

HISTORICAL - ITINERARIES



Itinerary 7 - Souter Johnnie's Cottage, Crossraguel Abbey, and Blairquhan Castle

Estimated Time - Half Day

Souter Johnnie's Cottage

Map Ref: 16

Souter Johnnie's cottage is well worth a visit. The route to it is along the beautiful coast road; a journey which offers stunning views of Arran and Ailsa Craig, and on a clear day Northern Ireland can be seen in the distance.

If it hadn't been for Robert Burns, John 'Souter Johnnie' Davidson would have slipped into obscurity. His friendship with the poet has earned him a place in history, and his home in Kirkoswald is now a museum owned and managed by the National Trust for Scotland.

Built in a similar style to the cottage where Burns was born in Alloway, it contains Burns memorabilia, and an exhibition of shoemakers (souter's) tools of the time. Its rooms are laid out very much as they would have been when Burns was a frequent visitor there - no doubt carousing with his friends in the manner for which he is famous.

Telephone : 01655 760603

**Open 1st Apr - 30th Sep daily from 11.30-17.00. Oct weekends 11.30-17.00
Last admission at 16.30**

Crossraguel Abbey

Map Ref: 15

The dramatic ruins of Crossraguel Abbey stand on the road to Maybole in South Ayrshire. In its heyday, it was extremely important in the local political scene. At a time when lands meant power, the abbey and its properties were a force to be reckoned with. While the monks themselves may have led a simple, peaceful life of poverty, chastity and obedience, positions of authority within the church were strictly to do with family connections and money.

History tells of a dispute over the abbey land between the Abbot, Allan Stewart, and the Earl of Cassilis. There is some confusion about who exactly had rights over the land and at what time, but the situation escalated to a point when the Earl forcibly took the Abbot to Dunure Castle, and roasted him over a fire until he signed over the lands.

Today, Crossraguel remains an impressive ruin, and some important original architectural features survive. A visitor centre on the site gives an insight into the life and times of the Abbey and those who lived there.



Telephone : 01655 883113

Open Apr-Sep seven days 09.30-18.30

Blairquhan Castle

Map Ref: 28

In the heart of the beautiful Girvan Valley lies Blairquhan Castle in its own extensive estate.

It was built in the 1820s, but like many of Ayrshire's castles, it lies on the site of a much older building - a keep tower dating back to the 1340s. The estate belonged in centuries past to the prominent local Kennedy family, but the modern appearance owes everything to the Hunter-Blairs, for whom Blairquhan continues to be a family home.

The estate grounds contain landscaped features - tree lined avenues, a walled garden and woodland, all with the River Girvan flowing through it. A further attraction is the collection of Scottish Colourists at the castle, which are on view when Blairquhan is open to the public during the summer months.