



Northeast Scotland

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Why Go?

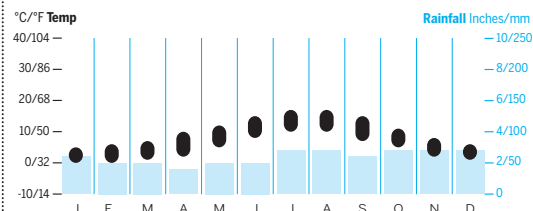
Many visitors pass by this corner of the country in their headlong rush to the tourist honeypots of Loch Ness and Skye. But they're missing out on a part of Scotland that's as beautiful and diverse as the more obvious attractions of the western Highlands and islands.

Within its bounds you'll find two of Scotland's four largest cities – Dundee, the city of jute, jam and journalism, the cradle of some of Britain's favourite comic characters, and home to Captain Scott's Antarctic research ship, the *Discovery*; and Aberdeen, the granite city, an economic powerhouse fuelled by the riches of North Sea oil.

Angus is a region of rich farmland and scenic glens dotted with the mysterious stones left behind by the ancient Picts, while Aberdeenshire and Moray are home to the greatest concentration of Scottish Baronial castles in the country, and dozens of distilleries along the River Spey.

When to Go

Aberdeen



June/July Classic boats large and small fill Portsoy harbour for the Scottish Wooden Boat Festival.

September Braemar Gathering (Highland games); whisky and music festival in Dufftown.

December Spectacular fireball ceremony in Stonehaven on Hogmanay (New Year's Eve).



Northeast Scotland Highlights

- ① Hiking through the hills around beautiful **Glen Clova** (p235)
- ② Meditating on the meaning of the mysterious **Pictish stones** (p231) of Angus
- ③ Tucking into the freshest of Scottish seafood at the **Tolbooth Restaurant** (p246) in Stonehaven
- ④ Exploring the hills, forests, castles and pretty villages of **Royal Deeside** (p247)
- ⑤ Being initiated into the mysteries of malt whisky on a **Speyside distillery tour** (p255)

① Getting Around

You can pick up a **public transport map** from tourist offices and bus stations. For timetable information, call **Traveline** (☎0871 200 2233; www.travelinescotland.com).

BUS The Dundee to Aberdeen route is served by **Scottish Citylink** (www.citylink.co.uk) buses. **Stagecoach** (www.stagecoachbus.com) is the main regional bus operator, with services linking all the main towns and cities.

Stagecoach offers a **Highland Megarider** ticket (£24) that gives seven days unlimited bus travel in Inverness and as far as Strathpeffer, Beaulieu, Nairn, Elgin and Fochabers, and a **Bluebird Megarider** ticket (£70) that allows seven days unlimited travel on all its services in Aberdeenshire and Moray.

TRAIN The Dundee–Inverness railway line passes through Arbroath, Montrose, Stonehaven, Aberdeen, Huntly and Elgin.

DUNDEE & ANGUS

Angus is a region of fertile farmland stretching north from Dundee – Scotland's fourth-largest city – to the Highland border. It's an attractive area of broad straths (valleys) and low, green hills contrasting with the rich, red-brown soil of freshly ploughed fields. Romantic glens finger their way into the foothills of the Grampian Mountains, while the scenic coastline ranges from the red-sandstone cliffs of Arbroath to the long, sandy beaches around Montrose. This was the Pictish heartland of the 7th and 8th centuries, and many interesting Pictish symbol stones survive here.

Apart from the crowds visiting Discovery Point in newly confident Dundee and the coach parties shuffling through Glamis Castle, Angus is a bit of a tourism backwater and a good place to escape the hordes.

Dundee

POP 144,000

London's Trafalgar Sq has Nelson on his column, Edinburgh's Princes St has its monument to Sir Walter Scott and Belfast has a statue of Queen Victoria outside City Hall. Dundee's City Sq, on the other hand, is graced – rather endearingly – by the bronze figure of Desperate Dan. Familiar to generations of British school children, Dan is one of the best-loved cartoon characters from the children's comic the *Dandy*, published by Dundee firm DC Thomson since 1937.

Dundee enjoys perhaps the finest location of any Scottish city, spreading along the northern shore of the Firth of Tay, and can boast tourist attractions of national importance in Discovery Point and the Verdant Works museum. Add in the attractive seaside suburb of Broughty Ferry, some lively nightlife and the Dundonians themselves – among the friendliest, most welcoming and most entertaining people you'll meet – and Dundee is definitely worth a stopover.

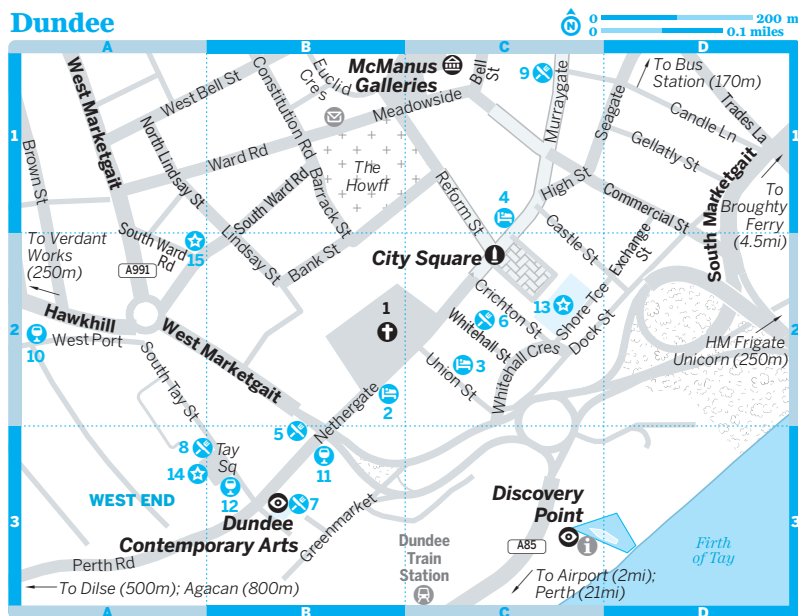
History

During the 19th century Dundee grew from its trading port origins to become a major player in the shipbuilding, whaling, textile and railway engineering industries. Dundonian firms owned and operated most of the jute mills in India (jute is a natural fibre used in making ropes and sacking), and the city's textile industry employed as many as 43,000 people – little wonder Dundee earned the nickname 'Juteopolis'.

Dundee is often called the city of the 'Three Js' – jute, jam and journalism. According to legend, it was a Dundee woman, Janet Keillor, who invented marmalade in the late 18th century; her son founded the city's famous Keillor jam factory. Jute is no longer produced, and when the Keillor factory was taken over in 1988 production was transferred to England. Journalism still thrives, however, led by the family firm of DC Thomson. Best known for children's comics, such as the *Beano*, Thomson is now the city's largest employer.

In the late 19th and early 20th centuries Dundee was one of the richest cities in the country – there were more millionaires per head of population here than anywhere else in Britain – but the textile and engineering industries declined in the second half of the 20th century, leading to high unemployment and urban decay.

In the 1960s and '70s Dundee's cityscape was scarred by ugly blocks of flats, office buildings and shopping centres linked by unsightly concrete walkways – the view as you approach across the Tay Road Bridge does not look promising – and most visitors passed it by. Since the mid-1990s, however, Dundee has reinvented itself as a tourist destination, and a centre for banking, insurance and new industries, while its waterfront is currently undergoing a major redevelopment. It also has more university students – one in seven of the population – than any other town in Europe, except Heidelberg.



Sights

Discovery Point

MUSEUM

(www.rrsdiscovery.com; Discovery Quay; adult/child £7.75/4.75; ☉10am-6pm Mon-Sat, 11am-6pm Sun Apr-Oct, to 5pm Nov-Mar) The three masts of Captain Robert Falcon Scott's famous polar expedition vessel the **RRS Discovery** dominate the riverside to the south of the city centre. The ship was built in Dundee in 1900, with a wooden hull at least half a metre thick to survive the pack ice, and sailed for the Antarctic in 1901 where it spent two winters trapped in the ice. From 1931 on it was laid up in London where its condition steadily deteriorated, until it was rescued by the efforts of Peter Scott (son of Robert) and the Maritime Trust, and restored to its 1925 condition. In 1986 the ship was given a berth in its home port of Dundee, where it became a symbol of the city's regeneration.

Exhibitions and audiovisual displays in the main building provide a fascinating history of both the ship and Antarctic exploration, but *Discovery* itself – afloat in a protected dock – is the star attraction. You can visit the bridge, the galley and the mahogany-panelled officers' wardroom, and poke your nose into the cabins used by Scott and his crew.

A joint ticket that gives entry to both Discovery Point and the Verdant Works costs £11.50/7 per adult/child.

Verdant Works

MUSEUM

(www.verdantworks.com; West Henderson's Wynd; adult/child £7/4; ☉10am-6pm Mon-Sat, 11am-6pm Sun Apr-Oct, 10.30am-4.30pm Wed-Sat, 11am-4.30pm Sun Nov-Mar) One of the finest industrial museums in Europe, the Verdant Works explores the history of Dundee's jute industry. Housed in a restored jute mill, complete with original machinery still in working condition, the museum's interactive exhibits and computer displays follow the raw material from its origins in India through to the manufacture of a wide range of finished products, from sacking to rope to wagon covers for the pioneers of the American West. The mill is 250m west of the city centre.

FREE McManus Galleries

MUSEUM

(www.mcmanus.co.uk; Albert Sq; ☉10am-5pm Mon-Sat, 12.30-4.30pm Sun) Housed in a solid Victorian Gothic building designed by Gilbert Scott in 1867, the recently restored McManus Galleries is a city museum on a human scale – you can see everything there is to see, without feeling rushed or overwhelmed. The exhibits cover the history

Dundee

📍 Top Sights

City Square	C2
Discovery Point	C3
Dundee Contemporary Arts	B3
McManus Galleries	C1

📍 Sights

Old Steeple	(see 1)
1 St Mary's Church	B2

🏠 Sleeping

2 Auld Steeple Guest House	B2
3 Aabalree	C2
4 Dundee Backpackers	C1

🍴 Eating

5 Deep Sea	B3
6 Fisher & Donaldson	C2
7 Jute Cafe-Bar	B3
8 Playwright	A3
Rep Theatre Cafe	(see 14)
9 Tesco Metro	C1

🍷 Drinking

10 Globe	A2
11 Nether Inn	B3
12 Social	B3

🎬 Entertainment

13 Caird Hall	C2
14 Dundee Rep Theatre	A3
15 Fat Sams	A2

of the city from the Iron Age to the present day, including relics of the Tay Bridge Disaster and the Dundee whaling industry. Computer geeks will enjoy the Sinclair ZX81 and Spectrum (pioneering personal computers with a whole 16K of memory!) which were made in Dundee in the early 1980s.

HM Frigate Unicorn

MUSEUM

(www.frigateunicorn.org; Victoria Dock; adult/child £5/3; ☎10am-5pm Apr-Oct, noon-4pm Wed-Fri, 10am-4pm Sat & Sun Nov-Mar) Unlike the polished and much-restored *Discovery*, Dundee's other floating tourist attraction retains the authentic atmosphere of a salty old sailing ship. Built in 1824, the 46-gun *Unicorn* is the oldest British-built ship still afloat – she was mothballed soon after launching and never saw action. By the mid-19th century sailing ships were outclassed by steam and the *Unicorn* served as a gunpowder store, then later as a training vessel.

When it was proposed to break up the ship for scrap in the 1960s, a preservation society was formed. Wandering around the four decks gives you an excellent impression of what it must have been like for the crew forced to live in such cramped conditions.

The *Unicorn* is berthed in Victoria Dock, just northeast of the Tay Road Bridge. The entry price includes a self-guided tour (also available in French and German).

FREE Dundee Contemporary Arts

ART GALLERY

(www.dca.org.uk; Nethergate; ☎10.30am-5.30pm Tue, Wed, Fri & Sat, 10.30am-8.30pm Thu, noon-5.30pm Sun) The focus for the city's emerging Cultural Quarter is Dundee Contemporary Arts, a centre for modern art, design and cinema. The galleries here exhibit work by contemporary UK and international artists, and there are **printmakers' studios** (print studio 11am-9pm Tue-Thu, 11am-6pm Fri & Sat) where you can watch artists at work, or even take part in craft demonstrations and workshops. There's also the Jute Cafe-Bar (see p229).

Dundee Law

PARK

It's worth making the climb up **Dundee Law** (174m) for great views of the city, the two Tay bridges and across to Fife. The **Tay Rail Bridge** – at just over 2 miles long, it was the world's longest when it was built – was completed in 1887 and replaced an earlier bridge whose stumps can be seen alongside. The original bridge collapsed during a storm in 1879, less than two years after it was built, taking a train and 75 lives along with it – the infamous Tay Bridge Disaster. The 1.5-mile **Tay Road Bridge** was opened in 1966. Dundee Law is a short walk northwest of the city centre, along Constitution Rd.

City Square

SIGNIFICANT AREA

The heart of Dundee is City Sq, flanked to the south by the 1930s facade of **Caird Hall**, which was gifted to the city by a textile magnate and is now home to the City Chambers. A more recent addition to the square, unveiled in 2001, is a bronze statue of **Desperate Dan**, the lantern-jawed hero of children's comic the *Dandy* (he's clutching a copy in his right hand), which has been published in Dundee since 1937.

Pedestrianised High St leads west into Nethergate, flanked to the north by **St Mary's Church**. Most of the church dates from the 19th century, but the **Old Steeple** was built around 1460.



Festivals & Events

If you're around in late July, look out for the **Dundee Blues Bonanza** (www.dundeebluesbonanza.co.uk), a two-day festival of free blues, boogie and roots music.



Sleeping

Most of Dundee's city-centre hotels are business oriented, and offer lower rates on weekends. The main concentrations of B&Bs are along Broughty Ferry and Arbroath Rds east of the city centre, and on Perth Rd to the west. If you don't fancy a night in the city, consider staying at the nearby seaside town of Broughty Ferry.

Accommodation in Dundee is usually booked solid when the Open Golf tournament is staged at Carnoustie or St Andrews – check www.opengolf.com for future dates and venues.

Balgowan House

B&B ££

(01382-200262; www.balgowanhouse.co.uk; 510 Perth Rd; s/d £63/84; P) Built in 1900 and perched in a prime location with stunning views over the Firth of Tay, Balgowan is a wealthy merchant's mansion converted into a luxurious guesthouse with two sumptuous en suite bedrooms. It's 2 miles west of the city centre, overlooking the university botanic gardens.

Apex City Quay Hotel

HOTEL ££

(01382-202404; www.apexhotels.co.uk; 1 West Victoria Dock Rd; r from £98; P) Though it looks plain from the outside, the Apex overlooks the city's redeveloping waterfront and sports the sort of stylish, spacious, sofa-equipped rooms that make you want to lounge around all evening munching chocolate in front of the TV. If you can drag yourself away from your room, there are spa treatments, saunas and Japanese hot tubs to enjoy. The hotel is just east of the city centre, close to the Frigate Unicorn.

Errolbank Guest House

B&B ££

(01382-462118; www.errolbank-guesthouse.com; 9 Dalgleish Rd; s/d £35/58; P) A mile east of the city centre, just north of the road to Broughty Ferry, Errolbank is a lovely Victorian family home with small but beautifully decorated en suite rooms set on a quiet street.

Dundee Backpackers

HOSTEL £

(01382-224646; www.hoppo.com; 71 High St; dm £13-15, s/tw from £25/40; @) New hostel in a beautifully converted historic building,

with clean, modern kitchen, pool room, and an ideal location right in the city centre. Can get a bit noisy at night, but that's because it's close to pubs and nightlife.

Shaftesbury Hotel

HOTEL ££

(01382-669216; 1 Hyndford St; s/d from £55/85; P) The family-run, 12-room Shaftesbury is a Victorian mansion built for a jute baron and has many authentic period features, including a fine marble fireplace in the dining room. It's 1.5 miles west of the city centre, just off Perth Rd.

Aabalree

B&B £

(01382-223867; www.aabalree.com; 20 Union St; s/d £24/40) This is a pretty basic B&B – there are no en suites – but the owners are welcoming (don't be put off by the dark entrance) and it couldn't be more central, close to both train and bus stations. This makes it popular, so book ahead.

Grampian Hotel

HOTEL ££

(01382-667785; www.grampianhotel.com; 295 Perth Rd; s/d from £55/70; P) A small and welcoming hotel set in a restored Victorian town house with six spacious bedrooms (all en suite), just five minutes' walk from the West End.

Aauld Steeple Guest House

B&B £

(01382-200302; www.aauldsteepleguesthouse.co.uk; 94 Nethergate; s/d £27/44; P) Just as central as Aabalree, but a bit more comfortable, the Aauld Steeple has spacious double and family rooms, some with views of St Mary's Church. Suffers a bit from street noise, though.

Riverview Caravan Park

CAMPSITE £

(01382-535471; www.riverview.co.uk; Marine Dr, Monifieth; tent or campervan sites £15; ☺closed Feb) The nearest camping ground to Dundee is attractively sited near the beach, 5 miles east of the city centre.



Eating



Metro

BRASSERIE ££

(0845 365 0002; www.apexhotels.co.uk/eat; Apex City Quay Hotel, 1 West Victoria Dock Rd; mains £10-16) Sleek, slate-blue banquettes, white linen napkins, black-clad staff and a view of Victoria Dock lend an air of city sophistication to this stylish hotel brasserie, with a menu that ranges from steaks and burgers to Caribbean jerk chicken with coconut curry. There's a three-course dinner menu for £21.50. Located just east of the city centre, close to the Frigate Unicorn.

