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SCOTLAND is famous not only for its Scotch Whisky and its beautiful 'lochs', but also for the exquisite forests and natural resources. The rich splendour of its 'glens' and 'isles' can find few parallels in the beautiful world of nature. A 'glen' is a small, narrow, secluded valley full of natural foliage, flora and fauna. Naturally, the existence of a valley would mean the co-existence of highlands. The beauty of its highlands is to be seen to be believed. Perhaps, it was this lovely spectacle that Wordsworth had in mind while composing his famous poem, *The Solitary Reaper*:
*Behold her, single in the field,
 Yon solitary Highland Lass!
 Reaping and singing by herself;
 Stop here, or gently pass!
 ...O listen! for the vale profound
 Is overflowing with the sound.*

While in Scotland, a visit to the Great Glen which comprises glens like Glencoe, Glen Garry, Glen Affric, Glen Cannich, Glen Moriston and Glen Urquhart is a must. High-velocity chilly winds coming from the north and the highly unpredictable weather conditions do not permit much of sight-seeing in Scotland during October to March. It is only with the arrival of Easter warmth that outdoor schedule takes precedence over anything else.

Glens are the most scenic places in Scotland and include some exotic glens and lakes like Loch Lomond, Loch Ness, Loch Oich and Loch Lochy, the ribbon shaped 'lochs' which fill most of the Great Glen's 55 mile (88 km) floor and, above all, the Isle of Skye.

The story of the glen goes back more than 350 million years to a time when colossal upheavals in the earth's crust were taking place. These resulted in fracture in the crust known as the Great Glen Fault. The Great Glen cuts diagonally across the Scottish highlands from the Atlantic Ocean to the

North Sea. Glaciers filled the glen during the ice ages and rocks caught in the slow moving ice acted like sandpaper, gauging away the valley sides and floor. The result was the steep hillsides which con-

A walk in the heart of the picturesque glens among the flora and fauna of nature, surrounded by the tall pine and conifer trees against the stunning backdrop of the beautiful mountains, was refreshing indeed,
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tribute so much to the glen's grandeur.

Our group consisted of a few families of different nationalities and the generous hosts. A cup of piping hot tea together in the cold weather and we

before finally joining the 'lochs'. Our fleeting visit to Fort William was basically a cruise through scenic splendour to the timeless haunts of a variety of wildlife.

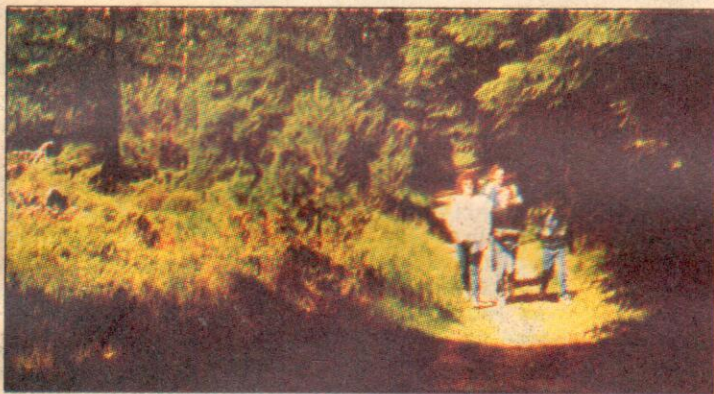
We, then, proceeded along the Great Glen passing by Ben Nevis, the highest mountain peak in the United Kingdom which is approximately 4,406 ft high. It was both interesting and amusing to stand at the base of Ben Nevis and tell the children that it was Britain's highest mountain, a fact they found hard to believe and digest. The cliff-like mountain stood as an absolute contrast to the mammoth size of our very own Indian mountains. We also passed through the Commando Memorial which is a tribute to the valour of the unknown soldiers who sacrificed their lives for their country. A wreath of flowers is permanently placed there as a mark of respect.

Our next stop was Fort Augustus which is the largest of the 'lochside' villages. As

we entered the village, we could see the Fort Augustus Abbey. The fort that gives Fort Augustus its name was one of a series of forts built by the Hanoverians to secure the Great Glen — Fort George, near Inverness, Fort Augustus in the heart of the Glen, and Fort William at the

southern end. Augustus was the name of King George II's son, who was later called 'The Butcher' after the bloody defeat of the Jacobites at Culloden. However, Fort Augustus did not remain a place of war for long, rather it was destined to become a place of solemn peace, a Benedictine monastery for monks whose motto was 'pax' — peace. The village also offered facilities of a caravan and camping site. We set up our camp in the village and this was to be our base for the next few days.

Going to the heart of the



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started in two small coaches towards our destination. Passing through the Bonnie banks of Loch Lomond and enjoying the lush green scenery around, we travelled through Glencoe to Fort William for a short stop. Mountains rise abruptly from the ribbon-shaped sides of the 'lochs'. Woodland on the lower slopes consists of heather trees or rough grassland but on the highest summits only alpine plants such as the dwarf willow can be seen. Rivulets in side glens cascade over the waterfalls and they pass through wooded ravines

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Great Glen was probably the most exciting agenda on our minds. In fact, it is believed that there are few better places in this world to enjoy than Glen Moriston. The glen has it all — extraordinary beauty, tales of courage and an air of serenity and peace that can rarely be found in the busy

world in which we live. Writing in 1933, the traveller H.V. Morton wrote: "Fifteen miles of beauty lie between hills. They are called Glen Moriston". In fact, Glen Moriston extends more like 25 miles towards the Isle of Skye. It can be a sheer pleasure to walk or drive along the glen.

For about five miles, one can walk beside the calm waters of Dundreggan Loch. Seen all around are wild flowers, the deciduous and pine woodlands and the ever present river Moriston. Plenty of wildlife is also to be found in the glen. Different varieties of birds are found around the dis-

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trict, but one can keep one's eyes open for woodpeckers, siskins and fieldfares flocking to eat the berries of the Rowan trees. One can occasionally spot a fox or the indigenous red squirrel. In fact, the Great Glen itself acts as a flight path for migrating sea birds between the Atlantic Ocean

and the North Sea.

A walk in the heart of the picturesque glens among the flora and fauna of the nature surrounded by the tall pine, heather and conifer trees against the stunning backdrop of the beautiful mountains and the calm waters of the Lock Ness was refreshing indeed.