

# CLAN GUNN INTERNATIONAL GATHERING 2026

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We are delighted to announce the itinerary for the 21<sup>st</sup> Clan Gunn International Gathering which we know, for many of you, is the highlight of the Clan Gunn calendar. The events take place from Saturday 18<sup>th</sup> July to Saturday 25<sup>th</sup> July 2026, with return coaches available from Caithness to Inverness on the morning of Sunday 26<sup>th</sup> July 2026.

As ever, our itinerary includes much loved Caithness essentials which we are sure will be enjoyed whether you are joining us for your first ever time or whether you're a more seasoned International Gathering attendee.

However, the first part of the week will see us visiting some new and exciting locations including an extra special venue which, if you're a fan of *Outlander*, you're going to absolutely love. Clan Gunn is going to take you there! To find out more, keep reading!

The full itinerary is below with the all-important booking form and instructions on how and where to book on the detachable centre page of our print edition.

To repurpose a borrowed line from a certain well-known TV show:

*Ye are Blood of my Blood, and Bone of my Bone, I give ye the itinerary...*

## Saturday 18<sup>th</sup> July 2026

The festivities begin with an evening informal buffet at the Highland Stirling Hotel, Stirling. We have a function room booked in the hotel and will notify you

later of the start time to ensure maximum attendance for the food – a great opportunity to meet new people or say hello to long valued friends.

## Sunday 19<sup>th</sup> July 2026

The morning sees us visit Stirling Castle. In its history, there have been eight sieges of Stirling Castle and several Scottish Kings and Queens have been crowned here including Mary, Queen of Scots. Be sure to spot the 16<sup>th</sup> Century large oak portrait medallions known as the Stirling Heads!

In the afternoon, we'll be taking the short trip to the fourteenth century Alloa Tower, now a scheduled monument. Mary Queen of Scots made numerous visits to Alloa Tower as did her second husband, Lord Darnley. Their son, King James VI of Scotland, stayed here for four days in August 1579. The history of Alloa Tower is also wrapped up with the Witch Trials through John Erskine, the second Earl Mar, whose family owned the property. Some internal medieval features remain.

## Monday 20<sup>th</sup> July 2026

We're always mindful that some of you bring younger guests who might enjoy something a little more exciting than a traditional museum so we're pleased to tell those of you this applies to that we begin the day at the Battle Of Bannockburn Experience. The Battle of Bannockburn is considered a landmark moment in Scottish history. Fought on 23-24 June 1314, the battle was between the army of Robert the Bruce, King of Scots, and the army of King Edward II of

England, during the First War of Scottish Independence. It was a decisive victory for Robert Bruce and formed a major turning point in the war, which ended 14 years later with the de jure restoration of Scottish independence. Your visit will take you through a thrilling interpretation of the characters and events of the battle, including a visit to the Battle Room, where you will watch a digitally re-created version of the battle. Please note that the battle experience is a dark and loud environment. There's very low lighting throughout and there are often loud, overlapping noises from the various battle scenes (including scenes of a violent nature). The audio-visual display has been noted for its realism. There is also a cafe and gift shop at the location.

The afternoon sees us taking a trip to Culross, including a visit to Culross Palace. Culross is Scotland's most complete example of a burgh of the 17th and 18th centuries. White-harled houses with red-tiled roofs line the steep cobbled streets which run from the market cross to the hilltop abbey. In the centre is the ochre-coloured palace with its beautifully reconstructed period garden, complete with herbs, fruit and vegetables. Culross Palace is a late 16th to early 17th century merchant's house. On the second floor of the south block are sixteen painted allegorical scenes that depict life lessons and moral codes. These paintings are over 400 years old, probably installed between 1597–1611. Culross Abbey was founded in 1217 and was first colonised by monks from Kinloss Abbey. Today, the remaining intact part of the Abbey is used by the Church of Scotland as the local parish church. Beyond the beauty of Culross, it's Palace and Abbey, there is a darker history as Culross was the epicentre of one of the worst witch hunts in European history. Culross has served as a filming location for *Outlander* and the

1971 movie *Kidnapped*, starring Michael Caine.

