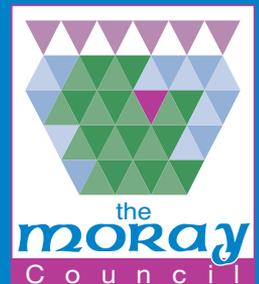




moray OFFICIALGUIDE





MORAY

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Front cover images – Mountain bike trail, Glenlivet; Engineering at Forsyths, Rothes; Creel fisherman, Hopeman; Whisky tasting, Speyside.





The River Spey near Aberlour © Barry Whyte

CONTENTS

Introduction	13
Moray Profile	16
Natural History	21
Historic Moray	22
Business: Make it Moray	26
Golf, Other Good Walks and Grand Days Out	30
Towns	34
Famous Personalities	48
Fifty Things to See and Do in Moray	52

INTRODUCTION

Moray Council is the local authority that provides services throughout the Moray area.

The council is responsible for operating a wide range of public sector services including education, housing, social work, planning, economic development, roads, environmental protection and leisure.

While its headquarters are in Elgin, there are also area offices in Forres, Buckie and Keith.

In delivering services to the public, the council and its partners are committed to improving the quality of life for everyone in Moray.

Moray has 45 primary schools and eight secondary schools and the council currently has responsibility for educating more than 13,000 school pupils. Its community learning and development team is also involved in arranging a wide range of classes and courses for adult learners.

The council operates a number of public libraries, all with free internet and e-mail access, and a mobile library which serves users in more remote areas.

Moray Council is also responsible for the maintenance of 1,000 miles of road, 450 miles of footpath, 468 bridges, 16,000 street lights and 10,500 road signs.

As a housing authority, it manages nearly 6,000 council properties and operates a council house waiting list.

It also provides housing which has been specially designed, built or adapted to meet the requirements of certain groups such as the elderly and those with special needs.

The council's development control section deals with thousands of planning applications every year from individuals and organisations seeking permission to erect buildings or adapt existing ones.

The section is part of the environmental services department whose responsibilities range from food safety to flood protection and trading standards to transport.

Waste management is another important part of the department's remit and each year approximately 50,000 tonnes of waste is collected from homes and commercial properties in Moray.

The area has one of the best recycling records of any Scottish local authority and the majority of households benefit from a kerbside recycling service.

There are more than 60 recycling points located throughout Moray in addition to eight larger recycling centres.

The safety of everyone in the community, whether residents or visitors, is of paramount consideration to Moray Council and it was



one of the first local authorities in the country to insist that all school transport providers fit their vehicles with seat belts.

Comprehensive details of the services provided by the council are available on its website at www.moray.gov.uk



Main Street in Tomintoul, the area's most southerly village and host to the UK's highest off licence, the Whisky Castle

MORAYPROFILE

Moray is one of the smallest regions in Scotland, but what it lacks in size it more than makes up in scenery, facilities and quality of life.

For residents and visitors alike, it offers all that is best in Scotland while retaining its own unique identity and one of which it is justifiably proud.

With a population of just 93,000, Moray nestles between the rugged and spectacular Highlands and the flat, fertile farmlands of the north-east and although it belongs to neither, it shares the best elements of both – from the snow-capped peaks of the Cairngorms to the unspoiled coastline of the Moray Firth. Local industry is as diverse as the landscape in which it is located and makes a major contribution to the area's buoyant economy. Moray is the heartland of the Scotch whisky industry and is home to more than 45 distilleries whose brands are savoured in just about every corner of the world.

In the spirit of celebration, music plays a vital role in the Moray community. There are

major music festivals every year, including the traditional Speyfest and the Spirit of Speyside, the latter linked to the whisky industry. Venues for the performing arts thrive in the area, and each town sustains a lively artistic culture. Most recently a new art centre has been completed in Findhorn, capable of hosting important exhibitions and accommodating music and dramatic art.

Traditional industries - farming, fishing and forestry - play an important part in the area's culture whilst underpinning the economy. In addition, two internationally renowned food producers, Baxters of Speyside and Walkers of Aberlour, have put Moray firmly on the international map.

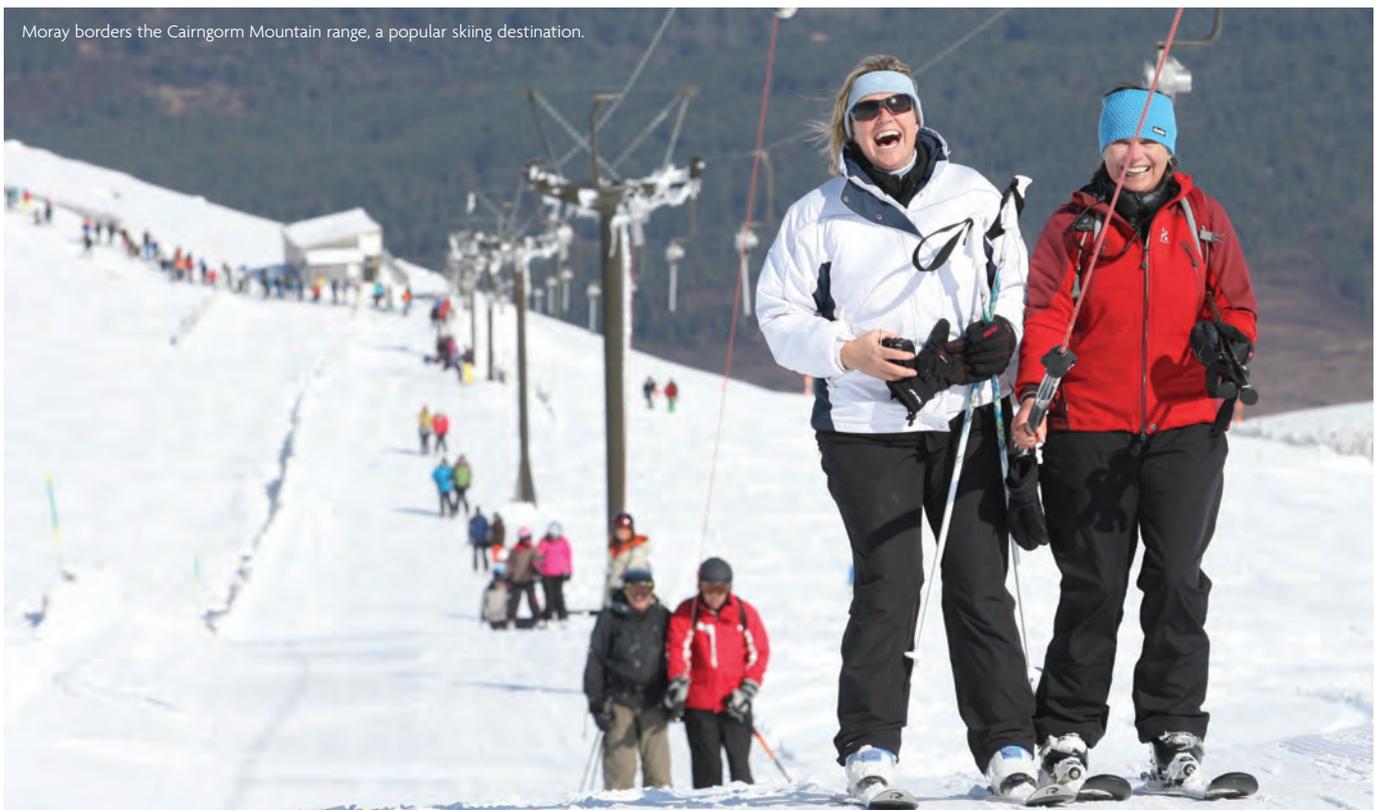
Moray's recent history has been inextricably linked with the Royal Air Force and its twin bases at Lossiemouth and nearby Kinloss. Both bases were founded in 1938 as the prospect of war with Germany loomed

large and the RAF expanded to meet the mounting threat and they have played a key role in the defence of the United Kingdom ever since.

Sadly, Kinloss fell victim to the most recent defence review and closed as an air station in 2012, although it has since been converted to an Army base and is now home to 39 Engineer Regiment following its relocation from Cambridgeshire.

The area's biggest town and administrative capital is Elgin, which is also Moray's principal shopping centre and many leading national retailers are represented alongside long-established local outlets.

Other main towns include Forres, well-known for its successes in national floral competitions; Buckie, with its fishing and commercial harbour; and Keith, built on a once-thriving textiles industry.



Moray borders the Cairngorm Mountain range, a popular skiing destination.

WHISKY MUSEUM



Sitting midway between Aberdeen and Inverness, Moray prides itself in an environment which is welcoming, friendly and safe and where a true sense of community thrives.

And while no promises can be made about the weather, it boasts one of the most equitable climates to be found anywhere in Scotland.

Moray is a paradise for lovers of the outdoors, with many designated footpaths, cycleways and bridleways and with a fascinating array of wildlife for those interested in natural history.

The area has some of the best salmon and trout rivers in Scotland while several coastal marinas have been developed in recent years to cater for the increasing number of yachts and pleasure craft using the sheltered inshore waters of the Moray Firth. Moray can be whatever the resident or visitor wants it to be – a place of peace and tranquility or somewhere to exercise the spirit of adventure.

Whichever it is, this guide can only scratch the surface in exploring what the area has to offer and the huge range of attributes which gives it a place of its own in Scotland's rich culture and heritage.

Stretching from the high mountain summits of the Cairngorms to the shores of the firth to which it lends its name, Moray is a place of outstanding natural beauty and splendour.

The rugged, awe-inspiring scenery of the uplands gradually gives way to the Laich of

MORAY PRIDES ITSELF IN AN ENVIRONMENT WHICH IS WELCOMING, FRIENDLY AND SAFE AND WHERE A TRUE SENSE OF COMMUNITY THRIVES.

Moray, a broad tract of land which is among the most fertile in Scotland and which represents some of the most productive farmland in the country.

Because of the topography, the Laich is where the main centres of population have evolved, among them Elgin and Forres along with many smaller satellite communities.

Further inland, the more mountainous and hilly terrain are dotted with small farms where the soil does not lend itself to growing crops and where cattle and sheep graze on what sustenance they can find.

Streams of crystal clear water tumble down the hillside and into the picturesque glens, many of them destined to feed into the River Spey, Scotland's fastest-flowing watercourse and one of the country's premier salmon rivers.

The only settlement of any size in the upland area is Tomintoul which, at more than 1,100ft above sea level, is Scotland's second highest village. It welcomes visitors from all over the world during the summer and its micro-economy relies heavily on the tourist industry during peak season although the proximity of the Lecht ski centre, which straddles the frequently snowbound Cockbridge-Tomintoul road, helps to keep the wolf from the door in winter.

