There are more castles per acre in Aberdeenshire than anywhere else in the UK, so it’s not surprising to learn that this area is home to Scotland’s only Castle Trail. Consisting of 17 of the region’s most striking castles and stately homes, hear about the (sometimes gruesome) history of Aberdeenshire, see some awesome defensive architecture, admire fine art and armour and touch the past.

Enjoy a fantastic family day out at Crathes Castle, near Banchory, with its expansive grounds, walking trails, adventure playground and Go Ape course. Plan your siege of the dramatic cliff-top castle of Dunnottar near Stonehaven. Learn about 18th century Jacobite uprisings and suppression at medieval Corgarff Castle in Strathdon with its distinctive 18th century star-shaped perimeter wall. And visit the enchanting Craigievar Castle near Alford, which reputedly inspired the design of Walt Disney’s fairytale castles.

Which of the castles on the Trail might have inspired DunBroch Castle in Disney•Pixar’s Brave?

Castle tours are great fun for all the family! Visit the regal gardens, grounds and exhibitions of Balmoral Castle, a Scottish residence of the Royal Family since 1856. Find out about the powerful Earls of Mar and spend some time in the children’s adventure playground at Castle Fraser or hear tales of battles and ghosts at Braemar Castle. Some castles along the trail have specific facilities and activities for families and children (look out for the families’ symbol overleaf).

In 2013, the Year of Natural Scotland, why not learn about the natural wonders around the sites on Scotland’s Castle Trail? Several castles include beautifully maintained formal gardens and extensive estates with walking trails which are well worth exploring.

Follow the distinctive white-on-brown roadside signs with the blue castle logo, which will lead you through the heart of the region on a historic journey complete with secret corridors, haunted rooms and atmospheric dungeons.

Cover: Castle Fraser, Garden & Estate, near Kemnay

www.visitscotland.com/castletrail
Aberdeenshire

Aberdeenshire is a region rich in beauty and heritage from the inland summits of the Cairngorms National Park and Royal Deeside, to the stunning beaches, clifftops and coves of the Banffshire, Mearns and East Grampian coasts.

There’s so much to see and do in Aberdeenshire and 2013, the Year of Natural Scotland, is the perfect time to explore this lovely part of Scotland. Watch bottlenose dolphins breaching off the Banffshire Coast - ‘Scotland’s Dolphin Coast’, or take a squawk on the wild side and head for the high cliffs of RSPB Troup Head near Pennan - a spectacular setting for Scotland’s only mainland gannet colony. On the East Grampian Coasts take in special National Nature Reserves at Forvie, with its seabirds, shifting sands and half-buried 12th century church, and at St Cyrus with its broad beach and colourful summer grasslands.

Get out into our natural playground and you’ll find an array of exciting pursuits to try. Test your game with a round on some of the best links and parkland golf layouts to be found in Scotland. With a choice of over 50 venues (and counting), you’ll easily be able to combine a round with a visit to a castle along the trail. Go to www.aberdeen-grampian.com/golf to find out more and request a copy of the 2013 golf guide.

But there’s more than just golf available here - try mountain biking at Pitfichie or skiing at Glenshee or The Lecht, sea kayaking off the Banffshire Coast, or walking along the Victorian Heritage Trail. Investigate the magnificent north east coastline on the Coastal Trail. Cover all or part of the 165 continuous miles of clifftops, coves and beaches, visiting quaint cliff-hugging villages and sentinel lighthouses along the way.

At the most southerly point of the Trail at St Cyrus, a National Nature Reserve with a vast beach, head along the rugged coastline until you reach Dunnottar Castle, which is spectacularly situated on a rocky outcrop above the North Sea.

A couple of miles north is the charming harbour town of Stonehaven. The lovely inns by the delightful harbour serve up delicious fresh local produce.

Balmudie is a couple of miles north of Aberdeen, with epic sand dunes and a brilliant stretch of beach. You’ll find the Trump International Golf Links near here too.

Further north up the coast is the pretty town of Cruden Bay. A collapsed sea cave has resulted in a near circular chasm 30 m deep, allowing you to watch the sea rushing in through a natural archway. You’ll also spot mainland puffins, razorbills, kittiwakes and guillemots on this clifftop walk where care is required.

Take a walk along the esplanade in the fishing town of Fraserburgh before continuing miles of clifftops and beaches. You’ll find the Trump International Golf Links near here too.

Travel deeper into Royal Deeside and stop by the Cambus O’ My suspension bridge, which spans the River Dee and is an excellent picnic spot.

The Royal Deeside Railway near Crathes Castle, was used by generations of the Royal Family to get from Aberdeen to Balmoral before the line closed in 1966. Experience the past on a return train trip which run regularly along a restored one-mile stretch of the line. www.deeside-railway.co.uk

Don’t miss the majestic views towards Lochnagar, Morven and Mount Keen that stopped Queen Victoria in her tracks, at the Queen’s View near Tarland.

