



Spirit Journeys Worldwide  
Travel Consultanat  
DMC Highlands

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## NC500 Self Drive

Enjoy more than 500 miles of the best the North Highlands has to offer. The route way runs to and from Inverness, venturing to/from Inverness, the Highlands' capital, up the rugged North Coast and back via the scenic West Coast



## Trip Summary

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————— **DAY 1 - Arrive Inverness**

Overnight Royal Highland Hotel with Breakfast

————— **DAY 2 - Inverness to Dornoch**

Overnight Dornoch Castle Hotel with Breakfast

————— **DAY 3 - Dornoch to John O'Groats**

Overnight Seaview Hotel, John O'Groats with Breakfast

————— **DAY 4 - John O'Groats to Durness**

Overnight MacKay's Durness with Breakfast

————— **DAY 5 - Durness to Ullapool**

Overnight Harbour House, Ullapool with Full Scottish Breakfast

————— **DAY 6 - Ullapool to Applecross**

Overnight Applecross Inn with Breakfast

————— **DAY 7 - Applecross to Inverness**

Overnight Royal Highland Hotel with Breakfast

————— **DAY 8 - Departure**

## DAY 1 - Arrive Inverness

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Arrive in the Highland Capital in time to Lunch. We hope you have enjoyed your trip to Inverness. Pick up your car or campervan and head towards your hotel for check-in, after check-in, why not enjoy the Highland Capital. Stroll around the city centre, take a trip to Culloden or enjoy the shops of Inverness – the choice is yours.

Overnight 3 star Inverness Hotel or Guest House



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### Overnight Royal Highland Hotel with Breakfast

Next to Inverness Rail Station, this hotel has a grand staircase that was inspired by the stairway in the Titanic. It is a friendly, welcoming hotel with 2 restaurants and free parking.

The Royal Highland has an excellent location for enjoying the activities and attractions in Inverness and the Highlands beyond. The airport is just 15 minutes' drive away.

The Gallery Café serves traditional meals, while Ash Restaurant serves an à la carte menu. Food is sourced locally, and includes fish from nearby lochs and rivers.

Each room at The Royal Highland has rich décor with traditional furniture and high ceilings. Every room also has satellite TV, and facilities for making tea and coffee.



## DAY 2 - Inverness to Dornoch



Now the adventure begins. Follow the NC500 from Inverness, passing through the villages of Beaulieu and Muir of Ord. First stop Beaulieu, thought to be named after Mary Queen of Scotland commented on her visit in 1564. It comes from the French beau lieu or "beautiful place". If you are an Outlander Fan there are three must stop of places. Wardlaw Mausoleum, Lovat hotel, owned and Beaulieu Priory.

Carry on to Robertson Farm shop to see the Highland Cows, and buy some local crafts. Then onto Glen Ord Distillery, one of Scotland's oldest distilleries. Make sure you prebook your tour and experience the distillers creating a magical malt whisky which is sweet, fruity and subtly spicy and maybe purchase a bottle of Singleton Glenord in the distillery shop.

Head off again, driving along the Cromarty Firth (a narrow inlet of the sea), a great spot to watch seals basking on the rocks along the shoreline. Spend the latter part of your afternoon exploring the charming, Royal Burgh of Tain before arriving at the historic town of Dornoch, which also has a golden beach and championship golf course, Royal Dornoch.

Overnight Dornoch 3 start hotel or Bed & Breakfast



### Overnight Dornoch Castle Hotel with Breakfast

A 500-year-old converted Scottish castle, this hotel is set in the centre of Dornoch, opposite a 13th-century cathedral. It boasts period features throughout the property, as well as fine dining and quiet walled gardens.

Bright rooms all have a TV, tea/coffee and a private bathroom, whilst some also include a seating area and a four-poster bed. Many rooms have views of the hotel's walled garden, Dornoch Firth or Dornoch Cathedral.

The award-winning Garden Restaurant has original 15th-century stone walls and wooden floors. It offers traditional Scottish dishes using local produce including local seafood, Aberdeen Angus beef and Highland venison.

Dornoch Castle Hotel is a 15-minute walk from the seashore and 10 minutes' walk away is Royal Dornoch Golf Club. Pubs and restaurants are just a few minutes' walk.



## DAY 3 - Dornoch to John O'Groats



After an enjoyable night's stay in Dornoch, it's time to carry on the journey along the coast North to John O'Groats.

On route why not stop at Dunrobin Castle? This castle dates back to the early 1300s home to the Earls and later, Sutherland's Dukes of Sutherland.

Carry on north, and we will find 'Carn Liath', one of the most enigmatic and complex prehistoric structures – the broch. Built during the Iron Age Brochs were massive, drystone towers. Some of these could reach 40 feet high. Most brochs are now in ruins, but Carn Liath is one of the prehistoric highlights on the North Coast 500.

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There are many other castles on the way to John O'Groats, Old castle of Wick and Castle Sinclair are both worth a stop if time allows. Also one other stop we recommend is Whaligoe Steps. These steps are built into the cliff face and lead down to the harbour area below.

