



### What's the rush?

To appreciate the immense beauty of this area one needs to allow plenty of time.

So instead of driving on, stop awhile, put a tape of Gaelic music on the car stereo and watch the light sweep the view before you.

Below is a wee suggestion on how long to linger at the locations listed over:

Key:

S o a k U p T h e S c e n e  
G e t O u t A n d W a l k



2



5



3



6



7



4



8

1. Through Glen Shiel
2. Eilean Donan Castle
3. The railway running to Kyle
4. The head of Loch Hourn

5. The Five Sisters of Kintail
6. Wooded lochs around Plockton
7. Sunny Plockton
8. Strome Castle

1. 2 hours (GOAW)
2. 2 hours (GOAW)
3. 2 hours (GOAW)
4. 45 mins (GOAW)
5. 45 mins (GOAW)
6. 5 hours (GOAW)
7. 2 hours (GOAW)
8. 45 mins (GOAW)
9. 45 mins (GOAW)
10. 30 mins (GOAW)
11. 30 mins (GOAW)
12. 30 mins (SUTS)
13. 2 hours (GOAW)
14. 30 mins (SUTS)
15. 2 hours (GOAW)
16. 45 mins (GOAW)
17. 30 mins (GOAW)
18. 30 mins (GOAW)
19. 2 hours (GOAW)
20. 30 mins (SUTS)
21. 1 hour (GOAW)
22. 30 mins (SUTS)
23. 1 hour (GOAW)
24. 2 hours (GOAW)
25. 45 mins (GOAW)
26. 45 mins (GOAW)
27. 30 mins (GOAW)
28. 45 mins (GOAW)

29. 30 mins (GOAW)
30. 2 hours (GOAW)
31. 30 mins (SUTS)
32. 2 hours (GOAW)



### Gaelic

Gaelic is the traditional language of the Highlands and Islands and is currently undergoing a rich revival thanks to the efforts of many dedicated institutions and individuals throughout the length and breadth of Scotland.

Pronounced 'GALIC', not 'gaylic' or 'garlic', the language is particularly lyrical and illustrative. Below is a glossary of words you are sure to come across whilst with us, but beware, their pronunciation is very different to their spelling! If in doubt why not ask a local for help.

**Abhainn** - river  
**Acarsaid** - anchorage  
**Ailean** - green field  
**Aird** - promontory  
**Airidh** - shieling  
**Allt** - burn  
**Ath** - ford

**Bac** - bank  
**Bàgh** - bay  
**Baile** - town  
**Bàn** - white  
**Beag** - little  
**Bealach** - pass or coll  
**Beinne** - ben or hill  
**Beithe** - birch tree  
**Bodach** - old man  
**Brae** - top or summit  
**Breac** - speckled  
**Bruach** - steep hillside  
**Buidhe** - yellow

**Cailleach** - old woman  
**Caisteal** - castle  
**Camas** - bay  
**Caol** - kyle or narrow strait  
**Cioch** - woman's breast  
**Clach** - stone  
**Clachan** - village  
**Cladh** - churchyard  
**Cnoc** - small hill  
**Coille** - wood or forest  
**Coire** - corrie  
**Cruach** - stack or heap

**Darach** - oak  
**Dearg** - red  
**Dubh** - black or dark  
**Dùn** - mound or fort

**Each** - horse  
**Eas** - waterfall  
**Eilean** - island  
**Fada** - long

**Fang** - sheep pen  
**Faoghail** - ford or sea channel  
**Fraoch** - heather  
**Fuar** - cold

**Garbh** - rough or harsh  
**Geal** - bright / white  
**Glas** - stream  
**Glas** - grey or green  
**Gleann** - glen or valley  
**Gobhar** - goat

**Inbhir** - rivermouth  
**Iolaire** - eagle

**Lagan** - hollow  
**Leac** - flat stone  
**Learg** - hillside  
**Leitir** - slope  
**Loch** - lake  
**Lòn** - stream or marsh

**Machair** - low grassy land  
**Maol** - headland / rounded hill  
**Meall** - rounded hill / lump  
**Mòine** - mossy place  
**Mhòr** - large or tall

**Ob** - bay  
**Ord** - conical hill

**Ruadh** - red or reddish  
**Rubha** - headland

**Sean** - old  
**Sgùrr** - peak  
**Sìth** - fairy  
**Srath** - river valley  
**Sruthan** - stream  
**Suidhe** - resting place

