

SCOTTISH HIGHLANDS

MAN



CLASSIC

SCOTTISH HIGHLANDS & ISLE OF MAN

“ The Isle of Man and northern Great Britain: a magical wonderland and any rider’s dream! ”

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RIDING DAY 1 : LIVERPOOL - DOUGLAS

Standard Route (150 km / 93 miles)

To catch the afternoon ferry from Heysham to the Isle of Man we could ride directly to the port, but we don't do that of course. First, we would be there much too early, and second, there is a beautiful area on the way that is very sparsely populated and crisscrossed by very narrow roads. In this "Forest of Bowland," we get to meet those narrow little roads that are so typical for England.

Afterwards, we ride to Heysham, have lunch, and then the ferry leaves for the legendary Isle of Man! The crossing takes about 2 hours, after that you can walk around Douglas and compare the local beers in one of the cozy pubs. Bushy's or Okell's?

Highlights:

#1: Forest of Bowland



The Forest of Bowland, a vast hilly area, belongs geographically to the Pennines, a mountain range also called the "backbone of England". The "Forest" consists mainly of high moorland, but there are also woods, typical stone walls, ancient stone farmsteads, countless sheep and extremely narrow roads. People, on the other hand, are not too numerous in this area.

#2: Isle of Man



The Isle of Man, otherwise known simply as Manx, is a self-governing British Crown Dependency, located in the Irish Sea between the islands of Great Britain and Ireland, within the British Isles. The island is not part of the United Kingdom, but its foreign relations and defense are the responsibility of the UK Government. The island has been inhabited since 6500 BC. In the 9th century, the Norse

began to settle there. In 1266, the island became part of Scotland. After a period of alternating rule by the kings of Scotland and England, the island came under the feudal overlordship of the English Crown in 1399. The lordship reverted to the British Crown in 1764, but the island never became part of the United Kingdom and retained its status as an internally self-governing jurisdiction.

The main international event associated with the island is the Isle of Man Tourist Trophy race, colloquially known as "The TT", which began in 1907. It takes place in late May and early June. The TT is now an international road racing event for motorcycles, which used to be part of the World Championship. It has long been considered one of the "greatest motorcycle sporting events of the world". Taking place over a two-week period, it has become a festival for motorcycling culture. It makes a huge contribution to the island's economy and has become part of the Manx identity. For many, the Isle carries the title "road racing capital of the world". The Manx Grand Prix is a separate motorcycle event for amateurs and private entrants that uses the same 37.70-mile Snaefell Mountain Course in late August and early September.

#3: Douglas



Douglas is by far the biggest and most important city on the Isle of Man. One out of three Manxmen and -women live here, a total of 28,000 people. The city is famous for the two mile-long sweep of Victorian buildings that line the promenade along the bay, a great backdrop for long walks or rides in horse-drawn carriages. Or on your bike, of course. All the TT races start and finish in Douglas, at the

Grandstand, a purpose-built structure that stays in place all year, not only for the TT. In fact, it also serves other motorsports events like the Manx GP.

Douglas may be a little rough around the edges but it has an amazing atmosphere, especially during the race week when thousands of bikes and riders from around the world fill the streets and the pubs are hopping and bopping with live music and party.

RIDING DAY 2 : DOUGLAS

Standard Route (172 km / 107 miles)

The Isle of Man is a quiet little island, except when the Tourist Trophy and the ManxGP take place. Then everybody gets crazy with race fever, the locals as well as thousands of visitors from around the world. While riding through the little villages it is hard to believe that during the weeks of racing the fearless riders take the turns at racing speed and even jump over the little bridges.

For us, however, the loop around the island and on the TT race track, the so-called Mountain Course, is a scenic ride at 'normal' speed. During our ride we will stop at Peel Castle and look for the Black Dog Ghost.

There is also a bigger loop around the island, beyond the Mountain Course. Attractions here are Castletown and Peel Castle, two landmarks of the IoM. During this leisurly ride, you will find out that there's more to the Isle of Man than just racing.

