



TIMBERBUSH  
TOURS

### John O'Groats - Inverness

We depart Inverness and begin our journey North, crossing over the Kessoch Bridge, and passing Dalmore Distillery; a Highland Whisky distillery established in 1839. We pass Thomas Telford's bridge over the River Alness and catch a glimpse of Invergordon; known as the Gateway to the Highlands of Scotland from the sea. Nowadays, this port is increasingly popular with cruise liners from all over the world.

Our first stop of the day is Loch Fleet. The loch is set in stunning surroundings and popular with some resident seals who love to play on the shore. It is also remembered for the highland clearances to make way for sheep farming; more than 15000 people left those lands. Enjoy time here for some photos of the beautiful Loch before we continue onwards towards Golspie.

Golspie has been home to the Dukes of Sutherland for hundreds of years. At the beginning of the 1800s, their estates amounted to some 1.5 million acres, forming the largest private estate in Europe, extending into Lairg and beyond. A 100 foot statue on top of Beinn a' Bhragaidh, just west of Golspie, is a towering testimonial to the 1<sup>st</sup> Duke of Sutherland. It was erected in 1834, a year after his death, marking him 'a judicious, kind and liberal landlord.'

However, it was around this time when it was discovered that more money could be made through land ownership if it were farmland rather than tenanted, which led to what many saw as 'agricultural improvements'. Unfortunately for the tenants, these 'improvements' meant forcible removal, and up to 15000 people were evicted from the Sutherland estates to make room for cattle. Some displaced people resettled in coastal communities in Scotland, but many set sail for the Americas.

Today, Golspie is an attractive little seaside resort, with long sandy beaches and beautiful viewpoints. Spend time here for refreshments before we travel on to Dunrobin Castle\*.



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Just a mile north lies Dunrobin Castle, the ancestral home of the Sutherlands. The castle was built in the late 1300s and some original parts remain albeit with later additions. Most of today's castle was built in the 1840s with a fairytale design by Sir Charles Barry, designer of the British House of Commons.

The story of Dunrobin Castle is deeply entwined with the story of the Earls of Sutherland. It is first mentioned as a stronghold of the Sutherland family in 1401 and has evolved over seven centuries of development and redevelopment, what Queen Victoria described as, "a mixture of an old Scottish Castle and a French Chateaux." Dunrobin Castle is open during the summer, giving visitors the chance to tour the castle as well as its magnificent gardens, watch falconry displays and visit the castle's museum and tearoom. Spend time here to discover the castle and its turbulent history.

We then journey further north and reach Helmsdale for a brief photo stop at the Emigrants Statue. The statue overlooks the village of Helmsdale and its river, and was unveiled in 2007 to commemorate the people of the Highlands and Islands who were forcibly evicted from their homes in the Highland Clearances. It depicts four figures; the kilted man is looking ahead into an unknown future, while beside him a boy is looking up to him for guidance. The woman, wrapped in a shawl, is holding a baby and looking back towards the home they have been forced to leave. In September 2008 a matching statue was unveiled in Winnipeg, Canada, and is known as the Selkirk Settlers Monument.

Travelling further north after our photo stop, we reach Wick for our lunch break. A former Viking settlement, Wick is the principal town in the far north of mainland Scotland. Spend time exploring the town at your leisure whilst you enjoy a bite to eat.

Leaving Wick, we head further north where we arrive at John O'Groats; the most northerly point on British mainland. Here you'll be able to stroll along the cliff path and take a photo next to the iconic signpost.

John O'Groats is named after a Dutchman, Jan de Groot. In 1496 King James IV granted Jan de Groot the ferry franchise between the harbour here and Orkney, at which time was a relatively new



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acquisition by Scotland. De Groot started the development of the harbour and its surroundings, building a house, reputedly octagonal. No-one knows why he chose to build his house in an octagonal shape, however it is interesting to see the shape reflected in parts of the design of the John O'Groats Hotel.

From John O'Groats, we begin our journey back south to Inverness and stop at Dunbeath Harbour to admire its bridge and pause for some photos of the surrounding area and Dunbeath Castle. The castle is perched precariously on cliffs south of the village. Spare a thought for the poor soul who must dangle over the cliffs to repaint its walls!

After leaving Dunbeath, we travel further south to Brora for a short comfort stop. Once a small industrial village, Brora is famous for its golf courses and magnificent coastal scenery. Enjoy the scenery here at our final stop of the day before we return to Inverness.

\*optional extra. The price of this is not included in your tour