

Moray Coast Trip 2016

Day 1: to start our journey we used the Fishers Tours Thursday bus to Inverness which, conveniently for us, passes through Birnam and which takes bikes and passengers with passes absolutely free. See www.fisherstours.co.uk for this great service.

Out of Inverness we followed NCN1 signs out of town then passed by the spectacular Culloden viaduct. Around 12 miles into the ride we took the shortcut through Cawdor, then rejoined NCN1 via Nairn and Forres and on to our night stop at Findhorn Hostel. To our surprise we were the only residents in this modernised hostel, so we were able to pick our own room. Only criticism, there was no secure parking for bikes - we actually brought our inside for the night - and there was no drying room had we needed it. After a meal at a local pub we spent the evening wildlife watching at the mouth of the estuary.



Day 2: this was to be a leisurely day. First we took the B road to Burghead harbour where we spent some time watching a lobster fisherman pulling up his pot and its occupant. We then rejoined the NCN via Lossiemouth and didn't rejoin the NCN till after Elgin. Having crossed the Spey viaduct after Garmouth, we took a side trip to the Moray Firth Wildlife Centre. Then on to Buckie, on the NCN once again. This was where our plans fell apart. It started to pour with rain, so after a brief sojourn in a local Aldi, we plunged off on the last 7 mile leg of the journey to Cullen Hostel. This off-road, clifftop path must be truly magnificent in fine weather. As it was the mud and rain made it hard to appreciate. Likewise there is a superb viaduct at Cullen, but the Sustrans signage omits to tell you how to get down to the village so we ended up carrying the bikes down steep steps. To make it worse, by this time my chain had come off, so we were feeling pretty sorry for ourselves by the time we reached the hostel. Despite rave reviews, we found the





hostel owners a little offhand. However, the upside was a great drying room, where we hung every stitch of our possessions including the panniers, and a huge off-fashioned bath.

Following this we felt much better, and enjoyed our sit-in fish tea near the arches.



Day 3 dawned fine and we got a photo of the famous viaduct arch. My bike was still clogged up with mud, so first stop was to locate a shop selling WD40, liberal applications of which got the machinery working again. This part of the Moray coast with its succession of fascinating harbours via Portsoy and Whitehills is well worth a

visit. At Banff NCN1 turns south. We had our sandwich lunch at Turriff to admire the famous Turra Coo. After Cumminestown we diverged from the NCN to take a variety of country roads to Tarves where we stayed the night at my son's house. We got there just before a second drenching!



What is Evelyn looking at



Day 4: this was a short but hilly Rayne, west of Oldmeldrum. took us home by car, which getting the bikes on the train. Great trip. Do try it!

Total distance: 141 miles.

Katharine Melville

morning's ride to Evelyn's son's house at Old Evelyn's husband Bill picked us up there and avoided the sometimes fraught business of Thanks Bill.

1888m climb. Not too taxing.