

The Cock O' The North

Thursday 29th August 2024 – Wednesday 4th September 2024



The Railway Touring Company

WELCOME TO COCK O'THE NORTH TOUR

Hello, my name is Graham, I am delighted to welcome you to our Cock O'The North tour.

I will be your tour manager throughout your holiday, my job is to ensure the smooth operation of the tour. If you have any requests, comments, suggestions, or problems please approach me for assistance/guidance.

TIMES vary from extremely rigid, on scheduled travel; to more flexible when it comes to private charters and mealtimes. I will keep you informed about timings. I do request, please, that you treat all scheduled services as inflexible; they will go on time and wait for no one!

HEALTH INSURANCE Please read your policy to identify any procedures necessary to comply with insurance conditions; we cannot be familiar with the range of policies being carried.

I look forward to welcoming you on the tour.

Graham Croucher

CONTACTS

Graham Croucher will be available throughout the tour. In hotels ask reception to put you through.

The Railway Touring Company

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**The Best Western Palace
Hotel and Spa**

8 Ness Walk

Inverness

IV3 5NG

Tel: 01463 223243

Email: palace@miltonhotels.com

The Royal Hotel

Bank Street

Portree

Isle of Skye

IV51 9BU

Tel: 01478 612525

Email: reservations@royalhotel.scot

PASSENGER LIST

Graham Croucher – Tour Manager

Michael Cooper

Margaret Cooper

Mark De Garis

Wendy De Garis

Aparupa Dey

Subhus Dey

Stephen Feaver

Hilarie Baker

Evelyne Flack

Ian Flack

Elizabeth Hallam-Smith

Michael Hehir

Patricia Hitch

Keith Leslie

Steve Priestley

Sally Priestley

Graham Vlacho

Lyn Vlacho

David Whittaker

「NER」

First Class



9 Coach Train

 Luggage rack

Cock O' the North (3)

London Kings Cross (12.00) – Inverness (20.07)

Thursday 29th August 2024

Outward

Coach L

GRAHAM VLACHO	L28
LYN VLACHO	L29
MICHAEL HEHIR	L30
STEVE PRIESTLEY	L35
SALLY PRIESTLEY	L36
MICHAEL COOPER	L37
MARGARET COOPER	L38
STEPHEN FEAVER	L41
HILARIE BAKER	L42
MARK DE GARDIS	L43
WENDY DE GARIS	L44
APARUPA DEY	L47
SUBHAS DEY	L48
IAN FLACK	L49
EVELYNE FLACK	L50
ELIZABETH HALLAM-SMITH	L53
PATRICIA HITCH	L54
DAVID WITTAKER	L55
GRAHAM CROUCHER (TM)	L56

Cock O' the North (3)

York (13.55) – Inverness (20.07)

Thursday 29th August 2024

Outward

Coach L

KEITH LESLIE	L31
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Cock O' the North (3)

Inverness (07.55) – London Kings Cross (15.49)

Wednesday 4th September 2024

Return

Coach L

GRAHAM VLACHO	L28
LYN VLACHO	L29
PATRICA HITCH	L30
STEVE PRIESTLEY	L35
SALLY PRIESTLEY	L36
MICHAEL COOPER	L37
MARGARET COOPER	L38
STEPHEN FEAVER	L41
HILARIE BAKER	L42
MARK DE GARDIS	L43
WENDY DE GARIS	L44
APARUPA DEY	L47
SUBHAS DEY	L48
IAN FLACK	L49
EVELYNE FLACK	L50
ELIZABETH HALLAM-SMITH	L53
DAVID WITTAKER	L54
MICHAEL HEHIR	L55
GRAHAM CROUCHER (TM)	L56

Cock O' the North (3)

Inverness (07.55) – York (13.54)

Wednesday 4th September 2024

Return

Coach L

KEITH LESLIE	L31
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COCK O'THE NORTH PROGRAMME (3)

Thursday 29th August 2024 – Wednesday 4th September 2024

(Please note that all timings were correct at the time of going to print, but they are subject to change)

Thursday 29th August

11.00	Meet the Tour Manager in First Class Lounge at London Kings Cross
12.00	Train departs London Kings Cross
13.55	Train departs York
	Light snacks and beverages will be served at your seat as we head North
	Enjoy the attractive coastal scenery as we race on through Berwick to Edinburgh
20.07	Arrive at Inverness station
	Transfer by coach to The Best Western Palace Hotel for dinner and overnight accommodation

