guides have an encyclopedic knowledge of the region. The company also runs multiday tours of the Scottish regions and can help book accommodations along the way. ☎ 01463/798372 🌐 www.jajcd.com 📄 Prices on request.

Inverness

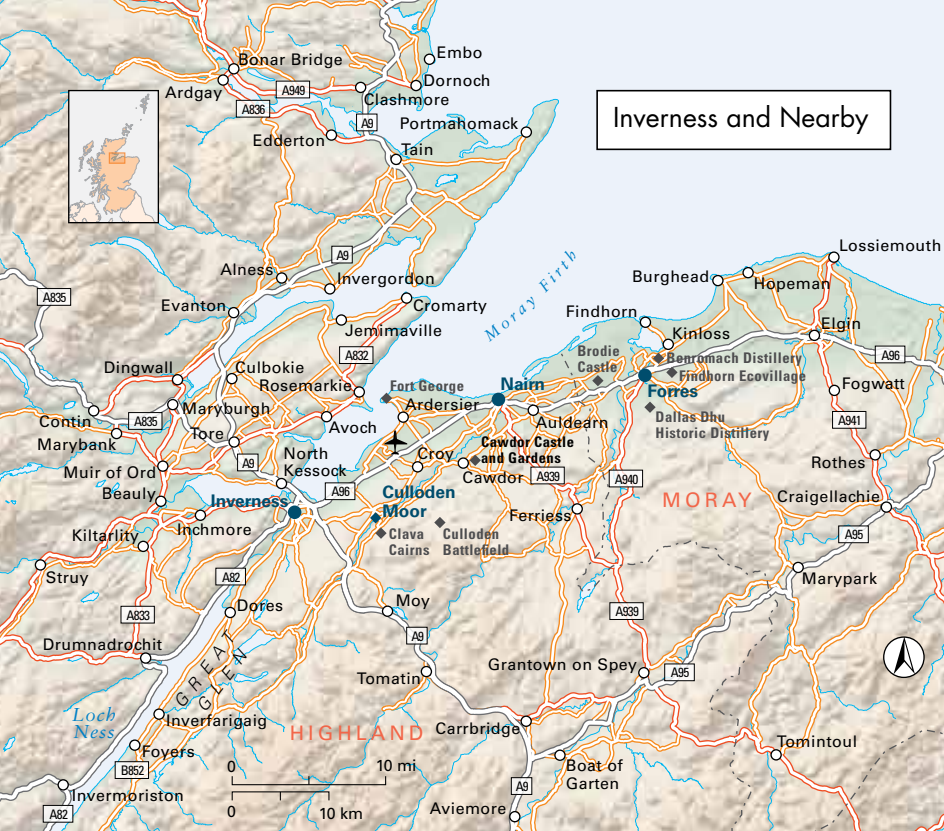
176 miles north of Glasgow, 156 miles northwest of Edinburgh.

It's not the prettiest or the most charming Scottish city, but with a few attractions and some reliably good hotels and restaurants, Inverness makes a practical base for exploring a region that has a lot to offer. From here you can fan out in almost any direction for interesting day trips: east to Moray and the distilleries near Forres, southeast to the Cairngorms, and south to Loch Ness and Fort William. Throughout its past, the town was burned and ravaged by Highland clans competing for dominance.

GETTING HERE AND AROUND

You can easily fly into Inverness Airport, as there are daily flights from London, Bristol, Birmingham, Manchester, and Belfast. However, there are also easy train and bus connections from Glasgow Airport. Scottish Citylink has service here, and Megabus has long-distance bus service from Edinburgh and Glasgow. ScotRail runs trains from London, Edinburgh, Glasgow, and other cities.

Once you're here, you can explore much of the city on foot. A rental car makes exploring the surrounding area much easier. But if you don't have a car, there are bus and boat tours from the city center to a number of places in the Great Glen.



Inverness and Nearby



The sandstone structure known as Inverness Castle stands guard over the small city of Inverness.

ESSENTIALS

AIRPORT CONTACTS Inverness Airport.

✉ Dalcross, Inverness ☎ 01667/464000
 🌐 www.hial.co.uk/inverness-airport.

BUS CONTACTS Inverness Bus Station.

✉ Margaret St., Inverness
 ☎ 01463/233371 🌐 www.stagecoachbus.com.

VISITOR INFORMATION Visit Inver-

ness Loch Ness. ✉ Inverness 🌐 www.visitinvernesslochness.com. **VisitScotland Inverness iCentre.** ✉ 36 High St., Inverness ☎ 01463/252401 🌐 www.visitscotland.com.

Sights

Inverness Castle

CASTLE/PALACE | One of Inverness's few historic landmarks is reddish-sandstone Inverness Castle (now the local Sheriff Court), nestled above the river off Castle Road on Castle Hill. The current structure is Victorian, built after a former fort was blown up by the Jacobites in the 1745 campaign. The castle isn't open to the public, but you are free to wander the grounds. ✉ Inverness.

Inverness Museum and Art Gallery

HISTORY MUSEUM | FAMILY | The small but excellent Inverness Museum and Art Gallery covers archaeology, art, local history, and the natural environment in

its lively displays. The museum is also home to the Highland Photographic Archive. ✉ Castle Wynd, Inverness ☎ 01349/781730 🌐 www.hIGHLIFEhighland.com ☹ Closed Sun.–Mon.

St. Andrew's Cathedral

RELIGIOUS BUILDING | This handsome Victorian cathedral, dating from 1869, has two unique claims to fame: in addition to being the northernmost cathedral in the British Isles, it was, more significantly, the first cathedral to be built in Britain after the Reformation. The twin-turreted exterior of the building is made from characteristically reddish local Tarradale stone. Inside, it follows a medieval layout, with the addition of an unusual patterned wooden floor. Check out the beautiful white marble font, carved in the shape of a seated angel. ✉ Ardross St., Inverness ☎ 01463/225553 🌐 inverness-cathedral.org.

🍴 Restaurants

★ Café 1

\$\$ | **MODERN BRITISH** | Consistently recommended by locals as one of the best restaurants in the area, Café 1 really practices what it preaches in terms of sustainable, local produce. Taking inspiration from such big names as Blue Hill in New York, the restaurant rears its own herds to provide the menu's Hebridean lamb and Highland beef, usually served with a simple order of chips (thick-cut fries) and rich garlic butter. **Known for:** ethically sourced ingredients; castle views; melt-in-your-mouth lamb. 📍 Average main: £19 ✉ 75 Castle St., Inverness ☎ 01463/226200 🌐 www.cafe1.net ☹ Closed Sun.

The Dores Inn

\$\$ | **BRITISH** | Off a pretty country road on the eastern shore of Loch Ness, this low-slung, white-stone eatery is the perfect place to stop for lunch or dinner. The menu is a combination of well-prepared old favorites like fish-and-chips, together

with steaks, lamb, and seafood. **Known for:** gluten-free options; well-prepared Scottish classics; excellent range of whiskies. **Average main:** £16 ☎ B862, *Dores* ☎ 01463/751203 🌐 www.thedoresinn.co.uk ☺ Closed Mon.–Tue.

Fig and Thistle Bistro

\$\$ | BISTRO | FAMILY | This intimate restaurant has been packing in the crowds nightly thanks to its modern bistro fare presented stylishly but without fuss. You could start with a delicious goat cheese and fig tart, for example, followed by a sumptuous steak with a red-wine-and-thyme sauce. **Known for:** reservations needed on weekends; seared local salmon infused with Thai flavors; tasty homemade desserts. **Average main:** £18 ☎ 4A Stephens Brae, *Inverness* ☎ 01463/712422 🌐 [facebook.com/FigandThistleBistro](https://www.facebook.com/FigandThistleBistro) ☺ Closed Sun.–Mon. No lunch Tues.

River House

\$\$\$ | SEAFOOD | Head chef and owner Alfie Little draws heavily on local inspiration to shape the menu at this tiny riverside seafood restaurant, which has an interior as stylish as its appealing gray-and-white exterior. Start with mussels or oysters from the Scottish islands, then take your pick from mains based on native fish, such as Shetland halibut and Scabster hake, and wash it all down with a local beer. **Known for:** riverside outdoor seating in summer; intimate atmosphere; fresh and sustainable local seafood. **Average main:** £23 ☎ 1 Greig St., *Inverness* ☎ 01463/222033 🌐 riverhouseinverness.co.uk ☺ Closed Sun. and Mon. No lunch.

★ Rocpool

\$\$\$ | BRASSERIE | Another perennial favorite, the Rocpool has a frequently changing menu of modern bistro classics, with a few international twists. Local seafood from scallops to sea trout is a particular specialty, while meaty dishes range from Highland *côte de boeuf* steak to loin of Speyside venison. **Known for:** quality meat and seafood; outstanding wine selection; contemporary

twists on traditional dishes. **Average main:** £22 ☎ 1 Ness Walk, *Inverness* ☎ 01463/717274 🌐 www.rocpoolrestaurant.com ☺ Closed Sun.

★ Rocpool Reserve Hotel Restaurant

\$\$\$ | MODERN BRITISH | The clean modern design is as sleek as the service at this restaurant in the Rocpool Reserve Hotel (not to be confused with the nearby Rocpool restaurant); think monochrome walls, straight lines, and a whole lot of upholstery in tasteful accent colors. As for the menu, expect creative, decadent dishes, from venison tartare to salmon risotto. **Known for:** a handful of lovely hotel rooms; inventive dishes and beautiful presentation; chic cocktail bar. **Average main:** £24 ☎ Rocpool Reserve Hotel, *Culduthel Rd., Inverness* ☎ 01463/240089 🌐 www.rocpool.com.

