



Dun Ara, Isle of Mull

Inner and Outer Hebrides hiking adventure

Visiting some great ancient and medieval sites



1. Glasgow - Isle of Mull
2. Mull: Dun Ara, Duart Castle
3. Isles of Staffa, Iona
4. Isle of Mull - Isle of Skye
5. Skye: High Pasture cave, Loch Coruisk
6. Talisker distillery, Oronsay, ferry to Isle of Harris
7. Isle of Harris
8. Isle of Lewis: Callanish Stones, Dun Carloway
9. Lewis: Butt of Lewis
10. Isle of Lewis - Glasgow

This trip takes us along Scotland's west coast from the Isle of Mull in the south, along the western edge of highland Scotland to the Isle of Lewis in the Outer Hebrides (Western Isles), sometimes along the mainland coast, but more often across beautiful and fascinating islands. This is the perfect opportunity to explore all that the western Highlands and Islands of Scotland have to offer: prehistoric stone circles, burial cairns, and settlements, Gaelic culture; and remarkable wildlife—all amidst dramatic land- and seascapes.

Most of the tour will be off the well-beaten tourist trail through some of Scotland's most magnificent scenery. We will hike on seven islands. Sculpted by the sea, these islands have long and varied coastlines, with high cliffs, sea lochs or fjords, sandy and rocky bays, caves and arches - always something new to draw you on around the next corner.

Highlights

- Tobermory, Mull;
- Boat trip to and walks on the Isles of Staffa, with its basalt columns, and Iona with a visit to Iona Abbey;
- The sandy beaches on the Isle of Harris;
- Boat trip and hike to Loch Coruisk on Skye;
- Walk to the tidal island of Oronsay;
- Visit to the Standing Stones of Calanish on Lewis.
- Butt of Lewis hike.



Iona Abbey



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Calanais Standing Stones. Lewis

History

The Scots of the Western Highlands were Iron Age immigrants from Ireland and their initial foothold, in Argyll, was crucially accessible by sea. They long jealously guarded their independence from central authority, whether in Edinburgh or London or elsewhere. In this they were aided by difficult agricultural conditions and remoteness.

But the west of Scotland also has far earlier links with Scotland's past. Prehistoric remains are found all along the west coast of Scotland and on the Hebrides. In some places they are in unusual concentrations, for example on the Isle of Lewis at Callanish. This is the work of Bronze and Stone Age people, and collectively they take us back as far as 5000 BC and the time of our first settled farming communities.

The Vikings famously travelled by sea, and very many Hebridean place names testify to their influence. The western islands were part of Norway for about 200 years between the 11th and 13th centuries.

Christianity, weak across most of Britain, can be said to have re-established itself from the 6th century from Iona – a place of refuge because very much on the edge. A tribal / clan society survived here much later than elsewhere in western Europe, in part because of isolation.

Quite recently, the accounts of 18th century visitors to the highlands and islands – arguably the first tourists here – show, frankly, a horror at the living conditions they found and put much blame on the catastrophic collapse of the clan social system following the Jacobite rising of 1745-6.

All in all, a unique history and culture, and one that no visitor should ignore. And we won't, with visits planned, among others, to the Abbey on Iona, a whisky distillery, brochs, a traditional thatched house and the standing stones of Calanais, and to finish, a hike on the windy Butt of Lewis, the most northerly point of the Western Isles.

Isle of Mull

Mull is bitten into by so many sea lochs that the sight and sound of salt water is never far away. The island is divided into north and south. The southern half has a core of dramatic hill country. To the west the lower peninsula of the Ross of Mull runs out almost to touch St.

Columba's holy island of Iona. Northern Mull holds the island's tiny 'capital' of Tobermory (= Mary's Well).

Isle of Skye

Skye, the Misty Isle, is famous for its spectacular scenery and landscapes. It is a beautiful island with ruined castles, sea lochs and remote moors with in its heart the dramatic Black Cuillin range rising to over 3,000 feet. They were formed by volcanic activity some fifty million years ago.

Harris & Lewis

Harris and Lewis in the Outer Hebrides is the largest of the Scottish islands. They are one island with the mountains of north Harris forming a barrier between Lewis and Harris and only traversed by one road. In early ages the sea was the main thoroughfare and from this viewpoint it is easy to see why Lewis and Harris were thought of as separate islands. Both geographically and historically each part has its own unique identity. The west coast of south Harris is famed for its vast areas of sandy beaches.



Loch Coruisk, Isle of Skye



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