Friday 30th August

	Breakfast is served in the hotel restaurant
08.20	Meet in hotel reception
08.30	Coach departs for Strathspey Railway for a return trip
10.15	Depart Aviemore on Strathspey Railway
10.40	Train arrives Broomhill
10.50	Train departs Broomhill
11.34	Train arrives back at Aviemore
11.50	Coach departs Aviemore to Dufftown
14.00	Lunch in the Sidings Cafe
15.30	Train departs Dufftown
16.10	Train arrives at Keith
16.38*	Train departs Keith
17.00	Train arrives Dufftown
17.15	Coach departs Dufftown
18.45	Coach arrives at The Best Western Palace Hotel & Spa
19.30	Dinner is served in the hotel restaurant

Saturday 31st August

	Breakfast is served in the hotel restaurant
10.30	Coach departs hotel
10.56	Train departs Inverness Station
	Sit back and enjoy one of the most scenic rides in Britain
13.35	Arrive Kyle of Lochalsh station
	Time to purchase lunch In Kyle of Lochalsh, there is also a café at Eilean Donan Castle if you would prefer lunch there

14.40	Meet at discussed meeting point ready to re-join the coach
14.45	Depart by coach to Eilean Donan Castle
	We take a scenic ride along the road to Eilean Donan Castle to admire this stunning castle before crossing the New Bridge at the Kyle of Lochalsh
15.00	Arrive at Eilean Donan Castle
16.45	Meet back at the coach
17.00	Continue your journey onto Portree
	Arrive at the Royal Hotel in Portree
19.30	Dinner and overnight accommodation at The Royal Hotel

Sunday 1st September

	Breakfast is served in the hotel restaurant
09.00	Tour guide, Gordon meets you at hotel for coach tour of Skye, an island dominated by the Black Cuillin mountain range.
13.00	Enjoy lunch at Blas café in Skye
14.10	Transfer by coach to Dunvegan Castle
14.30	Visit to Dunvegan Castle, the oldest continuously inhabited castle in Scotland and has been the ancestral home of the Chiefs of Clan MacLeod for 800 years
	Depart Dunvegan Castle by coach back to Portree
19.30	Dinner and overnight accommodation at The Royal Hotel

Monday 2nd September

	Breakfast is served in the hotel restaurant
08.15	Meet in hotel reception ready to travel to the ferry
08.25	Coach departs hotel
09.25	Arrive Armadale
09.45	Last check-in time for the ferry
10.05	Ferry departs for Mallaig
10.35	Arrive Mallaig
	You will have time to purchase lunch and visit the Heritage Centre and explore Mallaig
14.10	‘Jacobite’ steam train departs Mallaig
16.03	Arrive Fort William
16.15	Depart by coach to Inverness
18.00	Arrive back at the Best Western Palace Hotel
19.30	Dinner will be served in the hotel restaurant

Tuesday 3rd September

	Breakfast is served in the hotel restaurant
	Meet in reception ready to depart by coach
08.35	Depart by coach for Dochgarroch Lock
09.45	Depart on a Canal & Loch Cruise along the Loch Ness
10.45	Arrive at Urquhart - visit the castle
12.00	Transfer by coach to your hotel in Inverness
13.00	Purchase lunch at one of the many restaurants and spend the early afternoon exploring Inverness
15.40	Meet in the Best Western hotel reception
15.50	Depart by coach to Uilebheist Distillery for a tour and tasting experience
16.00	Arrive at Uilebheist Distillery
	Coach takes you back to The Best Western Place Hotel & Spa
	Get ready for your farewell dinner in the hotel restaurant
19.30	Dinner in the hotel restaurant

Wednesday 4th September

	Breakfast is served in the hotel restaurant
07.30	Coach transfer to station
07.55	Train departs Inverness
	Light snacks and beverages will be served at your seat during the journey
13.59	Train arrives at York
15.50	Arrive London Kings Cross

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King's Cross Station

King's Cross railway station is a Central London railway terminus on the northern edge of the city. It is one of the busiest railway stations in the United Kingdom, being the southern terminus of the East Coast Main Line to North East England and Scotland.