Hotels

Bluebell House

\$ | B&B/INN | At this traditional Scottish guesthouse, sturdy oak furnishings are featured in each room, including a downstairs bedroom with a full-curtained four-poster bed and a curved chaise lounge. **Pros:** great hosts; large rooms; decadent furnishing. **Cons:** minimal technology; no windows in bathrooms; smallish bathrooms. **Rooms from:** £120 ☎ 31 Kenneth St., *Inverness* ☎ 01463/238201 🌐 www.bluebell-house.com ➔ 4 rooms ☺ Free Breakfast.

Bunchrew House Hotel

\$\$\$ | HOTEL | This 17th-century baronial mansion, its turrets reflected in a glassy lake, looks like something from a Scottish fairy tale. **Pros:** good restaurant; beautiful setting; atmospheric building. **Cons:** a little out of town; quite expensive; some rooms could do with refurbishment. **Rooms from:** £255 ☎ Off A862, *Inverness* ➔ About 3 miles west of *Inverness* ☎ 01463/234917 🌐 www.bunchrewhousehotel.com ➔ 16 rooms ☺ Free Breakfast.

Highland Apartments by Mansley

\$\$\$ | APARTMENT | One of three Mansley properties in Scotland (the other two are in Edinburgh), Highland Apartments offers luxurious self-catering accommodations, many with delightful balcony views of the River Ness. **Pros:** secure parking available; chic modern apartments; great city center location. **Cons:** some may find entry by code impersonal; quite expensive; not all apartments have river views. **Rooms from:** £225 ☎ Bridge House, 21–23 Bridge St., *Inverness* ☎ 0800/304–7160 🌐 bymansley.com ➔ 19 apartments ☹ No Meals.

★ Ness Walk

\$\$\$ | HOTEL | This spot offers true five-star luxury in the form of spacious and stylish rooms, one of Inverness's best fine-dining restaurants (Torrish), and a verdant riverside location. **Pros:** lounge check-in with Champagne; beautiful riverside property; phenomenal afternoon tea. **Cons:** very expensive; superattentive service can be stifling; walk from the city center. **Rooms from:** £295 ☎ 12 Ness Walk, *Inverness* ☎ 01463/215215 🌐 www.nesswalk.com ➔ 47 rooms ☹ Free Breakfast.

Trafford Bank

\$\$ | B&B/INN | This former Bishop's home turned boutique B&B makes for a practical and stylish base, with owner Lorraine Freel's talent for interior design seen in the bespoke dining room chairs and handmade wallpaper—as well as in the eclectic array of art throughout. **Pros:** relaxing vibe; welcoming atmosphere; stylish rooms. **Cons:** a walk from the city center; early checkout time; some rooms on the small side. **Rooms from:** £155 ☎ 96 Fairfield Rd., *Inverness* ☎ 01463/241414 🌐 www.invernesshotelaccommodation.co.uk ➔ 5 rooms ☹ Free Breakfast.

Nightlife

★ Hootananny

PUBS | An odd but much-loved combination of Scottish pub, concert hall, and Thai restaurant, Hootananny is one of the best places in the region to hear live music. The excellent pub has a warm atmosphere and serves food that comes highly recommended by locals. Several bands play each Saturday evening and a few during the week, too—check the website for listings. ☎ 67 Church St., *Inverness* ☎ 01463/233651 🌐 www.hootanannyinverness.co.uk.

Performing Arts

★ Eden Court Theatre

ARTS CENTERS | The varied program at this excellent local filmhouse and theater includes movies, musical theater, comedy, ballet, and even pantomime. Check out the art gallery and the bright café, and take a walk around the magnificent Bishop's Palace. In summer, there's also regular live music on the lawn. ☎ Bishops Rd., *Inverness* ☎ 01463/234234 🌐 eden-court.co.uk.

Shopping

Although Inverness has the usual indoor shopping malls and department stores, the most interesting goods are in the specialty outlets in and around town.

BOOKSTORES

★ Leakey's Bookshop

BOOKS | This shop claims to be Scotland's largest secondhand bookstore. When you get tired of leafing through the 100,000 or so titles, climb to the mezzanine café and study the cavernous church interior, complete with wood-burning fire. Antique prints and maps are housed on the balcony. ☎ Greyfriars Hall, *Church St., Inverness* ☎ 01463/239947 🌐 [facebook.com/LeakeysBookshop](https://www.facebook.com/LeakeysBookshop) ☺ Closed Sun.

CLOTHING

Chisholms Highland Dress

MEN'S CLOTHING | This shop specializes in kilts and tartans. Mail-order and made-to-measure services are available. ☎ 47–51 Castle St., Inverness ☎ 01463/234599 🌐 www.kilts.co.uk ☺ Closed Sun.

GALLERIES

Castle Gallery

ART GALLERIES | The excellent Castle Gallery sells contemporary paintings, sculpture, prints, and crafts. It also hosts frequently changing exhibitions by up-and-coming artists. ☎ 43 Castle St., Inverness ☎ 01463/729512 🌐 www.castlegallery.co.uk ☺ Closed Sun.

LOCAL SPECIALTIES

Inverness Coffee Roasting Co.

OTHER FOOD & DRINK | An ideal place to pick up a gift, this beautifully presented little coffee shop stocks a good selection of locally roasted beans to enjoy on the premises or take away with you. Indulgent handmade treats made in Inverness by luxury chocolatiers The Chocolate Place are also available here. ☎ 15 Chapel St., Inverness ☎ 01463/242555 🌐 invernesscoffeeroasting.co.uk ☺ Closed Sun. and Mon.

SHOPPING CENTERS

The Victorian Market

MALL | Don't miss the colorful Victorian Market, built in 1870. The atmospheric indoor space houses more than 40 privately owned specialty shops, selling everything from fashion and jewelry to artisan chocolate. ☎ Academy St., Inverness ☎ 01463/710524 🌐 www.thevictorianmarket.com.



Activities

★ Castle Stuart Golf Links

GOLF | Opened in 2009, this course overlooking the Moray Firth is already considered one of Scotland's finest—it's hosted the Scottish Open on four

Fishing in the Great Glen



The Great Glen is laced with rivers and lochs where you can fly-fish for salmon and trout. The fishing seasons are as follows: salmon and sea trout, from early February through September or even into October and November (depending on the area); brown trout, from mid-March through September; rainbow trout year-round. Sea angling from shore or boat is also possible. Tourist centers can provide information on locations, permits, and fishing rights.

occasions since. Expect undulating fairways and extensive bunkers that test your mettle. The 210-yard 17th hole provides perilous cliff-top play; the wind can defeat the canniest player. The art deco-inspired clubhouse offers stunning views of the water. ☎ Off B9039, Inverness ☎ 01463/796111 🌐 www.castlestuartgolf.com ☎ £235 ⚡ 18 holes, 6553 yards, par 72 ☺ Closed mid-Nov.–mid.Mar.

Inverness Golf Club

GOLF | Established in 1883, and partly designed by famous British Open champion and course designer James Braid, Inverness Golf Club welcomes visitors to its parkland course on the edge of the city. The tree-lined course overlooking the Beaulieu Firth presents some unique challenges to keep even experienced golfers on their toes. ☎ Culcabock Rd., Inverness ☎ 01463/239882 🌐 www.invernessgolfclub.co.uk ☎ £69 May–Aug.; £50 Apr., Sept., and Oct.; £30 Nov.–Mar. ⚡ 18 holes, 6094 yards, par 69.

Bonnie Prince Charlie



His life became the stuff of legend. Charles Edward Louis John Casimir Silvester Severino Maria Stuart—better known as Bonnie Prince Charlie, or the Young Pretender—was born in Rome in 1720. The grandson of ousted King James II of England (King James VII of Scotland) and son of James Stuart, the Old Pretender, he was the focus of Jacobite hopes to reclaim the throne of Scotland. Charles was charming and attractive, and he enjoyed more than the occasional drink.

In 1745, Charles led a Scottish uprising to restore his father to the throne. He sailed to the Outer Hebrides with only a few men but with promised support from France. When that support failed to arrive, he sought help from the Jacobite supporters, many from the Highland clans, who were faithful to his family. With 6,000 men behind him, Charles saw victory in

Prestonpans and Falkirk, but the tide turned when he lied to his men about additional Jacobite troops waiting south of the border. When these fictitious troops did not materialize, his army retreated to Culloden where, on April 16, 1746, they were massacred.

Charles escaped to the Isle of Benbecula, where he met and is rumored to have fallen in love with Flora MacDonald. After he had hidden there for a week, Flora dressed him as her maid and brought him to sympathizers on the Isle of Skye, who helped him escape to France.

Scotland endured harsh reprisals from the government after the rebellion. As for Charles, he spent the rest of his life in drunken exile, taking the title Count of Albany. In 1772, he married Princess Louise of Stolberg-Gedern, only to separate from her eight years later. He died a broken man in Rome in 1788.

Culloden Moor

6 miles east of Inverness.

Culloden Moor was the scene of the last battle fought on British soil—and to this day its name is enough to invoke raw and tragic feelings in Scotland. Austere and windswept, it is also a place of outstanding natural beauty.

