

Scotland - 3 bikes, 6 days, 2600 kms...

With only a week to spend away on the bike, I quickly discounted France, as it would take a day to get there and a day back, and celtic ferries, when I was looking, couldn't offer a cabin...

Therefore, on a budget, I decided on Scotland in September. Three of us travelled, well actually 2 of us travelled out on Saturday, with us meeting the third the following Tuesday, with one of the original two returning on Wednesday, and the remaining two returning on Friday.... Work commitments made it a bit messy J

The 2 bikes were well loaded with camping equip and the usual weeks clothing... 2 Gs's my 1150 and John's 1200. We caught the 1130 ferry from Belfast, which sailed on time and a smooth crossing... Breakfast on board was poor... but the free coffee / tea refills helped. On board we decided to head to Glencoe, and take the A roads avoiding Glasgow, motorways etc. We went via Greenock, but in hindsight, it just added time for little return... Traffic from the port was heavy, and it took an hour to reach AYR.

Weather on day 1 was okay, with a little rain starting about 5pm... We reached Tyndrum, the start of the glencoe run @ about five.... Scenery was spectacular... and we had to stop for a few photos.. cross wind was high, pushing us a bit on the more open roads, but not as bad as expected.... A few days earlier we were told of 73 mph gusts.... After the long run from the port, we didn't really appreciate the run into Glencoe

We reached Glencoe village @ about 1830, found the camp site and all sorted by 1930...

The evening concluded with a few beers, some food, and local banter with the bar staff.... Followed by the half mile walk back to the campsite in the rain... all part of the adventure J

The area is full of hill climbers, especially at the weekend... but all in good spirits (a lot of local whiskey on offer)

Day 2

We woke to rain... so decided to camp in glencoe for another night.. Over a quick coffee (Jetboil is a must if camping) we decided to head to fort William, and the world war 2 monument on the A82, followed by a spin around Loch Ness....

Breakfast was had in a visitor centre in Fort William, adequate but thats it... The monument is a bit of a tourist attraction, but worth a visit... and with the sun was now shining, Ben Nevis could be seen in the distance...

Although the roads were still damp, the spin on the A82 was good,,, the surface is good and the corners flowing, you could see the lake to you right as you weaved in and out of the forest. a lot of bikes on the road, but nothing that would spoil the spin... We stopped at the loch ness visitor centre for a coffee, and a chat with one of the locals, who said to take the low road down the other side from Inverness. We did as instructed, and this was our first encounter of

“single track roads”... small road with passing points. These are okay, but you need to be careful on blind corners etc.

The road opened up to some of the more spectacular scenery.... We stopped and walked to a viewing point.... Well worth the effort... Back to the camp site for about six with another coffee on route. Quick shower etc. and back to the pub to plan the next day.

Day 3

Ullapool and Durness were the destinations of today.... Rain again in glencoe as we packed up the tents, and started the journey on the A82 (again).... We took the A87 heading for Skye, which for me, was the best road of the trip.... So much so, I'd do it again later in the week going to applecross J

We stopped for a coffee and scone before turning onto the A890, heading north. It started to rain heavy.... So much so, we slowed down to approx. 30 mph and followed a truck as it climbed the road. It was like we were riding in a small stream. After an hour I was soaked through, we stopped at a small hotel. Like an oasis, they had a big fire going, and even though we must have looked like drowned rats, they were very welcoming.

A pot of tea and an hour in front of the fire, made it all seem okay... although we considered parking up for the rest of the day, and staying at the hotel, until we heard the price (GBP 170)

We decided to push onto to Ullapool.... The sun came out upon arrival, and we stopped for fuel and food... the best fish and chip ever....

The final part of the day, brought us to Durness..... the sun was shining for the last hour, and the road was excellent..... Arriving at the campsite, the views of the ocean were excellent, and facilities good. We found the pub, and settled down for a few well-earned pints.... FYI... all the pubs close bang on 11.00 pm.... A bonus when driving J

| Day 4

After a night of heavy rain and wind, which only disturbed my sleep a little, we packed up and headed for Tongue...a place famous for pannier stickers (I love Tongue!!)... we took our time on the single track roads, as again the scenery was amazing... Connemara on steroids was mentioned. The sun was shining and the roads goods, even if it was a little chilly... It took about 90 minutes to reach Tongue, fill with fuel and acquire the stickers JNot much else there to be honest.

As we were meeting Damien later from the ferry, we needed to head south, so decided to stop for breakfast in Lairg... We found a great little coffee shop beside a camp site (crotters, I think), which were extremely welcoming and provided a massive pot of tea, great breakfast followed by a couple of scones J

After a nice break we headed for Inverness and then onto Niarn and onto the A939 for Balmoral. The A939 brought us onto the Whiskey trail and through Glenmore Forest and Cairngorms Nat Park. This brought us over the mountains

at Lecht ski centre... Amazing to see all the ski lift equip without snow...

The day was filled with heavy showers, and after the long spin up to Durness, by the time we reached Braemar on the A93, we were shattered. Into the local coffee shop (more tea and an amazing piece of apple pie), we phoned Damien and told him to meet us here... After 3 nights camping it was time for a B&B. The lady in the coffee shop pointed us in the right direction and we got a room for three.... Bit of a rip off to be honest, but welcomed. Damien arrived and after the usual shower etc, we found a pub J

Day 5

Early start to a fried breakfast, and after a quick visit to the coffee shop to collect freshly baked scones (just out of the oven) we parted company with John, who was heading for the ferry, and decided to head for Applecross.... The sun was shining and it had the making of a great day. Fully refreshed after a good nights sleep, we headed back up the A939 to Grantown on Spey (appreciating the road more this time), Onto the A95, A9, A86 and back to Spean Bridge (A82)... Great spin, but better to come....We needed to refuel so we sent up the A82 filled up and found a café for lunch, the thistle stop café.... Excellent... and a parking area specifically for bikes (Owner has a blackbird). After some excellent soup, we're back onto the A87 & A890... What was a good spin on day 3, was even better in the dry... What a road !!

It was a clear day, so we could appreciate the run up to applecross, and the view from the summit was breath taking.... We continued to the village, found the campsite, and strolled to the pub (sounds like we spent a lot of time in the pub ??).. good beer and food, followed by a stroll back to bed for midnight.

Day 6

Departure time was scheduled for 0900, and Damian being a pilot, we were bang on time.. We drove a different route back, heading for Skye, which was mainly single track roads. We had decided to visit the clan Donald centre (not mcdonalds) and then get a ferry back to Mallaig... We arrived in loads of time for the ferry, so had a coffee... Ferry was a rip off @ GBP 16.00 each... The A830 and then A861 was another exceptional road to ride.. We had planned to camp @ Oban, but when we arrived, we were not impressed with the campsite.. so decided to go another hour to Tyndrum.. This brought us a little closer to the route back to the ferry for tomorrow.... And finish the day on another great road.. the A85 from Connel to Tyndrum.... After setting up camp, off to the ...etc etc

Day 7

We woke to frost on the bikes and tents, but sun was shining for the spin back to the ferry... After packing away, and departure we headed down the A82 to Glasgow and onto the M77 / A77 for Cairnryan... Ferry was delayed and departed @ 1600, with arrival back into Belfast for 1815... home for 2030 J

Overall an excellent week of great roads, good food, good company and spectacular scenery. The weather is the only thing that would put you off travelling to Scotland...

Total cost for the 7 days was around GBP 600.00, but considering at least 50% is petrol, it's not too bad. For the exceptional roads, and if you took the earlier ferry, a long weekend would be very doable and affordable!!