

Scotch Whisky Tour



DC-3 Airways Scotch Whisky Tour



Whisky

The commercial production of Scotch whisky began more than 300 years ago when an Argyllshire farmer produced the drink in a simple device using a similar method to that of the monks who were distilling centuries earlier. Distilling alcohol from various fruit or grain was brought from China by Arab traders to the Middle East, then to Europe, most notably France where Cognac was produced from grapes. The method then traveled from France to Ireland with monks escaping pillage and persecution. They used barley instead of grapes in their process and now the Irish lay claim to having the oldest whisky distillery in the world. And from Ireland as with many other things, it came to Scotland.

In the late seventeenth century a landowner, Duncan Forbes, was granted the rights to produce whisky 'from any of the grain grown on his estate' without paying tax. When, in 1784, this 100-year-old monopoly was abolished, distilleries rapidly sprang up throughout central Scotland and began to export to England. The English war with France and high taxes forced these small lowland distilleries out of business, but the trade carried on using illicit stills. Remote Highland glens were the

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ideal setting to conceal the cottage industry that then sprang up, and the peat fires and pure water of the glens, used with more traditional methods, produced an even more palatable product.

In 1822 the visit of King George IV once again made whisky widely popular, and changes were made in the law reducing excise duties and encouraging legal production. Blending became an important innovation with huge vats in which whiskies were mixed to improve their flavor.

Scotland is divided into regions coinciding with the type of whisky it produces. The distilleries below a line from Dundee to Greenock produce lowland malts which are lighter with a subtle flavor best suited as aperitifs. Whisky produced above the line is considered Highland.

The east of Scotland from Dundee to Royal Loch Nagar produces a whisky whose predominant flavor is malt, although much depends on how it is casked. To the west from Speyside to Oban the whisky is very well balanced. There are, however, distinct flavors to be found in the Islays.

Speyside is the modern heart of whisky production with over 30 per cent of Scotch malt whisky such as Glenlivet, Glenfarclas, Glenfiddich and the MaCallan coming from this small area. This is where the illegal trade flourished.

Now that we have that tucked away, let's head out on the journey.

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Leg One

Well, the some of the DC3 Airways pilots wanted to go on a tasting tour of some of the finer Scotch whisky distilleries. What better way to go than to arrange a charter flight with the company DC-3 and have you fly them around the beautiful countryside.

The flight will depart from Edinburgh Airport and the Caledonia distillery and head northeasterly to the Cameronbridge distillery at Windygates near the Fife Ness NDB (305.0) if you care to identify it on the way.

Next we fly over the distillery at Montrose, Glen Esk. Traditionally this has been an important component of the blended whisky Vat 69, bottled in South Queensferry, near Edinburgh by William Sanderson, formerly a Distillers Company Limited subsidiary and now subsumed into United Distillers. The Glenesk distillery is at the mouth of the South Esk river, at Montrose. It began its life as a flax mill and became a malt distillery in 1897. It was re-equipped to produce grain whisky around the time of the Second World War, converted back in the 1960s, and extended in the 1970s. It has been temporarily closed since 1985. Despite its chequered history it has very much the look of a traditional malt distillery. It has an adjoining maltings of the drum type.

Sadly the other distillery located near Montrose, called Lochside, has been sold for property development, but is worth mentioning. Once the well-known James Deuchar brewery, Lochside has been a distillery since 1957. The premises are on a filled-in loch, hence the name. Since 1973 the distillery has been in Spanish ownership and much of its malt goes into the Distilieras y Crianza blended whisky, a major product in Spain. In Scotland there is also a good splash of Lochside in the Sandy Macnab's blend.

