

Included in Lonely Planet's 'Best in Travel' top 10 regions to visit in 2019



VisitAberdeenshire offers a range of complimentary services for you so we can share our local knowledge of the destination to help you plan authentic, memorable and unique experiences for your group:

- Itinerary planning and development
- Sourcing accommodation quotes
- Venue finding
- Providing contacts for accommodation/attractions/restaurants
- Use of the images and videos in the Media Room on our website
- A section of our website dedicated to the travel trade

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VisitAberdeenshire



Aberdeen, in the North-east of Scotland is quickly establishing itself as a cultural destination that can rival even the most established of visitor destinations thanks to its authentic Scottish experience. It's a place where spectacular natural landscapes, glorious gastronomy, fascinating heritage and a hospitable welcome await.

Aberdeen is serviced by an international airport with excellent connectivity throughout the UK, including 90 flights a week from London and connecting routes from throughout Europe and beyond. When travelling by train you arrive in the heart of the city and can travel from most major cities throughout the UK. The recent £745 million investment in improving the North-east's road infrastructure makes getting to and moving around the region by car and coach easy.



Its compact infrastructure allows you to easily explore the region, from castles, coastline and mountains to the third largest city in Scotland. It is the North-east's easily negotiated landscape which sets it apart from other destinations. You no longer have to choose between visiting one attraction or the other; now you can do it all, experiencing quintessential authentic Scotland from one easy to explore place.

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The British Royal family has been visiting Aberdeenshire for over 100 years as their summer holiday destination of choice. Located within the largest national park in the UK, the Cairngorms National Park, the Royal Deeside area of Aberdeenshire presents you with a stunning backdrop of panoramic mountain views. It's a place that, like the many people before, will leave you feeling awe inspired.

Home to one of the greatest coastlines in the world and described by National Geographic as 'one of the world's outstanding coastlines', the 165-mile-long strip includes golden sandy beaches, hidden caves and rugged cliffs. It's a place where puffins, seals and dolphins play against an unblemished backdrop of big skies and deep blue seas. Castles perch on cliff edges overlooking the sea where you can capture the awe-inspiring vista. Home to the longest castle trail of anywhere in Europe, the region has 263 castles to discover and explore.

The Aberdeen region is an authentic Scottish experience where you have the freedom to experience the place as you want to see it. And with over 7,000 quality hotel rooms currently available in the region, and a further 1,500 coming online in the next three years, there is plenty of choice of places to stay. ■

Take me there

To find out more, and for support in all aspects of arranging a group visit to the region, contact VisitAberdeenshire. The complimentary service can assist you in all aspects of planning, from introducing you to suppliers, to on the ground local knowledge and full itinerary planning and development including quotes for accommodation.

For more information visit
travel-trade.visitabdn.com or call 01224 900490.



An astonishing kingdom

← **Nestled on the border of Wiltshire and Somerset, the Longleat estate, made up of over 900 acres of expansive parkland, is the unrivalled home of over 140 species (and growing) of exotic animal, and an annual calendar of events which bring the park to vibrant life.**

New for 2019 and now open to the public, for the first time ever at Longleat your group can discover England's only koalas in their new exhibit; Koala Creek. It is home to the Safari Park's newest (and furthest travelled) residents; a group of iconic southern koalas and

two endearing hairy nosed wombats. They share their new antipodean abode with long-nosed potoroos; rabbit-sized, kangaroo-like, marvellous marsupials. Longleat is the only animal collection in England exhibiting koalas and the only animal collection in Europe exhibiting southern koalas.

In the new exhibit, your group will go on a journey through indoor and outdoor habitats with many opportunities to observe the wonderful and iconic Australian animals eye to eye and within almost touching distance. Discover the down-under lowdown of the fascinating adaptations of the marsupials in the area. For example, did you know that koalas have curved backbones, which help them to curl up comfortably and sleep in trees?

Adjacent to Koala Creek is another new exhibit, featuring giant otters and Cuban crocodiles. The two formidable



• Koala Creek is now open to the public and allows visitors to get up close to the iconic Australian animals.



Here's a quick reminder of all the brilliant reasons to visit Longleat as a group of 12+ in 2019:

- 30% off day tickets.
- Free coach driver tickets and meal vouchers.
- Free organiser ticket for groups of 30+.
- Exclusive ticket types, unavailable to general visitors.
- Optional discounted add-ons (like catering vouchers and goody bags).
- Exclusive Longleat House tours.
- Dedicated group bookings team.
- Book well in advance of general sale for special events to guarantee tickets for the best dates.
- Free all-day coach parking.

looking female crocodiles can be viewed in their fully refurbished and repurposed habitat, including opportunities to spot them in and out of water. The neighbouring giant otters spend most of their time frolicking around their new habitat, which includes an outdoor and indoor area, where they can be seen both in and out of water.