Overnight John O'Groats



### Overnight Seaview Hotel, John O'Groats with Breakfast

With panoramic views of the Pentland Firth and the Orkney Isles, Seaview Hotel is just half a mile from the John O'Groats ferry terminal. This family-run hotel has a bar and restaurant and offers free parking and Wi-Fi.

Each room has en suite bathroom facilities with shower or bath and complimentary toiletries. There is a flat-screen TV and tea and coffee facilities in all rooms at the Seaview Hotel.

The hotel has a dining room with scenic views, and a lounge bar where more than 100 malt whiskies are served. Meals are prepared using local produce where possible.

Reiss Golf Club is around 13 miles from the hotel, and the town of Wick is less than 30 minutes' drive away. The Castle of Mey, the former holiday home of the Queen Mother, is just over 6 miles away.



## DAY 4 - John O'Groats to Durness



After a hearty Scottish breakfast, you can now explore the most northerly point of the Scottish Mainland. But first get your photos taken by the famous John O'Groats signpost.

Visit Duncansby Head. Duncansby Head has two spectacular sea stacks, the largest being 60 metres high. Enjoy the beautiful views and the sea air at the most North Easterly tip of Scotland. Wander along the coast and enjoy the views.

If you wish to see another castle, how about adding in a private tour and lunch at the Queen Mother's Pad! Britains most northerly castle with beautiful views across the Pentland Firth over to Orkney. Once the home of the Queen Mother. Enjoy the walking in the walled garden, around the Animal Centre and enjoy the Castle Shop for some beautiful gifts.

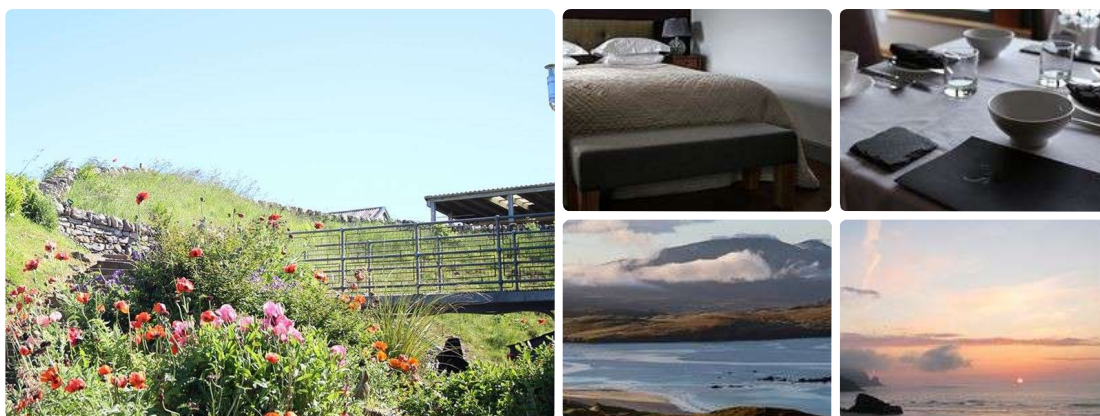
Onwards to Thurso, Dunnet Head where you can see Puffins and sample some Gin. If you enjoy Scottish spirits or locally made goodies, get yourself along to Dunnet Bay Distillery. Here they make the famous Rock Rose Gin and Holy Grass Vodka? Meet Elizabeth, their traditional copper pot still, take a tour of the gardens and see some of their multi-award winning products. Drive up to Dunnet Head. At 58degrees north, geographically it is the most northerly point on mainland Britain. There is an array of wildlife and birdlife – such as the North Atlantic puffin, razorbills, guillemots, fulmars, kittiwakes, shags and cormorants the grey seal. Historically it also has significant World War II importance, see if you can spot the remains of old military buildings. Then onto Thurso where you can spend an hour in the 5-star Caithness Horizons, which provides a detailed look at the area's prehistory, including standing stones, great exhibits on the area's social history. The development of the cutting-edge nuclear power plant at Dounreay is reflected here, and even has Dounreay's control panel!

Carry along the coast to your overnight stop of Durness.



### Overnight MacKay's Durness with Breakfast

Mackay's Rooms is one of those rare finds one makes or hears about very occasionally. Located in the rugged and spectacular scenery of Durness, this is a truly luxurious & individually styled boutique B&B where guests can come to escape the stresses of daily life.



## DAY 5 - Durness to Ullapool



On the eastern edge of Durness, be sure to take the 20-minute cave tour of one of Britain's largest sea cave, set into limestone cliffs. Smoo Cave was formed over many thousands of years and was originally a small swallet cave, carved along a weak fault line. Then head for some "Chocaholics Heaven" with a visit to Cocoa Mountain. It is one of the best reasons to travel to Durness to taste their amazing hot chocolate served at Cocoa Mountain cafe. You will never have a better mug of hot chocolate. Probably the most geographically remote chocolate producer in Europe! Spend some time exploring Balnakeil Bay, looking onto Cape Wrath admiring Sango Sand's sights before taking the loop south to Ullapool. On this route, the scenery is impressive. The area may lack prehistoric and historical sites, but it certainly makes up for it with magnificent panoramas and landscapes, so take your time driving and enjoy the views.

