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NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC ENCOURAGES TRAVELLERS TO HEAD TO CAIRNGORMS

Highlands in top 20 holiday destinations

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Forget that lazy beach holiday in the Maldives or a jungle safari in Kenya, one of the world's most influential travel magazines has named the Highlands as one of its top holiday destinations.

The region is among 20 locations to make the National Geographic Traveler's prestigious list, which also includes Palaman in the Philippines, the Black Sea Coast in Crimea and the Gaspé Peninsula in Quebec.

It encourages intrepid travellers and outdoor enthusiasts to visit the Cairngorms National Park, Nevis Range, and to cheer on "tartan-clad participants" during Highland games.

Last year the magazine's senior editor, Norie Quintos, visited the region when she addressed the Adventure Travel world summit, organised by VisitScotland and the Adventure Travel Trade Association, at Aviemore.

She said: "I spent a few days in the environs of Scotland's newest national park, the Cairngorms, and was enveloped by the rough-and-tumble Highland history of clans and kings, made all the more atmospheric by the stunning quality of light on the moors."

Last night VisitScotland's regional director, Scott Armstrong, said: "Anyone who has ever visited the Highlands won't be surprised to learn it has captured the imagination of National Geographic and we hope those readers who have not already experienced Scotland will be encouraged to put this country at the top of their list of places they have to visit."

Lib Dem MSP for the Highlands Jamie Stone also welcomed the news. He said: "This accolade can only mean great news for businesses and the local economy."

And Sally Dowden, owner of Aviemore-based Speyside Wildlife, said: "It is great to see National Geographic has given this endorsement to the Highlands. Not only is the scenery fantastic, but this part of the world is at the top of a lot of people's must-see destinations in terms of watching wildlife.

"If you are a birdwatcher, then the Cairngorms National Park is the centre of the universe as far as we're concerned, with species you can see here including the golden eagle, capercaillie and the Scottish crossbill."



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