

Aberdeenshire Coastal Trail

Discover one of the world's finest coasts



Museum of Scottish Lighthouses, Fraserburgh



St Cyrus National Nature Reserve



Duff House, near Banff



RSPB Troup Head, near Pennan

Ideas to inspire

Much of Aberdeenshire's coast is rated as one of the most scenic in the world by *National Geographic* magazine with 165 miles of glistening coastal scenery just waiting to be discovered. This three day itinerary provides some ideas for planning a group holiday to this incredible part of Scotland. You'll discover a fine collection of fascinating visitor attractions; captivating history; beautiful nature reserves abundant in wildlife; dramatic clifftop walks, charming coves and expansive beaches; delightful towns and villages and world-class golf courses.

Scottish Traditional Boat Festival, Portsoy



© Allan Robertson

Begin this trip on the Banffshire coast – 'Scotland's Dolphin Coast', with a tour of Glenglassaugh Distillery near Sandend. Then head east to the town of Portsoy and discover the intriguing stories of its fishing and smuggling past by the historic 17th century harbour and at the Salmon Bothy. Continue further east to Banff and admire the

stunning Georgian architecture of Duff House – an outstation of the National Galleries of Scotland. Nearby, visit Macduff Marine Aquarium or enjoy a round of golf at Duff House Royal. Banff has a selection of possible overnight accommodation.

On day two, head for the busy fishing town of Fraserburgh. This is the UK's largest shellfish port, where you can uncover over 400 years of history at Fraserburgh Heritage Centre. Right next door, take a tour of the Museum of Scottish Lighthouses. South-east of Fraserburgh call into the RSPB Scotland Loch of Strathbeg reserve and see all manner of birdlife. Spend time discovering the **Energetica Coast** running from Peterhead (Europe's largest white fish port) to Aberdeen, where beautiful beaches rich in wildlife, are just waiting to be explored. For early-birds, visit Peterhead Fish Market at 7.00am (Monday to Friday) to see fresh landings being sold (maximum group size 20). Possible overnight in Boddam/Peterhead or Aberdeen.

Day three starts at either Torry Battery on the south-side of Aberdeen Harbour or at Footdee on the north side. Built in 1860, Torry Battery defended the entrance to the harbour, but today is one of the best places along the coast to spot resident bottlenose dolphins. If you opt to head for Footdee instead of Torry Battery, this also provides great access to Aberdeen Esplanade, amusement park and the Beach Ballroom. Travel down the coast to Stonehaven and see thousands of seabirds at RSPB Scotland's Fowlsheugh reserve. No trip along the Coastal Trail is complete without a visit to the iconic clifftop fortress of Dunnottar Castle, which survived a Cromwell siege, protected the Scottish crown jewels, was the setting for Mel Gibson's Hollywood movie *Hamlet* and narrowly missed out on becoming the eighth wonder of the world.

Brilliant events on the Aberdeenshire Coast

May - COAST Festival of Arts, Various venues in Banff & Macduff
Come along to these picturesque twin harbour towns for a wonderful community run festival of visual arts, music and stories and great food and drink.

May - August - Energetica Summer Festival
Join this fabulous festival and enjoy guided walks and cycles and wildlife watching along the remarkable East Grampian Coast. There's something for all ages.

May - Haal Folk Festival, The Salmon Bothy, Portsoy
A fantastic opportunity to hear the music traditions of the north east, from bothy ballads and Robert Burns to Celtic and Irish music.

June - Cornhill Highland Games, near Banff
This colourful traditional games is a must-see event. You'll never forget the sights and sounds of pipe bands, Highland dancing, caber tossing and hammer throwing.

June - Midsummer Beer Happening, Stonehaven
This event builds on the hugely successful Stonehaven Beer Festival with a fantastic celebration of beer, food and music, but mostly beer!

July - Scottish Traditional Boat Festival, Portsoy
See traditional vessels gather in the historic 17th century harbour, some over 100 years old. The Festival also features music, dance, local produce and traditional crafts.

July - Stonehaven Folk Festival, Stonehaven Town Hall
You haven't heard music until you've heard the World Paper 'n' Comb Championships! It's part of this fun festival that also includes traditional and contemporary music concerts and an aqua ceilidh!

