

# Epitome of

**K**NOwn as the land of thousand lakes, Scotland indeed is the epitome of nature's beauty. Its green meadows and pastures present a spectacle that one does not feel like taking one's eyes off. The description of Scotland's beauty was aptly put across by my 10-year-old daughter when she was asked to compare the USA with Scotland: "America is huge and majestic; it reflects opulence, but Scotland is beautiful." Its thousand lakes simply add to its unmatched beauty. In fact, the Scots don't call these as 'lakes'. For them, the word is *loch* and has been derived from Gaelic. Scotland has all *lochs* with one exception, i.e. lake Valentine. We had an opportunity of visiting three of its most famous *lochs*: Katrin, Lomond and Ness.

A visit to the Scottish *lochs* must include one to Katrin, thought it is the other two which are more talked about. It is the main source of drinking water supply for the city

*lochs*. It is 24 miles long and 5 miles wide and is about 600 feet deep at its deepest point. It takes about 20 minutes from Glasgow to reach the southern tip of Lomond and then you drive along the *loch* for about half to reach its other end. You come across a number of islands, interspersed along the way, serving as excellent abodes for birds. It as a smooth and relaxed drive in the sunny weather with lovely spectacle of lush green meadows and small cliffs on both sides of the road. The singing bug soon caught up the jubilant mood of the tourists with children giving company in each and every Hindi popular film number that was sung amidst clapping. The north-western bank of Lomond has excellent mountain bike tracks and also offers several other sports and hobbies like canoe-

prospects of reaching Fort Augustus from where starts the proper Ness. Ness is famous for many reasons. Talk is mostly about Ness, and people have a hundred stories to tell about it. It may not be the biggest lake in Scotland, that distinction goes to Lomond in Strathclyde, but it is the biggest volume of water in Britain owing to its great depth — approximately 132 metres on an average. Drawing from nearly 700

square miles, Europe's largest systems hold more water than all the lakes in the whole of England and Wales together. Our excitement and thrill knew no bounds when we were at the bar of the long and narrow water ahead

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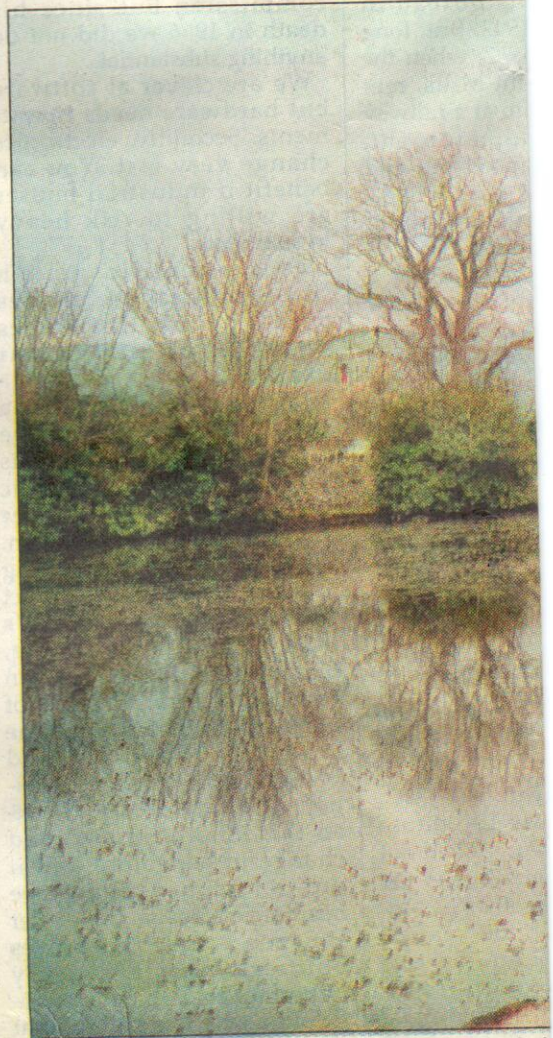
**Suchita Malik**

of Glasgow, which is situated on 37 hills. Situated against the backdrop of hills, the zigzag flow of the water looks magnificent, specially on a moonlit night. The metalled road along side the lake provides an excellent walking area extending beyond 5 miles for walkers and joggers. This ribbon — shaped lake oozes out serenity and charm, very uncommon to most of the lakes in Scotland.