**Traigh** - beach

**Uisge** - water



### FOR MORE INFORMATION:

#### BOOKS:

Brown, Hamish. **Skye and Kintail** (Mercat Press 2000)  
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 Swire, Otta. F. **Skye - The Island and its Legends** (MacLean Press 1999)

#### INTERNET:



[www.skye.co.uk](http://www.skye.co.uk)

[www.scotland-info.co.uk](http://www.scotland-info.co.uk)  
[www.highland.freedom.com](http://www.highland.freedom.com)  
[www.scotinfor.co.uk](http://www.scotinfor.co.uk)  
[www.smo.uhi.ac.uk](http://www.smo.uhi.ac.uk)  
[www.ealaghol.co.uk](http://www.ealaghol.co.uk)  
[www.kyleakin.com](http://www.kyleakin.com)  
[www.lochalsh.com](http://www.lochalsh.com)  
[www.gardenofskye.co.uk](http://www.gardenofskye.co.uk)  
[www.skye.ws](http://www.skye.ws)  
[www.plockton.com](http://www.plockton.com)

The official web site for the communities of Skye, Lochalsh and Raasay.

Discover a wealth of information about the area and way of life, even make contact with local people.

#### MAPS:

Ordnance Survey maps for Traveller's Companion guides:  
 ORDNANCE SURVEY LANDRANGER SERIES 1:50,000  
 SHEET 32 SOUTH SKYE & CUILLIN HILLS  
 SHEET 33 LOCHALSH, GLEN SHIEL & LOCH HOURN  
 SHEET 25 GLEN CARRON & GLEN AFFRIC  
 SHEET 24 RAASAY & APPLECROSS, LOCH TORRIDON & PLOCKTON  
 SHEET 23 NORTH SKYE, DUNVEGAN & PORTREE



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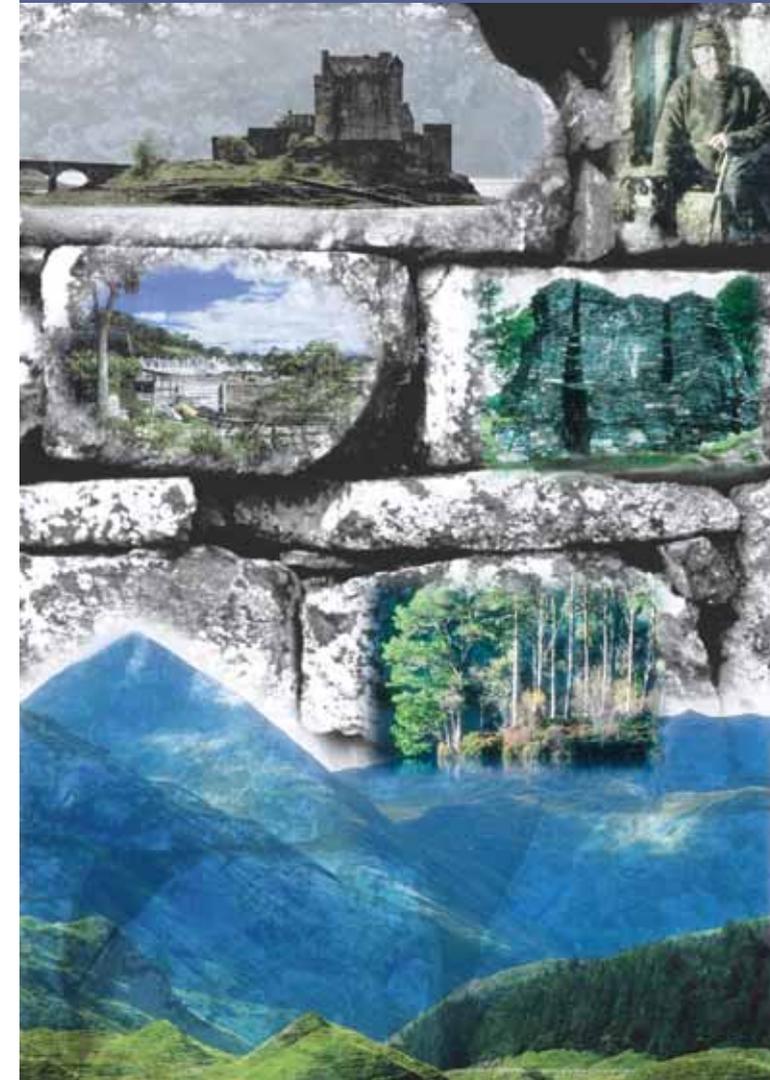
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# Lochalsh



the sights and sounds, present and past  
of Skye & Lochalsh



Unlike a thousand and one Highland merchant seamen, I have never seen the sunrise over Fujiama, but I have seen it rise - and set - over the majestic mountains of Kintail, and until someone pays my fare to Japan, or the Lord takes me into Glory, the local marvel that is called Lochalsh will suffice.

