

# LOCH NESS, GLENCOE & THE HIGHLANDS

Tour Code: 3SRE/1R



**Pick up: Stirling Riverhouse Restaurant**  
**Finish: Edinburgh**

## Full Details & Itinerary

Unicorn Travel arranges pick ups at Stirling Riverhouse Restaurant at around 09.00 am and will provide you with maps and information on how to get there.

For passengers travelling from Edinburgh, the departure is at 8.15 am and travel northwest past Linlithgow palace, birthplace of Mary Queen of Scots, and Stirling Castle. Stirling castle was once known as the 'Key to Scotland', with its imposing position in the centre of the country. To the north is the 220ft high tower of the National Wallace Monument commemorating Scotland's great hero William Wallace, played by Mel Gibson in the Oscar-winning movie Braveheart.

You pass close to the scene of Wallace's greatest triumph, the battle of Stirling Bridge, where he defeated the English army in 1297. To the south is Bannockburn where, in 1314, the great Scottish warrior-king Robert the Bruce defeated the English army of Edward II, restoring independence for Scotland. A little further on you will make a short stop for coffee at Callander, the 'frontier town' on the edge of the Highlands. Crossing the Highland boundary fault line the scenery changes quickly and dramatically, the flat fertile plains of the lowlands giving way to shimmering lochs, rugged mountain tops and forest-filled glens. It's easy to forget that this was once thought of as a dangerous frontier, fought over by the fiercely territorial Highland clans such as the MacGregors, and made famous by highland folk hero, Rob Roy MacGregor.

Travelling north through Breadalbane (meaning the 'High Country of Scotland'), you climb towards the wild desolation of Rannoch Moor. At an altitude of over 1000ft, covered by heather and peat-bogs and dotted with dozens of lochs, it's an unique landscape. This contrasts with the spectacular mountain scenery as you pass the majestic peak of Buachaille Etive Mor (meaning 'the great shepherd of Etive') and down into Scotland's most famous valley, Glencoe. Stunningly beautiful, with its dramatic cliff faces and steep slopes, Glencoe is infamous as the site of the Glencoe massacre in 1692. Following orders from King William, Scottish soldiers under the leadership of Captain Robert Campbell slaughtered 38 men, women and children of the Macdonald clan. This was especially shocking as the soldiers had been living with the people of Glencoe for 2 weeks and killed them in their own homes. No one was ever punished for this crime, as the King himself had signed the order, but because it was murder under trust, the Highlands would never be the same again. Beyond Glencoe you will enter the Great Glen, a deep glacial valley following a geological fault line.

Passing through the town of Fort William you drive under Britain's highest mountain, Ben Nevis before arriving at Fort Augustus on the southern shore of Loch Ness. At 23 miles long and over 700ft deep it's the largest loch by volume in Scotland and contains more water than every lake in England and Wales combined! The loch is best known for the legendary sightings of the Loch Ness Monster ("Nessie") and you can take the opportunity of a boat cruise on the loch to go in search of the monster, or simply to enjoy the beautiful scenery. Fort Augustus is a pretty little town in its own right, the Caledonian Canal which links the lochs of the Great Glen dominates the town and makes a great place to relax and watch the boats sail by. You will stop here for nearly 2 hours to give you time for lunch and take in the scenery around Scotland's most famous loch.

From Loch Ness you head south through the mountains of the Cairngorms National Park. Your route takes us alongside Loch Laggan (the setting for the BBC series 'Monarch of the Glen'), over the Drumochter Pass (1500ft above sea level) and past 13th century Blair Castle, ancestral home of the Duke of Atholl. Your next stop is the Highland resort town of Pitlochry, built on Victorian tourism and nestled amongst the mountains of Highland Perthshire. After Pitlochry, you continue south through the forests of Perthshire, famous as Macbeth country, and past Perth itself. Perth was the medieval capital of Scotland, where for hundreds of years Scottish monarchs were crowned at nearby Scone Palace. South of Perth you drive past Loch Leven, where Mary Queen of Scots was imprisoned by her Protestant nobles, before escaping to England where she was eventually executed by her cousin Elizabeth I. Then it is over the famous Forth Bridge before returning to Edinburgh.