Access to all of the new animal areas, is included in a Group Day Ticket.

Besides brand new developments, Longleat is famous for its rich heritage and its opportunities for guests to immerse themselves in the enigmatic and incredible history of the estate; namely, Longleat House, which is celebrating its 70th anniversary, following being the first stately home to fully open its doors to the public back in 1949.

The House is widely regarded as one of the finest examples of Elizabethan architecture in Britain. Built by Sir John Thynne, it was substantially completed by 1580 and is the current home to the 7th Marquess of Bath and his family; Viscount and Viscountess Weymouth and their sons, John and Henry.

Add a spark of intrigue to your group visit and experience a behind the scenes tour of the iconic and lavish household. Uncover the untold and salacious secrets of its past on the Scandalous History Tour, or marvel at the opulent splendour of the stately rooms in the Exclusive Tour.

For something a little different, try the Mystery Tour – this popular jaunt takes in the private family spaces and will see you heading beyond the public route to a world of lavish delights and tales.

With so much to do, your group is bound to work up an appetite. Enjoy seated lunch in the Cellar Café, previously the wine vaults of the House, or treat yourselves to a Luxury Afternoon Tea, served in the beautiful Orangery or in Lord Bath's Banqueting Suite. For a large group you can go all out with a meal in The Longhouse for up to 260 people. If you'd prefer more flexibility, discounted lunch or treat vouchers for your group can be arranged.

An iconic Elizabethan stately home, a world-famous safari park and unmissable animal encounters, Longleat truly is an astonishing kingdom for all the family. ■



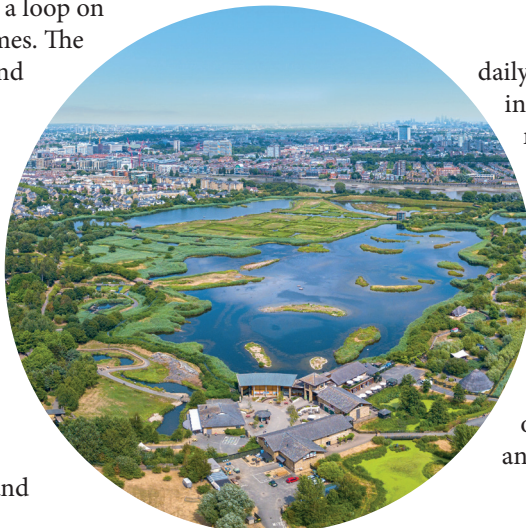
An ecological sanctuary for groups in the heart of London

Bringing the countryside to the capital, London Wetland Centre is the perfect place for groups to enjoy fantastic views, nature and an array of wildlife.

The London Wetland Centre is an award-winning nature reserve and the city's first large-scale, man-made, inner city wetland reserve. Located just ten minutes from Hammersmith by bus, the centre occupies 42 hectares of land and has recorded over 220 bird species since its opening.

Opened by Sir David Attenborough in 2000, the nature reserve is made up of four disused Victorian reservoirs, tucked into a loop on the south bank of the River Thames. The centre features a variety of wetland habitats including lakes, pools, reedbeds and wet grasslands, all of which attract an incredible array of wildlife, some of which cannot easily be seen anywhere else in London.

Experiences for groups can be tailored to meet various needs including specialist tours, specific menus for groups and any special requirements as well as itinerary ideas. Group tours and



Benefits for groups

- Discounted admission rates for groups of 12 or more.
- Ample free coach and minibus parking, adjacent to the centre.
- Selection of special group catering packages.
- Free familiarisation trip for the group organiser.
- Welcome pack on arrival.
- Bookable guided tours providing an insight into the history of the centre and its wildlife.
- Free entry for group organiser and coach driver.

daily spotlight talks will provide further insight into the centre's history and its many inhabitants.

Not to be missed

Feathered feeding time: Visit Duck Tales and feed our domestic ducks with their own special grain or join us on a bird feed tour (weekends and school holidays only) when wardens feed our birds and explain more about them.

Seasonal highlights

London Wetland Centre has something new to look out for each season:

Spring

You'll be able to see sand martins preparing to nest, the first of the ducklings hatching, butterflies starting to appear and three of the UK's six native reptile species, the common lizard, grass snake, and slow worm, which are usually active by April. Not to mention the wild orchids coming into bloom.

Summer

Look out for lapwings, little ringed plovers, great crested and little grebes, among others. Keep an eye out for darting dragonflies and damselflies, dancing butterflies, as well as lizards basking in sunny spots and listen out for voles in the reeds or marsh frogs calling to attract a mate.