Playwright

BISTRO ££

(☎01382-223113; www.theplaywright.co.uk; 11 Tay Sq; mains £23-25; ☉10am-midnight) Next door to the theatre, and decorated with photos of Scottish actors, this innovative cafe-bar and bistro serves a 'grazing menu' of light meals (£5 to £8) from noon to 5pm, a lunch and pre-theatre menu (£17/20 for two/three courses) and a gourmet à la carte menu that concentrates on fine Scottish produce with dishes such as saddle of lamb with wild mushrooms and roast halibut with shellfish sauce.

Jute Cafe-Bar

BISTRO ££

(www.jutecafebar.co.uk; Dundee Contemporary Arts, 152 Nethergate; mains lunch £7-11, dinner £13-20; ☉10am-midnight Mon-Sat, noon-midnight Sun) The industrial-chic cafe-bar in the Dundee Contemporary Arts centre serves excellent deli sandwiches and steaks, as well as more adventurous Mediterranean-Asian fusion cuisine. Early-bird menu (5pm to 6.30pm daily) offers a two-course dinner for £12. Tables spill out into the sunny courtyard in summer.

Agac n

TURKISH ££

(☎01382-644227; 113 Perth Rd; mains £10-16; ☉dinner Tue-Sun) With a charismatic owner, quirky decor and wonderfully aromatic Turkish specialities (Iskender kebab is our favourite), it's no wonder that you have to book ahead at this little spot on a corner, a 20 minute walk up Perth Rd from the centre. If you can't get a table, you can settle for takeaway.

Dil'se

INDIAN ££

(www.dilse-restaurant.co.uk; 99 Perth Rd; mains £8-15; ☉noon-2.30pm & 4.30-11pm Sun-Thu, noon-2am Fri & Sat) Dundee loves a curry, and nobody does it better than this sleek modern Bangladeshi restaurant most of the way up Perth Rd. The bold, contemporary approach extends beyond the delicious old favourites to new dishes, such as Mas Bangla, which brings the subcontinent to Scots salmon.

Rep Theatre Cafe

CAFE-BAR ££

(www.dundeereptheatre.co.uk; Tay Sq; mains £9-15; ☉cafe 10am-late, restaurant noon-3pm & 5-10pm Mon-Sat) The city's arty types hang out in this Continental-style cafe-bar and restaurant in the foyer at the Dundee Rep Theatre. Great sandwiches and pizza, as well as tasty steaks, fishcakes and veggie dishes.

Fisher & Donaldson

TEAROOM £

(12 Whitehall St; ☉6.30am-5pm Mon-Sat) There's an excellent tearoom in the up-market bakery and patisserie.

Deep Sea

FISH & CHIPS £

(81 Nethergate; ☉9.30am-6.30pm Mon-Sat) Dundee's best fish and chips.

Tesco Metro

SELF-CATERING £

(Murraygate; ☉7am-midnight Mon-Fri, 7am-10pm Sat, 10am-7pm Sun)

**Drinking**

There are many lively pubs, especially in the West End and along West Port.

Nether Inn

PUB

(134 Nethergate) This large, stylish place, with comfy couches, pool table and drinks promos, is popular with students.

Social

BAR

(www.socialanimal.co.uk; 10 South Tay St) A lively style bar with a separate dining area.

Globe

BAR

(53-57 West Port; ☎) Serves good bar meals from noon to 7.30pm (6pm Sunday) and often has live music or sport on the big-screen TV.

**Entertainment**

Dundee's nightlife may not be as hot as Glasgow's, but there are lots of places to go – pick up a free what's-on guide from the tourist office, or check out the What's On section of www.dundee.com. Tickets for most events are on sale at the Dundee Contemporary Arts centre.

Caird Hall

MUSIC, COMEDY

(www.cairdhall.co.uk; 6 City Sq; ☉box office 9am-4.30pm Mon-Fri, 9.30am-1.30pm Sat) The Caird Hall hosts regular concerts of classical music, as well as organ recitals, rock bands, dances, comedians, fetes and fairs. Check its website for details of coming events.

Dundee Rep Theatre

DRAMA

(www.dundeereptheatre.co.uk; Tay Sq; ☉box office 10am-6pm or start of performance) Dundee's main venue for the performing arts, the Rep is home to Scotland's only full-time repertory company and to the Scottish Dance Theatre.

Fat Sams

CLUB, LIVE MUSIC

(www.fatsams.co.uk; 31 South Ward Rd; ☉11pm-late) Fat Sams has been around for more than 20 years but is still one of the city's

most popular clubs, with regular live gigs, DJs and student nights pulling in a young crowd (including lots of students from St Andrews University).

Reading Rooms

CLUB, LIVE MUSIC

(www.myspace.com/thereadingrooms; 57 Blackcroft; admission £3-8; ☎8.30pm or 10.30pm-2.30am Wed-Sat) Dundee's hippest venue is an arty, bohemian hang-out in a run-down former library that hosts some of Scotland's best indie club nights. Live gigs have ranged from island singer-songwriter Colin MacIntyre (aka Mull Historical Society) to Argyshire rock band Biffy Clyro.

i Information

Ninewells Hospital (☎01382-660111; ☎casualty 24hr) At Menzieshill, west of the city centre.

Tourist office (☎01382-527527; www.angusanddundee.co.uk; Discovery Point; ☎10am-5pm Mon-Sat, noon-4pm Sun Jun-Sep, 10am-4pm Mon-Sat Oct-May)

i Getting There & Away

AIR Two and a half miles west of the city centre, **Dundee Airport** (www.hial.co.uk/dundee-airport) has daily scheduled services to London City airport (CityJet), Birmingham and Belfast (FlyBe). Bus 8X runs between the airport and the city centre (five minutes, half-hourly Monday to Saturday). A taxi to the airport takes five minutes and costs £3.50.

BUS National Express (www.nationalexpress.com) operates one direct service a day from London to Dundee (£40, 11 hours).

Scottish Citylink (www.citylink.co.uk) has hourly buses from Dundee to Glasgow (£15, 2½ hours), Perth (£8, 35 minutes), Aberdeen (£15, 1½ hours) and Edinburgh (£14, two hours, change at Perth); book via www.megabus.com for fares as low as £5. Some Aberdeen buses travel via Arbroath, others via Forfar. There are also direct buses to Oban (£26, 3½ hours, two daily).

Stagecoach operates buses to Perth (one hour, hourly), Blairgowrie (one hour, hourly), Forfar (40 minutes, once or twice an hour), Kirriemuir (one hour, half-hourly), Brechin (1¼ hours, 10 daily, change at Forfar) and Arbroath (one hour, half-hourly). Bus 99 runs to St Andrews (one hour, every 15 minutes Monday to Saturday, hourly on Sunday).

TRAIN Trains run to Dundee from Edinburgh (£20, 1¼ hours) and Glasgow (£23, 1½ hours) at least once an hour Monday to Saturday, hourly on Sunday from Edinburgh, and every two hours on Sunday from Glasgow.

Trains from Dundee to Aberdeen (£24, 1¼ hours) travel via Arbroath and Stonehaven. There are around two trains an hour, fewer on Sunday.

i Getting Around

The city centre is compact and is easy to get around on foot. For information on local public transport, contact **Travel Dundee** (www.traveldundee.co.uk; Forum Shopping Centre, 92 Commercial St; ☎9.15am-4.55pm Mon-Fri, 10am-3.55pm Sat).

BUS City bus fares cost 65p to £1.45 depending on distance; buy your ticket from the driver (exact fare only – no change given).

CAR Rental agencies:

Arnold Clark (☎01382-225382; East Dock St)

National Car Rental (☎01382-224037; 45-53 Gellatly St)

TAXI **Discovery Taxis** (☎01382-732111)

Broughty Ferry

Dundee's attractive seaside suburb, known locally as 'The Ferry', lies 4 miles east of the city centre. It has a castle, a long, sandy beach and a number of good places to eat and drink. It's also handy for the golf courses at nearby Carnoustie.

FREE Broughty Castle Museum MUSEUM (Castle Green; ☎10am-4pm Mon-Sat, 12.30-4pm Sun, closed Mon Oct-Mar) A 16th-century tower house that looms imposingly over the harbour, guarding the entrance to the Firth of Tay. There's a fascinating exhibit on Dundee's whaling industry, and the view from the top offers the chance of spotting seals and dolphins offshore.

🏠 Sleeping

Hotel Broughty Ferry

HOTEL ££

(☎01382-480027; www.hotelbroughtyerry.com; 16 W Queen St; s/d £68/88; ☎☎☎) It doesn't look like much from the outside, but this is the Ferry's swankiest place to stay, with 16 beautifully decorated bedrooms, a sauna and solarium and a small, heated pool. It's only a five-minute stroll from the waterfront.

Invermark House

B&B ££

(☎01382-739430; www.invermark.co.uk; 23 Monifieth Rd; s/d from £30/50; ☎☎) Invermark is a grand Victorian villa set in its own grounds, built for a jute baron in the mid-19th century. There are five large en suite

PICTISH SYMBOL STONES

The mysterious carved stones that dot the landscape of eastern Scotland are the legacy of the warrior tribes who inhabited these lands 2000 years ago. The Romans occupied the southern half of Britain from AD 43 to 410, but the region to the north of the firths of Forth and Clyde – known as Caledonia – was abandoned as being too dangerous, sealed off behind the ramparts of the Antonine Wall and Hadrian's Wall.

Caledonia was the homeland of the Picts, a collection of tribes named by the Romans for their habit of painting or tattooing their bodies. In the 9th century they were culturally absorbed by the Scots, leaving behind only a few archaeological remains, a scattering of Pictish place names beginning with 'Pit', and hundreds of mysterious carved stones decorated with intricate symbols, mainly in northeast Scotland. The capital of the ancient Southern Pictish kingdom is said to have been at Forteviot in Strathearn; Pictish symbol stones are to be found throughout this area and all the way up the eastern coast of Scotland into Sutherland and Caithness.

It is thought that the stones were set up to record Pictish lineages and alliances, but no-one is sure exactly how the system worked. They are decorated with unusual symbols, including z-rods (lightning bolt?), circles (the sun?), double discs (hand mirror?) and fantastical creatures, as well as figures of warriors on horseback, hunting scenes and (on the later stones) Christian symbols.

Local tourist offices provide a free leaflet titled the *Angus Pictish Trail*, which will guide you to the main Pictish sites in the area. The finest assemblage of stones in their natural outdoor setting is at Aberlemno (see the boxed text, p234), and there are excellent indoor collections at St Vigean's Museum (p232) and the Meigle Museum (p222). The Pictavia interpretive centre at Brechin (p237) provides a good introduction to the Picts and is worth a look before you visit the stones.

The Pictish Trail by Anthony Jackson lists 11 driving tours, while *The Symbol Stones of Scotland* by the same author provides more detail on the history and meaning of the Pictish stones.

bedrooms and an elegant lounge and dining room with a view of the gardens.

Ashley House

B&B ££

(☎01382-776109; www.ashleyhousebroughtyferry.co.uk; 15 Monifieth Rd; per person £30-35; ☎) This spacious and comfortable guesthouse has long been one of Broughty Ferry's best. Its four cheerfully decorated bedrooms come equipped with hotel-grade beds and DVD player; one has a particularly grand bathroom.

Fisherman's Tavern

B&B ££

(☎01382-775941; www.fishermanstavern.co.uk; 10-16 Fort St; s/d £39/64) A delightful 17th-century terraced cottage just a few paces from the seafront, the Fisherman's was converted into a pub in 1827. It now has 11 stylishly modern rooms, most with en suite, and an atmospheric pub (see p231).



Eating & Drinking

Ship Inn

PUB, RESTAURANT ££

(www.theshippinn-broughtyferry.co.uk; 121 Fisher St; mains £10-18; ☎food noon-2pm & 5-10.30pm Mon-Fri, noon-10.30pm Sat & Sun) On the sea-

front around the corner from the Fisherman's is the snug, wood-panelled, 19th-century Ship Inn, which serves top-notch dishes ranging from gourmet haddock and chips to venison steaks; you can eat in the upstairs restaurant, or down in the bar (bar meals £7 to £9). It's always busy, so get there early to grab a seat.

Fisherman's Tavern

PUB £

(10-16 Fort St; mains £6-12; ☎food noon-2.30pm & 5-7.30pm) The Fisherman's – a maze of cosy nooks and open fireplaces in a 17th-century cottage – is a lively little pub where you can wash down smoked haddock fishcakes or steak and chips with a choice of Scottish real ales.

Visocchi's

CAFE £

(40 Gray St; mains £7-10; ☎9.30am-5pm Tue, 9.30am-8pm Wed, Thu & Sun, 9.30am-1pm Fri & Sat) Visocchi's – a 70-year-old institution – is a traditional, family-run Italian cafe that sells delicious homemade ice cream, good coffee and a range of burgers, pizzas and pasta dishes.

Getting There & Away

City bus 5 and Stagecoach bus 73 run from Dundee High St to Broughty Ferry (20 minutes) several times an hour from Monday to Saturday, and hourly on Sunday.

Glamis Castle & Village

Looking every inch the Scottish Baronial castle, with its roofline sprouting a forest of pointed turrets and battlements, **Glamis Castle** (www.glamis-castle.co.uk; adult/child £8.75/6; ☉10am-6pm mid-Mar-Oct, 10.30am-4.30pm Nov & Dec, closed Jan-mid-Mar) claims to be the legendary setting for Shakespeare's *Macbeth*. A royal residence since 1372, it is the family home of the earls of Strathmore and Kinghorne – the Queen Mother (born Elizabeth Bowes-Lyon; 1900–2002) spent her childhood at Glamis (pronounced 'glams') and Princess Margaret (the Queen's sister; 1930–2002) was born here.

The five-storey, L-shaped castle was given to the Lyon family in 1372, but was significantly altered in the 17th century. Inside, the most impressive room is the **drawing room**, with its vaulted plasterwork ceiling. There's a display of armour and weaponry in the haunted crypt and frescoes in the chapel (also haunted). Duncan's Hall is named for the murdered King Duncan from *Macbeth* (though the scene actually takes place in Macbeth's castle in Inverness). As with Cawdor Castle, the claimed Shakespeare connection is fictitious – the real Macbeth had nothing to do with either castle, and died long before either was built.

You can also look around the royal apartments, including the Queen Mother's bedroom. The one-hour guided tours depart every 15 minutes (last tour at 4.30pm, or 3.30pm in winter).

The **Angus Folk Museum** (NTS; Kirkwynd, Glamis; adult/child £5.50/4.50; ☉noon-5pm daily Jul & Aug, noon-5pm Sat & Sun only Easter-Jun, Sep & Oct), in a row of 18th-century cottages just off the flower-bedecked square in Glamis village, houses a fine collection of domestic and agricultural relics.

Glamis Castle is 12 miles north of Dundee. There are two to four buses a day from Dundee (35 minutes) to Glamis; some continue to Kirriemuir.

Arbroath

POP 22,800

Arbroath is an old-fashioned seaside resort and fishing harbour, home of the famous **Arbroath smokie** (a form of smoked haddock). The humble smokie achieved European Union 'Protected Geographical Indication' status in 2004 – the term 'Arbroath smokie' can be only be used legally to describe haddock smoked in the traditional manner within an 8km radius of Arbroath. No visit is complete without buying a pair of smokies from one of the many fish shops and eating them with your fingers while sitting beside the harbour. Yum.

Sights

Arbroath Abbey

ABBAY

(HS; Abbey St; adult/child £4.70/2.80; ☉9.30am-5.30pm Apr-Sep, 9.30am-4.30pm Oct-Mar) The magnificent, red-sandstone ruins of Arbroath Abbey, founded in 1178 by King William the Lion, dominate the town centre. It is thought that Bernard of Linton, the abbot here in the early 14th century, wrote the famous Declaration of Arbroath in 1320, asserting Scotland's right to independence from England (see the boxed text, p445). You can climb to the top of one of the towers for a grand view over the town.

St Vigean's Museum

MUSEUM

(HS; St Vigean's Lane; adult/child £3.70/2.20; ☉10am-5pm Tue-Thu, Sat & Sun Apr-Oct, 11am-1pm Tue-Thu, Sat & Sun Nov-Mar) About a mile north of the town centre, this cottage museum houses a superb collection of Pictish and medieval sculptured stones. The museum's masterpiece is the **Drosten Stone**, beautifully carved with animal figures and hunting scenes on one side, and an interlaced Celtic cross on the other (look for the devil perched in the top left corner).

Arbroath Museum

MUSEUM

(Ladyloan; ☉10am-5pm Mon-Sat year-round, plus 2-5pm Sun Jul & Aug) This museum is housed in the elegant Signal Tower that was once used to communicate with the construction team working on the Bell Rock Lighthouse 12 miles offshore. It was undergoing refurbishment at the time of research, but will reopen in summer 2011 with new displays dedicated to Arbroath's maritime heritage and the Bell Rock lighthouse, which was built between 1807 and 1811 by the famous engineer Robert Stevenson (grandfather of writer Robert Louis Stevenson).



Activities

The coast northeast of Arbroath consists of dramatic red-sandstone cliffs riven by inlets, caves and natural arches. An excellent **cliff-top walk** (leaflet from the tourist office) follows the coast for 3 miles to the quaint fishing village of **Auchmithie**, which claims to have invented the Arbroath smokie.

If you fancy catching your own fish, the **Marie Dawn** (☎01241-873957) and **Girl Katherine II** (☎01241-874510) offer three-hour sea-angling trips (usually from 2pm to 5pm) out of Arbroath harbour for £15 per person, including tackle and bait.