Highlights:

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#2: Peel Castle



Peel Castle was originally constructed in the 11th century by Vikings. The castle stands on St. Patrick's Isle, which is connected to the town by a causeway. In the early 14th century, the majority of the walls and towers were built primarily from local red sandstone, which is abundant in the area. After the rule of the Vikings the castle continued to be used by the church--due to the cathedral built there--

but was eventually abandoned in the 18th century. The buildings within the castle are now mostly ruined, but the outer walls remain intact. The castle's most famous "resident" is the so-called Moddey Dhoo or Black Dog Ghost. Peel Castle is featured on the reverse side of the 10 pound notes issued by the Isle of Man government.

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RIDING DAY 3 : DOUGLAS - LAKE DISTRICT

Standard Route (280 km / 174 miles)

We say goodbye to the Isle of Man, catch the early ferry and sail back to England. Four hours later we arrive in Heysham, head to the motorway and go straight to the famous Lake District. This is one of the most beautiful and best-loved regions in England, a wonderland of lakes, rivers, forests and hills, criss-crossed by narrow, twisty motorcycle roads. Highlights there include Lake Windermere, England's largest natural lake, the single track road of Hardknott Pass and Castlerigg stone circle right outside of Keswick. One afternoon in the Lake District will be enough for you to fall in love with it.

Highlights:

#1: Castlerigg stone circle



Castlerigg Stone Circle, near Keswick, is one of the most visually impressive prehistoric monuments in Britain. It is the most visited stone circle in Cumbria. Every year, thousands of people make the short journey from Keswick to the plateau of Castlerigg Fell and to Chestnut Hill, on which the monument stands. This plateau forms the raised center of a natural amphitheatre created by the surrounding fells. From within the circle it is possible to see some of the highest peaks in Cumbria: Helvellyn, Skiddaw, Grasmoor and Blencathra.

#2: Lake District



The area comprising the Lake District was formed during several ice ages. The ice created a couple of valleys, most of them with lakes inside, surrounded by mountains up to 3,120 ft. high. Large sections of the Lake District were declared a National Park in 1951. This is considered to be the most beautiful park in merry olde England.

Optional Route (205 km / 127 miles)

To give you a bit of extra time at Castlerigg Stone Circle and in Keswick we designed a shorter route through Lakes District National Park. After leaving the motorway we pass the town of Kendal and head straight up towards one of the

most (in)famous mountain roads in all of England. Kirkstone pass is steep (up to 25%), narrow and twisty and offers wonderful views of the surrounding valleys and mountains. On the pass is the historic Kirkstone Pass Inn that dates back to at least 1496 and is therefore considered to be among the UK's oldest. It is, at almost 1,500 ft, also the UK's third-highest inn.

Record or not, we head down the northern side to Ullswater, one of the many lakes that gave the region and the park its name. If you don't mind a short walk you can see Aira Force, a 65 ft waterfall which is particularly impressive after or during rainfalls when it comes thundering down a narrow gorge.

The famous stone circle of Castlerigg shouldn't be missed, of course, and we won't. Keswick is only a stone's throw from here.

Highlights:

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RIDING DAY 4 : LAKE DISTRICT - EDINBURGH

Standard Route (270 km / 168 miles)

The border between England and Scotland was hotly contested throughout the centuries. Warfare was fierce, peace was rare. Countless fortresses (and ruins) dot the countryside. Even the Romans fortified the border of their province of Britannia to keep the savages, the Scots, out. The scenery is beautiful, on both sides, and today we are going to discover it.

We leave the Lake District behind, bypass the city of Penrith and head into the North Pennines, a mountainous region which is officially listed as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). The A686 is said to be one of the best motorcycle roads in the UK, full of sweeping curves and void of traffic.

Hadrians Wall, the afore mentioned Roman border fortification, is our first highlight today and we will spend some time discovering the remains of the main Roman fortresses. After a hearty lunch we continue to and through Northumberland National Park, surrounded by beautiful scenery. The mountain pass named Carter Bar is the place where we cross the border to Scotland and enter the region called The Borders, known for the four ruined abbey churches and for the place where Sir Walter Scott, the famous Scottish writer, used to sit, look at the land and contemplate life. After looking at one of the abbeys we finally ride to Edinburgh, less than an hour away.