The area now lays approximately 2 km north-west of the Roman settlement of Londinium. It is believed to be the location of the legendary battle between Queen Boudicca and Roman invaders. The story goes that the final resting place of Boudicca, the warrior queen of the Iceni, is under Platform nine at King's Cross Station.

The plans for the station in its current location were first made in 1848 under the direction of George Turnbull. Turnbull engineered the construction of the first 20 miles of the Great Northern Railway out of London. The detailed design was by architect, Lewis Cubitt and the station opened with two platforms in 1852.

Kings Cross came into the ownership of the London and North Eastern Railway (LNER) following the Railways Act 1921. The LNER made improvements to various amenities, including toilets and dressing rooms underneath what is now platform 8. The lines through the Gas Works tunnels were remodeled between 1922 and 1924 and improved signaling made it easier to manage the increasing number of local trains.

A number of famous trains have been associated with King's Cross, such as the Flying Scotsman service to Edinburgh. The Gresley A3 and later streamlined A4 Pacific steam locomotives handled express services from the 1930s until 1966. The most famous of these was *Mallard*, which holds the world speed record for steam locomotives at 126 miles per hour (203 km/h), set in 1938.

King's Cross handled large numbers of troops alongside civilian traffic during World War II. Engine shortages meant that up to 2,000 people had to be accommodated on each train. In the early hours of Sunday 11 May 1941, two 1,000 pounds (450 kg) bombs fell on the west side of the station, destroying the general offices, booking hall and a bar, and blowing out a large section of roof. Twelve people were killed.

The station complex was redeveloped in the 1970s, simplifying the layout and providing electric suburban services, and it became a major terminus for the high-speed InterCity 125. As of 2017, long-distance trains from King's Cross are run by Virgin Trains East Coast to Edinburgh Waverley and Glasgow Central via York and Newcastle; other long-distance operators include Hull Trains and Grand Central. In addition, Great Northern runs suburban commuter trains in and around north London.

The arrival of the 21st Century has seen some significant changes that have kick-started the next chapter in the history of King's Cross. In July 2001, construction work started on the Channel Tunnel Rail Link and the restoration and extension of St Pancras Station. In January 2018, it was revealed that half the station would close for 3 months from January to March 2020 for remodeling work to the station and its approach, expected to cost £237 million. This includes rationalisation of the tracks, reopening the third tunnel to the approach of the station and closure of platform 10.

The East Coast Main Line

The East Coast Main Line (ECML) is a 393-mile (632 km) long electrified high-speed railway link between London, Peterborough, Doncaster, Wakefield, Leeds, York, Darlington, Newcastle and Edinburgh. The line also handles cross-country, commuter and local passenger services, and carries heavy tonnages of freight traffic.

The ECML is sometimes regarded as extending beyond Edinburgh Waverley to Aberdeen, running mostly along the east coast via Kirkcaldy, Dundee and Arbroath. North of Edinburgh it includes the famous Forth Bridge, and at Dundee the curved Tay Bridge, both crossing wide river estuaries.

The Edinburgh Waverley to Glasgow Central via Carstairs and Motherwell line is officially part of the West Coast Main Line (WCML) route.

However, it is sometimes considered part of the ECML because there are East Coast through services between King's Cross and Glasgow Central that use this section.



The line was built by three railway companies, each serving their own area but with the intention of linking up to form the through route that became the ECML. The North British Railway (NBR) completed their line from Edinburgh to Berwick-on-Tweed in 1846. The North Eastern Railway (NER) combined parts of several local railways and built a section to form a direct through route from Berwick-on-Tweed to Shaftholme which was substantially complete in 1871. The Great Northern Railway (GNR) had completed their line from King's Cross to Shaftholme in 1850. The boundary between the NER and the GNR was an end-on junction, famously described as in "a ploughed field" at Shaftholme, some way north of Doncaster. In 1923 the three companies were grouped into the London and North Eastern Railway (LNER).

Numerous alterations to short sections of the original route have taken place, the most notable being the opening of the King Edward VII Bridge in Newcastle-upon-Tyne in 1906 and the Selby diversion, built to by-pass anticipated mining subsidence from the Selby coalfield and a bottleneck at Selby Station. The Selby diversion was opened in 1983 and diverged from the original ECML at Temple Hirst, north of Doncaster, and joined the Leeds to York line at Colton Junction.

