

Burns Cottage, Vikingar!, Magnum Centre

Burns Cottage - a small white house standing by the roadside in Alloway - is the place where it all began for Scotland's most famous poet, Robert Burns. He was born in the house in 1759, and thanks to careful restoration over the years, the cottage today is much as it would have been in Burns' time - except that it would have been surrounded by fields and a good few miles outside the main county town of Ayr.

There's an audio-visual presentation in the cottage itself, telling the poet's life story, and of course, there's a chance to look round the house and perhaps wonder that such humble surroundings fostered the great talent that Burns had.

Adjacent to the cottage is the museum which contains some important Burns manuscripts, including a rare copy of the first Kilmarnock Edition of his poems. There are also a number of Burns artefacts and displays which set his life in its historic context: his contemporaries, for example, included Mozart, Beethoven, and the artist JW Turner. On the political scene, the American War of Independence, and later on the French Revolution had a huge impact on world politics of the time whilst in Britain, the madness of King George was a major concern.

The Burns Cottage and Museum, as well as the National Heritage Park not only tell the story of a great poet, but open a window on a fascinating period of history.

Telephone: 01292 443700
Open: Apr-Sept, Mon-Sun 09.00-18.00
Oct-Mar, Mon-Sat 10.00-16.00, Sun 12.00-16.00

Vikingar!, Largs

Step back in time to the days of the Viking reign in Scotland and their final defeat at the battle of Largs in 1263. Vikingar!'s costumed storytellers introduce you to a world long gone, of battles, heroes and the all powerful gods, Odin and Thor. They'll also show you their homes and tell you about their family lives....and maybe let you try on some of their armour.

You can look back over the lives of one family over the generations until the fateful Battle of Largs at the film presentation, and then there's a chance to test your knowledge with the various interactive multimedia exhibits in the Hall of Knowledge.

After your encounter with the Vikings, you might like to have a bite to eat in the centre's restaurant. Younger children have a soft play area, and for the active, there are two swimming pools, a fitness centre and leisure suite. For the evenings the Barrfield Theatre provides a variety of quality entertainment...check out the events diary to find out what's on.

Telephone: 01475 689777
Open: Apr-Sept, Mon - Sun, 10.30-17.30
Oct & Mar, Mon - Sun, 10.30-15.30
Nov-Feb, Sat & Sun only, 10.30-15.30

Magnum Centre

Irvine's Magnum Centre is one of Scotland's biggest leisure centre with some of the biggest water slides at the pool, as well as one of the biggest ranges of activities on offer. There's a soft play area for younger children, whilst older one can test their skating skills in the ice rink. Fitness enthusiasts will find plenty to keep them occupied at the pool, fitness centre and health suite - or at the variety of classes which are held at the Magnum. In addition to the sporting facilities, the Magnum has both a theatre and cinema that is the venue for a variety of events.

Telephone: 01294 278381
Open: Mon & Fri 09.00-22.00, Tue-Thu 10.00-22.00
Sat & Sun 09.00-18.00* (*cinema open in evening)