

# The Road to the Isles



Front cover: Loch Shiel and Jacobite Steam Train on Glenfinnan Viaduct  
This page: Beaches at Morar.

A journey steeped in history and romance, the stunning Road to the Isles should be treated as more than just a means of travelling further north or west. Linger here and venture down the side roads to experience some of Scotland's finest coastal and hill scenery. Explore the numerous offshore islands and little-visited peninsulas. Find out why the makers of films as diverse as *Harry Potter* and *Local Hero* have assembled their tripods here, and why discerning families return to the area year after year.

# welcome

## BASE YOURSELF IN

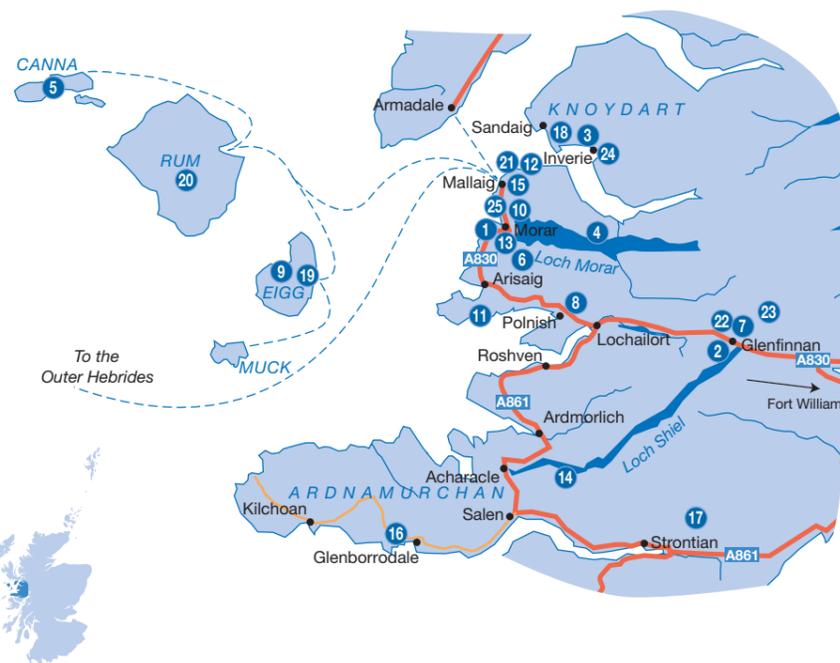
- Arisaig
- Mallaig
- Fort William
- Morar
- Glenfinnan
- With so many beautiful beaches and lochs in this area, it really is breathtaking to set up camp. All VisitScotland-graded parks have excellent facilities on site. Check out [visitscotland.com](http://visitscotland.com) for more details.

## IDEAL FOR

- Adventure
- Walking & Cycling
- Beaches & Picnics
- Wildlife

To find out more about accommodation in these areas, call 0845 22 55 121 or click on [visitscotland.com](http://visitscotland.com)

## LOCATION MAP



Principal photography © Paul Tomkins, VisitScotland/Scottish Viewpoint  
Additional photography: Laurie Campbell and VisitScotland Highland

Information correct June 2005

## DON'T MISS

- Free entry
- Paid entry
- Seasonal opening
- Primary school
- Pre-school
- Wet weather
- Refreshments



**1. Camusdarach Beach**  
– Familiar to fans of the film *Local Hero*, and every bit as stunning in reality, Camusdarach is one of a string of exquisite beaches along the shoreline between Arisaig and Morar. While away a few hours picnicking with the breathtaking backdrop of the Small Isles rising sheer out of the sea in front of you. For an alternative, try the Silver Sands of Morar to the north.



**2. Glenfinnan** – The glorious site at the head of Loch Shiel where Bonnie Prince Charlie famously raised his standard in 1745, Glenfinnan is now more commonly associated with the impressive viaduct which has featured prominently in the *Harry Potter* films. Visit the National Trust for Scotland centre or the Station Museum and Dining Car. Glenfinnan is located on the West Coast railway line and is on the route of the *Jacobite* steam train between Fort William and Mallaig.



**3. Knoydart** – Accessible only by boat from Mallaig or via a very long walk in from Kinlochhourn, Knoydart is recognised as the remotest part of mainland Britain and is perfect for adventurous families. One of the best hiking spots in the country, there are also options for wildlife watching, canoeing and fishing, amongst other activities organised by operators in the area. The scenery is outstanding and will leave a lasting impression.



**4. Loch Morar** – The deepest expanse of fresh water in Europe (310m), picturesque Loch Morar is steeped in mystery. It is reputedly home to Nessie's slightly less famous cousin Morag, although scientific studies have proved inconclusive. Rob Roy's home was located on the banks of the loch in the film of the same name. Just over the hill, neighbouring Loch Nevis ('Loch of Heaven') is the deepest seawater loch in Europe. This area is prime walking country.



