

Easter Holidays day 7 and 8 John O Groats to Lairg to Banchory

Hi all

We've made it daaaaan saaaaaaaaf a few miles, and are now in the beautiful Dee valley. We've been using the Brit Stops this last couple of nights for our overnight stops, and very good they've been too! We've also done significantly less driving, and today we even managed a stop at Balmoral Castle, but more on that later.

Yesterday we awoke to an overcast sky at

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John O Groats, but were refreshed after our peaceful night in the car park there. We set off about half 8 and were heading for a Brit Stop (no 821) near Lairg. The Brit Stop was at a famous visitor centre and we'd actually visited it on our first trip. We knew they had an excellent shop and couldn't wait to get in to buy some local food and drinks for later that evening. We actually ended up visiting the shop twice and spent almost £50 on tasty treats of jams, chutneys, and lots of whiskey tasters! □ so Brit Stops definitely worked well for this particular venue yesterday as we spent loads of money, money that we wouldn't be able to afford to spend if we were on a £20 site for the night.

We had a very chilled afternoon, walking jazz

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and snoozing, then catching up with some House on DVD until our leisure battery ran out whilst sampling some of our whiskey treats!

Today we set off south again after some delicious toast and jam – blackberry and sloe gin jam, courtesy of our shopping trip yesterday, yum yum! We were heading towards the Cairngorms with another Brit Stop in mind to stay at tonight.

We made good time, and arrived at the Lecht Ski centre in time for a bacon butty! Not sure what we'd imagined, maybe because we've been in this pocket of blue sky and sunshine for a week, we hadn't anticipated seeing so much snow! There certainly was no snow

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shortage for Easter skiers that's for sure and we enjoyed spending some time watching the hundreds out on the slopes, of all ages!! We did however feel slightly out of place- everyone else was understandably dressed head to toe in ski wear- we were in our shorts and crocs!!

We head on, through a spectacular drive- in some places the snow was up the height of our eyes at the sides of the roads (bearing in mind we are at a high sitting position in bluebell!) it was stunning though, and we had re found the sun for sure! Beautiful

Soon we saw a sign for Balmoral castle, and decided on a detour to visit. On first impressions, we found the entry charge of £10pp to

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be reasonable. However, in reality we didn't think we got much for the twenty quid, you couldn't get inside to see any of the rooms, not even the hall, and although it was nice to see the castle, and to say "We've been to Balmoral", we did come away thinking maybe it was a bit of a rip? Especially as we had to pay £1.50 to park too!

We carried on, and were again treated to some wonderful views, driving along the river Dee. About twenty miles on, and we arrived our stop for the night, Brit Stop no 815, which is a farm activity centre and farm shop! We once again couldn't wait to get into the farm shop and have a look at the local produce, and came away with some local cheeses, and a homemade/reared Aberdeen

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Angus pie along with some fresh veg for our tea tonight.

We both are so completely impressed with Brit Stops. For us, it's the perfect way to structure our tours, see local business' and more importantly spend some of our hard earned cash on what we love, local food and drink, whilst knowing you are helping a local farm shop or similar.



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