



THE SCOTSMAN

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Explore Aberdeen to Peterhead on the North East 250

As Aberdeen fades in the rear view mirror, the next stretch of the North East 250 unfolds as we exit the city to the north

into the coastal territory of the
Shire.

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This coastline offers so much to explore

In [Aberdeen](#), we saw how people and the sea have co-existed for hundreds of years as fishing, trading and oil shaped fortunes through voyaging and exploration. On the next stretch of coast, we see how the natural world rules where land and water meet.

Watch the local wildlife

At [Newburgh](#), around 14 miles north of Aberdeen, a giant seal colony is an enthralling sight. Around 400

grey and harbour seals gather here, waiting for the salmon drawn into the Ythan Estuary and are a joy to watch as they rest, roll and bide their time for their next catch. They can be observed safely on the sandy banks of the river, but please do not try and bother them, as this is very much their patch.



Colossal dunes emerge along this stretch of coastline, and the giant sandy barriers provide many wonderful natural habitats, not only for the seals but for eiders, terns and a rich mix of wildfowl and waders.

At Forvie National Nature Reserve, the shifting dunes at the southern end of the protected area have been compared to the Sahara Desert. So immense are they that 600 years ago, a fierce storm blew in so hard that the sand started to bury an entire village, which

to bury an entire village, which was ultimately abandoned by its residents in the late 1600s.

Today, the dunes hide layers of history and lost stories, but traces of life once lived in this coastal community can still be seen. You'll find the outline of the old Forvie Kirk, its appearance in the sand a ghostly reminder of the force that nature can hold.

Bram Stoker

The coast is a paradise for wildlife – as well as the inspiration for Dracula

Nudge further north to Cruden Bay and you'll find a place with its own, very different story given its links to gothic horror writer Bram Stoker, who landed in the [North East](#) ↗ from Dublin in the late 19th Century for some quiet time with his family.

It was here where he was to summon at least some of the

darkness required for his vampiric creation, Dracula, said to have been inspired by Slains Castle, which looms over the North Sea in foreboding style. Standing there as the skies darken against the silhouette of the ruin feels like a scene setter, indeed.

Despite the creepiness of Stoker's work, Cruden Bay is a pretty place with the Kilmarnock Arms, where the writer stayed and whose signature can still be found in the guest book, becoming a

home from home for the writer for 17 years.


The cliffs around here hold many treasures and tales, not least at Bullers of Buchan, a collapsed sea cave which has created a massive blow hole and several arches, that are now buzzing breeding grounds for seabirds, from kittiwakes to puffins and fulmars. As they swoop and dive as the water swirls below – and maritime plants such as pink sea thrift, Scots lovage and roseroot, brace in the sea breeze. it is

clear why this spot has been a popular draw for generations, so much so that it even had its own railway halt stop.

The Bullers of Buchan sit just a couple of miles north of Cruden Bay, on a good coastal path, so it's an option to leave the car at the village and see up close how these impressive landforms interplay with the sea.

Super trawler industry

Further north still and you will see that relationship in full

effect in [Peterhead](#) , the biggest fishing port in the UK. Super trawlers gleam like super yachts; the interiors are said to be so hi-spec fishermen have to wear slippers on board – with this port bringing sailors from all corners of the world as the search for fish in the North Sea gets ever more challenging. As in Aberdeen, you’ll feel the deep heave of industry in Peterhead, a town that is very much worth a look.

Another major attraction is the Peterhead Prison Museum,

which occupies part of the high-security place of incarceration that was home to the toughest of criminals and where riots in the early 80s, and the SAS rescue of a prison officer, scarred national memory. As you walk where prisoners slept, eat, worked and exercised, you'll experience a behind-the-scenes look of an environment normally out of bounds for most of us.

The story of how man versus sea shaped this part of the

world manifests itself at the prison, which was built as part of the plan to shield the town from giant breakwaters. The prison would provide a cheap workforce of convicts for the construction of this part of the harbour, the men shielding the town from the power of the mighty ocean beyond, which has long defined this part of the world and its people.


Go your own way

Made up of six engaging and exciting sections, the North

East 250 is perfect for a short

EAST 250 IS PERFECT FOR A SHORT break, or explore each section individually as a day out – it's a route planned with flexibility in mind.

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Peterhead

North East

Bram Stoker

Aberdeen

Newburgh