There will be a dinner at the Stirling Highland Hotel in the evening. This is not a black tie event but still an excuse to flash the plaid. Smart dress or highland wear, please.

### **Tuesday 21<sup>st</sup> July 2026**

Today we head slightly eastwards towards the Helix Park in Falkirk, home of the Kelpies and other features. The Kelpies - two enormous steel horses heads - are the largest equine sculptures in the world, inspired by the cultural heritage of the Clydesdale horses, draught horses, which worked hard to help people along the canals and on the land. Named after a mythical shape-shifting spirit inhabiting lochs in Scottish folklore, the Kelpies are a man-made wonder and a feat of engineering which tower 30 metres (100ft) over a new canal extension which links the Forth & Clyde Canal to the North Sea and which weigh more than 300 tonnes each. As Visit Scotland notes: "The Kelpies' name reflects the mythological transforming beasts that possess the strength and endurance of 100 horses; a quality that's analogous with the transformational change of the area's landscapes, endurance of its inland waterways and the strength of its communities." A great opportunity for photos and to see the visitor centre. There is also a café on site for those that skipped breakfast or fancy an early lunch.

Hopetoun House and Midhope Castle are on the agenda for the afternoon and, while some of you may never have heard of them, for many of us this will undoubtedly be the star attraction of the week's events.

Hopetoun is a 17<sup>th</sup> Century stately home and we will be able to tour the grounds

and building. Midhope is a smaller 15<sup>th</sup> Century home where we can explore the outer areas.

Both Hopetoun and Midhope have featured extensively in *Outlander*, as have other parts of the estate in which they sit, so any fans of the show will likely recognise some set locations. Midhope on the show is Lallybroch and Hopetoun has been used to portray everything from Sandringham's Estate to a Parisian Chateau.

We can't promise you'll meet Jamie Fraser (in fact, we can all-but promise you that you won't meet him because he's a fictional character living in the eighteenth Century) but we think people who have fallen in love with all things *Outlander* are going to absolutely love this.

To quote from the TV show: "On your feet soldier, take me home to Lallybroch!"

### **Wednesday 22<sup>nd</sup> July 2026**

Today, we will be heading north to Caithness by coach via Glencoe, Fort William and Loch Ness. The trip north from Stirling is very scenic and we will pass through the Trossachs, a region of woodland, glen and lochs in central Scotland. We will then head to Glencoe a historic glen in the Scottish Highlands, famous for its breathtaking mountain scenery, which was shaped by ancient volcanoes and glaciers. It is also known for its haunting history, particularly the 1692 massacre of Glencoe where more than 30 MacDonalds were murdered by government forces led by the Campbell clan.

From Glencoe our trip will take us northwards to Fort William, located on Loch Linnhe and which serves as a major

hub for the region, known as the "Outdoor Capital of the UK", although most of you will be pleased to hear that we won't be doing any climbing or skiing today. But if the weather is good, you will be able to see stunning views of Ben Nevis, the tallest mountain in the UK. We then head northeast along Loch Ness (keep your eyes peeled for Nessie, the Loch Ness Monster) to Inverness and then directly north up the East Coast of Scotland to our final destination, Wick. We will stop for lunch along the way which will be at your own expense. In the evening there will be a reception at the Norseman Hotel in Wick which includes a two-course dinner – drinks will be at your own expense.

### **Thursday 23<sup>rd</sup> July 2026**

After your day of travelling, we propose a free morning to allow you a little time to either catch up on your sleep or to explore the harbour town of Wick, a coastal town known for its Viking heritage, rich history as a major herring fishing port, and dramatic coastal scenery.

In the afternoon, coaches will leave for a guided tour of the county's North Coast which will aim to showcase some of the best Caithness historical sites and magnificent wildlife. The coach will return to Wick via Sweynskail (in Upper Gills), the Chief's new Caithness residence where he and his family invite you to have afternoon tea with them.

