



Fordyce and Portsoy Heritage Itinerary

The picture-perfect village of [Fordyce](#) has roots in medieval times, and a stroll around its streets will unravel some interesting tales from the past. The best place to start is at the earliest point in time – the Auld Kirk of Fordyce – which dates back to 1272. This is a striking building, and the kirkyard contains gravestones that are over 400 years old, as well as other grand monuments to notable families that would have been powerful in their day.

Another building worth looking out for is Fordyce Castle – an easily distinguishable tower house. A later addition was a wing known as Glassaugh House, which for a time served as Fordyce Academy. The tiny school punched well above its weight in terms of its academic achievements, and was regarded as the most significant feeder school for Aberdeen University outside of the city. The roll call of notable students includes Nellie Badenoch, first woman graduate with First Class Honours from Aberdeen University and Sir John Forbes MD – a physician to Queen Victoria.

But the village of Fordyce is not all about notable scholars, as there is also an opportunity to learn about the history of ordinary working class folk. A visit to the Fordyce Joiner's Workshop and Visitor Centre will highlight the importance of the rural carpenter in the days before machinery. After watching a craftsman working in wood and looking at early machinery, stop off and enjoy some time in the tranquillity of the Victorian garden and then head to Fordyce's only tea room for a bite to eat.

After lunch, head back towards the coast and the main A98 road, turning right towards Portsoy. Start your visit here at the 17th century harbour – pausing to look at the unusual construction of vertical, rather than horizontal stones. You will find some excellent examples of Georgian architecture all over Portsoy, but the collection of town houses and former warehouses which overlook the harbour are particularly attractive.

Standing with your back to the harbour, look over at the large property with the red doors. This is the former home of the merchant and notorious smuggler Alexander 'Laird' Brebner, who ran rings around excisemen with his illegal trade in luxury goods such as brandy and tobacco.

Walk in a north-easterly direction towards the new harbour – a second harbour which was constructed in 1825 – and imagine it filled with dozens of fishing boats. It's now home to pleasure craft and small creel boats, but in its heyday it was one of the busiest ports on the coast.

Skirt right towards the historic [Salmon Bothy](#) – a must-visit for anyone interested in tracing their family tree. The bothy is now a museum with a fascinating display on the history of the local fishing and boatbuilding industries, and a community space for exhibitions and activities upstairs.



The former sleeping quarters has been turned into a genealogical research facility, where you can get help and advice on how to go about tracing your relatives and suggestions on where you can find clues. The museum is run by volunteers and many of them have lived in Portsoy all their days, so have a very good knowledge about families from the town.

Round off your visit by walking up the hill from the caravan park and back into the town centre. There is a large war memorial outside the church which lists the names of many local men who gave their lives during both world wars.

If you still have the energy, it's possible to take a coastal walk from [Portsoy over to Sandend](#) where you will see many of the caves and coves which smugglers used to hide out and stash their contraband.