



At the point where three sea lochs meet near the Isle of Skye, Eilean Donan castle has a long and colorful past.

Sea Lochs, Castles, Whiskey and Food

By Hauke Steinberg

For one of the most breathtaking experiences in the Scottish Highlands, take the A87 highway from Fort William to the Isle of Skye and descend into Glen Shiel to Loch Duich.

A few miles farther along the lakeshore, you'll suddenly come across the iconic sight of Eilean Donan Castle sitting on an island at the point where three of the great Scottish sea lochs meet.

Although the little island has been inhabited since the 6th century, when an Irish saint lived here, the first fortified castle wasn't built until 1220 against the Vikings.

By the late 13th century, Eilean

Donan had become a stronghold of the Mackenzies of Kintail. (Nowadays it is the home turf of the MacRae clan.) In April 1719 the castle was occupied by Spanish troops as part of a Jacobite uprising. The castle was captured and bombarded by three Royal Navy frigates to ensure it would never pose a threat again. For the following two centuries, it lay in ruins until it was restored between 1919 and 1932 by Lt. Col. John MacRae-Gilstrap.

The surrounding area of Lochalsh, famous for its natural beauty, is a popular hillwalking destination. Close by is the village called Kyle of Lochalsh, the gateway to the Isle of Skye, where the stark rise of the jagged Cuillin ridge drops to the gentle white of a soft, sand beach.

Inlets, bays, and islands create a complex

lacework pattern with the sea along this coast. Tiny villages are tucked into folds, on promontories, and along gurgling streams. Seafaring is at the heart of these coastal communities and there's a fabulous range of boat trips and tours available.

The food and drink of Skye and Lochalsh have developed an international reputation and you'll find famous restaurants here, such as the Three Chimneys, housed in a 100-year-old cottage overlooking the sea on the shores of Loch Dunvegan in northwestern Skye. If you're thirsty, there's the Isle of Skye Brewery, which you can also tour. If you prefer a more traditional taste of Scotland, you can check out the Talisker Distillery. ■