

Breathtaking Scotland



In April this year and after much planning, Kimberley and I spent ten fantastic days in Scotland, riding some of the most thrilling roads we have ever ridden in the UK. A motorbike trip to Scotland is no small undertaking for those of us based in the South of England, but the effort was well worth it.

You could say we 'cheated' in a way as, rather than ride the 400 plus mile journey to our destination near Crieff in Perthshire, we loaded our bikes onto our two-bike trailer, filled the car with all our suitcases, bike gear and our two Dachshunds and set off early to avoid as much of the Good Friday traffic as we could. The journey was almost all motorway and dual carriageway which we find are the best roads to use when towing. The fewer twists and turns the better when you are hauling a Ducati Multistrada and a BMW S1000R behind you.

For those considering towing, here is our first top piece of advice. The entries, exits and connecting roads at motorway services are often in terrible condition and you need to be extra vigilant for potholes, bumps and failed road surfaces here. We have towed the bikes for thousands of miles and the only two times we have had a ratchet strap bounce out of place is on the exits from services.

The journey took ten hours in total which is gruelling, but we arrived at our rented holiday home comfortable, tired but happy to be there and relaxed in the evening sun.



- **Motorcycle Servicing**
- **Suspension Specialist**
- **Tyre Fitting**
- **Machining Services**
- **Collection & Drop Off**



07769 183 068

Our reason for choosing to stay near Crieff was so we could ride routes which make up the "Crieff Cloverleaf". To explain, a group of bikers have devised a set of circular routes which start and finish in the lovely town of Crieff and have shared them on their website www.cloverleaf.scot. There are 4 main long routes named North, East, South and West ranging from 180 to 240 miles and 4 'little leaves' which are all around the 100-mile mark. All the routes are available from their website in GPX and Waypoint formats and all start from the easy to find Crieff Visitor Centre.

We took it easy for the first couple of days as there is plenty to do in and around Crieff. The major landmarks of The Kelpies and the Falkirk Wheel are less than an hour away and Dundee, with its recently regenerated waterfront and historic railway bridge is also within easy reach.



On our third day there, we decided to take our first ride and chose the 'Little Leaf Northwest' as our first taste of Scotland's roads by bike. Well, all I can say really is that from the moment we left the outskirts of Crieff, the roads opened up into rolling moorland full of twisty, well maintained, largely traffic free roads. The scenery was truly spectacular with dramatic mountains, tranquil lochs, and managed woodlands all around. Our first day took us through the confusingly Welsh sounding Aberfeldy, through the village of Dull (twinned with Boring in Oregon) and on to lunch at Killin.

This first ride out had given us a flavour of what was to come, so our next full ride was the 240 mile 'North Leaf'. This route included what we now think of as our new favourite road; a section of the A924 between Comrie and Kirkmichael. It really is stunning, with far too many twists and turns to count, it was a technical, spirited ride of long sweeping curves, rapid elevation changes and tight, almost chicane like



OH MY NOSH! BESPOKE PRIVATE DINING//CORPORATE CATERING

BESPOKE MENUS. BESPOKE PRICES...
FOR YOUR BESPOKE EVENT!
BRINGING THE CHEF TABLE TO YOUR TABLE.

www.ohmynoishcatering.com   [@ohmynoishcatering](https://www.instagram.com/ohmynoishcatering)  [@ohmynoishcatering](https://twitter.com/ohmynoishcatering)



dips and turns. I described parts of it as like doing Look, Lean, Roll in 3D. We arrived in the tiny village of Kirkmichael elated and ready for coffee and cake which was plentiful at the charming Community Village Shop. The shop is next door to a vintage car specialist and we spent a while chatting to the owner and admiring a Lagonda which dated back to long before it joined with Aston Martin.

We were only about a quarter of the way round this loop at this point and the route continued North to Braemar, Tomintoul (for lunch) and Aviemore. Again, the roads were largely empty and utterly breath taking. We'd frequently ride over a crest and just say "Wow" over the helmet comms at yet another spectacular view.

Here's another tip. There are a lot of elevation changes and hidden dips on these moorland roads so remember the advice that you "must be able to stop in the distance you can see on your side of the road". Remember that the obstacle you might encounter is just as likely to be a sheep as a Range Rover in these parts. Also, for large sections of this route there are Snow Poles on either side of the road which are very useful for those crests where it takes a moment to resolve if the road goes straight on, left or right after the hump. The top of the snow poles will be your first clue and help you set up for the next bend.

Next, we rode the 'West Leaf', which takes in the southern part of the Highlands and passes through Glencoe, Oban and Inveraray and includes more beautiful Lochs than you can count. It also includes Gleaner Gas Station near the Bridge of Awe. I only mention this as it was nearby to where Kimberley got a puncture in her rear tyre. Fortunately, we had a repair kit with us and plugged the hole sufficiently to get back to the gas station for air. Our repair kit was lacking a blade for cutting the excess repair string off and we think it stuck to the road and was ripped out on the short journey. With a second string inserted, I popped in to see if I could borrow a blade, only to find they had them for sale in the hardware section of the general store. Can you imagine finding a petrol station that also sells 3 inch blades in Berkshire?

Kimberley's tyre was close to the wear bars anyway by this point, so we called a tyre fitter back in Crieff who not only could fit her in the next day, but also had the

specific tyres she wanted in stock and ready to go.

Top tip number three. The roads up in this part of the world are mostly the course gravel embedded in tar type that you may have encountered in Wales or the leafier parts of TVAM territory. These roads are really abrasive so make sure you have plenty of tread and take into account you'll get less mileage than you think out of the rubber you have on.

Our last two riding days took in the full 'Little Leaf Northeast' route and on our last riding day, a hybrid route where we combined the start of the North loop with the Northeast loop in reverse specifically so that we could enjoy the A924 to Kirkmichael again. We stopped at the same Community shop again for more cake and coffee and a most delicious individual venison meat pie.

In our 10 days there, we were blessed with the most wonderful weather. Mostly sunny, not too hot, not too cold, though mornings were on the fresh side. We also scheduled our trip to be outside midge season. From what I read, most of the areas we rode in were not particularly prone to midges, but we felt it best to be on the safe side by going in April.

All in all, the trip to Scotland was well worth the long drive. Knowing what I know now, I'd say it could quite comfortably be done by bike all the way too if we'd not had the trailer available. All sorts of accommodation is available in the area, from swanky hotels to glamping pods. The Crieff Cloverleaf website includes plenty of advice on accommodation, places to eat and general information on making the best of your trip.

So, if you want to spread your wings further than the Thames Valley but don't want to get on a ferry or Eurotunnel, Scotland might be just the place for you.

Dee Scott

