

LOCH NESS AND WHISKY COUNTRY

Castles and whisky are famous icons of Scotland and this itinerary includes both, as well as one of the most impressive military forts in the whole of Europe. With Urquhart Castle on Loch Ness as the starting point, you can tour Scotland's North East, famous for its whisky and rich farmland.

Duration: We suggest you take 3 days for this tour.

Urquhart Castle (2m S of Drumnadrochit, on the A82, 17m S of Inverness), overlooking Loch Ness. The visitor centre tells the story of the area, while an audio-visual presentation gives a dramatic presentation of the Castle's history (visit: 1.5 hours).

There is also an option of travelling to Urquhart Castle by boat from/to Inverness with Jacobite Cruises. Tel: (01463) 233999.

Fort George (near Ardersier on the B9006, off the A96, 11m E of Inverness). One of the most outstanding military fortifications in Europe. Built by the British government after the Battle of Culloden (in 1746) to subdue the Highland population. Fort George (42 acres in size, but with a small 'troop train' to take people round the site), it has wonderful views over the Moray Firth, where dolphins can often be seen (visit: 1.5 hours).

Dallas Dhu Historic Distillery (1m S of Forres off the



A940, 18m E of Fort George). Built in 1898, a perfectly preserved time capsule of the distiller's art. The distillery provides an opportunity to get close to stills, vats and other equipment where the water of life was once distilled. The audio tour and video presentation (in several languages) give an insight into whisky production. A free dram is included in the tour (visit: 1.5 hours).



Elgin Cathedral

(in Elgin on the A96, 12m E of Forres). Known as the 'Lantern of the North', this is the superb ruin of what many say was once Scotland's most beautiful cathedral. From the top of the north west tower, there are stunning views across the countryside (visit: 45 minutes).



Balvenie Castle

(at Dufftown on the A941, 5m S of Elgin) sited at the junction of Glens Fiddich and Rinnes. Built by the Earls of Buchan, it also belonged to the Douglasses and the Duffs and at one time was a stylish residence (visit: 45 minutes).



Huntly Castle

(in Huntly, signposted from the A96, 14m E of Dufftown) was once the home of the Gordon family and dates from the 16th and 17th centuries. The earliest stronghold on the site sheltered Robert the Bruce in the 14th century (visit: 45 minutes).

Tolquhon Castle, (near Ellon, 15m N of Aberdeen, on the A920). Built for the Forbes family, Tolquhon Castle is surrounded by trees and has a 15th century tower. The extensive ruins surrounding the courtyard give a good idea of how cultured a life the Forbes family would have enjoyed (visit: 45 minutes).

Normal cost of entry - £34

Savings with a 3 day Explorer Pass - £15