**5. Puffins on Canna** – A property of the National Trust for Scotland, the beautiful island of Canna is home to a small crofting and farming community and is accessed via ferry from Mallaig. The southern cliffs of the island, offering stunning views towards the neighbouring island of Rum, are home to a myriad of seabirds, including the ever-popular puffin between May and July. (NTS)





## WALKS

**6. Arisaig to Scamadale** – This route provides a perfect opportunity for families to get a taster for the mountains around Arisaig and Loch Morar. Heading northwards on the A830, follow the signpost marked Kinloid. There is parking a short distance along this road, next to the guest house from where the path begins. From here, you'll follow the railway and explore native woodland before climbing to Scamadale. Allow 3 hours for the 7 mile walk. 🚶👨👩👦



**7. Glen Finnan** – From the Glenfinnan visitor centre car park, follow the Mallaig road across a bridge and then look out for a sign pointing towards Glenfinnan Lodge. From here, continue up the valley underneath the viaduct. An easy 5½ mile route, taking in most of this scenic glen, can be completed in roughly 2 hours, while keen walkers can continue a further 7 miles to lonely Loch Arkaig. 🚶👨👩👦

**8. Glen Mama to Loch Mama** – If you're searching for a picnic spot in this area, look no further than Loch Mama. From Glen Mama Farm on the A830 north of Polish (park at the lay-by 100m west of here), you begin to climb through oak woodland. Kids will love the early stages of the route, where a combination of bridges, trees, fords and stones form a zigzag across the river. The path ascends on the final approach to Loch Mama, bounded by high hills. The route is 6 miles in total. 🚶👨👩👦

**9. Singing Sands, Isle of Eigg** – Access to the stunningly beautiful Isle of Eigg is by ferry from Mallaig with Caledonian MacBrayne year-round or with Arisaig Marine in the summer. The Singing Sands in the north-west of the island are an undoubted highlight, complete with the Rum Cuillin as a backdrop. They can be reached by road from the foot of the Bealach Clithe, on through croft land and left at a fork. From here, a short walk leads to the cliff tops and a path winding down to the Sands. 🚶👨👩👦

**10. Morar to Loch Morar and Mallaig** – This is a walk you can enjoy without the hassle of taking a car. The starting and finishing points are both adjacent to train stations, so check out [www.firstscotrail.co.uk](http://www.firstscotrail.co.uk) to ensure you're on board! Set off from Morar station and walk south, taking a left turn onto the minor road along Loch Morar's north shore. Continuing along, the road becomes a path which passes a couple of small communities before arriving in Tarbet. Here, a boat departs daily at 3.30pm throughout summer to take you back via Loch Nevis to the connecting train at Mallaig. Allow 6 hours for the walk. 🚶👨👩👦

## FAMILY ATTRACTIONS

**11. Arisaig Marine** – Join MV *Sheerwater* daily throughout the summer months to explore the Small Isles of Muck, Eigg and Rum. Sailings vary each day, allowing you to focus on one island or enjoy a combination of two. A huge variety of wildlife may be seen on the water, while the islands have stunning walks and beaches. 🚶👨👩👦

**12. The Brightwater Experience** – Have a rip-roaring adventure aboard a 9.5m propelled RIB (Rigid Inflatable Boat). Itineraries and lengths of trip change depending on the day, but possible destinations include Skye, Eigg, Mull and Eilean Donan Castle. Departs Mallaig. 🚶👨👩👦

**13. Loch Morar Activities** – Enjoy the unrivalled scenery and wildlife of Loch Morar from the water. Loch Morar Activities offer open canoe and sea kayak hire. You can head out from an hour to an entire day, so you may wish to prepare a picnic in advance and find a quiet spot for lunch. The

loch is 12 miles long and untouched by road, so you'll have little difficulty doing so! 🚶👨👩👦

**14. Loch Shiel Cruises** – Departing from Glenfinnan, enjoy a unique cruise through one of Scotland's most remote, beautiful and unspoilt landscapes. Journey down magnificent Loch Shiel, looking out for golden eagles soaring above the craggy mountain tops and red deer roaming in the glens. Aboard MV *Sileas*, you'll also see many of the historical sites associated with Bonnie Prince Charlie and the Jacobite Rising. 🚶👨👩👦

**15. Marine World** – Located by the harbour in Mallaig, Marine World acts both as an interpretation centre focused on the fascinating species found in and around west coast waters, and as a demonstration of the importance of the fishing industry to the community here. If you want to see an octopus up close, make sure you pay a visit! 🚶👨👩👦