Highlights:

#1: Hadrian's Wall



Hadrian's Wall was a defensive fortification built by the Romans in northern England. Begun in AD 122, during the rule of Emperor Hadrian, it was the first of two fortifications built across Great Britain. The second was the Antonine Wall, lesser known of the two because its physical remains are less evident today. The wall was the most heavily fortified border in the Empire. In addition to its role

as a military fortification, it is thought that many of the gates through the wall served as customs posts, to allow trade and to levy taxes. A significant portion of the wall still exists, particularly the mid-section. For much of its length, the wall can be followed on foot along Hadrian's Wall Path, or by cycle on National Cycle Route 72. It is the most popular tourist attraction in northern England, and was designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1987. English Heritage, a government organisation in charge of managing the historic environment of England, describes it as "the most important monument built by the Romans in Britain."

#2: Northumberland National Park



Unlike the Lake District the national park of Northumberland is still a real wilderness. Only around 2,000 people live in an area of more than 400 square miles. This remote land is crisscrossed by only a few narrow, curvy roads that make it a paradise for riders like us

#3: Borders Abbeys



The region in the south of Scotland, right next to the English border, is called the “Scottish Borders” and has been brought to fame and honor by author Sir Walter Scott. The Borders can look back on an extraordinarily rich history, with countless conflicts ranging from the Romans all the way to the 17th century. Around the city of Galashiels there are numerous castles, fortresses, monasteries and noble mansions, most of them destroyed and rebuilt several

times over the course of the centuries.

What the region is most famous for, though, are the so-called Border Abbeys of Jedburgh, Kelso, Dryburgh and Melrose, all dating back to the 12th century. They lie in ruins today, but are still very impressive witnesses of former times. The most famous and also the best preserved one is Melrose Abbey, founded by Cistercian monks in 1136.

RIDING DAY 5 : EDINBURGH - BALLACHULISH

Standard Route (230 km / 143 miles)

To avoid traffic we leave Edinburgh on the expressway M9 and head straight to Falkirk to visit today's first highlight. The Falkirk Wheel is a boat lift that is unique in the world and with a bit of luck we can watch a boat being lifted up or down.

Afterwards we arrive in Stirling, and even the most die-hard iron butt should get off the bike here and have a look at Stirling Castle, probably the most impressive castle in Scotland. Stirling's Old Town is also worth a closer look.

Through Loch Lomond & Trossachs National Park we head to Lochearnhead and then along the famous valley known as Glen Coe, where the scenery is as amazing as it gets in Scotland. Ballachulish, our overnight town, sits at the western end of this beautiful valley.

Highlights:

#1: Falkirk Wheel



The Falkirk Wheel is the world's only rotating boatlift, which is used to connect the Forth & Clyde and Union canals in central Scotland.

The Wheel is a magnificent, mechanical marvel which was constructed in the 21st century, state-of-the-art engineering. It is already being recognised as an iconic landmark worthy of Scotland's traditional engineering expertise.

Designed to replace a series of lock gates built in the 19th century - long since demolished and replaced by housing - The Falkirk Wheel is the showpiece of the Millennium Link project where coast-to-coast navigation of the canals has been re-established for the first time in over 40 years. (www.visitscotland.com)

#2: Stirling Castle



the most visited attractions in Scotland.

It is said that if you want to rule Scotland you need to rule Stirling. Located high on a rocky outcrop and surrounded on three sides by steep cliffs, Stirling Castle was a focal point in the Wars of Scottish Independence, especially during the Battle of Banockburn which saw the final defeat of the English forces against Robert the Bruce. With almost half a million visitors each year Stirling Castle has become one of

#3: Loch Lomond and The Trossachs National Park



in Balgahidder.

In the 19th century the famous writer Sir Walter Scott wrote about this region in many of his books. Since then, Loch Lomond and the Trossachs (a national park since 2002) are among the most visited natural attractions in Scotland. The village of Callander features the Rob Roy Visitor Center, named after the clan chief and outlaw who Scott glorified as a national hero. You can visit Roy's tomb

#4: Glencoe



this event.

Scotland's most famous glen (glen = valley) owes its reputation to its history and its magnificent scenic beauty. Thirty-eight members of the MacDonald clan were murdered here by members of the Campbell clan in 1692, while many others froze to death after they fled into the snow. To this day, members of the MacDonald clan gather here each year on the 13th of February to commemorate

RIDING DAY 6 : BALLACHULISH - ISLE OF SKYE

Standard Route (404 km / 251 miles)

Fans of Harry Potter and/or railways will probably love the little detour this morning. Glenfinnan Viaduct is probably the most famous railroad bridge in the country (or the world) and with a little luck, we might see an old-fashioned steam train run across it.