In the evening, there will be a dinner dance at the Norseman Hotel where a three-course meal will be served followed by a Ceilidh and dancing to the Addie Harper and the Wick Scottish Band. Addie is a renowned fiddler and accordionist and is widely regarded as one of Scotland's best as are the other members of the band. The dances will be

“called” so any newcomers to Scottish dancing need not fear and can easily join in – it tends to be a lot of fun. Tonight is informal but if you do have some tartan with you, please feel free to wear it. Drinks will be at your own expense tonight.

### **Friday 24<sup>th</sup> July 2026**

Coaches will leave from outside the Norseman Hotel at 9.30am for a guided full day coach tour of the east and centre of the county. We will head town the East Coast to Lybster to visit the small heritage museum of Waterlines and then on the Clan Gunn Heritage Centre and Museum in Latheron.

Waterlines celebrates the story of Lybster from its natural history to the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century fishing industry when Lybster was a busy fishing port, especially during the boom in the herring industry when more than 100 boats were using the harbour.

The Clan Gunn Heritage Centre and Museum is at the very heart of the Clan. The centre tells the story of the clan from its Norse origins to the present day against the background of the history of the north of Scotland. It also contains one of the best clan archives in Scotland and a gift shop with all things Clan Gunn.

From there, we will head down to Helmsdale where we will turn west along the Straths of Kildonan and Halladale (traditional homes of Clan Gunn), stopping off at the small Kildonan church along the way.

We continue on to the North Coast once again and then head east to Thurso where we will be taking a trip to the Wolfburn Whisky Distillery. This will be extra special for those of you who bought shares in the Clan Gunn Society cask as we will be popping into the warehouse to

see our cask in situ. For everyone else, you’ll learn all about how this great young whisky brand is made and – doubtless – get to sample a wee dram, too!

Lunch will be a packed lunch which we hope to enjoy somewhere in the Strath of Kildonan.

The coach will then return to Wick and, after a long day in the coach, we feel you may need a night off, so the evening will be free. There are a number of good hotels and restaurants in and around Wick to choose to dine from and we can give you a steer if you need some help at the time.

### **Saturday 25<sup>th</sup> July 2026**

Coaches will leave from outside the Norseman Hotel at 10.00am for the short trip to Halkirk where the Clan Gunn Society AGM will be held at the Ross Institute at 11.00am. At 12.00pm, there will be a kilted march to the games field for the Halkirk Highland Games. Those members of the clan who wish to participate in the march, and many members often do, can do so behind the pipe band.

The afternoon will be spent at the Halkirk Highland Games where Clan Gunn will have a tent and where you can enjoy some light refreshment (whisky). Lunch will be a light soup and sandwich lunch in the Games food tent (included).

For those of you that haven’t been to a Highland Games before, they feature traditional celebrations of Scottish culture and sport, featuring heavy athletic events, Highland dancing, and bagpipe music. Popular heavy events include the caber toss, hammer throw, and stone put, while other activities include tug o’ war, track and field as well as family-friendly

events. These games combine the elements of a track meet and a county fair. The Clan also has someone to cheer as Jamie Gunn, a Halkirk local, is the current world heavyweight champion.

The coach will depart from outside the Ulbster Arms hotel at 3.30pm for the trip back to Wick where you can grab a few hours rest before the final event of the gathering.

Coaches will leave from outside the Norseman Hotel at 6.30pm for the short trip to Thurso where there will be a four-course black tie dinner at the Pentland Hotel. The ticket includes a champagne reception, wine with the meal and a dram with coffee afterwards. While the event is a “black-tie” event, we realise that not everyone has or is able to travel with full black tie, so smart casual would be equally acceptable. However, for those of you that are bringing full highland dress with you, this is your opportunity to showcase it. This event marks the formal end of the International Gathering so make sure you have said your goodbyes to old and new friends alike.

Carriages will be at 10.30pm and the coach will return you to Wick around 11.00pm.

### **Sunday 26<sup>th</sup> July 2026**

We have arranged coach travel, for those who would like to take it, from Wick back to Inverness. Coaches will leave from outside the Norseman Hotel at 9.00am with an expected arrival time in Inverness of around 11.30am.

