



Part Six

Preview

OutlandishScotland.com

A Novel Holiday Travel Guidebook

Part Six Introduction

Aberdeenshire Extras



Part 6 of *Outlandish Scotland Journey* is Unusual.
It consists only of 3 Sites, none of which are *Outlander*-related.

Here's the Skinny

These three Non-*Outlander* locations are not quickly or conveniently reached from Edinburgh or Inverness. For *Outlander*ites who have personal reasons for visiting the area of **Aberdeen**, however, they are special places that should not be missed.



If you'll be traveling in Aberdeenshire, each is **Great-Site** rated.



If Aberdeenshire is *not* a personal destination, each site is rated **Skip-It!**

Additionally, the *Outlandish Scotland Journey* Aberdeenshire Extras are best visited by those who will be driving. Only Loanhead of Daviot has a bus stop nearby.

Special Note: Because Part Six is so small, its eBook is offered as a free download on the Part Six page of our website! <http://outlandishscotland.com/outlandish-scotland-journey-part-six/>

Castle Fraser: Site #54



A Non-*Outlander* Fraser Castle
Over 500 Years Old



[©2013 Michael Garlick segment (enhanced)]

Castle Fraser is fairy tale fantastic and a fabulous place to visit. The photo above actually shows the *back* of the castle—its northern side—as seen when walking from the car park.

It is the most elaborate “Z-plan” castle in all of Scotland: a castle with a rectangular, medieval tower house at its center (Castle Fraser’s dating from the mid 1400s), with towers later erected at diagonally opposite corners. Construction of Castle Fraser’s diagonally opposite towers began in the late 1500s when Michael Fraser of Stoneywood and Muchall was the laird.

“Among the decorative motifs added to the exterior of the castle were a number with overtly Catholic origins, a rare and rather brave thing to do in a post-Reformation Scotland, and possibly a reflection of the power enjoyed by the Frasers in the [Aberdeenshire] area.

“The work on the two new towers was still incomplete at the time of Michael Fraser’s death in 1588. Michael’s son Andrew took up the project on reaching adulthood in 1592, and by 1618 he had completed the expansion his father had begun.

“Andrew employed as his master mason John Bell [*Outlander* trivia alert!], who left his mark at the foot of the large armorial panel that was added to the north face of the tower, in the form of a coded message that probably means ‘John Bell the mason made me.’

“During Andrew’s time the Fraser family fortunes reached their high point, and he was made 1st Lord Fraser before, in the 1630s, building two new wings extending north from the castle and enclosing a courtyard. For all intents and purposes, 190 years after the Frasers were granted the estates here, Castle Fraser was recognizably the building you see today.”

<https://www.undiscoveredscotland.co.uk/kenmay/castlefraser/index.html>

As usual, the entirety of Undiscovered Scotland's description of Castle Fraser is an excellent read and is accompanied by several photos. We highly recommend visiting the link above.

Outlander Trivia Note: John Bell is the name of the actor who plays Young Ian, beginning in Season 3.



[Outlander Season 2 screenshot segment (enhanced)]

Why is Castle Fraser a Non-Outlander-Related Site?

In the fictional world of *Outlander*, Jamie's father was the bastard son of the real-world Simon Fraser, 11th Lord Lovat of Clan Fraser of Lovat—nicknamed “the Fox” due to his propensity for deceitful double-dealing.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Simon_Fraser,_11th_Lord_Lovat

Clan Fraser of Lovat is actually a *junior* branch of the Aberdeenshire Clan Fraser, with the Lovat Frasers dwelling in the Inverness-shire area, next to **Beaulieu Priory (Site #18)**. Even though Lovat is a junior branch, the Aberdeenshire and Inverness-shire Fraser clans each have a separate clan chief.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Clan_Fraser_of_Lovat

Castle Fraser also has a Mackenzie link, though not the same as *Outlander's* MacKenzies.

“Castle Fraser was built as the home of the Frasers of Muchalls [of Aberdeenshire], later Frasers of Castle Fraser. The castle was passed down through the Lords Fraser, the Frasers of Inverallochy, and then the [Aberdeenshire] Mackenzie family who took the name Mackenzie Fraser.”

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Castle_Fraser

BTW: Muchall is pronounced “MOO-call.”

For those who wish to pronounce it perfectly: the “call” portion begins with the guttural “ch” sound as in “loch” or “Leoch.”