Aberdeenshire and Victorian heritage became inextricably linked when Queen Victoria and Prince Albert first visited Deeside (later Royal Deeside), in 1842. The Victorian Heritage Trail is a spectacular journey into the Don and Dee valleys exploring regal and historic highlights along the way.

You’ll find a number of award-winning parks and gardens in Aberdeen such as Hazlehead Park, Duthie Park and Seaton Park.

Walk or cycle sections of the Deeside Way from Duthie Park in Aberdeen to historic Ballater.

The Royal Deeside Railway near Crathes Castle, was used by generations of the Royal Family to get from Aberdeen to Balmoral before the line closed in 1966. Experience the past on a return train trip which run regularly along a restored one-mile stretch of the line. www.deeside-railway.co.uk

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A lovey inns by the delightful harbour serve up delicious fresh local produce.

For more on what to see and do in Aberdeenshire go to www.aberdeen-grampian.com/explore

And after you’ve finished exploring Aberdeenshire’s stunning countryside, head into the cosmopolitan ‘Granite City’ of Aberdeen where you’ll find the perfect blend of museums, theatres, shops and restaurants.

Find out more about the Victorian Heritage Trail at www.discoverroyaldeeside.com/vht

Visit Royal Deeside when Victoria Week takes place. www.victoriaweek.org

Enjoy a gentle stroll around the pretty town of Ballater, which for its size has more Royal Warrants than any other place in the world. Visit in August when Victoria Week takes place. www.victoriaweek.org

Discover more about Aberdeenshire’s fascinating Victorian Heritage Trail at www.discoverroyaldeeside.com/vht

Find out more about Aberdeenshire’s fantastic Coastal Trail at www.aberdeen-grampian.com
Aberdeen City and Shire's abundance of attractions, activities and eateries provides the perfect excuse to return and discover more, time and time again. As well as numerous castles and other themed trails, including the Victorian Heritage and Coastal Trails, you’ll find a fine selection of things to see and do and places to stay here. See the entries below for some ideas and if you need more information, go to www.aberdeen-grampian.com/explore

Duff House near Banff, one of Scotland's architectural masterpieces.

What's On

Why not combine a trip to an event or festival with a tour of a castle?

- Visit the Braemar Gathering on the first Saturday in September and Braemar Castle (No. 15 on the trail).
- Combine a trip in mid July to Stonehaven Highland Games with a tour of dramatic Dunnottar Castle (No. 1 on the trail).
- A day out at Turiff Agricultural Show in August can be extended with visits to Fyvie Castle, (number 7 on the trail) or Delgatie Castle (number 8 on the trail).

More information about what's on in Aberdeenshire can be found at www.aberdeen-grampian.com/events
Use the 17 numbered entries below and the map on the last page to navigate your way around Scotland’s Castle Trail. The location of each site is highlighted with a castle symbol on the map and a map grid reference in the top right corner of each entry to allow you to plan your journey around the trail. And look out for other featured locations along or near the trail highlighted by alphabetic purple place markers. Some key information for each site is shown in the entries below, and you can also find out more at www.visitscotland.com/castletrail.

1. **Dunnotar Castle**
   - **Castle Trail**
   - **Opening times:** May-Oct 10.00am-5.00pm
   - **Entry charge:** Adult £10.00 | Family £23.50 | 1 Parent family £22.00 | Concession £7.00
   - **Getting here:** Stonehaven, Aberdeenshire AB39 2TL
   - **Telephone:** 01241 877373
   - **Historic Scotland**

2. **Crathes Castle, Garden & Estate**
   - **Visitor Attraction**
   - **Opening times:** 23 Mar-30 Oct, Daily 10.30am-4.30pm
   - **Entry charge:** Adult £4.50 | Child £2.70 | Concession £3.60
   - **Getting here:** Near Banchory, Aberdeenshire AB31 5EY
   - **Telephone:** 01888 563479
   - **National Trust for Scotland**

3. **Drum Castle, Garden and Estate**
   - **Castle Trail**
   - **Opening times:** Daily 10.00am-4.30pm
   - **Entry charge:** Adult £6.00 | Child £3.00 | Concession £4.00
   - **Getting here:** Off A944, 2 miles north of Ballater AB30 1TE
   - **Telephone:** 01800 818081
   - **National Trust for Scotland**

4. **Castle Fraser, Garden & Estate**
   - **Castle Trail**
   - **Opening times:** Daily 10.00am-5.00pm
   - **Entry charge:** Adult £8.00 | Concession £5.00 | Children £5.00 | Family ticket £25.00
   - **Getting here:** Tarff, Aberdeenshire AB51 7LD
   - **Telephone:** 01844 536479
   - **www.delgatiecastle.com**

5. **Tolquhon Castle**
   - **Castle Trail**
   - **Opening times:** All year
   - **Entry charge:** Free to National Trust for Scotland members (membership can be set up on arrival)
   - **Getting here:** Off B999, 19 miles north of Aberdeen AB41 7EQ
   - **Telephone:** 01261 818181
   - **www.duffhouse.org.uk**

