



TIMBERBUSH
TOURS

OBAN, GLENCOE & WEST HIGHLAND CASTLES

We will leave the centre of Glasgow by the motorway which will take us over the River Clyde, past the airport and then into open countryside. We will then cross over the Clyde again, this time over the impressive **Erskine Bridge**, high up above the river to allow ships to sail underneath.

After driving through the town of **Dumbarton**, whose history goes back about 2000 years, we come to **Loch Lomond**. This is the third longest (37 km) & third deepest loch in Scotland and has the largest surface area of any loch or lake in Britain. On the far side of the loch is **Ben Lomond**, the most southerly of Scotland's mountains. Loch Lomond is wide at its southern end (8 km) but becomes very narrow in its northern part. It has also has 37 islands.

Soon we reach another loch, **Loch Long** and the village of Arrochar. There is a narrow piece of land between Loch Lomond (a freshwater loch) and Loch Long (a seawater loch) and back in 1263 the Vikings sailed up Loch Long from the Atlantic Ocean, pulled their longships from one loch to the other (3km, partly uphill!) so that they could then launch their ships on Loch Lomond and raid the lands around the loch.

We turn eastwards and head for a pass through mountains called the Arrochar Alps. At the top of a long, steep climb is the **Rest & Be Thankful** - once a very welcome stopping point in the days before motor vehicles. It serves as a lovely viewpoint for travellers, while the nearby mountains, especially Ben Arthur & Ben Narnian, are very popular with climbers & walkers.

Soon we come to the shores of **Loch Fyne**, Scotland's longest sea-loch (61 km) : it is famous for herring & oyster fishing and is home to dolphins, seals, otters and sometimes basking sharks. The small, attractive town of **Inveraray** stands on the shores of the loch. The 'new' town was built in the mid-18thc. on the order of the 3rd Duke of Argyll when he decided his new castle needed greater privacy and so he had the original town demolished. At the head of the main street stands a church dating



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from 1798 which used to be divided inside with one side being for services in the gaelic language and the other in English. Nearby is the restored 19thc. courthouse and jail, now a tourist 'experience'.

Very close to the town is **Inveraray Castle** which is home to the chief of the Clan Campbell who has the title of Duke of Argyll. It was built between 1741 & 1785 and replaced an earlier castle which had been home to the clan chief from the 15thc. The castle combines Baroque, Palladian & Gothic architecture and inside there are superb displays of weapons, furniture, paintings & porcelain. You will be able to make a tour of the castle* if you wish (April to October only).

From Inveraray we drive northwards to **Loch Awe**, the longest freshwater loch in Scotland (41 km) and very popular with fishermen. In the distance is the tallest mountain in this region, **Ben Cruachan** (1119 m). This mountain is also known as 'The Hollow Mountain', because deep within its heart there is a massive man-built cave that houses a hydro-electric power station, opened in 1965. The cave is so big it could house the Tower of London ! Water from a loch high up near the top of Ben Cruachan is piped down inside the mountain to the power station's turbines to generate electricity.

At the end of the loch is the very impressive **Kilchurn Castle**. It is now on a narrow piece of land jutting into Loch Awe but it used to be on an island until the water level of the loch was lowered 200 years ago. It is one of the most photographed castles in Scotland and was built in 1440 by the Campbell clan, one of the most powerful in the country. The castle saw a lot of fighting in the 17thc. and was garrisoned by government soldiers during the Jacobite Uprisings of 1715 & 1745. It was abandoned in 1770 after being badly damaged by lightning.

A few kilometres beyond Loch Awe, another loch, **Loch Etive**, comes into view over to the right and it won't be long before we arrive at the attractive town of **Oban**, our lunch stop. This busy town sits beside a lovely bay and is an important ferry-port for a number of the islands off the west coast. You may also see some fishing boats tied up at the pier.

After lunch we drive north, using the Connel Bridge to cross over Loch Etive – the bridge was originally built for trains but now only motor vehicles use it. This next stage of the tour takes us beside the attractive **Loch Linnhe** with lovely views to the west and after a little while the very photogenic **Castle**



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Stalker comes into view, built on a very small island in Loch Laich around 1320. It had a varied history, captured in turn by the Clans MacDougall, Stewarts and Campbells - the Campbells won it in 1620 as a result of a wager ! It was abandoned in the 1840's but was restored about 50 years ago and is lived in at times.

As we pass another attractive loch (Loch Leven) the mountains of **Glencoe**, the best known of all Scottish glens, come into view. Glencoe is full of atmosphere – beautiful, mysterious or menacing, depending on the weather and the light. It was here in the winter of 1692 that the **Glencoe Massacre** took place. Under orders from the government, a troop of the Campbell clan massacred 38 of the Macdonalds of Glencoe even though they had been given hospitality by the MacDonalds for 12 days beforehand. Even today the Campbell name is associated with their treachery and abuse of the hospitality they had received. Near the west end of the glen there's a hotel where there is a notice saying that Campbells are not welcome !

As we leave Glencoe we pass close to **Buachaille Etive Mor** ("the great shepherd of Etive" in gaelic), an impressive mountain that guards the east end of the glen and which is very popular with climbers. We then drive down onto **Rannoch Moor**, a large desolate area of moorland, small lochs & boulders that extends for a long way to the east (left) of the road while to the right are impressive mountains. Soon pretty **Loch Tulla** comes into view and from there more attractive scenery takes us to the village of **Tyndrum** and then on to another one, **Crianlarich**, which is an important road & rail junction. At Crianlarich we turn southwards, through attractive Glen Falloch to reach the northern end of **Loch Lomond** which is much narrower than the southern part that we saw this morning.

We will make a stop at **Luss**, an attractive small village on the shore of Loch Lomond. It is at least 1000 years old, possibly even older. There is a pleasant short circular walk through the village, down to the lochside and then along the beach and back to the car-park.

From Luss we will drive back to Glasgow.

* This is an optional extra – the cost for a visit to this attraction is not included in the price you have paid for the tour.