

Aberdeen - city of opportunities

Nicole van Voorst Vader



Nicole has been in Scotland for the last three years. She believes Scotland provides a range of opportunities for accompanying partners, and in this article shares stories from some of the people she has met who are making the most of them.

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Aberdeen is a really good family posting, with good local schools as well as the International School of Aberdeen. Teenagers can be fairly independent, using public transport to go out shopping or to the movies. There are fine amateur choirs, sport facilities etc. and, within a short drive of the city, superb hiking opportunities and golf courses. Many accompanying spouses are employed in oil-related activities or teaching, but there are also numerous charities welcoming volunteers and ample possibilities for studying at all levels. For the rest there are wonderful quilt shops, mahjong groups, bible study classes - you name it!

Hanneke Timmermans, a librarian by profession, adores books and loves meeting people. She also cherishes the freedom to get away, perhaps to visit her daughters 'back home', or to accompany her husband on a trip. She successfully manages to combine everything by working as a volunteer in the Oxfam Bookshop on the picturesque Backwynd in Aberdeen. A wide variety of books, cds, records and sheet music are sold as well as prints, cards and stamps. Hanneke loves to chat with the people who donate goods and the customers who buy, some of whom come from the city's two universities. The fact that instead of being trashed, unwanted stuff is sold on, and the money raised is contributing towards a worthy cause, is an added bonus.

Oxfam bookshop Aberdeen



Jacket by Irma Boutlaan



Having wanted to be a puppy-walker for many years, Ineke van Elst grasped her chance upon arrival in Aberdeen, and at the same time she became an active fundraiser for the Guide Dogs for the Blind Association. The Association breeds about 1000 puppies each year from carefully selected parents, aiming to produce obedient Guide Dogs who concentrate 'at work', and who are friendly, loyal and loving companions. 'Puppy-walkers' take the dogs at 6 weeks old and do the first training, teaching them to follow basic commands and to be sociable and well behaved. At a year old the dog leaves the walker and goes back to the Association for a year's further schooling. If all goes well, the dog will be matched to a blind person and they will then remain a team until the dog's retirement at 10-11 years old. Ineke has had four puppies so far and although giving up a puppy isn't easy, she rather enjoys having a dog for a limited period, alternating with time for herself. She remains deeply impressed each time she hears how much more freedom and confidence a guide-dog gives to his or her owner.

Irma Boutlaan who, incidentally has been a puppy-walker twice, has always enjoyed 'playing' with materials, knitting, embroidering, drawing etc. After High School she considered enrolling in Art School, but lacked a portfolio to demonstrate her abilities. As an expatriate she has been able to enjoy a lot of creative activities, including learning quilting in Oman, and now in Aberdeen she is an art student at Robert Gordon University. Her first year has included painting, printmaking, sculpture, drawing, photography, textiles and electronic media. Irma's days are filled to the brim combining classes with taking care of her young family, while in the evenings she is busy working on assignments and essays. For her end-of-year-exam Irma has designed a jacket for Vivienne Westwood of Sex Pistols fame; eventually she intends to specialise in Textiles.

As for me, as soon as my family settled in here, I enrolled at Aberdeen University to study Philosophy. Here you have to study two subject areas for the first 2 years - great for broadening horizons and for students who don't yet know what to specialize in. Taking the prescribed philosophy courses as well as Linguistics and Understanding Islam, I was able to explore the borders between ethics, politics, and language. After the second year you can take joint honours, or single honours as I did, and you can still take a few relevant classes from outside your main subject. 'Cherry-picking' the curriculum in this way has great advantages; everyone studying what they really find interesting means more fruitful



interaction with fellow students and teachers. Being a more experienced mature student adds an extra dimension also. My life is busier than that of my fellow students, but of course the young also need time to go to the pub, fall in love, and generally mature. It is stimulating to be in their midst!

All four of us have found ways to do something really worthwhile that builds on our previous experiences and dreams. It's great that Aberdeen offers so many wonderful opportunities.