6. **Haddo House**
   - **Historic House**
   - **Opening times:** 29 Mar-30 Jun, Daily 10.00am-5.00pm
   - **Entry charge:** Adult £8.00 | Concession £5.00 | Children £5.00 | Family ticket £20.00
   - **Getting here:** On A93, 3 miles east of Banchory AB31 5QJ
   - **Telephone:** 01343 546358
   - **National Trust for Scotland**

7. **Fyvie Castle**
   - **Historic House**
   - **Opening times:** Daily 10.00am-5.00pm
   - **Entry charge:** Adult £7.00 | Family £13.50 | 1 Parent family £12.00 | Concession £6.00
   - **Getting here:** Stonehaven, Aberdeenshire AB39 2TL
   - **Telephone:** 01241 877373
   - **National Trust for Scotland**

8. **Delgatie Castle**
   - **Castle Trail**
   - **Opening times:** Daily 10.00am-5.00pm
   - **Entry charge:** Adult £10.00 | Family £23.50 | 1 Parent family £22.00 | Concession £7.00
   - **Getting here:** Stonehaven, Aberdeenshire AB39 2TL
   - **Telephone:** 01241 877373
   - **National Trust for Scotland**

9. **Duff House**
   - **Historic House**
   - **Opening times:** All year
   - **Entry charge:** Adult £5.00 | Child £3.30 | Concession £4.00
   - **Getting here:** Off B999, 19 miles north of Aberdeen AB41 7EQ
   - **Telephone:** 01844 536479
   - **National Trust for Scotland**

10. **Huntly Castle**
    - **Castle Trail**
    - **Opening times:** All year
    - **Entry charge:** Adult £4.50 | Child £2.70 | Concession £3.60
    - **Getting here:** Off the A944 1½ miles north of Huntly AB54 4DN
    - **Telephone:** 01844 536479
    - **National Trust for Scotland**

11. **Spynie Palace**
    - **Historic Attraction**
    - **Opening times:** All year
    - **Entry charge:** Adult £6.00 | Child £3.00 | Concession £4.00
    - **Getting here:** Off the A944 1½ miles north of Huntly AB54 4DN
    - **Telephone:** 01844 536479
    - **National Trust for Scotland**

12. **Balvenie Castle**
    - **Castle Trail**
    - **Opening times:** Summer only
    - **Entry charge:** Adult £4.50 | Child £2.70 | Concession £3.60
    - **Getting here:** Off the A944 1½ miles north of Huntly AB54 4DN
    - **Telephone:** 01844 536479
    - **National Trust for Scotland**

**Note:** One of Scotland’s finest architectural masterpieces designed by William Adam and built in the 18th century as a seat for the Earls Fife. The house now contains works on loan from The National Galleries of Scotland.

**Historic Scotland**
- **Dunnotar Castle**
- **Crathes Castle, Garden & Estate**
- **Drum Castle, Garden and Estate**
- **Haddo House**
- **Fyvie Castle**
- **Duff House**
- **Huntly Castle**
- **Spynie Palace**
- **Balvenie Castle**

**Historic Attraction**
- **Castle Fraser, Garden & Estate**

**National Trust for Scotland**
- **Tolquhon Castle**
- **Haddo House**
- **Fyvie Castle**
- **Duff House**
- **Huntly Castle**
- **Spynie Palace**

**Tours & Tickets**
- **Dunnotar Castle**
- **Crathes Castle, Garden & Estate**
- **Drum Castle, Garden and Estate**
- **Haddo House**
- **Fyvie Castle**
- **Duff House**
- **Huntly Castle**
- **Spynie Palace**
- **Balvenie Castle**
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Castle</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Opening Times</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Contact</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Braemar Castle</strong></td>
<td>Historic House</td>
<td>All year</td>
<td>Banff, Aberdeenshire AB45 3SX</td>
<td><a href="http://www.braemarcastle.com">www.braemarcastle.com</a></td>
<td>One of Scotland’s finest architectural masterpieces designed by William Adam and built in the 18th century as a seat for the Earls of Buchan. It later became the home of John Stewart, Earl of Atholl. The Stewarts changed the formidable medieval stronghold into a pleasing Renaissance residence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Balmoral Castle</strong></td>
<td>Visitor Attraction</td>
<td>1 Apr-31 Jul: 9.30am-5.30pm; 1 Aug-30 Sep: 10am-4.30pm; closed 18 &amp; 25 Sept</td>
<td>Balmoral Estate, Ballater AB35 5TB</td>
<td><a href="http://www.balmoralcastle.com">www.balmoralcastle.com</a></td>
<td>Fairy tale castle built by the Earl of Mar in 1628, garrison for Hanoverian troops after Culloden, home to the Chiefs of Clan Farquharson. Scotland’s only community run castle.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
With our extensive network of buses and coaches across the North East, getting around the many castles of the area has never been easier!

For more travel and destination suggestions pick up one of our Discover... leaflets from the local travel shop or visit www.stagecoachbus.com for more information.