The North Highlands
A scenic tour along the North Coast 500 route through Wester Ross, Assynt, Sutherland, Caithness and Easter Ross

Uncover 500 miles of stunning scenery and fascinating history in the North Highlands along the iconic North Coast 500 route, which is set to become Scotland’s answer to the USA’s Route 66.

This 500 mile journey of a lifetime boasts some of the most magnificent scenery in Europe - wild mountains and lochs, foaming salmon rivers, rugged coastlines with mighty sea cliffs and secluded sandy bays, traditional crofts and large farms, fishing villages and bustling towns and a fine selection of visitor attractions.

On your first day, visit Wester Ross and take in the striking mountains of Torridon and the sea lochs that cut into this stunning part of the Highlands. Make the epic road journey to Applecross and, further north, visit the splendid Inverewe Garden at Poolewe. Look out for wildcats, sea eagles and pine martens at the Beinn Eighe National Nature Reserve, on the shores of beautiful Loch Maree.

On your second day, journey north to Cape Wrath lighthouse through breathtaking Assynt scenery. You’ll always remember the brilliant moment when you first gazed across the 3,000 million year old landscape of the North West Highlands Geopark. See the grand peaks of Suilven and Stac Pollaidh and be amazed by the rugged terrain of the far north west as you revel in this true wilderness.

Travel further east and discover the Pictish and Viking mysteries of Caithness or some archaeological gems along the Strathnaver Trail. Reach the most northerly point of the British mainland at Dunnet Head and witness the remarkable Stacks of Duncansby.

On your last day, discover beautiful Easter Ross, an area full of wonderful castles and distilleries. Follow the Highland Pictish Trail from Inverness to Dunrobin Castle. Don’t forget to stop for a refreshment at the Glenmorangie Distillery or the Black Isle Brewery.

For more ideas and contacts go to www.visitscotlandtraveltrade.com or email traveltrade@visitscotland.com
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DAY 1 - WESTER ROSS & ASSYNT

Beinn Eighe National Nature Reserve – with a cluster of mountain peaks, ancient pinewoods, secretive crossbills and soaring golden eagles, Beinn Eighe is Britain’s oldest National Nature Reserve. Situated just outside Kinlochewe, facilities include a small visitor centre, a picnic site, toilets and parking.

Hebridean Whale Cruises – take your group on a wildlife cruise from Garloch, on Scotland’s spectacular north west coast. You might spot whales, dolphins, porpoises, basking sharks – the great creatures of the sea and seals and otters on the shoreline. Two boats operate daily whale and wildlife cruises: offshore in the open waters of the North Minch and inshore around Loch Garloch.

Inverewe Garden – is one of the most beautiful places in Scotland. Helped by the warm currents of the Gulf Stream, Inverewe Garden is an oasis of exotic plants bursting with vibrant colour on a latitude more northerly than that of Moscow. Marked footpaths provide access to the wider estate with its lochside wildlife hide and opportunities to spot all kinds of birds and wildlife throughout the year.

Corneshalloch Gorge and Falls of Measach – situated south east of Ullapool, this spectacular mile-long gorge is one of the finest examples in Britain of a box canyon and provides a great stop for your group. A suspension bridge a little way downstream gives you views down into this spectacular, steep-sided gorge. Further downstream, a viewing platform provides an excellent vantage point.

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Please note some attractions have seasonal opening hours. Please check opening times with the attraction.

DAY 2 - ASSYNT AND THE NORTH WEST

Shearwater Cruises – is the only boat from Ullapool that cruises through all the Summer Isles and lands on the main island Tanera Mhor for 45 minutes. Four hour morning and two hour afternoon cruises take in the beauty of Loch Broom and the Summer Isles, with stunning scenery, geological and historical points of interest and close wildlife encounters. Vessel seats 45 persons.

Knockan Crag – unlock the mysteries of one of the oldest landscapes in Europe. At Knockan Crag National Nature Reserve, Scotland’s story of ancient oceans, vast deserts and ice sheets, crashing continents and epic journey from pole to pole is told through poetry, sculpture and interactive exhibitions. Facilities include a car park, toilets, interpretive centre and trails ranging from easy to strenuous.

Faraid Head & Balnakeil Beach – north from Durness lies the rocky headland of Faraid Head projecting two miles straight out into the Pentland Firth offering a magnificent walk. On the western side of the neck of land leading to it are the magnificent beaches and dunes of Balnakeil Bay. The beach is wide and white, and is backed to the east by a huge expanse of tall dunes covered in marram grass. Don’t miss the craft village nearby.

Smoo Cave – this dramatic and spectacular limestone sea-cave near Durness in Sutherland boasts one of the largest entrances to any sea cave in Britain at 50 ft high and is floodlit inside. It was formed by a burn that runs down into the rear chamber, as well as erosion caused by the sea. A stepped path leads down from the car park and there is a walkway through the cave. The cave can be explored by boat in summer time.

DAY 3 - Sutherland and Caithness

Strathnaver Museum and Trail – journey through Strathnaver’s mystical past, from the emergence of the Clan Mackay to the tragedy of Strathnaver’s mystical past, from the Strathnaver Museum and Trail – an oasis of exotic plants bursting with vibrant colour on a latitude more northerly than that of Moscow. Marked footpaths provide access to the wider estate with its lochside wildlife hide and opportunities to spot all kinds of birds and wildlife throughout the year.

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The Castle and Gardens of Mey – east of Thurso, the Scottish residence of the late Queen Mother, this is also the most northerly inhabited castle on the British mainland. Have a delicious snack in the tearoom, browse in the shop and check out the animal centre or just sit and enjoy the view.

Dunrobin Castle – is the most northerly of Scotland’s great houses and one of Britain’s oldest continuously inhabited castles, dating back to the early 1300s. Dunrobin is also known for its formal gardens, where daily falconry displays involve Highland birds such as peregrine falcons and golden eagles take place. Don’t miss the fascinating Garden Museum and the Castle Tea Room which offers a fantastic range of souvenirs and products available in the shop.

The Old Pulteney Distillery – near Wick’s historic harbour is the most northerly distillery on the mainland and continues to make malt whisky using traditional methods nearly two centuries after its opening. Take a guided tour, sample a complimentary dram and visit the excellent visitor centre, with a full range of souvenirs and products available in the shop.

Hugh Miller’s Birthplace – this museum in picturesque Cromarty celebrates prominent 19th-century Highland geologist and writer Hugh Miller. Today the Georgian villa, Miller House, is a museum which presents his life and work, while the attached fisherman’s cottage beside it was his birthplace and early home. A peaceful garden and picturesque courtyard complements the visitor experience.

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