

## Chapter 10

# INVERNESS AND AROUND THE GREAT GLEN

10

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 and famous figures like Bonnie Prince Charlie, and absorb the atmosphere of castles and battlefields, at Culloden Moor, Cawdor and Brodie castles, Fort George, and Glencoe.

★ **Outdoor activities:** The Great Glen is renowned for its hill walking. Some of the best routes are 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 on the A96 stretches the Morayshire coast, populated with castles, beaches, and the distilleries of Speyside. Head southeast on the A9 and you hit the Cairngorms National Park and other nature preserves. The A82 heads south from Inverness, hugging the west side of Loch Ness. Nearby are 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.

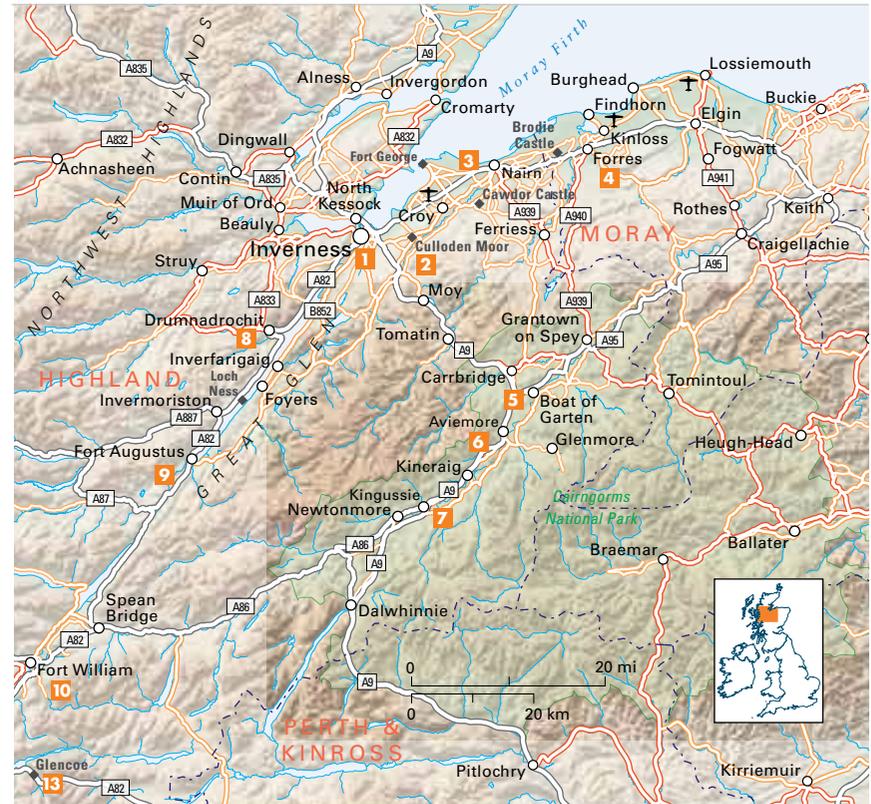
**1 Inverness.** The biggest city in the Highlands and a popular base for the region.

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



**3 Nairn.** A former fishing village now famous for golfing and 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 more low-key base for the Cairngorms.

**8 Drumnadrochit and Loch Ness.** Nessie's famed hometown.

**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.** Another town with lots of Jacobite history.

**12 Arisaig.** A gateway to the smaller Scottish isles.

**13 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 in which the views from almost every twist and bend in the circuitous roads may 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. Just south of the city, the 13th-century ruined Urquhart Castle sits 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 through the hills and glens.

Fort William makes a good base for exploring Glencoe, an awe-inspiring region that was also the scene of another notoriously murky episode in Scottish history: the Glencoe Massacre of 1692. It’s an area where history seems to be imprinted on the landscape, and it remains desolate, with some of the steepest, most atmospheric hills in Scotland.

Just north 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. The surrounding Morayshire coast is home to a more pastoral landscape, and 14th-century Cawdor Castle and its gardens have an opulent air. Nearby Brodie Castle has an awe-inspiring library and art collection.

Impressive long, sandy beaches stretch out along the coast from the towns of Nairn and Findhorn. Finally, the Malt Whisky Trail begins in Forres 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.

#### MAJOR REGIONS

**Inverness and Nearby.** 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. East of Inverness, the infamous Culloden Moor still looks desolate on most days, and you can easily imagine the fierce, brief, and bloody battle that took place here in 1746 that ended in final, catastrophic defeat for the Jacobites and their quest to restore the exiled Stuarts to the British throne. Because Jacobite tales are interwoven with landmarks throughout this entire area, you will get much more out of this storied landscape if you first learn something about this thorny but colorful period of Scottish history. The Morayshire coast boasts many long beaches and some refined castles (Cawdor and Brodie) that are definitely worth a visit. Moving east along the inner Moray Firth, you might be tempted by Benromach distillery in Forres, a taste of what you can find farther south if you follow the Malt Whisky Trail.

**Speyside and the Cairngorms.** Speyside is best known for its whisky distilleries, and those who enjoy a good dram often follow the Whisky Trail. The Spey is a long river, running from Fort Augustus to the Moray Firth, and its fast-moving waters make for excellent fishing at many points along the way. They also give Speyside malt whiskies a softer flavor than those made with peaty island water. The area’s native and planted pine forests draw many birds each spring and summer, and people come for miles to see the capercaillies and ospreys. 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 Speyside and the Cairngorms are nothing special, they make great bases for heading out into nature.

**Loch Ness, Fort William, and Nearby.** 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). Instead, it draws attention for its infamous 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. 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 lochans 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, Morar, 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 an exploration of Speyside, the Cairngorms, Cawdor and Brodie castles, and perhaps a few whisky-distillery tours. The second moves through the cloud-laden Glencoe and down through the moody Rannoch Moor, or toward the Road to the Isles; you could stay near Glencoe or in Fort William. To do the area justice you probably need at least three 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 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 Highlands serves the Great Glen and around Fort William.

**BUS CONTACTS Megabus.** ☎ 0900/160-0900 🌐 [www.megabus.com](http://www.megabus.com). **Scottish Citylink.** ☎ 0871/266-3333 🌐 [www.citylink.co.uk](http://www.citylink.co.uk). **Stagecoach Highlands.** ☎ 01463/233371 🌐 [www.stagecoachbus.com](http://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.

