

History & Heritage

3 Day Itinerary



Day 1

Today is castle day! With an impressive count of over 300 castles, stately mansions and ruins scattered across the landscape, there are more castles per acre here than anywhere else in the UK. There are more than you'd ever have time to explore on a visit to the area, so we've singled out two that you simply must go and see.

The first is right on our doorstep and can actually be seen from our Dalriada Lodges – [Dunnottar Castle](#). It may look a little familiar – it's been used as the backdrop for Hollywood films including Hamlet starring Mel Gibson and Victor Frankenstein with James McAvoy and Daniel Radcliffe. On a side note, this cliff top fortress is said to be the inspiration behind Disney's animated movie Brave.

The castle was the home of the Earls of Marischal and it has a rich and colourful history. It's been visited by Mary Queen of Scots and James VI and in the 17th century Oliver Cromwell's army laid siege to the castle for eight months. Surrender was eventually conceded – but not before the Scottish Crown Jewels were smuggled out to [Kinneff Old Church](#).

Next, we're heading inland to Royal Deeside and to a castle which some say is straight out of a fairy tale. [Craigievar Castle](#) near Alford is famed for its distinctive pink exterior and is one of the best preserved tower houses in Scotland. Built in 1626, it was a family home until the 1960s and houses an impressive collection of artefacts, art and armour.



Dunnottar Castle

Day 2

Many people consider Aberdeen to be a modern city because it's a powerhouse of the global energy industry, but it's a place with deep heritage and traditions. Before oil was discovered in the North Sea, the local economy was driven by the fishing industry. Few fishing vessels are found here nowadays, but the charming community of Footdee (pronounced Fittie) gives a snapshot of days gone by.



Footdee



This is a historic collection of picture-perfect cottages near the harbour – a village within the city. It's an excellent example of a planned development: Footdee's regimented squares have been described as a cross between the neo-classical aspirations of Aberdeen and the closeknit fishing communities of the north-east.

From there, visit the streets of Old Aberdeen – once home to monks, scholars, traders and travellers. There's a vibrant student community here now as it is home to Aberdeen University, and at the centrepiece is [Kings College](#) – the forerunner to that seat of learning – which dates back to 1495. Another must see in Old Aberdeen is [St Machar's Cathedral](#), along with the old cobbled streets, while the more recently opened [Kings Museum](#), which houses collections from the university, is also worth a visit.



St Machar's Cathedral

Aberdeen is known as the Granite City and walking around it's easy to see why. Just about every building has been created from granite, with famed architects Archibald Simpson and A Marshall Mackenzie responsible for many of the city's most prominent structures. Marischal College is particularly impressive, as are the Cowdray Hall and [His Majesty's Theatre](#).

Day 3

We start close to your home away from home at Stonehaven harbour where you will find the fascinating [Tolbooth Museum](#) which was once used as an administrative centre for the town. It has some interesting local history displays and artefacts, including the Inverbervie stocks and the Crank – a punishment device for criminals who were kept prisoner in the building.



Tolbooth Museum

We then travel south to the [Grassic Gibbon Centre](#) – a visitor attraction dedicated to the Scottish author James Leslie Mitchell. He wrote *Sunset Song* – named as the best Scottish novel of all time – and the centre in Laurencekirk is close to where he grew up in the Mearns countryside.

You'll be able to trace his life through a selection of story boards and an audio visual display, as well as look at a collection of rare and valuable books, his personal effects and other items on loan from his family. As well as learning more about his work, you can wander around the gift shop and enjoy some refreshments in the coffee shop.



Grassic Gibbon Centre