After passing the Girdle Ness NDB, the Glengarioch distillery at Huntly will be found between the Scotstownhead NDB (383.0), Aberdeen and Kinloss. The distillery was founded in 1797 and had a succession of owners including Sanderson's (who used the malt in their Vat 69 blend), gin distillers Booth's and DCL, who closed it in 1968 because they said there was not enough water for distillation. A forerunner of the present owners bought it two years later, dug a new well in a neighboring field and production started once more. The exterior of Glen Garioch is most attractive, a small-scale cluster of mellowed stone buildings, usually with pagoda heads, making up a well-preserved exterior. The floor maltings are still in use and supply just on half of the required amount of malt. The rest is brought in from outside maltsters. Peat was cut from local Pitsligo Moss for the malt drying. The peat was burned under the malt for about four hours to endow the correct degree of flavor for Glen Garioch and the drying is completed by gas-firing. A third still was added to the original pair in 1973, and then a fourth. One of the wash stills is twice the size of the other and the two spirit stills. Sadly, the distillery is closed at time of writing and is seeking new ownership.

Just prior to passing over the Kinloss NDB (370.0) you will overhead the Royal Brackla distillery located in Nairn. The distillery was founded by a Captain Fraser in 1812 at the height of the illicit whisky monopoly. He complained that he was surrounded by people who drank nothing but whisky yet he could not sell 100 gallons in a year. The distillery is one of only three ever entitled to the 'Royal' epithet. In Brackla's case, it was bestowed as a result of King William IV's particular liking for the whisky and it was called 'The King's Own Whisky'. Brackla was used in the making of the very first blended whiskies assembled from malts and grains, a procedure developed by Edinburgh merchant, Andrew Usher. The distillery remained in the hands of the Fraser family until the end

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of the century. In 1966 the floor maltings were closed and the single pair of stills became two. In the course of that reconstruction program, most of the older buildings were demolished, although the modern plant is attractively situated looking on to the distillery pond.

The famous Pulteney distillery at Wick, which is located just down the road from your waypoint (Wick NDB 344.0) is worthy of a visit with its clear, pure waters. Situated on the outskirts of Wick on the wind-swept north-eastern tip of Scotland, it was established in 1826. Nearby is the 14th century Castle Oliphant which seamen describe as a landmark as "The Auld Man o' Wick". Pulteney was closed during the slump in the trade early this century and was only reopened in 1951. The water is drawn from a loch, four miles distant, and there is an abundance of local peat. The water is of course one of the most important ingredients of good Scotch whisky.

The first leg of the flight will end at the northern most distilleries of Highland Park and Scapa at Kidwell.

Highland Park was established in Kirkwall in the Orkney Islands in 1789 on the site of the bothy of a famous smuggler in these parts, Magnus Eunson. Even the church apparently smiled on his activities for Eunson was a church officer and numbered among his ploys to avoid discovery the hiding place of his illicit whisky under the pulpit and various other parts of the building. The distillery does its own malting and the Orkney peat, it is said, imparts an aroma to the whisky which is quite different to that of the mainland malts.

Beneath the waters of Scapa Flow still lie the hulks of the German war fleet from World War I, scuttled on the orders of von Reuter who was fed up with the slowness of the post-war repatriation negotiations. During World War II, convoys gathered here for escorting across the Atlantic and Scapa distillery was used as accommodation for naval ratings.

The distillery was opened in 1885 and embarked on a century of production involving few changes of ownership. It was silent for two years from 1934 and was owned for a time by the owners of Glen Scotia distillery in Campbeltown. Scapa was rebuilt in 1959 with further internal improvements made in 1978. The water supply carries a considerable amount of peat from the Lingro Burn and local springs, as a result of which the barley it uses is left unpeated. The waterwheel that supplied power to the original distillery is still there but the maltings were taken out of use in the 1960s not long after the rebuilding of the distillery.

The distillery has a single pair of stills, which date from 1978 and one of them is of the Lomond type, a rare feature. It has a short, stubby top instead of the elongated conical heads customary in Scottish distilleries. An appealing aspect for hard-line traditionalists is that the whisky is made without the usual hi-tech automation. The distillate intended for bottling as a single malt is aged exclusively in ex-Bourbon casks - which is oak wood charred on the inside of the staves.

This ends the first leg of the trip and of course tastings have been arranged at both local distilleries. Remember however, at some point in time, the journey must continue.