However, it is Komond, the biggest freshwater lake in Scotland, situated approximately 17 miles north of Glasgow, which is the most famous among the Scottish

ing, rowing, fishing, walking and water ski-ing. It did not take us long to indulge in some trekking on our own after which all of us decided to have a small cruise in the motorboats standing on the bank. Soon, the *Lomond Chieftain* was hired by the entire group which took us into its crystal clear blue waters of the lake. The location, the transparent water, the deep blue sky above and the green and peaceful surroundings all around made Lomond experience an unforgettable one.

It was time to move on and everyone was excited at the



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square miles, Ness is one of Europe's largest freshwater systems holding more water than all the reservoirs and lakes in the whole of England and Wales together.

Our excitement and thrill knew no bounds when we were standing at the banks of the Ness, a long and narrow stretch of water ahead. The water

appeared calm, serene, rather slightly darkish in colour. Ness also has a feature unique to British lakes in the sense

that if you stand at the south-eastern end of the lake and look along its length, the water and the

sky meet on the horizon and the lake seems to go on for ever. Ness is about 24 miles long and is second in length

only to Awe. At places, it looks like a river bounded by the hills on both sides. The water of Ness is also said to be slightly acidic and acts as an enormous storage heater. The volume of water being so huge, the temperature does not fluctuate more than a few degrees between winter and summer. As a result of this, the water remains cool on balmy summer days, and in the winter when the air temperature falls below zero, the

