

‘CLASSIC SPEY DESCENT’ (Staying D.B&B en route)

Kincraig; Aviemore or Grantown to Spey Bay/Moray Firth

Paddle an open-canoe for up to 70 miles of this most beautiful of Scottish rivers, at a leisurely pace through 3; 4 or 5 unforgettable days. Suitable for all standards of paddler, from novice upwards, the adventure can begin in the Highland village of Newtonmore, where the first and second evenings and overnights may be spent in The Beeches, our comfortable Victorian home or other local high-quality accommodation ~ e.g. Craigerne Hotel; Coig na Shee.

(The following example programme is based upon 5-days on the river but can be reduced to ~ 4 days starting at Aviemore or 3 days from Grantown-on-Spey.)

Day 1 ~ Basic paddle strokes will be learned/revised on the flat waters of the Spey just downstream of Kincraig Bridge. Then, at a leisurely pace, the group will set off to tackle a series of small but fun rapids en route to Aviemore, travelling through historic Rothiemurchus Estate, with stories central to the history of Clan Grant. Return to Newtonmore or perhaps Rowan Tree Hotel, by Aviemore for another evening of warm comfort, including delicious food and exclusive single malts tasting.

Day 2 ~ From Aviemore, we move off on to a mixture of small, easy rapids and flat sections taking us on past Boat of Garten and Monarch of the Glen’s ‘Glenbogle’ Station near Broomhill Bridge. River starts to flow more decidedly seaward as it approaches Grantown on Spey, with some fun, boulder strewn rapids. We stop by the picturesque Old Spey Bridge and stay overnight at Grantown ~ most likely at Grant Arms Hotel; Garth Hotel or Tigh na Sgiath.

Day 3 ~ Starts back by the Old Spey Bridge. We move on downstream past Cromdale with its fine river-side kirk. Through Tulchan and Ballindalloch estates ~ see anglers maximising their skills in their attempts to hook the beautiful Atlantic salmon. Some more faster water throughout this section takes us to our next overnight stop, ideally at Cragganmore House or other B&B close-by. Time allowing, a late afternoon visit to Cragganmore distillery may be possible or a walk along the old Speyside railway line ~ now part of the Speyside Way long-distance foot-path.

Day 4 ~ On into the area with more famous malt whisky names ~ Knockando & Tamdhu, to Aberlour where, since we have fewer miles to travel today, with some interesting rapids to entertain us, we might manage to fit in a visit Aberlour Distillery. From Aberlour it is just 3 miles to Craigellachie, where we may stay in the Victorian grandeur of the Craigellachie Hotel ~ with its world-famous whisky-bar! Perhaps, once settled in, a nice walk along the ‘main street’ to partake in a pre-dinner dram with ‘Young Joe’ (80+!) in the unique Fiddichside Inn.

Day 5 ~ Launch in the shadow of wonderful Craigellachie Bridge ~ designed by Thomas Telford. After passing the village of Rothes, moving through steep forested banks and by impressive red cliffs and pillars, the river takes us on to Fochabers, heralding our approach to the coast. With now shingle banks either side one can smell the sea air, perhaps see ospreys on river patrol ~ even, if we are lucky, witness otters at play. Finally, in completing your memorable journey, paddle towards the rolling waves of remote Spey Bay, where ‘the fresh meets the salt’. Transport will then whisk us back to Newtonmore or other start point as appropriate ~ giving the option to depart that evening or, as many do, stay in Speyside for an additional overnight ~ D.B&B.

Join with me on this Magical Journey. Develop new skills and awareness, of how to handle this versatile craft, thus enhancing competence and confidence. Award yourself the pleasure of being steeped in nature and experience immense personal satisfaction in guiding, normally with a partner, your canoe, through some of the most beautiful countryside in Britain, along Scotland’s most ideal touring river. A bird-watchers’ paradise with dippers, golden-eye and grey wagtails at your elbow and buzzards soaring above. Distillery visits arranged as appropriate. Each day paddle with increasing competence ~ confident also that, each evening, you will be staying in yet another lovely accommodation which will provide you with warmth, comfort and delicious food. (These Journeys are ‘all-inclusive’ ~ only ‘extras’ such as ‘bar-bills’ are not included.)

‘**Miniature-Classic**’ ~ now my most popular Journey-type ‘Classic Spey Descent’ can now be offered as a 2-day/2-night journey ~ e.g. mid-week or weekend: ideal for corporate groups; groups of friends, etc.