When you travel north, on a dark winter's night, through the wondrous bleakness of Rannoch and the starry magnificence of Glencoe, past Fort William and through Glen Garry, and the snow swirls, and the wind howls, and you think all is lost, then that tiny light blinks in the distance, indicating that there are other human beings on this planet of ours, and that - very near - there is food and warmth and companionship. It is, of course, the light of Cluanie Inn, which is the first place you reach on your journey north, or west, into Lochalsh.

The Inn itself is a mecca and a haven for walkers and climbers in the area: spring in the forests, summer on the high peaks, autumn on the glorious slopes, winter in the crunching snow. Magnificent.

Then you drive, as if in a television advert, down through wondrous Glen Shiel, herds of deer on one side, streams and waterfalls on the other, and the Five Sisters of Kintail - Sgurr Fhuaran, Sgurr na Carnach, Sgurr na Moraich, Sgurr nan Saighead and Sgurr na Ciste Duibh - constantly drawing your attention.

I told you  
that the seals  
would surface  
to a Gaelic  
song and  
you asked,  
my darling,  
that I would  
sing an  
ancient  
crùnluath that  
would entice

At the bottom of this helter-skelter, you have yet another of these great Highland choices: whether to turn left at Shiel Bridge on to the Glenelg road, and then by ferry to Skye, or to carry on, towards Kyle of Lochalsh, and the Skye Bridge, or Plockton and Lochcarron and further north. The ferry from Glenelg to Skye only runs from Easter to October, so the choice is probably easier in the winter!

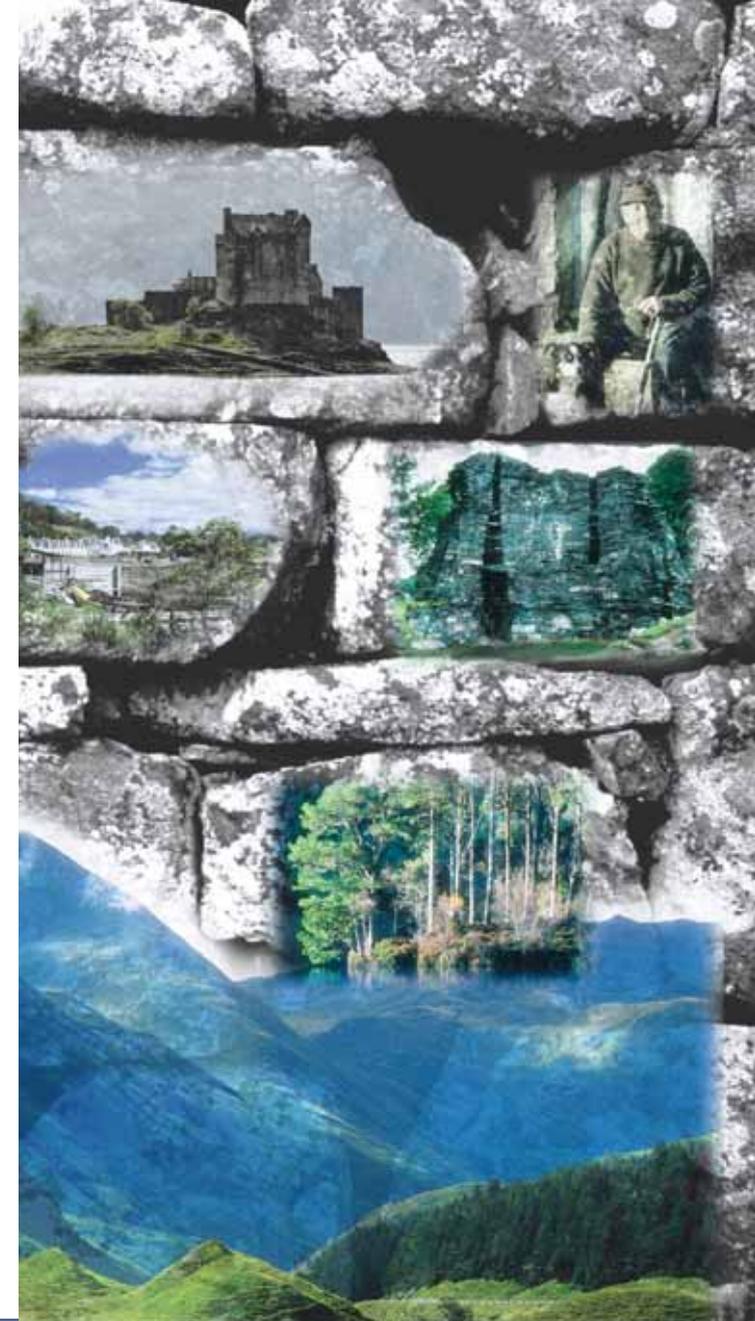
If, or when, you take the Glenelg road you will not be disappointed (just ALWAYS let the poor local driver behind you overtake! - that's what passing places are for), the views are breathtaking as is the sea-crossing to Skye on a nice choppy day!!!