## WILDLIFE ATTRACTIONS

**16. Ardnamurchan Natural History Centre** – The award-winning 'Living Building' at this natural history centre, reached via the A861 south of Lochailort, offers you the chance to see if the resident pine marten is in its den. You can also enjoy a treetop view of the heronry and observe a variety of birds, fish and pond life in an innovative and entertaining way. 🚶👨👩👦

**17. Ariundle Oakwood** – Further along the A861, you'll reach Strontian, north of which is this ancient woodland, complete with nature trails. The oak woodland reserve is packed with wildlife which changes with the season. Drop by to see spring flowers, summer butterflies or spectacular autumn colours, whilst learning about the cultural and natural history of the area on information panels. (FCS) 🚶👨👩👦

**18.** Located in the remote and beautiful wilds of Knoydart, **Doone** offers a selection of fully catered lodge accommodation with fantastic opportunities for walking, island hopping, diving, photography and wildlife watching. Hop aboard the *Mary Doone* for an opportunity to spot whales, dolphins, seals, eagles, and offers in spectacular surroundings. The proprietors run a series of special interest holidays throughout the summer months. 🚶👨👩👦

**19. Isle of Eigg** – Approximately 5 miles by 3, Eigg has an astonishing variety of habitats for its size: sandy bays, orchid-rich grasslands, lochs and moors, volcanic crags and mature woodlands. From April to September, take one of the weekly guided walks with the Scottish Wildlife Trust warden to see some of the 68 resident bird species. 🚶👨👩👦

**20. Isle of Rum** – The jagged peaks of Rum are a familiar sight on the western seaboard. Once the core of a volcano, the island was one of the earliest human settlement sites in Scotland. There's a mountain top colony of nocturnal Manx shearwaters numbering around 60,000 pairs, along with substantial numbers of red deer and white-tailed eagles, the latter reintroduced here in the late 20th century. 🚶👨👩👦



## HOW TO GET TO THE SMALL ISLES

A passenger ferry operated by Caledonian MacBrayne operates year-round from Mallaig to all four of the Small Isles (Canna, Eigg, Rum and Muck). The drop-off and pick-up points vary from day to day, so plan your trip ahead by visiting [www.calmac.co.uk](http://www.calmac.co.uk) or telephoning 08705 650000. Alternatively, from May to September, hop aboard MV *Sheerwater*, operated by Arisaig Marine, which visits all islands apart from Canna, again on a rotated timetable. Visit [www.arisaig.co.uk](http://www.arisaig.co.uk) or telephone 01687 462403 for more information.

## HOW TO GET TO KNOYDART

If you're not up to hiking for 2 days from Kinlochhourn in the east, use the services of Bruce Watt Sea Cruises, operating between Mallaig and Inverie. In summer, the service runs from Monday to Friday in the morning and afternoon. See [www.knoydart-ferry.co.uk](http://www.knoydart-ferry.co.uk) or telephone 01687 462320.

## THE JACOBITE STEAM TRAIN

Perhaps the best way to travel the length of the Road to the Isles is not in fact by road but by railway. The *Jacobite* is a steam engine which connects Fort William and Mallaig daily during the summer months. The 84-mile return trip takes in some truly impressive sites, including the Caledonian Canal, Glenfinnan Viaduct and Monument, and the glorious coastline of Arisaig and Morar. This route is regarded as one of the Great Railway Journeys of the World and, once you've experienced it, you'll be in no doubt as to why.

## The Road to the Isles



The Silver Sands of Morar

## FOOD & DRINK

**21. The Cabin, Mallaig** – The place to go if you're looking for fresh, locally-caught seafood in the area, The Cabin has a good value menu, and does a mean fish and chips.

**22. Glenfinnan Dining Car** – For a unique dining experience, book yourselves a table at the Glenfinnan Dining Car, a restored 1950s carriage. Your hosts serve lunches and cream teas during the day and a restaurant menu in the evening. For grown-ups there's a range of ales and whiskies to savour as you soak up the view to Loch Shiel and beyond.

**23. Glenfinnan House Hotel** – Glenfinnan House offers a diverse bar menu utilising the full spectrum of local produce, and has a wealth of choice for the kids as well. Those seeking something a little special should seek out the dining room with its enticing fixed price menu.

**24. The Old Forge, Knoydart** – Mainland Britain's remotest pub, the Old Forge has gained quite a reputation for the quality of its real ales and fresh seafood. This is an ideal spot to grab a bite to eat before you head on your walk or to relax at the end of it.

**25. Sunset, Morar** – Morar might be the last place you'd expect to find a traditional Thai takeaway, but those in the know have long raved about the quality of the food produced at the Sunset Guest House. Every day apart from Monday, you can place your order between 5pm and 10.30pm and your food will be ready for collection in the quickest time possible.

For more information, call 0845 22 55 121 or [visitscotland.com](http://visitscotland.com)



Achateny, Ardnamurchan