



Standing Stones of Callanish, Isle of Lewis

Inner and Outer Hebrides hiking adventure

Visiting some great ancient and medieval sites



This trip takes us along Scotland's west coast. The west Highlands have evolved a landscape of gentle farmland and wide peat bog surrounded by rugged hills. At its edge a unique seascape, wild and exposed, dominated by the archipelago of islands that make up the Inner and Outer Hebrides. Sculpted by the sea, these islands have long and varied coastlines, with high cliffs, spectacular sea lochs or fjords, sandy or rocky bays, caves and arches - always something new to draw you on around the next corner.

Highlights

- Visit to the Neolithic and early Bronze Age monuments on Machrie Moor, Arran;
- Walk through Kilmartin Glen with its prehistoric and early historic monuments;
- Tour of Duart Castle, Mull;
- Boat trip to and walks on the Isles of Staffa, with its basalt columns, and Iona with a visit to Iona Abbey;
- Tobermory, Mull;
- Boat trip and hike to Loch Coruisk on Skye;
- Visit to the Standing Stones of Calanish on Lewis.



Giant's Graves, Arran and Holy Isle

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| 1. Glasgow - Isle of Arran | 8. Isle of Mull - Isle of Skye |
| 2. Machrie Moo, King's Cave | 9. Talisker distillery and Oronsay |
| 3. Giant Graves, Holy Isle | 10. Loch Coruisk |
| 4. Carnasserie Castle, Crinan | 11. Isle of Skye - Isle of Harris |
| 5. Kilmartin Glen | 12. Isle of Harris |
| 6. Isle of Mull | 13. Callanish Stones, Lewis |
| 7. Isles of Staffa, Iona | 14. Stornoway - Glasgow |



Letters Lodge South, Strathlachlan, Argyll
 PA27 8BZ, Scotland (UK)
 Tel. +44 (0)1369 860272
info@aboutargyll.uk
www.aboutargyll.uk



Iona Abbey

Introduction

The west of Scotland is a glorious coastal region of glittering sea lochs, islands, hills 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. En route we will visit 8 islands, from Arran in the south to Harris & Lewis in the far north.

We will travel by minibus, ferries and smaller boats and stay in comfortable hotels.

History

The Scots of the Gaelic Highlands 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. The Scots were Iron Age immigrants from Ireland and their initial foothold, in Argyll, was crucially accessible by sea.

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. They are in unusual concentrations on the Isle of Arran at Machrie Moor, throughout Kilmartin Glen and 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 early Scots' hill fort capital at Dunadd, the Abbey on Iona, a whisky distillery, and, to finish our tour on Lewis, to a broch, a traditional blackhouse and the standing stones of Calanais.



Loch Coruisk, Isle of Skye



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