

# SCOTLAND'S COASTS AND WATERS 2020

Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire, Moray Speyside, The Highlands and Outer Hebrides



Q Seilebost, Isle of Harris, Outer Hebrides



Q Plockton, Highlands



Q Dolphin spotting, Moray Firth



Q Stonehaven Harbour, Aberdeenshire

As well as being home to Scotland's Castle Trail and the famous Royal Deeside, Aberdeenshire boasts coastal cliffs, panoramic skies and sweeping beaches such as Balmedie, Stonehaven and even the city of Aberdeen itself. The coastline is dotted with pretty seaside towns to explore and this is one of the best areas in Scotland to spot dolphins. Fishing has traditionally been one of the area's major industries and today Aberdeen is acknowledged as a global energy centre.

A popular early summer event is the Scottish Traditional Boat Festival held in the charming Aberdeenshire town of Portsoy. It brings together boats, music, local crafts and food and drink in a celebration of the region's rich cultural heritage.

Famous for its resident population of dolphins, the Moray Firth is one of the best places in Europe to see these creatures in the wild. Moray has a stunning coastline with wide sandy beaches, coastal formations and attractive fishing villages. Walkers will enjoy the Moray Coast Trail, a walking route which begins inland at Forres, hitting the coastline at Findhorn and beyond. The famous Speyside malt whiskies produced in the distilleries along the Speyside Malt Whisky Trail partially take their flavours from the clear waters of the River Spey.

The Highlands of Scotland are known across the globe for their scenic beauty, and this is as true of the Highland coastline as it is of the impressive inland lochs and mountains.

The journey up Scotland's east coast from Inverness, the Highland capital, reveals a land of beautiful beaches backed by rolling hills. In contrast, the west coast has a grandeur and dramatic beauty that few can resist. Spring and Autumn are the ideal time to explore both on the North Coast 500 driving route.

Two further new scenic routes in this area are the North East 250 which takes you through the most scenic coastal and inland parts of Aberdeenshire and Moray Speyside, and the Snow Roads route, which takes you on a 90-mile journey in the heart of the Cairngorms National Park, from the picturesque market town of Blairgowrie to the traditional town of Grantown-on-Spey.

South of Inverness lies Loch Ness – one of the most famous stretches of water in the world and a number of companies offer cruises from various points along its shores.

There's nothing like an island break to make you really feel like you're getting away from it all, and there can be few more stunning island locations than the Outer Hebrides. The islands' artistic and musical culture, and even the famous Harris Tweed, takes inspiration from the sandy white beaches and dramatic coastlines to be found along this unique archipelago. Make the spectacular drive north to the Butt of Lewis, where the lighthouse marks its 160th anniversary in 2020. Get here by ferry or by plane, including the chance to land on the world's only beach airport on the Isle of Barra, or explore islands such as North and South Uist, Benbecula, Vatersay and Eriskay, each with its own unique character.

## ABERDEEN AND ABERDEENSHIRE



**1**  
**North East 250** – explores everything for which Scotland is famous in a unique road trip taking you through the whisky distilleries of Speyside, the spectacular mountain passes of Cairngorms National Park, the famous castles of Royal Deeside, the Granite City of Aberdeen, the rugged North Sea coastline to the east, and the picturesque seaside villages of the Moray Firth.



**2**  
**Aberdeen Maritime Museum** – this fascinating museum tells the story of Aberdeen's long relationship with the sea. Admire the unique collection covering ship building, fast sailing ships, fishing and port history, bringing the drama of the North Sea industries such as offshore oil, fishing and shipping, to life.



**3**  
**River Dee and Royal Deeside** – Royal Deeside is part of the valley of the River Dee, one of Scotland's great salmon rivers. Rising in the Cairngorms National Park the river flows through beautiful scenery and past Balmoral Castle on its way to Aberdeen. Travel along the banks of this sparkling waterway enjoying a variety of scenery and attractions as you go.



**4**  
**Dunnottar Castle - Castle Trail** – with its romantic coastal setting and views out to the North Sea, Dunnottar Castle undoubtedly boasts one of the most impressive castle settings in Scotland. It's just one of nearly 20 castles on the Castle Trail, each one with its own unique history, allowing visitors to travel back through a thousand years of history.



**5**  
**Museum of Scottish Lighthouses** – situated within Kinnaird Head Castle. This fine 16th-century castle was altered in 1787 to incorporate the first lighthouse built by the Commissioners of the Northern Lighthouses. It offers a unique insight into the lives of Scotland's lighthouse keepers and the engineering developments which have saved countless lives.

## MORAY SPEYSIDE



**1**  
**Bow Fiddle Rock** – The Moray coastline near the fishing town of Buckie boasts wonderful beaches and abundant wildlife. Its most unique landmark is Bow Fiddle Rock, so called because it resembles the tip of a fiddle bow. This is a great spot to keep your eye open for otters, ospreys and dolphins.