The ECML has been the backdrop for a number of famous rail journeys and locomotives. The line was worked for many years by Pacific locomotives designed by Sir Nigel Gresley, including the famous steam locomotives "Flying Scotsman" and "Mallard". Mallard achieved a world record speed for a steam locomotive, at 126 miles per hour (203 km/h) and this record was never beaten. It achieved the record speed between Grantham and Peterborough on the descent of Stoke Bank. A prototype of the High Speed Train (HST) achieved 143 mph (230 km/h) on the line in 1973.

Railways of Scotland

Scotland has an extensive railway network using cross country links across the country, and connections to England; local commuter links to the major cities; and freight.

The first railway in Scotland was the Garnkirk and Glasgow which opened in 1831. The first inter-city route between Edinburgh and Glasgow opened in 1842. By 1850 Scotland's major cities were linked to each other and to the English railway network. The second half of the 19th Century saw a rapid expansion and by 1900 virtually every town on the Scottish mainland with a population of over 2,000, had a railway station.

The independent Scottish railway companies were merged at the “grouping” of 1923 into the London Midland and Scottish Railway (LMSR) and London and Northeastern Railway (LNER) companies. A separate Scottish company was considered but rejected as being probably not financially viable. During the 1920's and 1930's there was a decline in passenger and freight business and some lesser-used lines were closed to passenger traffic. The railways in Scotland became the Scottish Region of British Railways when the railways were nationalised in 1948.

It was not long before the Scottish Region was not covering its operating expenses and closures resumed after 1951. The pace of closures accelerated after the Beeching Report of 1963 though some of the recommended closures did not take place after Ministers of Transport refused consent on grounds of hardship, a concept which was open to wide interpretation. Freight services were also withdrawn from the majority of stations and concentrated on larger depots and private sidings. At the same time steam traction was replaced by diesel, with most of the Glasgow suburban and commuter network being electrified, in addition to both of the main lines to England.

The closure programme slowed down after the Transport Act of 1968 made it possible for the government to directly subsidise loss-making lines and the last major closure was the direct Edinburgh to Perth line in 1970. Since then a number of lines have been re-opened, and stations opened on existing lines. The railways were privatised in 1995 with Scottish railways forming a separate franchise. ScotRail is the FirstGroup train operating company running domestic passenger trains within Scotland and the cross-border Caledonian Sleeper service to London.

The Glasgow Subway (**photo below**) is an underground metro line in Glasgow which opened in 1896. It was originally a cable railway which was later electrified, although its twin circular lines were never expanded. It was known originally as the Glasgow District Railway, and then renamed the Glasgow Underground in 1936.



The circular route is almost 6.5 miles (10.5 km) long and extends both north and south of the River Clyde. The tracks have the unusual gauge of 4 foot (1,219 mm). The system was modernised between 1977 and 1980 including the provision of new rolling stock. New signalling was installed in 1996.

Principal rail routes in Scotland



Key

Main lines

- Ayrshire Coast Line
- Edinburgh to Aberdeen Line
- Fife Circle Line
- Glasgow-Edinburgh via Carstairs Line
- Glasgow-Edinburgh via Falkirk Line
- Glasgow South Western Line
- Highland Main Line
- Aberdeen-Inverness Line
- For North Line
- Kyle of Lochalsh Line
- West Highland Line

- Edinburgh & Glasgow local services
- Edinburgh, Dunblane & other Perth services
- Tay Coast line
- Lines under construction
- InterCity mainlines

— Ferry services

Routes are not indicative of actual train services but illustrate the main lines with their names

ScotRail

The ScotRail brand was originally used for services provided in Scotland by British Rail. The privatised railway network in Scotland is owned by Network Rail, the non-profit organisation responsible for all railway infrastructure. Rail services are provided under franchises awarded by the government and the Scottish franchises are now controlled by the Scottish Government. After privatisation, the Scottish rail franchise was called ScotRail and the current holder is First ScotRail. The service was initially operated as First ScotRail but was rebranded ScotRail: Scotland's Railway, in September 2008.



