

Year of History, Heritage & Archaeology 2017



Fyvie Castle, Turriff, Aberdeenshire

Highland Folk Museum, Newtonmore

Harris Tweed, Outer Hebrides

Spirit of Speyside Whisky Festival

Ideas to inspire

Aberdeenshire, Moray, Speyside, the Highlands and the Outer Hebrides

In 2017 Scotland will celebrate and showcase its rich history, heritage and archaeology. From the remains of our earliest settlements going back thousands of years, through the turbulent times of the Middle Ages and on to the Scottish Enlightenment and the Industrial Revolution, every area of Scotland has its own tale to share with visitors.

In Aberdeenshire you'll find beautiful Royal Deeside, a favourite holiday spot for the Royal Family since the days of Queen Victoria. Balmoral Castle, the Scottish home of the Royal Family, is just one of the castles on Scotland's Castle Trail. There are more castles per acre of land in this area than anywhere else in the UK, and the Castle Trail helps you to explore 18 of the most famous and dramatic.

The neighbouring county of Morayshire is steeped in history. There are stunning religious properties to explore and the area has links to Scots king Macbeth, immortalised centuries later in the play by William Shakespeare. This is also the home of the Speyside Malt Whisky Trail, which produces some of the worlds' best loved single malt whiskies.

The Scottish Highlands are famous for dramatic landscapes and dramatic events which shaped Scotland's history, such as the famous Jacobite rebellion highlighted in the early Outlander books by author Diana Gabaldon, now a hit international TV series. The area's fascinating folk museums recount the cruelty of the Highland Clearances which saw many Highlanders forced off their farmland, many travelling to other corners of the world to seek their fortunes.

Each breathtaking island of the Inner Hebrides has its own unique character. Here you'll find ancient standing stones and structures which give fascinating insights into how our Hebridean ancestors must have lived years ago.

Events:

Spirit of Speyside Whisky Festival - April/May – Speyside's malt whisky traditions go back for centuries and are famous throughout the world. Celebrate this rich history at this unique event which brings whisky novices, enthusiasts and connoisseurs together in honour of 'uisge beatha' - the water of life. www.spiritofspeyside.com

Braemar Gathering / Highland Games – May to September – Held on the first Saturday in September, the Gathering is a key event in the calendar of Royal Deeside. The history of Highland Games dates back for centuries and this is just one of the many Highland Games, to be found around Scotland from May right through to September. www.braemargathering.org, www.visitscotland.com

Aberdeen Asset Management Scottish Traditional Boat Festival – June – Each June, the Aberdeenshire community of Portsoy celebrates the region's maritime and rural history by featuring its crafts, music, art and local produce, as well as the chance to see a regatta featuring traditional 'skiffs'. www.stbfportsoy.com

Hebridean Celtic Festival – July – This international Celtic music festival takes place in Stornoway on the Isle of Lewis and features musical traditions from visiting international artists and local musicians as well as true Hebrides hospitality. www.hebceltfest.com

Celebration of the Centuries – August – Historic Fort George, overlooking the Moray Firth near Inverness, is the setting for this annual event which celebrates over 2,000 years of Scottish history from Pictish times to WWII. www.historic-scotland.gov.uk

Aberdeenshire, Moray, Speyside, the Highlands and the Outer Hebrides

Day 1 - Aberdeenshire



1
SCOTLAND'S CASTLE TRAIL – With over 300 castles, stately homes and ruins dotting its landscape, Aberdeenshire is unsurprisingly known as 'Scotland's Castle Country'. The Castle Trail lets you discover 18 of Aberdeenshire's most famous and dramatic castles, each with a fascinating history and its own tale to tell.



2
ABERDEEN MARITIME MUSEUM – The fascinating exhibition at Aberdeen Maritime Museum enables visitors to explore the unique history of Aberdeen through its relationship with the sea. Discover the centuries old traditions of the local fishing industry and how life in 'The Granite City' changed with the advent of North Sea oil and gas exploration.



3
PROVOST SKENE'S HOUSE – One of Aberdeen's last Medieval buildings, Provost Skene's House dates from 1545, and contains a series of period rooms, furnished to show how people in Aberdeen lived in the 17th, 18th and early 19th centuries. The house is named after one of Aberdeen's most famous former residents, Lord Provost George Skene.



4
GORDON HIGHLANDERS MUSEUM – Situated in the fashionable west end of Aberdeen, in the former home of leading Scottish artist Sir George Reid, the Gordon Highlanders Museum tells the 200 year story of one of the best known military regiments in the world. Discover the prominent role it played in the defeat of Napoleon at the 1815 Battle of Waterloo.



5
CRATHIE CHURCH – Lying in the heart of lovely Royal Deeside, this site has been a place of worship since the 6th century. Queen Victoria laid the foundation stone of the present church in 1893, beginning the tradition of the Royal Family worshipping here during visits to Balmoral Estate.