As the Spey, the UK's seventh-longest river, continues on its way to meet the Moray Firth, it passes through malt whisky country – the spiritual home of Scotland's national drink.

The saying goes that while Rome was built on seven hills, Dufftown was built on seven stills – a testament to its status as the world's whisky capital.

Dufftown is at the hub of Moray's Malt Whisky Trail which brings together distilleries where visitors are welcome to take a tour and sample the end product of the time-honoured distillation and maturation process. Many thousands do so every year and the popularity of the distillery tours among people from all over the world is exemplified by the fact that Glenfiddich Distillery at Dufftown, which blazed a trail for the rest of the industry by launching a visitor centre in the late 1960s, has itself welcomed more than three million visitors.

As the Spey makes its way towards the sea and encounters more low-lying land, its pace slows.

It flows serenely past Aberlour and Rothes, both also long-established whisky towns, and onwards to Fochabers, a village that is home to the world-famous Baxters food factory still family-owned after more than 100 years.

Along its lower reaches the River Spey traverses a low-lying and fertile plain which runs across virtually the entire breadth of Moray, from Forres in the west to Buckie and beyond in the east. At the end of its 100-mile journey from its source in the Monadhliath Mountains, the Spey empties into the Moray Firth at Spey Bay.

Forres, the second biggest town in Moray, has gained fame in recent years for its consistently successful performances in major floral competitions, not least among them the prestigious 'Britain In Bloom'. In the 12th and 13th centuries it was home to the kings of Scotland and features prominently in Shakespeare's "Macbeth".

Close by is the village of Findhorn, with its shallow bay which provides a natural refuge for small yachts, and, at the other end of a long, sweeping, sandy beach, the fishing port of Burghead, which started life as a Pictish settlement.

Some of Burghead's Pictish past is still in evidence and each year, on January 11, townspeople celebrate the Burning of the Clavie, an ancient ritual which dates back to the town's very earliest days.

Along the coast to the east lies the larger town of Lossiemouth, which originated as a port to serve the fast-growing Elgin, six miles inland.

But Lossiemouth – or Lossie, as it generally known – quickly established its own identity as a thriving fishing port, although

nowadays its two harbour basins have been converted into a yachting marina.

One of the town's claims to fame is as the birthplace of Britain's first Labour Prime Minister, Ramsay MacDonald, in 1866.

Continuing east along the coast and beyond the River Spey come the communities of Portgordon, Buckie, Findochty, Portknockie and Cullen, all of which owe their existence to the fishing industry. All were bustling ports when the industry was in its heyday in the first half of the 20th century but as fishing declined only Buckie survived.

Increasingly tight quotas and the decommissioning of vessels have decimated the industry in Moray and Buckie harbour now handles mainly commercial traffic, although the port still has a lifeboat station.

Keith is another town which has had to look to diversify its labour base following a gradual downturn in the industry which helped sustain it for generations – textiles.

The town and the surrounding area have a long-standing farming tradition and for many years the annual Keith Show has been Moray's only major agricultural event.

For more than a thousand years Elgin has been Moray's largest and most influential community while retaining its character as a market town, with extensive green space and amenity areas.

Its past is well documented and there has scarcely been a period in its history when some landmark event or other has not added another chapter to the Elgin story.

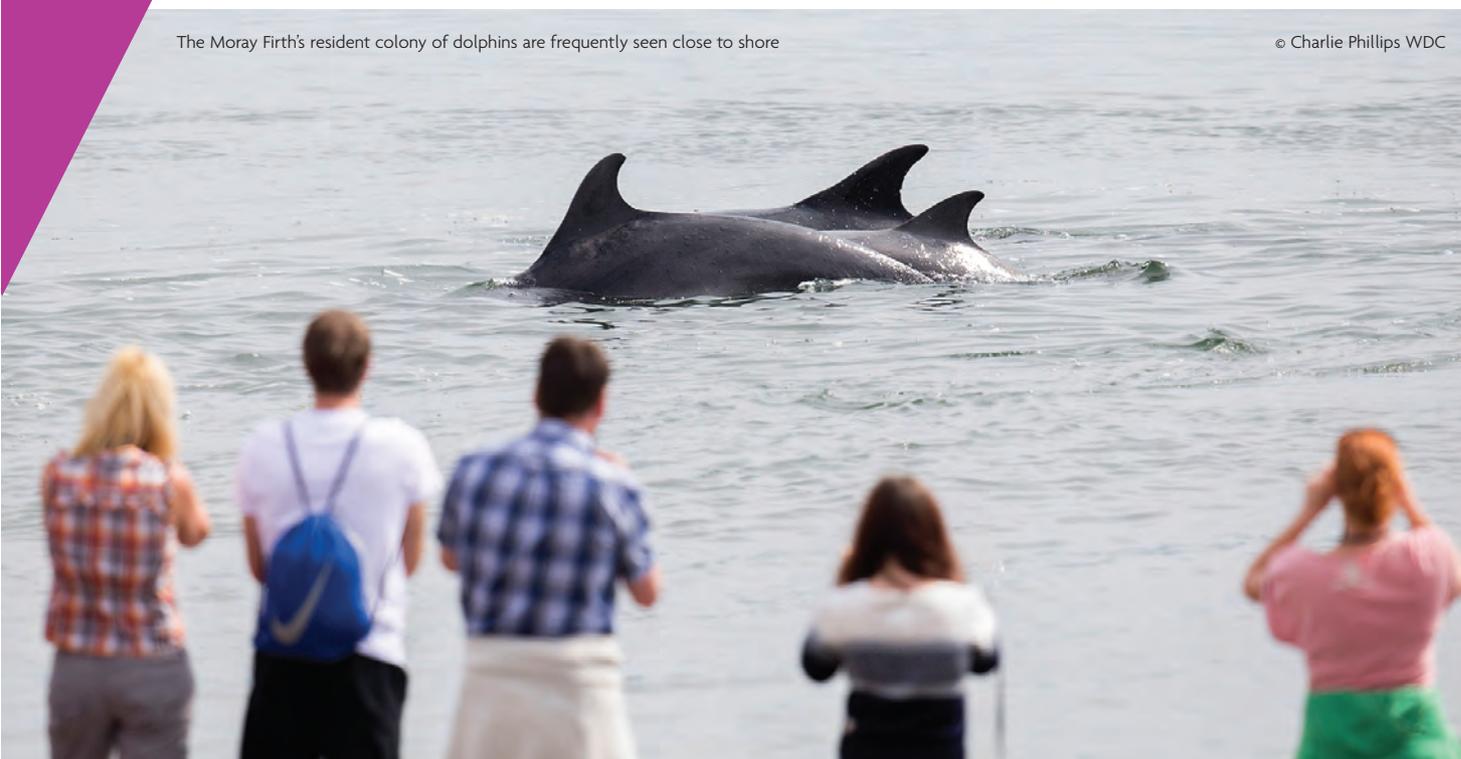
The built heritage of the central area in particular is testament to the town's status over the centuries and more recent developments have been designed in sympathy with the surrounding conservation area.

Elgin is Moray's principal retail centre and has taken strides in recent years in competing against its main rivals, Inverness and Aberdeen.

The town, straddling the main A96 trunk road and with a rail link to the east and west, has seen a steady growth in population in recent years and the local construction industry has been kept busy keeping pace with the demand for new housing.

LOCAL ATHLETE HEATHER STANNING PUT LOSSIEMOUTH ON THE MAP BY WINNING THE UK'S FIRST GOLD MEDAL IN THE LONDON 2012 OLYMPICS.





NATURAL HISTORY

With its diverse range of habitats, from mountain peaks, hillsides, moorland, farmland, river estuaries and shoreline, Moray provides a haven for a vast array of wildlife.

Much of the uplands of Moray lie within the recently designated Cairngorms National Park, while on the coast there are nature reserves of national and local status.

The area's largest mammal, the impressive antlered red deer, is generally found in the higher and more remote parts of Moray, and is frequently encountered in herds several dozen strong.

Its smaller cousin, the roe deer, inhabits more low-lying areas where it is associated with open land for grazing and adjoining woodland for refuge.

Foxes are relatively abundant as too are badgers, while wildcat and pine marten, which tend to have their stronghold in more isolated parts of Scotland, have a toehold in Moray. The crystal clear waters of our rivers and streams also provide the ideal environment for otters.

Moray is fortunate that, so far at least, it has escaped colonisation by the alien grey

squirrel and that the indigenous and much more endearing red squirrel still survives in reasonable numbers, although its future remains a cause for concern.

But perhaps the area's most celebrated mammal - and with good cause - is the bottle-nose dolphin, a colony of around 130 of which lives in the Moray Firth.

It is one of only two sizeable colonies of the species in British coastal waters, the other being in Cardigan Bay in Wales.

There are several vantage points along the Moray coast where the dolphins are most likely to be seen from shore, one of them being Tugnet at Spey Bay, where the Whale and Dolphin Conservation Society has a visitor centre and café.

Grey and common seals are relatively common offshore and can also be seen at closer quarters as they haul themselves out of the water to bask on the shoreline.

The area's birdlife is even more diverse and makes Moray one of the most popular and manageable destinations in Scotland for birdwatchers.

Within an hour's drive and a distance of under 50 miles, enthusiasts can watch golden eagles soar over the foothills of the Cairngorms and sea ducks gather in huge flocks in the sheltered inshore waters of the Moray Firth. Two of Scotland's most sought after species - capercaillie and crested tit - can be found in Moray. Both have extremely restricted ranges and can be difficult to connect with anywhere else.

Findhorn Bay is a staging post for many thousands of migrating wildfowl and waders in winter, and during the summer is one of the most reliable spots to observe osprey as they plunge into the shallow waters to catch fish.

HISTORIC MORAY

Moray is fortunate in the quality of its built heritage and has several historic buildings to rival Scotland's best.

In Elgin Cathedral, it has one of the best preserved ruins in the country and one can only wonder at what a magnificent sight it must have been in its original state.

Dating from the 1200s, it was burned down - along with much of Elgin - by the Wolf of Badenoch in 1390 in revenge for his excommunication by the Bishop of Elgin.

The sacking of the cathedral was followed by two centuries of reconstruction, but it began to suffer decay after being abandoned in the wake of the Reformation and in the early 1700s, a large part of the building collapsed.

However, enough remains to this day to make a visit to the cathedral, which is in the safe keeping of Historic Scotland, a memorable experience.

