

SCOTLAND HOLIDAY

Day One: Wednesday November 8th travelling

The coach departed Wymondham in the dark at 06.58 and at 08.20 we actually started heading north towards Ferrybridge Services for a driver change and a break. Departure was at 11.15 continuing up the A1 and at 12.15 we started across the roof of the country across the A66, reaching the M6 at 13.15 and heading north to our second stop at Moffat Woolen Mill, just off the A74(M) at 14.15 for a 45-minute break. The final leg was straight to Kingussie, (pronounced King- oosie), arriving at 18.15 for our four-night stay at the Duke of Gordon Hotel.



Day Two: Thursday November 9th: Ben Nevis and a local distillery.

Departure was at 09.00 and travelled across on the A86 arriving at the Ben Nevis centre at 10.30. This route passed Loch Laggan where Monarch of the Glen was filmed, with Ardverikie House acting the part of Glenbogle House. The Loch was also used for the car chase in No Time to Die. The RAF also used for the training runs held before 617 Squadron's successful night-time raid on hydroelectric dams in Germany's Ruhr Valley industrial heartland on the night of May 16, 1943.

The Ben Nevis centre opened in December 1989. Ben Nevis is 1345 meters high, and The Gondola system transports visitors from 100m to 650m up the mountain and takes approximately 15 minutes each way. There is a 1.6 KM walk to a viewpoint that offers fantastic views of the towering buttresses of the North face of Ben Nevis, well worth a short 30min walk. A new hydroelectric scheme has now powered the Nevis Range base station and Gondola since December 2016.

At 14.30 the party left for the Ben Nevis Distillery. Ben Nevis Distillery has been crafting Scottish whisky at the foot of Britain's highest mountain using the pure water since 1825. The group were given a guided tour, followed by some whisky tasting. The group left at 16.00 arriving back at the hotel around 17.30.

Day Three: Friday November 10th: Rail Trip to Kyle of Lochalsh

The coach left the hotel at 09.02 and within the eleven miles to Aviemore had passed through sunshine, rain, sleet, and snow, and it was raining when we arrived in Inverness to catch our 10.56 train to Kyle. The Kyle Line is one of the world's most scenic railway journeys. Running fifty-seven miles (92 km) coast to coast from Inverness, it passes magnificent lochs, mountains, moorland, and shore before reaching the harbour village of Kyle of Lochalsh. It was from here that the ferry ran across to Skye before the Sky Bridge across Loch Alsh was opened in 1995. This was the best day for seeing animals and bird life in the wild with sightings of Deer, Highland cattle, Herons, and Egrets. We did cross the Skye bridge but quickly turned back as the weather was not favorable for the potential viewpoints. We departed the isle of Skye around 14.00 and headed along the A87 to Fort Augustus through Glen Shiel, one of Scotland's most spectacular mountain passes.



A murky and wet view of the Skye Bridge



Fort Augustus is situated on the most southern tip of Loch Ness on the impressive 60 mile long Caledonian Canal, halfway between Inverness and Fort William. It was constructed in the early nineteenth century by Scottish engineer Thomas Telford and connects the Scottish east coast at Inverness with the west coast at Corpach near Fort William.

There are five locks at Fort Augustus to raise and lower the boats from Loch Ness to the Caledonian Canal.

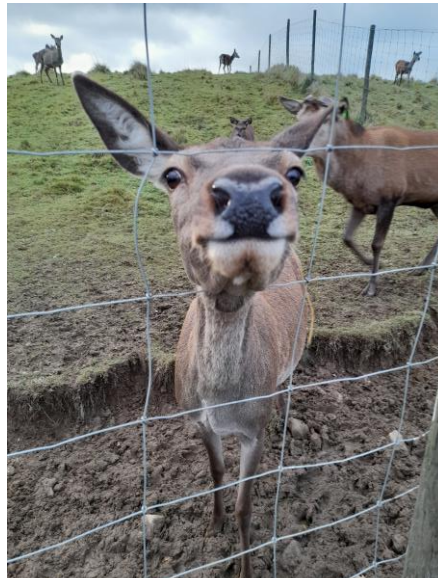
Day Four: Saturday November 11th: Aviemore and the Rothiemurchus Estate

This was a relaxing later start to travel the eleven miles up to Aviemore for a look around the famous “resort”. It is a town in the Spey Valley of Highland Scotland and is the main base for skiing and other outdoor activities in Cairngorms National Park. It's the largest of a straggle of villages including Rothiemurcus and Coylumbridge. During our time in Aviemore we explored the main street, shops and facilities, making sure that we had sourced food and drink as there would be no time when we visited the Rothiemurchus Estate at 13.00.

On the edge of Aviemore is the Rothiemurchus Highland Estate stretching from the River Spey to the high mountain plateau, within the Cairngorms National Park. It has been under the stewardship of the Grant family since the 16th Century and has a wealth of history before this. This visit to the estate was a first for Wymondham u3a so we did not really know what to expect. We were met by a tour guide who boarded the coach and we set off. Our two-hour tour took us along narrow roads through the estate initially to the highest point for a look around and a talk by the guide. We then moved on to the deer park where the deer quickly realised food and attention was available from this big blue coach. Lastly we travelled back down the slopes to see a herd of Highland Cattle who rushed down from their pastures to pose for us. The tour finished around 13.30 and we headed back to our hotel for our final evening meal and to prepare for the journey home,



One of two stags in the herd of Red Deer



Typical view of the Highland Cattle on the estate.

Day Five: Sunday November 12th: Travel Home.

The coach left the hotel on time at 08.30 in a “Scotch Mist” covering as we headed down the A9 towards Perth and Sterling in daylight, seeing the sites that we missed on the outward trip when it was dark. Our first stop was Moffat Woolen Mill at 11.30, leaving again at 12.20, and crossing the border back into England at 12.55. We stopped for another break and driver change at Ferrybridge Services, and left there at 16.04 in the dark, in the rain, straight into a traffic jam. Most of the journey home from Kingussie was either a bit misty, overcast, or raining, but we made good time and finally arrived back at WCH around 19.30.