Day 2 - Highlands



1
CULLODEN BATTLEFIELD – Standing on Culloden Battlefield, with stunning views over the Moray Firth, you get a real sense of what it must have been like to take part in the last pitched battle on British soil. Today, up-to-the-minute technology transports you into Bonnie Prince Charlie's army as he staged his fateful attempt to gain the crown of Scotland.



2
SMOO CAVE – Travelling along Scotland's most northerly coastline will take you to Smoo Cave. At over 200ft long, Smoo is the largest and most dramatic coastline cave in Britain. This spectacular site has a rich archeological history, with evidence of prehistoric dwellings, as well as fascinating geological formations and abundant wildlife.



3
FORT GEORGE – Fort George is one of the most outstanding fortifications in Europe. Taking 21 years to complete, it was built in the wake of the Battle of Culloden (1746) as an impregnable base for King George II's army. Today, it still serves the needs of the modern British Army.



4
FOLK MUSEUMS – The Highland Clearances are among the most significant and tragic events in Scotland's history. Thousands of Highlanders were forced off the lands from which they made their living. Find out more at the Strathnaver Museum, Thurso; Timespan, Helmsdale; the Highland Folk Museum, Newtonmore and the Skye Museum of Island Life.



5
GLENCOE – As well as being scenically beautiful, Glencoe is also steeped in history. This was reputedly the home of the great Celtic warrior Fingal, a hero of Gaelic mythology. It was also the site of the infamous massacre of Glencoe during the days of fierce rivalry between many Scottish clans. Experience its unique atmosphere.

Day 3 - Moray & Speyside



1
PLUSCARDEN ABBEY – Inhabited by monks as long ago as the 13th century, Pluscarden Abbey is the only medieval monastery in Britain still inhabited by monks. Visitors to the Abbey today will enjoy the beauty of its architecture, its secluded location and the masses sung by the monks each day in Gregorian Chant.



2
SPEYSIDE WHISKY TRAIL – Speyside is home to Scotland's renowned Malt Whisky Trail, running through one of the country's best-known whisky regions. Discover the secrets behind the art of creating some of Scotland's best loved malts, and find out how the stunning Speyside landscapes affect the flavour and character of the malts distilled here.



3
ELGIN CATHEDRAL – Elgin Cathedral is one of Scotland's most ambitious and beautiful medieval buildings. Dating back to 1224, it was the principal church of the bishops of Moray and is central to the history of the region. It's particularly notable for the wonderful 13th century west front and the stone bishop in the nave which resembles a giant chess piece.



4
SPEYSIDE COOPERAGE – This fascinating attraction, set amid the rolling Speyside hills, is the only working cooperage in the UK. See how the finest casks are made from oak using traditional methods and tools. Although shipped across the world, many of the casks remain in Scotland, providing a vital ingredient in Scotland's whisky making process.



5
BRODIE CASTLE – Brodie Castle is the ancient seat of Clan Brodie. Initially erected as a 16th century tower house, it's now a grand Scots Baronial-style mansion. The castle is also located near a small hill known locally as 'Macbeth's Hillock' where the Shakespearean hero is said to have encountered the Weird Sisters.

Day 4 - Outer Hebrides



1
CALANAI'S STANDING STONES, LEWIS – Located in the west coast of Lewis, the 5,000 year old Calanais Standing Stones are famous throughout the world. It is believed that this incredible stone circle was created by our Stone Age ancestors up to 5,000 years ago as some kind of astronomical observatory.



2
GEARRANNAN BLACKHOUSE VILLAGE, LEWIS – With self catering accommodation available all year and a seasonal living history museum, Gearannan Blackhouse Village gives visitors a taste of what life was like in a traditional Hebridean blackhouse. There's also a programme of onsite weaving demonstrations.



3
KISIMUL CASTLE, BARRA – Kisimul Castle is known as the 'Castle in the Sea' due to its spectacular location on a rock within Castle Bay. The only significant surviving medieval castle in the Western Isles, it's the seat of the of Clan Macneil. Take the short boat trip across to follow in the footsteps of the clan's chiefs and enjoy the panoramic views.



4
TAIGH CHEARSABHAGH, NORTH UIST – Located in the charming village of Lochmaddy on North Uist, Taigh Chearsabhagh Museum & Arts Centre lets you uncover the area's art, culture and heritage. Explore the social, domestic, economic, cultural and religious life of North Uist, with a variety of fascinating artefacts mainly from the 19th and 20th centuries.



5
DUN CARLOWAY BROCH, LEWIS – Dun Carloway Broch is one of the best-preserved examples of a broch – a type of fortification found only in Scotland. There are well over 500 of them across the country, dating from the Iron Age around 2,300 years ago. The adjacent visitor centre provides a fascinating insight into Iron Age life on the Isle of Lewis.