☎ 0844/850-4685 🌐 [www.westcoastrailways.co.uk](http://www.westcoastrailways.co.uk). **ScotRail.** ☎ 0344/811-0141 🌐 [www.scotrail.co.uk](http://www.scotrail.co.uk).

### Restaurants

Inverness, 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, towns have accommodations ranging from cozy inns to expansive hotels; in more remote areas your choice will usually be limited to smaller establishments. Book as far in advance as you can, as 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 in the pretty countryside nearby.

*Restaurant and hotel reviews have been shortened. For full information, visit [Fodors.com](http://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

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

### Tours

#### Inverness Tours

**GUIDED TOURS** | This outfitter runs the occasional boat cruise, but it's mainly known for very good tours around the Highlands in well-equipped vehicles, led by expert guides and heritage enthusiasts. Nevertheless, the price is per minibus, not per person, so while it's quite a bargain 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. ☎ 01667/455699 🌐 [www.invernesstours.com](http://www.invernesstours.com) 🗨 From £150.

#### 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. Tours 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](http://www.jajcd.com) 🗨 Prices on request.

### Inverness

176 miles north of Glasgow, 109 miles northwest of Aberdeen, 161 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. 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 here 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.

An unusual option from Inverness is a day trip to Orkney. From June through August, John O'Groats Ferries runs daily tours from Inverness to Orkney. They cost £76 for a whole day, including a six-hour tour of the island.

### ESSENTIALS

#### AIRPORT CONTACTS Inverness Airport.

✉ Dalcross ☎ 01667/464000 🌐 [www.invernessairport.co.uk](http://www.invernessairport.co.uk).

#### BOAT CONTACTS John O'Groats Ferries.

☎ 01955/611353 🌐 [www.jogferry.co.uk](http://www.jogferry.co.uk).

#### BUS CONTACTS Inverness Bus Station.

✉ Margaret St. ☎ 01463/233371.

**VISITOR INFORMATION Inverness—The City in the Highlands.** 🌐 [www.inverness-scotland.com](http://www.inverness-scotland.com). **VisitScotland Inverness iCentre.** ☎ 36 High St. ☎ 01463/252401 🌐 [www.visitscotland.com](http://www.visitscotland.com).

## Sights

### ★ Fort George

**MILITARY SITE** | 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, 14 miles northeast of Inverness, is also a great base for spotting dolphins and whales out at sea. ✉ *Old Military Rd., Ardersier* ⚡ Off B9006 ☎ 01667/460232 🌐 [www.historicenvironment.scot](http://www.historicenvironment.scot) 🚗 £9.

### Inverness Castle

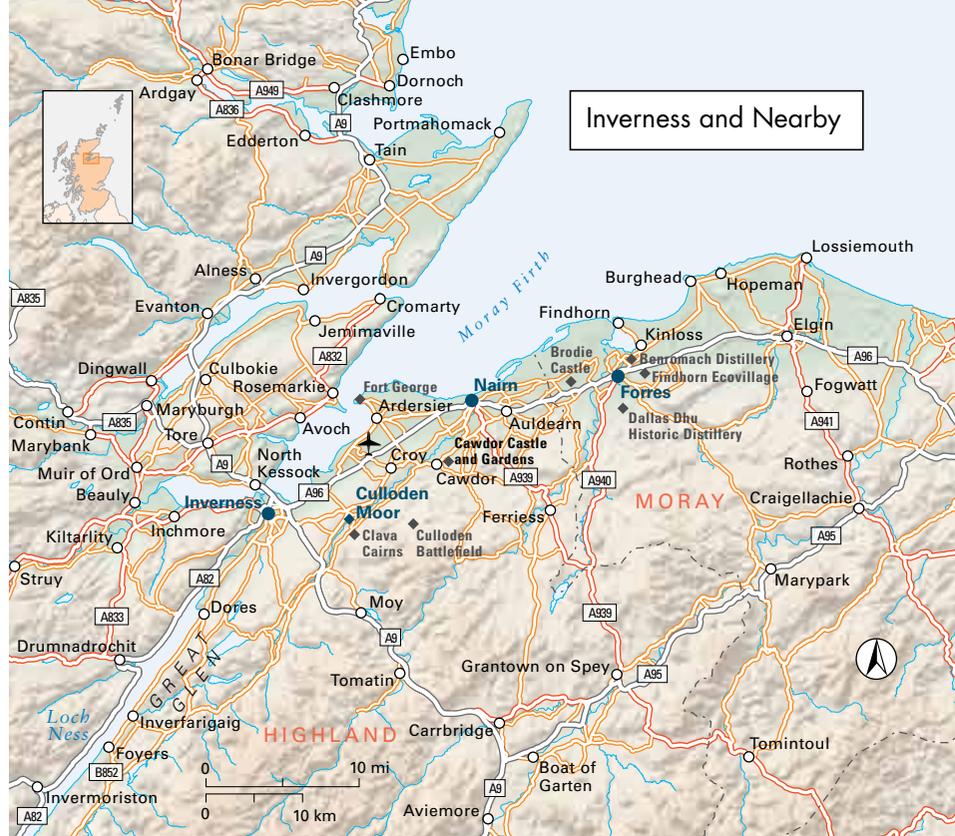
**CASTLE/PALACE** | One of Inverness's few historic landmarks is reddish-sandstone Inverness Castle (now the local Sheriff Court), nestled above the river off Castle Road on Castle Hill. The current structure is Victorian, built after a former fort was blown up by the Jacobites in the 1745 campaign.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

### Inverness Museum and Art Gallery

**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* ☎ 01349/781730 🌐 [www.highlifehighland.com](http://www.highlifehighland.com) 🚗 Free ☺ Closed Sun. and Mon.

### St. Andrew's Cathedral

**RELIGIOUS SITE** | 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.* ☎ 01463/225553 🌐 [www.morayepiscopalchurch.scot](http://www.morayepiscopalchurch.scot) 🚗 Free.

## 🍴 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 Hebridean lamb

and Highland beef on the menu, usually served with a simple order of chips (thick-cut fries) and rich garlic butter. **Known for:** castle views; melt-in-your-mouth lamb; ethically sourced ingredients. 📍 *Average main: £19* ☎ 75 *Castle St.* ☎ 01463/226200 🌐 [www.cafe1.net](http://www.cafe1.net) ☺ Closed Sun.

