



Ardvreck Castle and Calda House, Assynt

## North Highlands and Isle of Lewis hiking adventure

### Visiting great archaeological sites in stunning scenery

*This trip takes us to the remote North Highlands and the Isle of Lewis. From the flow country of Caithness in the north-east to the spectacular mountains of Assynt in the north-west and the beautiful island of Lewis in the Outer Hebrides. You can't wish for a more varied scenery.*

*Everywhere we go, there will be an abundance of archaeological and historical sites and excellent hiking.*

*We'll never be far from the coast with high cliffs, spectacular sea lochs - fjords -, sandy and rocky bays, caves and arches.*

*Always something new to draw you on around the next corner.*

#### Highlights

- Dunbeath Water hike with numerous ancient monuments and a spectacular gorge;
- Camster long and round cairns, Caithness;
- Hike on the moor near Lochinver surrounded by the spectacular Assynt mountains;
- Boat trip to and hike on Handa Island with 100,000 breeding seabirds, including puffins;
- Visit to the Standing Stones of Calanish, Isle of Lewis;
- Hike to the Iron Age Village on Great Bernera;
- Traigh Uig beach hike, Isle of Lewis were the Lewis Chessmen were found.



Wag of Forse broch, Caithness

1. Inverness - Brorar
2. Dunbeath Heritage hike
3. Caithness archaeology
4. Brorar - Lochinver
5. Clachtoll Broch and River Inver

6. Handa Island
7. Lochinver - Isle of Lewis
8. Callanish Stones, Carloway Broch
9. Great Bernera and Traigh Uige
10. Stornoway - Glasgow



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Standing Stones of Callanish, Isle of Lewis

## Introduction

The north of Scotland is a glorious coastal region of glittering sea lochs, islands, mountains and glens just waiting to be explored. Scotland's coastline stretches for thousands of miles and includes everything from rocky shorelines to secluded island beaches, all of which are home to many different species of flora and fauna. Most of the tour will be off the well-beaten Highland tourist trail through some of Scotland's most magnificent scenery.

Scotland has a long and varied history stretching back many thousands of years and these architectural remains cover the landscape of the north Highlands and the Isle of Lewis. From Neolithic cairns and stone circles to Iron Age brochs - ancient dry stone buildings unique to Scotland - Medieval castles and deserted clearance villages.

We will travel by minibus, ferries and smaller boats and stay in comfortable hotels where you can enjoy the Highland warmth and hospitality.

## Caithness

Caithness is known for its wide open spaces and big skies. It is fringed by dramatic coastal scenery.

Caithness is rich in prehistoric remains from Neolithic times onward. Cairns, standing stones, and hill forts abound, and there are more brochs than in any other Scottish county. The area was an early Pictish province called Cait, or Cat, which was invaded by Norsemen. Its place-names testify to Norse domination.

## Assynt

Assynt is referred to as one of the last truly wild places in Europe. It has a stark, eerie landscape and is a hauntingly beautiful area, with



Long Cairn, Camster, Caithness



Traigh Uig, Isle of Lewis

strange isolated mountains and sparkling beaches. The vast, undulating moorland is studded with a maze of a thousand fresh-water lochans. Up from this rise a series of remarkable mountains. These peaks are very steep and completely separate from one another, and are eroded into fantastic, individual shapes, making this one of the most memorable landscapes in Scotland. According to Norse legend, this was where the gods practised mountain building. They did it on a grand scale.

Early humans used the famous bone caves and buried their dead in the large cairns visible throughout this dramatic landscape. From later in prehistory come cist burials, brochs, duns and crannogs. Fragments of a Celtic cross point to an early medieval Christian presence beside On the shores of Loch Assynt we'll visit the ruined castle and burial vault of the Macleods of Assynt, the gaunt remains of the grand Calda House of their Mackenzie successors, the old parish church and the remains of flourishing pre-clearance settlements.

## Isle of Lewis

The Isle of Lewis is steeped in history and culture, ranging back thousands of years. Gaelic is spoken alongside English. Best known for the Calanish standing stones, there is much more archaeology to explore, including Carloway Broch, blackhouses, the Iron Age village at Greater Bernera with a superbly rebuilt Iron Age house, Traigh Uig, a stunning white beach bordered by windswept shifting sand dunes and rich machair grasses. The famous Lewis Chessmen, a group of seventy-eight 12th-century Viking chess pieces, were discovered here in 1831.



Replica Iron Age House, Great Bernera



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