

Soldiers in the Hills and Illicit Stills

The line of the B976 road was laid down by the military, under the direction of Major William Caulfield who continued the program that General Wade had started in 1725. Their road building was intended to assist the movement of troops in the disarmament of the highland people. No sign of conflict now, take it slow and enjoy the many viewpoints the road offers to mighty Lochnagar and across wide-open moors. Stop, enjoy the hush and breathe the fresh air. This is a great route for spotting wildlife particularly game birds or deer. **Corgarff Castle** almost jars in this wild country, a reminder of military occupation. We take you to the edge of whisky country, where illegal stills were an early form of agricultural diversity.

Summary

Drive Distance :Ballater/Corgarff 22 miles; Corgarff/Ballater 15 miles
:Total 37 miles
Drive time :1 hrs 15 mins
Accessibility :Be prepared for walking over short distances and for being outside
Year round :Yes - see descriptions below for a guide to opening.
Child friendly :Yes

Route

Depart Ballater on the A93 heading west, turning right to head north on the B976 after Crathie. Continue until the road joins the A939 at Bridge of Gairn. Continue on the A939 past Corgarff Castle, pass the Allargue Arms Hotel and stop at the **viewpoint** above it. If you wish a walk continue past the **Lecht 2090 Ski Centre**, park where the Well of the Lecht is signposted and take the **Lecht Mine** route. Return on the A939 towards Corgarff and all the way to Ballater.

Corgarff Castle Viewpoint In 2003 a granite sculpture created by Louise Gardner was erected here. The sculpture is a standing stone with telescopic lenses inserted to provide close up views to Corgarff Castle and the valley junctions below. It is incised, *Take a moment to behold, As still skies or storms unfold, In sun, rain, sleet or snow, Warm your soul before you go.* Enough said.

Lecht Mine Walk Iron ore was mined from here 1730 to 1737 and was reopened in 1841 for mining manganese. There is an attractive walk up to the mine, [*less than 2km round trip*] which is now empty save for an interpretative panel. As you approach the mine there is a track to the left. Consider taking this as a short detour as it gives an interesting perspective looking down on the mine and its spoil heaps. This is the old whisky smuggling path and in fact, after the steep ascent across the hills leads to the old Scaln Seminary. The track is quite steep so, only take it if you are well prepared and weather conditions are agreeable. The detour may allow more sights of wildlife so be prepared for cackling red grouse suddenly emerging from the heather! This is also a good place for a picnic if the conditions are favourable.

The Lecht 2090 A traditional Scottish ski resort, which has diversified to provide year-round outdoor activities, particularly mountain bike trails in summer. The centre has a café and is worth popping-in to see which activities are currently on. [*Open daily year round*]

Corgarff Castle Militarization of the Highlands took place over a number of decades. Control in days of rebellion was important and once subdued, the important business of ensuring taxes were paid on whisky continued the need for a presence. Corgarff started as a family home to a branch of Clan Forbes, it was burned-out by the Gordons in the 16th century and was later abandoned by the Forbes'. It was garrisoned with British soldiers in the 18th century and what you experience today relives that period of the castle's history. [*Open 7 days Apr-Sep; Weekends Oct-Mar*]

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

Visits

Corgarff Castle, Corgarff, AB36 8YP; 01975 651 460;
Lecht History

www.historic-scotland.gov.uk
www.glenlivetestate.co.uk/history_lecht.html

Refreshment Options

Allargue Arms Hotel, Corgarff, Strathdon, AB36 8YP; 01975 651410;
The Lecht 2090, Strathdon, AB36 8YP; 019756 51440;
Picnic on the Lecht Mine walk

www.allarguearmshotel.co.uk
www.lecht.co.uk