

North Coast 500

Recommended trip length: 6-7 days

Hike, cruise, kayak and stargaze on this road route through Scotland's untamed north.



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Buckle up for action-packed days on the north coast of Scotland, exploring mighty peaks, pristine beaches, clifftop trails and wildlife-filled lochs. From spotting dolphins and puffins to driving the legendary Bealach na Ba road, there's a new adventure around every corner...

The route

- Inverness • Dornoch • Wick • Durness • Ullapool
- Applecross • Inverness



Getting around

- The route covers around 500 miles (830km) and can be completed in either direction.
- There are many hotels and campsites along the way, but advance booking is essential.
- Set aside at least six days – ideally longer. The distances are modest but allow for multiple stop-offs: you'll want to savour the landscapes, not rush through them.
- There are several car, campervan and motorhome hire companies in Inverness, or consider renting a vehicle in Glasgow or Edinburgh. The route has plenty of charging points for electric vehicles.

Route highlights

- Glenmorangie Distillery
- Achavanich Stone Circle
- Whaligoe Steps
- Castle Sinclair Girnigoe
- Glen Torridon
- Rogie Falls
- Walking tour of Inverness
- The Torridon Stargazing Experience

Stop 1



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Inverness to Dornoch

Spend the morning exploring **Inverness**, then hit the road northwards.



Morning: Explore the 'capital of the Highlands'.

Find out why Inverness is said to be the happiest city in Scotland on a **walking tour** of the historic town.



Afternoon: Sip a dram at Glenmorangie Distillery Visitor Centre.

Bask in the golden glow of some of Scotland's best-loved whiskies, on a **tasting and tour experience at Glenmorangie Distillery** in Tain.



Evening: Unwind in an ancient castle.

Dine (and stay) at the historic **Dornoch Castle Hotel** located in the refurbished 13th-century Bishop's Palace opposite Dornoch Cathedral.

Dornoch to Wick

If time allows, plan an extra day to discover local hiking and cycling trails.



Morning: Explore the Achavanich Stone Circle.

In wild, windswept Achavanich, this mysterious stone circle dates back 4,000 years – a spectacular start to your morning, with hiking trails nearby.



Afternoon: Hike the Whaligoe Steps.

Discover a secret harbour at the bottom of these steep cliff-face steps, rich in wildlife and edge-of-the-world beauty – ideal for a picnic lunch.



Evening: Walk down the shortest street in the world.

Stay at the family-run **Mackays Hotel** situated on Ebenezer Place, named the World Shortest Street at 2.06 m (6 ft 9 in) by Guinness World Records.



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Stop 2

Stop 3



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Wick to Durness

Venture to mainland Britain's northernmost point today, then head west.



Morning: Discover **Castle Sinclair Girnigoe**.

Roam the ruins of this ancient clifftop fortress, which actually comprises two centuries-old castles. A glorious spot for hiking and sea views.



Afternoon: Spot puffins at **Dunnet Head**.

Stand on Britain's most northerly point for breathtaking coastal vistas and look out for its colourful resident puffins!



Evening: Stay in Durness over night.

After a day of exploring, unwind at **Smoo Lodge**, a luxury bed and breakfast housed within a former 18th-century sporting lodge.

Durness to Ullapool

Stop for souvenirs at **Balnakeil Craft Village**, and scenic snaps at Kylesku Bridge.



Morning: Marvel at **Smoo Cave**.

Cruise through cathedral-like sea caverns on **a guided boat tour**, and hike to an underground waterfall – following in the footsteps of Vikings.



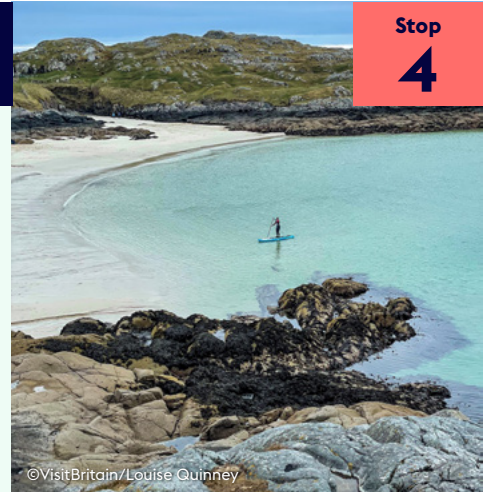
Afternoon: Enjoy the white sands of **Durness**.

Wide and pristine, the beaches of Durness are gorgeous year-round, whether for relaxing in the sun or enjoying a long autumn walk.



Evening: Cosy up in a cabin.

Book a cabin at boutique hotel **Mackay's** or stay in one of their individually styled guest rooms. The hotel's restaurant serves locally sourced produce such as Loch Eriboll langoustines.



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Stop 4

Stop 5



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Ullapool to Applecross

Follow the coast today. From Ullapool go south and turn onto the A832; from Shieldaig, take the sea road to Applecross – save the Bealach na Ba for tomorrow.



Morning: Spy red deer in **Beinn Eighe National Nature Reserve**.

Look out for golden eagles, pine martens and red deer while exploring this reserve's wild mountain-view hiking trails; there are route options for all abilities.



Afternoon: Be awed by **Glen Torridon**.

There are beautiful waterside pathways to discover around Torridon, plus mountain biking at **Torridon Outdoors visitor centre**.



Evening: Gaze at the stars.

On clear nights, the Milky Way is visible from the Highlands, thanks to the lack of light pollution. Check out **The Torridon Resort's stargazing experience**, hosted by an astronomer.

Applecross to Inverness

Return to Inverness today, via one of the world's most spectacular roads.



Morning: Cross the **Bealach na Ba**.

Don't rush this legendary mountain track – not only because of its many twists and turns, but to savour its breathtaking scenery.



Afternoon: Venture to **Rogie Falls**.

Before returning to Inverness, take a walk on this gentle 1.3km (0.75 mile) trail to a thundering waterfall. Look out for leaping salmon in August and September.



Evening: Catch a play in Inverness.

Set on the banks of the river Ness, **the Eden Court Theatre** offers a wide range of entertainment, from drama to silent disco. Stay at the chic **Rocpool Reserve Hotel**.



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Stop 6

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