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From – To	Flight Description. "Allocated runways and related information may change when flying online or using Real Weather"				Course (Leg) Deg	Distance (Leg) nm	ETE (leg) HH+MM
	Dep. Rwy – 12	Init. Hdg – 126	Init. Alt – 5,500ft	Apt Elev. – 134ft			
Edinburgh (EGPH), Scotland To Kirkwall (EGPA), Shetland Is. Scotland watch for small collie like dogs here! ;-)	Departure: To Fix 01. Continue on runway heading 126deg until 500ft MSL.....				126	2.2	00+01
	Enroute: To FP (Fife Ness) NDB, 305.0. Turn left to 056deg, and start climb to 5,500ft for VFR cruising altitude. Remember, “see and be seen” and avoid rising terrain. Direct to NDB.....				056	31.6	00+15
	To GD (Girdle Ness) NDB, 311.0. On station passage continue outbound from FP NDB on heading 026deg. until GD NDB received.....				026	54.5	00+22
	To SHD (Scotstownhead) NDB, 383.0. Turn left to 024deg. Direct to NDB.....				024	26.3	00+10
	To KS (Kinloss) NDB, 370.0. On station passage climb to 6,500ft and continue outbound from FP NDB on heading 285deg until KS NDB received.....				285	57.2	00+23
	To WIK (Wick) NDB, 344.0. On station passage descend to 5,500ft and continue outbound from KS NDB on heading 027deg until KS NDB received.				027	50.6	00+20
	Approach: To KW (Kirkwall) NDB, 395.0. Turn left to 017deg begin 500 ft/min decent to 1,500ft and slow to 120kts. Direct to Kirkwall NDB.				017	31.1	00+13
	To Fix 02. After station passage, turn right to 082deg and fly downwind for two minutes, descending at 500ft/min to 1,000feet MSL.				082	4.0	00+02
	To runway. Commence a right standard rate turn to a heading of 276 for runway 27 at Kirkwall Airport (EGPA).				276	4.4	00+02
	Land: Kirkwall runway 27 Length: 4,730ft Width: 151ft Surface: Asphalt						
Flight: 888-01-01	Arrival Airport Elev. – 52ft Estimated totals for this flight>>>					262nm	01+48

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Leg Two

Up early and preflight the venerable company airplane for the next leg of the tour. We will depart in a southwesterly direction and head for a tour of the Hebrides Islands to the west of the mainland. This leg will be more about sightseeing and beauty with the distilleries being discovered further along the flight. The Outer Hebridean Islands of Lewis & Harris lie on the western edge of the British Isles, off the North West coast of Scotland. A visit here gives a glimpse of a unique culture with its own language and traditions, influenced by Celtic and Viking settlers. The Callanish Stones, Harris Tweed and lilting Gaelic melodies evoke the freedom and timelessness of a bygone age. Harris and Lewis are a world apart from the Scottish mainland. Life goes on at an easy pace, city life urgency disappears and there is a wonderful feeling of freedom and peace. Harris is of course where the world famous Harris Tweed cloth is woven. Harris is geographically linked with the Isle of Lewis, but is more mountainous than Lewis, and has a rocky coast and fertile west coast with many miles of superb beaches.

The main town of Lewis is Stornoway, a busy ferry and fishing port with good shopping and restaurant facilities. Lewis has many places to visit of historic and archaeological interest, including the famous, spectacular 5,000 year old Standing Stones at Callanish.

If you really want to get away from it all, a visit to the tiny island of Barra for its empty golden beaches, sandy grasslands, wild flowers and rugged interior will do it for you. Nestling near the bottom of the Western Isles chain, it has been quite rightly called "Barradise". The old b/w movie "Whisky Galore" (known as "Tight Little Island" in the US) was filmed here based on the novel by Compton MacKenzie who adapted the true story of the S.S. Politician which sank off nearby Eriskay with its cargo of whisky in 1941. Its sequel Rockets Galore made in color a few years later was also shot around the island. An excellent place for cycling, Barra's main road loops twelve miles around the island. At Northbay, an offshoot takes you up the Eoligarry peninsula to Barra's northern tip. The local Post bus running between Castlebay and the airport takes on passengers for a small fee. The population of the island numbers approximately 1300. Many of the islanders still speak Gaelic.