Also open to the public is another Historic Scotland property, the nearby Spynie Palace which for five centuries was the residence of the Bishops of Moray.

As with Elgin Cathedral, it began to fall into a state of disrepair in the 17th century and much of the structure has gone, although the impressive David's Tower and other parts of the building are still standing.

Pluscarden Abbey stands in a secluded wooded valley inland from Elgin and is home to a small community of Benedictine monks who recolonised and restored the building in 1948.

It was founded in 1230 but was gradually abandoned after the Reformation and by the end of the 19th century even the roof had gone. A handful of monks from Prinknash Abbey in Gloucestershire arrived to reclaim the building after the Second World War and in 1975, after 750 years as a priory, Pluscarden was given abbey status.

Visitors are welcome but large sections of the abbey are out of bounds to the public.

Brodie Castle, near Forres, is the ancestral home of the Brodie clan although it has



IN ELGIN CATHEDRAL, IT HAS ONE OF THE BEST PRESERVED RUINS IN THE COUNTRY AND ONE CAN ONLY WONDER AT WHAT A MAGNIFICENT SIGHT IT MUST HAVE BEEN IN ITS ORIGINAL STATE.



Moray has strong historic links to the armed forces that remain to this day.

been in the ownership of the National Trust for Scotland for the past 35 years. Dating from the 16th century, it houses a fine collection of furniture, porcelain and art and its library contains around 6,000 books.

Visitors are also free to wander in the extensive grounds of the castle which, in spring, are carpeted with daffodils.

Well inland, at the remote Braes of Glenlivet (picture below), can be found a building which during the 18th century was the only place in Scotland where young Catholic priests were trained.

Despite constant persecution, over 100 young men trained as priests during that period. The seminary at Scalan played a key role in keeping the Catholic faith alive in the north and the Braes remains one of its strongholds.

One of Moray's best-known and most distinctive structures spans the fast-flowing River Spey at Craigellachie. The single-span bridge was built by the celebrated Scottish engineer, Thomas Telford, and opened in 1814 and carried vehicular traffic until the 1970s.

Moray is also fortunate in having a number of natural features which are worth a visit, although some are more accessible than others.

The views from 2,775ft Ben Rinnes, near Dufftown, are well worth the hike to the top and in recent years the Friends of Ben Rinnes have put in an immense amount of work upgrading the path to the summit.

Randolph's Leap, within easy walking distance of the B9007 Carrbridge-Forres road, is a deep gorge where the fast-flowing waters of the River Findhorn have eroded the sandstone rock.

It takes its name from Randolph, a 14th century Earl of Moray who was forced to give up the chase after an enemy when he leapt from one side of the chasm to the other.

Another impressive natural feature are the eroded red sandstone pillars which tower above the Spey at Aultdearg, just upriver from Fochabers.

Bowfiddle Rock at Portknockie is a striking example of what the action of the sea can do. In this case it has eroded the rock into the shape of the bow of a fiddle, hence its name.

THE SEMINARY AT SCALAN PLAYED A KEY ROLE IN KEEPING THE CATHOLIC FAITH ALIVE IN THE NORTH AND THE BRAES REMAINS ONE OF ITS STRONGHOLDS.



© Peter Harvey

BUSINESS: MAKE IT MORAY

"The Moray area is constantly up there as one of the best places in Scotland to live. It's a brilliant place to be, both professionally and personally. Moray offers a great lifestyle, it's close to the coast and some beautiful countryside, with two cities an easy commute away. The two most important things to attract businesses looking to expand or relocate are buildings and people, both of which we are in the fortunate position of being able to offer. We have excellent skills and a strong work ethic in the area."

David Oxley, Moray Area Manager, Highlands and Islands Enterprise

Top 10 reasons to invest in Moray

From educational excellence to pioneering innovation, there are many reasons to invest in Moray. Here are our top ten.

High returns

Moray is a part of the best performing economy in the UK, recording the fastest growth in economic output in the country in the decade to 2008. It is also one of the most cost effective regions, with competitive labour costs, ensuring best value and enabling your company to achieve a high return on investment.

Proven track record

Moray has the expertise to support the growth of world class businesses. The region is home to renowned food and drink brands, from Walkers Shortbread to Baxters Foods and numerous Speyside whiskies providing high end products to international markets, as well as small, high quality, niche producers. Thirty years of operational experience in energy-related engineering and fabrication as well as the increase in engineering skills make its coastal location perfect to support Scotland's ambition, to be a world leading renewable energy powerhouse.

Pioneering innovators

A key partner within the UK's newest university, the University of the Highlands and Islands, the Moray education system is responsible for delivering the skilled workforce we need. The collaborative pioneering work of digital and medical professionals in the region is putting Moray on the map in the development of Scotland's digital healthcare sector. The Alexander Graham Bell Centre is a centre of excellence for digital health, research and education based at the Moray College campus. This facility will contribute to success in creating important and strong links between the private sector, medical practitioners and academia.

Live. Work. Relax. Moray

Moray is a beautiful area to live in and visit. National Geographic placed the Moray coastline in the top ten for nature tourism.



The Spey Valley, the Cairngorms National Park and the surrounding Highlands provide a firm foundation for Moray tourism. Moray has been named as one of the top five rural regions in Scotland favoured for its quality of life. With affordable housing, great schools and a dry climate, Moray is a great place to live, work and relax.

Access to markets

Moray is located between Scotland's oil capital, Aberdeen, and the Highlands' capital city, Inverness, with easy access to rail, road and international airport links. Inverness Airport is only 35 minutes from Elgin, the commercial and administrative capital of Moray, while Aberdeen Airport is no more than 90 minutes' drive from anywhere in Moray. Moray has better air connections than most UK locations with 138 flights per week, including 35 flights to London airports and a daily connection into the international hub at Amsterdam. Every UK city can be reached within a single day of legal commercial driving hours.

Space to grow

We have space for your business to grow with high quality infrastructure across the region, with locations such as the Enterprise Park Forres (EPF), Elgin Business Park and Buckie harbour. The Moray Council also has a range of property across the region. Moray offers high levels of broadband connectivity, meeting your worldwide online requirements.

The Enterprise Park, Forres is proving to be a thriving location, for a diverse mix of businesses. Developed by Highlands and Islands Enterprise, EPF extends over 100 acres of land offering an excellent working environment, with a range of high quality

business units, each flexibly designed for office, lab, manufacturing and light industrial purposes. Horizon Scotland, the business and innovation centre at EPF, offers high quality conferencing and meeting facilities plus fully serviced office space on flexible terms. Horizon Scotland is a great location to grow or base your business.

With over 60 acres to develop, the park has the potential for a number of proposed future units and sites. Indicative unit sizes range from 3,000 to 100,000 sq ft, the size and fit-out of the future units are flexible and can be built to meet specific business requirements. The park is already home to a number of specialist companies who are leaders in their field of work, including the life science, IT and oil and gas sectors.

Buckie harbour, owned by Moray Council, is located on the south side of the Moray Firth coastline. The harbour is home to successful fabrication, cargo handling, fishing and renewables businesses. Buckie is considered to be ideally placed as an onshore support base for the proposed Moray Firth offshore wind projects. A number of existing buildings are available at the quayside for use and vacant land is also available. The harbour is identified in the Moray Local Plan 2008 for industrial purposes, which favours the site for industrial uses, including offices.

Elgin Business Park, adjacent to the A96, is a 125 acre site to the east of Elgin. The business park is proposed to have a mix of industries such as retail, hospitality, business and industrial use. Phase 1 of development started autumn 2013.





Mansefield House is set in the town centre of Keith, a thriving Highland town in Moray. It is just off the A96, giving easy access to both Aberdeen and Inverness. Mansefield House provides office accommodation extending to 800 square metres over two floors, with one floor being currently occupied.

Working together

Moray has developed a mature partnership model of working which brings together all aspects of its community. Eighteen partner groups including Moray Council, development agency Highlands and Islands Enterprise, Skills Development Scotland, and business, health, community and academic representatives are working together to support your investment in the area.

Highlands and Islands Enterprise, Moray Council and Scottish Development International (SDI) all work together to promote Moray's strong portfolio of assets and advantages to inward investors from around the globe. These organisations can support you with almost every aspect of the decision making process, whether it's finance or IT, finding suitable premises or staff recruitment, product development or marketing.

Any business interested in exploring the opportunities available in Moray will have a dedicated team to work with every step of the way, both before and after you've made the move to Moray, helping to get your business up and running quickly, and building strong foundations for growth and development.

Business support

Highlands and Islands Enterprise can support every aspect of your investment project. The team has a dedicated office in Moray which can help to get your business up and running quickly, and build strong foundations for growth and development. We can help you identify and access funding and provide a comprehensive investor support programme. Our team can talk through your business plan and the financial needs of the business as part of our wider discussions about what Moray has to offer for you.

Strong work ethic

Moray offers a well educated, skilled workforce with a great reputation for customer service. Moray companies have

low turnover of staff and high retention rates. Moray has a growing population. The 2011 census shows an increase to 93,300 people resident in Moray. However, the area has access to an even wider labour pool. There are 236,000 people within a one-hour drive of Elgin. Moray has 85% of its working age population in employment which is higher than the Scottish average (80%).

Skills

Workers in Moray are more likely to have a skill than across Scotland as a whole. Moray College is part of the new University of the Highlands and Islands (UHI) and has over 8,000 enrolled students. It offers a range of degree and postgraduate courses. Moray has a strong educational base. There are eight secondary schools, which in 2011 produced 1,021 school leavers. Some 89% went on to further/higher education or to gain employment – above the Scottish average of 82%.

Moray has developed concentrated activity in particular areas including tourism, food and drink, life sciences and manufacturing. Food and drink manufacturers employ 10% of Moray's workforce. Employment in professional, scientific and technical activities now number over 8,300 individuals and over 8,000 people are employed in engineering disciplines.

Key sector profiles

Life sciences

There are a number of strands of life sciences activity emerging in Moray. The area has a growing reputation in developing digital and online technologies to improve service delivery and efficiency. Although these strands have emerged independently, they are complementary and have arisen because of the unique health ecosystem found in Moray.

Collaboration between the cutting edge work of experts from Dr Gray's Hospital in Elgin and care and health services in the community means it is in a strong position to develop, pilot and test comprehensive digital healthcare models. The Alexander Graham Bell Centre will complement the existing digital healthcare activity being carried out in Moray.