Sleeping

Harbour Nights Guest House B&B £££
(☎01241-434343; www.harbournights-scotland.com; 4 The Shore; s/d from £45/60) With a superb location overlooking the harbour, five stylishly decorated bedrooms and a gourmet breakfast menu, Harbour Nights is our favourite place to stay in Arbroath. Rooms 2 and 3, with harbour views, are a bit more expensive (doubles £70 to £80), but well worth asking for when booking.

Old Vicarage B&B £££
(☎01241-430475; www.theoldvicaragebandb.co.uk; 2 Seaton Rd; s/d from £55/80; P☎) The three five-star bedrooms in this attractive Victorian villa have a pleasantly old-fashioned atmosphere, and the extensive breakfast menu includes Arbroath smokies. The house is on a quiet street close to the start of the cliff-top walk to Auchmithie.



Eating

Gordon's Restaurant SCOTTISH ££££
(☎01241-830364; www.gordonsrestaurant.co.uk; Main St, Inverkeilor; 3-course lunch £37, 4-course dinner £45; ☎noon-1.45pm Wed-Sun, 7-9pm Tue-Sun) Six miles north of Arbroath, in the tiny and unpromising-looking village of Inverkeilor, lies this hidden gem – an intimate and rustic eatery serving gourmet-quality Scottish cuisine. There are three comfortable bedrooms (single/double from £75/90) for those who don't want to drive back to a hotel after dinner.

But'n'Ben Restaurant SCOTTISH £££
(☎01241-877223; 1 Auchmithie; mains £8-15; ☎lunch & dinner Wed-Sat, lunch Sun, dinner Mon) Above the harbour in Auchmithie, this cosy, tartan-clad cottage restaurant serves the best of local seafood – the Arbroath smokie

pancakes are recommended – plus great homemade cakes and desserts. Best to book.

Smithie's CAFE £
(16 Keptie St; mains £3-6; ☎9.30am-4.30pm Mon-Fri, 9.30am-4pm Sat) Housed in a former butcher's shop, with hand-painted tiles and meat hooks on the ceiling, Smithie's is a great little neighbourhood deli and cafe serving Fairtrade coffee, pancakes, wraps and freshly made pasta – butternut squash and sage tortellini make a tasty change from macaroni cheese for a vegetarian lunch.

Sugar & Spice Tearoom CAFE £
(www.sugarandspiceshop.co.uk; 9-13 High St; mains £5-9; ☎10am-5pm Mon-Thu, 10am-9pm Fri & Sat, noon-7pm Sun, longer hours Jun-Sep; ♿) With its flounces, frills and black-and-white uniformed waitresses, this chintzy tearoom verges on the twee. However, the place is very child-friendly – there's an indoor play area and a Wendy (play) house out the back – and the tea and scones are sublime. You can even try an Arbroath smokie, grilled with lemon butter.

Information

Visitor centre & tourist office (☎01241-872609; Fishmarket Quay; ☎9.30am-5.30pm Mon-Sat, 10am-3pm Sun Jun-Aug, 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, 10am-5pm Sat Apr, May & Sep, 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, 10am-3pm Sat Oct-Mar) Beside the harbour.

Coldroom Computers (15 Westport; per 15 min 50p; ☎10am-5.30pm Mon-Fri, noon-4pm Sat; @) Internet access.

Getting There & Away

BUS Bus 140 runs from Arbroath to Auchmithie (15 minutes, six daily Monday to Friday, three daily on Saturday and Sunday).

THE FORFAR BRIDIE

Forfar, the county town of Angus, is the home of Scotland's answer to the Cornish pasty: the famous **Forfar bridle**. A shortcrust pastry turnover filled with cooked minced beef, onion and gravy, it was invented in Forfar in the early 19th century. If you fancy trying one, head for **James McLaren & Son** (8 The Cross, Forfar; ☎8am-4.30pm Mon-Wed, Fri & Sat, 8am-1pm Thu), a family bakery bang in the centre of Forfar, which has been selling tasty, home-baked bridies since 1893.

TRAIN Trains from Dundee to Arbroath (£4.50, 20 minutes, two per hour) continue to Aberdeen (£19, 55 minutes) via Montrose and Stonehaven.

Montrose

POP 11,800

Despite its seaside setting, broad main street of Victorian buildings and reputation as a golfing resort, Montrose exudes an austere and slightly down-at-heel atmosphere. It sits at the mouth of the River South Esk, where its industrial harbour serves the North Sea oil industry; and is backed by the broad, tidal mud flats of Montrose Basin, a rich feeding ground for thousands of resident and migrant birds.

At the southern edge of town, **Montrose Basin Visitor Centre** (www.montrosebasin.org.uk; Rossie Braes; adult/child £4/3; ☉10.30am-5pm Mar-Oct, 10.30am-4pm Fri-Sun Nov-Feb) has indoor and outdoor hides, and viewing platforms with high-powered binoculars and remote-controlled TV cameras where you can zoom in on the local wildlife. In summer you can see curlews, oystercatchers and eider ducks – and perhaps an otter if you're lucky – and in autumn the basin is invaded by huge flocks of pink-footed and greylag geese. The birdwatching is best from two hours after high tide till two hours before the next high tide – check times at any tourist office.

WORTH A TRIP

THE ABERLEMNO STONES

Five miles northeast of Forfar, on the B9134, are the mysterious **Aberlemno stones**, some of Scotland's finest Pictish symbol stones. By the roadside there are three 7th- to 9th-century slabs with various symbols, including the z-rod and double disc, and in the churchyard at the bottom of the hill there's a magnificent 8th-century stone displaying a Celtic cross, interlace decoration, entwined beasts and, on the reverse, scenes of the Battle of Nechtansmere (where the Picts vanquished the Northumbrians in 685). The stones are covered up from November to March; otherwise there's free access at all times.

Prettier than Montrose's town beach, the 2-mile strand of **Lunan Bay** to the south is overlooked by the dramatic ruin of **Red Castle**.

Montrose lies on the Dundee to Aberdeen railway line.

Kirriemuir

POP 6000

Known as the Wee Red Town because of its close-packed, red-sandstone houses, Kirriemuir is famed as the birthplace of JM Barrie (1860–1937), writer and creator of the much-loved *Peter Pan*. A bronze statue of the 'boy who wouldn't grow up' graces the intersection of Bank and High Sts.

The tourist office is in the Gateway to the Glens Museum.

Sights

JM Barrie's Birthplace (NTS; 9 Brechin Rd; adult/child £5.50/4.50; ☉11am-5pm Jul & Aug, noon-5pm Sat-Wed Apr-Jun, Sep & Oct) is the town's big attraction, a place of pilgrimage for Peter Pan fans from all over the world. The two-storey house where Barrie was born has been furnished in period style, and preserves Barrie's writing desk and the wash house at the back that served as his first 'theatre'. The ticket also gives admission to the **Camera Obscura** (adult/child Camera Obscura only £3/2; ☉noon-5pm Mon-Sat, 1-5pm Sun Jul-Sep, noon-5pm Sat & 1-5pm Sun Easter-Jun) on the hilltop northeast of the town centre, given to the town by Barrie himself.

The old Town House opposite the Peter Pan statue dates from 1604 and houses the **Gateway to the Glens Museum** (32 High St; admission free; ☉10am-5pm Mon-Sat Apr-Sep, closed Thu am Oct-Mar & Sun), a useful introduction to local history, geology and wildlife for those planning to explore the Angus Glens.

For generations of local school kids, the big treat when visiting Kirriemuir was a trip to the **Star Rock Shop** (27-29 Roods). Established in 1833, it still specialises in traditional Scottish 'sweeties' (candy), ranged in colourful jars along the walls – humbugs, tablet, cola cubes, pear drops, and the original Star Rock, still made to an 1833 recipe.

Sleeping & Eating

Airlie Arms Hotel

HOTEL ££

(☎01575-572847; www.theairliearms.co.uk; St Malcolm's Wynd; s/d £45/75; ) This attrac-

tive old coaching inn, just a few minutes' walk from the tourist office, has been recently revamped with modern, stylish en suite rooms and a candle-lit restaurant called the **Wynd** (mains £8-14; ☎5-9pm Wed-Fri, noon-9pm Sat & Sun).

88 Degrees

CAFE, DELI &

(17 High St; mains £3-6; ☎9am-5pm) A new cafe and deli that serves superb coffee (named for the ideal temperature of an espresso), delicious cakes and handmade chocolates. Breakfast till 10.30am and light lunches till 2.30pm.

i Getting There & Away

Stagecoach bus 20 runs from Dundee to Kirriemuir (£5.30, one hour, hourly Monday to Saturday, every two hours Sunday) via Glamis (20 minutes, two daily Monday to Saturday) and Forfar (25 minutes).

Angus Glens

The northern part of Angus is bounded by the Grampian Mountains, where five scenic glens – Isla, Prosen, Clova, Lethnot and Esk – cut into the hills along the southern edge of the Cairngorms National Park. All have attractive scenery, though each glen has its own distinct personality: Glen Clova and Glenesk are the most beautiful, while Glen Lethnot is the least frequented. You can get detailed information on walks in the Angus Glens from the tourist office in Kirriemuir and from the Glen Clova Hotel in Glen Clova.

Since the withdrawal of the postbus service, there is no public transport to the Angus glens other than a limited school-bus service along Glen Clova; ask at the tourist office in Kirriemuir or Dundee for details.

GLEN ISLA

At Bridge of Craigisla at the foot of the glen is a spectacular, 24m waterfall called **Reekie Linn**; the name Reekie (Scottish for 'smoky') comes from the billowing spray that rises from the falls.

A 5-mile walk beyond the road end at Auchavan leads into the wild and mountainous upper reaches of the glen, where the **Caanlochan National Nature Reserve** protects rare alpine flora on the high plateau.

GLEN PROSEN

Near the foot of Glen Prosen, 6 miles north of Kirriemuir, there's a good forest walk up

to the **Airlie monument** on Tulloch Hill (380m); start from the eastern road, about a mile beyond Dykehead.

From Glenprosen Lodge, at the head of the glen, a 9-mile walk along the **Kilbo Path** leads over a pass between Mayar (928m) and Driesh (947m), and descends to Glen-doll Lodge at the head of Glen Clova (allow five hours).

Prosen Hostel (☎01575-540238; www.prosenhostel.co.uk; per person £18; ☎year round; @) is an 18-bed bunkhouse with excellent facilities (including a red-squirrel viewing area in the lounge). It's 7 miles up the glen, just beyond Prosen village, but there's no public transport.

GLEN CLOVA

The longest and loveliest of the Angus Glens stretches north from Kirriemuir for 20 miles, broad and pastoral in its lower reaches but growing narrower and craggier as the steep, heather-clad Highland hills close in around its head.

The minor road beyond the Glen Clova Hotel ends at a Forestry Commission car park with toilets and a picnic area, which is the trailhead for a number of strenuous walks through the hills to the north.

Jock's Road is an ancient footpath that was much used by cattle drovers, soldiers, smugglers and shepherds in the 18th and 19th centuries; 700 Jacobite soldiers passed this way during their retreat in 1746, en route to final defeat at Culloden. From the car park the path strikes west along Glen Doll, then north across a high plateau (900m) before descending steeply into Glen Callater and on to Braemar (15 miles; allow five to seven hours). The route is hard going and should not be attempted in winter; you'll need OS 1:50,000 maps, numbers 43 and 44.

An easier, but still strenuous, circular walk starts from the Glen Clova Hotel, making a circuit of the scenic corrie (glacial hollow) that encloses **Loch Brandy** (6 miles, four hours).



Glen Clova Hotel (☎01575-550350; www.clova.com; Glen Clova; s/d £60/90; P) is a lovely old drover's inn near the head of the glen and a great place to get away from it all. As well as 10 comfortable, country-style, en suite rooms (one with a four-poster bed), it has a bunkhouse out the back (£14 per person), a rustic, stone-floored climbers' bar with a roaring log fire, and a bay-windowed **restaurant** (mains £8-

13; ☉noon-8.15pm Sun-Thu, noon-8.45pm Fri & Sat) with views across the glen. The menu includes cock-a-leekie soup, venison in Drambuie sauce, and lamb and rosemary lasagne, and there are separate children's and vegetarian menus.

GLEN LETHNOT

This glen is noted for the **Brown & White Caterthuns** – two extraordinary Iron Age hill forts, defended by ramparts and ditches, perched on twin hilltops at its southern end. A minor road crosses the pass between the two summits, and it's an easy walk to either fort from the parking area in the pass; both are superb viewpoints. If you don't have a car, you can walk there from Brechin (6 miles) or from Edzell (5 miles).

GLENESK

The most easterly of the Angus Glens, Glensesk, runs for 15 miles from Edzell to lovely **Loch Lee**, surrounded by beetling cliffs and waterfalls. Ten miles up the glen from Edzell is **Glenesk Folk Museum** (The Retreat; adult/child £2/1; ☉noon-6pm daily Jun–mid-Oct, noon-6pm Sat & Sun only Easter-May; ☎), an old shooting lodge that houses a fascinating collection of antiques and artefacts documenting the local culture of the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries. It also has a tearoom, restaurant and gift shop, and has public internet access.

Five miles further on, the public road ends at **Invermark Castle**, an impressive ruined tower guarding the southern approach to the Mounth, a hill track to Deeside.

Edzell

POP 785

The picturesque village of Edzell, with its broad main street and grandiose monumental arch, dates from the early 19th century when Lord Panmure decided that the original medieval village, a mile to the west, spoiled the view from Edzell Castle. The old village was razed and the villagers moved to this pretty, planned settlement.

Lord Panmure's predecessors as owners of **Edzell Castle** (HS; adult/child £4.70/2.80; ☉9.30am-5.30pm Apr-Sep, to 4.30pm Oct, 9.30am-4.30pm Sat-Wed Nov-Mar) were the Lindsay earls of Crawford, who built this 16th-century L-plan tower house. Sir David Lindsay, a cultured and well-travelled man,

laid out the castle's beautiful **pleasance** in 1604 as a place of contemplation and learning. Unique in all of Scotland, this Renaissance walled garden is lined with niches for nesting birds, and sculptured plaques illustrating the cardinal virtues, the arts and the planetary deities.

Two miles north of Edzell, the B966 to Fettercairn crosses the River North Esk at Gannochy Bridge. From the lay-by just over the bridge, a blue-painted wooden door in the stone wall gives access to a delightful footpath that leads along the wooded river gorge for 1.5 miles to a scenic spot known as the **Rocks of Solitude**.

Alexandra Lodge (☎01365-648266; www.alexandralodge.co.uk; Inveriscandy Rd; s/d £45/70; ☎) is an attractive Edwardian villa with comfortable bedrooms and a lovely wood-panelled lounge, while the **Panmure Arms Hotel** (☎01365-648950; www.panmurearmshotel.co.uk; 52 High St; s/d from £55/80; ☎) is a pretty, mock-Tudor place serving excellent bar meals (£11 to £15) from noon till 2pm Monday to Friday and noon till 9pm Saturday and Sunday.

Bus 29 or 29A from Brechin to Laurencekirk stops at Edzell (15 minutes, seven a day Monday to Friday, five on Saturday).

Brechin

POP 7200

The name of the local football team, Brechin City, proclaims this diminutive town's main claim to fame – as the seat of **Brechin Cathedral** (now demoted to a parish church) it has the right to call itself a city, albeit the smallest one in Scotland. Adjacent to the cathedral is a 32m-high **round tower** built around 1000 as part of a Celtic monastery. It is of a type often seen in Ireland, but one of only three that survive in Scotland. Its elevated doorway, 2m above the ground, has carvings of animals, saints and a crucifix.

Housed nearby in the 18th-century former town hall, court room and prison, **Brechin Town House Museum** (St Ninian's Sq; admission free; ☉10am-5pm Mon-Sat Apr-Sep, 10am-5pm Mon, Tue & Thu-Sat, 10am-1pm Wed Nov-Mar) records the history of the round tower, cathedral and town.

The town's (OK, city's) picturesque Victorian train station dates from 1897 and is now the terminus of the restored **Caledonian Railway** (www.caledonianrailway.com; 2

Park Rd), which runs steam trains (adult/child £5/3 return) along a 3.5-mile stretch of track to Bridge of Dun. Trains run on Sunday from late May to mid-September, on Saturday in July and August, and at Easter and Christmas. From Bridge of Dun, it's a 15-minute signposted walk to the **House of Dun** (NTS; adult/child £8.50/5.50; ☀11am-5pm Jul & Aug, noon-5pm Wed-Sun Apr-Jun, Sep & Oct), a beautiful Georgian country house built in 1730.

Adjoining Brechin Castle Centre (a gardening and horse-riding centre on the A90 just west of Brechin) is **Pictavia** (www.pictavia.org.uk; adult/child £3.25/2.25; ☀9.30am-5.30pm Mon-Sat, 10.30am-5.30pm Sun Easter-mid Oct, 9am-5pm Mon-Sat, 10am-5pm Sun mid-Oct-Easter), an interpretive centre telling the story of the Picts, and explaining current theories about the mysterious carved symbol stones they left behind. It's worth making a trip here before going to see the Pictish stones at Aberlemno.

i Getting There & Away

Scottish Citylink buses between Dundee and Aberdeen stop at Clerk St in Brechin. Stage-coach buses depart from South Esk St heading to Forfar (30 minutes, hourly), Aberlemno (15 minutes, six a day) and Edzell.

Bus 24 links Brechin and Stonehaven (55 minutes, three daily Sunday to Friday, five on Saturday).