The Island of Skye, situated off the West coast of Mainland Scotland, is the largest and best known of the Inner Hebrides. Sometimes referred to in Gaelic poetry and song as *Eilean a' Cheò* (The Misty Isle), Skye is renown for its natural beauty, history and wildlife. The Cuillin Hills, the Red Hills and Blaven have long been favorites with climbers and walkers. If you don't fancy the high places, the deeply indented coastline means you are never far from the sea. Wildlife abounds on the Island, with birds from the tiny Goldcrest to magnificent Golden Eagle, mammals from Pygmy Shrew to Red Deer and fish from Saithe to Salmon. If you are lucky you might catch sight of the elusive Otter playing on the shore. The wide range of geology and topography provides habitats for many wild flowers. Alas, we will only overfly this wonderful isle.

On the way to our next NDB we will fly past the distillery of Ben Nevis at Ft. William. Founded by "Long John" Macdonald in 1825. Owned by various Macdonalds until bought by Seager Evans in the 1920s. Taken over by Ben Nevis Distillery (Fort William) Ltd. who installed a coffee still. Four pot stills. Sold by the Whitbread group to the Japanese company, Nikka, early in 1989. A cask of Ben Nevis was presented to Queen Victoria on her visit to Fort William on 21 April 1848. The cask was not to be opened until the Prince of Wales reached his majority 15 years later. Ben Nevis Distillery, standing at the foot of Scotland's highest mountain, is one of the oldest distilleries in Scotland. It was founded at Fort William by the famous local character. the 'Long' John Macdonald in 1825. (The brand name of Long John and the distillery company became separated.) After more than 100 years and three generations in the

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family, the distillery was sold in 1941. The subsequent addition of a patent still made the distillery one of the few that could produce both malt and grain under one roof, and it received a new lease of life in the late 1980's following its acquisition by the Nikka Whisky Distilling Co. of Japan.

As we fly over the OBN NDB (404.0) at North Connel you will see one of my favorite distilleries, Oban. The town of Oban is also known as the 'Gateway to the Isles'. Two brothers, the Stevensons settled here in 1778 and greatly enriched the hamlet, as it was then, with their business activities ranging from slate quarrying to shipbuilding. In 1794 Hugh Stevenson built the Oban Distillery, hiring an experienced Lowland distiller to manage the whole operation. The distillery remained in the hands of the family until 1866 and was eventually acquired by one Walter Higgin (1883). By this time Oban was a busy port with wool, whisky, slate, and kelp being shipped to Liverpool and Glasgow by steamship. The railway also brought in a new wave of prosperity to the area: tourism with the first scheduled passenger trains arriving from Glasgow in 1880. Higgin made many improvements to the distillery with solid rock face behind it blasted away to accommodate the enlargements. In 1898, Alexander Edward, owner of Aultmore Distillery, bought Higgin out. In its first year the Oban and Aultmore Distilleries Ltd. suffered near fatal losses, when the major blending company Patterson's of Leith collapsed. In 1923 Aultmore was acquired by John Dewar & Sons and Oban by a new company, Oban Distillery Co. This in turn came under the wing of DCL when Scottish Malt Distillers bought the entire capital share in 1930.