Engineering, production and manufacturing

Moray is a natural location to establish an engineering business to support the oil and gas and renewable energy sectors. With its long history as an engineering and fabrication base for the oil and gas and distillation industries, it is perfectly placed for diversification into the renewable energy supply chains.

Electrical and mechanical engineering skills are highly developed in the local workforce, including those making the transition from armed forces to civilian life. The strengths of engineering, combined with the strategy to diversify the benefits of the oil and gas industry around Scotland, put Moray in a prime position as a great place to invest.

Business services

Moray offers an available workforce with a great reputation for business process outsourcing, with leading process and outsourcing company Capita being located on EPF. The region's location represents cost efficiencies with lower average rents and salaries, while providing an experienced and loyal workforce which is highly skilled in delivering excellent customer service.

Food and drink

Moray has some of the strongest food and drink export businesses in Scotland, including some of the world's leading brands, ranging from indigenous Baxters Food Group and Walkers Shortbread to the world's leading premium drinks business, Diageo. There is also a strong presence of independent international seafood companies. The Scotch whisky industry is centred in Speyside. The strength of Speyside's heritage has attracted significant investment.

Tourism

Moray provides a firm foundation for a high value tourism sector and represents a hidden opportunity. The location is highly accessible and has a tremendously varied tourism offer that is yet to be fully exploited. Mountains, coast, forestry, National Park and market towns offer outdoor and indoor pursuits. The area is also a base for international and national tourism businesses with a requirement for hotel accommodation.

To find out more call 01309 696000 or visit www.enterpriseparkforres.co.uk www.hie.com

GOLF, OTHER GOOD WALKS & GRAND DAYS OUT

When it comes to choice and quality of golf courses, Moray can justifiably claim to be well above par.

Few areas of similar size in Scotland – the home of golf – can have as many courses of such a high standard.

Thousands of people visit Moray every year simply to sample its golfing facilities, and they do not go away disappointed.

There are courses to suit all abilities, from high handicappers to those who play the game at the very top level, all of whom have a choice of lush parkland courses or challenging links courses. Not only that, Moray also boasts some of the cheapest golf anywhere in the country. Where else can you enjoy a day's golf for as little as £20?

Moray Golf Club in Lossiemouth, with its two 18 hole links courses, was founded in 1889 and its 6,687 yard Old Course is generally regarded as one of the best in the north of Scotland. The 18th, with a cavernous bunker guarding the green, is

widely regarded as one of the most demanding finishing holes in Scottish golf.

The New Course, at just over 6,000 yards, was designed by Sir Henry Cotton and has also gained a reputation as a tough test of golf since it opened for play in the late 1970s.

At the opposite end of the golfing spectrum is Dufftown Golf Club, perched high on a heather-clad hillside amid some of Moray's most beautiful scenery.

While Moray is at sea level and, as far as golf courses go, as flat as a pancake, to caddy at Dufftown requires the stamina of a Sherpa.

The ninth tee stands 1,294ft above sea level, making it one of the highest in Britain. The drop from tee to fairway is 200ft, with a further drop of 130ft to the green.

Dufftown also has one of the shortest holes in Scotland – just 67 yards off the visitors' tee but with a deep ravine between tee and green.

One of the first things that strikes the visitor to Cullen Golf Club is how it was possible to squeeze an 18-hole course into such a narrow strip of land adjacent to the sandy beach.

THERE ARE COURSES TO SUIT ALL ABILITIES, FROM HIGH HANDICAPPERS TO THOSE WHO PLAY THE GAME AT THE VERY TOP LEVEL...





The original nine holes were laid out by Old Tom Morris, often regarded as the father of golf, in 1870 and the course now has an outward nine which go up, over and down 80ft cliffs, and a home nine which hug the shoreline.

Garmouth and Kingston, on the banks of the River Spey, and Hopeman share the distinction of being part links, part parkland courses, while both of Buckie's courses, Buckpool and Strathlene are long-established links courses, as is Spey Bay.

Elgin and Forres are two of Moray's most popular parkland courses, with tree-lined fairways and immaculately manicured greens, and both have hosted major tournaments.

There are also golf courses at Keith and Rothes – the latter is nine holes and was opened only in 1990 – while there are two nine-hole pay-as-you play courses at the Kinloss Country Golf Club.

Golf is also a recent innovation at Ballindalloch Castle where the course, set in magnificent surroundings on the banks of the fast-flowing River Avon, has nine holes and 18 tees. The configuration enables golfers to play two distinctive sets of nine holes.

Moray has two of the finest salmon rivers in Scotland in the Spey and the Findhorn and while the cost of pitting one's wits against the king of fish is beyond the pocket of most people, limited day tickets can be obtained through local angling associations.

LOVERS OF THE GREAT OUTDOORS ARE WELL CATERED FOR IN MORAY, AND WITH ENDLESS MILES OF FOREST, MOORLAND AND COASTLINE, IT IS A PARADISE FOR WALKERS AND CYCLISTS.

Fishing is also available on several well-stocked lochs in the area and in recent years a number of man-made fisheries have also been created to cater for angling enthusiasts.

The Speyside Way is one of four official long-distance routes in Scotland and stretches 65 miles from Aviemore to Buckie.

It follows the course of the River Spey for much of the way and since it opened in 1981, many thousands of walkers have enjoyed the beautiful scenery through which it passes.

There are many other way-marked walks throughout Moray, including the sprawling Culbin Forest and the Glenlivet Estate, and there is also a trail which links the towns and villages situated along Moray's 50 miles of coastline.

The increase in the popularity of mountain biking has not bypassed Moray and, largely due to the efforts of the Forestry Commission, the area now has a number of woodland trails with courses for both novices and experienced mountain bikers. The Glenlivet Estate – part of the UK Crown Estate – has very

recently opened one of the area's most challenging mountain bike trail through woods, hills and moorland across the southern part of the area.

The growth in popularity of weekend sailing has seen several former fishing ports along the Moray coast converted to yachting marinas in recent times, most notably Lossiemouth, Hopeman, Findochty and Portknockie.

Royal Findhorn Yacht Club overlooks scenic Findhorn Bay and the Moray Forth and enjoys some of the safest and most sheltered moorings anywhere in the area.

Lovers of the great outdoors are well catered for in Moray, and with endless miles of forest, moorland and coastline, it is a paradise for walkers and cyclists.

Moray has added another string to its bow, with Forres being chosen to host the European pipe band championships in 2013, 2014 and 2015. The inaugural event was a huge success and attracted 120 bands and saw 17,000 spectators crowd into Grant Park in a single day.

TOWNS

Elgin

With the imposing ruins of its medieval cathedral standing witness to its often turbulent history, Elgin is, and has been for centuries, Moray's principal settlement. It is the main administrative centre and is the economic, commercial, industrial and social hub of Moray.

Its population of 22,000 is more than twice that of the next largest centre of population and it is the main work destination from within Moray and beyond.

Elgin has been the traditional seat of local government for generations and is where Moray Council, the unitary authority charged with delivering services to the public, has its headquarters.

A city and royal burgh, Elgin was granted its charter by David I in 1136 and became a cathedral city in the early 13th century.

Although the cathedral was razed to the ground in 1390 by the marauding Wolf of Badenoch, the shell of the building remains Elgin's most impressive landmark.

It is in the ownership of Historic Scotland and every year attracts thousands of visitors from all over the world.

The Elgin skyline is dominated by the 80ft monument to the 5th Duke of Gordon which stands on Ladyhill, a prominent mound which was once the location of Elgin Castle, little of which has survived the ravages of time.

Although Elgin continued to flourish down through the centuries and established its credentials as the area's main commercial centre, not everyone was impressed.

In 1773 the celebrated essayist and lexicographer Dr Johnson and his travelling companion and biographer, James Boswell, stopped off during their journey to the Hebrides and found it a "place of little trade, and thinly inhabited."

They also bemoaned the fact that the dinner served up to them at the best inn in town was inedible.

"Such disappointments," they said, "must be expected in every country where there is no great frequency of travellers."



ELGIN'S POPULATION OF 22,000 IS MORE THAN TWICE THAT OF THE NEXT LARGEST CENTRE OF POPULATION AND IT IS THE MAIN WORK DESTINATION FROM WITHIN MORAY AND BEYOND.

More than two centuries on, Elgin is well served in terms of transport links, located as it is on the A96 trunk road and the Aberdeen-Inverness railway line, with the area's main bus terminus sited close to the town centre.

Inverness airport, with routes to destinations around Britain, is only 45 minutes away while the larger regional airport at Aberdeen is little more than an hour's drive.

Elgin also stands on the River Lossie. Although normally benign, it has been the source of severe flooding on several occasions over recent years and as a consequence of which work is well under way on an £86 million flood alleviation scheme.

Funded by the Scottish Government and Moray Council, it represents the biggest project of its kind undertaken in Scotland.

As the capital of Moray, Elgin supports a thriving commercial and industrial sector with many national companies having a presence.

Elgin's bustling town centre, with St Giles' Church at its heart, was pedestrianised in the mid 1990s and is Moray's busiest shopping centre.

The central area is characterised by a series of historic pends - or closes - which run at right angles off the High Street and which were once teeming with families living cheek-by-jowl. Visitors to the town have a choice of hotels and guesthouses in which to stay and Elgin boasts a variety of pubs and good quality restaurants to suit all tastes.

Within only a few minutes' walk of the town centre is Elgin's jewel in the crown, the Cooper Park which, with its boating pond and acres of parkland, has been popular with generations of local people and visitors.

Close to the cathedral, where those energetic enough to climb to the top of the tower can enjoy panoramic views of the town, is the Biblical Garden, a haven of peace and tranquility planted with flowers and shrubs which feature in the Bible.

Elgin's award-winning local museum, which can be found at the east end of High Street, houses an internationally renowned collection of fossils and Pictish artefacts in addition to Roman coins found at an important archaeological site at Birnie, near Elgin.

In Dr Gray's, Elgin boasts one of the most modern and best-equipped hospitals outside the major Scottish cities, while Moray College - part of the University of the Highlands and Islands - provides further education for thousands of students from a wide area.

Elgin has two secondary schools and seven primary schools and is also well-served in terms of sports and recreational facilities.

The Moray Leisure Centre has a swimming pool, ice rink and gymnasium while there are also a number of privately-run gyms and martial arts studios in the town.

Bowlers are well catered for with an indoor stadium and three outdoor greens, while Elgin Golf Club, on the outskirts of the town, welcomes visitors to pit their skills against the challenging and well-maintained Hardhillock course.

Elgin City play in the Third Division of the Scottish Football League, although their finest hour came when, as a Highland League club, they progressed to the quarter-finals of the Scottish Cup in season 1967-68.