Aberdeen University

Eating in Scotland

Mary Macpherson

Mary is a born and bred Scot. She is currently based in the Netherlands with her husband Rab and their two girls Lucy and Katy.

Scottish cuisine has it all. Where else in the world will you find such mouthwateringly fresh ingredients, a staggering array of malt whiskeys, local mineral waters, and Perthshire fruit wines, and the finest selection Glayva or Drambuie? But I digress, back to the cuisine.

Scotland's cuisine is directly linked to its diverse landscape. The Highlands with their heather grazing sheep and grouse, the lowlands with manicured fields full of golden barley for the whiskey and beer; oats for the bannocks, skirlie and porridge; tatties for the stovies and mince; vegetables for the scotch broth, and of course our world famous Aberdeen Angus black cattle - the choice above others for connoisseurs of fillet and sirloin steaks. We have a varied coastline, perfect for prawns and scallops, and oysters can be found in the cold clear waters of the west coast. The North Sea, bountiful for its fish such as haddock, cod and sole as well as for its oil and gas reserves! Let's not forget our clear rivers with brown trout and wild salmon, or our skies with pigeon, geese and pheasant.

Am I forgetting something? Oh yes...haggis! Suffice to say that it tastes great with bashed neeps and chappit tatties, at any time of the year - full of oatmeal, spices and lots of other "animal inside" things, all stuffed (traditionally at least) into a sheep's stomach. You can even get a vegetarian haggis these days - what will they think of next?

Of course all is not perfect in Scottish cuisine. There is the delicacy known as a deep fried mars bar, and a "traditional"



pub menu may still feature frozen fish or steak pies and salads consisting of limp lettuce, half a tomato, two slices of cucumber, a hard boiled egg garnished with dried parsley flakes and salad cream...Hmm.

But Scottish cuisine has come a long way; there are farmers' markets and local shops, and famous chefs like Nick Nairn. The Scottish love of travel and adventure is reflected in the food and lasagna, sweet & sour pork and curry are probably considered traditional tucker. There is even a great restaurant in Glasgow where tikka marsala is served by Indian men wearing kilts!

Scotland welcomes people from all over the world, which adds diversity and colour to our lives as well as the dishes that we choose. Lucky us and lucky you when you visit Scotland for all it has to offer. It must be said however, that the best dish to consume on the way home from the pub after "being on the skite" is a doner kebab with extra chilli sauce, washed down with a can of chilled Irn Bru beer. Pure magic!

The glories of Lochnagar



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In the heart of Lochnagar's corrie - climbers ascending 'Black Spout Gully' (photograph courtesy of Ronnie Robb)

by Kirsty Johns

After fourteen enjoyable years of global expatriation, Kirsty now lives on 'royal Deeside' in Aberdeenshire.

**'England, thy beauties are tame and domestic
To one who has roamed over mountains afar.
Oh for the crags that are wild and majestic,
The steep frowning glories of dark Lochnagar.'**

These words were written by the poet Byron who lived in Aberdeenshire as a child with his Scottish mother in the 1790s - and they serve as a fine introduction to the magnificent mountain range of Lochnagar.

Lochnagar is one of Scotland's 284 'Munroes' - mountains over 3000 ft / 915m. The range is located in the Cairngorm mountains and stands grandly on guard over the towns of Ballater, Braemar and Balmoral. Ever popular with walkers, climbers and mountaineers, it is an example of the grandeur to be offered by the Scottish highlands - and it is less than two hours' drive from the Shell offices in Aberdeen.

From its summit (Cac Carn Beag, 3789 ft/1155m) there is a panoramic view of the surrounding hills. But beware in poor visibility - the upper part of the route is short of obvious features and there are very steep cliffs on its northern edge. The northern corries (among them Black Spout, a difficult winter climb with the hardest single pitch climb in the world) have long attracted expert climbers, and many have learned their craft on its crags.