### ★ Chez Roux

\$\$\$\$ | **MODERN BRITISH** | The menu is as sleek as the service at this restaurant in the Rocpool Reserve Hotel, with clean modern design throughout (think monochrome walls, straight lines, and a whole lot of upholstery in tasteful accent colors). Expect creative, decadent dishes, including a signature soufflé that is far more filling than a lighter-than-air starter ought to be. **Known for:** inventive dishes; beautiful presentation; chic cocktail bar. 📍 *Average main: £26* ☎ *Rocpool Reserve*



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

*Hotel, Culduthel Rd.* ☎ 01463/240089  
 🌐 [www.rocpool.com](http://www.rocpool.com).

#### 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—fish-and-chips, perhaps, or an all-day breakfast—along with steaks, lamb, and seafood. **Known for:** well-prepared Scottish classics; excellent range of whiskies; gluten-free options. ☎ *Average main:* £16 ☎ B862, *Dores* ☎ 01463/751203 🌐 [www.thedoresinn.co.uk](http://www.thedoresinn.co.uk).

#### Fig and Thistle Bistro

\$\$ | **BISTRO** | **FAMILY** | This intimate little 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:** seared local salmon infused with Thai flavors;

tasty homemade desserts; reservations needed, especially on weekends. ☎ *Average main:* £16 ☎ 4A *Stephens Brae* ☎ 01463/712422 ☺ *Closed Sun. and 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 Scrabster hake, and wash it all down with a local beer. **Known for:** intimate atmosphere; fresh, sustainable local seafood; riverside outdoor seating in summer. ☎ *Average main:* £23 ☎ 1 *Greig St.* ☎ 01463/222033 🌐 [www.riverhouseinverness.co.uk](http://www.riverhouseinverness.co.uk) ☺ *Closed Sun. and Mon. No lunch.*

#### ★ Rocpool Restaurant

\$\$\$ | **BRASSERIE** | Another perennial favorite, the Rocpool has a frequently changing menu of modern bistro

classics, with a few international twists. Local seafood is a specialty, and the wine list is excellent. **Known for:** outstanding wine selection; contemporary twists on traditional dishes; quality meat and seafood. ☎ *Average main:* £20 ☎ 1 *Ness Walk* ☎ 01463/717274 🌐 [www.rocpool-restaurant.com](http://www.rocpool-restaurant.com) ☺ *Closed Sun.*

## Hotels

#### Bluebell House

\$ | **B&B/INN** | Each room at this traditional Scottish guesthouse has sturdy oak furnishings, including a downstairs bedroom with a full-curtained four-poster bed and a curved chaise lounge. **Pros:** large rooms; decadent furnishing; great hosts. **Cons:** smallish bathrooms; no windows in bathrooms; minimal technology. ☎ *Rooms from:* £100 ☎ 31 *Kenneth St.* ☎ 01463/238201 🌐 [www.bluebell-house.com](http://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:** beautiful setting; atmospheric building; good restaurant. **Cons:** some rooms could do with refurbishment; quite expensive; a little out of town. ☎ *Rooms from:* £345 ☎ *Off A862* ↗ *About 3 miles west of Inverness* ☎ 01463/234917 🌐 [www.bunchrewhousehotel.com](http://www.bunchrewhousehotel.com) ↗ 16 rooms 🌐 *Free breakfast.*

#### Highland Apartments by Mansley

\$\$ | **RENTAL** | One of three Mansley properties in Scotland (the other two are in Edinburgh), Highland Apartments offers luxurious self-catering accommodations right in the city center, many with delightful balcony views of the River Ness. **Pros:** chic modern apartments; great city center location; secure parking available. **Cons:** not all apartments have river views; quite expensive; some may find entry by code impersonal. ☎ *Rooms from:* £175 ☎ *Bridge House, 21–23 Bridge St.*

☎ 0800/304-7160 🌐 [www.bymansley.com](http://www.bymansley.com) ↗ 19 rooms 🌐 *No meals.*

#### Moyness House

\$ | **B&B/INN** | On a quiet residential street with well-trimmed hedges a few minutes from downtown Inverness, this lovely Victorian villa was once the home of Scottish author Neil M. Gunn (1891–1973), known for short stories and novels that evoke images of the Highlands, such as *Morning Tide*, *Highland River*, and *Butcher's Broom*. **Pros:** beautiful building; lovely garden; great location near the river. **Cons:** public rooms a bit fussy for some; books up quickly; strict cancellation policy. ☎ *Rooms from:* £95 ☎ 6 *Bruce Gardens* ☎ 01463/233836 🌐 [www.moyness.co.uk](http://www.moyness.co.uk) ↗ 7 rooms 🌐 *Free breakfast.*

#### ★ 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:** beautiful riverside property; phenomenal afternoon tea; lounge check-in with champagne. **Cons:** walk from the city center; superattentive service can be stifling; very expensive. ☎ *Rooms from:* £240 ☎ 12 *Ness Walk* ☎ 01463/215215 🌐 [www.nesswalk.com](http://www.nesswalk.com) ↗ 47 rooms.

#### Trafford Bank

\$\$ | **B&B/INN** | This former Bishop's home turned boutique B&B makes for a practical and stylish base, with owner Lorraine Freely'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:** welcoming atmosphere; stylish rooms; relaxing vibe. **Cons:** some rooms on the small side; early checkout time; a walk from the city center. ☎ *Rooms from:* £135 ☎ 96 *Fairfield Rd.* ☎ 01463/241414 🌐 [www.invernesshotelaccommodation.co.uk](http://www.invernesshotelaccommodation.co.uk) ↗ 5 rooms 🌐 *Free breakfast.*

## Nightlife

### ★ Hootananny

**BARS/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. ☎ 01463/233651 🌐 [www.hootanannyinverness.co.uk](http://www.hootanannyinverness.co.uk).

## Performing Arts

### ★ Eden Court Theatre

**DANCE** | 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. ☎ 01463/234234 🌐 [www.eden-court.co.uk](http://www.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/STATIONERY** | 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. ☎ 01463/239947.