Another favorite, well I shouldn't say that, they all are good and have their distinctive flavors..... but the flight is coming to an end for this leg and we approach the airport at Islay (EGPI). The group has insisted on a distillery visit so this has been arranged. Situated in a small bay near the south coast of Islay, Lagavulin stands near the ruins of Dunyveg Castle. It was from here that 1,000 Islaymen set sail to fight alongside Robert the Bruce at Bannockburn in 1314, and in this bay the Macdonalds maintained their power base as Lords of the Isles until they were finally driven out by the Campbells three centuries later. Lagavulin legitimately claims to be one of the oldest distilleries in Scotland. Distilling on the site is thought to date from as early as 1742. In the late 1700s it is believed that there were up to ten illicit stills operating in the district. But by the 1830s only two distilleries remained in the bay. In 1837 these distilleries amalgamated to form Lagavulin. At this stage the distillery was under the ownership of the Graham brothers and James Logan Mackie, uncle of Sir Peter Mackie who later became one of the 'big five' in the whisky industry.

By 1875 Lagavulin was producing 75,000 gallons of whisky. It was chosen by United Distillers for their Classic Malts series in 1988/89 and is now more widely available. That is where we will be spending our time in Islay.

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From – To	Flight Description. "Allocated runways and related information may change when flying online or using Real Weather"				Course (Leg) Deg	Distance (Leg) nm	ETE (leg) HH+MM
	Dep. Rwy – 27	Init. Hdg – 276	Init. Alt – 6,500ft	Apt Elev. – 52ft			
Kirkwall (EGPA), Shetland Is. Scotland To Islay (EGPI) Scotland	Departure: Before take off tune NDB to KW (Kirkwall) NDB, 395.0. To Fix 01. Continue on runway heading 276deg until 500ft MSL.....				276	2.0	00+01
	Enroute: To Fix 02. Turn left to 243deg, and start climb to 6,500ft for VFR cruising altitude. Remember, “see and be seen” and avoid rising terrain. Waypoint reached when the RMI reads 078deg.....				243	1.1	00+01
	To SAY (Stornoway) NDB, 431.0. Turn right to 258deg, RMI reads 078deg from KW. Re tune ADF when you lose the signal from KW.				258	113.5	00+47
	To BRR (Barra) NDB, 316.0. Turn left to 217deg. Direct to NDB.....				217	79.9	00+31
	To BFD (Isle of Skye) NDB, 390.0. Turn left to 084deg, RMI reads 264deg from BRR, and descent to 5,500ft. 10mins after station passage BRR retune ADF. Direct to NDB.....				084	54.6	00+21
	To CNL (North Connel) NDB, 404.0. Turn right to 171deg, RMI reads 351deg from BFD. 15mins after station passage BFD retune ADF. Direct to NDB.....				171	49.4	00+19
	To RN (Rhinn of Islay) NDB, 293.0. Turn right to 228deg, and descend to 4,500ft. Begin 500 ft/min decent 13 minutes after station passage CNL to 1,500ft MSL.....				228	60.4	00+24
	Approach: To LAY (Islay) NDB, 395.0. Turn left to 095deg begin 500 ft/min decent to 1,000ft and slow to 120kts. Direct to NDB.				095	8.9	00+04
	To Fix 03. After station passage, turn right to 117deg and fly downwind for two minutes.....				117	4.0	00+02
	To runway. Commence a right standard rate turn to a heading of 310deg. There is rising terrain to North through East so remain in the airport environment.....				310	5.0	00+02
Land: Islay runway 31 Length: 5,089ft Width: 151ft Surface: Asphalt							
Flight: 888-01-02	Arrival Airport Elev. – 52ft Estimated totals for this flight>>>					379nm	02+32

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Leg Three

After a pleasant visit to Lagavulin distillery and a good rest, it is off for the final leg of the tour. So far the plane has been flawless and the fellow pilots in the back have not been too rowdy, but then they haven't volunteered to pitch in and fly a leg either.

