

## Countryside is Great – Part 2

Next we're heading north.

I've come to Cairngorm National Park in Scotland, home to 5 out of 6 of the tallest mountains in Britain, and what's more, I'm going to get to the top of that mountain without losing my breath!

If you don't fancy the hour and a half walk to the top, like me, you can ride the Cairngorm Mountain Railway.

**Richard:** Hiya. One ticket for the funicular, please.

The journey is 2km long, which makes this the highest railway journey in Great Britain. The train takes us to the top of the mountain – nearly 2000 metres above sea level. Now this is what I call mountain climbing...

It only takes about 7 minutes to get to the top and it's the best way to experience the peaks in all weather conditions.

And here we are right at the top. It might be very windy, but just look at the views – absolutely incredible.

The views across Cairngorm National Park are stunning and you can see why this is Britain's largest nature reserve.

Colin Kirkwood knows the Cairngorms better than most and works at the Mountain Railway.

**Richard:** What can we see at the top of Cairngorm mountain?

**Colin:** Well, you get a wonderful view from here. Looking down you can see over Loch Morlich, which is a famous beauty spot in this area, but you also get wonderful views of the surrounding mountains. You can see Ben Nevis, Scotland's highest mountain, to

the west, and to the north, some eighty miles away, you can see Ben Hope.

**Richard:** Great Britain has a lot of mountains. What makes this one stand out?

**Colin:** Well, this is the sixth highest mountain in Britain. It's also a wonderful place for people to come to walk, to climb and, of course, to enjoy snow sports.

**Richard:** What kind of wildlife can we see?

**Colin:** Well, if you're lucky, you may see ptarmigan on the mountain, it's kind of like an iconic bird for this area, and also a dotterel, which is a rare and protected species, and you might well see some mountain hare as well.

**Richard:** What do you love most about it?

**Colin:** Well, I think it's a very special place to work. To me, it's a real privilege to be able to work in this kind of mountain environment and to enthuse about it to other people and attract them to coming here.

Another one of Scotland's famous landmarks is Loch Ness. It's 37km long and 239m deep at the deepest point, and some say it has its own monster!

The Giant's Causeway in Northern Ireland is just a short trip across the water. This world heritage site is the most popular tourist attraction in the area.

Around 40 thousand rock columns were formed by the eruption of a volcano here, thousands of years ago. The tallest of the columns are around 12 metres high.

The British coastline offers both beauty and variety.

This is the Jurassic coast in Dorset. It could be as old as a quarter of a billion years and that amazing arch is called Durdle Door, and it's one of the most photographed landmarks along this coast.

Durdle Door is a huge natural limestone arch near to Lulworth Cove on the south coast of England and is owned by the Lulworth Estate.

This area is part of 153km of natural World Heritage coastline. It's a geological or rock formation walk through time.

Looking after this countryside is an important job.

Sarah Spurling is a countryside ranger.

**Richard:** Wow! A beautiful sunset, Sarah. Is this the best time to see Durdle Door?

**Sarah:** It's a lovely time to see it. It's lovely every time of day, but it's pretty beautiful, isn't it?

**Richard:** Yeah, absolutely. Tell me about the actual rock itself.

**Sarah:** Well, Durdle Door is a beautiful limestone arch, carved out with the power of the sea. It could be at least a thousand years old and it's one of the most magnificent features in Britain.

**Richard:** How exactly did it form?

**Sarah:** Well, Durdle Door used to be part of a big wall of rock that joins up with rocks you see in the water. That would have been the old coastline many thousands of years ago. The sea's worn it down over many years, leaving behind the rocks that\* you see now. The softer rocks behind it were eroded much more quickly, leaving Durdle Door sticking out into the water.

**Richard:** This whole coastline is really special, isn't it?

**Sarah:** Yeah, it is. I mean, it's special because of wonderful natural features like Durdle Door, also the sheer variety of landscapes and environments you can enjoy.

**Richard:** And it's quite environmentally sensitive.

**Sarah:** The nature of the landscape round here means that the area has escaped much of the development and modern farming that you see in other areas, and so the features and the wildlife that remain are good examples of what once may have been common.

**Richard:** Thanks, Sarah. Shall we enjoy the view?

**Sarah:** Let's enjoy the view.

Do you know what? I've truly discovered the most amazing countryside, and it's all here in Great Britain.