ABERDEENSHIRE & MORAY

Since medieval times Aberdeenshire and its northwestern neighbour Moray have been the richest and most fertile regions of the Highlands. Aberdeenshire is famed for its Aberdeen Angus beef cattle, its many fine castles and the prosperous 'granite city' of Aberdeen. Moray's main attractions are the Speyside whisky distilleries that line the valley of the River Spey and its tributaries.

Aberdeen

POP 197,300

Aberdeen is the powerhouse of the north-east, fuelled by the North Sea petroleum industry. Oil money has made the city as expensive as London and Edinburgh, and

there are hotels, restaurants and clubs with prices to match the depth of oil-wealthy pockets. Fortunately, most of the cultural attractions, such as the excellent Maritime Museum and the Aberdeen Art Gallery, are free.

Known throughout Scotland as the granite city, much of the town was built using silvery grey granite hewn from the now abandoned Rubislaw Quarry, at one time the biggest artificial hole in the ground in Europe. On a sunny day the granite lends an attractive glitter to the city, but when low, grey rain clouds scud in off the North Sea it can be hard to tell where the buildings stop and the sky begins.

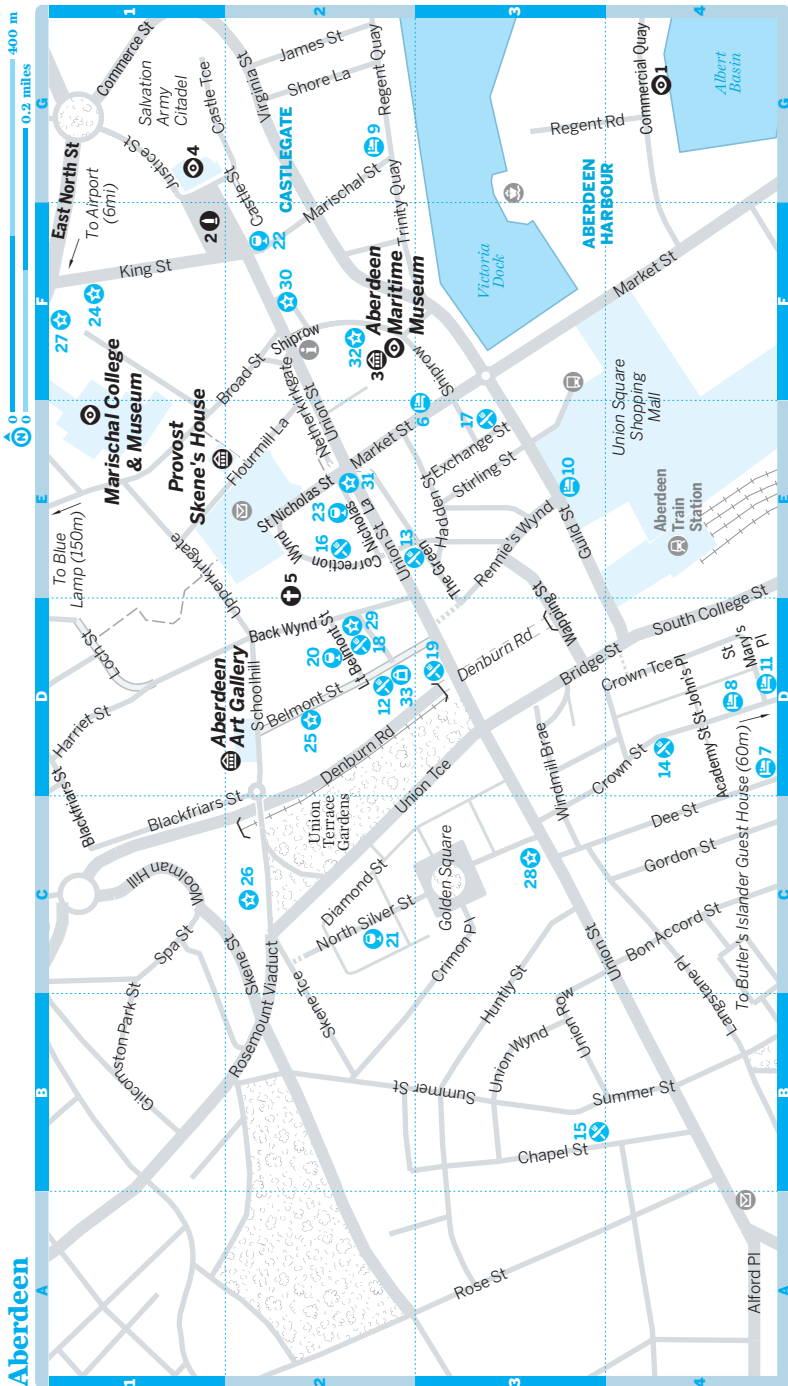
Royal Deeside is easily accessible to the west, Dunnottar Castle to the south, sandy beaches to the north and whisky country to the northwest.

History

Aberdeen was a prosperous trading and fishing port centuries before oil became a valuable commodity. After the townspeople supported Robert the Bruce against the English at the Battle of Bannockburn in 1314, the king rewarded the town with land for which he had previously received rent. The rental income was used to establish the Common Good Fund, to be spent on town amenities, a fund that survives to this day: it helped to finance Marischal College, the Central Library, the art gallery and the hospital, and also pays for the colourful floral displays that have won the city numerous awards.

The name Aberdeen is a combination of two Pictish-Gaelic words, *aber* and *devana*, meaning 'the meeting of two waters'. The area was known to the Romans, and was raided by the Vikings when it was already an important port trading in wool, fish, hides and fur. By the 18th century paper and rope-making, whaling and textile manufacture were the main industries, and in the 19th century it became a major herring-fishing centre.

Since the 1970s Aberdeen has been the main focus of the UK's offshore oil industry, home to oil company offices, engineering yards, a bustling harbour filled with supply ships, and the world's busiest civilian heliport. Unemployment rates, once among the highest in the country, are now among the lowest.



Sights

City Centre

Union St is the city's main thoroughfare, lined with solid, Victorian granite buildings. The oldest area is **Castlegate**, at the eastern end, where the castle once stood. When it was captured from the English for Robert the Bruce, the password used by the townspeople was 'Bon Accord', which is now the city's motto.

In the centre of Castle St stands the 17th-century **Mercat Cross**, bearing a sculpted frieze of portraits of Stuart monarchs. The Baronial heap towering over the eastern end of Castle St is the **Salvation Army Citadel**, which was modelled on Balmoral Castle.

On the northern side of Union St, 300m west of Castlegate, is **St Nicholas Church**, the so-called 'Mither Kirk' (Mother Church) of Aberdeen. The granite spire dates from the 19th century, but there has been a church on this site since the 12th century; the early 15th-century **St Mary's Chapel** survives in the eastern part of the church.

FREE Aberdeen Maritime Museum

MUSEUM

(www.aagm.co.uk; Shiprow; ☉10am-5pm Mon-Sat, noon-3pm Sun) Overlooking the nautical bustle of the harbour is the Maritime Museum. Centred on a three-storey replica of a North Sea oil production platform, its exhibits explain all you ever wanted to know about the petroleum industry. Other galleries, some situated in **Provost Ross's House**, the oldest building in the city and part of museum, cover the shipbuilding, whaling and fishing industries. Sleek and speedy Aberdeen clippers were a 19th-century shipyard speciality, used by British merchants for the importation of tea, wool and exotic goods (opium, for instance) to Britain, and, on the return journey, the transportation of emigrants to Australia.

FREE Aberdeen Art Gallery

ART GALLERY

(www.aagm.co.uk; Schoolhill; ☉10am-5pm Tue-Sat, 2-5pm Sun) Behind the grand facade of Aberdeen Art Gallery is a cool, marble-lined space exhibiting the work of contemporary Scottish and English painters, such as Gwen Hardie, Stephen Conroy, Trevor Sutton and Tim Ollivier. There are

Aberdeen

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Aberdeen Art Gallery.....	D2
Marischal College & Museum.....	E1
Provost Skene's House.....	E1

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Aberdeen Box Office.....	(see 28)
25 Belmont Cinema.....	D2
26 His Majesty's Theatre.....	C2
27 Lemon Tree Theatre.....	F1
28 Music Hall.....	C3
29 O'Neill's.....	D2
30 Snafu.....	F2
31 Tunnels.....	E2
32 Vue Cinema.....	F2

Shopping

33 One Up Records.....	D2
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also several landscapes by Joan Eardley, who lived in a cottage on the cliffs near Stonehaven in the 1950s and '60s and painted tempestuous oils of the North Sea and poignant portraits of slum children. Among the Pre-Raphaelite works upstairs, look out for the paintings of Aberdeen artist William Dyce (1806–64), ranging from religious works to rural scenes.

Downstairs is a large, empty, circular white room, with fish-scaled balustrades evoking the briny origins of Aberdeen's wealth, commemorating the 165 people who lost their lives in the Piper Alpha oil-rig disaster in 1988.

FREE Marischal College & Museum

MUSEUM

(www.abdn.ac.uk/marischal_museum; Marischal College, Broad St; ☉10am–5pm Mon–Fri, 2–5pm Sun) Across Broad St from Provost Skene's House is **Marischal College**, founded in 1593 by the 5th Earl Marischal, and merged with King's College (founded 1495) in 1860 to create the modern University of Aberdeen. The huge and impressive facade in Perpendicular Gothic style – unusual in having such elaborate masonry hewn from notoriously hard-to-work granite – dates from 1906 and is the world's second-largest granite structure (after L'Escorial near Madrid). At the time of research the building was being converted into Aberdeen City Council's new headquarters.

Founded in 1786, the **Marischal Museum** houses a fascinating collection of material donated by graduates and friends of the university over the centuries. In one room, the history of northeastern Scotland is depicted through its myths, customs, famous people, architecture and trade. The other gallery gives an anthropological overview of the world, incorporating objects from vastly different cultures, arranged thematically (Polynesian wooden masks alongside gas masks and so on). There are the usual Victorian curios, an Inuit kayak found in the local river estuary in the 18th century and Inuit objects collected by whalers. At the time of research, the museum was closed to the public during building work, but will reopen sometime in 2011.

FREE Provost Skene's House

HISTORIC BUILDING

(www.aagm.co.uk; Guestrow; ☉10am–5pm Mon–Sat) Surrounded by concrete and glass office blocks in what was once the worst slum in Aberdeen is Provost Skene's House, a late-

medieval turreted town house occupied in the 17th century by the provost (the Scottish equivalent of a mayor) Sir George Skene. It was also occupied for six weeks by the Duke of Cumberland on his way to Culloden in 1746. The tempera-painted ceiling with its religious symbolism, dating from 1622, is unusual for having survived the depredations of the Reformation. It's a period gem featuring earnest-looking angels, soldiers and St Peter with crowing cockerels.

Gordon Highlanders Museum

MILITARY MUSEUM

(www.gordonhighlanders.com; St Lukes, Viewfield Rd; adult/child £5/2; ☉10.30am–4.30pm Tue–Sat, 12.30–4.30pm Sun Apr–Sep, 10am–4pm Tue–Sat Oct, Nov, Feb & Mar) The excellent Gordon Highlanders Museum records the history of one of the British Army's most famous fighting units, described by Winston Churchill as 'the finest regiment in the world'. Originally raised in the northeast of Scotland by the 4th Duke of Gordon in 1794, the regiment was amalgamated with the Seaforths and Camerons to form the Highlanders regiment in 1994. The museum is about a mile west of the western end of Union St – take bus 14 or 15 from Union St.

Aberdeen Harbour

Aberdeen has a busy, working harbour crowded with survey vessels and supply ships servicing the offshore oil installations, and car ferries bound for Orkney and Shetland. From dawn until about 8am the colourful **fish market** on Albert Basin operates as it has done for centuries.

Aberdeen Beach

Just 800m east of Castlegate is a spectacular 2-mile sweep of clean, **golden sand** stretching between the mouths of the Rivers Dee and Don. At one time Aberdeen Beach was a good, old-fashioned British seaside resort, but the availability of cheap package holidays has lured Scottish holidaymakers away from its somewhat chilly delights. On a warm summer's day, though, it's still an excellent beach. When the waves are right, a small group of dedicated **surfers** ride the breaks at the south end.

The Esplanade sports several traditional seaside attractions, including **Codona's Amusement Park** (www.codonas.co.uk; Beach Blvd; all-day wristband £12; ☉11am–6pm Jul & Aug, check website rest of year, closed Nov–Easter), complete with stomach-churning waltzers, dodgems, a roller coaster, log

flume and haunted house. The adjacent **Sunset Boulevard** (www.codonas.com; Beach Blvd; all-day wristband £12; ☀10am-midnight) is the indoor alternative, with tenpin bowling, dodgins, arcade games and pool tables.

Halfway between the beach and the city centre is **Satrosphere** (☎01224-640340; www.satrosphere.net; 179 Constitution St; adult/child £5.75/4.50; ☀10am-5pm), a hands-on, interactive science centre.

You can get away from the funfair atmosphere by walking north towards the more secluded part of the beach. There's a **bird-watching hide** on the south bank of the River Don, between the beach and King St, which leads back south towards Old Aberdeen.

Buses 14 and 15 (eastbound) from Union St go to the beach; or you can walk from Castlegate in 10 minutes.

Old Aberdeen

Just over a mile north of the city centre is the district called Old Aberdeen. The name is misleading – although Old Aberdeen is certainly old, the area around Castlegate is older still. This part of the city was originally called Aulton, from the Gaelic for 'village by the pool', and this was anglicised in the 17th century to Old Town.

It was here that Bishop Elphinstone established King's College, Aberdeen's first university, in 1495. The 16th-century **King's College Chapel** (College Bounds; admission free; ☀9am-4.30pm Mon-Fri) is easily recognised by its crown spire; the interior is largely unchanged since it was first built, with impressive stained-glass windows and choir stalls. The nearby **King's College Visitor Centre** (College Bounds; admission free; ☀10am-5pm Mon-Sat, 2-5pm Sun) houses a multimedia display on the university's history and a pleasant coffee shop.

Bus 20 from Littlejohn St (just north of Marischal College) runs to Old Aberdeen every 15 to 20 minutes.

FREE **St Machar's Cathedral** CATHEDRAL
(www.stmachar.com; The Chanonry;

☀9am-5pm Mon-Sat Apr-Oct, to 4pm Nov-Mar) The 15th-century St Machar's Cathedral, with its massive twin towers, is a rare example of a fortified cathedral. According to legend, St Machar was ordered to establish a church where the river takes the shape of a bishop's crook, which it does just here. The cathedral is best known for its impressive **heraldic ceiling**, dating from 1520,

which has 48 shields of kings, nobles, archbishops and bishops. Sunday services are held at 11am and 6pm.

Sleeping

There are clusters of B&Bs on Bon Accord St and Springbank Tee (both 400m southwest of the train station) and along Great Western Rd (the A93, a 25-minute walk southwest of the city centre). They're usually more expensive than the Scottish average and, with so many oil industry workers staying the night before flying offshore, single rooms are at a premium. Prices tend to be lower on weekends.

City Wharf Apartments

SERVICED APARTMENTS ££

(☎0845 094 2424; www.citywharfapartments.co.uk; 19-20 Regent Quay; d from £95; ☎☎) You can watch the bustle of Aberdeen's commercial harbour as you eat breakfast in one of these luxury serviced apartments, complete with stylish, fully equipped kitchen, champagne-stocked minibar and daily cleaning service. Available by the night or the week, with discounts for longer stays.

Globe Inn

B&B ££

(☎01224-624258; www.the-globe-inn.co.uk; 13-15 North Silver St; s/d £65/70) This popular pub (see p243) has seven appealing and comfortable guest bedrooms upstairs, done out in dark wood with burgundy bedspreads. There's live music in the pub on weekends so it's not a place for early-to-bed types, but the price vs location factor can't be beaten. No dining room, so breakfast is continental, served on a tray in your room.

Brentwood Hotel

HOTEL ££

(☎01224-595440; www.brentwood-hotel.co.uk; 101 Crown St; s £45-90, d £59-99; ☎☎) The friendly and flower-bedecked Brentwood, set in a granite town house, is one of the most attractive hotels in the city centre. It's comfortable and conveniently located, but often busy during the week – weekend rates (Friday to Sunday) are much cheaper.

Butler's Islander Guest House

B&B ££

(☎01224-212411; www.butlersguesthouse.com; 122 Crown St; s £40-65, d £60-80; ☎☎) Just across the street from the Brentwood, and with a similar weekday/weekend price split, Butler's is a cosy place with a big breakfast menu that includes fresh fruit salad, kippers and kedgeree as alternatives to the traditional fry-up.

Aberdeen Douglas Hotel

HOTEL £££

(01224-582255; www.aberdeendouglas.com; 43-45 Market St; r from £125; 🍷) You can't miss the grand Victorian facade of this historic landmark, which first opened its doors as a hotel in 1853. Now renovated, it offers classy modern rooms with polished woodwork and crisp white bedlinen, and is barely a minute's walk from the train station.

Simpson's Hotel

BOUTIQUE HOTEL ££

(01224-327777; www.simpsonshotel.co.uk; 59 Queen's Rd; s/d from £60/80; 🍷) Simpson's, a mile west of Union St, is a stylish boutique hotel decorated with a Mediterranean-Italian theme in shades of sand, terracotta and aqua. It's aimed at both business and private guests, and is totally wheelchair accessible. Cheaper rates on weekends.

Dunrovin Guest House

B&B ££

(01224-586081; www.dunrovinguesthouse.co.uk; 168 Bon Accord St; s/d from £45/70; 🍷) Dunrovin is a typical granite Victorian house with eight bedrooms; the upstairs rooms are bright and airy. The friendly owners will provide a veggie breakfast if you wish. Located 400m south from the western end of Union St.