There are many famous associations with Lochnagar. In contrast with the passionate and somewhat disreputable reputation of Lord Byron, it shares more sedate (though no less entertaining) connections with the British royal family. Queen Victoria and Prince Albert acquired Balmoral Castle in 1848 and, along with Osborne House on the Isle of Wight, it was one of her favourite residences. She was much taken by the local scenery and, in a letter to her uncle in 1849, described the deep loch beneath its crags as 'one of the wildest, grandest things imaginable'. She commissioned several paintings of the mountain, including two watercolours of the northern corries viewed from the loch below which still remain in the Royal Collection. The 1997 film 'Mrs Brown', starring Judy Dench and Billy Connolly, includes many scenes on the Balmoral estate, and recounts the unusual friendship - following the death of her beloved Albert - of Queen Victoria and her loyal Scottish servant John Brown. Even now, rumours circulate of a secret marriage ceremony between the two.



Queen Victoria 1885

Queen Victoria is also rumoured to enjoy the odd glass of whisky, and the owners of the New Lochnagar Distillery, situated by the River Dee half a mile from Balmoral Castle in nearby Crathie, invited his new royal neighbours to visit in 1848. Victoria and Albert duly dropped in, and were so impressed that they awarded him the very first Royal Warrant 'Distiller to Her Majesty' - he

was then allowed to call his distillery Royal Lochnagar. It was reputedly the loyal retainer, John Brown, who invented one of Victoria's favourite tipples, a cocktail comprising equal parts of claret wine and malt whisky - thereby, some might say, ruining two of the world's great drinks.

Members of the royal family continue to have great affection for the area, and often holiday on the Balmoral estate in the summer. The royal lodge 'Allt-na-Guibhsaich' is picturesquely situated at the start of the main path up Lochnagar (and is now available for rent as a holiday cottage, along with other

cottages on the estate). Some years ago, the heir to the British throne Prince Charles wrote a children's story entitled 'The Old Man of Lochnagar' (the mountain range is actually situated within the Balmoral royal estate). Originally written for reading to his younger brothers, Andrew and Edward, it was published in 1980 with engaging illustrations by Sir Hugh Casson. The book quirkily describes the various adventures of an old man who lives in a cave by Loch Lochnagar - the very same loch that so appealed to Charles' great-great-great grandmother, Queen Victoria. The final sentence of his story reads, 'He couldn't think of anywhere more special to be, than to be living at the foot of Lochnagar' - as so many walkers have discovered.

For those inclined to venture a bit further than the car park and lake, the climb up Lochnagar from Loch Muick is a circular walk of around eight miles. The view from the top is tremendous on a clear day, on other days it is hard even to see a few paces ahead, so it is not a place for inexperienced walkers. The wildlife reserve around Loch Muick and Lochnagar was established in 1974, and the area is designated as a natural 'special protection area' due to a nationally important number of upland birds, including large numbers of breeding Dotterel, a species of mountain plover.

On a fine day, go to the west wing of the fourth floor in the office building known as Phase 5 at the Shell HQ in Aberdeen, and you can just spot the mountain tops of Lochnagar fifty miles away. And what better thing to do on a spring weekend than drive to Glen Muick, take in the history, and view for yourselves the 'steep frowning glories of dark Lochnagar'.

Scots Wha Hae!

Andrew Rudge

Ah, Scotland! Renowned for its glorious scenery, the vagaries of its weather and the mystery of what lies beneath the kilt. Equally well-known for having magnificent golf courses, in some places an impenetrable accent and for exporting the world's finest whisky – without an 'e'.

But let's not forget the other major export – people. There's hardly a far-flung destination that hasn't had its share of Scottish influence. Just look at the place names. Fraserburg; the McKenzie River; Dunedin; Perth, and thousands of towns, lakes and features throughout the newer world. And how dull the old and new worlds without Sherlock Holmes, Peter Pan and Winnie the Pooh – products of Scottish imagination. How rough the roads without good old McAdam; a less steamy Industrial Revolution without Watt; no phone without Bell or TV without Baird. Mungo Park went up the Niger in the early 1800s; Laing was the first European to reach Timbuktu; James Hector was kicked by a packhorse in the Rockies at a place known for ever after as Kicking Horse Pass, and Livingstone named the Victoria Falls before meeting Stanley, dying in Africa and being interred in



product of Scottish imagination

Westminster Abbey. Some exports have a wilder streak and it's no coincidence that the mad janitor in the Simpsons and the fearsome Nac mac Feegle of the Discworld sport red hair and accents from way north of the border. Scots and Nac mac Feegle wha hae indeed!