The road we're on is the famous Road to the Isles. It's beautiful and ends at Malloig, but due to ongoing problems with the ferry connection to Armadale we decided to plan our route differently and take the road along Glen Shiel instead. Don't worry, it's just as stunning as the other one!

Just before we get to Skye we pass Scotland's most famous castle, Eilean Donan, the Highlander's home. Nowadays the parking lot is ten times bigger than the castle itself but that doesn't take away any of the magic, the views of the castle are still awesome.

Skye ("Cloud Island") is the largest island of the Inner Hebrides. Its abundance of castles, distilleries, museums and the scenic beauty of its mountains, lochs and cliffs make it very attractive. Capitol of Skye is the small town of Portree ("the King's harbor"), a charming place with a picturesque harbor and some cozy pubs.

Highlights:

#1: Glenfinnan



The original attraction in Glenfinnan, a kilted highlander monument commemorating the Jacobite rebellion, is today outdone by the famous viaduct. The 21-arch structure featured in "Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets" has become a pilgrimage site for Potter-fans from near and far.

#2: Eilean Donan Castle



This picture-perfect castle, situated at the confluence of three lochs, acquired worldwide fame after starring alongside Sean Connery in the movie "Highlander," as well as in "Braveheart" and many other films. It was built in 1220, razed in 1719, and rebuilt in the 20th century on a small island in Loch Duich, connected to the mainland by a stone bridge.

#3: Isle of Skye



The island of Skye is of exceptional beauty and full of rich history. In 1745, Bonnie Prince Charlie embarked from here to gather and unite the Highland clans in one last attempt to free Scotland from the English. He was defeated in the Battle of Culloden a year later and had to flee back to the Isle of Skye, where a Flora MacDonald helped him escape his pursuers by dressing him up as a maid. The combination of prehistoric and historic sites, spectacular scenery and small, winding roads make the Isle of Skye one of the highlights of this tour.

RIDING DAY 7 : ISLE OF SKYE - INVERNESS

Standard Route (372 km / 231 miles)

Apart from a quick picture stop at the Highlander's castle, you can stay clear today of traffic and major tourist highlights and instead ride the roads less traveled. They lead us along countless lochs and the rugged coastline towards the north. Along the way, we ride across the spectacular Applecross Pass, a challenging, hair-raising ride that should only be attempted during dry weather, and marvel at the spectacular Corrieshalloch Gorge. It's a long but rewarding ride that will eventually lead us to the Highland's capital, Inverness.

Highlights:

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#2: Bealach na Bà (Applecross Pass)



The Bealach na Bà, or Cattle Pass, is a curvy mountainous road located on the Applecross peninsula. This twisting, single-track mountain road is the third highest road in Scotland rising up to 626 metres (2,054 ft) above sea level. It's one of the most scenic drives in the world. Speeds faster than 30 mph are rarely permitted or possible.

The route demands 100% concentration. This road has humbled many egos. It's not for the sissies and shouldn't be attempted by novice drivers. It's similar to the great mountain passes in the Alps, with very tight hairpin bends which switch back and forth up the hillside, with gradients approaching 20%... (dangerousroads.org)

#3: Corrieshalloch



Corrieshalloch may mean 'Ugly Hollow' in Gaelic, but there is nothing ugly about Corrieshalloch Gorge National Nature Reserve - a deep tree-shrouded chasm and beauty spot that cuts through a Highland wilderness rich in flora and fauna.

Corrieshalloch is a slot gorge, or box-canyon, that was cut as far back as 2.6 million years ago by Ice Age glacial meltwater. The River Droma forges through the gorge,

dramatically dropping 100 metres in just 1.25 km through a series of waterfalls, including the thunderous 45 m high Falls of Measach.