GETTING HERE AND AROUND

Driving along the B9006 from Inverness is the easiest way to Culloden Battlefield, and there's a large car park to handle many visitors. Stagecoach North Scotland's Bus 2 also runs from Inverness to the battlefield.



Clava Cairns

RUINS | Not far from Culloden Moor, on a narrow road southeast of the battlefield, are the Clava Cairns, dating from the Bronze Age. In a cluster among the trees, these stones and monuments form a large ring with underground passage graves that are reached via a tunnel. Helpful placards put everything into historical context. ☎ Off B851, Culloden ☎ 01667/460232.

★ Culloden Battlefield

MILITARY SIGHT | Here, on a cold April day in 1746, the hopelessly outgunned Jacobite forces of Bonnie Prince Charlie were destroyed by King George II's army. The victorious commander, the Duke of Cumberland (George II's son), earned



Legend has it that Cawdor Castle was built around a thorn tree that can still be seen in the castle's dungeon.

the name of the Butcher of Cumberland for the bloody reprisals carried out by his men on Highland families, Jacobite or not, caught in the vicinity. In the battle itself, the duke's army—greatly outnumbering the Jacobites—killed up to 2,000 soldiers. The victors, by contrast, lost just 50 men. The National Trust for Scotland has re-created a slightly eerie version of the battlefield as it looked in 1746 that you can explore with a guided audio tour. An innovative visitor center enables you to get closer to the sights and sounds of the battle and to interact with the characters involved, while a viewing platform helps put things into perspective from on high (literally). Academic research and technology have helped recreate the Gaelic dialect, song, and music of the time. There's also a good on-site café. ☒ Off B9006, Culloden ☎ 01463/796090 🌐 www.nts.org.uk 🚗 £11.

Nairn

12 miles northeast of Culloden Moor.

This once-prosperous fishing village is now more likely to lure golfers than sailors, though its long sandy beach is great for a stroll. Nearby attractions include Cawdor Castle and Fort George.

GETTING HERE AND AROUND

From Inverness, you can reach Nairn by bus, train, or car: simply drive west along the A96. A car will give you the most flexibility to explore the area, though there are some local buses.

Sights

★ Cawdor Castle and Gardens

CASTLE/PALACE | FAMILY | Shakespeare's Macbeth was the Thane of Cawdor (a local officer of the crown), but the sense of history that exists within the turreted walls of Cawdor Castle is certainly more

than fictional. Cawdor is a lived-in castle, not an abandoned, decaying structure. The earliest part is the 14th-century central tower; the rooms contain family portraits, tapestries, fine furniture, and paraphernalia reflecting 600 years of history. Outside the walls are sheltered gardens and woodland walks. Children will have a ball exploring the lush and mysterious Big Wood, with its wildflowers and varied wildlife. There are lots of creepy stories and fantastic tales amid the dank dungeons and drawbridges. If the castle sounds appealing, keep in mind that the estate has cottages to rent. Cawdor Castle is 6 miles southwest of Nairn. ☒ Off B9090, Cawdor ☎ 01667/404401 🌐 www.cawdorcastle.com 🚗 Castle £13.50; grounds only £8 🕒 Closed Oct.–Apr.

★ Fort George

MILITARY SIGHT | After the fateful Battle of Culloden, the nervous government in London ordered the construction of a large fort on a promontory reaching into the Moray Firth. Fort George was started in 1748 and completed some 20 years later. It's one of the best-preserved 18th-century military fortifications in Europe. At its height it housed 1,600 men and around 30,000 pounds of gunpowder; the on-site Highlanders Museum gives you a glimpse of the fort's history. The fort, 8½ miles west of Nairn, is also a great base for spotting dolphins and whales out at sea. ☒ Old Military Rd., Ardersier ➔ Off B9006 ☎ 01667/460232 🌐 www.historicenvironment.scot 🚗 £9.

Nairn Museum

HISTORY MUSEUM | FAMILY | The fishing boats have moved to larger ports, but Nairn's historical flavor has been preserved at the Nairn Museum, in a handsome Georgian building in the center of town. Exhibits emphasize artifacts, photographs, and model boats relating to the town's fishing past. A genealogy service is also offered. A library in the same building has a strong local-history

section. ☒ Viewfield Dr., Off A96, Nairn ☎ 01667/456791 🌐 www.nairnmuseum.co.uk 🚗 £4 🕒 Closed Sun.

Hotels

★ Boath House

\$\$\$ | **B&B/INN** | Built in the 1820s and recently refurbished, this stunning Regency manor house offers elegant, spacious rooms (some with cast-iron bathtubs), a highly renowned fine-dining restaurant with local, ethically sourced ingredients, and a stunning setting within 20 acres of lovingly nurtured gardens. **Pros:** great package deals; excellent dining; gorgeous grounds and relaxed atmosphere. **Cons:** very pricey; no gym or spa facilities; some airplane noise. ☑ Rooms from: £250 ☒ Off A96, Auldearn ☎ 01667/454896 🌐 www.boath-house.com 🚗 9 rooms 🕒 Free Breakfast.

Sandown House

\$\$ | **B&B/INN** | This former dairy-farm-turned-guesthouse offers a choice of accommodations: opt for one of the two charming sea-view guest rooms in the main 110-year-old building or for one of the more spacious, modern suites in the separate courtyard building. **Pros:** superb breakfast with lots of choice; easy access to Nairn Golf Club and beach; stylish rooms with spacious bathrooms. **Cons:** a 30-minute walk to the center of Nairn; no lunch or dinner available; main house rooms are smaller. ☑ Rooms from: £155 ☒ Sandown Farm La., Nairn ☎ 01667/451363 🌐 www.sandownhouse.com 🚗 6 rooms 🕒 Free Breakfast.

★ Wendy Hoose

\$ | **B&B/INN** | Located at the bottom of the Boath House Estate, the Wendy Hoose—named for owner Wendy Matheson, who runs the property with her husband, Don—is a charming B&B, where the historic exterior gives way to a thoroughly modern interior. **Pros:** easy access to dining at Boath House; informal and

relaxed vibe; cozy contemporary decor.

Cons: no guests under 18 allowed; two-night minimum in high season; accepts only cash or Bacs (U.K. payment system).
Rooms from: £120 **Boath House, Off A96, Auldearn** ☎ 07703/737530 www.thewendyhoose.com ➡ 2 rooms **Free Breakfast.**

Shopping

Auldearn Antiques

ANTIQUES & COLLECTIBLES | It's easy to spend an hour wandering around this old church, 3½ miles southeast of Nairn. It's filled to the brim with furniture, fireplaces, architectural antiques, and linens, and the converted farmsteads also have tempting antique chinaware and textiles.
Dalmore Manse, Lethen Rd., Auldearn ☎ 01667/453087 www.auldearnantiques.co.uk.

Activities

BOATING

Phoenix Sea Adventures

BOATING | With one- and two-hour trips by boat from Nairn Harbour into the Moray Firth, Phoenix Sea Adventures offers you the chance to see seals, porpoises, and dolphins in their breeding areas. The daily departure times for the modern, ex-naval SWIFT vessels vary depending on the tides and the weather. Evening trips are offered on certain dates in summer.
Nairn Marina, Harbour St., Nairn ☎ 01667/457175 www.phoenix-nairn.co.uk ➡ Tours from £20.

GOLF

Nairn's courses are highly regarded by golfers and are very popular, so book far in advance.

Nairn Dunbar Golf Club

GOLF | Founded in 1899, the difficult Championship Links Course here features gorse-lined fairways and lovely sea views. **TIP→ Ask about the special-rate Nairn ticket, which allows you to play**

both this and the similarly named Nairn Golf Club, for the bargain rate of £210 from April to October. **Lochloy Rd., Nairn** ☎ 01667/452741 www.nairndunbar.com ➡ £70 (£50 after 2 pm) Apr. and Oct.; £100 (£70 after 3 pm) May–Sept.; £35 Nov.–Mar. **18 holes, 6721 yards, par 72.**

Nairn Golf Club

GOLF | Highly regarded in golfing circles, the Nairn Golf Club dates from 1887 and is the regular home of Scotland's Northern Open. Huge greens, aggressive gorse, a beach hazard for five of the holes, a steady prevailing wind, and distracting views across the Moray Firth make play on the Championship Course unforgettable. The adjoining nine-hole Cameron Course is ideal for a warm-up or a fun round for the family.
Seabank Rd., Nairn ☎ 01667/453208 www.nairngolfclub.co.uk ➡ Championship Course: £190 (£160 off-peak) May–Sept.; £130 Apr. and Oct. Cameron Course: £20 **18 holes, 6832 yards, par 71; Cameron Course: 9 holes, 1634 yards, par 29.**

Forres

10 miles east of Nairn.

The burgh of Forres is everything a Scottish medieval town should be, with a handsome tolbooth (the former courthouse and prison) and impressive gardens as its centerpiece. It's remarkable how well the old buildings have adapted to their modern retail uses. With two distilleries—one still operating, the other preserved as a museum—Forres is a key point on the Malt Whisky Trail. Brodie Castle is also nearby. Just 5 miles north you'll find Findhorn Ecovillage, and a sandy beach stretches along the edge of the semi-enclosed Findhorn Bay, which is excellent bird-watching territory.

GETTING HERE AND AROUND

Forres is easy to reach by car or bus from Inverness (via Nairn) on the A96, while regular ScotRail trains run here from Inverness and Aberdeen.

