



TIMBERBUSH
TOURS

ISLE OF SKYE, THE HIGHLANDS AND LOCH NESS

DAY 1

We leave Edinburgh and head west on a motorway that links the capital to **Glasgow**, the largest city in Scotland. We will pick up our other passengers in George Square in the centre of the city.

We come to **Loch Lomond** (a loch is the word we use for a lake). 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. We will make a stop at **Luss**, an attractive small village on the shore of Loch Lomond. Enjoy a pleasant walk through the village, down to the lochside and along the beach. There is also a café and a shop for refreshments.

At the next village, **Tyndrum**, the road divides and we head north into a very sparsely populated area. Now we are approaching **Glencoe**, the best known of all Scottish glens and full of atmosphere - beautiful, mysterious or menacing, depending on the weather and the light. We drive round the base of **Buachaille Etive Mor**. Soon we reach the narrow part of Glencoe where there are three mountains on the left, all similar to each other and called the **Three Sisters of Glencoe**.

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 remembered for their treachery and their 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!

Beyond Glencoe we come to two sea-lochs, **Loch Leven** & **Loch Linnhe** and at the north end of the latter is **Fort William**. A fort was built here by the government in 1690 to house soldiers to police this part of the highlands. The fort was demolished in 1855 but the town grew in size (population is now 10,000) and this makes it the largest on the west side of Scotland north of the Glasgow area. Behind the town is **Ben Nevis**, the highest mountain in Britain at 1344 m.

As we are driving out of Fort William you may see huge pipes on the mountain-side: these bring water from Loch Treig, 24km away, to an aluminium smelter in the town. As we leave Fort William there is a roundabout and a road going to the west called the "Road to the Isles" that leads to a fishing port called Mallaig. A railway line also runs between Fort William and Mallaig and that rail journey has been voted **the most beautiful in the world** by an independent travel magazine! At the same roundabout you will see the Ben Nevis Distillery where whisky is produced, one of about 100 distilleries in Scotland.



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Further on a road leads to **Aonach Mor**, another of Scotland's ski centres but also the site of an important mountain bike centre, used in world championships. Just beyond the village of **Spean Bridge** stands the impressive **Commando Memorial** built in 1952 and dedicated to commandos killed during World War 2. They were highly trained soldiers in the British Army who did much of their training in this area before being dropped by parachute into enemy-held parts of Europe.

Soon we drive into the **Great Glen**, a major geological fault line cutting across the Highlands from Fort William to Inverness. It is 96 km long and contains 3 lochs. In the first half of the 19thc. a huge engineering project linked the lochs together by canals and also linked the lochs to the open sea on the east & west sides of Scotland, thereby providing a short-cut for ships. It is called the **Caledonian Canal** and was designed by a famous Scottish engineer, Thomas Telford. We will cross over the canal once today, three times on our third day, and it may be that we will have to stop at least once when the bridge over the canal opens to allow boats through.

We now come to one of Scotland's most impressive & photogenic castles, **Eilean Donan**. It has a turbulent history and in 1719 it was almost completely destroyed by English warships. However the castle was restored about 100 years ago by the **Clan Macrae**, who still own it, and you will have the chance to tour the castle either today or on your third day if you wish.*

Not long after leaving the castle, the **Skye Bridge** comes into view and we cross over onto the island of **SKYE**. We reach the largest town, **Portree**. This will be our base for our stay.

DAY 2

Today we will tour around the northern half of Skye, taking in some of the wonderful scenery and attractions the island has to offer. The following are some of the places your driver may stop at:-

- **Old Man of Storr** A 50 metre high basalt tooth of rock that sits below a mountain called the Storr.
- **Lealt Falls** A short walk takes in two waterfalls and at the end of the path, down on the shore, are the remains of the factory where a mineral called diatomite was processed, having been extracted from fossilised shells at a loch Cuithir a few km away.
- **Kilt Rock** Vertical black basalt columns & horizontal strata in the cliff-face have created a curious pleated effect like a kilt. There is also a waterfall where a small river plunges over the top of the cliff.
- **Duntulm Castle** Built in 1539 it was home to the chief of the Clan Macdonald. They abandoned it in 1732 after a clumsy nurse dropped the chief's baby son from a window onto the rocks below. The ghost of the nurse is said to still haunt the castle ruins.



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- **Skye Museum of Island Life*** A collection of 'blackhouses', which show how people lived 100 years ago – they are open to visitors in the summer months.
- **Fairy Glen** A delightful landscape of grassy, cone-shaped hills. The rocky tower is known as Castle Ewen. The glen is believed to have been created by small landslides which were then further sculpted by glaciation.
- **Dunvegan Castle*** Home of the Clan MacLeod chiefs since the 13th century, although the present structure dates from 15th & 16thc. It is the UK's oldest inhabited castle.

DAY 3

Today we return to Edinburgh. If we didn't stop at **Eilean Donan Castle*** on our first day we will do so this morning. We then drive through Glen Shiel, alongside Loch Cluanie and then through **Glen Moriston** until we rejoin the Great Glen road at **Invermoriston**. In the village we cross over the River Moriston and you will have a lovely view downriver if you are sitting on the left of the bus while those on the right will see a fine old bridge, built in 1813.

Almost immediately we reach the famous **Loch Ness** so keep watching out for **Nessie, the Loch Ness Monster** ! The loch is 37 km long and is the second deepest in Scotland. There have been over 1,000 sightings of Nessie, the first recorded one being in 565 AD.

We will make a stop in the next village, **Fort Augustus**, at the south end of Loch Ness. A fort was built here in the early 18thc. and like Fort William its purpose was to prevent Highland clans rising up against the government.

Further on we pass **Blair Castle** on the left before driving into **Pitlochry**, a very pleasant town where we may make a short stop.

To return to Edinburgh we cross over the Firth of Forth, an inlet of the North Sea and you will see our famous **Forth Bridges**. Once over the Forth Road Bridge we return into Edinburgh.

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