### CLOTHING

#### Duncan Chisholm

**CLOTHING** | This shop specializes in Highland dress and tartans. Mail-order and made-to-measure services are available. ☎ 47–51 Castle St. ☎ 01463/234599 🌐 [www.kilts.co.uk](http://www.kilts.co.uk).

### 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. ☎ 01463/729512 🌐 [www.castlegallery.co.uk](http://www.castlegallery.co.uk).

### LOCAL SPECIALTIES

#### Inverness Coffee Roasting Co

**FOOD/CANDY** | 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. ☎ 01463/242555 🌐 [www.inverness-coffeeroasting.co.uk](http://www.inverness-coffeeroasting.co.uk).

### SHOPPING CENTERS

#### Victorian Market

**SHOPPING CENTERS/MALLS** | Don't miss the colorful Victorian Market, built in 1870. The atmospheric indoor space houses more than 40 privately owned specialty shops. ☎ Academy St.

## Activities

### ★ Castle Stuart Golf Links

**GOLF** | Opened in 2009, this course overlooking the Moray Firth is already considered one of Scotland's finest, hosting the Scottish Open in 2011. 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

☎ 01463/796111 🌐 [www.castlestuartgolf.com](http://www.castlestuartgolf.com) ☎ £210 May–Oct.; £155 Apr. and Nov. 🏹 18 holes, 6553 yards, par 72 ☎ Closed Dec.–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 1 mile from downtown. The tree-lined course overlooking the Beaully Firth presents some unique challenges to keep even experienced golfers on their toes. ☎ Culcabock Rd. ☎ 01463/239882 🌐 [www.invernessgolfclub.co.uk](http://www.invernessgolfclub.co.uk) ☎ £65 May–Aug.; £50 Apr., Sept., and Oct.; £25 Nov.–Mar. 🏹 18 holes, 6102 yards, par 69.

## 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's 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 Highlands Bus 5 also runs from Inverness to the battlefield.

## Sights

### Clava Cairns

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITE** | Not far from Culloden Moor, on a narrow road south-east 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

## 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.

everything into historical context. ☎ Off B851, Culloden ☎ Free.

### ★ Culloden Battlefield

**MILITARY SITE** | 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 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. 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.

## Bonnie Prince Charlie



His life became the stuff of legend. Charles Edward Louis John Casimir Silvester 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.

☒ Off B9006, Culloden ☎ 0844/493-2159  
 🌐 [www.nts.org.uk](http://www.nts.org.uk) 🚗 £11.

## Nairn

12 miles northeast of Culloden Moor, 16 miles northeast of Inverness, 87 miles northwest of Aberdeen.

This once-prosperous fishing village is now more likely to lure golfers than sailors. Nearby is Cawdor Castle, loaded with history. East of Nairn pier is a long beach, great for a stroll.

### GETTING HERE AND AROUND

A car gives you the most flexibility, but Nairn is close to Inverness (via A96), and regular local buses serve the town.

## 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



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

sounds appealing, keep in mind that the estate has cottages to rent. ☒ B9090, Cawdor ↻ 5 miles southwest of Nairn  
 ☎ 01667/404401 🌐 [www.cawdorcastle.com](http://www.cawdorcastle.com) 📞 Castle £12.50; grounds only £7.50  
 🕒 Closed mid-Oct.–mid-Apr.

### Nairn Museum

**MUSEUM |** 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 House, Viewfield Dr. ☎ 01667/456791 🌐 [www.nairnmuseum.co.uk](http://www.nairnmuseum.co.uk) 📞 £4 🕒 Closed Sun.

### Phoenix Sea Adventures

**TOUR—SIGHT |** 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. ☎ 0770/316-8097 🌐 [www.phoenix-nairn.co.uk](http://www.phoenix-nairn.co.uk) 📞 Tours from £20.

## Hotels

### ★ Boath House

**\$\$\$\$ | B&B/INN |** Built in the 1820s and refurbished in 2017, 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:** excellent dining; gorgeous 20-acre grounds; relaxed atmosphere. **Cons:** some airplane noise; no gym or spa facilities; very pricey. 📄 Rooms from: £380 ☒ Off A96, Auldearn ☎ 01667/454896 🌐 [www.boathouse.com](http://www.boathouse.com) 📞 9 rooms 10! 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:** cozy contemporary interior; informal and relaxed vibe; easy access to dining at Boath House. **Cons:** accepts only cash or Bacs (U.K. payment system); minimum two nights in high season; no guests under 18 allowed. 📞 *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, which is filled to the brim with furniture, fireplaces, architectural antiques, and linens. The converted farmsteads also have tempting antique chinaware and textiles. 📍 *Dalmore Manse, Lethen Rd., Auldearn* 📞 *01667/453087* 🌐 *www.auldearnantiques.co.uk.*

### 🚶 Activities

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 £180 from April to October.** 📍 *Lochloy Rd.* 📞 *01667/452741* 🌐 *www.nairndunbar.com* 🚗 *£40 (£30 after 1 pm) Apr. and Oct.; £55 (£45 after 2 pm) May–Sept.; £27 Nov.–Mar.* 🏌️ *18 holes, 6765 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.* 📞 *01667/453208* 🌐 *www.nairngolfclub.co.uk* 🚗 *Championship Course: £160 (£110 off-peak) May–Sept.; £110 Apr. and Oct.; £50 Nov.–Mar.; Cameron Course: £20* 🏌️ *Championship Course: 18 holes, 6774 yards, par 72; Cameron Course: 9 holes, 1634 yards, par 29* 📞 *Reservations essential.*

## 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 6 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 on the A96. Daily ScotRail trains run here from Inverness and Aberdeen.

