



Central Highlands

Includes »

West Perthshire	115
Aberfeldy	115
Blair Castle	126
The Cairngorms.....	127
Aviemore.....	127
Moray	134
Strathdon.....	137
Craigievar Castle	137
Deeside	138
Balmoral Castle	139
The Angus Glens.....	141
Blairgowrie & Glenshee... 144	
Walking in the Central Highlands.....	145

Best Places to Eat

- » Moulin Hotel (p125)
- » Gathering Place (p140)
- » The Cross (p133)

Best Places to Stay

- » Moor of Rannoch Hotel (p120)
- » Dalmunzie House (p144)
- » Glen Clova Hotel (p143)
- » Eagleview Guest House (p133)
- » Auld Kirk (p139)
- » Rucksacks (p140)
- » Milton Eonan (p119)

Why Go?

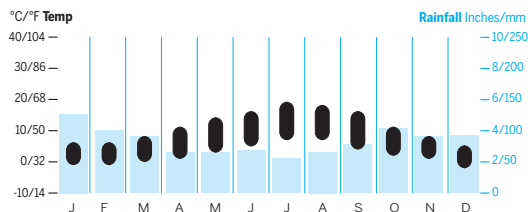
The road from Perth to Inverness cuts through the heart of the Central Highlands, following the valleys of Scotland's two longest rivers: the Tay, whose headwaters lead to the picture-postcard scenery of Loch Tay and Loch Tummel, and the majestic desolation of Rannoch Moor; and the Spey, whose lower reaches are dotted with dozens of whisky distilleries.

The subarctic summits of the Cairngorm Mountains, which form the focus of Cairngorm National Park, rise close to the watershed. With its ice-sculpted glens, glittering lochs and ancient Caledonian pine forests, the park provides endless opportunities for outdoor adventures – hiking, hillwalking, mountain biking and wildlife watching are all on offer.

On the eastern side of the mountains, Royal Deeside stretches along the banks of one of Scotland's most famous salmon rivers, sporting the greatest concentration of Scottish Baronial castles anywhere in the country – including Balmoral, the Royal Family's Highland retreat.

When to Go

Aviemore



May If the weather's kind, this is a magical time for exploring before the summer crowds arrive.

Sep Braemar Gathering, and Spirit of Speyside whisky and music festival in Dufftown.

Dec–Mar Hit the slopes at Glen-shee, Cairngorm or the Lecht when the hills are blanketed with snow.

WEST PERTSHIRE

The jewel in central Scotland's crown, West Perthshire achieves a Scottish ideal with rugged, noble hills reflected in some of the nation's most beautiful lochs. Bring your hiking boots and camera and prepare to stay a few days.

Aberfeldy

POP 1900

Aberfeldy is the gateway to west Perthshire, and a good base: adventure sports, walks (see p122), art and castles all feature on the menu. It's a peaceful, pretty place on the banks of the Tay, but if it's moody lochs and glens that steal your heart, you may want to push a little further on into the region.



Sights & Activities

Castle Menzies

CASTLE

(www.menzies.org; adult/child £6/2.50; ⌚ 10.30am-5pm Mon-Sat, 2-5pm Sun Apr-mid-Oct) About 1½ miles west of town by the B846, Castle Menzies is the impressive restored 16th-century seat of the chief of the clan Menzies (*ming-iss*). The Z-plan tower house is magnificently located against a backdrop of Scottish forest. And inside it doesn't disappoint: the place smells just like a castle should – musty and lived in.

It reeks of authenticity despite extensive restoration work and is a highly recommended ramble. Check out the fireplace in the dungeon-like kitchens and the gaudy great hall upstairs, with windows unfurling a ribbon of lush, green countryside extending into wooded hills beyond the estate. You'll get in for free if you share a surname with the castle.

Dewar's World of Whisky

DISTILLERY

(www.dewarworldofwhisky.com; tour £6.50; ⌚ 10am-6pm Mon-Sat & noon-4pm Sun Apr-Oct, 10am-4pm Mon-Sat Nov-Mar) Dewar's Distillery and their World of Whisky visitor centre is on the eastern outskirts of Aberfeldy. The tour is a good one, fully 90 minutes long; after the usual overblown film, there's a very entertaining interactive blending session as well as the tour of the whisky-making process.

Watermill

HISTORIC BUILDING

(☎ 01887-822896; www.aberfeldywatermill.com; Mill St; admission free; ⌚ 10am-5pm Mon-Sat, from 11am Sun) The Watermill is an unusual attrac-

tion in the centre of town, incorporating a bookshop with a great Scottish collection, a gallery with contemporary works of art and a coffee shop. You could while away several hours in this old mill.

Highland Safaris

WILDLIFE TOURS

(☎ 01887-820071; www.highlandsafaris.net; ⌚ 9am-5pm) This outfit, just past Castle Menzies, offers an ideal way to spot some wildlife or simply enjoy Perthshire's magnificent countryside. Standard trips include the 2½-hour Mountain Safari (per adult/child £37.50/15), which includes a dram in the wilderness; and the Safari Trek (adult/child £60/30), which includes a walk in the mountains and a picnic.

You can hire mountain bikes here (per day £15), and for another £15 they'll drive you up the top of the hill and you make your own way down (a good option for walkers too). Wildlife you may spot include golden eagles, osprey and red deer. There's also gold-panning for kids.

Splash

RAFTING

(☎ 01887-829706; www.rafting.co.uk; Dunkeld Rd; ⌚ 9am-9pm; 🚣) Splash offers family-friendly whitewater rafting on the River Tay (per adult/child £25/40) and more advanced adult trips on the Tummel and the Orchy. It also runs canyoning trips and hires mountain bikes (per half/full day £10/20).



Sleeping

Guinach House

B&B ££

(☎ 01887-820251; www.guinachhouse.co.uk; Urlar Rd; d £95-125; 🍷🍷) More like a boutique hotel, Guinach House has modish rooms and a casual, relaxed ambience. Rooms are individually styled – our favourite is the zebra room, although the red room, with freestanding bathtub, runs a close second. The whole place is set on a large estate, so there are plenty of rambling options just beyond the front doorstep.

Tigh'n Eilean Guest House

B&B ££

(☎ 01887-820109; www.tighneilan.com; Taybridge Dr; s/d £52/66; 🍷🍷) Everything about this property screams comfort. It's a gorgeous place overlooking the Tay, with individually designed rooms all creating a unique sense of space. For couples our fave is the jacuzzi room – it's huge, and the same price as the others. The Tay riverbank here is delightful, with birdsong above and ducks paddling below.