

Dufftown: More than just the Whiskey Capital Of World

The North-East of Scotland, unlike the West Coast, doesn't boast the same marketing recognition and budget. Fortunately, it also doesn't suffer from an overwhelming influx of tourists or midges. What it offers is breathtaking countryside, mountainous landscapes, historic castles, a rich heritage, welcoming locals, a stunning coastline, and, of course, Whisky.

In a quaint village, Dufftown proudly claims the title of the Whisky Capital of the World, the presence of numerous distilleries certainly sets it apart. With a concentration of six distilleries, including renowned names like Glenfiddich, Balvenie, and Mortlach it earns it kudos in the world of spirits. Although a few distilleries have closed and reopened, the legacy of the village remains strong.

While whisky aficionados flock to Dufftown throughout the year to explore the distilleries, other noteworthy activities in the area deserve attention as well. Despite Dufftown being seldom featured in travel guides, it's good to know there is more to do here than visit a distillery. Although, doing a tour and trying a wee dram or two is still a must.

For the Love of Whisky (Uisge beatha is the Scottish Gaelic term for 'water of life')

Whisky is a major draw for visitors to the area, making it a great place to begin exploring. There are plenty of tour options in Dufftown and the surrounding areas. If you have a passion for Whisky and can be flexible with your visit dates, consider attending the [Speyside Whisky Festival](#), typically held at the end of April or the beginning of May. Ensure to book your spot well ahead of time for this popular event.

The top tours in the area are both at [Glenfiddich and Balvenie](#)

[Distilleries](#). Both distilleries are owned by William Grants &

Sons. Balvenie offers a more comprehensive tour however due to its popularity it's booked well in advance. On the other hand, Glenfiddich provides great value for money, with a rich history and an in-depth tour that walks visitors through all areas, from the history, wash and tun rooms, still house through to the warehouse. The tour concludes with a tasting of four premium whiskies. While booking online is

recommended, a few walk-in spots may be available, but they fill up quickly, so be sure to get there as early in the day as possible. Additionally, Glenfiddich has a charming shop and cafe where visitors can enjoy a drink or relax with a cup of tea and a scone. [Book or reserve your tour here.](#)



[Speyside Tours](#) provides walking tours of Dufftown, where you will explore the village, discover the history and stories of the local distilleries, and have the opportunity to sample a few drams along the way. www.speysidetours.co.uk

What to see and do around Dufftown



Balvenie Castle: Hidden among the trees near Glenfiddich, you'll find the ruins of Balvenie Castle. While it's only open on select days in the summer (Friday, Saturday, and Sunday), you can still capture great photos from the outside on other days. This castle holds intriguing tales, from hosting Mary Queen of Scots to surviving an attack by Robert the Bruce. Interestingly, it was once

leased for the symbolic payment of a single red rose per year, although

maintaining it surely came with a hefty price tag. You can check when it's open and [book here on the Visit Scotland website.](#)

The Fairy Village: The location might be a bit tricky to find for those unfamiliar, as Google Maps isn't very clear about it. To reach the spot, follow the Giants Chair walk on the left side of the Dullan River (heading out of Dufftown), and you'll spot it just beyond the Giants Chair on the left. Keep your eyes open so you don't miss it. This charming spot was set up and funded by a local, with local volunteers pitching in to maintain it annually. It's a lovely spot to take the children for a stroll, and the Giants Chair walk is a great option for a leisurely walk in fair weather. [Fairy Village on Facebook.](#)



The Clock Tower stands as the focal point of Dufftown, holding a rich history within its walls. Originally constructed in 1839 as a gaol, it later served as the burgh chambers and a tourist information centre, though currently inactive. The clock within the tower was relocated from Banff and played a pivotal role in a dark tale involving the infamous local figure, James McPherson, known as a Robin Hood-like character and talented fiddler. The clock was manipulated by the sheriff, Lord Braco, to hasten McPherson's execution, despite a belated pardon. The clock was later moved to reside in Dufftown's Clock Tower, maintaining its presence as one of the town's key features.



Mortlach Church and its Pictish Stones. The optimal time to view the stones is on Sundays when the church is open. Additionally, there is a standing stone in the churchyard. This stone is surrounded by various myths and legends regarding its origin and purpose, though the true history remains uncertain. While the standing stone has weathered over time and lost some of its original markings, the stones inside the church are well-preserved, displaying Pictish symbols of a snake, bull and eagle. The original church is among the oldest Christian sites in North East Scotland, having undergone several extensions and reconstructions. The area around the church was also the site of a significant battle between Malcolm II and the Danes.

Keith & Dufftown Railway: This is a historic railway that is operated by a team of dedicated volunteers, who do a remarkable job managing the line, maintaining train operations, selling tickets, and sharing stories. The journey from Dufftown to Keith and back is both charming and scenic. Running from March to October, the railway offers special themed events like the Whisky Run. For the most current information, be sure to visit the website. Additionally, if you enjoy walking, consider disembarking at Drummuir and taking a scenic walk back to Dufftown through the forest, hills, and past the loch. [Visit the website to learn more.](#)

Dufftown Golf Course: If you're a golfer, the one here in Dufftown is said to be one of the highest in Scotland. While this isn't confirmed, as I've heard conflicting input, nonetheless, it's a great place to play a round, and the stunning views add to its charm. You can visit the website to book or learn more www.dufftowngolfclub.com

Hiking and Walking in and Around Speyside

Ben Rinnes and the Conval Hills Walks:

Ben Rinnes stands as the tallest hill in the vicinity and requires a

short drive to its base for the ascent, this is located just 5 minutes outside Dufftown. On the other hand, the Convals can be accessed from Dufftown, with the path beginning at the rear of the Golf course. For more information on the various walks in the area, [a local map is available for download](#).



Speyside Way is also a popular route in the vicinity, that goes from the Cairngorms down to the Coast, you can walk down the old railway line down to Craigellachie to join up with it. www.speysideway.org

Best Places to Eat

[Seven Stills](#) stands out as the top restaurant in the area. It is advisable to book in advance since they have limited operating hours, only during peak seasons. For accurate opening hours and more information, [it is recommended to visit their website](#).

Sidings Cafe is situated at the Dufftown to Keith Railway, housed in an old railway car. It's the perfect spot for a fast lunch or a relaxing afternoon tea.

Gathering Cafe: This is over in Aberlour, the coffee and atmosphere are worth the small drive down the road if you want to be comfortable and cosy. www.thegathern.com

Best Places to Stay while in Dufftown



Dunvegan B&B: Located in the heart of the village, this charming spot was my first choice during my visit. It offers a cosy and comfortable stay, along with a delightful breakfast selection in the mornings.

[Little Robin Bed & Breakfast:](#) Situated centrally, this B&B is renowned for its friendliness, style, and chic ambience, making it one of the top choices in town. www.littlerobinbandb.com

[The Gables Whisky B&B:](#) Slightly outside the town, run by Whisky enthusiasts they also have their bar and Whisky collection, so the ideal B&B is a must-visit for whisky lovers. www.thegablesbb.co.uk

[Hillside Havens:](#) Nestled on the village outskirts, these modern pods offer a private retreat, some even featuring jacuzzis and BBQ facilities. Enjoy stunning views, a countryside atmosphere, and easy access to the village on foot. www.hillsidehavens.com

Links to further local travel information:

[Dufftown Information](#)

[Moray Speyside Website](#)