After departing Islay airport we will head for Campbeltown and fly past the Glenscotia distillery. Glen Scotia has been silent on frequent occasions this century, including a recent spell in the 1980s. However, the distillery keeps on bouncing back and welcomes visitors with its new facilities. The distillery had a very stable existence throughout the last century. From 1832 to 1895 it belonged to the original licensees, but then changed hands twice more before falling silent, as did so many of its neighbors, in the 1920s. For a while it belonged to the owners of Scapa distillery in Orkney, right at the other end of the country. It was owned by Gibson International, until 1994 when production again ceased. The new owners are Loch Lomond Distillery Co. Ltd. The buildings, including the malt barns and the barley lofts, are Victorian and the stillhouse is thought to be original. At some stage expansion took in a row of shops so that the yard now abuts the street. Glen Scotia maintained its cooperage function and there has always been a cooper on the distillery payroll and there is a small range of cask-making tools on display. A single pair of stills contrasts with the set of three used at Springbank. The water is drawn from Crosshill Loch and the distillery's own wells which are 80 feet deep. The distillery has a resident ghost, that of a previous owner, Duncan MacCallum, who committed suicide in 1930 after losing a fortune in a crooked business deal. He drowned himself in Campbeltown Loch, later made famous in a popular song by Scots entertainer, Andy Stewart. The singer dreams that the loch is full of whisky, not water, and tries to drink it dry.

The flight now takes us over our final distillery of the tour, the Girvan distillery at Girvan. Built as a grain distillery in 1963, it is one of the largest and most modern in Europe producing well over 15,000,000 gallons annually with warehouse facilities for 25,000,000 gallons. The site covers 64 acres and three years after the establishment of the grain distillery, a Lowland malt distillery, Ladyburn, was added. In this area the visitor is never very far from the sight of Ailsa Craig - the granite sugar-load islet, which is such a distinctive feature of the Firth of Clyde.

Now we continue on and overfly the Prestwick airport (hope you have visited here in the DC3 Airways charter "Fate is the Hunter"), Glasgow, and up to Fife Ness for the approach into Edinburgh. Hope you enjoyed the tour and not only saw some beautiful scenery, but were challenged by the navigation, learned some history about Scotch whiskys, and enjoyed the journey with some friends.

Regards,

George Nuse

DCA_888

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From – To	<u>Flight Description.</u> "Allocated runways and related information may change when flying online or using Real Weather"				Course (Leg) Deg	Distance (Leg) nm	ETE (leg) HH+MM
	Dep. Rwy – 31	Init. Hdg – 310	Init. Alt – 5,500ft	Apt Elev. – 52ft			
Islay (EGPI), Scotland To Edinburgh (EGPH), Scotland	Departure: To Fix 01. Continue on runway heading 310deg until 500ft MSL.....				310	2.0	00+01
	Enroute: To CBL (Campbeltown) NDB, 380.0. Turn right to 138deg, and start climb to 5,500ft for VFR cruising altitude. Remember, "see and be seen" and avoid rising terrain. Direct to NDB.....				138	27.0	00+13
	To WFR (West Freugh) NDB, 339.0. Turn right to 151deg, RMI reads 331deg from CBL. 10mins after station passage CBL retune ADF. Direct to NDB.....				151	43.0	00+17
	To PIK (Prestwick) NDB, 355.0. Turn left to 026deg. Direct to NDB. Higher density traffic over this and next areas.				026	40.7	00+16
	To AC (Glasgow) NDB, 325.0. Turn left to 012deg. Direct to NDB.....				012	18.5	00+07
	To CBN (Cumbernauld) NDB, 374.0. Turn right to 071deg. Direct to NDB.....				071	21.4	00+08
	To FP (Fife Ness) NDB, 305.0. Turn right to 075deg. Direct to NDB.....				075	49.9	00+18
	Approach: To EDN (Edinburgh) NDB, 341.0. Turn right to 240deg begin 500 ft/min decent to 1,000ft. Direct to NDB.				240	29.5	00+12
	To runway. Turn right to 247deg for a visual approach. VFR traffic may land on runways 6/24 or 12/30 depending on winds upon arrival. Runway 8/26 is a bit short for company aircraft operations.....				247	2.7	00+01
	Land: Edinburgh runway 24 Length: 8,384ft Width: 151ft Surface: Asphalt						
Flight: 888-01-03	Arrival Airport Elev. – 134ft				Estimated totals for this flight>>>		235nm 01+33