Breath-taking views: Watch amazing birds from our six hides including the Observatory, a three storey hide and our Tower, with the city skyline as a back drop!

Wetlands of the World: Step into our wonderful wetland oasis of colourful water birds. Discover American wood ducks, noisy white-faced whistling ducks and lots more.

Meadows and gardens: You can't beat the sweet-scented peace of our two beautiful gardens. Plus your group can pick up tips on how to create their own sustainable garden or window box.

Testimonials

"The reserve is the ideal model for how humankind and the natural world may live side by side in the 21st century."

Sir David Attenborough

"Its broad range of habitats bring a huge variety of water birds, amphibians and small mammals to the heart of the capital, giving millions of people the opportunity to encounter wildlife up close."

BBC Springwatch presenter Chris Packham

Autumn

See migrant wading birds including black-tailed godwits, green sandpipers and greenshanks. Look out for the first arrival of the elusive bitterns in the reedy margins and spot the colourful berries in the trees and bushes that attract the thrushes, as well as our smallest bird – the diminutive goldcrest.

Winter

One of the best seasons to visit the centre, as some of the UK's most attractive ducks arrive, with teal, wigeon and shovelers easy to spot. Look carefully and you might even spot one of the shyer species, the water rail, in the waterside vegetation. Meanwhile, the enigmatic bittern enables many visitors to see this normally retiring bird close up and personal.



Sir David Attenborough opened the Wetland Centre in 2000.

Sand martin bank: Enjoy springtime thrills as our sand martins dart from their burrow. Come summertime, your group can head into the back of the nest bank for a rare look at the parents feeding their young.

Comfort viewing: With soft chairs, binoculars, bird books and expert guides on hand to share the day's sightings, the Headley Discover Hide and the Observatory are relaxed wildlife watching at its best.

An impressive list of species for such an urban site which can be seen throughout the year during its 364 open days.

Round off your group's visit to the London Wetland Centre with food and drink from the new Kingfisher Kitchen before browsing in the centre's gift shop. You can be sure of an unforgettable experience with your group! ■

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Atholl
Estates
Blair Castle

BY ROYAL *appointment*

Why Blair Castle in Scotland continues to marvel visitors with its long and illustrious history.

Home of the Atholl family for more than 700 years, Blair Castle is one of Scotland's best-known Highland estates; you may recognise it as the filming location for the popular ITV series *Victoria*.

Nestled in the landscape of Highland Perthshire, the unique castle brings to life centuries of fascinating history for visitors, having been home to 19 generations of Stewarts and Murrays.

You're taken on an intriguing journey, from a visit by Mary Queen of Scots to the Civil War and from the Jacobite cause to the disaster of Culloden following Bonnie Prince Charlie's own stay in the castle.



You'll hear how the lucky inheritance of a smuggler-infested island helped turn the castle in to a comfortable home and how a visit from Queen Victoria led to the creation of Europe's only surviving private regiment, the Atholl Highlanders.

More than 30 rooms are on display, full of Scottish cultural history, architectural design, family portraits and landscape paintings. Highlights include: The Entrance Hall, complete with weapons used at the Battle of Culloden, the grandeur of The Drawing Room and the sumptuous Tapestry Room.

Groups can also explore the historic grounds and gardens, featuring a nine-acre walled garden, an extensive wooded

Group benefits

- Discounted group rates are available for parties over 12 people.
- There's a ground floor audio visual room for those not wanting or able to use the stairs.
- The castle closes at the end of October to March but is happy to open to groups Monday to Friday during this period.
- Drivers, couriers and tour guides get free entry to the castle and grounds and two vouchers for use in the restaurant and gift shop.
- Free parking and Coach-friendly status.

grove, a ruined kirk, a red deer park and a gothic folly. Around the grounds you'll spot local wildlife and enjoy the picturesque scenery of Highland Perthshire.

Group tours

Guided tours of the castle can be requested (excluding July and August) for 12 or more.

For groups with special interests, there are great options (minimum of ten) including a tour about the Atholl Highlanders. Hear how Queen Victoria was guarded by Atholl men during her stay at the castle and see historic record books and photos showing the regiment and activities from inception to present day.

There's also a tour of the gardens available during which groups can learn about its history and prominence.

Catering

The Tullibardine Restaurant seats up to 125 people and serves a range of home-made hot and cold meals and snacks. Groups are welcome to visit the restaurant and can pre-book from the wide selection of menus on offer (where available, they can reserve seating too). ■

Contact:
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• The impressive Blair Castle is nestled in the Highland landscape.