The ScotRail network is a mixture of long-distance, commuter and rural lines, totalling 1,696 miles (2,729 km). ScotRail is the FirstGroup train operating company running domestic passenger trains within Scotland (**photo left**) and the cross-border Caledonian Sleeper service to London. In 2006, ScotRail came to an agreement with DB Schenker to use a small dedicated fleet of Class 90

locomotives, in First ScotRail livery, between London and Edinburgh/Glasgow. Express trains operate between Edinburgh, Glasgow, Inverness, Dundee and Aberdeen. The Highland Main Line links Inverness to the south. Local services within the former Strathclyde Regional Council area are provided by First ScotRail on behalf of Strathclyde Partnership for Transport (SPT). The SPT is a public body which is responsible for planning and co-ordinating regional transport in the Strathclyde area of western Scotland.

The main cross border services in Scotland are: The West Coast Main Line operated by Virgin Trains and First Transpennine Express; The East Coast Main Line operated by East Coast; and the Cross Country Route operated by CrossCountry.

The Scottish Government has committed itself to the expansion of the railway network. A new line has opened between Hamilton and Larkhall and other new lines planned include links to Glasgow and Edinburgh Airports; re-opening of the line between Edinburgh and the Scottish Borders; and re-opening of the line between Stirling, Alloa and Kincardine.

ScotRail operates its services with a diesel fleet comprising a mixture of Class 156 Super



Sprinter and Class 158 Express Sprinter units inherited from British Rail. It also has Class 170 Turbostar sets (**photo left**) acquired post-privatisation. The electric fleet includes Class 314, Class 318, Class 320, Class 322, Class 334 Juniper, and Class 380 units.

Strathspey Railway

The Strathspey Railway (SR) **(photo right)** operates 10 miles (16 km) preserved railway from Aviemore to Broomhill via Boat of Garten. It was part of the former Inverness and Perth Junction Railway, later part of Highland Railway (HR), which linked Aviemore with Forres. The SR operated from Aviemore Speyside Station until 1998, but now uses Network Rail's Aviemore Railway Station.



Leaving Aviemore, the line passes the four road locomotive shed which was constructed by the HR in 1898. In British Railways (BR) days the shed code was 60B and SR locomotives now carry a 60B shed plate on their smoke box. There is also a carriage maintenance shed which was erected and opened for use in 2005, allowing the railway's volunteers and staff to work on its fleet of coaches indoors. The former enginemens' hostel called 'Spey Lodge' also stands at this location. This building was erected by the LMSR during World War II and was saved by the Strathspey Railway Company during the 1970's. It is again used for housing locomotive crews, and railway volunteers.

Boat of Garten Station was the first terminus of the SR and remains much as it was in the days of BR. It features its original buildings. It was originally a parallel junction between the HR's main line from Perth to Forres and the Great North of Scotland Railway's (GNSR) branch to Craigellachie, which was the original Strathspey Railway. Boat of Garten also has the railway's only water column where the locomotives stop to take water on their way north through the station. This is currently the only station with operational signalling and has two signal boxes, Boat of Garten North and Boat of Garten South, using traditional BR semaphore signals.

Beyond Boat of Garten the track had been lifted and structures demolished by BR after closure of the line in the 1960's. Trains now cross the road on the new single track box-girder bridge and pass the permanent way depot, once the site of the original GNSR engine shed. The railway passes though mainly farmland on the re-laid track, which was mostly recovered from Kincardine power station in Fife in the 1990's.



The line reaches its current terminus at Broomhill, in countryside roughly half-way between the villages of Nethy Bridge and Dulnain Bridge. The station building has been reconstructed on the original foundations and is used as the station for Glenbogle, in the BBC series "Monarch of the Glen". The run-round loop is beyond the station **(photo left)** and it is anticipated that this will be removed when the planned extension to Grantown-on-Spey is complete.

The Keith and Dufftown Railway

The Keith and Dufftown Railway (KDR) is an 11 mile (18 km) heritage railway line linking the “Whisky Capital of the World”, Dufftown, to the market town of Keith. The line is known as "The Whisky Line" and was reopened by volunteers during 2000 and 2001. It passes through some of Scotland's most picturesque scenery, with forest and farmland, lochs and glens, castles and distilleries, and abundant wildlife.

The route of the railway follows the former Great North of Scotland Railway (GNSR) Keith and Dufftown Railway which was part of the link between Aberdeen and Elgin and with the Strathspey Railway and Morayshire Railway. The line was latterly a freight-only branch for British Rail, truncated at Dufftown, although in its last years it was used for a series of Northern Belle summer Sunday lunch specials from Aberdeen.