Teaching in Aberdeen circa 1979

José is a sub-editor for DESTINATIONS. She has enjoyed numerous postings over the years with her husband Simon, including Brunei, Stavanger, Norway and Warri Nigeria. She has been back in the Netherlands for the last 10 years, where her youngest child Alex is in his last year at The British School in The Netherlands. José and Simon have two other children; Kim who is taking her finals for a BA in London College of Fashion and Niels who is finishing his BSc at Durham University.

José Jakeman-Walker

After three years of teaching in a lovely Wassenaar primary school, it was time for a change. My father had seen an advertisement in the newspaper for a position in Gamba, Gabon. It was to fill the place of a woman who was pregnant and while I was lucky enough to be interviewed the timing didn't work out. According to my contract I had to give three months notice and the mum-to-be needed to be replaced immediately. So my file went into the drawer with the promise that if another opportunity arose I would be called - which is how in August 1979, I ended up teaching at the Shell school in Aberdeen, Scotland.

Before I was confirmed in the position, I made a visit to Scotland. Aberdeen looked fine, the school was excellent and I got on well with the Dutch headmistress, Georgette Siemers. On my return to the Netherlands I asked Mr. Soedjak (the then Shell Education Advisor) if I would be eligible for the job. 'Yes', he said, 'I'll give you a four year contract and no more, because no doubt you'll find a petroleum engineer, will get married and live happily ever after!'

It was all very exciting moving from a little room in the loft of an Old Peoples Stately Home 'Rijksdorp' in Wassenaar

KNIGHT IN SHINING ARMOUR OR



SHELL PETROLEUM ENGINEER?

to a ground floor two bedroom apartment in the middle of "Cloggy Hill", Aberdeen, where most Dutch Shell families lived at the time. Scotland was only a short flight away from Holland, but culturally it was a big change. I had to get used to not buying bunches of flowers every week, but I loved the Scottish country dancing and pub lunches. It was all different but extremely interesting.

Causewayend School was a big granite building with small windows overlooking a roundabout in a city neighbourhood of Aberdeen. The Dutch Shell School, occupied four classrooms of Causewayend Primary school, and it shared many of the facilities like playground, sports hall, art room and cooking room with them. Unfortunately however, despite the close proximity, there was little interaction between the Causewayend School children and the Dutch Shell School children. In some respects the school was in a difficult location. It was a poor part of town and the economic gap between the financially secure Shell families and the locals whose children attended Causewayend was uncomfortably obvious. In 1992 the Dutch Shell School located at Causewayend closed and a new Dutch Primary school opened in Craighill (former "Cloggy Hill").



One of José's favourite pastimes in Scotland was taking long drives through the Highlands.

Unlike in Wassenaar, where field trips involved local visits, such as to the Wassenaar Zoo and playground - yes Wassenaar once had a fully fledged zoo, complete with giraffes and monkeys - school trips at the Aberdeen school went further afield. Once we took the whole school (45 students) on a skiing trip to Glenshee and another time on a cultural tour of Edinburgh. When one of the pupils wondered where the bathroom was in her room and how many stars the accommodation had, I realised just what a Shell child's expectations were at the age of eight years!

Mr. Soedjak's predictions proved to be right. I did meet a petroleum engineer. An Englishman who having joined Shell International was posted to Aberdeen. The reason being " it is easier to find a partner [there] and we recommend you look for a teacher, secretary or a nurse."

While my expatriate contract would end if I got married, engagements were different. We got engaged, and swapped our respective bachelor accommodations for a sweet little house in Hazlehead where every morning a little bottle of creamy milk was left on the front door step, and we married four years later. I wrapped up my contract in Aberdeen in 1983 (my fiancé had already started his new job in Brunei) and left the Granite City for our wedding in Holland. The day after, we flew together into a new adventure: six exotic years in Brunei and lived happily ever after.

