

## 4. **THE HIGHEST VILLAGE AND THE OLDEST POST OFFICE IN SCOTLAND.**

Distance: 75 miles  
(suitable for whole day or half-day)

Leave Moffat towards the A74(M), pass underneath it, and at the next roundabout take the third exit, signposted the Auchin Castle Hotel. This road, the motorway, and the railway (the main Glasgow - London line) stay close together in the narrow valley of the Evan Water, but once over Beattock Summit there is more open countryside. The gradient was once a great obstacle to railway traffic, and W. H. Auden immortalised it in "The Night Mail".

Near the village of Crawford, follow signs for Wanlockhead. The B7040 is a pretty road, particularly in early autumn when the heather is blooming. At Leadhills, take the B797 for Wanlockhead, the highest village in Scotland. Well into the 20th century, both of these villages bustled with industry as metals, both precious and base, were extracted. The railway which runs between them is presently being restored and is open in the summer. The history of Wanlockhead can be traced by visiting the mining museum and going underground, or more poignantly by wandering through the village and visiting the graveyard. The bowling green is the highest in the U.K.

The B797 follows the Mennoch Water to the junction with the A767. Turn right for Sanquhar, where can be found the world's oldest Post Office, opened in 1738.

Leave Sanquhar heading towards Dumfries and beyond Thornhill, turn left for Ae, the village with the shortest name in Britain. Through Ae, which was created by the Forestry Commission after the war, continue on the same road until you reach the A701. Turn left and return to Moffat.

## 5. **THE SOLWAY COAST**

Distance: 90 miles  
(suitable for a whole day)

Leave Moffat on the A701 and follow all signs for Dumfries. Although quite a busy road, one can still admire the scenery and catch glimpses of Raehills, the home of the Earl of Annandale, and the Galloway Hills to the west. In Dumfries, which is the commercial centre of the area, follow all signs for New Abbey by the A710.

In this attractive little village can be found Shambellie House, the home of the Scottish Museum of Costume and a restored 18th century water powered oatmeal mill. However, dominating the village are the ruins of Sweetheart Abbey, built in the 13th century by Devorgilla, Lady of Galloway, in memory of her husband, John Balliol.

The A710 continues as far as Dalbeattie, about 20 miles beyond New Abbey, but to make the most of the journey, explore the many cul-de-sacs to the left: to the coastal hamlet of Carsethorn, to Arbigland Gardens, to the John Paul Jones museum, to Southernness Point and to the sandy beach at Rockcliffe and the sailing centre at Kippford.

Architecturally, Dalbeattie is quite different from other villages further east and there is little evidence of the use of sandstone which features so obviously in Dumfries.

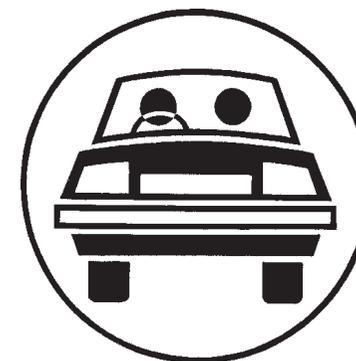
Leave the village on the B794, and then turn right on to the A75. After about 7 miles, turn left to the hamlet of Shawhead. Go through the village and on a hillside to the north can be found Henry Moore's great bronze sculptures as well as some by Joseph Epstein and one by Rodin.

The most direct route to return to Moffat is by Dumfries.



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# TAKE 5 DRIVES AROUND MOFFAT



*Moffat sits amid some beautiful scenery, and although the A74(M) is always busy, most of the roads in the area carry little traffic and, with care, driving can be enjoyable. These drives should give the visitor a pleasant introduction to the region. They are not intended to give detailed descriptions of what can be seen; other literature will do that. The distances are all approximate.*

# 1. *FOUR LOCHS AND A WATERFALL*

Distance: 40 miles

(Suitable for a half-day or evening)

Leave Moffat on the A708, signposted Selkirk. Not far beyond the hospital, the road rises from the valley of the Annan Water and then descends into the Moffat Water valley which it follows for about 9 miles. This is the finest example of a U-shaped valley in the South of Scotland and the road undulates along the valley floor.

After 10 miles, the Grey Mare's Tail tumbles from its hanging valley to the main valley floor. The path to the left of the burn takes visitors to the bottom of the waterfall, whilst the very steep path to the right goes to the top. Near the car park several notice boards explain the geology of the region and give details of the flora and fauna.