Once upon a time, you could regularly sail, by steamer, from Glasgow to Kyle of Lochalsh, but these days are gone, except in the memory. What you can do, however, is come and go by train, on the picturesque line between Inverness and Kyle which is worth the fare just for the sound of some of the stations: Lochluichart, Achnasheen, Achnashellach (all - inevitably - of Gaelic origin, but turned into linguistic nonsense by non-Gaelic speakers: Achnashellach, for example, ought to be three words: Achadh (field); na (of); Seileach (willow). Go on: when you're here, find out the Gaelic root, via the Gaelic language: impress your pals in Seattle, or Shrewsbury. So then, what does Glenelg mean? Or Kyle of Lochalsh? Or Plockton?).

I suppose that the principal two villages in Lochalsh are Kyle itself, and Plockton. Kyle has the great advantage of being a permanent place of arrivals and departures: there is no better sight than the steam-train heading into Kyle, or departing in the evening sunset. In five minutes you can be in Skye; in two hours in Inverness, and on a plane to Paris, walking down the Champs Elysees with the postcard from Kyle still in your back pocket. Ach, just post it from the Rue de Mòliere! I haven't done it personally, mind you, but then again isn't living all about the possibilities of existence? Oh, and meantime, while you're waiting for your bus to Bangkok, Kyle has got excellent services: everything from stamps to a bank, from chips to a jacuzzi and swim!

A few miles along the road, Plockton has managed to do the almost impossible: be simultaneously local and universal. It is such a pretty village that it could very easily have been spoilt by a host of influences, yet retains a 'local' feel. Oh, and it has a particularly excellent sailing gala which runs throughout the summer but culminates in the highly colourful Regatta Fortnight, the last week in July and the first week in August. Competitive in the bay, they tell me, but even more competitive in the bars, where many old scores are settled, in traditional Highland fashion - verbally, of course.

ANGUS PETER CAMPBELL



Always with a point of view and never without passion, Angus Peter Campbell, Poet, Broadcaster, Writer, Preacher, and defender of all things Gaelic is your travelling companion through the six distinct areas which make up this beautiful region of Skye and Lochalsh. In his company expect the unexpected, find enlightenment, enjoy instruction, be argued with, even sung to! For this guide is designed to reveal the heart and soul of each area and to help you appreciate why, for many, it takes a lifetime of visitation to understand this unique place and people.

the entire  
universe.

"Then you drive, as if in a television advert, down through wondrous Glen Shiel, herds of deer on one side, streams and waterfalls on the other..."



# Lochalsh

L o c h A i l l s e  
L o c h a l s h

**Lochalsh, defining its boundaries from Stromeferry in the north, Kyle of Lochalsh in the west, Barrisdale in the south and Cluanie in the east, is a wonderfully wild and rugged region. Echoing to over 7,000 years of human habitation, the area is a treasure chest of castles, brochs and clan intrigue. Spend some time discovering and soaking up the atmosphere of this unique area.**



# Lochalsh

**1 Loch Cluanie:**  
Part of the Garry Moriston hydroelectric scheme, a dam was built here due to the area 'enjoying' four times the annual rainfall compared to the East coast of Scotland! When finished the loch's water level had risen by over 29 metres!

