

Wild Horses

Not wild but rather a mix of iron and rescued horses! This is a fun family day where you can combine a short train trip with shopping in **Banchory** and a visit to **Belwade Farm** run by the charity World Horse Welfare. Banchory, was chosen for pioneering health care in the late 19th century because of its mild, sunny climate and air quality. Somerset Maugham spent time at the health facility in 1917 and his short story "Sanatorium" was written during his stay. Today it is one of the most popular satellite towns to Aberdeen with a traditional heart making it an excellent place to explore. The scenic **Deeside Railway** was dubbed *Royal* after Queen Victoria and the royal family used it for annual summer visits to Balmoral Castle.

Summary

Drive Distance :Ballater/Crathes 27 miles; Crathes/Banchory 3 miles; Banchory/Dess 11 miles; Dess/Ballater 14 miles
:Total 55 miles
Drive time :1 hr 45 mins
Accessibility :Be prepared for walking over short distances and for being outside
Year round :Yes : Wednesdays, weekends & bank holidays only – see descriptions below for a guide to opening
Child friendly :Yes

Route

Depart Ballater on the A93 heading east. After passing through the town of **Banchory** you will see tracks of the **Royal Deeside Railway** on your right and you should turn right into Milton of Crathes. Head west to Banchory and park in the centre of town by turning left at the traffic lights. After exploring Banchory, head west on A93. After passing through the village of Kincardine O Neil, you will see a tourist brown signpost to the left for Belwade Farm. Continue west on A93 to Ballater.

Royal Deeside Railway The Royal Deeside Railway Preservation Society was formed in 1996 by enthusiasts who long had a dream to resurrect the Deeside rail line, at least in part. Steam-hauled trains are said to be *an imminent prospect* and certainly the line has made great progress since restarting with over 60 days of operation planned for 2010. In this very car-bound culture, step back to the golden age of train travel! [*Starts 11am; Variable dates; Days of operation Wed, Sat, Sun & BH; Not Feb/Mar/Oct/Nov – timetable online*]

The Old Royal Station in Ballater has a replica of a Royal carriage used by Queen Victoria. Prince Charles suggested that a replica be commissioned and when the project was realised he visited the popular exhibition! [*4 Jan - 25 Jun & 4 Sep - 30 Dec: Mon-Sun 10am-5pm; 26 Jun - 3 Sep: Mon-Sun 9am-6pm*]

Banchory Gift shops, boutiques and for foodies, 2 delicatessens, a fishmongers and a chocolate shop are just some of the delights that are unveiled by a wander around the town. There are a number of family friendly restaurants in addition to hotels, which cater to non-residents. Perhaps if it is fine, a picnic by the river after a deli visit may be enjoyed. Parking is available next to the children's playground. Turn left from High St at the traffic lights as you are travelling west. Parking is on the left. A side trip to **Raemoir Garden Centre** is worth considering perhaps en-route to the railway, much more than a garden centre with a fine café! It is signposted with a brown tourist sign.

Belwade Farm is operated by the World Horse Welfare charity. Meet the horses with staff on-hand to tell you each story. There is a visitor centre describing the charity's work to rest, rehabilitate and re-home horses. The centre also serves light refreshments. A nature walk offers fine views where you can walk up to 5 miles, through woodland and by the river Dee. In July each year, Belwade hosts the North East Scotland Farrier Championships. Visitors are welcome to enjoy this truly special event. [*Open 2-4pm Wednesday, weekends and bank holidays*]

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

Visits

The Royal Deeside Railway, Milton of Crathes, AB31 5QH
Belwade Farm, near Dess, Aboyne, AB34 5BJ; 01339 887186

www.deeside-railway.co.uk
www.worldhorsewelfare.org

Refreshment Options

Raemoir Garden Centre, Raemoir Road, Banchory, AB31 4EJ; 01330 825059
The Milton Restaurant, Crathes, Banchory, AB31 5QH; 01330 844566
Franco's Restaurant, 40, High St, Banchory, AB31 5SR; 01330 826093
The Burnett Arms Hotel, 25 High Street, Banchory, AB31 5TD; 01330 824944
The Banchory Lodge Hotel, Dee Street, Banchory, AB31 5HS; 01330 822625
Number 10 Tearoom & Winebar, 10, Dee St, Banchory, AB31 5ST; 01330 825747
Dudley's Restaurant & Coffee House, 14, Dee St, Banchory, AB31 5ST; 01330 822326

www.raemoirgardencentre.co.uk
www.themilton.co.uk
www.francosrestaurant.biz
www.bw-burnettarms.co.uk
www.banchorylodge.co.uk