A brace of trails opens up the gorge to walkers, with a Victorian suspension bridge built by Sir John Fowler (one of the chief engineers behind the Forth Bridge), a jaw-dropping viewing platform and a viewpoint on hand to help visitors appreciate the full drama of Corrieshalloch Gorge, one of the wonders of the West Highlands. (www.visitwester-ross.com)

RIDING DAY 8 : INVERNESS

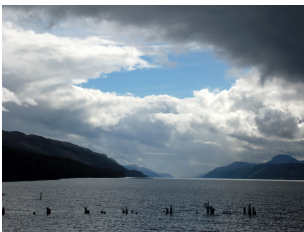
Standard Route (175 km / 109 miles)

Inverness is the center of the Scottish Highlands and one of the fastest growing cities in Europe. Apart from the castle, there is not too much to see in the city. However, beautiful Loch Ness is waiting close by. If you don't want to ride today, you can go on a cruise on the loch all the way to Fort Augustus.

If you do want to ride, there is a short route that takes you around Loch Ness, out to Culloden, where the Scottish fought their last battle against the English in 1746 and to Macbeth's home, Cawdor Castle.

Highlights:

#1: Loch Ness



So does it exist or not? For centuries, locals have been talking about a large, strange-looking creature roaming the waters of Scotland's largest loch. But the monster is elusive, despite high-tech search missions and the blurry photographs that appear frequently in newspapers around the world are not very convincing. Monster or not, you will certainly love the scenic beauty of Loch Ness.

#2: Urquhart Castle



Wild natural beauty and 1,000 years of history - Urquhart Castle offers a taste of the Highlands at their most dramatic. Experience a glimpse of medieval life and enjoy stunning views over Loch Ness from the ruins of the greatest castle in the Highlands.

Climb the Grant Tower that watches over the iconic loch, peer into a miserable prison cell, said to have held the legendary Gaelic bard Domhnall Donn, and imagine the splendid banquets staged in the great hall. A more comfortable view of the iconic ruins, against a backdrop of Loch Ness and the hills of the Great Glen, can be enjoyed from the café.

Urquhart's stories are also told through a remarkable collection of artefacts left by its residents, historic replicas, including a full-sized, working trebuchet siege engine, and a short film.

The castle has a distinct Highland heritage and the site has witnessed some of the most dramatic chapters in Scotland's history. This is where St Columba is said to have worked miracles in the 6th century, where acts of chivalry and defiance provided inspiration during the Wars of Independence and where the MacDonald Lords of the Isles struggled with the Crown for power. (www.visitscotland.com)

#3: Clava Cairns



Clava Cairns, a well-preserved Bronze Age cemetery, dates back 4,000 years. But this isn't even the earliest known use of the site, as archaeological excavations show it was once used for farming. Some of the early farm buildings may even have been recycled and incorporated into the burial site.

Excavations at Clava Cairns have confirmed that it was reused 1,000 years after it was first built. At this time new burials were interred and additional monuments erected. Today the remains of a ring cairn can be found at the main site as well as chapel ruins nearby. This much later use of the cemetery suggests that Clava Cairns was an important place for a long period of time, before finally falling into disuse.

So, what do we know about the people who were buried here? Sadly, the answer is very little as early archaeologist did more damage than good with their overzealous excavations. What we do know is that only one or two burials were interred inside each cairn. The huge effort that it must have taken to build the cemetery, hints that these were probably people of status and importance. (www.truehighlands.com)

#4: Cawdor Castle



Not only is Cawdor linked to Shakespeare's Macbeth, but home to the magical, fairy tale castle, Cawdor Castle.

Cawdor Castle dates from the late 14th century, having been built as a private fortress by the Thanes of Cawdor, with the ancient medieval tower built around the legendary holly tree – wherever you look, Cawdor Castle is steeped in intrigue and history. The ancient castle, which is home to

the Cawdor family to this day, has evolved over 600 years and has been lovingly filled with beautiful furniture, fine portraits, intriguing objects and amazing tapestries. (www.cawdorcastle.com)

For fans of classic literature, this is a must!

#5: Culloden Moor

The last fight of the Scottish in their desperate struggle for independence took place here in 1746 under the leadership of Bonnie Prince Charlie. He lost the battle and the defeat meant the end of the old clan system in the Highlands and the start of the "Highland Clearances", where landowners evicted tens of thousands of farmers and forced them to emigrate, mostly to the New World.