Royal Crown Guest House

B&B ££

(01224-586461; www.royalcrown.co.uk; 111 Crown St; s £35-70, d £60-80; 🍷) The Royal Crown has eight small but nicely furnished bedrooms, and has a top location only five minutes' walk from the train station (though up a steep flight of stairs).

Aberdeen Youth Hostel

HOSTEL £

(SYHA; 01224-646988; 8 Queen's Rd; dm £18-20; 🍷) This hostel, set in a granite Victorian villa, is a mile west of the train station. Walk west along Union St and take the right fork along Albyn Pl until you reach a roundabout; Queen's Rd continues on the western side of the roundabout.

Jurys Inn

HOTEL ££

(01224-381200; www.jurysinns.com; Union Sq, Guild St; s/d £88/96; 🍷) Stylish and comfortable new hotel right next to the train station.

Adelphi Guest House

B&B ££

(01224-583078; www.adelphiguesthouse.com; 8 Whinhill Rd; s/d from £40/50; 🍷) It's 400m south from western end of Union St.

Arden Guest House

B&B ££

(01224-580700; www.ardenguesthouse.co.uk; 61 Dee St; s/d from £50/60)

Kildonan Guest House

B&B ££

(01224-316115; www.kildonan-guesthouse.com; 410 Great Western Rd; s/d from £30/50; 🍷) 900m southwest of the city centre.

**Eating****Café 52**

BISTRO ££

(01224-590094; www.cafe52.net; 52 The Green; mains £12-16; ☺noon-9.30pm Mon-Sat, noon-6pm Sun; 🍷) This little haven of laid-back industrial chic – a high, narrow space lined with bare stonework, rough plaster and exposed ventilation ducts – serves some of the finest and most inventive cuisine in the northeast. Try starters such as wild game and garlic meatloaf with spiced swede chutney, or mains like roast-cumin-and-honey pork loin with baked black pudding.

Silver Darling

SEAFOOD £££

(01224-576229; www.silverdarlingrestaurant.co.uk; Pocra Quay, North Pier; lunch mains £10-15, dinner mains £18-27; ☺noon-1.45pm Mon-Fri & 7-9.30pm Mon-Sat) The Silver Darling (an old Scottish nickname for herring) is housed in a former Customs office, with picture windows overlooking the sea at the entrance to Aberdeen harbour. Here you can enjoy fresh Scottish seafood prepared by a top French chef while you watch the porpoises playing in the harbour mouth. The lunch menu offers good-value gourmet delights, such as pan-fried turbot with chorizo and herb croquette; bookings are recommended.

Moonfish Café

FRENCH ££

(01224-644166; www.moonfishcafe.co.uk; 9 Correction Wynd; 2-/3-course dinner £16/22; ☺noon-11pm) The menu of this funky little eatery tucked away on a back street concentrates on good value French bistro fare (two-course lunch £10) such as classic French onion soup, *moules-frites* (mussels with fries) with saffron and Pernod cream sauce, and crisp sea bass fillet with chorizo, *boudin noir* (blood sausage) and salsa verde.

**Foyer**

FUSION ££

(01224-582277; www.foyerrestaurant.com; 82a Crown St; mains £10-19; ☺11am-9.30pm Tue-Sat) A light, airy space filled with blond wood and bold colours, Foyer is an art gallery as well as a restaurant and is run by a charity that works against youth homelessness and unemployment. The seasonal menu is a fusion of Scottish, Mediterranean and Asian influences, with lots of good veg-

etarian (and gluten- or dairy-free) options. A light lunch menu is available from 11am to 4pm.



Musa Art Cafe

MODERN SCOTTISH ££

(☎01224-571771; www.musaaberdeen.com; 33 Exchange St; lunch mains £6-12, mains £16-19; ☉noon-11pm) The bright paintings on the walls match the vibrant furnishings and smart gastronomic creations at this great cafe-restaurant, set in a former church that was later used to store bananas. As well as a menu that focuses on quality local produce cooked in a quirky way – think haggis-and-coriander spring rolls with apricot chutney – there are Brewdog beers from Fraserburgh, and interesting music, sometimes live.

Rendezvous@Nargile

TURKISH ££

(☎01224-323700; www.rendezvousatnargile.co.uk; cnr Forest Ave; mains £13-19; ☉noon-10pm; 🍷) A stylish West End venue specialising in Turkish cuisine. There are tasty spreads of mezes – *shakshuka* (a blend of roast peppers, tomatoes, aubergines and chilli), *djadjik* (yoghurt with garlic and cucumber) and *sigara boregi* (cheese pastries), for example – followed by delicious, melt-in-the-mouth kebabs and marinated meats, and vegetarian dishes such as *mantar guvec* (casserole of button mushrooms in creamy sauce with a cheese-and-couscous crust).

Beautiful Mountain

CAFE £

(www.thebeautifulmountain.com; 11-13 Belmont St; mains £6-9; ☉8am-4.30pm Mon-Fri, 8am-5pm Sat, 5.30-11pm Thu-Sat) This cosy cafe is squeezed into a couple of tiny rooms (seating upstairs), but serves all-day breakfasts and tasty sandwiches (smoked salmon, Thai chicken, pastrami) on sourdough, bagels, ciabatta and lots of other breads, along with exquisite espresso and consummate cappuccino.

Sand Dollar Café

CAFE, BISTRO £

(www.sanddollarcafe.com; 2 Beach Esplanade; mains £4-7; ☉9am-5pm) A cut above your usual seaside cafe – on sunny days you can sit at the wooden tables outside and share a bottle of chilled white wine, and there's a tempting menu that includes pancakes with maple syrup, homemade burgers and chocolate brownie with Orkney ice cream. An evening bistro menu (mains £11 to £20, served from 6pm Thursday to Saturday) offers steak and seafood dishes. The cafe is on the esplanade, 800m northeast of the city centre.

Ashvale Fish Restaurant

FISH & CHIPS £

(www.theashvale.co.uk; 42-48 Great Western Rd; takeaway £4-6, mains £8-10; ☉11.45am-11pm; 🍷) This is the flagship, 200-seat branch of the Ashvale, an award-winning fish-and-chip restaurant famed for its quality haddock. The Ashvale Whale – a 1lb fish fillet in batter (£10.65) – is a speciality; finish it off and you get a second one free (as if you'd want one by then!). There are branches in Elgin and Brechin.

Howie's

MODERN SCOTTISH ££

(☎639500; 50 Chapel St; 2-course lunch mains £6-8, dinner mains £10-13) A chic bistro dishing up great-value 'modern Scottish' cuisine accompanied by very reasonably priced house wine. Two-/three-course dinner £18/20.

Victoria Restaurant

CAFE £

(140 Union St; mains £6-9; ☉9am-5pm Fri-Wed, 9am-6.30pm Thu) The Victoria, above the Jamieson & Carry jewellery shop, is a traditional, posh Scottish tearoom, with delicious fresh soups, salads and sandwiches. Breakfast served till 11.30am.

Poldino's

ITALIAN ££

(www.poldinos.co.uk; 7 Little Belmont St; mains £10-20; ☉noon-2.30pm & 6-10.45pm Mon-Sat) Poldino's is a long-established Aberdeen eatery – an upmarket Italian family restaurant that never fails to impress with the quality of its food and service.



Drinking

Aberdeen is a great city for a pub crawl – it's more a question of knowing when to stop than where to start. There are lots of pre-club bars in and around Belmont St, with more traditional pubs scattered throughout the city centre.

Globe Inn

PUB

(www.the-globe-inn.co.uk; 13-15 North Silver St) This lovely Edwardian-style pub with wood panelling, marble-topped tables and walls decorated with old musical instruments is a great place for a quiet lunchtime or afternoon drink. It serves good coffee as well as real ales and malt whiskies, and has live music (rock, blues, soul) on Friday and Saturday evenings. And probably the poshest pub toilets in the country.

Prince of Wales

PUB

(7 St Nicholas Lane) Tucked down an alley off Union St, Aberdeen's best-known pub boasts the longest bar in the city, and a great range of real ales and good-value pub

grub. Quiet in the afternoons, but standing-room only in the evenings.

Old Blackfriars

PUB

(www.old-blackfriars.co.uk; 52 Castlegate) One of the most attractive traditional pubs in the city, with a lovely stone and timber interior, stained-glass windows and a relaxed atmosphere – a great place for an afternoon pint.

Blue Lamp

PUB

(121 Gallowgate) A long-standing feature of the Aberdeen pub scene, the Blue Lamp is a favourite student hang-out – a dark and slightly dingy drinking den with beer, good *craic* (lively conversation) and a jukebox selection that has barely changed since Elvis died. There are regular sessions of live jazz, folk and acoustic music. The pub is 150m north of the city centre, along Broad St.

Cameron's

PUB

(6 Little Belmont St; ☎) Known as Ma Cameron's, this is Aberdeen's oldest pub (established in 1789). It has a pleasantly old-fashioned atmosphere, with lots of wood, brick and stone, and a range of excellent real ales and malt whiskies.

Lemon Tree Cafe

CAFE-BAR

(www.boxofficeaberdeen.com; 5 West North St; ☎noon-4pm Fri-Sun) The bohemian cafe-bar at the Lemon Tree theatre does excellent coffee, and stages live rock on Friday, folk on Saturday and jazz on Sunday.

★ Entertainment Cinemas

Belmont Cinema

CINEMA

(www.picturehouses.co.uk; 49 Belmont St) The Belmont is a great little art-house cinema, with a lively programme of cult classics, director's seasons, foreign films and mainstream movies.

Vue Cinema

CINEMA

(www.myvue.com; 10 Shiprow) A seven-screen multiplex, conveniently located just off Union St, that shows mainstream, first-run films.

Clubs & Live Music

Check out what's happening in the club and live-music scene at local record shops – try

One Up Records (www.oneupmusic.co.uk; 17 Belmont St).

Snafu

CLUB, LIVE MUSIC

(www.clubsnafu.com; 1 Union St) Aberdeen's coolest club – though admittedly there

isn't much competition – cosy Snafu offers a wide range of rotating club nights and guest DJs, as well as a Tuesday night comedy club and live music gigs.

Tunnels

CLUB, LIVE MUSIC

(www.thetunnels.co.uk; Carnegie's Brae) This cavernous, subterranean club – the entrance is in a road tunnel beneath Union St – is a great live music venue, with a packed programme of up-and-coming Scottish bands. It also hosts regular DJ nights – check the website for the latest program.

O'Neill's

PUB, LIVE MUSIC

(www.oneills.co.uk; 9 Back Wynd) Upstairs at O'Neill's you're guaranteed a wild night of pounding, hardcore Irish rock, indie and alternative tunes Friday to Sunday; downstairs is a (slightly) quieter bar packed with rugby types downing large quantities of Murphy's stout.

Theatre & Concerts

You can book tickets for most concerts and other events at the **Box Office** (www.boxofficeaberdeen.com; ☎9.30am-6pm Mon-Sat) next to the **Music Hall** (Union St), the main venue for classical music concerts.

Lemon Tree Theatre

DRAMA, MUSIC

(www.boxofficeaberdeen.com; 5 West North St) An interesting program of dance, music and drama, and often has live rock, jazz and folk bands playing. There are also children's shows, ranging from comedy to drama to puppetry.

His Majesty's Theatre

BALLET, OPERA

(www.boxofficeaberdeen.com; Rosemount Viaduct) The main theatre in Aberdeen hosts everything from ballet and opera to pantomimes and musicals.

Aberdeen Arts Centre

DRAMA

(www.aberdeenartscentre.org.uk; King St) Stages regular drama productions in its theatre and changing exhibitions in its gallery.

i Information

Aberdeen Royal Infirmary (☎01224-681818; Foresterhill; ☎) Medical services. About a mile northwest of the western end of Union St.

Books & Beans (www.booksandbeans.co.uk; 22 Belmont St; per 15min £1; ☎8am-6pm Mon-Sat) Internet access; also Fairtrade coffee and secondhand books.

Main post office (St Nicholas Shopping Centre, Upperkirkgate; ☎9am-5.30pm Mon-Sat)

Post Office (489 Union St)

Tourist office (☎01224-288828; www.aberdeen-grampian.com; 23 Union St; ☀9am-6.30pm Mon-Sat, 10am-4pm Sun Jul & Aug, 9.30am-5pm Mon-Sat Sep-Jun; @). Internet access too.

i Getting There & Away

AIR Aberdeen Airport (www.aberdeenairport.com) is at Dyce, 6 miles northwest of the city centre. There are regular flights to numerous Scottish and UK destinations, including Orkney and Shetland, and international flights to the Netherlands, Norway, Denmark and France.

Stagecoach Jet bus 727 runs regularly from Aberdeen bus station to the airport (single £1.70, 35 minutes). A taxi from the airport to the city centre takes 25 minutes and costs £15.

BOAT Car ferries from Aberdeen to Orkney and Shetland are run by **Northlink Ferries** (www.northlinkferries.co.uk). For more details, see p405. The **ferry terminal** is a short walk east of the train and bus stations.

BUS The **bus station** is next to Jurys Inn, close to the train station. National Express runs direct buses from London (£45, 12 hours) twice daily, one of them overnight. Scottish Citylink runs services to Dundee (£15, 1½ hours), Perth (£21, two hours), Edinburgh (£26, 3¼ hours) and Glasgow (£26, 4¼ hours).

Stagecoach bus 10 runs hourly to Inverness (£11, 3¼ hours) via Huntly, Keith, Fochabers, Elgin (£10, two hours) and Nairn. Service 201 runs every half-hour (hourly on Sunday) to Crathes Castle gate (45 minutes), continuing once an hour (less frequently on Sunday) to Ballater (1¼ hours) and every two hours to Crathie (for Balmoral Castle) and Braemar (£9, 2¼ hours).

Other local buses serve Stonehaven, Fraserburgh, Peterhead, Banff and Buckie.

TRAIN The **train station** is south of the city centre, next to the massive Union Square shopping mall. There are several trains a day from King's Cross in London to Aberdeen (£122, 7½ hours); some are direct, but most services involve a change of train at Edinburgh.

Other destinations served from Aberdeen by rail include Edinburgh (£40, 2½ hours), Glasgow (£40, 2¾ hours), Dundee (£24, 1¼ hours) and Inverness (£25, 2¼ hours).

i Getting Around

BUS The main city bus operator is **First Aberdeen** (www.firstaberdeen.com). Local fares cost from 70p to £2; pay the driver as you board the bus. A FirstDay ticket (adult/child £3.90/2.70) allows unlimited travel from the time of purchase until midnight on all First Aberdeen buses. Information, route maps and tickets are available from the **First Travel Centre** (47 Union St; ☀8.45am-5.30pm Mon-Sat).

The most useful services for visitors are buses 16A and 19 from Union St to Great Western Rd (for B&Bs); bus 27 from the bus station to Aberdeen Youth Hostel and the airport; and bus 20 from Marischal College to Old Aberdeen.

CAR For rental cars try **Arnold Clark** (☎01224-249159; www.arnoldclarkrental.com; Girdleness Rd) or **Enterprise Car Hire** (☎01224-642642; www.enterprise.co.uk; 80 Skene Sq).

TAXI The main city-centre taxi ranks are at the train station and on Back Wynd, off Union St. To order a taxi, phone **ComCab** (☎01224-353535) or **Rainbow City Taxis** (☎01224-878787).

Around Aberdeen

STONEHAVEN

POP 9600

Originally a small fishing village, Stonehaven has been the county town of Kincardineshire since 1600 and is now a thriving family-friendly seaside resort. There's a **tourist office** (☎01569-762806; 66 Allardie St; ☀10am-7pm Mon-Sat, 1-5.30pm Sun Jul & Aug, 10am-1pm & 2-5.30pm Mon-Sat Jun & Sep, 10am-1pm & 2-5pm Mon-Sat Apr, May & Oct) near Market Sq in the town centre.

👁 Sights & Activities

From the lane beside the tourist office, a boardwalk leads south along the shoreline to the picturesque cliff-bound **harbour**, where you'll find a couple of appealing pubs and the town's oldest building, the **Tolbooth**, built about 1600 by the Earl Marischal. It now houses a small **museum** (admission free; ☀10am-noon & 2-5pm Mon & Thu-Sat, 2-5pm Wed & Sun) and a restaurant.

At the northern end of town is the **Open-Air Swimming Pool** (www.stonehavenopenairpool.co.uk; adult/child £4.70/2.80; ☀10am-7.30pm Mon-Fri, 10am-6pm Sat & Sun Jul-mid-Aug, 1-7.30pm Mon-Fri, 10am-6pm Sat & Sun Jun & late Aug), an Olympic-size (50m), heated, sea-water pool in art deco style, dating from 1934. The pool is also open for 'midnight swims' from 10pm to midnight on Wednesday from the end of June to mid-August.

A pleasant, 15-minute walk along the clifftops south of the harbour leads to the spectacular ruins of **Dunnottar Castle** (www.dunnottarcastle.co.uk; adult/child £5/1; ☀9am-6pm daily Easter-Oct, 10.30am-dusk Fri-Mon Nov-Easter), spread out across a grassy promontory rising 50m above the sea. As dramatic a film set as any director could wish for, it provided the backdrop for Franco Zeffirelli's *Hamlet*, starring Mel Gibson.

The original fortress was built in the 9th century; the keep is the most substantial remnant, but the drawing room (restored in 1926) is more interesting.

The **Lady Gail 2** (☎01569-765064; adult/child £10/5) offers boat trips from the harbour to the nearby sea cliffs of Fowlshugh nature reserve, which from May to July are home to around 160,000 nesting seabirds, including kittiwakes, guillemots, razorbills and puffins.