Something that the visitor to Elgin will not find are the Elgin Marbles whose connection with the town are, to say the least, tenuous.

As most school children know, the Marbles are a collection of priceless sculptures removed from Athens in the early 19th century by the 7th Earl of Elgin during his time as British Ambassador to Constantinople. The Marbles are in the British Museum in London and have been the subject of a long-running and often bitter campaign by the Greek government to have them returned.

The title of Earl of Elgin was created in 1633 but, other than in name, the family has no link with Elgin. The ancestral seat is, in fact, in Fife.

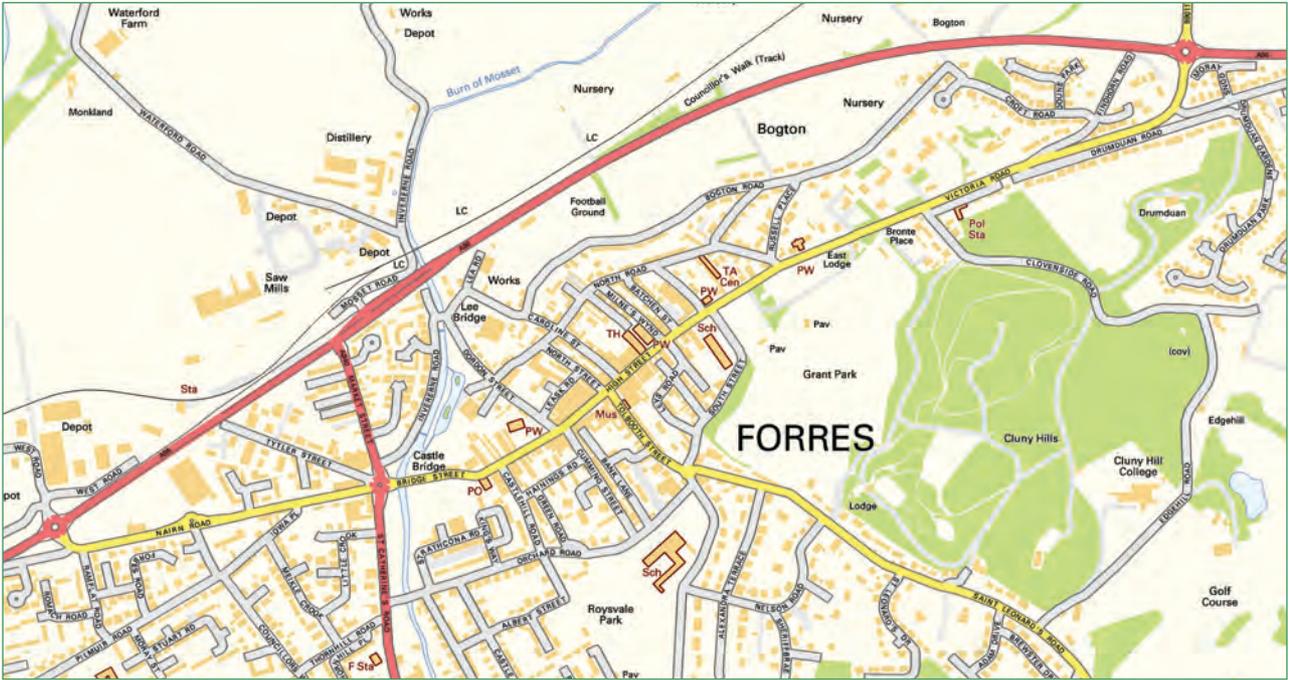
Cycling and Walking in Elgin

Take a walk...

When did you last go for a walk in Elgin? We've suggested a few places that you might like to take a meander around - we've even told you how much you could burn off on the way!



- 1 Circuit Training**
Running track and riverside walk
12 mins from the town centre = 1 ginger nut biscuit
- 2 Hello Ducky**
Cooper Park boating lake
20 mins from New Elgin = 1 scoop of low fat ice cream
- 3 Playtime!**
Children's play area, tennis courts and mini golf
25 mins from Elgin West End = 1 banana
- 4 Air Miles**
Dovecot, pavilion and play area
30 mins from Spynie Hospital = chocolate brownie
- 5 Walk on the Wild Side**
The Wards Nature Park
15 mins from the town centre = 1 bag of crisps



Forres

Forres has gained well-earned fame for its run of successes in national floral and environmental competitions stretching back more than 20 years.

The town has won a string of accolades in major events such as 'Britain In Bloom' and 'Beautiful Scotland In Bloom' which are a credit to the pride residents take in their local community.

Grant Park provides a magnificent eastern gateway to the town with its floral sculptures, sunken garden and parkland with an imposing woodland backdrop.

Forres has long been considered one of Moray's greener and more pleasant communities with an identity all of its own.

A historic town, it features in Shakespeare's "Macbeth" where the three witches of hubble, bubble, toil and trouble fame meet on "a blasted heath near Forres."

Sueno's Stone, a 20ft high monolith, stands at the edge of the town close to the A96 trunk road and dates from Pictish times. Now encased in glass to protect it from the elements, the stone carries intricate carvings believed to depict an ancient battle.

Standing on Clunyhill and overlooking Forres is Nelson's Tower, built by public subscription to commemorate Nelson's victory at the Battle of Trafalgar in 1805. Commissioned by the Forres Trafalgar Club, it was the first monument erected in Nelson's honour following his death.

The 65ft octagonal tower, with its 96 steps to the top, is open to the public during the

summer and commands spectacular views over Forres and beyond.

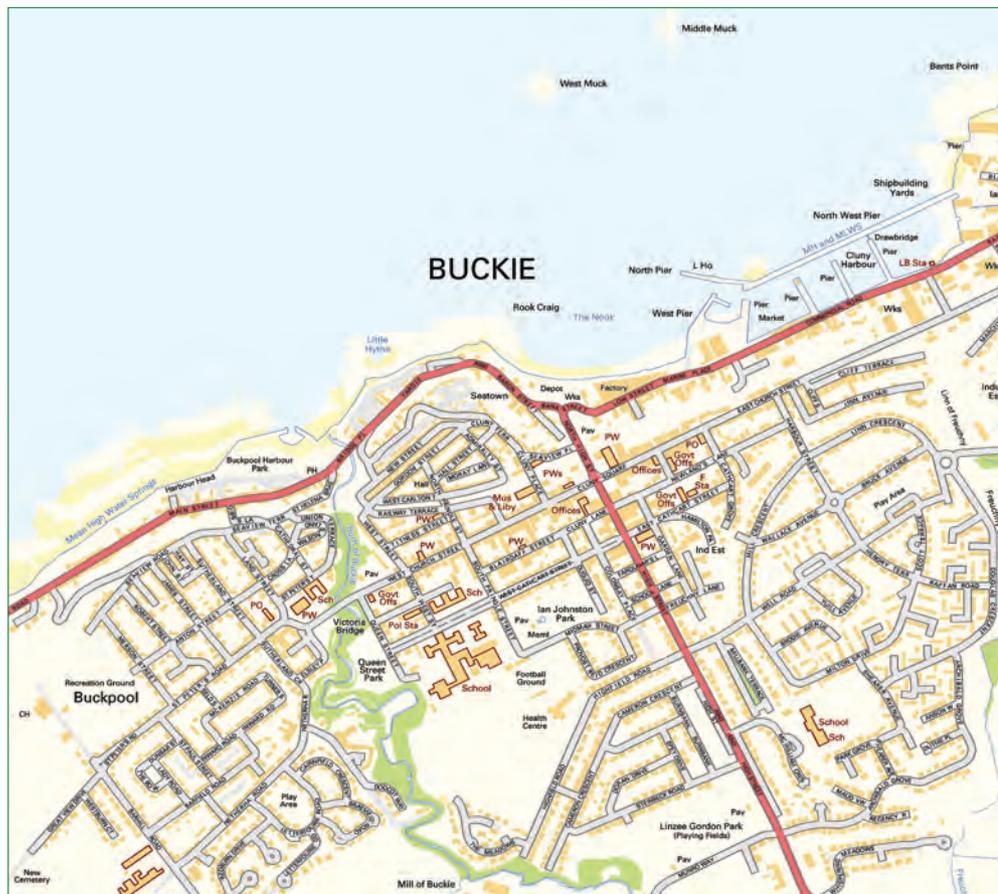
High on the list of the town's many assets is the Falconer Museum, founded in 1871 and recently the subject of a £650,000 refurbishment.

It was founded with a bequest from one of Forres's most famous sons, Dr Hugh Falconer, an eminent Victorian geologist, botanist and palaeontologist.

The museum houses a wide-ranging collection which includes many of the fossils which Falconer collected during his illustrious career, along with some of his personal papers.

It also has a section on the late Roy Williamson, who lived in Forres and wrote "Flower of Scotland".

Only a few miles to the west of Forres is Brodie Castle, the ancestral home of the



Brodie clan and a National Trust for Scotland property since the late 1970s.

The castle is open to the public and, in the spring, its grounds are swathed in yellow with magnificent displays of daffodils.

Buckie

Buckie is Moray's largest coastal settlement and owes its existence to the fishing industry which continues to make a valuable contribution to the town's economy.

Many of those who have been steeped in the fishing industry have made good use of their skills learned at sea by transferring to standby vessels and supply ships associated with the North Sea oil industry.

Although the number of fish landings made at Buckie has reduced in recent times, the harbour is busy with commercial traffic and also has Moray's only RNLI lifeboat station.



Unsurprisingly, the area is also home to companies whose business is harbour-related, such as fish processors and ships' chandlers. The importance of the fishing industry and ancillary industries to Buckie past and present is in evidence at the Buckie Fishing Heritage Centre near the town centre.

The centre houses a vast range of items and photographs dating back generations and has recently been renovated and extended to show off the collection to better effect.

In characteristic fisherfolk fashion, many of the houses in the older parts of Buckie such as the Yardie and Portessie are built side-on to the sea to present as small a profile as possible to stormy weather coming in off the Moray Firth.

Buckie's most prominent landmark, which can be seen from miles around and was a welcome sight for fishermen as they approached the safety of their home port after days at sea, is St Peter's Church, which stands sentinel over the town and is Britain's only twin-spired Roman Catholic church.

Cluny Square marks the centre of Buckie, with most shops and offices located on East Church Street, West Church Street and High Street.

Buckie, whose leisure facilities include a swimming pool and fitness centre, has a holiday caravan park at Strathlene, on the eastern edge of the town and only yards from a small sandy stretch of beach.