[Thank you, Àdhamh Ó Broin, *Outlander* Gaelic Consultant!]

Bottom Line:

- Castle Fraser is part of the Aberdeenshire Clan Fraser's history and has no relationship to Clan Fraser of Lovat.
- Castle Fraser's Mackenzie family is not the Inverness-shire MacKenzie family of **Castle Leod (Site #19)**—aka the MacKenzies of "Castle Leoch" in the *Outlander* novels.
- Diana Gabaldon never mentioned Castle Fraser in her novels.
- Castle Fraser was not an *Outlander* TV series film site.

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To see additional site photos, go to the **Castle Fraser** board on our **Outlandish Scotland Journey**

Pinterest Site:

<https://www.pinterest.com/chasOSJ/castle-fraser/>

OutlanderLinks

All website addresses and coordinates found in this chapter (including those in the Time & Travel section, below) are available in the **Site #54 OutlanderLinks** PDF, posted free of charge on the **Part 6 OutlanderLinks** directory of our website.

<http://OutlandishScotland.com/54OutlanderLinks.pdf>

Updated Castle Fraser information that becomes available after *Outlandish Scotland Journey* is published will also be posted in this directory.

Time & Travel: Castle Fraser

Visiting Time

- Schedule at least **90 minutes** to tour the interior of Castle Fraser—whether guided or self-guided.
- Add another **30 to 60 minutes** for enjoying the Tea Room and Gift Shop.
- The walled garden can be visited in **30 to 60 minutes**, depending on how much you enjoy lingering in gardens.
- Walking either of the two grounds trails will require at least **an hour**.

Hours of Operation (2019)

The Castle Fraser Grounds and Walled Garden are open all year, everyday, from 10am to 4pm.

(If you'll be visiting when the Castle and Gift Shop are closed, download the NTS grounds map PDF and bring it with you.)

Castle Fraser Interior, Gift Shop, and Tea Room Hours

- 02 March to 31 March: Saturday & Sunday, 11am to 2pm
- 01 April to 31 October: Open Daily, 10am to 4pm
- 01 November to 15 December: Saturday & Sunday, 11am to 2pm
- 16 December to 29 February (2020): Closed

Castle Fraser Guided Tours are available on Mondays through Saturdays at 10:25am, 11am, 11:45am, and 12:30pm.

At all other times, each room contains informational posters and, during the high tourist season, docents are stationed in key locations throughout the castle.

Additionally, the official Castle Fraser souvenir guidebook contains information about each room you'll visit.

Castle Fraser Admission Fees

- NTS members, NTS Discover Ticket and Scottish Heritage Pass holders: FREE
- Adult £12
- Concession £10 [Seniors 60+, Students (with valid ID), Disabled individuals]
- Family £28
- One Adult Family £23

Accessibility

- There are at least 8 disabled parking spaces available near the front of the castle. In the event that they all are occupied on the date of your visit, disabled individuals can be dropped off at the castle's main entrance, and then the driver can park in the Castle Fraser car park.
- The ground floor of the castle, shop and cafe are accessible for wheelchairs.
- All upper-floor rooms require stairway ascent.
- There is a digital screen in the Castle reception area where visitors can look at the upper-floor rooms in more detail.
- The scented walled garden and adventure playground are wheelchair accessible.
- There are accessible toilets in the courtyard at the rear of the castle.
- The two grounds walks are wheelchair accessible. If recent rains have made the trails boggy, however, only wheelchair athletes, or those with a strong pusher, should attempt them.

Public Transportation Directions

Castle Fraser is not accessible by bus.

Driving Directions

Car Park Coordinates: 57.205382, -2.461159

The car park fee is £3. (All proceeds go to support Castle Fraser grounds care and castle conservation.)

[End of Site #54 Sample]

Easter Aquhorthies Stone Circle: Site #55



An Intact Recumbent Stone Circle,
Over 4000 Years Old



[Watercolor painting of the Easter Aquhorthies Stone Circle by Lady Sophia Dunbar, circa 1870, segment (enhanced)]

A stone circle that includes a large monolith lying on its side—aka, “recumbent”—is called a recumbent stone circle. These types of circles were erected around 2700 to 2000 BC and are only found in two regions of the world: northeastern Scotland’s Aberdeenshire, and Ireland’s southwestern counties of Cork and Kerry.