The line passes the back of the Glenfiddich Distillery and under the walls of Balvenie Castle after leaving Dufftown Station (**photo right**). It crosses the River Fiddich on Fiddich Viaduct and begins a steep 1 in 60 climb. It passes the site of the junction with the branch to Mortlach (later Parkmore Quarry sidings) and enters the narrow valley below the wooded slopes of Scaut Hill. The climb continues to the summit, 590 feet above sea level, which marks the watershed between the tributaries of the Fiddich, and source of the River Isla.



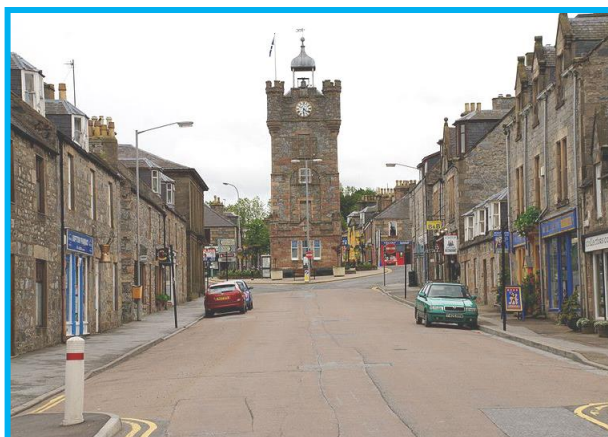
The valley opens out as the line descends from the summit to Loch Park which is a man-made loch. It stretches for just over a mile along the narrow valley at the head of the River Isla. The line is between the river and the steep pine-covered hillside, until the waters drop over a circular weir beside the Loch Park Activity Centre. The route continues to follow the river, with the towers of Drummuir Castle visible, to Drummuir Station. The valley begins to widen out approaching Towiemore Halt which no longer has a platform. The former platform hut is now in use as a permanent way store. The warehouses here were once served by a large goods yard. The landscape changes from areas of dense pine forest to open farmland approaching Auchindachy Station.

Auchindachy Station building is now a private residence and one platform of the original two remains. The nearby Mill of Towie is a Victorian watermill complete with waterwheel and internal fittings but is, at present, empty. The line now crosses the river twice and the Keith-Dufftown road crosses for the last time as the route descends through the picturesque valley towards Keith. The line is in a narrow cutting as it passes under the main Aberdeen-Inverness road (A96) and enters Keith Town Station.

A new station building has been constructed at Keith Town and was officially opened in 2003. It is based on the original and unique split-level GNSR station building which once stood at the station. Keith Town is the eastern terminus of the KDR, although the line continues for another half-mile down a steep 1 in 70 gradient to a junction with the Aberdeen to Inverness line. Keith Junction Station is on the Aberdeen to Inverness line and currently operating as part of the ScotRail network.

Inverness to Kyle of Lochalsh

The Kyle of Lochalsh Line is a primarily single track railway line in the Scottish Highlands, running from Dingwall to Kyle of Lochalsh. The population along the route is sparse, but the scenery is beautiful and can be quite dramatic. The Kyle line has been likened to a symphony in three parts: pastoral, mountain and sea.



The route was built in three sections:-

- Inverness and Ross-shire Railway between Inverness and Dingwall
- Dingwall and Skye Railway between Dingwall and Stromeferry
- Kyle of Lochalsh Extension (Highland Railway) between Stromeferry and Kyle of Lochalsh

The first section of the route between Inverness and Dingwall opened in 1862. The line curves sharply out of Inverness Station and soon crosses the River Ness on a concrete viaduct built in 1990 to replace the original that collapsed during severe flooding. Shortly, the line crosses Clachnnaharry Swing Bridge over the Caledonian Canal, and then runs beside the Beaully Firth. The original station at **Beaully** closed in 1960 but was re-sited and reopened in 2002 following a local campaign. **Muir of Ord Station** has the only passing loop on the single line between Inverness and Dingwall. It was once the junction of a branch railway to Fortrose that finally closed in 1960. The junction with the Far North Line to Wick and Thurso is beyond **Dingwall Station**.