Lossiemouth

Lossiemouth's founding fathers were the merchants and civic leaders of Elgin who were in desperate need of a port through which to import and export goods if the royal burgh was to continue to prosper.

And so Lossiemouth was born around the middle of the 18th century and gradually expanded to develop its own identity as a fishing port.

The twin basins of its present harbour were home to a flourishing fishing fleet for generations but like so many other smaller ports, it experienced a slow and terminal decline in the fishing industry. In recent years the harbour was converted to a yachting marina and the town has become a magnet for weekend sailors from a wide area.

With long sandy beaches stretching east and west and an esplanade overlooking the mouth of the River Lossie, the town has always been a popular destination with people from far and near and attracts many holidaymakers in summer.

A fisheries' museum now occupies a building on the harbour quayside which was once used to store and mend fishing nets. The museum includes a re-creation of the study of Lossiemouth's most famous son and Britain's first Labour Prime Minister, Ramsay MacDonald. The cottage where MacDonald was born into poverty still stands, as does the house where he later lived and which is still in the ownership of the family.

Keith

For many years Keith was synonymous with the Scottish textiles industry which formed the backbone of the town's economy.

But the industry became unravelled due to competition from overseas where costs were lower and within a relatively short period, Keith and textiles had parted company, although the town is still home to Scotland's first and only kilt-making school.

Much of the area surrounding Keith is farmland and each year in August the town's Seafield Park hosts the Great Keith Show where farmers bring their livestock for judging. It is the only agricultural event of its kind in Moray and attracts thousands of visitors to enjoy a packed programme of activities and entertainment.

The other big event in the Keith calendar is the town's weekend of traditional music and song which attracts performers from all over Scotland.

Keith is rare among settlements in having two squares – Regent Square in Fife-Keith, the older part of the town, and Reidhaven Square in the newer part.

Distilling has been a cornerstone of the Keith economy for as long as anyone can remember and the town's Strathisla Distillery is one of the most popular stop-offs on Moray's Malt Whisky Trail.

Keith has a recently upgraded railway station and also stands at one end of the 11-mile Dufftown-Keith line where pleasure trips are operated throughout the summer by volunteers of the Keith and Dufftown Railway Association.

The town's main shopping area, Mid Street, carries only one-way traffic and has free car parking only yards from the shops.

Keith now has its own dedicated website - www.imkeith.com

Dufftown

If the world has a whisky capital, it is Dufftown, with its concentration of distilleries producing fine malts which are enjoyed by people all over the globe.

Although the town was not founded until 1817, the area was already infamous for illegal whisky making and it was perhaps fitting that the first approved distillery to open was built on the site of an illicit still.

It was joined later in the 19th century by six more, resulting in a well-known local saying that if Rome was built on seven hills, then Dufftown was built on seven stills. Today thousands of visitors flock to the town for distillery tours and to sample Scotland's national drink at source.

The square in Dufftown is dominated by the Clocktower which originally served as the local jail and later the burgh chambers, before being converted into a tourist information centre.

The remains of Balvenie Castle, built in the 13th century, are in the ownership of Historic Scotland and are open to the public, as is the historic and picturesque Mortlach Church, whose origins can be traced back nearly 1,500 years.

Dufftown's Highland Games are among the longest-established in Scotland and have been held annually since 1892 and possibly long before that.





Other Communities

Many of the smaller communities have a character all of their own and each plays its part in making Moray such a pleasant and rewarding area to live and to visit.

The neighbouring coastal towns of Cullen, Portknockie and Findochty, each with its neat little harbour, have a close-knit feel to them and where traditional values remain strong.

Cullen, with its imposing but long-disused viaduct, is best known as the home of 'Cullen skink', a delicious soup-like dish of fish and potatoes.

Further west, the villages of Spey Bay, Garmouth and Kingston are clustered round the estuary of the River Spey.

Garmouth was the scene of the signing of the Solemn League and Covenant by King Charles II on his return from exile in 1650 and villagers continue to observe the annual Maggie Fair, one of the oldest-established street markets of its kind in Scotland.

Only a few miles upriver is Fochabers, founded in 1776 by the Duke of Gordon. The original settlement was, from the duke's point of view, uncomfortably close to his family pile at Gordon Castle and he decided that his subjects should be kept at arm's length by moving the village.

Fochabers has a village square with church and fountain and can also claim to have one of the prettiest cricket grounds in Scotland, perched as it is on the banks of the Spey.

Further upriver and into whisky country are Rothes and Aberlour and, lying between them, Craigellachie and its iconic Telford Bridge spanning the Spey.

The structure, built in the early 1800s, is the oldest surviving iron bridge in Scotland and is considered to be one of Thomas Telford's finest engineering achievements. Along with Elgin Cathedral, it is one of Moray's most photographed subjects.

Of all Moray's communities, Tomintoul is farthest inland and, standing at 1,150ft above sea level, is the second highest village in Scotland.

With its long main street, the village depends heavily on summer tourist trade although it also benefits from the proximity of the Lecht ski centre.

Heading back towards the coast is the small village of Dallas which was catapulted into the limelight in the late 1970s thanks to the hit American television soap of the same name.

Although it had little or nothing in common with its Texan namesake, Dallas nonetheless basked in its hour of global glory as inquisitive visitors from all over the world arrived to see if Moray had its own versions of JR and Southfork!

Overlooking a tidal bay and the Moray Firth, Findhorn is one of Moray's quaintest and most-visited villages and over the years has become something of a playground for yachting and watersport enthusiasts. The original village was swallowed up by sea and sand more than 300 years ago and the present village is the second to bear the name.

Nearby is the Findhorn Foundation, a spiritual community which began life in a caravan in the 1960s and which has grown into an internationally renowned centre for the arts and global sustainability.

Burghead, with its harbour still used by a fleet of small fishing vessels, can trace its roots back to Pictish times and its former coastguard lookout post has recently been converted into a local heritage centre.

The town's Pictish past is revived every year with the annual Burning of the Clavie ceremony, one of Scotland's few surviving fire-worshipping ceremonies.

Nearby Hopeman, which celebrated its bicentenary in 2005, started out as a fishing village but diversified with the development of two major local quarries at Greenbrae and Clashach, with stone being shipped from the harbour to sites around the country and beyond.

FAMOUS PERSONALITIES

Throughout recorded history, Moray has spawned its share of the great, the good and the not so good. It has produced brilliant academics, captains of industry, successful politicians, scientists, adventurers, philanthropists and a few ne'er-do-wells.

There are those who have brought honour to Moray and others whom their homeland would happily disown.

But each has his or her own place in the illustrious history of an area which continues to take a pride in its sons and daughters who have made good.

And they don't come much better than **Saint John Ogilvie**, Scotland's only post-Reformation saint who was born near Keith in 1579.

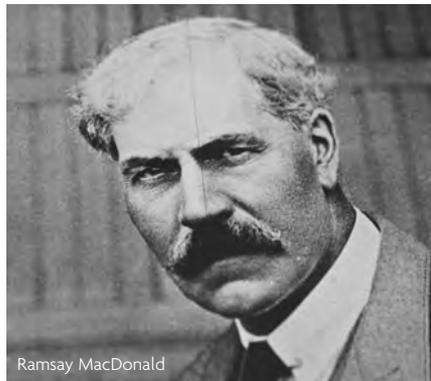
He studied at Catholic schools in mainland Europe and was ordained as a priest in Paris before returning to Scotland to minister to the few remaining Catholics in the Glasgow area. He began to preach in secret and to celebrate mass clandestinely but it was not long before he was betrayed.

Ogilvie was tortured in a bid to force him to reveal the identities of other Catholics, but he steadfastly refused. He was convicted of high treason and hanged at Glasgow Cross in 1615, aged 36.

He was beatified as a martyr in 1929 and canonised in 1976 following the miracle cure of a Glasgow cancer sufferer who had prayed to Ogilvie.

One of the most infamous characters in Moray's history was **Alexander Stewart**, better known as the **Wolf of Badenoch**, who terrorised much of the north of Scotland in the late 14th century and whose name became synonymous with death and destruction.

A son of King Robert II, he was a philanderer whose marital infidelity riled the Bishop of Moray to the extent that he was excommunicated. Seeking revenge, the Wolf and his men left their lair at Lochindorb Castle, in the middle of a loch on the bleak Dava Moor between Forres and Grantown-on-Spey, and bore down on Elgin where they sacked and burned the cathedral and much of the town.



According to legend, the Wolf died after losing a chess game with the Devil. He lies buried in Dunkeld Cathedral.

The British equivalent of America's log cabin-to-President dream came true for **James Ramsay MacDonald**, the illegitimate son of a servant girl who went on to become Britain's first Labour Prime Minister.

MacDonald was born in Lossiemouth in 1866 and the cottage where he first saw the light of day survives to this day. He was brought up in abject poverty and his prospects were not helped by the fact he had been born out of wedlock, a status that in those days carried a heavy stigma.

MacDonald left for Bristol as a teenager to take up a post as a clergyman's assistant but soon became involved in politics and was elected as MP for Leicester in 1906. His political career took off and in 1924, as leader of the Opposition, was asked by King George V to form a government when the small Conservative majority in the House of Commons proved unworkable.

Within a year there would be a General Election and MacDonald's short-lived government was defeated.

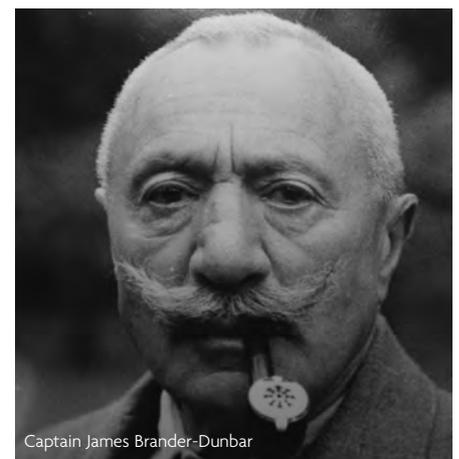
But he was given a second bite of the cherry in 1929 when he again headed a minority government which survived through turbulent times until 1935.

MacDonald built a house in Lossiemouth and returned whenever he could to escape the endless pressures of political life. The house, The Hillocks, remains in the ownership of his family.

Weary of politics and with his health in decline, MacDonald took his doctor's advice and in 1937 left for a cruise to South America. He died aboard the vessel at the age of 71 and following a funeral service in Westminster Abbey his ashes were buried at Spynie Churchyard on the outskirts of Elgin.

