



40 fascinating 'facts' about Dufftown & Surrounds

1. The Keith and Dufftown Railway is an eleven-mile historic line linking the World's Malt Whisky Capital, Dufftown, to the market town of Keith. It opened in 1862.
2. The line closed to passengers in 1968 but reopened again in 2000, first to Drummuir and then later to Keith.
3. Craigellachie marks the northern boundary of the territory of Clan Grant. Another Craigellachie close to Aviemore marks the southern boundary of Clan Grant.
4. The highest hill in the Dufftown area is Ben Rinnes, at 2755 feet.
5. George Stephen (Lord Mount Stephen), born in Glenrinnies in 1829 and educated in Dufftown was a joint promoter of the Canadian Pacific Railway.
6. George Stephen christened the spot where the last spike in the Canadian Pacific Railway was driven, Craigellachie.
7. King Malcolm II of Scotland defeated an army of Scandinavian invaders at Mortlach nearby Dufftown. The Mortlach Battle Stone close to River Dullan commemorates the event.
8. Craigellachie Bridge is a cast iron arch bridge located in Speyside at Craigellachie designed by the renowned Scots civil engineer Thomas Telford. Built from 1812–1814, the bridge has a single span of approximately 46m and was revolutionary for its time, in that it used an extremely slender arch, which was not possible using traditional masonry construction.
9. That's the oldest surviving bridge in Scotland. It cost £8200 to build.
10. The Spirit of Speyside whisky festival takes place annually (www.spiritofspeyside.com). Learn more than you thought possible about whisky!
11. There's also a Dufftown whisky festival in the autumn each year.
12. James Duff, 4th Earl of Fife, founded Dufftown after he returned from the Napoleonic Wars as a hero.
13. The River Fiddich runs through Dufftown, and its valley gives its name to the famous Glenfiddich distillery, which is situated there.
14. The Speyside Way has around 105 miles of way-marked walks. This includes a spur, which leads walkers to Dufftown. Perhaps for some locally inspired spiritual education.
15. Mortlach is probably the oldest bishopric in the north dating from around the 8th Century. Malcolm II enhanced its cathedral in thanksgiving for victory against Danish invaders. The see was moved to Aberdeen in the 12th Century.
16. Evidence of early Christianity is found at Mortlach. It is thought that St Moluag founded a Christian church there in the 6th Century. St Moluag was contemporary with St Columba.
17. Balvenie Castle from the 13th Century was a stronghold of the Black Comyn, Earls of Buchan. Their family lost fortune by being mortal enemies of Robert the Bruce who murdered Red Comyn in Dumfries, his closest rival, for the kingship of Scotland.
18. Balvenie underwent a renaissance palace style renovation, a la Huntly Castle in the 16th Century when the Castle was in the hands of John Stewart, 4th Earl of Atholl.
19. Mortlach Saskatchewan (Canada) was twinned with Mortlach Dufftown (Scotland) during the Spirit of Speyside Whisky Festival in early May 2003. The Canadian town was named after the Scots one, one of a number of northeast names that were introduced to Canada by Lord Mount Stephen of Dufftown during his work with the Canadian Pacific Railway.
20. Auchindoon Castle was a Gordon stronghold. Held by Edim o Gordon, it was burned down in the 16th Century. Edim himself had seen the burning of Corgarff Castle resulting in the death of 27 Forbes, his sworn enemies. The Forbes were mostly women and children.
21. Craigellachie is home to a unique spectacle in the Speyside Cooperage. It is the only cooperage in Scotland where there is a visitor centre which allows live viewing of the coopers at work. Fascinating.
22. Ben Aigan Forest offers three linked mountain bike trails. These can be accessed from the car park and include 'The Hammer', a red (difficult) route around the summit with big earth features and board walk sections, 'The Mast Blast', another red route with fast downhill sections and

single track switchbacks and 'The Pink Fluffy Bunny', a black (severe) route for more experienced riders.

23. The Quaich Bar of the Craigellachie Hotel is world renowned for its collection of ready to drink malt whisky. Almost 700 different single malts around all the walls await you in its cosy, club-like atmosphere.
24. The area around Keith and Dufftown has a number of Neolithic, one example is the superb recumbent stone circle, a northeast phenomenon, which lies just north of Milton of Rothiemay.
25. The Isla Way connects Dufftown and Keith with a way marked trail.
26. Dufftown produces more malt whisky than any other town in Scotland.
27. Dufftown Highland Games celebrations are held annually.
28. Loch Park was created in the Victorian period as a beauty spot for visitors to nearby Drummuir Castle. Set in the malt whisky trail between Keith and Dufftown in the picturesque Strathisla Valley, Loch Park provides excellent facilities for anyone interested in outdoor pursuits.
29. Charlestown of Aberlour is the home of the world's most famous shortbread – Walker's. Joseph Walker moved to Aberlour in 1909 from Torphins in Aberdeenshire because he needed larger premises.
30. Rome may be built on 7 hills but Dufftown was founded on 7 STILLs, apparently!
31. One of the best-known families historically associated with whisky-making is the Grants. Their long association with whisky is reflected in the Gaelic nick-name of the Grant menfolk: 'Clann na braiche' – the malt boys!
32. The Clan Grant motto is 'Stand Fast Craigellachie'.
33. The first record of whisky is in the Scottish Exchequer Rolls of 1494 requesting 'eight bolls of malt to Friar John Cor werewith to make aqua vitae'.
34. Distilling originated in the Middle East and arrived in Scotland in the 9th Century.
35. Tax was first levied on whisky in 1644 at 2 shillings and eightpence (13p) per pint.
36. Tax on whisky rose steeply after the Union of the Scots and English parliaments in 1707, in an attempt to discourage illicit stills.
37. Ancient Greek explorer Ptolemy's map of this part of Scotland (or what subsequently became known as Scotland) named the indigenous people of this area the 'vacomagi', a reference to the fact they were cattle herders.
38. The parish church of Mortlach is one of the oldest in the north, having been rebuilt as long ago as the 13th Century.
39. Dufftown Golf course's 9th tee is one of the highest in UK being 1294ft above sea level. Both the 7th hole and the 10th feature in Britain's 100 Extraordinary Golf Holes.
40. The Glenlivet Estate between Dufftown and Tomintoul is owned by the Crown Estates (ie the Queen!) but she doesn't own the famous distillery there that produces The Glenlivet malt whisky. It's owned by Pernod Ricard.