The line crosses the River Peffery and begins to climb at 1 in 50 to the summit at Raven's Rock. There follows a steep descent through forestry, passing Loch Garve before **Garve Station**. The line climbs again, then descends to Loch Luichart at **Lochluichart Station**, and passes Loch Achanalt before **Achanalt Station**. The route now passes through Strath Bran, with a steady climb to **Achnasheen**. Climbing continues past Loch Gowan to Luib Summit, at 646 feet the highest point on the line.

The line descends sharply, passing Loch Sgumhain and through Glen Carron, followed by expansive views across to the Torridon Hills, before **Achnashellach Station**. It then follows the River Carron towards **Strathcarron Station** where there is a passing loop. The route is beside tidal Loch Carron for some distance before **Attadale Station** which opened in 1873 to serve the nearby Attadale Estate. There is an avalanche shelter before **Stromeferry Station** which was the terminus of the line between 1870 and 1897, before it was extended to Kyle of Lochalsh.

Duncraig is a remote railway station serving Duncraig Castle and village. It features a unique little octagonal waiting room. **Plockton** is in a picturesque setting and there are numerous rock cuttings along the route to **Duinish Station**, and before the line reaches its terminus at **Kyle of Lochalsh** (photo right).



Armadaile to Mallaig

Armadaile is a village and small port on the Sleat Peninsula at the southern end of the A851 road on Skye. The final section of a new double-track road from Broadford through Sleat to Armadaile was completed in recent years.



The name Sleat comes from its Scottish Gaelic form which in turn comes from an Old Norse word meaning smooth or even. This well describes Sleat when considered in the context of its surroundings. The mountains on the mainland and those on the islands of Skye and Rum dominate the horizon all around. By contrast Sleat is a fairly fertile area and although there are hills, most do not reach a great height, unlike most of Skye.

Caledonian MacBrayne (usually shortened to Cal Mac) is the major operator of passenger and vehicle ferries between the mainland of Scotland and 22 of the major islands on Scotland's west coast. MacBrayne's was initially known as David Hutcheson & Co. which began in 1851 as a private steamship operator. The founders of David Hutcheson & Co retired in the 1870's and their partner David MacBrayne gained full ownership, and changed the company's name accordingly. The company remained in the hands of the MacBrayne family until 1928 when, unable to carry on, it was acquired jointly by the London Midland & Scottish Railway (LMSR) and Coast Lines.

The various Scottish railway companies each operated fleets of ferries which were merged into either the LMSR or LNER when the railways were grouped in 1923. When the railways were nationalised in 1948 the LMSR and LNER fleets were amalgamated under British Railways with the name Clyde Shipping Services. A reorganisation in 1957 restored an earlier name, Caledonian Steam Packet Co (CSP), to the operation. The CSP acquired most of the ships and routes of MacBrayne's in 1973 and commenced joint River Clyde and West Highland operations under the new name of Caledonian MacBrayne. In 1990 the ferry business became a separate company, keeping the Caledonian MacBrayne brand, and issuing shares. It is now publicly owned and controlled by the Scottish Executive who owns all the shares.

MV Coruisk (**photo right**) is a Caledonian MacBrayne ferry operating on the west coast of Scotland. She provides the Mallaig to Armadaile service in summer and assists at Gourock and Rothesay in the winters. The route from Armadaile to Mallaig crosses the Sound of Sleat and takes 25 minutes.

MV Coruisk was launched at Appledore's in early 2003 and took over the Mallaig to Armadaile route in August that year. The ship's design is unique as she has bow and stern ramps, allowing drive-through operation, and also a port side ramp, allowing side-loading on the Clyde in the winter months. The Schottel azi-pod propulsion system is used by the ship and this incorporates rotating pods protruding beneath the hull, with two propellers on each.



Mallaig to Glenfinnan

The Jacobite steam train service operates over part of the West Highland Railway Line between Fort William and Mallaig and return. The scenic Mallaig Extension of the West Highland Railway opened in 1901, and was operated by the North British Railway. It was intended to help open up this rural and remote part of the Scottish Atlantic coast, and the building of the line was heavily subsidised by the British Government. It became part of the London and North Eastern Railway at the Grouping in 1923, and British Railways (BR) at Nationalisation in 1948.