One of MacDonald's closest friends, **Captain James Brander-Dunbar**, was also one of Moray's most colourful characters of recent generations. Brander-Dunbar was Laird of Pitgaveny, an estate which lies between Elgin and Lossiemouth, and died aged 94 following an eventful and often controversial life.

He fought in the Boer War where he led what was the first-ever commando-style unit, and later served in the colonial service in Africa where he gained a reputation as a big game hunter. He had scant respect for authority and during a dispute with Lossiemouth Town Council over ownership of the town square he had part of it ploughed up.



On the estate, he had a sneaking admiration for poachers, having been one himself. In his younger day he had made a wager with a Highland laird that he could poach a stag from his land without getting caught. He won the bet and had the £20 cheque framed. The story became the inspiration for author John Buchan's novel "John MacNab".

Several years before his death on Christmas Day 1969, one of Brander-Dunbar's favourite oak trees on Pitgaveny Estate was blown down in a gale and he had his coffin made from it.

He penned his own epitaph: "A fine natural blackguard who gave greater justice than ever he got."

James Gordon Bennett, born at Newmill, near Keith, in 1795, emigrated to North America where he founded and edited 'The New York Herald' which went on to boast the highest circulation in the United States.

On his retirement he handed control to his son, James Gordon Bennett Junior, who commissioned Henry Morton Stanley to search for David Livingstone in darkest Africa. It was from the son that the phrase 'Gordon Bennett', denoting surprise or exasperation, derives.

Moray has produced a leading media figure in more recent times, BBC radio presenter **James Naughtie**, who was brought up at Rothiemay and was head boy at Keith Grammar School before embarking on a career in journalism.

He wrote for 'The Scotsman', 'The Washington Post' and 'The Guardian' before moving to radio journalism.

The late **Jessie Kesson** was a writer of a very different kind, a novelist whose works were largely autobiographical and drawn from her austere upbringing.



James Naughtie



Doctor Hugh Falconer

Born in a workhouse, she lived in poverty in one of Elgin's town centre closes with her unmarried mother.

Those formative years inspired her first and best-known novel, "The White Bird Passes", which was published in 1958.

Kesson went on to produce 'Women's Hour' on BBC Radio and also wrote plays for radio and TV. She spent the latter years of her life in London where she died in 1994.

A Moray loon who headed Stateside in the 19th century was **James Philip**, born and brought up on a farm at Dallas. Philip – dubbed Scotty in deference to his homeland - is credited with helping to save the American bison from extinction.

The bison - or buffalo as it was commonly known - had been hunted to the verge of oblivion and in the 1890s Philip inherited a small herd of survivors which he moved to his ranch. By 1914 the herd was 400-strong and were the ancestors of many of the wild bison which roam free over North America today.

Another of Moray's greatest benefactors was **Doctor Hugh Falconer**, a distinguished natural historian and contemporary of Charles Darwin.

Born in Forres in 1808, he studied the flora, fauna and geology of large parts of India and Burma and became an authority on fossils.

He spent 25 years in India before being forced to leave because of ill health, but his research continued until his death in London in 1865. The Falconer Museum in

Forres, built with a bequest from Falconer and opened within six years of his death, is a memorial to his scientific achievements and has a section dedicated to the man and his work.

Dufftown-born **George Stephen** - later to become **Lord Mountstephen** - emigrated to Canada at the age of 21 and soon became a prominent businessman with a particular interest in railways. He played a pivotal role in developing the rail network and in the construction of the Canadian Pacific Railway. He returned to live in Britain in 1888 and died in 1921.

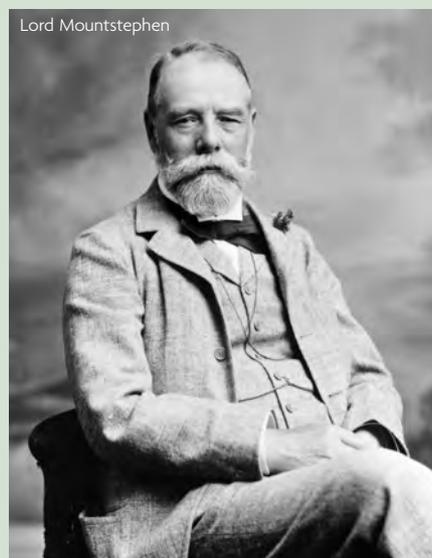
Mountstephen was joined in developing Canada's fledgling rail network by his cousin, **Lord Strathcona**, who was born plain **Donald Smith** in Forres in 1820.

He worked in the Forres town clerk's office before seeking his fortune in Canada and drove the last spike in the Canadian Pacific Railway at Craigellachie, British Columbia, in 1885.

A politician and philanthropist, he was Canada's High Commissioner to Britain from 1896 to 1913, the year before his death.

Although not a Moravian by birth, the author of the "Biggles" novels, **Captain W.E. Johns**, penned many of his best-known works in Moray.

He visited the area frequently on fishing holidays and for several years in the late 1940s and 1950s spent the summer at Pitchroy on the Ballindalloch Estate, where at least 15 of the "Biggles" series of adventure novels were written. Johns returned south in 1953 and died in London in 1968.



Lord Mountstephen

FIFTYTHINGSTO SEEANDDOINMORAY

Elgin Cathedral

One of Scotland's finest medieval buildings, the cathedral – known as the Lantern of the North - was laid waste by the Wolf of Badenoch in 1390 but its magnificent ruins provide a wonderful insight into what it must once have looked like. Open daily throughout the summer, restricted opening in winter. Admission charge.

Spynie Palace

Situated a mile from Elgin off the A941 Elgin-Lossiemouth road, it was the residence of the Bishops of Moray for five centuries until 1686. Although much of the palace has gone, a substantial part remains. Open daily throughout the summer, restricted opening in winter. Admission charge.

Elgin Museum

Owned and run by the Moray Society, the museum was founded in 1842 "for the collection and preservation of objects of science and virtue." Its collection includes Roman coins found at an archaeological site at Birnie, near Elgin. Open April to October. Admission charge.

Tugnet Ice House

A three-vaulted ice house located near the mouth of the River Spey at Spey Bay, it is the largest building of its kind in Scotland with only a third showing above ground level. It was built in 1830 and was used as a cold store to keep locally-caught salmon fresh until shipping.

Moray Firth Wildlife Centre

The disused fishing station at Tugnet was converted to a wildlife centre in the mid 1990s and is now run by the Whale and Dolphin Conservation Society. It is also a study centre for the Moray Firth's rare bottlenose dolphins which can often be seen close inshore.

Portknockie Harbour

The small picturesque harbour was built in 1890 in a cove sheltered from the sea by a promontory which was once a Pictish stronghold, although a harbour of sorts

probably existed long before that. The harbour can only be reached by a very steep approach road from the village which perches above.

Brodie Castle

Four miles west of Forres, the 16th century castle houses collections of art and antiques which include French furniture, porcelain from different parts of the world and many paintings. It is the ancestral home of the Brodie family but is now in the ownership of the National Trust for Scotland. Open from Easter to October. Admission charge. Castle grounds open all year.

Cullen Viaduct

One of Moray's best-known landmarks, the long-disused stone viaduct towers over Cullen. The railway had to be constructed over the town, rather than past it, because the then Countess of Seafield would not allow it to run through the grounds of Cullen House.



Restaurants

Moray has scores of restaurants across the area with a wide range of fare on offer. Everything from a full-on gourmet experience to a quick pub lunch can be had within a small radius of most towns.



Barrel Houses at the Findhorn Foundation

Findhorn Foundation

With its roots planted in the 1960s, the Findhorn Foundation is a spiritual community of around 400 people who have become known for their empathy with nature and sustainable living. The foundation runs a series of educational programmes and every year welcomes thousands of people from around the world to take part in residential courses.

Millbuies

One of the area's most popular beauty spots, the country park at Millbuies, four miles from Elgin, was gifted by philanthropist George Boyd Anderson. It has pleasant walks around a loch on which there is trout fishing.

Johnstons of Elgin

The mill which today produces cashmere and other luxury fabrics has stood on the same site since the company was founded in 1797. Guided tours of the mill are available to visitors who can see the production process from start to finish. There is also a visitor centre, retail shop, coffee shop and a homeware department. Open all year.

Sculptor's Cave

So called because of its ancient inscriptions, Sculptor's Cave is a sea cave at Covesea, to the west of Lossiemouth, where excavations have uncovered large numbers of children's bones. Originally thought to have been the site of macabre human sacrifice, it is believed the cave was the final resting place of Picts who had died in childhood and whose heads were severed and placed on poles. The cave is accessible only at low tide.

Balvenie Castle

The imposing ruins of Balvenie Castle at Dufftown are what remains of an impressive fortification dating from the 13th century. It had a succession of owners before it shared the fate of many similar buildings by gradually falling into a state of disrepair. Open daily throughout the summer. Admission charge.

Famous Fochaberians' Garden

The commemorative garden honouring famous people from Fochabers was opened in 2002. It was laid out at the entrance to the village cricket field on the banks of the Spey, with two standing stones bearing the names of 21 Fochaberians who achieved great things in their chosen field.

Moray Piano Competition

Since its inception in 2000 the competition has gained a reputation as one of the leading events of its kind by attracting many of the best young pianists from all over Britain and beyond. It takes place at Elgin Town Hall over a weekend in November and is split into competitions for pianists aged 20 and under, 16 and under and 12 and under.

Wartime Defences

Moray has some of the best preserved wartime coastal defences anywhere in Scotland and their survival gives a fascinating insight into how Britain hoped to defend itself in the event of a seaborne invasion during World War II. Although many have been swallowed up by shifting sand and shingle, long lines of large concrete blocks and pillboxes still exist to the west of Kingston and along Roseisle beach.

Malt Whisky Trail

The world's only malt whisky trail connects seven working distilleries – Benromach, Cardhu, Glenfiddich, Glen Grant, Glenlivet, Glen Moray and Strathisla – the Speyside Cooperage and the Dallas Dhu time capsule distillery owned by Historic Scotland.

Angling

Moray has some of Scotland's finest salmon rivers but permits are very limited. There are also a small number of privately owned trout fisheries in the area.

Tomintoul

Moray's highest community at 1,150ft above sea level, Tomintoul can trace its origins back to 1775 when it was founded by the Duke of Gordon. Its resident population of just over 300 is swollen by large numbers of tourists in summer and its economy also relies in no small measure on the nearby Lecht Ski Centre.

Clavie

On January 11 the people of Burghead celebrate the Pictish New Year with the Burning of the Clavie, an ancient fire ceremony which, according to tradition, wards off evil spirits for the year ahead. A barrel filled with burning tar is carried through the streets of the town, with smouldering embers handed out as a token of good luck.