### **How to get to and from Stirling**

It would be a very long article to cover every potential route members might take to get to Stirling but, in the guide below, we've covered the basics assuming most

people will travel to Stirling from Edinburgh, Glasgow or Inverness. We hope this guide will be helpful.

### **From Edinburgh Airport:**

Stirling can be found 33 miles from Edinburgh Airport, to the South-East, with a journey time of around 45 minutes by taxi. It is possible to take a taxi directly from the airport to Stirling. Uber has plenty of taxis in the Edinburgh area which would offer competitive rates. Prices listed online for other companies for a taxi start at £65.

A much cheaper option is to take the tram to Edinburgh train station and pick up a train there. The tram station is just outside the arrivals door of Edinburgh airport. The tram stop for Edinburgh's main train station, Waverley, is called St Andrew Square. Trams from the airport to St Andrew Square (for Waverley) cost £7.90 at the time of writing and run every 10-12 minutes and the journey time is 41 minutes.

### **From Edinburgh rail station (Waverley):**

You can get a direct train to Stirling. Journey times are around 50 minutes and the service is frequent with a single fare costing from £12.10 at the time of writing.

### **From Inverness rail station:**

There are direct but infrequent trains from Inverness station to Stirling. The journey time is, on average, around 3 hours with single fares from £46.50. If you're choosing this option, don't fall asleep on the train because the scenery by rail from Inverness is really very, very pretty.

## **From Glasgow (Queen Street station):**

There are direct and very frequent trains from Glasgow Queen Street to Stirling. The journey time is 30-35 minutes with single fares from £10.70.

## **After the Gathering... your onward journey from Inverness**

If you are traveling on the Clan Gunn Society coach which returns to Inverness on Sunday 26<sup>th</sup> July 2026, you can get direct trains from Inverness station to both Edinburgh and Glasgow for any onward journeys.

## **About booking trains in Scotland**

It is often much cheaper to buy return train tickets rather than single tickets for Scotland's trains. The easiest way to plan your journey is on:

<https://www.nationalrail.co.uk>

which will give you times, fares and transfer you to the lowest price train company's website to buy advance tickets.

## **Accommodation Information**

For overseas visitors who need advice on flights, connections etc., Council Member Eleanor Rogers, who has good travel knowledge for USA and UK, can be contacted on:

[eilidhocabourngunn@gmail.com](mailto:eilidhocabourngunn@gmail.com)

Eleanor is generously making herself available for US to UK travel advice only, she won't be booking your trip for you!

## **Stirling**

Clan members are responsible for booking their own accommodation.

There are multiple options to suit all budgets in the area with direct booking available via hotels listed on Google or using sites such as Booking.com, hotel.com and Trivago to name a few. **Please ensure that any accommodation is within walking distance of the Stirling Highland Hotel** where coach trips will depart from and the arrival buffet and Tuesday meal will be held, unless you have your own transport. We will consider other pick up points for day tours if a large enough group are staying slightly further out but we will need to discuss before agreeing.

## **Wick**

Clan members are again responsible for booking their own accommodation; however, the Clan Gunn Society has reserved 20 rooms at the Norseman Hotel in Wick from the 22<sup>nd</sup> to the 25<sup>th</sup> July. Tel: +44 (0)1955 603344, email: [norseman@thecaithnesscollection.co.uk](mailto:norseman@thecaithnesscollection.co.uk) from £95/night for a single room and £75 per person per night for a double or twin room and £60 per person per night for a triple room. All prices include breakfast and these rooms are being held until 31<sup>st</sup> March 2026. **Please quote Clan Gunn when booking.**

Again, other accommodation at a range of prices is available and details can be found at the usual well known booking websites. Please ensure that any accommodation is within walking distance of the Stirling Highland Hotel where coach trips will depart from, unless you have your own transport.

***We'll end this guide with a question for the 'Outlander' fans amongst you: see ye in 2026, Sassenach? ■***