Regular steam services over the West Highland Line were withdrawn in 1967, but in 1984, BR re-introduced a steam-hauled service over part of the line. In 1995 following the privatisation of BR, the operating license for the trains was granted to the West Coast Railway Company. They began operating the service under the name of "The Jacobite", after the historic Jacobite political movement which has local connections.

The train leaves **Mallaig** along a sea wall with views of the small Isles to the west and the Isle of Skye to the north-west. In less than 3 miles the line passes through **Morar Station**. Morar Beach is known for its "silver sands" and has been used as a film location. The line now runs in a southerly direction with Loch Morar to the west. It is the deepest freshwater body in the British Isles and is separated only by a thin strip of land from the Atlantic Ocean in the west.

There are normally good views out to sea of the 'small isles' Eigg (nearest), Muck (smallest, to south) and Rum (largest) approaching **Arisaig**. This is the most westerly station on the National Rail network. The station is 54 km (34 miles) west of Fort William and has two platforms, one on either side of a crossing loop. Arisaig signal box was situated at the east end of the Down platform, on the south side of the line.

The line now descends Beasdale Bank and passes through a tunnel approaching **Beasdale Station** which was originally a private station for the nearby Arisaig House. **Lochailort Station** serves the remote village of Lochailort that lies at the head of Loch Ailort, a sea loch.

The line runs along the south side of Loch Eilt and climbs to the summit before descending to **Glenfinnan Station**. Here there are two platforms with a passing loop, and sidings on the south side. The station was extensively refurbished in 2007 and there is a railway museum in the station building on the Down platform. Glenfinnan signal box was at the east end of the Down platform on the south side of the line. It had 15 levers and closed in 1987. Glenfinnan village is located at the northern end of Loch Shiel. It is a freshwater loch with picturesque surrounding mountains that are rarely climbed as none quite reaches the 3,000 feet (910 metres) required for Munro status. The area is well wooded compared to the many Highland areas that have suffered from overgrazing.



Glenfinnan to Fort William

The line curves out of Glenfinnan Station with views of the Glenfinnan Monument, a memorial to the 1745 Jacobite Rising, and the waters of Loch Shiel to the south. Glenfinnan



Viaduct (**photo left**) has 21 arches reaching as high as 100 foot (30 metres) and is single track. It was one of the largest engineering undertakings using concrete without reinforcement when it was built by Sir Robert McAlpine between 1897 and 1901. It has been used as a location in several films and television series, including most famously the Harry Potter films in which the Hogwarts Express crosses the viaduct. The train, supplied by the West Coast Railway Company, was hauled by ex-Great Western Railway steam locomotive No. 5972 “Olton

Hall”, renamed “Hogwarts Castle” and painted a shade of red.

Locheilside Station also has a single platform on the north side of the line. The line runs alongside Loch Eil providing excellent views across the lake to Fort William and Ben Nevis. Loch Eil is a sea loch that opens into Loch Linnhe near Fort William. **Loch Eil Outward Bound Station** was opened in 1985 to serve the nearby Outward Bound Centre. It has a single platform on the north side of the line.



Corpach Station (**photo left**) has one platform on the north side of the line. The Caledonian Canal enters Loch Linnhe adjacent to the station. It was opened in 1822 to connect the Scottish east coast at Inverness with the west coast at Corpach near Fort William. It is 62 miles (100 km) long but only one third of the entire length is man-made, the rest being formed by Loch Dochfour, Loch Ness, Loch Oich, and Loch Lochy.

Banavie Railway Station has a single platform on the north side of the line. Banavie Canal Bridge signal box was located at the west end of the station, on the north side of the line. It controlled the nearby level crossings and the adjacent swing bridge over the Caledonian Canal at Neptune's Staircase, the UK's longest staircase lock.

Banavie was chosen as the location for the control centre for the West Highland Line's new radio signalling system because of the continuing requirement to operate the swing bridge locally. Banavie signalling centre opened in June 1987 when it replaced the old Canal Bridge signal box.

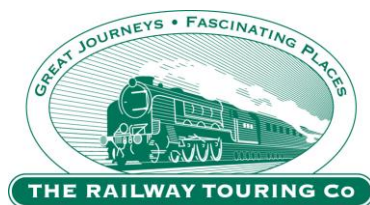
The line soon passes the site of Fort William locomotive depot and joins the route from Glasgow at Fort William Junction one mile east of **Fort William Station**.

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