

Royal Connections

Royal connections permeate this part of Scotland. The Balmoral Estate was brought into Royal ownership in 1853 and was a retreat for Queen Victoria when she lost her husband Prince Albert. It remains a private holiday home for the Queen and her family, who holiday here every year. Our itinerary includes a visit to **Crathie Church**, the local parish church where the Royal family still worship when in residence, **Balmoral Castle & Grounds**, a walk to take in various royal commemorative stones and **Royal Lochnagar Distillery**. In the winter combining the walk with a visit to the distillery would still be a memorable day out

Summary

Drive Distance :Ballater/Crathie 7 miles; Crathie/Lochnagar 1 mile; Lochnagar/Ballater 8 miles
:Total 18 miles

Drive time :45 mins

Accessibility :Be prepared for walking and for being outside

Year round :No – see descriptions below for a guide to opening. Royal family in residence restricts estate access.

Child friendly :In part. Children under 8 are not admitted to Distillery production areas.

Route

Depart Ballater on the A93 heading west. Park at the car park after the Tourist Information Centre. **Crathie Kirk** is on the opposite side of the road and is visible from the car park. Take care crossing the road. From the car park to enter **Balmoral** you must cross the bridge over the River Dee – the only Brunel bridge in Scotland! Return to the car park and take the B976 east towards **Royal Lochnagar Distillery** by crossing the Brunel bridge and use the parking area before the distillery for the **Cairns Walk**. After the visit continue east back to Ballater.

Crathie Kirk's The first royal visit was in 1848 when Victoria and Albert had leased Balmoral estate for a summer holiday. The current church, a simple expression in granite, had its foundation stone laid by Victoria herself in 1895. Queen Elizabeth still worships here when she is in residence at Balmoral and Princess Anne, the Princess Royal, was married to Tim Lawrence here in 1992. From outside the church, look south and you will see the old churchyard where you can find the grave of John Brown, ghillie and a loyal servant to Queen Victoria during her time of mourning. The film *Mrs Brown* tells the story of that relationship. *[Easter weekend to 31st October open daily 9:30 am - 5 pm. Closed 12.30pm – 1pm]*

Balmoral Castle & Grounds The Royal family purchased this estate after leasing it for a holiday. Prince Albert then set about designing a new house with the help of architect William Smith. Still the private residence of the royal family, it is possible to visit the estate with limited access to the castle but still worth the visit. Buy tickets at the gates and either walk *[recommended]* to the castle or wait for the little train, which shuttles guests back and forth from the gates to the exhibition area. The highlight is the castle grounds. An audio tour included in the entry price provides accompanying information and a number of lively anecdotes, to a walk through the grounds in addition to exhibitions in the coach houses, the castle ballroom and around the outside of the castle. The end of July is a particularly pleasing time to visit when the country-style garden is blossoming in time for the Queen arriving. *[Balmoral open fully April to End July then guided tours specific dates Nov/Dec]*

Royal Cairns Walk A circular walk with moderate ascents, which takes in 8 Royal cairns commemorating various royal marriages, the purchase of Balmoral and the memorial cairn to Albert. The walk is around 8.5km and can take 2.5 hours. *[It is respectfully requested that this walk is not undertaken when the royal family are in residence August & September]* Good footwear is advisable. Please see separate description of the walk at Route 66:
www.walks.able-technologies.eu/walking.shtml.

Royal Lochnagar Distillery John Begg built New Lochnagar as it was then called in 1845. In 1848 Begg was cheeky enough to invite the Royal couple to visit the distillery and sample its delights. His impertinence paid off as they did just that, stopping-by very informally and were presumably *most amused* as the distillery was dubbed *Royal* from then on. A visit to Royal Lochnagar will reveal its own insight to Scotland's national drink. *[Royal Lochnagar open 7 days Apr-October; Mon-Sat in Nov & Dec; Mon-Fri Jan & Feb 10am-4pm]*

Contact Information *[we recommend checking opening for your planned visit]*

Visits

Crathie Kirk, Crathie near Ballater, AB35 5UL ;

Balmoral Castle & Grounds, near Ballater, AB35 5TB; 01339 742534

Royal Lochnagar Distillery, near Ballater, AB35 5TB; 01339 742700

www.braemarandcrathieparish.org.uk

www.balmoralcastle.com

www.discovering-distilleries.com/RoyalLochnagar

Refreshment Options

Balmoral Castle Restaurant or picnic in Balmoral Estate grounds