Sights

Benromach Distillery

DISTILLERY | The smallest distillery in Moray was founded in 1898. It's now owned by whisky specialist Gordon and MacPhail and produces an array of distinctive (often slightly peaty) malts, as well as its distinctive Red Door gin. An informative hourly tour will lead you through the facilities, including seeing the poignant signatures of distillery managers before and after a 15-year closure in the late 20th century. Tours end with a tutored nosing and tasting.
Invererne Rd., Forres ☎ 01309/675968 www.benromach.com ➡ From £8.

Brodie Castle

CASTLE/PALACE | A magnificent, medieval turreted fortification, Brodie Castle was rebuilt and extended in the 17th and 19th centuries. Consequently, there are fine examples of late-17th-century plasterwork preserved in the Dining Room and Blue Sitting Room, as well as a superb collection of artworks from the Old Masters up to the modern day. You'll also find an impressive library and beautiful gardens with more than 400 varieties of daffodils. The castle is around 4 miles west of Forres, on the road from Nairn.
Off A96, Brodie, Forres ☎ 01309/641371 www.nts.org.uk ➡ Castle and gardens £15, castle only £11 **Closed Oct.–early Feb.**

Dallas Dhu Historic Distillery

DISTILLERY | The final port of call on the Malt Whisky Trail, the Dallas Dhu Historic Distillery was the last such facility built in the 19th century and was still in operation until the 1980s. Today, its distillery rooms—from the malt barn to the still house to the bonded warehouses—make

up a fascinating exhibition that tells the story of Scotland's national drink. You'll be walked through the entire whisky-making process by an audio-tour guide, before eventually arriving in the bar to taste a dram and watch an entertainingly dated video.
Mannachie Rd., Forres ☎ 01309/676548 www.historicenvironment.scot ➡ £6 **Closed Thurs.–Fri. in Oct.–Mar.**

Findhorn Ecovillage

TOWN | This fascinating, self-sufficient community project began in 1962 and is still going strong 60 years later. Dedicated to developing “new ways of living infused with spiritual values,” the ecovillage draws its power from wind turbines, local farms, and gardens. You can wander around the village yourself for free, pick up a book for a self-guided tour (£7), or join a thought-provoking guided tour (£8, times and days vary by season so check the website) at the visitor center. The latter offers the most insight into the lives of the ultra-independent villagers, as well as a peek at some fascinating architectural quirks, from homes built out of whisky barrels to the Universal Hall, filled with beautiful engraved glass. Elsewhere, the Phoenix Shop sells organic foods and handmade crafts, and the Blue Angel Café serves organic and vegetarian fare. It's a short stroll from the ecovillage to Findhorn, with its pretty harbor and popular beach.
The Park, Off B9011, Findhorn ☎ 01309/690311 www.ecovillagefindhorn.com ➡ Free; tours £7 or £8.

Sueno's Stone

RUINS | At the eastern end of Forres stands Sueno's Stone, a 22-foot-tall pillar of stone carved with the ranks of soldiers from some long-forgotten battle. Nobody can quite agree on how old it is or what battle it marked, but its intricate Pictish carvings suggest it is from the early medieval period, probably erected between AD 600 and 1000.
Findhorn Rd., Forres www.historicenvironment.scot.

🍴 Restaurants

Franklin's Restaurant

\$\$\$ | MODERN BRITISH | Set within the gorgeous front room of the Cluny Bank Hotel, this excellent but unfussy fine-dining restaurant is run by Lloyd Kenny, a passionate foodie who's spent decades honing his skills as a chef. Choose from a two-course (£38) or three-course (£48) menu, with each offering beautifully prepared dishes made from the very finest Scottish produce, from roe deer to guinea fowl and from scallops to sole. **Known for:** rooms available upstairs; relaxed fine dining; charming and chatty host.
 ☎ Average main: £38 ☎ 69 St. Leonard's Rd., Forres ☎ 01309/674304 🌐 clunbank-hotel.co.uk ☺ Closed Sun. No lunch.

🏨 Hotels

Knockomie Inn

\$\$ | HOTEL | Stylishly decorated bedrooms, consistently high quality dining, and an appealing whisky bar makes this one of the area's most upmarket accommodations. **Pros:** good value dinner-bed-and-breakfast deals; antique furnishings; delicious cooked breakfasts. **Cons:** a little out of town; showing signs of wear and tear; bathrooms small and lacking shelves.
 ☎ Rooms from: £135 ☎ Grantown Rd., Forres ☎ 01309/673146 🌐 www.knockomie.co.uk ➡ 15 rooms 🏠 No Meals.

🛍 Shopping

★ Brodie Countryfare

MIXED CLOTHING | Visit Brodie Countryfare only if you're feeling flush: you may covet the unusual knitwear, quality designer clothing and shoes, gifts, and toys, but they are *not* cheap. The excellent restaurant, on the other hand, is quite inexpensive. In a rush? Pick up some delicious savory treats, like scotch eggs and sausage rolls, from the deli counter.
 ☎ A96, Brodie, Forres ☎ 01309/641555 🌐 www.brodiecountryfare.com.

Boat of Garten

30 miles south of Forres.

In the peaceful village of Boat of Garten, the scent of pine trees mingles with an equally evocative smell—that of steam trains. The town is home to the historic Strathspey Steam Railway. Close to Cairngorms National Park, Boat of Garten has built a reputation as a great place to stay while exploring the region.

GETTING HERE AND AROUND

This charming town is an easy drive from Forres via the A940/A939, or Inverness via the A9. It's also serviced by local buses, and some people travel here on the Strathspey Steam Train.

👁 Sights

Landmark Forest Adventure Park

AMUSEMENT PARK/CARNIVAL | FAMILY | Situated 4 miles northwest of Boat of Garten, this park has a host of attractions, including nature trails, a heart-stopping parachute jump simulator, raft rides with varying degrees of wetness, a fire tower you can climb, and, best of all, the WonderWood, a place where visual tricks like forced perspective are used to befuddle your senses. You could easily spend half a day here. The park is open year-round, but most attractions close in winter (so prices are significantly lower). ☎ B9153, Carrbridge ☎ 01479/841613 🌐 www.landmarkpark.co.uk ➡ Apr.–Oct. £24; Nov.–Mar. £10.

RSPB Loch Garten Osprey Centre

NATURE PRESERVE | Set in the heart of Abernethy Forest, 3 miles east of Boat of Garten, the Loch Garten Osprey Centre offers a glimpse of the large fishing birds that come here to breed. The reserve, one of the last stands of ancient Scots pines in Scotland, attracts a host of other birds, too, including the bright crossbill and the crested tit. You might also spot the rarely seen red squirrel. The sanctuary is administered by the Royal Society for the Protection of



Speyside and the Cairngorms

Birds (RSPB). ☎ Off B970, Nethy Bridge ☎ 01479/831476 🌐 www.rspb.org.uk ☎ £5 ☺ Closed early Sept.–Mar.

Strathspey Steam Railway

TRAIN/TRAIN STATION | FAMILY | The oily scent of smoke and steam hangs faintly in the air near the authentically preserved train station in Boat of Garten. Travel in old-fashioned style and enjoy superb views of the high, often white domes of the Cairngorm Mountains. Breakfasts, lunches, and special dinners are served on board from March to October and in December. **TIP → For the full experience, check the details carefully before you book, especially outside of the high season—less romantic diesel engines are used on certain days.** ☎ Boat of Garten station, Spey Ave., Boat of Garten ☎ 01479/810725 🌐 www.strathspeyrailway.co.uk ➡ £15.75 round-trip.

★ Tomatin Distillery

DISTILLERY | Established in 1897 and once the largest malt distillery in Scotland, Tomatin is more of a large industrial complex than a typical pagoda-roofed Speyside distillery, yet the working nature of this place makes for a fascinating tour. Knowledgeable and playful guides take visitors through every step of the whisky-making process, with fun extras like a chance to stand inside a disused mash tun, and a photo opp with barrels dating back to the mid-1900s. Tours conclude with a tasting of three single malts, including the heavily peated Cu Bocan—worth the price of admission alone. Tomatin Distillery is located 13 miles northwest of Boat of Garten, on the road from Inverness. ☎ Off A9, Inverness ☎ 01463/248144 🌐 www.tomatin.com ☎ £10.






Hotels

The Boat Country Inn

\$\$ | HOTEL | Great views of the Strathspey Steam Railway, welcoming traditional decor, and a wide variety of room types make this hotel much more than just a base for exploring the Cairngorms. **Pros:** garden access an option; good views; peaceful location. **Cons:** disappointing breakfast; some shared spaces need a lick of paint; not all rooms are family friendly.  Rooms from: £140  Deshar Rd., Boat of Garten  01479/831258  www.boathotel.co.uk  34 rooms  Free Breakfast.

Activities

★ Boat of Garten Golf Club

GOLF | This is one of Scotland's greatest "undiscovered" courses. The club, which dates from the late 19th century, was redesigned and extended by James Braid in 1932, and each of its 18 holes has a strong Highland feel. Some cut through birch wood and heathery rough, and most have long views to the Cairngorms. An unusual feature is the preserved steam railway that runs alongside part of the course.  Nethybridge Rd., Boat of Garten  01479/831282  www.boatgolf.com  £75  18 holes, 5876 yards, par 70.

Aviemore

6 miles southwest of Boat of Garten.

At the foot of the Cairngorms, once-quiet Aviemore now has all the brashness and boxiness of a year-round holiday resort. In summer, it's filled with walkers, cyclists, and rock climbers and is a convenient place for stocking up on supplies.

