



TIMBERBUSH
TOURS

Glenfinnan, Mallaig & Glencoe Adventure - Glasgow

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 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 it also 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 narrow in its northern half. It has 37 islands and it is very popular with holiday makers.

We drive up the west side of this very attractive loch and once we get to the north end we pass a fascinating old hotel, the Drovers Inn which dates back to 1701 and is said to be haunted. Then it's into the attractive Glen Falloch (a glen is the name we use in Scotland for a narrow valley) which takes us to the village of Crianlarich which is an important road & rail junction. Trains from Glasgow divide here with one section going west to an attractive fishing & ferry port called Oban while the rest of the train goes north to the town of Fort William. From now on, all the signposts that have the names of towns will be in both English and Gaelic which is Scotland's other language.

At the next village, Tyndrum, the road divides and we head north into a very sparsely populated area. For a short distance our road runs parallel to the railway line and also to the West Highland Way, a 152 km long distance walk that goes from Glasgow to Fort William through beautiful countryside. Soon pretty Loch Tulla comes into view before we drive up onto Rannoch Moor, a vast desolate area of moorland, small lochs & boulders left over from the Ice Age and which extends for a long way to the east (to the right of the road) while to the west are more impressive mountains.

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 pass the road to one of Scotland's five ski centres then drive round the base of Buachaille Etive Mor ("the great shepherd of Etive" in Gaelic), the imposing



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mountain that guards the east end of Glencoe and is very popular with climbers. 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 while up on the right is Aonach Eagach ("the notched ridge").

It was in 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 although they had been given hospitality by Macdonald families for 12 days beforehand. Even today the Campbell name is associated with their treachery and the terrible abuse of the hospitality they had received. In the middle 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 the town of Fort William. A fort was built here by the government in 1690 to house soldiers to control this part of the Highlands from the threat of Jacobite Uprisings. The fort was demolished in 1855 but the town grew in size (its population is now 10,000) and it is a very popular base for visitors because there's so much to do in the area. Top of the list for many is a walk up Ben Nevis, the highest mountain in Britain at 1344 m. which stands behind the town.

As we are driving out of Fort William you may see huge pipes on the mountainside : these bring water from Loch Treig, 24km away, to an aluminium smelter in the town. At a roundabout we take a road to the west called the "Road to the Isles" that leads to a fishing and ferry port called Mallaig. This road goes through some stunning countryside with a railway line alongside also going to Mallaig. That rail journey has been voted the most scenic in the world by an independent travel magazine!

Very soon we cross over a canal with a series of locks on the right called Neptune's Staircase. It is part of the Caledonian Canal, which along with four lochs, allows boats and ships to make a 96 km journey from the west to east side of Scotland. After a lovely drive we pass through Glenfinnan - for now we keep driving but we will be stopping here on our return journey.



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Amazingly the scenery gets even better with many beautiful mountains and lochs as we drive on to reach our lunch stop in Mallaig where there are a few cafes and shops and it is likely that there will be fishing boats and ferries in the harbour.

After lunch we have to start the return journey but on the way we will make a stop at Glenfinnan, situated beside the lovely Loch Shiel with mountains surrounding it and with the magnificent curved railway viaduct that opened in 1901, has 21 arches and was made entirely out of concrete.

It was at Glenfinnan in 1745 that Bonnie Prince Charlie met the clans who agreed to support him in a Jacobite Uprising against the government in an attempt to regain the throne for his father : this followed a rebellion in 1688 that had forced his grandfather, King James II, off the throne. There is a monument associated with the Jacobites, that you can climb* but the best viewpoint for both the loch and the viaduct is on the small hill behind the visitor centre and which is easily reached by a path – definitely worthwhile.

The loch, but especially the railway viaduct, were used in three of the Harry Potter films. The most famous scene shot here was in the flying car scene in *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets* when Ron and Harry find themselves being chased across the bridge by the train.

When we leave Glenfinnan the only available route back to Glasgow is the one we took this morning. On our drive back down the side of Loch Lomond we will make a stop at Luss, an attractive small village on the shores 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 loch side and there are also cafés & shops.

From Luss, we make our way back into Glasgow and the end of the tour.