RIDING DAY 9 : INVERNESS - ABERDEEN

Standard Route (300 km / 186 miles)

Three of the things that Scotland is most famous for are the wild, remote highlands, whisky and castles. All three of them are on our schedule today as we head from Inverness towards the south-east, to Aberdeenshire. The Cairngorms are Scotland's largest mountain wilderness and offer not only wilderness, but also some great riding roads. The river Spey flows from these mountains to the sea and provides the water for over 50% of all the country's whisky distilleries. Glenfiddich and Glenlivet are two of the most famous ones, they are on our way and can be visited. A bit further down the road we dive into castle country, where over 300 castles and castle ruins are waiting for the unassuming visitor. We won't have much time left, but a quick coffee and/or picture stop should work out before we ride out to the coast, to Aberdeen.

Highlights:

#1: Cairngorm Mountains

Britain's largest National Park, the Cairngorms are the most extensive range of high mountains in the UK, with a vast, tundra-like wilderness plateau, girt with magnificent corries, at the heart of the region. This is encircled by the beautiful valleys of the Rivers Spey and Dee, each passing through stunning landscapes of ancient Caledonian pinewoods teeming with wildlife. Aviemore on the northern side is the best known centre, joined by the small towns of Kingussie, Newtonmore and Grantown-on-Spey, all close to or on the River Spey. (www.walkhighlands.co.uk).

A road leads up to over 600 m and offers amazing views of this wilderness. This is one of the most beautiful dead-end roads in Scotland, so you won't mind doing it twice!

#2: Whisky Trail



One of the things Scotland is famous for is, of course, whisky, (note the spelling: in Scotland it comes without the “e”). More than 2,000 brands are produced in Scotland, around 100 of which are single malts. Over half of the distilleries that make single malts are located in an area that is known as Speyside, the county on both sides of the Spey River, with famous names like Glenfiddich and

Glenlivet. The quality of the water is one of the most important factors for the quality of the whisky, and distilleries have traditionally been drawn to the Spey for that reason.

#3: Castle Trail



There are more than 300 castles, noble mansions and ruins in Aberdeenshire, making this region the UK's number one in terms of "castle density". One lifetime would not be enough to visit all of them, so marketing people came up with The Castle Trail, a 400 km drive that connects 19 of those castles. Each one has another claim to fame, many of them are haunted, some are still owned and lived in by the

same family that has been owning them for hundreds of years. What they all have in common is loads and loads of history and magical settings in stunning Scottish scenery.

RIDING DAY 10 : ABERDEEN - EDINBURGH

Standard Route (325 km / 202 miles)

Our route today is quite long and challenging. At first we head west, following the River Dee on a small road along its southern banks. Balmoral Castle is where the Queen spends her summer holidays and if she's there we can pop in for a cup of coffee, or tea of course. In Braemar we turn south to ride on one of Scotland's most spectacular roads through the beautiful valley of Glen Shee. At 670 m above sea level Cairnwell Pass is officially the highest mountain pass in the UK!

A few more lochs, another couple of single track roads, some more gorgeous scenery: the beauty of Scotland captivates us all the way to Edinburgh, but just before we get there there is another major highlight, that no visitor to Scotland should miss. The famous Forth Rail Bridge is a sight to behold, a masterpiece of engineering and a great photo op. This could be the best selfie of your trip!

Highlights:

#1: Balmoral Castle



The holiday home of the Royal Family only dates back to the 19th century. It's most appealing in August, when the flowers in the beautiful garden are in full bloom. For friends of the Monarchy, a visit is, of course, a "must" at any time.

#2: Glen Shee


The A93 from Braemar to Rattray is one of the most spectacular roads in the country and features Cairnwell Pass, Scotland's highest, a staggering 2,200 ft. (670 m) above sea. The scenery is magnificent, with soaring peaks, dense forests and pristine rivers, frequently crossed by age-old stone bridges. This hidden gem is still quite remote and undiscovered, even though tourism has developed quite a bit around here in recent years.

The notorious "Devil's Elbow", a double hairpin bend once feared by motorists, was (unfortunately) bypassed when the new road was built in the 1960s. Still, this road is a dream ride.

#3: Firth of Forth Rail Bridge



The famous railway bridge across the Firth of Forth is a masterpiece of engineering, dating back to Victorian times (built 1882-1890). The mighty 1.5 mile long bridge, constructed of red steel rhombs, is unique in the world.



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