**2 Glen Shiel:- 'Glen of Shieling'**  
Dominated by the awe inspiring Five Sisters of Kintail, Glen Shiel witnessed the last battle ever fought on British soil involving foreign troops. On the 10th June 1719 at 5pm, and lasting for three hours, the battle was contested by a Jacobite army which included Seaforth's, MacKenzies, Camerons plus a force of over 230 Spaniards, a total of around 1,500 men, including the legendary Rob Roy. Opposing them a government force of roughly equal numbers but with the advantage of field mortars. Although putting up a brave fight, the Jacobite forces found themselves out manoeuvred, and around 8pm in the evening executed an orderly retreat. Government casualties included 121 men wounded and 21 killed, whereas it was said of the Jacobite losses: "in all the attacks there are not upon the Highlander side ten men killed or wounded."

**3 The Five Sisters of Kintail:**  
Legend has it that this magnificent range of peaks came into existence through the work of the Grey Magician of Coire Dhunaid. Two handsome Irish princes were cast upon the shores of Loch Duich by a vicious storm. Offered accommodation by the king of Kintail, while their vessel was repaired, the princes fell head over heels in love with the two youngest of the king's seven daughters. If the king allowed the princes to marry the girls and take them home to Ireland, the princes promised to send their five older brothers back to accommodate the remaining princesses. The king agreed, and the remaining daughters started their vigil. The girls waited and waited, but in vain. In desperation they visited the Grey Magician and pleaded with him to extend their vigil into the after-life. This he did by casting a powerful spell, turning them into the mountains we see today.

Brenda Macrow in her book 'Kintail Scrapbook' hauntingly describes each daughter thus:

"Each of the Five Sisters of Kintail, at close quarters, has a distinct personality of her own. Austere, proud and haughty as a legendary princess of the isles, Sgurr Fhuaran towers above her companions, more often than not veiling her lovely head in the clouds. There are two stories concerning her name - one version having it that she was christened after Saint Oran, and the other that she is properly called 'The Peak of the Well'. There are a variety of spellings, and it is difficult to ascertain which story is true. Her neighbour, dark Sgurr na Carnach, the Peak of the Rocks or Cairns, broods over the Glen with the enigmatic, gnarled countenance of an old witch. Her rough, rounded crest is in striking contrast to Sgurr Fhuaran's chaste pure line. Quite different again, is Sgurr na Moraich - a sprawling, spreading mass of lumpy rock, seeming to have no shape at all, or too much in the wrong places, like the Fat Lady at a circus. This hill is a particularly tiring one to climb. Its name means the Peak of the Salt Marsh, and it was doubtless so called because of the view of Loch Duich head from its summit. Sgurr nan Saighead is just a long scree-covered ridge, until seen from a distance, when it mysteriously takes on a conical outline to match its fellows. Grimmett lady of the quintet is, as the name suggests, Sgurr na Ciste Duibhe - the Peak of the Black Chest or Coffin. The finest view of her sombre and evil beauty is to be had from the watershed in Glen Shiel, near which point she is first glimpsed by the traveller from Cluanie, scowling darkly through her clouds."

**4 Dunan Diarmid:**  
Between a double row of stones on this small promontory lies the remains of Diarmid the Beautiful, killed by a boar with a poisonous spine. It was Fingal, the mythical Celtic hero, who arranged Diarmid's death for having an affair with his wife. Buried with all his weapons, the site was excavated a number of years ago revealing nothing but a single pot!

**5 Clachan Duich:**  
Originally dedicated to St Dubhthach in 1050. It is thought there was a church on this site as early as 750 AD. Believed to have been shelled by the same ships which destroyed Eilean Donan Castle, the graveyard of this parish church of Kintail, which was re-constructed in 1855, contains many old MacRae graves.

**6 Falls of Glomach:**  
Requiring a rather longer 'stretch of the legs' than normal, the Falls of Glomach are well worth the trek (allow seven hours). Glomach means gloomy, probably referring to the steep ravine where water cascades over 600 feet. The path that leads to the Falls follows the route of one of the old 'coffin roads' which was used to take the dead along to Clachan Duich for a Christian burial.