José (standing far right) and students on Edinburgh field trip



Leading the singing at the petroleum engineering Christmas party

Update - Dutch schooling Aberdeen

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International School of Aberdeen

In 2006, due to falling numbers, it was agreed that the Dutch School in Aberdeen would close in July 2007. From the start of the 2007-08 school year, the International School of Aberdeen will offer a Dutch mother tongue language and culture programme (Nederlandse Taal-en Cultuur) accredited by Stichting NOBC (Foundation for Dutch Education Abroad). Over the past year, plans for the new Dutch course of study have progressed to ensure a seamless transition for all pupils. The aim of the programme is to make any possible re-entry into the Dutch education system as smooth as possible. The International School of Aberdeen is located in Milltimber, a popular residential suburb of Aberdeen, on a 7.5 acre site on the north side of the Dee River valley. Further information can be found on www.isa.aberdeen.sch.uk

Dutch Education with the Rijnlands Lyceum In Cults Primary and Cults Academy

Starting in the 2007/2008 school year the Rijnlands Lyceum Aberdeen together with Cults Primary will offer the NTC1, 2 and 3 programme for P1 up to P7 (groep 1 t/m 8). This move extends the secondary programme already offered, to include a full primary component. Qualified teachers will give lessons in school hours.

The Rijnlands Lyceum has an almost 18 years partnership with Cults Academy, running an additional Dutch programme integrated in the Scottish curriculum. Over these years approximately 200 pupils have participated in the programme and have successfully made a switch back to either a Netherlands-based education or to an international school in another part of the world.

For further information contact Bill de Koning at rlaberdeen@btinternet.com

World Heritage Sites

Sheila Young



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Sheila was born in Oban, Scotland. She spent her childhood in Scotland and Wales and went to university in Aberdeen, and after moving overseas in 1984 spent the next 18 years in The Netherlands, Australia, Thailand and New Zealand. Since returning to the UK a few years ago she has been working as an inter-cultural trainer, and presents the cultural and leisure sections of the ‘Settling into Aberdeen’ course, as well as designing and presenting bespoke cultural awareness courses for companies. She is married with two children (aged 18 and 14).

Heritage is our legacy from the past, what we live with today, and what we pass on to future generations. UNESCO through its international treaty: the Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage encourages identifying, preserving and protecting cultural and natural heritage sites around the world. There are 812 World Heritage Sites (WHS) around the world - four of which are in Scotland.

Having moved around the world with Shell now for nearly 20 years I felt that I was reasonably well travelled. It therefore came as a rather humbling experience to discover that I had only visited only 30 of the 812 World Heritage sites! However, I was pleased that I had been to three out of the four sites in Scotland - the island of St.Kilda, Edinburgh’s Old and New Towns, the industrial village of New Lanark and the Heart of Neolithic Orkney.

ST KILDA

St Kilda was inscribed as a WHS in 1986. Lying 40 miles west of the furthest of the Outer Hebrides, St Kilda is one of the most remote places in Scotland. It was inscribed as a WHS in 1986 for its natural significance, because its cliffs and sea stacks are the most important breeding stations for sea birds in North West Europe. In 2005 it was further recognised for its cultural significance and is one of the few places in the world with Dual World Heritage status. Apart from researchers, the islands are uninhabited today, The last inhabitants of St Kilda, some 35 people, asked to be evacuated from the islands in 1930. Their numbers had depleted so much through disease and emigration that they felt it was no longer viable to continue living on the islands.



Today St Kilda is difficult to reach. You can go there as part of a National Trust for Scotland Work party (you have to pay for the privilege of doing voluntary work - but there is never a shortage of people prepared to work just for the experience of living on St Kilda for a few weeks). Alternatively you could charter a boat. The National Trust for Scotland has to be informed if you intend to land on St Kilda and you should be aware that there is no accommodation, only a designated campsite. A number of cruise ships also visit each year, including the Hebridean Princess: www.hebridean.co.uk/cruises/hp110a.html