“They are thought to be associated with rituals in which moonlight played a central role, as they are aligned with the arc of the arc of the southern [rising and setting moon at midsummer].

“More than 200 such stone circles are known to exist. [Half of that number are found in] Aberdeenshire ...

“The circle builders left no records, but their works were remarked upon and to some extent mythologized in historic times by the region’s later inhabitants. The 16th century Aberdonian historian Hector Boece wrote that,

“ ‘In the times of King Mainus ... huge stones were assembled in a ring and the biggest of them was stretched out on the south side to serve for an altar ... In proof of the fact to this day there stand these mighty stones gathered together into circles “the old temples of the gods” they are commonly called—and whoso sees them will assuredly marvel by what mechanical craft or by what bodily strength stones of such bulk have been collected to one spot.’ ”

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Recumbent_stone_circle

Before going any further, let's tackle the circle's name!

Sometimes referred to as "East Aquhorthies," the majority of archeologists and historians (such as Canmore, the National Record of the Historic Environment) call the circle "Easter Aquhorthies."

There is no doubt that "Aquhorthies" derives from the Gaelic language, but opinions differ as to its original meaning.

"Some believe that it means 'field of prayer' (from 'auch' or 'achd' meaning 'field' and 'ortha' meaning 'prayer'). Others contend that it means 'field of pillar stone' ('achadh choirthe')."

<https://online.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/smrpub/master/detail.aspx?refno=NJ72SW0009>

As for the pronunciation:

Easter is the easy part. It is pronounced like the holiday: "EEST-er."

Aquhorthies is the challenge.

- It begins with "ahk" (rhymes with "rock")
- The second syllable is emphasized; "HOR" (rhymes with "more")
- Followed by "theez" ("th" as in "thick" and rhymes with "please").

Put it altogether: "EEST-er ahk-HOR-theez."



[©Aberdeenshire Council] [©Historic Environment Scotland] Segments, enhanced.

Easter Aquhorthies is one of the best-preserved recumbent stone circles and may be the oldest. It also is one of the very few that still has its full complement of stones, totaling 15.

- There are 9 independent standing stones that form most of the circle. Of these, 8 are made of porphyry—a reddish rock with quartz running through it. One is made of a hard substance called jasper, which is a brighter red and also contains quartz.
- As is common for a recumbent stone circle, the 2 tallest stones flank the largest stone—the recumbent. The "flankers" are grey granite.
- Easter Aquhorthies' recumbent stone is red granite, flecked with lines of crystal and quartz.
- Set almost at a right angle to the primary recumbent are 3 smaller, oddly shaped recumbent stones, composed of different colors of granite.

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Time & Travel: Easter Aquhorthies

Visiting Time

Although an Easter Aquhorthies stone circle visit could be accomplished faster, we suggest scheduling at least **an hour** here. Spend 15 to 30 minutes wandering the circle and snapping your pix. Then, sit down somewhere that appeals to you, close your eyes and meditate. Can you feel the energy of the circle?

If you visit near the Summer or Winter Solstice, near Beltane or Samhain, or near the Vernal or Autumnal Equinoxes, and you hear a loud *buzzing*—beware!

Hours of Operation/Admission Fees

The Easter Aquhorthies stone circle is in the care of Historic Environment Scotland, but it is an unattended site. As such, there are no hours of operation. It is open every day of the year, all day long, and no admission fee is charged.

If you enjoy your visit, there is a lock box in the car park where you can contribute to the upkeep of this marvelous monument. Please donate generously.

Special Note: There are no toilets at the Easter Aquhorthies stone circle.



[©2017 Hugh Newman YouTube screenshot] [©2002 CD Miller] Segments, enhanced.

Another Special Note: Although only 2-tenths of a mile from the car park (about a 5 minute walk), the circle cannot be seen from the car park, and there have been a few TripAdvisor comments about the absence of a sign indicating how to find it. Adding to the confusion; the farm road leading to the circle is signed, "farm access only." That sign is posted to prevent *vehicle* access, not pedestrian use.

To reach the stones, pass through the pedestrian gate at the car park, turn left and walk south, up the gently inclined farm road. The circle will soon come into view, on your right.

Accessibility

At the time of this writing, Easter Aquhorthies is reasonably accessible to anyone *not in a wheelchair*.