**7 Eilean Donan Castle:**  
Probably the most photographed and reproduced castle in Scotland, Eilean Donan stands as a majestic testament to eight centuries of national and international dispute. It is believed the small island was inhabited as far back as the 3rd century with perhaps a cell dedicated to St. Donan. The original medieval castle was built in the 13th century and experienced turmoil right from its completion. Owned first by the Earls of Ross, it has been the domain of the MacRaes who were bodyguards to the MacKenzie Chiefs of Kintail for 400 years. In 1719 the castle was bombarded by three government vessels for two days to dislodge Jacobite and Spaniard forces. Most of the castle was destroyed, and it remained in this sad state until 1912, when it was restored by Farquhar MacRae of Auchtertyre for Lt. Colonel MacRae-Gilstrap. Completed in 1932, it was said that the plans for reconstruction came to Farquhar in a dream, and amazingly matches drawings found much later made by Louis Petit. Regularly featured in films and TV programmes, the castle is certainly one of the jewels in Lochalsh's crown.

**8 Dornie:**  
Originally named Bundalloch (the foot of two lochs), it was laid out in 1794 as a fishing and trading station by the British Fisheries Society. Once a thriving village it boasted boat building, net making and shoe making amongst its trades.

**9 Cup Markings:**  
Made around 2000 BC, these cup marked depressions surrounded by rings are originally thought to have been highlighted with bright vegetable colour. Fine examples of these can also be seen on rocks near Dornie.

**10 Killilan:**  
Once the site of the Church of Fillan. Fillan was a missionary of Columba who died whilst travelling to Iona. At the precise request of St Columba, Fillan was brought here to be buried.

**11 Stromeferry Castle:**  
Located on the opposite shore to Stromeferry. The castle was originally a MacDonald stronghold, which was effectively blown to pieces by Kenneth MacKenzie in 1602.

**12 Stromeferry:**  
Originally an insignificant settlement. All this changed with the arrival of the railway in 1870. After this momentous event Stromeferry became a key location for passenger steamers, mail boats and produce in the form of fish and cattle.

**13 Plockton:**  
Consisting of a few cottages, Plockton, originally known as Am Ploc, was created as a modern village by Sir Hugh Innes to provide homes for some of his cleared tenants. Deriving its main income from fishing and shipbuilding during the 1800's, Plockton suffered like many other villages during the potato blight of the 1840's. In 1851 Sir Alexander Matheson of the famous East India Company bought the Lochalsh estate and built Duncairn Castle, which overlooks the bay. Benefiting from the mild flow of the Gulf Stream, there are even palm trees growing along the shore. These were originally brought here by Tom Cload, a Glasgow Parks Department horticulturist and gardening correspondent with the Oban Times. A mecca for visitors from across the world, Plockton was the location for the BBC Television series 'Hamish Macbeth'.

**14 Erbusaig:- 'Erp or Erks Bay'**  
Once a fishing village before being cut off from the sea by the railway. At low tide, a bank of coral (the same variety found at Dunvegan) becomes exposed and is used as fertiliser by local crofters.

**15 Kyle of Lochalsh:**  
Kyle of Lochalsh has been the location of a ferry to Skye since the 17th century and continued to provide this service up until the advent of the Skye Bridge in 1996. Although an important crossing point, Kyle was little more than an inn and four houses until the extension of the railway from Stromeferry, at a cost of £17,000 per mile in 1897. With the advent of the railway the village saw its population increase rapidly, and by 1917 the number of dwellings had risen to 80 with a population of 350! An important Naval base during both wars, the Americans were stationed here during the First and HMS Port Napier sunk here during the Second.

**16 Eilean Ban:**  
This small island with its pretty white lighthouse cottages was once occupied by Gavin Maxwell, author of 'Ring of Bright Water'. He bought the island in 1963 intending to turn it into a private zoo for Scottish wildlife. Now managed by the Eilean Ban Trust, the cottages have been renovated and are accessible by boat from The Bright Water Visitor Centre in Kyleakin.

**17 Scalpaidh:**  
This now deserted settlement once spread across the main road and it is believed that its inhabitants were originally cleared to this site from a more fertile area.

**18 Murchison Monument:**  
Erected in 1861, this monument remembers the extraordinary loyalty of Colonel Donald Murchison. Donald risked his life time and again to collect rents for his exiled Jacobite-supporting employer, the Fifth Earl of Seaforth. Eventually caught and imprisoned in the Tower of London, Donald was pardoned and granted land by King George I for his outstanding display of loyalty.

**19 Lochalsh Woodland Garden:**  
Rising from the shores of Loch Alsh, and now owned by the National Trust for Scotland, this delightful informal garden, planted and developed during the 1800s, mixes native plants with exotic species from as far away as Tasmania, Chile and China.