Nevertheless, many of the smaller villages nearby are quieter places to stay.

■ **TIP → Be forewarned: this region can get very cold above 3,000 feet, and weather conditions can change rapidly, even in the middle of summer.**

Boat of Garten's Ferry

A ferry that once linked both sides of the River Spey gave its name to Boat of Garten. The first official record of the ferry is in 1662, but the village itself did not appear until the coming of the railway in 1868, when cottages sprang up between the railway line and the ferry crossing. When it was time to pick a name, the ferry seemed like a good symbol. Not long after that, bridges were built across the River Spey, and demand for the little ferry disappeared. But the name stuck.

GETTING HERE AND AROUND

The A9, Scotland's major north-south artery, runs past Aviemore. From Boat of Garten take the A95 south. The town is serviced by regular trains and buses from Inverness, Edinburgh, and Glasgow.

ESSENTIALS

VISITOR INFORMATION VisitScotland Aviemore iCentre.  7 Grampian Rd., Aviemore  01479/810930  www.visitscotland.com.

Sights

★ Cairngorms National Park

NATIONAL PARK | This sprawling, rugged wilderness of mountains, moorlands, glens, and lochs covers nearly 1,750 square miles of countryside, making it Britain's largest national park. It is home to five of Scotland's nine 4,000-foot mountains, with 13 more over 3,000 feet. These rounded mountains, including Cairn Gorm (meaning "blue hill" in Gaelic) and Ben Macdui, the second highest in Britain at 4,295 feet, were formed at the end of the last ice age. The Lairig Ghru Pass, a stunning U-shaped glen, was carved by the retreating glacier.






Rugged Cairngorms National Park features many beaches and lochs, including rocky Loch Morlich.

A good place to start exploring the Cairngorms is the main visitor center in Aviemore. The staff can dispense maps, expert advice on the best trails, and information on guided walks and other activities. For hikers and cyclists, there are dozens of scenic trails centered around Loch Morlich. Because much of the park's best scenery—including ancient pine forests and open moorland—is off-road, a particularly good way to cover ground in the park is on a pony trek. The Rothiemurchus Estate leads treks for riders of all abilities.

The environment supports rare arctic-alpine and tundra plant and animal species (a full quarter of Britain's endangered species are found here), including flora such as the least willow and alpine blue-sow thistle and birds such as the ptarmigan, dotterel, and Scottish crossbill—the only bird completely unique to Britain. Lower down the slopes, terrain that was once filled with woodland is now characterized by heather, cotton grass, and sphagnum moss. This open expanse affords

glimpses of animals such as the golden eagle, roe deer, or red deer. Fragments of the ancient Caledonian forest (largely Scots pine, birch, and rowan) remain and are ideal habitats for pine martens, red squirrels, and capercaillie (a large grouse). Studding these forests are dramatic glens and the rivers Spey, Don, and Dee, which are home to Atlantic salmon, otters, and freshwater pearl mussels.

Weather conditions in the park change abruptly, so bring cold-weather gear, particularly if you plan on hiking long distances.  Aviemore  01479/873535  cairngorms.co.uk.

Cairngorm Reindeer Centre

NATURE PRESERVE | FAMILY | On the high slopes of the Cairngorms, you may see the reindeer herd that was introduced here in the 1950s. The reindeer are docile creatures that seem to enjoy human company. Ranger-led visits to the 150-strong herd are offered at least once a day, weather permitting. In July and August you can also accompany rangers on gentle half-day treks through the

mountains. From April through December a small herd of young reindeer is cared for at a paddock near the visitor center; you can visit (and pet them) for a small fee. Bring waterproof gear, as conditions can be wet and muddy. The Cairngorm Reindeer Centre lies 6 miles east of Aviemore. ☎ *Reindeer House, Glenmore, Aviemore* ☎ 01479/861228 🌐 www.cairngormreindeer.co.uk 📄 £18.50; paddock £3.50.

★ Rothiemurchus

NATURE PRESERVE | FAMILY | This excellent activity center has a host of organized outdoor diversions, including guided pony rides, mountain biking, fishing, gorge swimming, and white-water rafting. It also offers ranger-guided safaris to see the park's rare and endangered wildlife, including red squirrels and "hairy heilan coos" (Highland slang for Highland cattle—docile, yaklike creatures). The Rothiemurchus Centre is the best place to get oriented and book activities; it also has a handy restaurant and a well-stocked shop selling plenty of fresh produce from the estate. One of the most beautiful parts of the estate is a nature reserve called Loch an Eilein. There are great low-level paths around the tree-rimmed loch—perfect for bikes—or longer trails to Glen Einich. A converted cottage beside Loch an Eilein serves as a visitor center, art gallery, and craft store. ☎ *Rothiemurchus Centre, B970, Inverdrue* ☎ 01479/812345 🌐 rothiemurchus.net.

🍴 Restaurants

Old Bridge Inn

\$\$ | **MODERN BRITISH** | This old-style bar and conservatory restaurant serves what many locals claim is the best pub food in Aviemore. The menu changes with the seasons, but you can always expect simple dishes built around quality ingredients such as local lamb chops or Angus beef, as well as a variety of fresh fish. **Known for:** warm and welcoming vibe; classic British fare; spirited live music.

Biking the Glen



A dedicated bicycle path, created by Scotland's National Cycle Networks, runs from Glasgow to Inverness, passing through Fort William and Kingussie. Additionally, a good network of back roads snakes around Inverness and toward Nairn. The B862 and B852, which run by the southern and eastern sides of Loch Ness, have little traffic and are good bets for cyclists. It's best to stay off the vehicle-heavy A9 on both sides of Aviemore, as well as the A82 main road along the northwest bank of Loch Ness via Drumnadrochit.

📄 *Average main:* £17 ☎ 23 *Dalfaber Rd., Aviemore* ☎ 01479/811137 🌐 www.oldbridgeinn.co.uk.

🏠 Hotels

Cairngorm Hotel

\$ | **HOTEL** | The suit of armor standing guard at the entrance is a good indication of what awaits within this grand old house: acres of tartan carpet, chandeliers made from antlers, and a small museum's worth of distinctly Scottish decorative items (be sure to say hello to the taxidermy golden eagle on the stairs). **Pros:** family rooms offered; practical location; simple and traditional rooms. **Cons:** regular live bagpiper not for everyone; interior needs a refresh; not scenic. 📄 *Rooms from:* £110 ☎ 77 *Grampian Rd., Aviemore* ☎ 01479/810233 🌐 cairngorm.com ➡ 32 rooms 🍷 Free Breakfast.

★ Ravenscraig Guest House

\$ | **B&B/INN** | Owned by Scottish-Swedish couple Scott and Helena, this charming little B&B offers a warm family welcome, modern rooms with bathrooms en suite, and a great location at the heart

of Aviemore. **Pros:** free off-road parking; fantastic breakfast; smart TVs in the rooms. **Cons:** no dinner service; weak shower pressure; early checkout time. 📄 *Rooms from:* £80 ☎ 141 *Grampian Rd., Aviemore* ☎ 01479/810278 🌐 www.ravenscraighouse.co.uk ➡ 12 rooms 🍷 Free Breakfast.

🚶 Activities

Glenmore Lodge

MOUNTAIN CLIMBING | In Cairngorms National Park, this is a good center for day and residential courses on rock and ice climbing, hiking, kayaking, ski touring, mountain biking, and more. Some classes are aimed at under-18s. There are superb facilities, such as an indoor climbing wall. Glenmore Lodge is about 7 miles east of Aviemore, just beyond Cairngorm Reindeer Centre. ☎ *Off B970, Glenmore, Aviemore* ☎ 01479/861256 🌐 www.glenmorelodge.org.uk.

G2 Outdoor

WATER SPORTS | The wide range of adventures at G2 Outdoor includes white-water rafting, gorge walking, and rock climbing. The company offers a family float trip on the River Spey in summer, and in winter runs ski courses. ☎ *The Hatchery, Alvie Estate, Aviemore* ➡ *Off A9* ☎ 01540/651784 🌐 www.g2outdoor.co.uk.

Mikes Bikes (Aviemore Bikes)

BIKING | This small bike shop stocks all the gear you might need to take advantage of the many paths around Aviemore. It also rents and repairs bikes. Prices start at £15 for three hours. ☎ 5A *Myrtlefield Shopping Centre, Grampian Rd., Aviemore* ☎ 01479/810478 🌐 [www.aviemorebikes.co.uk](http://aviemorebikes.co.uk).

Kingussie

12½ miles southwest of Aviemore.

Set in a wide glen, Kingussie is a pretty town east of the Monadhliath Mountains. With great distant views of the Cairngorms, it's perfect for those who would prefer to avoid the far more hectic town of Aviemore.

GETTING HERE AND AROUND

From Aviemore, Kingussie is easy to reach by car via the A9 (switch to the A86 for the last mile), although the slightly longer drive along the B9152 is generally quieter and more pleasant. There are also good bus and train services between the two towns.

👁 Sights

★ Highland Folk Museum

HISTORY MUSEUM | FAMILY | Explore reconstructed Highland buildings, including a Victorian-era schoolhouse, at this open-air museum 2 miles west of Kingussie. You can also watch tailors, clock makers, and joiners demonstrating their trades. Walking paths (or old-fashioned buses) take you to the 18th-century township that was a setting for the hit TV show *Outlander* and includes a peat house made of turf and a weaver's house. Throughout the museum there are hands-on exhibits like a working quern stone for grinding grain. ☎ *Aultlarie Croft, Kingussie Rd., Newtonmore* ☎ 01349/781650 🌐 www.highlifehighland.com 🍷 Free ☺ Closed Nov.–Mar.