July - Stonehaven Highland Games, Mackie Academy
Cabers will be tossed, hammers thrown, dances danced and crowds delighted at this ever popular event. Get yourself along to experience the brilliant atmosphere of these lively local games.

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Day 1 - The Banffshire coast - 'Scotland's Dolphin Coast'

Optional extra



1
GLENGLOSSAUGH DISTILLERY
Sited at the east end of beautiful Sandend Bay is Glenglassaugh Distillery, founded in 1875 by Colonel James Moir. For over 20 years, this distillery was closed until it was purchased by a group of investors and production restarted in 2008. Discover the fine flavours of one of the **Secret Malts of Aberdeenshire** and go on a behind-the-scenes tour. You can even fill your own bottle of Glenglassaugh whisky and take it away with you!



2
PORTSOY SALMON BOTHY – Uncover the fascinating fishing traditions of the region at the Salmon Bothy Museum, housed in a charming limewashed building which dates back over 180 years. You'll find a range of exhibits in the former ice chambers. Learn about the town's harbours, its industry, trade and the salmon fishing operations, and get a unique insight into the geography, history and culture of Portsoy. In the bothy, trace your family tree with trained genealogists and discover your connections to the area.



3
DUFF HOUSE – Take in the splendour of one of Scotland's architectural masterpieces. Built by William Adam in the 18th century, the house was originally a seat for the 1st Earl Fife and is now one of 18 sites along **Scotland's Castle Trail**. Admire the artworks, many of which are on loan from the National Galleries of Scotland, before exploring the vast parkland grounds. Stroll along the banks of the River Deveron to the south of the house, or test your game with a round of golf at Duff House Royal Golf Club.



4
MACDUFF AQUARIUM – Discover astonishing underwater worlds at this brilliant attraction which is great for marine visitors of all ages. Learn about the marine life of the Moray Firth, from its rocky shores to the depths of the sea floor. Come face-to-face with intriguing sea creatures such as octopus and conger eel, and hold starfish and crabs at the touch pool. The aquarium is home to a living kelp reef, the only one of its kind in Britain. You might even see divers hand feeding the fish.



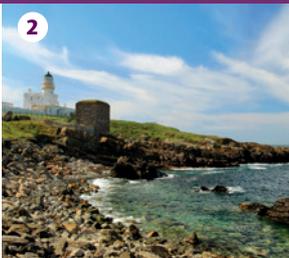
5
RSPB SCOTLAND TROUP HEAD
Take a memorable boat trip from Macduff with a choice of four charter operators who run cruises to the remarkable cliffs of Troup Head. Each spring the reserve transforms into a seabird city as thousands of gannets, guillemots, kittiwakes, puffins and razorbills return from their winter at sea to nest and raise their young. If you're lucky, you might also spot passing dolphins and whales.

Day 2 - Fraserburgh & the East Grampian coast

Optional extra



1
FRASERBURGH HERITAGE CENTRE
Explore a treasure trove of wonders and discover 400 years of history at this award-winning museum and visitor centre, established by members of the local community in what was originally a barrel store. The centre, which is located next to the Museum of Scottish Lighthouses, gives a great insight into the story of Fraserburgh and its people through 23 unique displays. Learn about Thomas Blake Glover, one of the founders of modern Japan, and see some remarkable garments by iconic 1960s fashion designer Bill Gibb. Audio tours of the centre are available at no extra charge.



2
MUSEUM OF SCOTTISH LIGHTHOUSES
Take a guided tour of Kinnaird Head, the only lighthouse in the world built in a castle, whilst on your visit to this award-winning national museum. See the fascinating exhibitions, which include a wonderful collection of glass lighthouse lenses and learn about the lives of those who watched over Scotland's coastline for over 200 years. Enjoy some refreshments in Stevenson's Café and take in views of the entrance to the Moray Firth – you might even spot some wonderful marine wildlife off the coast. Disabled access is available to the museum building but not to the lighthouse itself.



3
RSPB SCOTLAND LOCH OF STRATHBEG – Regardless of season, there's always something fascinating to see at Britain's largest dune loch. During spring and summer, you might spot gulls, terns and wading birds raising their young, while in the autumn and winter months you can marvel at the spectacle of thousands of pink-footed geese (20% of the world's population), which arrive from Iceland. The reserve has three hides and an observation room in the visitor centre. Nearby, see Rattray Head Lighthouse, explore the extensive sand dunes and spot old shipwrecks on the beach.