**20 Ard Hill:**  
This wooded promontory is enshrined in MacKenzie Clan law. In times of trouble, to rally the clan, a tar barrel would be set alight upon the hill's summit. This image became the burning mound of the Seaforth's badge and 'Tulloch Ard' (the High Hillock) was the clan's war cry and slogan.

**21 Caisteal Grugaig:- 'Castle of the Witch'**  
This impressive broch was cleared in 1889 and boasts an enormous triangular lintel positioned above the doorway. Apparently, the broch was named after an old woman who allegedly could raise storms to wreck ships and cast spells on milk cows.

**22 Bernera Barracks:**  
Designed to support an existing military presence and cover important routes, Bernera was one of four barracks planned for the Highlands. The other three were Inversnaid, Kilwhinnen and Ruthven. Construction work started in 1720 and took three years to complete. The second largest of the four barracks, Bernera was designed to accommodate four companies (240 men), although it is believed no more than two were ever in residence. The barracks never saw action and eventually was bought back by MacLeod of MacLeod for £925 in 1797. By the 1830's the barracks had become home for the poor and dispossessed.

**23 Glenelg:**  
Up until the 18th century, Glenelg was known as Kirkton. The community here had grown up around a parish church, which is believed to have been built in the 13th century by a priest named Crotach (hunchback) MacGilligorm, who was trained by monks at Beaulieu. With the arrival of the army and the building of Bernera Barracks, the village developed along military lines. The main street with its line of facing houses were dwellings for officers from the barracks. Another reminder of the village's military connections is the large war memorial at the south end of the village. Commissioned by Lady Scott, in honour of her son and other West Highlanders who perished during World War I, it stands rather self-consciously amidst the surrounding mountains.

**24 Glenelg: 'Gleann Seilg' - The Glen of Hunting**  
In 1282 the area was noted as being part of the Kingdom of Man and the Isles. In the 14th century it is believed a structure known as Castle MacLeod (Caisteal MacLeod) was sited on the rocky slopes above Galder (Galltair).

**25 Mam Ratagan Pass:**  
Although the area has a reputation for witchcraft, the only things to bewitch the visitor today are the breathtaking views this pass affords. With the Five Sisters on one side and the peaks of Beinn Sgritheall and Beinn a' Chapuill on the other, the road was constructed by Hanoverian forces under the command of General Wade, and was intended to link Bernera Barracks in Glenelg with Fort Augustus.

**26 Dun Telve:**  
A perfect example of this uniquely fascinating structure, Dun Telve was excavated in 1914. The finds include rotary querns, stone cups and dishes, spindle whorls plus a fragment of what could be a Roman jar circa 2nd century AD.

**27 Dun Troddan:**  
In 1772 it is believed that the broch was over 36 feet high. Unfortunately, much of the stone was 'borrowed' to help construct the barracks at Bernera. Excavated before 1922, three supernatural central hearths were revealed within a concentric circle of timber uprights. The small number of finds included stone whorls, schist discs and a small bead.

**28 Balvraid Chambered Cairn:**  
Built some 5000 years ago, this cairn was constructed out of a mound of earth covered with stones. Excavated in 1965, finds include pottery shards, flint artefacts and a leaf shaped arrowhead.

**29 Dun Grugaig:**  
Another good example of a broch, although not as impressive as Dun Telve or Dun Troddan.

**30 Sandaig:**  
Near this beautiful spot between Glenelg and Arnisdale, on the shores of the Sound of Sleat, is the site of Camusfearna, the fictional location of Gavin Maxwell's cottage featured in his world famous book 'Ring of Bright Water'. It was here that he lived for some time with Mjibil, his otter from southern Iraq.

**31 Arnisdale:**  
Almost at the end of the road, Arnisdale is the departure point for two extremely remote locations. The first being the deserted village of Kinloch Hourn situated at the head of Loch Hourn (Loch Hell). The second, and requiring more stamina, the summit of Ladhair Bheinn (3,343 feet), providing breathtaking views across to Skye, the Cuillin, Rum and Eigg. Both destinations are reached by a local ferryman working out of Arnisdale.

**32 Barrisdale:**  
Marking the southern tip of Lochalsh and only accessible by boat, Barrisdale has the dubious distinction of registering a 2.9 earth tremor on the BGS seismograph in 1999!