★ Festivals & Events

The town hosts several special events, including the famous **Fireball Ceremony** (www.stonehavenfireballs.co.uk) at Hogmanay (31 December), when people parade along the High St at midnight swinging blazing fireballs around their heads, and the three-day **Stonehaven Folk Festival** (www.stonehavenfolkfestival.co.uk) in mid-July.

🛏 Sleeping & Eating

TOP CHOICE 24 Shorehead B&B ££
(☎01569-767750; www.twentyfourshorehead.co.uk; 24 Shorehead; s/d £55/70; @) Location makes all the difference, and the location of this former cooorage offering peaceful and very stylish B&B accommodation can't be beaten – last house at the end of the road, overlooking the harbour, with lovely sea views. Using the binoculars provided, you can even spot seals from your bedroom. No credit cards.

Beachgate House B&B ££
(☎01569-763155; www.beachgate.co.uk; Beachgate Lane; s/d £55/70; P) This luxurious modern bungalow is right on the seafront, just a few paces from the tourist office; two of its five rooms have sea views, as does the lounge/dining room.

TOP CHOICE Tolbooth Restaurant SEAFOOD £££
(☎01569-762287; www.tolbooth-restaurant.co.uk; Old Pier; mains £16-24; ☺closed Mon year round & Sun Oct-Apr) Set in a 17th-century building overlooking the harbour, and decorated with local art and crisp white linen, this is one of the best seafood restaurants in the region. Daily specials include dishes such as scallops with samphire risotto, artichokes and saffron foam. From Tuesday to Saturday you can get a two-/three-course lunch for £13/16. Reservations recommended.

Marine Hotel PUB, SEAFOOD ££
(www.marinehotelstonehaven.co.uk; 9-10 The Shore; mains £8-13; ☺food noon-2.30pm &

5.30-9pm Mon-Fri, noon-9pm Sat & Sun) A recent makeover with bare timber, slate and dove-grey paintwork has given this popular harbourside pub a boutique look; there are still half a dozen real ales on tap, including Deuchars IPA and Timothy Taylor, and a bar-meals menu that includes fresh seafood specials.

Carron Restaurant SCOTTISH ££
(www.carron-restaurant.co.uk; 20 Cameron St; mains £12-20; ☺Tue-Sat) This beautiful art deco restaurant is a remarkable survival from the 1930s, complete with bow-fronted terrace, iron fanlights, deco mirrors, player piano and original tiled toilets. The French- and Mediterranean-influenced menu makes the most of local produce, matching the elegance of the surroundings.

Boathouse Café CAFE £
(Old Pier; mains £6-8; ☺9.30am-4pm Mon-Fri, 9.30am-5pm Sat & Sun) Excellent coffee, cakes and light lunches; outdoor terrace with a view of the sea,

Ship Inn PUB, SEAFOOD £
(www.shipinnstonehaven.com; 12 5 Shorehead; mains £9-17; ☺lunch & dinner Mon-Fri, noon-9.45pm Sat & Sun) Real ales, pub grub and outdoor tables with a view of the harbour. More formal dining in the neighbouring Captain's Table restaurant.

📍 Getting There & Away

Stonehaven is 15 miles south of Aberdeen and is served by the frequent **buses** travelling between Aberdeen (45 minutes, hourly) and Dundee (1½ hours). **Trains** to Dundee are faster (£12, 55 minutes, hourly) and offer a more scenic journey.

CASTLE FRASER

The impressive 16th- to 17th-century **Castle Fraser** (NTS; adult/child £8.50/5.50; ☺11am-5pm Jul & Aug, noon-5pm Thu-Sun Apr-Jun, Sep & Oct) is the ancestral home of the Fraser family. The largely Victorian interior includes the great hall (with a hidden opening where the laird could eavesdrop on his guests), the library, various bedrooms and an ancient kitchen, plus a secret room for storing valuables; Fraser family relics on display include needlework hangings and a 19th-century artificial leg. The 'Woodland Secrets' area in the castle grounds is designed as an adventure playground for kids.

The castle is 16 miles west of Aberdeen and 3 miles south of Kemnay. Buses from Aberdeen to Alford stop at Kemnay.

HADDO HOUSE

Designed in Georgian style by William Adam in 1732, **Haddo House** (NTS; Tarves; adult/child £8.50/5.50; ☀11am-5pm Jul & Aug, 11am-5pm Fri-Mon Apr-Jun, Sep & Oct) is best described as a classic English stately home transplanted to Scotland. Home to the Gordon family, it has sumptuous Victorian interiors with wood-panelled walls, Persian rug-scattered floors and a wealth of period antiques. The beautiful grounds and terraced gardens are open all year (9am to dusk).

Haddo is 19 miles north of Aberdeen, near Ellon. Buses run hourly Monday to Saturday from Aberdeen to Tarves/Methlick, stopping at the end of the Haddo House driveway; it's a mile-long walk from bus stop to house.

FYVIE CASTLE

Though a magnificent example of Scottish Baronial architecture, **Fyvie Castle** (NTS; adult/child £10.50/7.50; ☀11am-5pm Jul & Aug, noon-5pm Sat-Tue Apr-Jun, Sep & Oct) is probably more famous for its ghosts, which include a phantom trumpeter and the mysterious Green Lady. The castle's art collection includes portraits by Thomas Gainsborough and Sir Henry Raeburn. The grounds are open all year (9am to dusk).

The castle is 25 miles north of Aberdeen on the A947 towards Turriff. A bus runs hourly every day from Aberdeen to Banff and Elgin via Fyvie village, a mile from the castle.

Deeside

The valley of the **River Dee** – often called **Royal Deeside** because of the royal family's long association with the area – stretches west from Aberdeen to Braemar, closely paralleled by the A93 road. From Deeside north to Strathdon is serious castle country – there are more examples of fanciful Scottish Baronial architecture here than anywhere else in Scotland.

The Dee, world-famous for its **salmon fishing**, has its source in the Cairngorm Mountains west of Braemar, the starting point for long walks into the hills. The **Fish-Dee website** (www.fishdee.co.uk) has all you need to know about fishing on the river.

CRATHES CASTLE

The atmospheric, 16th-century **Crathes Castle** (NTS; adult/child £10.50/7.50; ☀10.30am-

5pm Jun-Aug, 10.30am-4.30pm Sat-Thu Apr, May, Sep & Oct, 10.30am-3.45pm Sat & Sun Nov-Mar; ♿) is famous for its Jacobean painted ceilings, magnificently carved canopied beds, and the 'Horn of Leys', presented to the Burnett family by Robert the Bruce in the 14th century. The beautiful formal **gardens** include 300-year-old yew hedges and colourful herbaceous borders.

The castle is on the A93, 16 miles west of Aberdeen, on the main Aberdeen to Ballater bus route.

BALLATER

POP 1450

The attractive little village of Ballater owes its 18th-century origins to the curative waters of nearby Pannanich Springs (now bottled commercially as Deeside Natural Mineral Water) and its prosperity to nearby Balmoral Castle.

The **tourist office** (☎01339-755306; Station Sq; ☀9am-6pm Jul & Aug, 10am-5pm Sep-Jun) is in the Old Royal Station. For internet access, go to **Cybernaut** (www.cybernaut.org.uk; 14 Bridge St; per 15min £1; ☀9am-5pm Mon-Fri, 10am-4pm Sat; @).

👁 Sights & Activities

When Queen Victoria travelled to Balmoral Castle she would alight from the royal train at Ballater's **Old Royal Station** (Station Sq; admission £2; ☀9am-6pm Jul & Aug, 10am-5pm Sep-Jun). The station has been beautifully restored and now houses the tourist office, a cafe and a museum with a replica of Victoria's royal coach. Note the crests on the shop fronts along the main street proclaiming 'By Royal Appointment' – the village is a major supplier of provisions to Balmoral.

Also on Station Sq is **Dee Valley Confectioners** (www.dee-valley.co.uk; Station Sq; admission free; ☀9am-noon & 2-4.30pm Mon-Thu Apr-Oct), where you can drool over the manufacture of traditional Scottish sweets.

As you approach Ballater from the east the hills start to close in, and there are many pleasant **walks** in the surrounding area. The steep woodland walk up **Craigendarroch** (400m) takes just over one hour. **Morven** (871m) is a more serious prospect, taking about six hours, but offers good views from the top; ask at the tourist office for more info.

You can hire bikes from **CycleHighlands** (www.cyclehighlands.com; The Pavilion, Victoria Rd; per day £16; ☀9am-6pm), who also offers guided bike rides and advice on local

trails, and **Cabin Fever** (Station Sq; per 2hr £8; ☉9am-6pm), who can also arrange pony trekking, quad-biking, clay-pigeon shooting or canoeing.

Sleeping & Eating

Accommodation here is fairly expensive and budget travellers usually continue to Braemar.



Auld Kirk

RESTAURANT WITH ROOMS **££**

(☎01339-755762; www.theauldkirk.com;

Braemar Rd; s/d from £73/110; ☉) Here's something a little out of the ordinary – a six-bedroom 'restaurant with rooms' housed in a converted 19th-century church. The interior blends original features with sleek modern decor, and the stylish Scottish restaurant (two-/three-course dinner £29/35) serves local lamb, venison and seafood.

Green Inn

RESTAURANT WITH ROOMS **££**

(☎01339-755701; www.green-inn.com; s/d from £58/76; ☐) A lovely old house dotted with plush armchairs and sofas, this is another 'restaurant with rooms' – three comfortable en suite bedrooms, with the accent on fine dining. The menu includes French-influenced dishes such as roast quail with crayfish, truffle and wild mushrooms. A two-/three-course dinner costs £34/41 and meals are served from 7pm till 9pm Tuesday to Saturday.

Cellicall

B&B **££**

(☎01339-755699; www.cellicallguesthouse.co.uk; 3 Braemar Rd; d from £54; ☐) Cellicall is a friendly, family-run B&B in a modern cottage right across the street from Station Sq, within easy walking distance of all attractions.

Old Station Cafe

CAFE **££**

(Station Sq; mains £9-15; ☉10am-5pm daily, 6.30-8.30pm Thu-Sat) The former waiting room at Queen Victoria's train station is now an attractive dining area with black-and-white floor tiles, basketwork chairs, and marble fireplace and table tops. Daily specials make good use of local produce, from salmon to venison, and good coffee and home-baked goods are available all day.

Getting There & Away

Bus 201 runs from Aberdeen to Ballater (£9, 1¼ hours, hourly Monday to Saturday, six on Sunday) via Crathes Castle, and continues to Braemar (30 minutes) every two hours.

BALMORAL CASTLE

Eight miles west of Ballater lies **Balmoral Castle** (www.balmoralcastle.com; adult/child £8.70/4.60; ☉10am-5pm Apr-Jul, last admission 4pm), the Queen's Highland holiday home, screened from the road by a thick curtain of trees. Built for Queen Victoria in 1855 as a private residence for the royal family, it kicked off the revival of the Scottish Baronial style of architecture that characterises so many of Scotland's 19th-century country houses.

The admission fee includes an interesting and well thought-out audioguide, but the tour is very much an outdoor one through garden and grounds; as for the castle itself, only the ballroom, which displays a collection of Landseer paintings and royal silver, is open to the public. Don't expect to see the Queen's private quarters! The main attraction is learning about Highland estate management, rather than royal revelations. Guided tours are available on Saturdays from October to December – check the website for details.

The massive pointy-topped mountain that looms to the south of Balmoral is **Lochnagar** (1155m), immortalised in verse by Lord Byron, who spent his childhood years in Aberdeenshire:

England, thy beauties are tame and domestic

To one who has roamed o'er the mountains afar.

O! for the crags that are wild and majestic:

The steep frowning glories of dark Lochnagar.

Balmoral is beside the A93 at Crathie and can be reached on the Aberdeen-Braemar bus.

BRAEMAR

POP 400

Braemar is a pretty little village with a grand location on a broad plain ringed by mountains where the Dee valley and Glen Clunie meet. In winter this is one of the coldest places in the country – temperatures as low as -29°C have been recorded – and during spells of severe cold hungry deer wander the streets looking for a bite to eat. Braemar is an excellent base for hill walking, and there's also skiing at nearby Glenishee.

The **tourist office** (☎01399-741600; The Mews, Mar Rd; ☎9am-6pm Aug, 9am-5pm Jun, Jul, Sep & Oct, 10am-1.30pm & 2-5pm Mon-Sat, 2-5pm Sun Nov-May), opposite the Fife Arms Hotel, has lots of useful info on walks in the area. There's a bank with an ATM in the village centre, a couple of outdoor equipment shops and an **Alldays** (☎7.30am-9pm Mon-Sat, 9am-6pm Sun) grocery store.

👁 Sights & Activities

The **Braemar Highland Heritage Centre** (Mar Rd; admission free; ☎9am-6.30pm Jul & Aug, 10am-6pm Jun & Sep, 10am-5.30pm Mon-Sat, noon-5pm Sun Mar-May, shorter hr winter), beside the tourist office, tells the story of the area with displays and videos.

Just north of the village, turreted **Braemar Castle** (www.braemarcastle.co.uk; adult/child £5/3; ☎11am-6pm Sat & Sun, also Wed Jul & Aug) dates from 1628 and served as a government garrison after the 1745 Jacobite rebellion. It was taken over by the local community in 2007, and now offers guided tours of the historic castle apartments.

An easy walk from Braemar is up **Creag Choinnich** (538m), a hill to the east of the village above the A93. The route is way-marked and takes about 1½ hours. For a longer walk (three hours) and superb views of the Cairngorms, head for the summit of **Morrone** (859m), southwest of Braemar. Ask at the tourist office for details of these and other walks.

🛏 Sleeping

TOP CHOICE **Rucksacks Bunkhouse** BUNKHOUSE £ (☎01339-741517; 15 Mar Rd; bothy £7, dm £12-15, tw £36; 📞) An appealing cottage bunkhouse, with comfy dorm and cheaper beds in an alpine-style bothy (shared sleeping platform for 10 people; bring your own sleeping bag). Extras including a drying room (for wet-weather gear), laundry and even a sauna (£10 an hour). Nonguests are welcome to use the internet (£3 per hour, 10.30am to 4.30pm), laundry and even the showers (£2), and the friendly owner is a fount of knowledge about the local area.

Craiglea B&B ££ (☎01339-741641; www.craigleabraemar.com; Hill-side Dr; r £70; 📞) Craiglea is a homely B&B set in a pretty stone cottage with three en suite bedrooms. Vegetarian breakfasts are available and the owners can give advice on local walks.

BRAEMAR GATHERING

There are Highland games in many towns and villages throughout the summer, but the best known is the **Braemar Gathering** (www.braemar-gathering.org), which takes place on the first Saturday in September. It's a major occasion, organised every year since 1817 by the Braemar Royal Highland Society. Events include Highland dancing, pipers, tug-of-war, a hill race up Morrone, tossing the caber, hammer- and stone-throwing and the long jump. International athletes are among those who take part.

These kinds of events took place informally in the Highlands for many centuries as tests of skill and strength, but they were formalised around 1820 as part of the rise of Highland romanticism initiated by Sir Walter Scott and King George IV. Queen Victoria attended the Braemar Gathering in 1848, starting a tradition of royal patronage that continues to this day.

Clunie Lodge Guesthouse B&B ££ (☎01339-741330; www.clunielodge.com; Cluniebank Rd; r per person from £30; 📞) A spacious Victorian villa set in beautiful gardens, the Clunie is a great place to relax after a hard day's hiking, with its comfortable residents lounge, bedrooms with views of the hills and red squirrels scampering through the neighbouring woods. There's a drying room and secure storage for cycles.

Braemar Lodge Hotel HOTEL, BUNKHOUSE ££ (☎01339-741627; www.braemarlodge.co.uk; Glenshee Rd; dm from £12, s/d £75/120; 📞) This Victorian shooting lodge on the southern outskirts of the village has bags of character, not least in the wood-panelled Malt Room bar, which is as well stocked with mounted deer heads as it is with single malt whiskies. There's a good restaurant with views of the hills, plus a 12-berth hikers' bunkhouse in the hotel grounds.

Braemar Youth Hostel HOSTEL £ (SYHA; ☎01339-741659; 21 Glenshee Rd; dm £16-17; ☎Jan-Oct; 📞) This hostel is housed in a grand former shooting lodge just south of the village centre on the A93 to Perth. It has

a comfy lounge with pool table, and a bar-becue in the garden.

St Margarets

B&B ££

(☎01339-741697; 13 School Rd; s/tw £32/54;

☎) Grab this place if you can, but there's only one room – a twin with a serious sunflower theme. The genuine warmth of the welcome is heart-warming.

Invercauld Caravan Club Site

CAMPSITE £

(☎01339-741373; tent sites £10-15; ☎late

Dec-Oct) Good camping here, or you can **camp wild** (no facilities) along the minor road on the east bank of the Clunie Water, 3 miles south of Braemar.



Eating



Gathering Place

BISTRO ££

(☎01339-741234; www.the-gathering-place.co.uk; 9 Invercauld Rd; mains £15-18; ☎dinner Tue-Sun) This bright and breezy bistro is an unexpected corner of culinary excellence, with a welcoming dining room and sunny conservatory, tucked below the main road junction at the entrance to the village.

Taste

CAFE £

(www.taste-braemar.co.uk; Airlie House, Mar Rd; mains £3-5; ☎10am-5pm Thu-Mon; ☎) Taste is a relaxed little cafe with armchairs in the window, serving soups, snacks, coffee and cakes.