## 👁 Sights

#### Benromach Distillery

**WINERY/DISTILLERY** | The smallest distillery in Moray, Benromach 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 the housemade gin Red Door. 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.* 📞 *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 over 400 varieties of daffodils. The castle is around 24 miles east of Inverness, making it a popular day trip. 📍 *Off A96, Brodie* 📞 *01309/641371* 🌐 *www.nts.org.uk* 🚗 *Castle and gardens £20, castle or gardens only £11.*

#### Dallas Dhu Historic Distillery

**WINERY/DISTILLERY** | The final port of call on the Malt Whisky Trail, the Dallas Dhu Historic Distillery was the last distillery built in the 19th century and was still in operation until the 1980s. Today its distillery rooms—from malt barn to still house to 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 presentation. 📍 *Mannachie Rd.*

📞 *01309/676548* 🌐 *www.historicenvironment.scot* 🚗 *£6* 🕒 *Closed Thurs. and Fri. Oct.–Mar.*

#### Findhorn Ecovillage

**TOWN** | This education center is dedicated to developing “new ways of living infused with spiritual values,” drawing power from wind turbines, local farms, and gardens to sustain themselves. A tour affords a thought-provoking glimpse into the lives of the ultra-independent villagers. See homes made out of whisky barrels, and the Universal Hall, filled with beautiful engraved glass. The Phoenix Shop sells organic foods and handmade crafts, and the Blue Angel Café serves organic and vegetarian fare. 📍 *The Park, Off B9011, Findhorn* 📞 *01309/690311* 🌐 *www.findhorn.org* 🚗 *Free; tours £8; book for self-guided tour £7* 🕒 *No tours Tues., Thurs., and Sat.*

#### Sueno's Stone

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITE** | At the eastern end of town 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.* 🌐 *www.historicenvironment.scot* 🚗 *Free.*

## 🏨 Hotels

#### Cluny Bank Hotel

\$\$ | **HOTEL** | Take one look at any of this pretty Victorian hotel's unique bedrooms, filled with personal touches, and you could easily guess that this is a family-run venture. **Pros:** lovely hosts; tranquil residential area; award-winning restaurant. **Cons:** some bathrooms a bit small; a little out of town; decor tired in places. 📞 *Rooms from: £130* 📍 *69 St. Leonard's Rd.* 📞 *01309/674304* 🌐 *www.clunymbank-hotel.co.uk* 🚗 *7 rooms* 🍳 *Free breakfast.*

## Shopping

### Brodie Countryfare

**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. ☑ *On A96, Brodie* ☎ 01309/641555 🌐 [www.brodiecountryfare.com](http://www.brodiecountryfare.com).

## Activities

### Findhorn Bay Beach

**BEACHES** | Along the edge of Findhorn Bay you'll find a long stretch of beach, great for an afternoon by the sea. You can reach the beach through the dunes from the northern end of the Findhorn Ecovillage, or park at the edge of the village of Findhorn for a shorter stroll. There are public restrooms, but few other amenities. **Amenities:** toilets. **Best for:** solitude; walking. ☑ *Off B9011, Findhorn*.

## Boat of Garten

35 miles southwest of Rothes, 6 miles northeast of Aviemore.

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, which is currently closed due to a fire in summer 2019. 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 Inverness or Aviemore via the A9 and the A95. It's also serviced by local buses, and some people travel here on the Strathspey Steam Train.

## Sights

### Landmark Forest Adventure Park

**AMUSEMENT PARK/WATER PARK** | **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 Wonder Wood, 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* ☎ 0800/731-3446 🌐 [www.landmarkpark.co.uk](http://www.landmarkpark.co.uk) ☑ *Apr.–Oct., £21.45; Nov.–Mar., £7.25*.

### Loch Garten Osprey Centre

**NATURE PRESERVE** | Set in the heart of Abernethy Forest, 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 Birds. ☑ *Off B970, Nethy Bridge* ➔ *1 mile east of Boat of Garten* ☎ 01479/831476 🌐 [www.rspb.org.uk](http://www.rspb.org.uk) ☑ *£5* ☑ *Closed early Sept.–Mar.*

## 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:** good views; peaceful location; garden access an option. **Cons:** not all rooms are family-friendly; some shared spaces need a lick of paint; disappointing breakfast. 📺 *Rooms from: £130* ☑ *Deshar Rd.*



☎ 01479/831258 🌐 [www.boathotel.co.uk](http://www.boathotel.co.uk)  
☑ 34 rooms 🍳 Breakfast.

## Activities

### ★ Boat of Garten Golf Club

**GOLF** | This is one of Scotland's greatest "undiscovered" courses. The club, which dates to 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.* ☎ 01479/831282 🌐 [www.boatgolf.com](http://www.boatgolf.com) ☑ *£75* 🏹 *18 holes, 5876 yards, par 70* 📞 *Reservations essential.*

## Aviemore

6 miles southwest of Boat of Garten, 30 miles southeast of Inverness.

At the foot of the Cairngorms, once-quiet Aviemore now has all the brashness and boxiness of a year-round holiday resort. In the summer months it's filled with walkers, cyclists, and rock climbers, so it's 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.**

### GETTING HERE AND AROUND

The A9, Scotland's major north-south artery, runs past Aviemore. From Boat of Garten take the A95. The town is

serviced by regular trains and buses from Inverness, Edinburgh, and Glasgow.

## ESSENTIALS

### VISITOR INFORMATION VisitScotland

**Aviemore iCentre.** ☎ 7 Grampian Rd.  
☎ 01479/810930 🌐 [www.visitscotland.com](http://www.visitscotland.com).

## 👁 Sights

### 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 herd are offered at least once a day from mid-February to December, 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. ☎ *Reindeer House, Glenmore* ↔ 6 miles east of Aviemore ☎ 01479/861228 🌐 [www.cairngormreindeer.co.uk](http://www.cairngormreindeer.co.uk) 📞 £16; paddock £3.50 🗓 Closed Jan.–early Feb.

### ★ Cairngorms National Park

**NATIONAL/STATE PARK |** A rugged wilderness of mountains, moorlands, glens, and lochs, the sprawling Cairngorms National Park, established in 2003, takes in more than 1,700 square miles. At the heart of Britain's largest national park (nearly 1,750 square miles of countryside) is a wild arctic landscape that sits on a granite plateau. Five of Scotland's nine 4,000-foot-high mountains are found in this range, and there are 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

## 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.

Lairig Ghru Pass, a stunning U-shaped glen, was carved by the retreating glacier.

Past Loch Morlich, at the high parking lot on the exposed shoulders of the Cairngorm Mountains, are dozens of trails for hiking and cycling. This is a massive park, encompassing small towns as well as countryside, but a good place to start exploring is the main visitor center in Aviemore. The staff can dispense maps, expert advice on the best trails, and also information on guided walks and other activities. Because much of the best scenery in the park is off-road—including ancient pine forests and open moorland—a particularly good way to cover ground in the park is on a pony trek. The **Rothiemurchus Estate** leads guided treks for riders of all ability levels.