The short path leading west to the circle from the farm road is a widened livestock trail; slightly rocky and uneven in parts, prone to becoming boggy and slippery when wet. With care, however, this path should not prevent those using canes or other means of support—or those in wheelchairs—from reaching the circle.

To access the circle's interior after passing through the fence that surrounds it, you must ascend three narrow, shallow steps, as seen in the pic below, left. A wheelchair athlete, or someone with a strong pusher/puller, may be able to reconnoiter these steps—or surmount a low section of the cobbled wall next to the steps.

It is the “kissing gate” in the surrounding fence (identified by a red arrow in the pic below, **left**) that currently makes Easter Aquhorthies inaccessible to individuals in wheelchairs.



[©2018 Stuart O'Hara <https://oweite.blogspot.com/2018/07/easter-aquorthies-stone-circle-and-loan.html>]

[Internet-posted pic, ©Unknown] Segments, enhanced.

A kissing gate is designed to allow one person to pass through, while preventing livestock from getting in. (Cattle and sheep that graze in adjacent pastures are frequently herded past the circle.)

To enter, a person stands in the small enclosure beside the gate and opens the gate, which swings in, toward the enclosure. The gate can open only as wide as the opposite post of the enclosure (identified by a red arrow in the pic above, **right**). The gate meets—“kisses”—that post, and can go no further. Once the gate is open, the person walks in and the gate closes behind them. Only someone who can stand within the small enclosure can pass through the gate.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kissing_gate

[End of Site #55 Sample]

Loanhead of Daviot Stone Circle: Site #56



Another Recumbent Stone Circle

As more fully discussed in the **Easter Aquhorthies (Site #55)** chapter, a recumbent stone circle is one that includes a large monolith lying on its side—aka, “recumbent.”

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Recumbent_stone_circle

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[©2016 Internet-posted pic ©Unknown segment (enhanced)]

The Loanhead of Daviot stone circle is less frequented than Easter Aquhorthies, making it more likely that you’ll enjoy privacy when visiting.

“Known locally as ‘the Loanies’ ... This is a well preserved (and partly restored) example of a recumbent stone circle. ... As is usual, the stones of the circle are graded, with the higher ones closest to the recumbent. There are at least five cupmarks[*] on the stone anticlockwise from the east flanker [seen at center, above].

“The circle itself is 20 metres in diameter, within which lies the ring cairn, with a clear central area about four metres across in the very middle of the site.

“An excavation in 1932 turned up many beaker sherds which shows that the ring cairn was in use in the Early Bronze Age. It is likely to have been built at an earlier period though, as Neolithic pottery was found in some of the stone holes. A cist was also found containing a Middle Bronze Age incense cup.

“The ring cairn was also discovered to overlie traces of burning, and in the central area were found charcoal, cremated human bone, and flakes of flint. An information board on the site summarizes what is known of the structural sequence here.”

<https://stonesofwonder.com/loanhead.htm>

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Public Transportation Directions

Loanhead of Daviot is the only one of our three Aberdeenshire Extra sites accessible by bus. The nearby village of Daviot has a handful of bus stops, but your most likely arrival point is the Kirkton Park bus stop next to the Daviot Village Hall—whether journeying from Edinburgh, Aberdeen, or Inverness. From that stop it is only an 11 minute walk (half a mile) to the circle.

Use Traveline Scotland to plot your journey.

www.travelinescotland.com

www.travelinescotland.com/apps

Please Note: Your destination is Daviot, **Aberdeenshire**, *not* Daviot, Highland. Daviot, Highland is a village near Inverness.

Driving Directions

Loanhead of Daviot Car Park Coordinates: 57.348495, -2.422449

No matter where you are traveling from, a SatNav/GPS device is extremely helpful for reaching the Loanhead of Daviot stone circle. While it isn't particularly distant from Aberdeen or the other two sites in Part 6 [**Castle Fraser (Site #54)** and **Easter Aquhorthies (Site #55)**], it is situated on a remote, single-track road. Furthermore, all routes leading to the circle are unsigned. The only Loanhead of Daviot signs are posted *at* the car park entrance.



[©2008 Google Street View image segments (enhanced)]

As you can see above, if approaching from Inverness (or other points north), the Loanhead of Daviot sign—and the short, green monument marker—may be hidden by foliage until you actually reach the entrance.

[End of Site #56 Sample]

[End of the Part Six Preview]