Hungry Highlander

FISH & CHIPS £

(14 Invercauld Rd; mains £3-7; ☎10am-10pm Mon-Sat, 10.30am-10pm, 10am-10pm Sun) Serves a range of takeaway meals and hot drinks.



Getting There & Away

Bus 201 runs from Aberdeen to Braemar (£9, 2½ hours, eight daily Monday to Saturday, five on Sunday). The 50-mile drive from Perth to Braemar is beautiful, but there's no public transport on this route.

INVEREY

Five miles west of Braemar is the tiny settlement of Inverey. Numerous mountain walks start from here, including the adventurous walk through the **Lairig Ghru** pass to Aviemore (see the boxed text, p331).

The **Glen Luibeg** circuit (15 miles, six hours) is a good day-walk. Start from the woodland car park 250m beyond the **Linn of Dee**, a narrow gorge at the road bridge about 1.5 miles west of Inverey, and follow the footpath and track to Derry Lodge and Glen Luibeg – there are beautiful remnants of the ancient Caledonian pine forest here.

Continue westwards on a pleasant path over a pass into Glen Dee, then follow the River Dee back downstream to the linn. Take OS 1:50,000 map sheet number 43.

A good short walk (3 miles, 1½ hours) begins at the **Linn of Quoich** – a waterfall that thunders through a narrow slot in the rocks. Head uphill on a footpath on the east bank of the stream, past the impressive rock scenery of the **Punch Bowl** (a giant pothole), to a modern bridge that spans the narrow gorge, and return via an unsurfaced road on the far bank.

Strathdon

The valley of the River Don, home to many of Aberdeenshire's finest castles, stretches westward from Kintore, 13 miles northwest of Aberdeen, taking in the villages of Kemnay, Monymusk, Alford (*ah*-ford) and tiny Strathdon. The A944 parallels the lower valley; west of Alford, the A944, A97 and A939 follow the river's upper reaches.

Stagecoach bus 220 runs from Aberdeen to Alford (1½ hours, seven a day Monday to Saturday, four on Sunday); bus 219 continues from Alford to Strathdon village (50 minutes, two daily Tuesday and Thursday, one on Saturday) via Kildrumny.

ALFORD

POP 1925

Alford has a **tourist office** (☎01975-562052; Old Station Yard, Main St; ☎10am-5pm Mon-Sat, 12.45-5pm Sun Jun-Aug, 10am-1pm & 2-5pm Mon-Fri, 10am-noon & 1.45-5pm Sat, 12.45-5pm Sun Apr, May & Sep), banks with ATMs and a supermarket.

The **Grampian Transport Museum** (www.gtm.org.uk; adult/child £6/3; ☎10am-5pm Apr-Sep, 10am-4pm Oct) houses a fascinating collection of vintage motorbikes, cars, buses and trams, including a Triumph Bonneville in excellent nick, a couple of Model T Fords (including one used by Drambaie), a Ferrari F40 and an Aston Martin V8 Mk II. Unusual exhibits include a 19th-century horse-drawn sleigh from Russia, a 1942 Mack snowplough and the Craigievar Express, a steam-powered tricycle built in 1895 by a local postman.

Next to the museum is the terminus of the narrow-gauge **Alford Valley Steam Railway** (☎01975-562811; www.alfordvalleyrailway.org.uk; adult/child £2.50/1.50; ☎11.30am-4pm May-Sep, Sat & Sun only Apr), a heritage

line that runs from here to Houghton Country Park.

CRAIGIEVAR CASTLE

The most spectacular of the Strathdon castles is **Craigievar** (NTS; adult/child £10/7; ☉noon-5.30pm Jul & Aug, noon-5.30pm Fri-Tue Easter-Jun & Sep), located 9 miles south of Alford. A superb example of the original Scottish Baronial style, it has managed to survive pretty much unchanged since its completion in the 17th century (although the exterior has recently been restored to its original pink colour after a £500,000 facelift). The lower half is a plain tower house, the upper half sprouts corbelled turrets, cupolas and battlements – an extravagant statement of its builder's wealth and status.

KILDURMYY CASTLE

Nine miles west of Alford lie the extensive remains of the 13th-century **Kildrummy Castle** (HS; adult/child £3.70/2.20; ☉9.30am-5.30pm Apr-Sep), former seat of the Earl of Mar and once one of Scotland's most impressive fortresses. After the 1715 Jacobite rebellion the earl was exiled to France and his castle fell into ruin.

If you're in the mood for a night of luxury, head for **Kildrummy Castle Hotel** (☎01975-571288; www.kildrummycastlehotel.co.uk; s/d from £90/139; 📶) just along the road, a splendid Baronial hunting lodge complete with original oak panelling, log fires and four-poster beds.

CORGARFF CASTLE

In the wild upper reaches of Strathdon, near the A939 from Corgarff to Tomintoul, is the impressive fortress of **Corgarff Castle** (HS; adult/child £4.70/2.80; ☉9.30am-5.30pm daily Apr-Sep, 9.30am-4.30pm Sat & Sun Oct-Mar). The tower house dates from the 16th century, but the star-shaped defensive curtain wall was added in 1748 when the castle was converted to a military barracks in the wake of the Jacobite rebellion.

Jenny's Bothy (☎01975-651449; www.jenny.sbothy.co.uk; dm £10) is a welcoming year-round bunkhouse set in a remote croft; look out for the sign by the main road, then follow the old military road (drivable) for 0.75 miles. Phone ahead before arriving.

LECHT SKI RESORT

At the head of Strathdon the A939 – a magnificent rollercoaster of a road, much loved

by motorcyclists – crosses the Lecht pass (637m), where there's a small skiing area with lots of short easy and intermediate runs. **Lecht 2090** (www.lecht.co.uk) hires out skis, boots and poles for £17 a day; a one-day lift pass is £25. A two-day package, including ski hire, lift pass and instruction, costs £90.

The ski centre opens in summer, too, when you can rent mountain bikes (£20 for four hours) and quad bikes (£10 for a 12-minute session).

Northern Aberdeenshire

North of Aberdeen, the Grampian Mountains fall away to rolling agricultural plains pocked with small, craggy volcanic hills. This fertile lowland corner of northeastern Scotland is known as Buchan, a region of traditional farming culture immortalised by Lewis Grassie Gibbon in his trilogy, *A Scots Quair*, based on the life of a farming community in the 1920s. The old Scots dialect called the Doric lives on in everyday use here – if you think the Glaswegian accent is difficult to understand, just try listening in on a conversation in Peterhead or Fraserburgh.

The Buchan coast alternates between rugged cliffs and long, long stretches of sand, dotted with picturesque little fishing villages such as Pennan, where parts of the film *Local Hero* were shot.

FRASERBURGH

POP 12,500

Fraserburgh, affectionately known to locals as the Broch, is Europe's largest shellfish port. Like Peterhead, Fraserburgh's fortune has been founded on the fishing industry and has suffered from its general decline. The harbour is still fairly busy, though, and is an interesting place to wander around; there are good sandy **beaches** east of the town. There's a **tourist office** (☎01346-518315; Saltoun Sq; ☉10am-1pm & 2-5pm Mon-Sat Apr-Oct), a supermarket and banks with ATMs.

The excellent **Scottish Lighthouse Museum** (www.lighthousemuseum.org.uk; Kinnaird Head; adult/child £5/2; ☉10am-6pm Mon-Sat, 11am-6pm Sun Jul & Aug, 11am-5pm Mon-Sat, noon-5pm Sun Apr-Jun, Sep & Oct, to 4pm Nov-Mar) provides a fascinating insight into the network of lights that have safeguarded the Scottish coast for over 100 years, and

the men and women who built and maintained them (plus a sobering fact – that *all* the world's lighthouses are to be decommissioned by 1 January 2080). A guided tour takes you to the top of the old Kinnaird Head lighthouse, built on top of a converted 16th-century castle; the engineering is so precise that the 4.5-ton light assembly can be rotated by pushing with a single finger. The anemometer here measured the strongest wind speed ever recorded in the UK, with a gust of 123 knots (142mph) on 13 February 1989.

Maggie's Hoosie (26 Shore St, Inverallochy; admission free; ☎2-4pm Mon-Thu Apr-Sep), 4 miles east of Fraserburgh, is a traditional fishwife's cottage with earthen floors and original furnishings, a timeless reminder of a bygone age.

Buses 267 and 268 run to Fraserburgh from Aberdeen (1½ hours, every 30 minutes Monday to Saturday, hourly on Sunday) via Ellon.

PENNAN

Pennan is a picturesque harbour village tucked beneath red-sandstone cliffs, 12 miles west of Fraserburgh. The white-washed houses are built gable-end to the sea, and the waves break just a few metres away on the other side of the village's only street. Most of the cottages are now holiday homes.

The village featured in the 1983 film *Local Hero*, and fans of the film still come to make a call from the red telephone box that played a prominent part in the plot. However, the box in the film was just a prop, and it was only later that film buffs and locals successfully campaigned for a real one to be installed.

The interior of the village hotel, the **Pennan Inn**, also appeared in the film, though one of the houses further along the seafront to the east doubled for the exterior of the fictional hotel. The beach scenes were filmed on the other side of the country, at Camasdarach Beach in Arisaig, see p345.

Bus 273 from Fraserburgh to Banff stops at the Pennan road end (25 minutes, two a day, Saturday only), 350m south of (and a steep climb uphill from) the village.

GARDENSTOWN & CROVIE

The fishing village of **Gardenstown**, or Gamrie (*game-rey*), founded by Alexander Garden in 1720, is built on a series of cramped terraces tumbling down the steep

cliffs above the tiny harbour. Drivers should beware of severe gradients and hairpin bends in the village, parts of which can only be reached on foot. **Crovie** (*criv-vee*), 800m to the east, is even more claustrophobically picturesque.

HUNTLY

POP 4400

An impressive ruined castle and an attractive main square make this small town worth a stopover between Aberdeen and Elgin. The **tourist office** (☎01466-792255; The Square; ☎10am-5.30pm Mon-Sat, 10am-3pm Sun Jul & Aug, 10am-1pm & 2-5pm Mon-Sat Apr-Jun, Sep & Oct) is on the main square, next to a bank with an ATM.

Castle St (beside the Huntly Hotel) runs north from the town square to an arched gateway and tree-lined avenue that leads to 16th-century **Huntly Castle** (HS; adult/child £4.70/2.80; ☎9.30am-5.30pm Apr-Sep, 9.30am-4.30pm Oct, 9.30am-4.30pm Sat-Wed Nov-Mar), the former stronghold of the Gordons on the banks of the River Deveron. Over the main door is a superb carving that includes the royal arms and the figures of Christ and St Michael.

Just off the A96, 3 miles northwest of Huntly, is the **Peregrine Wild Watch Centre** (www.forestry.gov.uk/huntlyperegrines; Bin Forest; admission free; ☎9.30am-5.30pm Apr-Aug), a centre where you can observe rare peregrine falcons, both live from a hide and via a remote camera monitoring their nest site.

Sleeping

There are a couple of hotels on the main square and a handful of B&Bs in the surrounding streets; the hospitable **Hillview** (☎01466-794870; www.hillviewbb.com; Provost St; s/d £30/50; ☎☎) and its tasty breakfast pancakes are recommended.

If you want to spoil yourself, continue along the drive beyond the castle to the **Castle Hotel** (☎01466-792696; www.castlehotel.uk.com; s/d from £70/100; ☎☎), a splendid 18th-century mansion set amid acres of parkland. It's comfortably old fashioned, with a grand wooden staircase, convoluted corridors, the odd creaky floorboard and rattling sash window, but must be among the most affordable country house hotels in Scotland.

Getting There & Away

Bus 10 from Aberdeen (1½ hours, hourly) to Inverness passes through Huntly. There are also

THE WOLF OF BADENOCH

Of all the hard-man figures of medieval Scotland, few inspired as much terror as Alexander Stewart, Earl of Buchan (1343–1405), illegitimate son of the king and better known as the Wolf of Badenoch. A cruel landowner with a number of castles in the Strathspey region, he was not a man to get on the wrong side of, as the Bishop of Moray found out in 1390. When the earl ditched his wife in favour of his mistress, the bishop excommunicated him. The monk who bore the message of excommunication was thrown head first into a well, and the infuriated Wolf, accompanied by a band of 'wild wicked Highland men', embarked on an orgy of destruction, burning first Forres, then Elgin, to the ground, destroying the cathedral and nearby Pluscarden Abbey in the process. Amazingly, Stewart still managed to end up being buried in Dunkeld Cathedral. Legend says his death occurred on a dark, stormy night. The devil came calling on a black horse and challenged him to a game of chess. The Wolf was checkmated, and the devil took his life (and soul) as his prize.

regular trains from Aberdeen to Huntly (one hour, every two hours), continuing to Inverness.

Moray

The old county of Moray (*murr-ree*), centred on the county town of Elgin, lies at the heart of an ancient Celtic earldom and is famed for its mild climate and rich farmland – the barley fields of the 19th century once provided the raw material for the Speyside whisky distilleries, one of the region's main attractions for present-day visitors.

ELGIN

POP 21,000

Elgin's been the provincial capital of Moray for over eight centuries and was an important town in medieval times. Dominated by a hilltop monument to the 5th Duke of Gordon, Elgin's main attraction is its impressive ruined cathedral, where the tombs of the duke's ancestors lie.

👁 Sights

Elgin Cathedral

CATHEDRAL

(HS; King St; adult/child £4.70/2.80, joint ticket with Spynie Palace £6.20/3.70; ☎9.30am–5.30pm Apr–Sep, 9.30am–4.30pm Oct, 9.30am–4.30pm Sat–Wed Oct–Mar) Many people think that the ruins of Elgin Cathedral, known as the 'lantern of the north', are the most beautiful and evocative in Scotland. Consecrated in 1224, the cathedral was burned down in 1390 by the infamous Wolf of Badenoch, the illegitimate son of Robert II, following his excommunication by the Bishop of Moray. The octagonal chapter house is the finest in the country.

Elgin Museum

MUSEUM

(www.elginmuseum.org.uk; 1 High St; adult/child £4/1.50; ☎10am–5pm Mon–Fri, 11am–4pm Sat Apr–Oct) Palaeontologists and Pict lovers will enjoy Elgin Museum, where the highlights are its collections of fossil fish and Pictish carved stones.

Gordon & MacPhail

DELICATESSEN

(www.gordonandmacphail.com; 58–60 South St; ☎9am–5pm Mon–Sat) Not a sight as such, but a sight for sore eyes perhaps – Gordon & MacPhail is the world's largest specialist malt whisky dealer. Over a century old and offering around 450 different varieties, its Elgin shop is a place of pilgrimage for whisky connoisseurs, as well as housing a mouth-watering delicatessen.

Spynie Palace

HISTORIC BUILDING

(HS; adult/child £3.70/2.20; ☎9.30am–5.30pm Apr–Sep, 9.30am–4.30pm Sat & Sun Oct–Mar) This palace 2 miles north of Elgin was the residence of the medieval bishops of Moray until 1686. The massive tower house commands lovely views over Spynie Loch.

🛏 Sleeping & Eating

Croft Guesthouse

B&B ££

(☎01343-546004; www.thecroftelgin.co.uk; 10 Institution Rd; s/d from £55/70; ☎) The Croft offers a taste of Victorian high society, set in a spacious mansion built for a local lawyer back in 1848. The house is filled with period features – check out the cast-iron and tile fireplaces – and the three large bedrooms are equipped with easy chairs and crisp bed linen.

Mansefield Hotel

HOTEL ££

(☎01343-540883; www.themansefield.com; Mayne Rd; s/d from £90/110; ☎) Centred on a

19th-century manse (minister's house), but with extensive modern additions, the Mansfield offers elegant accommodation both in sleek, modern rooms aimed at business travellers and in more traditional rooms with four-poster beds.

Southbank Guest House

B&B ££

(☎01343-547132; www.southbank-guesthouse.co.uk; 36 Academy St; s/d from £50/75; P) The family-run, 12-room Southbank is set in a large Georgian town house in a quiet street south of Elgin's centre, just five minutes' walk from the cathedral and other sights.

Mezzo

BISTRO ££

(cnr Hay & South Sts; mains £8-15; lunch & dinner Mon-Sat, dinner Sun) This lively bar and restaurant is part of the Mansfield Hotel complex, and serves tasty bistro fare, including pasta, pizza, burgers and various vegetarian dishes.

Xoriatiki

GREEK ££

(☎01343-546868; 89 High St; mains £7-12; lunch & dinner Tue-Sat) Likeable place which brings an authentic taste of Greece to Elgin at competitive prices. Access is via an alleyway off the main street.

Ashvale

FISH & CHIPS £

(11 Moss St; mains £6-12; 10.45am-10pm) A branch of the famous Aberdeen fish-and-chip shop, sit in or takeaway.

Information

Moray Business & Computer Centre

(20 Commerce St; per 15min £1; 9am-5pm Mon-Sat; Internet access.

Post office (Batchen St; 8.30am-6pm Mon-Fri, 8.30am-4pm Sat)

Tourist office (☎01343-542666; 17 High St; 9am-6pm Mon-Sat, 11am-4pm Sun Jun-Aug, 9am-5pm Mon-Sat, 11am-3pm Sun Apr, May, Sep & Oct, 10am-4pm Mon-Sat Nov-Mar)

Getting There & Away

The bus station is a block north of the High St, and the train station is 900m south of the town centre.

BUS Elgin is a stop on the hourly Stagecoach bus 10 service between Inverness (£8, one hour) and Aberdeen (£10, two hours). Bus 305 goes from Elgin to Banff and Macduff (£8, one hour), continuing to Aberdeen via Fyvie. Bus 336 goes to Dufftown (£4, 30 minutes, hourly Monday to Saturday).