### Overnight Ullapool



### Overnight Harbour House, Ullapool with Full Scottish Breakfast

Set in Ullapool, Harbour House has a garden. This guest house offers luggage storage space and free WiFi.

At the guest house, all rooms come with a wardrobe. The private bathroom is fitted with a bath or shower. The units in Harbour House are equipped with a flat-screen TV and free toiletries.

A fully cooked breakfast is served daily at the property.



## DAY 6 - Ullapool to Applecross

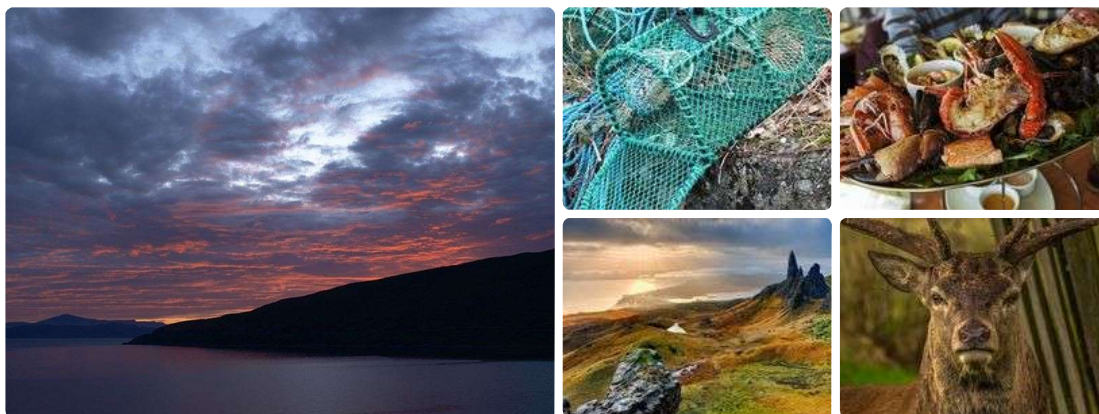
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Get ready for another epic day and some spectacular scenery and incredible roads. Enjoy some of the best scenery in Scotland and maybe spot a deer or two.

Stop at Inverewe Gardens, a pretty and extensive estate and gardens, instigated by Osgood Mackenzie in 1862. Inverewe House is now a museum with a twist, where you are encouraged to interact with a variety of objects, play games and even take a piece of Inverewe home from our seed bank. The Sawyer Gallery hosts exhibitions throughout the year that reflect the characteristics of Inverewe and the surrounding environment.

Driving around the coast, we pass through the villages of Poolewe, Gairloch, Badachro (great gin distillery here), Shialdaig before driving along the Applecross peninsula. On this stunning peninsula is a small "Shangri la" village called Applecross, a beautiful little fishing village. Visit the Heritage Centre, the Smoke House, Walled Garden TeaRooms, walk along the shore. Maybe visit the award-winning Applecross Inn and try their speciality of Pasta with Squatlobster (My favourite). Visit the old church, which is reputed to be the site of the first Christian Church. The settlement is linked with St. Máelrubai (Old Irish form) or Maelrubha, who came to Scotland in 671 from the major Irish monastery of Bangor, County Down. He founded Aporcosan in 672 in what was then Pictish territory, and was the monastery's first abbot, dying on 21 April 722 in his eightieth year.

### Overnight Applecross



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### Overnight Applecross Inn with Breakfast

Situated in the village of Applecross, on the remote Applecross peninsula, in the North West Highlands of Scotland, the Inn boasts lovely views across the Inner Sound of Raasay, to the isles of Raasay and Skye.

Famous for its quality, multiple award-winning, dining and bar, the Inn's great range of delicious fresh meals are well worth the journey here. They specialise in using local produce, including seafood and highland game and meats. They also offer daily seafood specials and have children and vegetarian menus available





## DAY 7 - Applecross to Inverness

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### On the Road back

Today is the last leg of your journey, and we head back to Inverness, but not before you experience the Bealach! Leaving Applecross, you will find yourself at the spectacular Bealach na Bà. "Bealach na Bà" is Gaelic for 'Pass of the Cattle'. This route will take you along one of the most dramatic mountain roads on mainland UK, rising to 626 metres (2,054ft) above sea level; the third-highest Road in Scotland. The rest of your journey will take you through Strathconnon, Lochcarron, Achnasheen, Achanalt on to Garve and after that you are back into Inverness.

I hope you have enjoyed the NC500 as much as we do.

### Overnight Inverness



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### Overnight Royal Highland Hotel with Breakfast

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## DAY 8 - Departure

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Drop off your vehicle and start your journey home

Gur math a thèid leibh! agus Slàinte mhath!