## Holiday

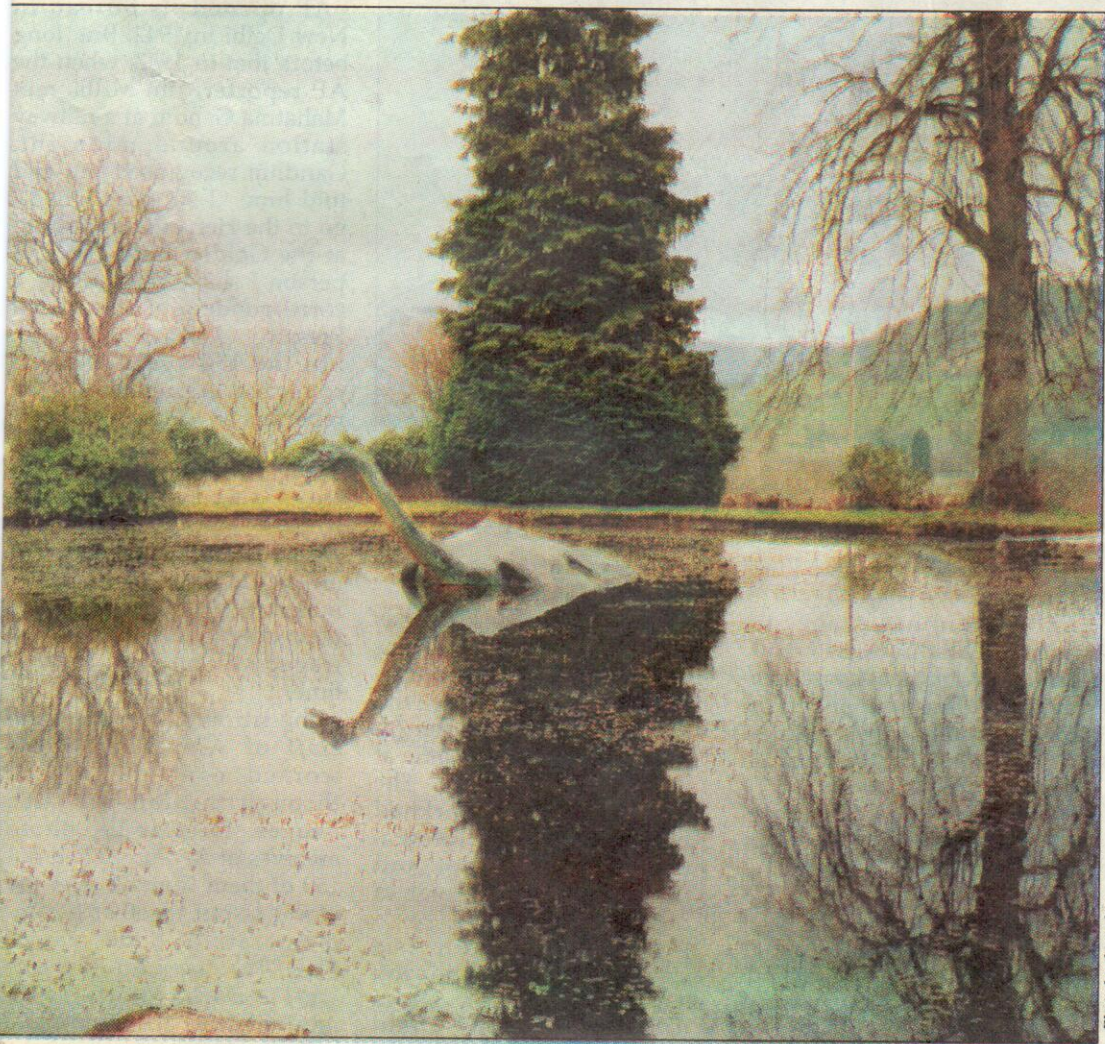


Photo by the writer

ctured image is installed in Drumnadrochit, a small hamlet along the Loch Ness

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water feels apparently warm. No one has ever heard of Ness freezing, and even during the snowfall, the banks of the lake remain always clear. Often the water is seen to be evaporating, causing mist which only adds to the loch's famous air of mystery.

Ness also supports around 8 of Scotland's 40 or so native fish species. These include salmon, trout, pike, eel, minnow, stickleback, brook, lamprey and the rarely seen arctic char.

Ness has been the subject of intense speculation regarding the world famous Ness monster, known affectionately as 'Nessie' by most people. It's believed that the Ness is the abode of Nessie, the largest living monster. It has a history and indeed so much has been written about the monster.

In the 6th century, it is believed that St. Columba confronted a monster in Ness which was terrorising local villagers. He, supposedly, raised his hand, gave the sign of the cross and invoked the name of the Lord and commanded the monster saying: "Thou shalt go no further nor touch the man — return with all speed".

It is believed that the beast was afraid and fled faster than it had appeared. The next reference to the monster, came up in a letter to *'The Scotsman'* newspaper in 1933 from a D. Murray Rose who referred to a story in an old book dated around 1520 that spoke of the slaying of dragons: "It goes on to say that Fraser (of Glenvackie) killed the last known dragon in Scotland, but none has yet managed to slay the monster of Ness lately seen". This letter started a spate of reference to

'leviathans in the lake' and dozens of people claimed to have seen 'Nessie'. Significant among those was a couple, Mr and Mrs Mackay, owners of the Drumnadrochit hotel, who claimed to have seen in the centre of the loch "an enormous animal rolling and plunging". They told their account to a young water bailiff in Fort Augustus who also happened to be a correspondent for the *Inverness Courier*.

It was also published in the Scottish national newspapers and the loch became a favourite jaunt for the 'experts' to track down Nessie. Even the Prime Minister, Ramsay MacDonald, at the time, thought of visiting the loch in the hope of catching a glimpse of the monster.

A cruise in the Ness was just the right thing in everybody's mind and we quickly boarded the 'Royal Scotland' and joined the others for a cruise. The boat is a special carrier with modern gazettes fitted in it. The computer-controlled TV screen is available for the passengers to fathom the depth of water as you move in the interior. It is also subject to take note of any strange creature under water — an effort that has been going on to track down 'Nessie'.

It is a pleasure to be in the middle of Ness with deep and calm waters all around and the lush green surroundings adding to the feeling of contentment. Even a few ripples in the water, near or far, would force the tourists to rush to the deck with an intense desire to spot the Nessie. Many also held the view that the Nessie myth was a concoction to attract the tourists and the 'monster in the loch' phenomenon seems to be spreading.