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



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

filled with woodland is now characterized by heather, cotton grass, and sphagnum moss. This open expanse allows visitors to glimpse animals such as the golden eagle, roe deer, or red deer. Fragments of the ancient Caledonian forest (largely Scots pine, birch, and rowan) remain, offering the ideal habitat 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 be sure to bring cold-weather gear, particularly if you plan on hiking long distance. ☎ *Aviemore* 🌐 [cairngorms.co.uk](http://cairngorms.co.uk).

### ★ Rothiemurchus Estate

**TOUR—SIGHT | FAMILY |** This excellent activity center is among the best in the Cairngorms. It offers 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, Inverdrurie* ☎ 01479/812345 🌐 [www.rothiemurchus.net](http://www.rothiemurchus.net) 📞 Free.

## 🍴 Restaurants

### Mountain Café

§ | **CAFÉ |** On the main street in Aviemore, the Mountain Café is a useful pit stop for a hearty lunch or afternoon snack. Regularly appearing on lists of Scotland's

best cafés, this small place has a big reputation, which means it's rarely empty. **Known for:** lively atmosphere (be prepared to wait); award-winning baked goods; beautiful views. 📍 *Average main:* £12 📍 111 Grampian Rd. ☎ 01479/812473 🌐 [mountaincafe-aviemore.co.uk](http://mountaincafe-aviemore.co.uk) 🕒 *Closed Wed. No dinner.*

### Old Bridge Inn

\$\$ | MODERN BRITISH | This old-style bar and conservatory restaurant serves what many locals call 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:** classic British fare; spirited live music; warm and welcoming vibe. 📍 *Average main:* £18 📍 23 Dalfaber Rd. ☎ 01479/811137 🌐 [www.oldbridgeinn.co.uk](http://www.oldbridgeinn.co.uk).

## Hotels

### Cairngorm Hotel

\$ | HOTEL | Walk past the suit of armor standing guard at the entrance and you should already have a good idea of what awaits within this grand old house, the first building you'll see on exiting the train station. **Pros:** practical location; simple, traditional rooms; family rooms offered. **Cons:** not scenic; interior needs a refresh; regular live bagpiper not for everyone. 📍 *Rooms from:* £110 📍 77 Grampian Rd. ☎ 01479/810233 🌐 [www.cairngorm.com](http://www.cairngorm.com) ➔ 31 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:** fantastic breakfast; smart TVs in the rooms; free off-road parking. **Cons:** early checkout time; weak

shower pressure; no dinner service. 📍 *Rooms from:* £95 📍 141 Grampian Rd. ☎ 01479/810278 🌐 [www.aviemoreonline.com](http://www.aviemoreonline.com) ➔ 14 rooms 🕒 *Free Breakfast.*

### Rowan Tree Country Hotel

\$ | B&B/INN | Hugging the quieter road from Aviemore to Kingussie, Rowan Tree offers a comfortable, traditional Highland stay and a practical base for exploring nature, from the on-the-doorstep Loch Alvie to the long-distance Speyside Way. **Pros:** stunning countryside location; incredibly good value; delicious breakfast porridge with cream and Drambuie. **Cons:** very old-fashioned in places; 2 miles outside Aviemore; some rooms with shared bathrooms. 📍 *Rooms from:* £70 📍 B9152 ➔ Near Alvie ☎ 01479/810207 🌐 [www.rowantreehotel.com](http://www.rowantreehotel.com) ➔ 12 rooms 🕒 *Free Breakfast.*

## Activities

### Glenmore Lodge

CLIMBING/MOUNTAINEERING | 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. 📍 *Off B970, Glenmore* ➔ About 9 miles east of Aviemore ☎ 01479/861256 🌐 [www.glenmorelodge.org.uk](http://www.glenmorelodge.org.uk).

### G2 Outdoor

CLIMBING/MOUNTAINEERING | 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* ➔ Off A9 ☎ 01540/651784 🌐 [www.g2outdoor.co.uk](http://www.g2outdoor.co.uk).

### Mikes Bikes

BICYCLING | 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. ☎ 01479/810478 🌐 [www.aviemore-bikes.co.uk](http://www.aviemore-bikes.co.uk).

## Kingussie

13 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 and the A86. 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

MUSEUM | FAMILY | Explore reconstructed Highland buildings, including a Victorian-era schoolhouse, and watch tailors, clock makers, and joiners demonstrating their trades at this open-air museum. 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](http://www.highlifehighland.com) 🕒 *Free* 🕒 *Closed Nov.–Mar.*

## 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/B852, which runs by the southeast side of Loch Ness, has little traffic and is a good bet for cyclists. Stay off the A9 on both sides of Aviemore and the A82 main road along the northwest bank of Loch Ness via Drumnadrochit, however, as they're both busy with vehicular traffic.

### Ruthven Barracks

MILITARY SITE | 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 then abandoned and blew up the government outpost they had earlier captured. You'll see its crumbling, yet imposing, stone outline as you approach. 📍 *Off B970* ➔ ½ mile southeast of Kingussie ☎ 🌐 [www.historicenvironment.scot](http://www.historicenvironment.scot) 🕒 *Free.*

## 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 four 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:** perfectly curated set menus; stunning location; gorgeous desserts like passion fruit cheesecake. **☎ Average main: £55** **📍 Tweedmill Brae, Ardbroilach Rd.** **☎ 01540/661166** **🌐 www.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:** 3 miles outside Kingussie; hard to reach without a car; some rooms on the smaller side. **📍 Rooms from: £90** **📍 Off Laggan Rd. (A86), Newtonmore** **☎ 01540/670109** **🌐 www.coignashee.co.uk** **🛏 5 rooms** **🍳 Free breakfast** **👶 No children under eight.**

### ★ 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:** lovely spacious bedrooms; stunning lounge views; great value. **Cons:** hilltop location best accessed by car; not licensed to sell alcohol; early checkout time. **📍 Rooms from: £110** **📍 Old Distillery Rd.** **☎ 01540/661155** **🌐 www.sutherlandskingussie.co.uk** **🛏 5 rooms** **🍳 Free breakfast.**

## Drumnaochit and Loch Ness

15 miles south of Inverness.