Ruthven Barracks

MILITARY SIGHT | Looking like a ruined castle on a mound, Ruthven Barracks is redolent with tales of "the '45," as the last Jacobite rebellion is often called. The defeated Jacobite forces rallied here after the Battle of Culloden, but they then abandoned and blew up the government

outpost they had earlier captured. You'll see its crumbling, yet imposing, stone outline as you approach. Most come by car—there's a small car park across the road—but it's also walkable from Kingussie in about 20 minutes. ☒ *Off B970, Kingussie* 🌐 www.historicenvironment.scot.

🍴 Restaurants

★ The Cross at Kingussie

\$\$\$\$ | **BRITISH** | This former tweed mill, with a narrow river running alongside its stone walls, is a haven of wooden beams, whitewashed stone walls, and open fireplaces, all set within 4 acres of woodlands. The intimate dining room serves sumptuous Scottish produce, from duck and halibut to lamb and sea bass, each delicately prepared with an intimate knowledge of textures and flavors. **Known for:** gorgeous desserts like passion fruit cheesecake; perfectly curated set menus; stunning location. ☒ *Average main: £55* ☒ *Tweedmill Brae, Ardbroilach Rd., Kingussie* ☎ *01540/661166* 🌐 thecross.co.uk ☺ *Closed Jan. No dinner Sun. and Mon.*

🏨 Hotels

Coig Na Shee

\$ | **B&B/INN** | This century-old Highland lodge has a warm and cozy atmosphere, and each of its spacious bedrooms is unique, with well-chosen furnishings and soothing color schemes. **Pros:** quiet location; great walks from house; plenty of privacy. **Cons:** hard to reach without a car; some rooms on the smaller side; 3½ miles outside Kingussie. ☒ *Rooms from: £95* ☒ *Off Laggan Rd. (A86), Newtonmore* ☎ *01540/670109* 🌐 www.coignashee.co.uk ➡ *5 rooms* 🏠 *Free Breakfast* 🚫 *No children under 8.*

★ Sutherlands Guest House

\$ | **B&B/INN** | Finding that sweet spot where contemporary meets cozy is no mean feat, but the husband-and-wife

team behind this welcoming guesthouse make it look simple. **Pros:** great value; lovely spacious bedrooms; stunning lounge views. **Cons:** early checkout time; not licensed to sell alcohol; hilltop location best accessed by car. ☒ *Rooms from: £115* ☒ *Old Distillery Rd., Kingussie* ☎ *01540/661155* 🌐 www.sutherlandskingussie.co.uk ➡ *5 rooms* 🏠 *Free Breakfast.*

Drumnadrochit and Loch Ness

15 miles southwest of Inverness.

A tourist hub at the curve of the road, Drumnadrochit is not known for its style or culture, but it attracts plenty of people interested in searching for mythical monsters. There aren't many good restaurants, but there are some decent-enough hotels.

GETTING HERE AND AROUND

Drumnadrochit is an easy drive from Inverness (to the north) or Fort Augustus (to the south) on the A82. Buses run frequently, as this is a busy tourist destination.

👁 Sights

Loch Ness

BODY OF WATER | From the A82 you get some spectacular views of the formidable Loch Ness, which has a greater volume of water than any other British lake, a maximum depth of more than 800 feet, and—perhaps you've already heard?—a famous monster. Early travelers who passed this way included General Wade (1673–1748), who, prior to destroying much of Hadrian's Wall in England, came to dig a road up the loch's eastern shore; English lexicographer Dr. Samuel Johnson (1709–84), who remarked at the time about the poor condition of the population and the squalor of their homes;

“Nessie”: The Loch Ness Monster



Tall tales involving some kind of beast inhabiting the dark waters of Loch Ness go all the way back to St. Columba in the 7th century AD—but, for the most part, the legend of “Nessie” is a disappointingly modern one. In 1933, two vacationing Londoners gave an intriguing account to a newspaper, describing a large, unidentified creature that slithered in front of their car before plunging into the loch. Later that year a local man, Hugh Gray, took the first purported photograph of the monster, and Nessie fever was born. The pictures kept coming—none of them too clear, of course—and before long the resident monster turned into a boon for the local tourism industry. Fortunately for

them the age of camera phones has not dented Nessie's popularity: you don't have to search far on the Internet to find all sorts of photos of something—anything—that must surely be the monster, if you only squint a little. But does anybody seriously believe in it? Well ... no. But like all good legends, there is just enough doubt to keep the campfire tales alive. In 2006, declassified documents even revealed that, in the 1980s, Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher considered plans to declare the Loch Ness monster a protected species, as a safeguard against the hordes of bounty hunters she feared would descend should it ever be proven to exist.


and travel writer and naturalist Thomas Pennant (1726–98), who noted that the loch kept the locality frost-free in winter. None of these observant early travelers ever made mention of a monster. Clearly, they had not read the local guidebooks. ☒ *Drumnadrochit.*

Loch Ness Centre and Exhibition

OTHER MUSEUM | **FAMILY** | If you're in search of the infamous monster, the Loch Ness Centre and Exhibition walks you through the fuzzy photographs, the unexplained sonar readings, and the sincere testimony of eyewitnesses. It's an entertaining way to spend an hour, even if the boasts of “high tech” and “state-of-the-art” feel overly generous. It's said that the loch's huge volume of water has a warming effect on the local weather, making the loch conducive to mirages in still, warm conditions—but you'll have to make up your own mind about that explanation. ☒ *A82, Drumnadrochit* ☎ *01456/450573* 🌐 www.lochness.com 🎫 *£8.45.*

★ Urquhart Castle

CASTLE/PALACE | Located about 2 miles southeast of Drumnadrochit, this castle is a favorite Loch Ness monster-watching spot. This romantically broken-down fortress stands on a promontory overlooking the loch, as it has since the Middle Ages. Because of its central and strategic position in the Great Glen line of communication, the castle has a complex history involving military offense and defense, as well as its own destruction and renovation. The castle was begun in the 13th century and was destroyed before the end of the 17th century to prevent its use by the Jacobites. A visitor center gives an idea of what life was like here in medieval times. ☒ *Off A82, Drumnadrochit* ☎ *01456/450551* 🌐 www.historicenvironment.scot 🎫 *£12.*

to connect the lochs and complete the waterway from coast to coast. After 19 years, the canal, with its 29 locks and 42 gates, was open and ready for action. Travel along the canal today and stunning vistas open up: mountains, lochs, and glens, and to the south, the profile of Ben Nevis. At the visitor center in Fort Augustus, you can learn all about this historic engineering feat and take a picturesque walk along the towpath.  **Caledonian Canal Centre, Canalside, Fort Augustus** ☎ 01463/725581 🌐 www.scottishcanals.co.uk.

Hotels

Glengarry Castle Hotel

\$\$ | **HOTEL** | Tucked away in Invergarry, 7 miles south of Fort Augustus though still within reach of the Great Glen's most popular sights, this rambling baronial mansion offers alluringly old-fashioned rooms with traditional Victorian decor, some with superb views over Loch Oich. **Pros:** family rooms available; atmospheric building and gardens; good-value takeout lunches. **Cons:** some may find it old-fashioned; a little way from Loch Ness; no elevator.  **Rooms from: £180**  **Off A82, Invergarry** ☎ 01809/501254 🌐 www.glengarry.net ☺ **Closed Nov.–Mar.** ➡ 26 rooms  **Free Breakfast.**

The Lovat

\$\$\$ | **HOTEL** | The rooms in this charming Victorian hotel are tasteful and comfy, with some offering loch views, but the real highlights are the carefully furnished shared areas. **Pros:** some dog-friendly rooms; lovely lochside location; the region's best fine dining restaurant. **Cons:** expensive for the area; some corridors feel sterile; inconsistency in the quality of rooms.  **Rooms from: £225**  **Off A82, Fort Augustus** ☎ 01456/490000 🌐 www.thelovat.com ➡ 28 rooms  **Free Breakfast.**


Fort William

31 miles southwest of Fort Augustus.

As its name suggests, Fort William originated as a military outpost, established by Oliver Cromwell's General Monk in 1655 and refortified by George I (1660–1727) in 1715 to help combat an uprising by the turbulent Jacobite clans. It remains the southern gateway to the Great Glen and the far west. It's not Scotland's most charming or authentic town, but it's got several good hotels and makes a convenient base for exploring the surrounding countryside.

GETTING HERE AND AROUND

From Glasgow (to the south) and Inverness (to the north), the A82 takes you the entire way. From Edinburgh, take the M9 to the A84. This empties into the A85, which connects to the A82 that takes you to Fort William. Roads around Fort William are well maintained but mostly one lane in each direction. They can be very busy in summer.

A long-distance Scottish Citylink bus connects Glasgow and Fort William. ScotRail has trains from London, as well as connections from Glasgow and Edinburgh. It also operates a train service three times a day between Fort William and Mallaig. For those who like to combine travel and accommodations, the Caledonian Sleeper ( www.sleeper.scot) leaves most days from London Euston late in the evening, arriving at Fort William midmorning the following day.