TRAIN There are frequent trains from Elgin to Aberdeen (£15, 1½ hours) and Inverness (£10, 45 minutes).

LOSSIEMOUTH

POP 9000

Lossie, as it's known locally, is the former port of Elgin, now better known as a seaside resort, yachting harbour and air force base; it's also the birthplace of James Ramsay MacDonald (1866-1937), who was the UK's first Labour prime minister (served 1923-24 and 1929-31; there's a plaque at 1 Gregory Pl, where he was born).

Lossiemoth's big selling point is the **East Beach**, a beautiful golden-sand beach that stretches for several miles to the south-east of the town, reached via a footbridge over the River Lossie. The old harbour, now a yachting marina, is a pleasant place to stroll.

Good places for coffee and cake or a light lunch include **Harbour Lights** (5 Pitgaveny Quay; snacks £2-5; 9am-5pm), a tearoom beside the marina, and **La Caverna** (20 Clifton Rd; mains £9-13; noon-2pm & 5-9.30pm), a stone-vaulted Italian cafe and restaurant – the outdoor tables have a view of the beach.

DUFFTOWN

POP 1450

Rome may be built on seven hills, but Dufftown's built on seven stills, say the locals. Founded in 1817 by James Duff, 4th Earl of Fife, Dufftown is 17 miles south of Elgin and lies at the heart of the Speyside whisky-distilling region.

The **tourist office** (☎01340-820501; 10am-1pm & 2-5.30pm Mon-Sat, 11am-3pm Sun Easter-Oct) is in the clock tower in the main square; the adjoining museum contains some interesting local items.

Sights & Activities

With seven working distilleries nearby, Dufftown has been dubbed Scotland's malt whisky capital. Ask at the tourist office for a **Malt Whisky Trail** (www.maltwhiskytrail.com) booklet, a self-guided tour around the seven stills plus the Speyside Cooperage.

Keith and Dufftown Railway

HERITAGE RAILWAY

(www.keith-dufftown-railway.co.uk; Dufftown Station) A heritage railway line running for 11 miles from Dufftown to Keith. Trains hauled by 1950s diesel motor units run on Saturdays and Sundays from June to September, plus Fridays in July and August; a return ticket costs £9.50/4.50 for an adult/child. There are also two 1930s 'Brighton Belle' Pullman coaches on display, and a cafe housed in a 1957 British Railways cafeteria car.

BLAZE YOUR OWN WHISKY TRAIL

Visiting a distillery can be memorable, but only hardcore malthounds will want to go to more than two or three. Some are great to visit; others are depressingly corporate. The following are some recommendations.

» **Aberlour** (www.aberlour.com; tours £10; ☎10.30am & 2pm daily Easter-Oct, Mon-Fri by appointment Nov-Mar) Has an excellent, detailed tour with a proper tasting session. It's on the main street in Aberlour.

» **Glenfarclas** (www.glenfarclas.co.uk; admission £3.50; ☎10am-4pm Mon-Fri Oct-Mar, 10am-5pm Mon-Fri Apr-Sep, plus 10am-4pm Sat Jul-Sep) Small, friendly and independent. Glenfarclas is 5 miles south of Aberlour on the Grantown road. The last tour leaves 90 minutes before closing. The in-depth Ambassador's Tour (Fridays only) is £15.

» **Glenfiddich** (www.glenfiddich.com; admission free; ☎9.30am-4.30pm Mon-Fri year-round, 9.30am-4.30pm Sat & noon-4.30pm Sun Easter-mid-Oct) It's big and busy, but handiest for Dufftown and foreign languages are available. The standard tour starts with an overblown video, but it's fun, informative and free. An in-depth Connoisseur's Tour (£20) must be prebooked. Glenfiddich kept single malt alive during the dark years.

» **Macallan** (www.themacallan.com; standard tours £5; ☎9.30am-4.30pm Mon-Sat Apr-Oct, ring for winter hours) Excellent sherry-casked malt. Several small-group tours are available (last tour at 3.30pm), including an expert one (£15); all should be pre-booked. Lovely location 2 miles northwest of Craigellachie.

» **Speyside Cooperage** (www.speysidecooperage.co.uk; admission £3.30; ☎9am-4pm Mon-Fri) Here you can see the fascinating art of barrel-making in action. It's a mile from Craigellachie on the Dufftown road.

» **Spirit of Speyside** (www.spiritofspeyside.com) This biannual whisky festival in Dufftown has a number of great events. It takes place in early May and late September; both accommodation and events should be booked well ahead.

Whisky Museum

MUSEUM

(www.dufftown.co.uk; The Hub, 12 Conval St; ☎1-4pm Mon-Fri May-Sep) As well as housing a selection of distillery memorabilia (try saying that after a few drams), the Whisky Museum (recently moved to new premises in Conval St) holds 'nosing and tasting evenings' where you can learn what to look for in a fine single malt (£8 per person; 8pm Wednesday in July and August). You can then test your new-found skills at the nearby **Whisky Shop** (www.whiskishopdufftown.co.uk; 1 Fife St), which stocks hundreds of single malts.



Sleeping & Eating

Davaar B&B

B&B ££

(☎01340-820464; www.davaardufftown.co.uk; 17 Church St; s/d from £40/60) Just along the street opposite the tourist office, Davaar is a sturdy Victorian villa with three smallish but comfy rooms; the breakfast menu is superb, offering the option of Portsoy kipers instead of the traditional fry-up (which uses eggs from the owners' own chickens).

Fife Arms Hotel

HOTEL ££

(☎01340-820220; www.fifearmsdufftown.co.uk; 2 The Square; s/d from £35/60; ☎) This welcoming hotel offers slightly cramped but comfortable accommodation in a modern block around the back; its bar is stocked with a wide range of single malts, and the restaurant (mains £9 to £16) dishes up sizzling steaks, homemade steak pies and locally farmed ostrich steaks.



La Faisanderie

FRENCH, SCOTTISH £££

(☎01340-821273; The Square; mains £18-21; ☎noon-1.30pm & 5.30-8.30pm) This is a great place to eat, run by a local chef who shoots much of his own game, guaranteeing freshness. The interior is decorated in French *auberge* style with a cheerful mural and pheasants hiding in every corner. The set menus (three-course lunch £18.50, four-course dinner £32) won't disappoint, but you can order à la carte as well.



A Taste of Speyside

SCOTTISH ££

(☎01340-820860; 10 Balvenie St; mains £16-20; ☎noon-9pm Tue-Sun Easter-Sep, noon-

2pm & 6-9pm Tue-Sun Oct-Easter) This up-market restaurant prepares traditional Scottish dishes using fresh local produce, including a challenging platter of smoked salmon, smoked venison, brandied chicken liver pâté, cured herring, a selection of Scottish cheeses and homemade bread (phew!). A two-course lunch costs £13.50.

Getting There & Away

Buses link Dufftown to Elgin (50 minutes, hourly), Huntly, Aberdeen and Inverness.

On summer weekends, you can take a train from Aberdeen or Inverness to Keith, and then ride the Keith and Dufftown Railway (see p254) to Dufftown.

TOMINTOUL




POP 320

This high-altitude (345m) village was built by the Duke of Gordon in 1775 on the old military road that leads over the Lecht pass from Corgarff, a route now followed by the A939 (usually the first road in Scotland to be blocked by snow when winter closes in). The duke hoped that settling the dispersed population of his estates in a proper village would help to stamp out cattle stealing and illegal distilling.


Tomintoul (tom-in-towel) is a pretty, stone-built village with a grassy, tree-lined main square, where you'll find the **tourist office** (01807-580285; The Square; 9.30am-1pm & 2-5pm Mon-Sat Easter-Oct, plus 1-5pm Sun Aug); and, next door, the **Tomintoul Museum** (The Square; admission free; 9.30am-5pm Mon-Sat Apr-Oct, plus 1-5pm Sun Jul & Aug), which has displays on a range of local topics.

The surrounding **Glenlivet Estate** (now the property of the Crown) has lots of **walking and cycling** trails – the estate's **information centre** (www.crownestate.co.uk/glenlivet; Main St) distributes free maps of the area – and a spur of the **Speyside Way** long-distance footpath (see the boxed text, p32) runs between Tomintoul and Ballindalloch, 15 miles to the north.

Sleeping & Eating

Accommodation for walkers includes the **Tomintoul Youth Hostel** (SYHA; 01807-580364; Main St; dm £15; May-Sep), housed in the old village school. The excellent **Argyle Guest House** (01807-580766; www.argyletomintoul.co.uk; 7 Main St; d/f £59/100) is a more comfortable alternative.

For something to eat, try the **Clockhouse Restaurant** (The Square; mains £10-12;

lunch & dinner), which serves light lunches and bistro dinners made with fresh Highland lamb, venison and salmon.



Getting There & Away

There is a very limited bus service to Tomintoul from Elgin, Dufftown and Aberlour. Check with the tourist office in Elgin for the latest timetable.

BANFF & MACDUFF

COMBINED POP 7750

The handsome Georgian town of Banff and the busy fishing port of Macduff lie on either side of Banff Bay, separated only by the mouth of the River Deveron. Banff Links – 800m of clean golden sand stretching to the west – and Macduff's impressive aquarium pull in the holiday crowds.


The **tourist office** (01261-812419; Collie Lodge, High St; 10am-5pm Mon-Sat, noon-5pm Sun Apr-Sep) is beside St Mary's car park in Banff.

Sights

Duff House



ART GALLERY

(www.duffhouse.org.uk; adult/child £6.55/5.45; 11am-5pm Apr-Oct, 11am-4pm Thu-Sun Nov-Mar) Duff House is an impressive baroque mansion on the southern edge of Banff (upstream from the bridge, and across from the tourist office). Built between 1735 and 1740 as the seat of the Earls of Fife, it was designed by William Adam and bears similarities to that Adam masterpiece, Hopetoun House. Since being donated to the town in 1906 it has served as a hotel, a hospital and a POW camp, but is now an art gallery. One of Scotland's hidden gems, it houses a superb collection of Scottish and European art, including important works by Raeburn and Gainsborough.

Nearby **Banff Museum** (High St; admission free; 10am-12.30pm Mon-Sat Jun-Sep) has award-winning displays on local wildlife, geology and history, and Banff silver.

Macduff Marine Aquarium

AQUARIUM

(www.macduff-aquarium.org.uk; 11 High Shore; adult/child £5.65/2.80; 10am-5pm; ) The centrepiece of Macduff's aquarium is a 400,000L open-air tank, complete with kelp-coated reef and wave machine. Marine oddities on view include the brightly coloured cuckoo wrasse, the warty-skinned lump-sucker and the vicious-looking wolf fish.

Sleeping & Eating

Bryvard Guest House

B&B 

(01261-818090; www.bryvardguesthouse.co.uk; Seafeld St, Banff; s/d from £40/70; ) The

Bryvard is an imposing Edwardian town house close to the town centre, with four beautiful period-furnished bedrooms (two with en suite). Go for the 'McLeod' room, which has a four-poster bed and a sea view. The guesthouse's **Hidden Corner** restaurant (mains £15-18) serves dinner Thursday to Saturday.

County Hotel

HOTEL ££

(☎01261-815353; www.thecountyhotel.com; 32 High St, Banff; s/d from £45/80; P) The County occupies an elegant Georgian mansion in the town centre, and is owned by a French chef – the hotel's **bistro** serves light meals (mains £6 to £10), while **Restaurant L'Auberge** offers the finest French cuisine (à la carte mains £29 to £35, three-course dinner £31).

Banff Links Caravan Park

CAMPSITE £

(☎01261-812228; Banff; tent/campervan from £8/14; ☀Apr-Oct) This camp site is beside the beach, 800m west of town.

1 Getting There & Away

Bus 305 runs from Banff to Elgin (1½ hours, hourly) and Aberdeen (two hours), while bus 273 runs less frequently to Fraserburgh (one hour, twice on Saturday only).

PORTSOY

POP 1730

The pretty fishing village of Portsoy has an atmospheric **17th-century harbour** and a maze of narrow streets lined with picturesque cottages. An ornamental stone known as Portsoy marble – actually a beautifully patterned green-and-pale-pink serpentine – was quarried near Portsoy in the 17th and 18th centuries, and was reputedly used in the decoration of some rooms in the Palace of Versailles. Beside the harbour, the **Portsoy Marble Shop & Pottery** (Shorehead; ☎10am-5pm Apr-Oct) sells handmade stoneware and objects made from the local marble.

Each year on the last weekend in June or first weekend in July, Portsoy harbour is home to the **Scottish Traditional Boat Festival** (www.scottishtraditionalboatfestival.co.uk), a lively gathering of historic wooden sailing boats accompanied by sailing races, live folk music, crafts demonstrations, street theatre and a food festival.

The 12-room **Boyne Hotel** (☎01261-842242; www.boynehotel.co.uk; 2 North High St; s/d £40/72) is a cosy and atmospheric place to stay, while the **Shore Inn** (Church St) is a characterful real-ale pub overlooking the harbour.

Portsoy is 8 miles west of Banff; the hourly bus between Elgin and Banff stops here.

FORDYCE

POP 150

This impossibly picturesque village lies about 3 miles southwest of Portsoy. The main attractions are the 13th-century **St Tarquin's Church**, with its extraordinary canopied Gothic tombs, and the impressive 16th-century tower house of **Fordyce Castle**. The castle isn't open to the public, but its whitewashed west wing provides atmospheric **self-catering accommodation** (☎01261-843722; www.fordycecastle.co.uk; per week £395-595, 3 nights in low season £295) for up to four people.

The nearby **Joiner's Workshop & Visitor Centre** (admission free; ☎10am-8pm Thu-Mon Jul & Aug, 10am-6pm Fri-Mon Sep-Jun) has a collection of woodworking tools and machinery, and stages woodwork demonstrations by a master joiner.

FOCHABERS & AROUND

POP 1500

Fochabers sits beside the last bridge over the River Spey before it enters the sea. The town has a pleasant square, with a church and clock tower dated 1798, and a handful of interesting antique shops.

West of the bridge over the Spey is **Baxters Highland Village** (www.baxters.com; admission free; ☎10am-5pm), which charts the history of the Baxter family and their well-known brand of quality Scottish foodstuffs, founded in 1868. There's a factory tour with cookery demonstrations on weekdays.

Four miles north of Fochabers, at the mouth of the River Spey, is the tiny village of **Spey Bay**, the starting point for the Speyside Way long-distance footpath (p32).

SUENO'S STONE

The tidy town of Forres, 4 miles south of Findhorn, is famous for **Sueno's Stone**, a remarkable, 6.5m-high Pictish stone. It is the tallest and most elaborately carved Pictish stone in Scotland, dating from the 9th or 10th century, and is thought to depict a battle between the Picts and invading Scots or Vikings. It's protected from the elements by a huge plate-glass box, and is signposted from the main A96 Inverness-to-Elgin road at Forres.

CULBIN FOREST

On the western side of Findhorn Bay is **Culbin Forest** (www.culbin.org.uk), a vast swathe of Scots and Corsican pine that was planted in the 1940s to stabilise the shifting sand dunes that buried the Culbin Estate in the 17th century. The forest is a unique wildlife habitat, supporting plants, birds and animals (such as the pine marten) that are normally found only in ancient natural pine woods.

The forest is criss-crossed by a maze of walking and cycling trails which lead to a fantastic beach near the mouth of Findhorn Bay, a great birdwatching spot. Check the website for more info, or pick up a leaflet from local tourist offices.

It's also home to the **WDCS Wildlife Centre** (www.wdcs.org; Tugnet Ice House; admission free; ☉10.30am-5pm Apr-Sep) with an interesting display on the Moray Firth **dolphins**, which can occasionally be seen off the mouth of the river, and a pleasant cafe.

Fochabers is on the Aberdeen-to-Inverness bus route.

FINDHORN

POP 885

The attractive village of Findhorn lies at the mouth of the River Findhorn, just east of the Findhorn Bay nature reserve. It's a great place for **birdwatching**, **seal-spotting** and **coastal walks**.

Findhorn Heritage Centre (www.findhorn-heritage.co.uk; admission free; ☉2-5pm daily Jun-Aug, 2-5pm Sat & Sun May & Sep), housed in a former salmon-fisher's bothy at the northern end of the village, records the history of the settlement. The beach is just over the dunes north of the heritage centre – at low tide, you can see seals hauled out on the sandbanks off the mouth of the River Findhorn.

Hippies old and new should check out the **Findhorn Foundation** (www.findhorn.org; ☉visitor centre 10am-5pm Mon-Fri year-round, plus 1-4pm Sat Mar-Nov & 1-4pm Sun May-Sep), an international spiritual community founded in 1962. There's a small permanent population of around 150, but the community receives thousands of visitors each year. With no formal creed, the community is dedicated to cooperation with nature, 'dealing with work, relationships and our environment in new and more fulfilling ways', and fostering 'a deeper sense of the sacred in everyday life'. Projects include an eco-village, a biological sewage-treatment plant and a wind-powered generator. Guided tours (£5) start from the visitor centre at 2pm on Monday, Wednesday, Friday and Saturday from April to November, and on Sunday as well from April to September, or you can take a self-guided tour with guidebook (£3.50).

There are two good places to eat: the **Bakehouse** (mains £5-10; ☉10am-5pm), an organic bakery and cafe in the village centre, and the **Blue Angel Cafe** (www.blueangelcafe.co.uk; mains £3-9; ☉10am-5pm; ☉), an organic and vegetarian eatery in the Findhorn Foundation's eco-village.

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