**2**  
**Ace Adventures** – based in the Morayshire town of Forres, Ace Adventures is a specialist operator offering half or full days packed with all kinds of outdoor activities. Kayaking, river tubing, and white water rafting are among the ways for all the family to enjoy a unique perspective of Scotland's glorious rivers.



**3**  
**Scotland's Malt Whisky Trail** – the sparkling rivers in this part of the world are one element of the world famous and distinctive malt whiskies produced here. On Scotland's Malt Whisky Trail which winds along the Spey Valley, you'll discover eight distilleries, plus Speyside Cooperage where you can see the process involved in creating a whisky barrel.



**4**  
**Coastal Towns** – The Moray coast is home to a number of charming towns and villages, driving along the coast is a great way to see this stunning region. Findhorn, Lossiemouth, Hopeman and Burghead are all well known for their superb beaches. Make the trip inland to visit Elgin with its historic attractions including Elgin Cathedral and nearby Pluscarden Abbey and Spynie Palace.



**5**  
**Speyside Wildlife** – The Moray Coast has abundant wildlife, as does the nearby Cairngorms National Park. Whether you want to take to the coast or forest to spot the most elusive species, Speyside Wildlife can arrange wildlife spotting experiences to suit your needs. Visit the WDC Scottish Dolphin Centre near Fochabers to learn about the whales and dolphins to be seen in the Moray Firth.

## THE HIGHLANDS



**1**  
**North Coast 500** – there's nothing quite like the freedom of the long open road. Never-ending back roads, wide meandering country tracks and beautiful bends through some of Scotland's finest coastal scenery are just a few things you can expect along the North Coast 500 - Scotland's answer to Route 66. Spring and Autumn are ideal times to drive the route.



**2**  
**Caledonian Canal** – starting in the city of Inverness, the Caledonian Canal stretches south to include Loch Ness, Loch Oich, Loch Lochy and Loch Linnhe near Fort William. A range of operators such as Loch Ness Cruises, Jacobite Cruises and Crannog Cruises offer the opportunity to travel these stretches of water. The Caledonian Canal Visitor Centre in Fort Augustus explores its rich history.



**3**  
**Highland Wildlife** – The Highlands of Scotland offers many opportunities to watch wildlife and enjoy nature. Various operators offer wildlife-focused boat trips, particularly from the Isle of Skye, but also from north west locations such as Plockton and Kyleakin, as well as along the Caithness coast. Whales, dolphins, seals and seabirds are just some of the species which can be spotted.



**4**  
**Coastal Villages** – The Highland coastline is dotted with picturesque small towns and villages that are well worth spending time in. Cromarty, Tain and Helmsdale on the East coast, Ullapool, Poolewe and Plockton in the West and of course John O-Groats, the most northerly tip of the Scottish mainland, are just a few of the many options to consider.



**5**  
**Coastal Castles** – find a number of fascinating castles on the Highland coastline, each of which allows you to step into the past, as well as admiring the wonderful views of the present. These include fairytale Dunrobin Castle on the East Coast, the Castle of Mey in the north, the famous Eilean Donan Castle on the west coast, and Dunvegan Castle and Armadale Castle on the Isle of Skye.

## OUTER HEBRIDES



**1**  
**Island Hopping** – each island in the Outer Hebrides has its own unique personality and deserves time and exploration. From centuries of history to stunning land and seascapes, these fascinating islands offer surprises around every corner. You can also explore the Hebrides Way, a long distance walking and cycle route linking the islands. Ticket options are available from Calmac Ferries.



**2**  
**Barra Airport** – famed for its beauty, Barra is a special place to visit, especially if you arrive by plane! The airport is one of the most unusual in the world, with flights landing on the beach at Cockle Strand in between tides. At high tide the runway disappears beneath the waves.



**3**  
**Beaches** – one of the things the Outer Hebrides is most famous for is its renowned sandy beaches. There are literally dozens of them. Among the most impressive is Seilebost on the Isle of Harris. Named one of the UK's best beaches in the TripAdvisor Travellers' Choice Awards, Luskenyre boasts miles of white sand and stunning green-blue water.



**4**  
**Dramatic Coastlines** – as well as stunning beaches, the Outer Hebrides have a varied, dramatic and rugged coastline with rugged stacks and secret inlets, which have shaped the islands' rich, unique, culture and traditions. Pay a visit to the Isle of Harris Distillery to taste Harris Gin, which is infused with sugar kelp.



**5**  
**Harris Tweed** – don't forget a souvenir made from the area's most famous export – Harris Tweed. This unique, high quality cloth is inspired by the colours and moods of the islands' seascapes and landscapes, and has been used by famous names from Chanel to Nike. Visit the Story of Harris Tweed Room at the Harris Tweed Authority in Stornoway for some fascinating insights.

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

For more ideas and contacts go to [www.visitscotlandtraveltrade.com](http://www.visitscotlandtraveltrade.com) or email [traveltrade@visitscotland.com](mailto:traveltrade@visitscotland.com)