ESSENTIALS

VISITOR INFORMATION **VisitScotland Fort William iCentre.**  15 High St., Fort William ☎ 01397/701801 🌐 www.visitfortwilliam.co.uk, www.visitscotland.com.



The famous Jacobite Steam Train doubles as the Hogwarts Express in the Harry Potter films.


Sights

Ben Nevis


MOUNTAIN | The tallest mountain in the British Isles, 4,411-foot Ben Nevis looms over Fort William, less than 4 miles from Loch Linnhe. A trek to its summit is a rewarding experience, but you should be fit and well prepared—food and water, map and compass, first-aid kit, whistle, hat, gloves, and warm clothing (yes, even in summer), as well as insect spray for midges—as the unpredictable weather can make it a hazardous hike. Ask for advice at the local tourist office before you begin.

★ Jacobite Steam Train

TRAIN/TRAIN STATION | **FAMILY** | The most relaxing way to take in the wild, birch- and bracken-covered slopes is by rail, and the best ride is on the historic Jacobite Steam Train, a spectacularly scenic 84-mile round-trip that runs between Fort William and Mallaig. You'll see mountains, lochs, beaches, and islands along the way. There are two trips a day

between late April and late October (though weekend trips are only in the height of summer).  **Fort William Travel Centre, MacFarlane Way, Fort William** ☎ 0844/850-4685 🌐 westcoastrailways.co.uk ➡ £69 round-trip ☺ **Closed late Oct.–late Apr.**

★ Nevis Range Mountain Experience

VIEWPOINT | Located 6 miles northeast of Fort William, this fantastic outdoor center offers a range of activities in all seasons, from downhill skiing and snowboarding to exhilarating mountain-biking trails, treetop adventure obstacle courses, and mountaintop paragliding. From June to early September, you can also take a gondola to the 2,000-foot summit of Aonach Mor, from which you can hike and explore more of the range (and enjoy stunning views of Ben Nevis). There are also two good dining options: try Pinemarten Café at the foot of the gondola for its rich macaroni and cheese and local craft beer selection.  **Off A82, Fort William** ☎ 01397/705825 🌐 www.nevisrange.co.uk ➡ **Gondola £22.**

★ West Highland Museum

HISTORY MUSEUM | In the town center, the small but fascinating West Highland Museum explores the history of Prince Charles Edward Stuart and the 1745 rebellion. Included in the museum's folk exhibits are a costume and tartan display and an excellent collection of Jacobite relics. One of the most intriguing objects here is a tray decorated with a distorted image of Bonnie Prince Charlie that only becomes visible when reflected in a wine glass or goblet. This elaborate ruse enabled clandestine supporters among the nobility to raise a (treasonous) toast without fear of discovery. ☒ *Cameron Sq., Fort William* ☎ 01397/702169 🌐 www.westhighlandmuseum.org.uk ☺ Closed Sat.–Mon.

🍴 Restaurants

★ Crannog Seafood Restaurant

\$\$\$ | **SEAFOOD** | With a reputation for quality and simplicity, this restaurant on the town pier serves outstanding seafood. Fishing boats draw up on the shores of Loch Linnhe and deliver their catch straight to the kitchen. **Known for:** offers seal-spotting cruises in summer; small but well-curated menu that includes delicious Cullen skink; idyllic lochside location. ☎ *Average main: £22* ☒ *Town Pier, Fort William* ☎ 01397/705589 🌐 www.crannog.net.

Lime Tree An Ealdhain

\$\$\$ | **MODERN BRITISH** | One of Fort William's most upscale culinary spots, this restaurant is unfussy and modern inside, with low-hanging lamps, rich jewel-toned walls, and solid wood furniture. Expect filling dishes that, while not overly complex, are given an edge with embellishments such as fennel sauerkraut or marrowbone crumble. **Known for:** on-site art gallery; some of Fort William's most interesting food; inspired desserts. ☎ *Average main: £21* ☒ *The Old Manse, Achintore Rd., Fort William* ☎ 01397/701806 🌐 www.limetreelfortwilliam.co.uk ☺ No lunch.

🏠 Hotels

★ Ardrhu House

\$\$\$ | **HOUSE** | Drive 10 miles south of Fort William, turn onto an unassuming country road, and you'll find this hidden gem of a guest house—a gorgeous old lochside manor with beautifully appointed bedrooms, a top-drawer restaurant, and even a small spa. **Pros:** outdoor whirlpool tub overlooking Loch Linnhe; Master Suite has its own steam room; exceptional dining. **Cons:** no TVs in the bedrooms; continental breakfast only; a 20-minute drive from Fort William. ☎ *Rooms from: £240* ☒ *Off A82 near Onich, Fort William* ☎ 01855/821210 🌐 www.ardrhuhouse.com ➡ 6 rooms 🍳 Free Breakfast.

★ Crolinnhe Guest House

\$\$ | **B&B/INN** | This beautiful old house with elegant suites and colorful gardens overlooks Loch Linnhe yet is only a 10-minute walk from town. **Pros:** comfortable rooms; stunning loch views; great breakfasts. **Cons:** grand decor not to everyone's tastes; short walk from town; late check-in and early check-out. ☎ *Rooms from: £180* ☒ *Grange Rd., Fort William* ☎ 01397/703795 🌐 www.crolinnhe.com ☺ Closed Nov.–Easter ➡ 3 suites 🍳 Free Breakfast.

Inverloch Castle Hotel

\$\$\$\$ | **HOTEL** | A red-granite mansion turned luxury boutique hotel, Inverloch Castle stands on 50 acres of woodlands in the shadow of Ben Nevis, with striking scenery on every side. **Pros:** beautiful countryside location; gorgeous historic building; excellent restaurant. **Cons:** a little outside Fort William; strict dress code for dinner; extremely expensive. ☎ *Rooms from: £515* ☒ *Off A82, Fort William* ☎ 01397/702177 🌐 www.inverlochcastlehotel.com ☺ Closed mid-Jan.–mid-Feb. ➡ 17 rooms 🍳 Free Breakfast.

🚶 Activities

GOLF

Fort William Golf Club

GOLF | This excellent course has spectacular views of Ben Nevis (indeed, it partly occupies its lower slope). The Highland course appeals to beginners and experts alike, drawn as much for the beautiful setting as the thoroughly reasonable green fees. Watch out for the treacherous 4th hole—it looks simple, but a fierce prevailing wind will test even the most practiced swing. ☒ *North Rd., Torlundy, Fort William* ➡ *Off A82* ☎ 01397/704464 🌐 www.fortwilliamgolfclub.com ☎ £20 ➡ 18 holes, 6217 yards, par 70.

HIKING

This area—especially around Glen Nevis, Glencoe, and Ben Nevis—is popular with hikers. However, routes are not well marked, so contact the VisitScotland Fort William iCentre before you go. The center will provide you with expert advice based on your interests, level of fitness, and hiking experience.

★ Glen Nevis

HIKING & WALKING | For a walk in Glen Nevis, drive north from Fort William on the A82 toward Fort Augustus. On the outskirts of town, just before the bridge over the River Nevis, turn right up the road signposted Glen Nevis. About 6½ miles along this road is a parking lot (Upper Glen Nevis Car Park); from here, a footpath will lead you to a steel-cable bridge (1 mile) and then to Steall Waterfall. The ruined croft beside the boulder-strewn stream is a great picnic place. You can continue up the glen for some distance without any danger of becoming lost as long as you stay on the path and keep the river to your right. Watch your step going through the tree-lined gorge. The return route is simply back the way you came. ☒ *Upper Glen Nevis Car Park*.

Glenfinnan

16 miles west of Fort William, 19 miles east of Arisaig.

Perhaps the most visitor-oriented stop on the route between Fort William and Mallaig, Glenfinnan has much to offer if you're interested in Scottish history. Here the National Trust for Scotland has capitalized on the romance surrounding the story of the Jacobites and their attempts to return a Stewart monarch and the Roman Catholic religion to a country that had become staunchly Protestant. It was at Glenfinnan that the rash adventurer Bonnie Prince Charlie gathered his meager forces for the final Jacobite rebellion of 1745–46.

GETTING HERE AND AROUND

If you're driving from Fort William, travel west via the A830. The same road continues to Arisaig and Mallaig. For great views, take a ride on the Jacobite Steam Train, which you can catch in Fort William.

👁 Sights

Glenfinnan Monument

MONUMENT | One of the most striking monuments in Britain, this 1815 tower overlooking Loch Shiel commemorates the place where Bonnie Prince Charlie raised his standard. Note, however, that the figure on the top is a Highlander, not the prince himself. The story of his ill-fated campaign is told in the nearby visitor center. ■ **TIP→ The view down Loch Shiel from the Glenfinnan Monument is one of the most photographed in Scotland.** ☎ *Off A830, Glenfinnan* ☎ 01397/722250 🌐 www.nts.org.uk.