4
FORVIE NATIONAL NATURE RESERVE & THE YTHAN ESTUARY
Walk through sand dunes at Forvie National Nature Reserve and explore the heather moorlands, clifftops and a nearby secluded beach – there's even the ruins of a half-buried 12th century church to explore. Nearby, on the Ythan Estuary, birdlife is plentiful; waders and waterfowl feast in the mud in winter, and in summer you'll see a thousand breeding eider ducks (and maybe also 'Elvis' a colourful migratory king eider duck). You're also virtually guaranteed to see common and grey seals basking on the north bank of the estuary.



5
CRUDEN BAY GOLF CLUB – Named the second best fun course in Great Britain by *Golf World* magazine and awarded top course in Scotland at the 2012 Golf Tourism Scotland Awards, Cruden Bay is a spectacular seaside links course like no other. Designed by Old Tom Morris and Archie Simpson in the late 19th century and set against beautiful rolling hills with towering sand dunes, both the 18 hole Championship Course and 9 hole St Olaf Course are open to visitors seven days a week and are well worth a visit for golfers of all abilities. Visitors are assured of a warm welcome at one of Aberdeenshire's premier golf venues.

Day 3 - Aberdeen & the Mearns

Optional extra



1
TORRY BATTERY – For many, the star attraction of Aberdeen's busy harbour is its pod of bottlenose dolphins, and Torry Battery is an excellent viewpoint to try and spot these playful creatures – make sure you bring your binoculars and camera! Take a stroll to this former fortified artillery battery dating back to 1860, which was last used defensively in WWII. Those of limited mobility or disability should park in the free upper car park, access is over rough ground but is manageable. Standing nearby at the entrance of the River Dee is Girdleness Lighthouse which was designed by Robert Stevenson and built in 1833.



2
STONEHAVEN HARBOUR & TOLBOOTH MUSEUM – Stonehaven's pretty working harbour, busy with sailing yachts and fishing boats, provides the perfect subject for budding photographers. Visit the Tolbooth Museum, housed in the oldest building in the town, and uncover the fascinating heritage of both the town and the 16th century building itself, historically, it served as a prison and has connections to nearby Dunnottar Castle. In the summer months, head for the magnificent cliffs at RSPB Scotland Fowlsheugh reserve, a seabird cliff colony packed with 130,000 breeding seabirds.



3
DUNNOTTAR CASTLE – Coastal castles don't get much more romantic and dramatic than the magnificent ruins of Dunnottar Castle. Perched 160 ft high above the North Sea, nothing beats approaching the castle on foot along the coastal path from Stonehaven – a walk of around 1½ miles. This fortress has a long and enthralling history; it was besieged by Oliver Cromwell, has housed the Scottish Crown Jewels and also been graced by visits from Scottish icons William Wallace and Mary, Queen of Scots. If you're lucky, you might even see dolphins from the ramparts. Access is via uneven steps and may not be suitable for infirm and disabled visitors.



4
RSPB SCOTLAND FOWLSHEUGH
Guillemots, razorbills and kittiwakes are some of the thousands of pairs of breeding birds which collectively form an awesome natural spectacle on the cliffs of Fowlsheugh in the spring and summer months. You might see comical-looking puffins and beady-eyed fulmars too. Put on your boots and follow one of the clifftop paths and admire the breathtaking coastal vistas, and keep your eyes to the sea; grey seals, dolphins and minke whales are often spotted by walkers. A new viewing shelter has been built at the end of the RSPB maintained path, giving superb views.



5
ST CYRUS NATIONAL NATURE RESERVE – Feel like you're miles from the hustle and bustle of urban life as you wander along the cliffs and dunes of St Cyrus National Nature Reserve. In the summer months, this protected area is awash with colour and life, from pretty purple bellflowers dotted across the grassy dunes to the constant movement of fluttering butterflies. Keep your eyes to the skies, where you might spot circling peregrine falcons, or in the winter months look out for feeding waders on the shoreline. Access to the beach may not be suitable for infirm and disabled visitors.