The road now rises to cross the water shed and just past Birkhill Cottage, once the home of the eminent Victorian geologist, Charles Lapworth, descends to the Yarrow Valley. Between the Loch of the Lowes and St. Mary's Loch is Tibbie Shiel's Inn, a cafe, and a magnificent statue of James Hogg, the Ettrick Shepherd.

Half way along St. Mary's Loch, turn left towards Tweedsmuir. This narrow road with passing places skirts the edge of the Megget Reservoir, and then descends to Talla Reservoir. On reaching the main road at Tweedsmuir, turn left and return to Moffat.

You are now in the Tweed Valley. The road follows the river to its source, and reaches Moffat by the Devil's Beef Tub. This steep corrie is not marked, but about a mile after the road begins to descend, i.e. about half a mile beyond the monument to the left of the road, there is parking, inconveniently on a bend, on the right hand side. Cross the road carefully for the view over the edge of the Beef Tub before returning to Moffat.

# 2. *AN ART GALLERY AND 5 MUSEUMS*

Distance: 60 miles

(Suitable for a half-day or whole day)

Leave Moffat on the A701, signposted Edinburgh. The road rises steadily up the side of the Annan Water Valley and crosses a burn by a narrow bridge from which, in 1946, Dr. Ruxton disposed of the bodies of his unfortunate wife and maid whom he had just murdered. 5.6 miles after leaving Moffat, parking is available on the left, and it is worth crossing the road carefully to enjoy the view into the Devil's Beef Tub.

About half a mile past this, a monument on the right records the deaths in snow of the driver and guard of a Carlisle to Edinburgh stage coach. Once over the brow of the hill, the road enters the valley of the River Tweed, at first no more than a trickle but soon to become one of Scotland's major rivers.

A glass blower works regularly at the Crook Inn and a small museum dedicated to the life of John Buchan is on the left at the approaches to Broughton. "The Thirty Nine Steps" is still a good read. Continue through the village and, to visit the Broughton Gallery in its magnificent setting, turn right at the sign.

From the gallery, turn back towards the village, and then right towards Biggar, about 4 miles away on the B7016. Biggar's wide main street offers plenty of parking space. In recent years, the town's museums have developed a worthy reputation, for although each of the four is small, they contain much of interest, and together with the very worthwhile town trail, make Biggar a delightful destination.

To complete the circuit, leave Biggar on the A702, and pass through Coulter. On reaching the motorway, you can either join it southbound and leave it at Junction 15, or take the smaller road to Crawford and then Beattock. As over 70% of the traffic entering and leaving Scotland uses this motorway, I would advise the minor road which parallels the main west coast railway line. However, only from the road can you now turn off at 'Beattock for Moffat'.

# 3. *THE ETTRICK SHEPHERD AND A BUDDHIST TEMPLE*

Distance: 60 miles

(Suitable for half-day)

FOLLOW ROUTE 1 FOR THE FIRST THREE PARAGRAPHS.

After the statue of James Hogg, continue along the shore of St. Mary's Loch. After the turning to Tweedsmuir, you will see a sign indicating a footpath to the ruined churchyard of St. Mary's. It is a short walk, and the views make it worthwhile. The church was destroyed by fire in 1557, only one service each year is now held there, and only Andersons, Armstrongs, Brydons, Grieves and Scotts may be buried in the graveyard.

The main road follows the River Yarrow as it leaves the loch and continues to Selkirk. However, you should turn right at the Gordon Arms and follow the B709 to Crosslee and then the Tushielaw Inn.

James Hogg was born near Ettrick village and there is an interesting detour by turning right in the village on to the cul-de-sac. Return to the main road, and turn right again to rejoin the B709 as it wanders through impressively remote countryside to Eskdalemuir, the home of weather and seismic survey stations.

Turn right to join the B723, signposted Lockerbie, from which road on the left the Buddhist community and temple of Samye Ling can be visited. It is easily possible, here, to imagine oneself in Tibet, and one does not need to share the Buddhist faith to appreciate the beauty of the temple and the commitment of the community members.

At Boreland, turn right again and follow all signs for Newton Wamphray and then Moffat. This undulating country road passes close enough to be aware of the motorway traffic, but you cannot envy the drivers on that road who pass through the scenery so quickly.