Maggie Fair

Every June for more than 400 years, Garmouth has celebrated Maggie Fair when stalls and sideshows are set up in the heart of the village.

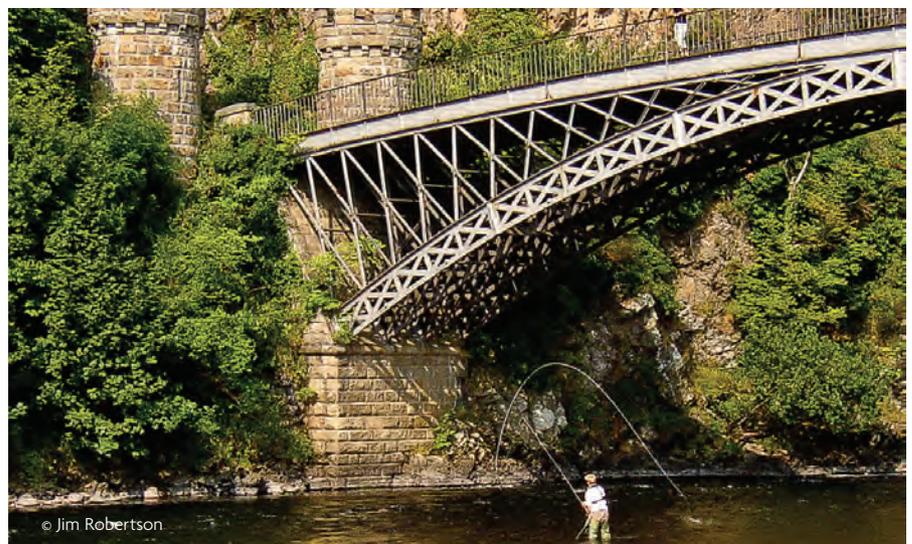
It is one of the few street fairs still surviving in Scotland and is believed to take its name from Lady Margaret Ker, the wife of the local laird and by all accounts very popular with villagers.

Auld Brig

Built in 1609, the Auld Brig in Keith was a packhorse bridge built of stone and is one of the oldest surviving structures of its kind in Scotland. It was designed to take people on foot or ponies and horses but not a cart or carriage.

Keith Show

The Keith Show staged over two days in early August is Moray's only major agricultural show and dates back to 1872. Held at Seafield Park, it attracts large entries of cattle, sheep and horses and is an important occasion on the local farming community's calendar. Admission charge.



Telford Bridge

The iconic Telford Bridge at Craigellachie is one of Moray's most photographed structures and is one of the finest examples of Thomas Telford's work. Opened in 1814, it carried vehicular traffic over the River Spey until the early 1970s when a new road bridge was built downstream. The bridge has a single 150ft span and was revolutionary for its time.

Ramsay MacDonald's Birthplace

The tiny cottage in Lossiemouth where Britain's first Labour Prime Minister, Ramsay MacDonald, was born in 1866 still stands. It is marked with a plaque but is not open to the public. MacDonald's remains are buried in the family tomb at Spynie Kirkyard, near Elgin.

Keith Music Festival

Performers and fans from all over Scotland flock to what has become known simply as the Keith Festival – a three-day celebration of Scottish traditional music and song. Hotels, pubs and local halls host ceilidhs, concerts and competitions during the event, which has been held every June for the past quarter of a century.

Biblical Garden

Occupying a secluded area in the shadow of Elgin Cathedral, the walled Biblical Garden was the first of its kind to be created in Scotland. It has examples of all 110 plants mentioned in the Bible in addition to statues of biblical figures. Open May to September, admission free.

Mountain Biking

The Forestry Commission has created three Moray Monster Trails to satisfy mountain bikers of all abilities. The trails, totalling 17 miles in length, are located at Ordiquish and Whiteash, both on the outskirts of Fochabers, and Ben Aigan, near Craigellachie. Mountain bike trails have also recently been developed by the Crown Estate on its Glenlivet Estate.

Cooper Park

Gifted to the people of Elgin in 1902 by Sir George Cooper, the Cooper Park is the town's most popular recreational area. Covering some 40 acres on the banks of the River Lossie, it has a boating pond, tennis courts, a cricket pitch and children's playground.

Ballindalloch Castle

The castle has been home to the Macpherson-Grant family since 1546 and stands in a magnificent setting between the River Spey and one of its tributaries, the Avon. The castle and its extensive grounds, including a walled garden, are open daily, apart from Saturday, from April to September. Admission charges apply.

Ladyhill

The site of Elgin Castle in medieval times, the mound known as Ladyhill is where Elgin's most prominent landmark, the monument to the 5th Duke of Gordon, can be seen. The 80ft column was erected in 1839 and the statue of the duke added in 1855.



A barrel of laughs at the Speyside Whisky Festival every May

Whisky Festival

Aficionados of Scotland's national drink make the annual pilgrimage to the Spirit of Speyside Whisky Festival which takes place in May. A packed programme of events spans several days and includes distillery tours, whisky tastings, talks, theme dinners, ceilidhs and visits to places of interest. All the sites offer guided tours, including the cooperage where visitors can have a go at making a cask.

Elgin High Street

The centre of Elgin is dominated by St Giles' Church, built in 1827 and named in honour of the town's patron saint. Nearby is the Muckle Cross, a market cross restored in 1888 after the original was demolished, while at the east end of High Street is the Little Cross where transgressors had punishment meted out to them. The west end of High Street is dominated by the façade of Dr Gray's Hospital with its commanding dome.

Golf

Anyone coming to Moray for a fortnight's holiday can play a round of golf on a different course every day. Its reputation for choice and quality of courses is unrivalled. Visitors are welcome at all 14 clubs and green fees are among the cheapest anywhere in Scotland.

Lecht

The Lecht ski centre straddles the Cockbridge-Tomintoul road at just over 2,000ft although the chairlifts rise to around 2,500ft. It is one of Scotland's five ski centres and attracts winter sports enthusiasts from far and near. In recent years it has diversified to become a year-round resort, with quad bikes and karting among the attractions.

Moray Leisure Centre

Opened in 1993, the Moray Leisure Centre in Elgin has a wide range of facilities for people of all ages. Its 25 metre pool is used by swimmers both for fun and fitness, while its ice rink is popular with skaters and curlers and is also used for ice hockey. The centre also has a health and wellness suite and a healthy eating café and is open seven days a week.



Fishing Museum

The recently extended Buckie and District Fishing Heritage Centre has an unrivalled collection of exhibits which traces the history of the fishing and boat-building industries in the area. Housed in a converted cottage and run by volunteers, the centre has over 7,000 photographs and a comprehensive database of all vessels built in local boatyards over the years. Open during the summer, otherwise by arrangement.

Grouse Inn

Situated on the A941 Dufftown to Rhynie Road at the Cabrach and surrounded by heather-clad hillside, the Grouse Inn has been a popular staging post for generations of hungry and thirsty travellers. The family-run business boasts one of the largest collections of whiskies anywhere. Open daily throughout the summer.

Bothy Ballads Festival

A full house is guaranteed for Elgin Rotary Club's annual festival of bothy ballads at the town hall. The event, held in early February, is a celebration of the Doric and helps to keep alive many of the homespun songs which emanated mainly from the north-east farming community of yesteryear. The audience can also look forward to a plate of stovies and a dram of whisky during the interval.

Sueno's Stone

This 20ft high stone of Pictish origin stands only yards from the main A96 on the outskirts of Forres. Its carvings date from 800 to 900AD and depict a bloody battle, although, in the absence of any inscription, exactly which battle no one knows for sure. The stone was encased in glass a number of years ago to protect it from further weathering.

Scalan

The survival of Catholicism in Scotland following the Reformation owes much to Scalan, a small seminary nestling in the hills at the remote Braes of Glenlivet where young priests were trained. The original building was destroyed after Culloden but it was replaced in the 1770s by the simple building which survives today and which is looked after by the Scalan Association. It is open to visitors year round.

Nelson's Tower

This octagonal tower at Forres was built by public subscription in 1806 to honour Horatio Nelson and his famous victory at Trafalgar. Visitors can climb the 96-step spiral stairway to the rooftop and enjoy spectacular views across the Moray Firth. The tower also houses Nelson memorabilia. Open during the summer, admission free.

Falconer Museum

The museum in Forres was founded in 1871 by the family of locally-born naturalist and palaeontologist Dr Hugh Falconer, a contemporary of Darwin who did much of his research in India. Recently redeveloped, the museum houses a wide-ranging collection, including some of Falconer's fossil finds. Open year round, restricted hours in winter. Admission free.

Speyfest

This four-day festival of Celtic culture featuring music, song and crafts is held in Fochabers, normally in late July or early August. Organised by a local committee, many of the events take place in marquees pitched on the village playing fields. The festival features performers from home and abroad and has become an annual fixture on the Scottish music scene.

Findhorn Bay

One of Moray's most scenic spots, the bay's shallow waters are popular with water sports enthusiasts and also provide a safe haven for yachts and pleasure craft. The bay is a designated nature reserve and attracts thousands of migrating wildfowl and wading birds, particularly in autumn. Sitting at one corner of the bay is the village of Findhorn, home of the Royal Findhorn Yacht Club and with its own local heritage centre.

Pluscarden Abbey

Located in a peaceful setting in the Vale of Pluscarden, the abbey, founded in 1230, is the only medieval monastery in Britain still inhabited by monks. The small community of Benedictine monks returned to Pluscarden in 1948 to restore the abbey which had been abandoned many years before. Visitors are welcome.

Speyside Way

Walkers who want to enjoy some of the best scenery that Moray has to offer could do worse than take to the Speyside Way, which as its name suggests follows the course of the River Spey although the last few miles to Buckie hug the coastline. The route is waymarked and a number of maps and leaflets are available.

Highland Games

Four of Moray's communities stage their own annual Highland Games in the summer – Dufftown, Tomintoul, Aberlour and Forres. Featuring a mixture of track and field events, the emphasis is on the traditional competitions such as tossing the caber. The games are particularly popular with visitors to the area and their participation in the various competitions is encouraged.



Grant Park is host to a wide variety of events such as arts festivals

Grant Park

With its wide open spaces and wooded backdrop, Grant Park has played a pivotal role in Forres's long-running successes in major national floral and environmental competitions, among them 'Britain in Bloom' and 'Beautiful Scotland In Bloom'. The park's sunken garden and floral sculptures are a magnet for visitors.