



Weekend in Appin in the Scottish Highlands

Touring in the northwest of the Scottish Highlands can take you to some areas with less tourist traffic where there are some hotels which are very comfortable and have wonderful views across lochs and over to distant mountains. One location is [Port Appin](#) alongside Loch Linnhe at the southern end of the Great Glen between Fort William and Oban. Here Victor Smith recalls a memorable visit.

History of Appin and the Stewart clan

Appin is an area much fought over by the Stewart clan for many years not least because the Stewarts of Appin fought for the Jacobite Cause at the Battle of Sheriffmuir in 1715, and were attainted for treason. Charles Stewart of Ardsheal led the men of Appin at the Battle of Culloden in 1746 where 92 clansmen were among the dead. The Stewarts of Appin suffered appalling casualties at Culloden breaking the ranks of the Government Regiments of Foot of the British Army. The Stewarts of Appin were traditional allies of the Clan MacLaren of Balquhider, the Clan Cameron of Lochiel and the Clan MacDonald of Glencoe (or Maclans) of Glencoe. They were inveterate enemies of the Clan Campbell of Argyll and Breadalbane.

Following the defeat of the Jacobites at Culloden, Colin Campbell of Glenure, 'the Red Fox', was placed as Government factor on the forfeited Stewart estates. His murder in 1752 has been immortalised by Stevenson in the novel Kidnapped and after the chief suspect, Alan Breck Stewart, made his escape, James Stewart, the half-brother of the chief, was tried by a jury composed entirely of Campbells at Inverary presided over by Argyll himself. Perhaps not surprisingly, James Stewart was convicted and hanged.



Airds Hotel at Port Appin

[Airds](#) is a boutique hotel at Port Appin a mile or so off the A828 road between Ballachulish and Connell. The entrance to the hotel is through a small flower filled conservatory which looks out towards Loch Linnhe and the mountains beyond. Here you can relax any time of the day and read or admire the view over a cup of coffee or enjoy a lunch watching 'life' go by. It is most popular for afternoon tea when it gets the best of the sun and later for pre-dinner drinks with the sun setting over the mountains. With a dry April in the Scottish NW Highlands, and before the arrival of the midge in early June, enjoying a lunch of smoked salmon in warm sunshine in the garden of the Airds Hotel looking out across Loch Linnhe is bliss.

In the photo alongside you can see across Loch Linnhe is Creach Beinn 853m in Kingairloch, an area between Ardgour to the north east and the remote Morven further to the west. To get over there you need to take the short ferry crossing at Corran. The Corran Narrows are on Loch Linnhe to the north - beyond Suna Island which you can see at the top of the sunshade in the photo alongside.

Visiting Castle Stalker

[Castle Stalker](#), which stands in a commanding position on a rocky islet where Loch Laich meets Loch Linnhe. A guided tour by the present owner is an experience that underlines that from the start, the Stewart lordship of Castle Stalker was wrapped in violence and intrigue. Battles and murders were endless – if you have a glass of malt to hand to steady your nerves as there is [more here](#) on the bloody period.

James IV of Scotland stayed frequently at Castle Stalker on hunting and hawking excursions to Argyll. Another murder followed in 1520 when Sir Alexander Stewart of Invernahyle was killed by a party of Campbells while fishing just off the islet next to the castle. Following the Jacobite defeat at Culloden the castle, along with the whole Appin estate, was forfeited in 1746 and the Chief and his family were in hiding. The castle was burned and remained unrestored until the early 20th century, when Charles Stewart of Achara bought it and began restoration work, but sold it again before it was completed. Subsequently in the 1960s, the late Lt Col. Stuart Allward bought the ruin and he and his family have restored the fabric largely with their own hands. His family still own the Castle.

Many readers may probably remember Castle Stalker had a role in the film Monty Python and the Holy Grail – it is the island castle that appears right near the end of the film as a horde charge towards the castle. In fact the "warriors" were children from a local school dressed in cloaks and helmets. The film was on a tight budget!

