

## The Whisky Train

A railway between Dufftown and Nethy Bridge was built in 1863 to serve the numerous distilleries operating in Speyside. This Speyside Railway was extended 3 years later to Boat of Garten to join up with the Highland Railway and became part of the Great North of Scotland Railway in the same year. The line was closed to passenger traffic in 1963 and goods trains, mainly whisky trains, stopped running 3 years later. The track was lifted in 1970 although 2 heritage railways still operate at either end; the *Keith & Dufftown Railway* and the *Strathspey Heritage Railway* between Broomhill (near Nethy Bridge) and Aviemore. A section between Craigellachie and Ballindalloch forms part of the *Speyside Way* walking route now.

We start our drive / ride at Dufftown station (AB55 4BA) and follow roads which run alongside or close to this whisky railway. The route is just under 50 miles long and takes in some interesting places to visit before it loops back to Dufftown. Full details are given in a table and shown on the map, overleaf. You can of course visit the numerous famous single malt whisky distilleries en-route but how many can you tick-off from your Collins-gem *Whisky* book? You pass Glenfiddich alongside the railway for starters, so start counting.



Our 1<sup>st</sup> suggested stop is at the famous Thomas Telford Bridge at Craigellachie, dating from 1814. It has a span of 46m using a cast iron arch structure complete with mock medieval towers with battlements at either end. It is a category A listed structure and is now only open to pedestrians or cyclists.

Our 2<sup>nd</sup> suggested stop is at the Square in Charlestown of Aberlour. "Le Petit Gourmand" is a super little café making very tasty snacks and the most wonderful French patisseries and cakes.



Our 3<sup>rd</sup> stop is at the wool mill at Upper Knockando. This factory still uses some machinery dating from 1870 to card, spin and weave wool. There are more modern machines as well but it's really interesting to see the original processes; take your ear plugs – the noise is unbelievable. The mill makes the most beautiful blankets and lambswool scarves.

For our 4<sup>th</sup> stop, we take the B9137 to Cragganmore reaching the end at the distillery before returning to stop in the car park by the old Ballindalloch station. Take the footpath along the old trackway, where you can see remnants of the railway station and a granary which has now been converted to holiday lets.



A couple of 100m away is an impressive, riveted, lattice girder bridge, made by McFarlanes of Dundee in 1863 and which now, is another category A listed structure. Walkers and cyclists still cross this bridge because it forms part of the Speyside Way.

On the final leg of the journey on the B9009 from the junction at Auchbreck to Dufftown, you will pass Ben Rinnes on your left. Its only a 3 – 4 mile hike to the peak of this Munro (height 840m) from the B9009 so if your feeling energetic, you might get there and back in 2 – 3 hours!



We finish our loop in Dufftown at the junction between Conval Street, Balvenie Street and Fife Street.

How many distilleries did you spot?

We hope you enjoy our **Whisky Train** route in our *Oot an' about* series. We would be pleased to receive suggestions of your favourite routes to include on the website for the benefit of everyone in our Aberdeen community or even for other IAM motorists or motorcyclists, who are visiting our beautiful region.



The route comprises a loop of about just under 50 miles which starts and finishes at Dufftown. Its mainly covered in OS Landranger map 28 (Elgin, Dufftown & Surrounding area). This overview map is replicated with kind permission from the AA 2019 GB Road Atlases © AA Media Limited. The direct roads to Dufftown from Aberdeen are on the A96 to Huntly and then A920 to Dufftown or via the A944 through Alford to Mossat, then the A97 to Rhynie and then A941 to Dufftown.

From a starting point at Dufftown station, about 1 mile from Dufftown centre on the A941 towards Elgin, beside Glenfiddich distillery, the table below lists each of the junctions where you need to turn with the miles travelled, direction to take and the identification of the next road.

Mile	Junc <sup>n</sup>	Dir <sup>n</sup>	Next Road	Mile	Junc <sup>n</sup>	Dir <sup>n</sup>	Next Road
0.0	T	R	A941 to Craigellachie	10.6	T	L	Minor rd to Upper Knockando
3.6	T	L	A95 towards Keith	10.8	T	L	B9102 thro Upper Knockando
3.8	-	L	Minor road to Telford's bridge	20.2	-	L	Minor rd thro Advie
3.9	C Park		After bridge visit, return to A95	21.1	T	L	A95 towards Elgin
4.0	T	R	A95 to Charlestone-Aberlour	25.1	-	L	Minor rd to Cragganmore
6.6	-	R	Minor rd to Carron	26.4	O	Back	Cragganmore distillery
7.1	T	L	Minor rd to Upper Knockando	26.8	C Park	Str Ah	B9137 to A95
8.5	T	L	B9102 towards Upr Knockando	27.6	T	L	A95 to Bridge of Avon
10.2	-	L	Minor road towards Knockando	28.4	-	R	B9008 thro Glenlivet
10.4	-	R	Minor road to Woolmill	34.3	T	L	B9009 to Dufftown
10.5	C Park		After woolmill, return to Upp Kn	45.6	-	End	Finish at junction with A941