A tourist hub at the curve of the road, Drumnaochit 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

Drumnaochit 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

### Jacobite Cruises

**TOUR—SIGHT** | The company runs morning and afternoon cruises on Loch Ness to Urquhart Castle and other destinations throughout the region. Tours depart from either Clansman Harbour, 5 miles northeast of Drumnaochit, or Dochgarloch Loch farther up the A82. **📍 Barckla Harbour, A82** **☎ 01463/233999** **🌐 www.jacobite.co.uk** **🗉 Tours from £15.**

### 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; 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. From Easter to October, you can also take hourly cruises of the loch, leaving from the little craft store at the Loch Ness Lodge Hotel in Drumnaochit, and try to spot Nessie yourself; pre-booking for the cruises is not available. **📍 Drumnaochit.**

## “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, unidentifiable 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.

### Loch Ness Centre and Exhibition

**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** **☎ 01456/450573** **🌐 www.loch-ness.com** **🗉 £8.45.**

### ★ Urquhart Castle

**CASTLE/PALACE** | About 2 miles southeast of Drumnaochit, 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** **☎ 01456/450551** **🌐 www.historic-scotland.gov.uk** **🗉 £12.**

## Hotels

### ★ Loch Ness Lodge

**\$\$\$ | B&B/INN** | Run by siblings Scott and Iona Sutherland, Loch Ness Lodge is an elegant and exclusive lodging option offering a traditional Highland welcome; the formalities are kept to a minimum, but nice touches like the small decanter of sherry on arrival ensure you feel pampered. **Pros:** superb views of Loch Ness; lovely rooms; complimentary afternoon tea. **Cons:** near a busy road; no restaurant; easily confused with a (lesser) hotel of the same name in Drumnaochit.





Stretching 60 miles through the Great Glen, a boat trip on the Caledonian Canal is a lovely way to see this part of Scotland.

## Hotels

### Glengarry Castle Hotel

\$\$ | HOTEL | Tucked away in Invergarry, this rambling baronial mansion is 7 miles south of Fort Augustus and within easy reach of the Great Glen's most popular sights. **Pros:** atmospheric building and gardens; good-value take-out lunches; family rooms available. **Cons:** no elevator; a little way from Loch Ness; some may find it old-fashioned. 📍 *Rooms from: £185* 📞 *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:** excellent bar and restaurant; some dog-friendly rooms; lovely lochside location. **Cons:** inconsistency in the quality of rooms; some corridors feel

sterile; expensive for the area. 📍 *Rooms from: £190* 📞 *Off A82* ☎️ *01456/490000* 🌐 *www.thelovat.com* ➡️ *28 rooms* 🍳 *Breakfast.*

## Fort William

*32 miles southwest of Fort Augustus, 67 miles southwest of Inverness, 108 miles northwest of Glasgow, 132 miles northwest of Edinburgh.*

As its name suggests, Fort William originated as a military outpost, first 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.* ☎️ *01397/701801* 🌐 *www.visitfortwilliam.co.uk, www.visitscotland.com.*

## Sights

### Ben Nevis

**MOUNTAIN—SIGHT** | 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

**TRANSPORTATION SITE (AIRPORT/BUS/FERRY/TRAIN) | FAMILY** | The most relaxing way to take in the landscape of birch- and

bracken-covered wild 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 mid-April and late October (though weekend trips are only in the height of summer). 📍 *Fort William Travel Centre, Tom-na-Faire Station Sq.* ☎️ *0844/850-4685* 🌐 *www.westcoast-trailways.co.uk* 📞 *£59.95 round-trip* 🗓️ *Closed late Oct.–mid-Apr.*

### ★ Nevis Range Mountain Experience

**VIEWPOINT** | Located 6 miles outside 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 mountain-top paragliding. From June to early September, you can also take a gondola up to the 2,000-foot summit of Aonach Mor, from which you can hike and explore more of the mountain 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* ☎️ *01397/705825* 🌐 *www.nevisrange.co.uk* 📞 *Gondola £19.50.*

### ★ West Highland Museum

**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*



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

Sq. ☎ 01397/702169 🌐 [www.westhighlandmuseum.org.uk](http://www.westhighlandmuseum.org.uk) 🆓 Free ☹ Closed Mon.–Sat. in July and Aug. and Sun. in Sept.–June.

## 🍴 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:** small but well-curated menu; idyllic lochside location; delicious Cullen skink. ☎ Average main: £19 ☒ Town Pier ☎ 01397/705589 🌐 [www.crannog.net](http://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:** some of Fort William's most interesting food; inspired desserts; on-site art gallery. ☎ Average main: £21 ☒ Achintore Rd. ☎ 01397/701806 🌐 [www.limetreelfortwilliam.co.uk](http://www.limetreelfortwilliam.co.uk) ☹ No lunch.

## 🏠 Hotels

### ★ Crolinnhe

\$\$ | B&B/INN | An elegant old house with colorful gardens, this exceptionally comfortable B&B overlooks Loch Linnhe, yet is only a 10-minute walk from town. **Pros:** stunning loch views; great breakfasts; comfortable rooms. **Cons:** final payment only by cash or check; short walk from town; grand decor not to everyone's tastes. ☎ Rooms from: £160 ☒ Grange Rd. ☎ 01397/703795 🌐 [www.crolinnhe.co.uk](http://www.crolinnhe.co.uk) ☹ No credit cards ☹ Closed Nov.–Easter ↪ 3 suites 🍳 Free breakfast.

### Inverlochy Castle Hotel

\$\$\$\$ | HOTEL | A red-granite mansion turned luxury boutique hotel, Inverlochy

Castle stands on 50 acres of woodlands in the shadow of Ben Nevis, with striking scenery on every side; prices are high, but you could have a meal here to take in the surroundings. **Pros:** spectacular setting; excellent restaurant; beautiful location. **Cons:** extremely expensive; must dress up for dinner; a little outside Fort William. ☎ Rooms from: £495 ☒ Off A82 ☎ 01397/702177 🌐 [www.inverlochycastlehotel.com](http://www.inverlochycastlehotel.com) ☹ Closed Jan. and Feb. ↪ 17 rooms 🍳 Breakfast.