Glenfinnan Viaduct

BRIDGE | The 1,248-foot-long Glenfinnan Viaduct was a genuine wonder when it was built in 1897, and it remains so today. The railway's contractor, Robert MacAlpine (known among locals as "Concrete Bob"), pioneered the use of concrete for bridges when his company

built the Mallaig extension, which opened in 1901. In more recent times the viaduct became famous for its appearance in the Harry Potter films. The viaduct can be seen on foot; about ½ mile west of the railway station in Glenfinnan, on the A380 road, is a small parking lot. Take the footpath from here; you'll reach the viaduct in about ½ mile. If you time it right, usually at 11 am, 3 pm, and 7:30 pm (confirm times at westcoastrailways.co.uk), you'll see the iconic Jacobite Steam Train crossing the bridge. [✉ Glenfinnan Viaduct Car Park, Off A380, Glenfinnan.](#)

Hotels

Glenfinnan House

\$\$ | HOTEL | This handsome hotel on the shores of Loch Shiel was built in the 18th century as the home of Alexander MacDonald VII of Glenaladale, who was wounded fighting for Bonnie Prince Charlie; it was transformed into an even grander mansion in the 19th century. **Pros:** beautiful views; fabulous setting; atmospheric dining experience. **Cons:** no air-conditioning; a bit fussy for some; can hear bar noise in some rooms. [📞 Rooms from: £150](#) [✉ Off A830, Glenfinnan](#) [📞 01397/722235](#) [🌐 www.glenfinnan-house.com](#) [🕒 Closed Nov.–mid-Mar.](#) [➡ 15 rooms](#) [🍷 Free Breakfast.](#)

Arisaig

18 miles west of Glenfinnan.

Considering its small size, Arisaig, gateway to the Small Isles, offers a surprising choice of high-quality options for dining and lodging. To the north of Arisaig, the road cuts across a headland to reach a stretch of coastline where silver sands glitter with the mica in the local rock. Clear water, blue sky, and white sand lend a tropical flavor to the beaches—when the sun is shining.

From Arisaig try to visit a couple of the Small Isles: Rum, Eigg, Muck, and Canna, each tiny and with few or no inhabitants. Rum serves as a wildlife reserve, while Eigg was the world's first community where electricity was produced off-grid, solely by wind, wave, and solar energy.

GETTING HERE AND AROUND

From Glenfinnan, you reach Arisaig on the A830, the only road leading west. The Fort William–Mallaig train also stops here.

Restaurants

The Old Library

\$\$ | FRENCH | On the waterfront, this 1722 barn has been converted into a lovely, reasonably priced restaurant. Expect simple but tasty plates of local fish and seafood—think haddock, monkfish, scampi, and salmon—prepared in a French-bistro style. **Known for:** local character; hearty meals; ultrafresh produce. [📞 Average main: £15](#) [✉ B8008, Arisaig](#) [📞 01687/450651](#) [🌐 www.oldlibrary.co.uk.](#)

Hotels

Arisaig Hotel

\$ | B&B/INN | A coaching inn built in 1720, this hotel is close to the water and has magnificent views of the Small Isles. **Pros:** lots of life and music in the bar; amazing views of the bay; good-value restaurant. **Cons:** the main bar is noisy for some; small restaurant portions; rooms comfy but lack style. [📞 Rooms from: £110](#) [✉ B8008, Arisaig](#) [📞 01687/450210](#) [🌐 www.arisaighotel.co.uk](#) [➡ 13 rooms](#) [🍷 Free Breakfast.](#)

Activities

BOATING

Arisaig Marine

BOATING | FAMILY | Along with a host of wildlife excursions offering a chance to see minke whales, basking sharks, bottlenose dolphins, killer whales,

porpoises, gray seals, and lots of sea birdlife (including cute puffins), Arisaig Marine runs a boat service from the harbor at Arisaig to the Small Isles from May to September. There's also a little tea-room and gift shop here. [✉ Arisaig Harbour, Arisaig](#) [📞 01687/450224](#) [🌐 www.arisaig.co.uk](#) [➡ Eigg £18 round-trip.](#)

Mallaig

7½ miles north of Arisaig.

After the beautiful approach along the coast, the fishing port of Mallaig itself feels a little anticlimactic. It's pleasant enough, with some decent shops and cafes, but most jump straight on the ferry to the Isle of Skye, the largest island of the Inner Hebrides.

Mallaig is also the starting point for cruises up the Sound of Sleat, which separates Skye from the mainland. Daily ferries depart for Inverie on the Koydart peninsula.

GETTING HERE AND AROUND

The train from Fort William, which stops at Arisaig on the way, is by far the best way to travel here, as you can relax and enjoy the stunning views along the way. Take the Jacobite Steam Train for a particularly memorable journey. Driving is a quick and easy alternative: simply head north from Arisaig on the A830.

Sights

★ Koydart

NATURE PRESERVE | Often called mainland Britain's last wilderness, Koydart is a peninsula off the west coast of Scotland that's only accessible by ferry from Mallaig—or by two-day trek from the already-remote village of Kinloch Hourn. Koydart's main settlement of Inverie only has a population of 70, yet it boasts a post office, a tea room, and a small shop, as well as Britain's remotest pub, The Old Forge. Visitors come for many

reasons: to hike the peninsula's four impressive *munros* (mountains over 3,000 feet), to stroll its sandy beaches, to spot wildlife from red deer to golden eagles, or to simply get away from it all. You can reach Inverie from Mallaig on the daily, year-round Western Isles Cruises ferry; check the seasonal timetables ([🌐 www.westernislescruises.co.uk](http://www.westernislescruises.co.uk)). [✉ Inverie Ferry Terminal, Mallaig](#) [🌐 www.visitkoydart.co.uk](#) [➡ Ferry £11 each way](#) [➡ Ferry reservations required.](#)

Loch Morar

BODY OF WATER | This beautifully atmospheric loch, which starts 3½ miles southeast of Mallaig, is the deepest of all the Scottish lochs (more than 1,000 feet). In fact, the next deepest point is miles out into the Atlantic, beyond the continental shelf. Loch Morar is also said to have a resident monster, Morag, which undoubtedly gets less recognition than its famous cousin, Nessie. Whether that means you have more chance of getting her to appear for a photo, we can't say. You can drive part way along the northern edge of the loch on a small, unnamed side road; to get there, turn off the main A830 road onto the B8008 just south of Morar, then turn right again. [✉ Loch Morar, Off A830, Mallaig.](#)

Hotels

★ Sandaig B&B

\$ | B&B/INN | If you're looking for a bonafide get-away-from-it-all stay, this remote B&B on the western reaches of the Koydart peninsula is hard to beat. **Pros:** delicious raclette cooked by Swiss hosts; historic building with rustic charm; stunning bay views. **Cons:** a 90-minute walk from Inverie; no TV or Wi-Fi but games galore; clean and comfy rather than all-out luxury. [📞 Rooms from: £70](#) [✉ Mallaig](#) [📞 07826/707697](#) [🌐 www.sandaig.ch/en](#) [🕒 No credit cards](#) [🕒 Closed Nov.–mid-Mar.](#) [➡ 5 rooms](#) [🍷 Free Breakfast.](#)

The Glencoe Massacre



In 1692, Glencoe was the site of a brutal and bloody massacre, still remembered in the Highlands for the treachery with which soldiers of the Campbell clan (acting as a government militia) treated their hosts, the MacDonalds. According to Highland code, in his own home a clansman should give shelter even to his sworn enemy. In the face of bitter weather, the Campbells were accepted as guests

by the MacDonalds. But apparently acting on orders from the British Crown, the Campbells turned on their hosts and murdered them. The Massacre of Glencoe has gained an unlikely resurgence of fame in recent years, since it was revealed to be the historical basis for the infamous “Red Wedding” in George R. R. Martin’s popular books (and even more popular HBO series) *Game of Thrones*.

Glencoe

16 miles south of Fort William.

Glencoe is both a small town and a region of stunning grandeur, with high peaks and secluded glens. Dramatic scenery is the main attraction here: it’s as awesomely beautiful for a drive as it is for a hike. The A82—the main route through Glencoe—can get surprisingly crowded in high season, but it’s one of the great scenic drives in Scotland. This area, where wild, craggy buttresses loom darkly over the road, has a special place in the folk memory of Scotland, as it was the site of an infamous 17th-century massacre.

GETTING HERE AND AROUND

Glencoe is easily accessed by car via the A82. Regional buses arrive from most of Scotland’s major cities.

Sights

Glencoe Visitor Centre

VISITOR CENTER | This impressive visitor center, 1 mile south of Glencoe village, tells the life story of the region, from its volcanic origins to the MacDonald massacre to its current wildlife maintenance projects. There are fascinating exhibitions on Glencoe’s landscape and people, as well as great hiking trails leaving from

the center (you can get expert advice on longer hikes, too). There’s also an excellent café and shop. ☒ *Off A82, Glencoe* ☎ 01855/811307 🌐 www.nts.org.uk 🚗 *Parking £4* 🕒 *Closed Jan.–Apr.*



Hotels

★ Glencoe House

\$\$\$\$ | **B&B/INN** | Peaceful surroundings, arresting views, and the friendliest of welcomes await you at this former Victorian hunting lodge. **Pros:** lovely hosts; beautiful landscape; superb restoration. **Cons:** breakfast a little underwhelming; limited facilities; very expensive. 📞 *from: £605* ☒ *Glencoe Lochan, Glencoe* ☎ 01855/811179 🌐 www.glencoe-house.com 🚗 *14 suites* 🍳 *Free Breakfast.*



Activities

★ Woodlands Glencoe

LOCAL SPORTS | **FAMILY** | This popular outdoor center, 3½ miles west of Glencoe village, offers a long list of fun activities, from archery and laser clay shooting to golf and whisky tasting. Guided Segway tours (£39.50) last 45 minutes and take you through some spectacular scenery, with stunning mountain views and even a trail along a stretch of Loch Leven. ☒ *Woodlands, Off A828, Glencoe* ☎ 01855/413201 🌐 www.woodlands.scot