### Myrtle Bank Guest House

\$ | B&B/INN | This sweet, cheerful guesthouse is in a converted Victorian villa on the banks of Loch Linnhe. **Pros:** great views; friendly owners; convenient location. **Cons:** ground-floor rooms lacking views; breakfast finishes early; some shared bathrooms. ☎ Rooms from: £90 ☒ 8 Achintore Rd. ☎ 01397/702034 🌐 [www.myrtlebankguesthouse.co.uk](http://www.myrtlebankguesthouse.co.uk) ↪ 25 rooms 🍳 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 greens fees. Watch out for the treacherous 4th hole—it looks simple, but a fierce prevailing wind will test even the most practiced swing. ☒ North Road, Torlundy ↪ Off A82 ☎ 01397/704464 🌐 [www.fortwilliamgolfclub.com](http://www.fortwilliamgolfclub.com) ☎ £30 🏌️ 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 8 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, 18 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. For great views, take a ride on the Jacobite Steam Train, which you can catch in Fort William.

## Sights

### Glenfinnan Monument

**MEMORIAL** | One of the most striking monuments in Britain, the Glenfinnan Monument commemorates the place where Bonnie Prince Charlie raised his standard. The tower, which was built in 1815, overlooks Loch Shiel; 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* ☎ *01397/722250* 🌐 *www.nts.org.uk* 🚶 *£4.*

### Glenfinnan Viaduct

**BRIDGE/TUNNEL** | The 1,248-foot-long Glenfinnan Viaduct was a genuine wonder when it was built in 1897, and 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 half a 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, but you can confirm times at 🌐 *westcoastrailways.co.uk*), you'll see the iconic Jacobite Steam Train crossing the bridge. ☒ *Glenfinnan Viaduct Car Park, Off A380.*

## 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:** fabulous setting; atmospheric dining experience; beautiful views. **Cons:** some shared bathrooms; a bit fussy for some; no air-conditioning. ☑ *Rooms from: £145* ☒ *Off A830* ☎ *01397/722235* 🌐 *www.glenfinnanhouse.com* 🚫 *Closed mid-Nov.–mid-Mar.* 🚶 *14 rooms* 🍳 *Free breakfast.*

## Arisaig

*18 miles west of Glenfinnan, 34 miles west of Fort William, 52 miles northwest of Glencoe.*

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.

## Sights

### Arisaig Marine

**TRANSPORTATION SITE (AIRPORT/BUS/FERRY/TRAIN)** | Along with a host of wildlife excursions offering a chance to see minke whales, basking sharks, bottle-nose 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 tearoom and gift shop here. ☒ *Arisaig Harbour* ☎ *01687/450224* 🌐 *www.arisaig.co.uk* 🚶 *Eigg £18 round-trip.*

### Loch Morar

**BODY OF WATER** | Take the A830 north from Arisaig, turn right onto the B8008 before Morar, then turn right again onto an even smaller, unnamed side road, and you'll find yourself driving along the northern edge of Loch Morar, the deepest of all the Scottish lochs (more than 1,000 feet). The next deepest point is miles out into the Atlantic, beyond the continental shelf. The beautifully atmospheric loch is 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 photograph, we can't say. ☒ *Loch Morar, Off A830, Mallaig.*

## 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 meats, prepared in a French-bistro style—lamb shank, sirloin, or perhaps a fillet of buttery hake, served with seasonal veggies. **Known for:** hearty meals; ultra-fresh produce; local character. ☑ *Average main: £18* ☒ *B8008* ☎ *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:** good-value restaurant; lots of life and music in the bar; amazing views of

## 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 HBO series) *Game of Thrones*.

the bay. **Cons:** the main bar is noisy for some; small restaurant portions; some rooms could do with a refresh. ☑ *Rooms from: £80* ☒ *B8008* ☎ *01687/450210* 🌐 *www.arisaighotel.co.uk* 🚶 *13 rooms* 🍳 *Breakfast.*

### ★ Arisaig House

\$\$ | **HOTEL** | An open-arms welcome and stunning views of the Isle of Skye await you at this handsome stone mansion, built in the 1860s. **Pros:** beautiful views; lovely hosts; outstanding food. **Cons:** a bit isolated; expensive for the area; two-night minimum in summer. ☑ *Rooms from: £195* ☒ *Beasdale, Off A830* ☎ *01687/450730* 🌐 *www.arisaighouse.co.uk* 🚶 *12 rooms* 🍳 *Free breakfast.*

## Glencoe

16 miles south of Fort William, 92 miles north of Glasgow, 44 miles northwest of Edinburgh.

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 butresses 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. ScotRail trains and regional buses arrive from most of Scotland's major cities.

## Sights

### Glencoe Visitor Centre

**INFO CENTER** | This impressive visitor center tells the life story of Glencoe, from its volcanic origins to the MacDonald massacre to its current wildlife maintenance projects. There are fascinating exhibitions on the region, its landscape, and its 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 ↕ 1 mile south of Glencoe Village ☎ 01855/811307 🌐 [www.glencoe-nts.org.uk](http://www.glencoe-nts.org.uk) 🚗 Parking £4 🕒 Closed Mar.–mid-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:** beautiful landscape; superb restoration; lovely hosts. **Cons:** very expensive; limited facilities; breakfast a little underwhelming. ☎ Rooms from: £425 ☒ Glencoe Lochan ☎ 01855/811179 🌐 [www.glencoe-house.com](http://www.glencoe-house.com) 🚗 14 suites 🏠 No meals.

## Activities

### ★ Glencoe Activities

**CLIMBING/MOUNTAINEERING | FAMILY** | This popular outdoor center west of Ballachulish offers a long list of high-energy activities, from rock climbing to white-water rafting, and even hair-raising vertical canyon explorations complete with 500-foot descents. But there's a welcome twist here—it also caters to those with more limited mobility (or less adventurous souls). Guided Segway tours (£35) last 50 minutes and take you through some spectacular scenery, with stunning mountain views and even a trail along a stretch of Loch Leven. ☒ Dragon's Tooth Golf Course, Off A828 ↕ 4 miles west of Glencoe ☎ 01855/413200 🌐 [www.glencoeactivities.com](http://www.glencoeactivities.com).