

Trip itinerary

Day 1: Arrive in Inverness and travel to beautiful Ullapool.

Arrive in Inverness, Scotland today. Meet your guide and fellow travelers at the Inverness train station at 1:30pm to begin a scenic 60 mile drive to Ullapool. A thriving fishing village situated on the shores of Loch Broom, Ullapool is one of the most attractive sea lochs on Scotland's west coast. We have several options for a warm up hike including Rhu Hill, Ullapool Hill, or Corrieshalloch Gorge, an impressive 200' deep chasm containing the Falls of Measach. Your guide will choose your hikes each day based on weather and other conditions. An orientation of the coming day's hikes will be held over dinner. Overnight in Ullapool. Dinner included.

Hiking: 2-3 miles; Terrain: on trail; Elevation gain and loss: 500-750'.

Day 2: Explore Inverpolly, rich in flora and fauna amid sandstone peaks.

Following a full Scottish breakfast we explore the Inverpolly Special Area of Conservation. Inverpolly has received special SAC protection in an effort to safeguard its incredible biodiversity. Located just north of Ullapool, Inverpolly is rich in indigenous plant life such as heather, miniature wild orchids and Scotland's national flower, the thistle. It is also home to a variety of wildlife including deer, otter, wildcat and pine marten. Peaks of 800 million-year-old Torridonian sandstone add to the spectacle as they rise majestically from lochan-strewn moors. This afternoon's hiking options are plentiful—perhaps a hike following a portion of a traditional hut to hut backpacking route or a traverse along the rugged coast to look for seals and porpoise! Overnight in Ullapool. All meals included.

Hiking: 7-8 miles; Terrain: on and off trail; Elevation gain and loss: up to 2,000'.

Day 3: Hike the hillsides of Loch Broom with views of the Summer Isles.

We drive south on the "Destitution Road" to Little Loch Broom. When the potato crops failed in the mid-19th century, this road was built in exchange for food by the local inhabitants. Today the saltwater loch provides a natural harbor for open sea vessel. Options include trekking the hillsides for stunning views of the loch, heading overland to a fabulous mountain lake below the pinnacles of An Teallach - a true classic of Scottish walking, or hiking along the shore of the loch to the remote crofting community of Scoraig to revel in the glorious views of the Summer Isles and surrounding mountain ranges. Overnight in Gairloch. All meals included.

Hiking: 6-8 miles; Terrain: on-and-off trail; Elevation gain and loss: 1,000'-2,000'.

Day 4: Walk the coast at Rua Reid, looking for seals, divers, and gannets.

The day is spent hiking the coast around Rua Reidh near Gairloch, where we look for seals, divers and gannets as we ascend from sea level to the 1,000' cliffs. Unique heathland plants thrive here, including bog asphodel and several species of insectivorous plants. The coastline

offers many miles of beautiful cliffs, sea stacks and abundant birdlife such as graylag geese, ring ouzel and chaffinch. Visit the quaint shops in the village of Gairloch before heading off to explore the famous gardens of Inverewe, created by Osgood Mackenzie. The gardens are noted for their Himalayan and New Zealand plant collections, as well as their classic English garden. Overnight in Gairloch. All meals included.

Hiking: 6-7 miles; Terrain: mostly off-trail; Elevation gain and loss: 800'-1,100'

Day 5: Hike to the Fairy Lochs, a series of small highland lochlans.

A morning hike to the Fairy Lochs, a series of small highland lochlans that dot the moorland between the hill of Sidhean Mor and Loch Gairloch, provides a wonderful start to the day. The lochs offer an excellent display of local geology and a touching memorial to the crew of an American World War II bomber that crashed here in 1945. A second option is a hike in Beinn Eighe, Britain's oldest National Nature Reserve - now designated a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve. The lower hillsides are home to 350 year old Scots pines (affectionately called "granny " pines) and the oldest rocks here (indeed the oldest in the world) are Lewissian gneiss, dating back some 3 billion years. In the afternoon we drive through beautiful scenery to Skye, stopping en route at Eilean Donan Castle, one of the most spectacular castles in Scotland. The largest of the Hebridean Islands, Skye has an area of nearly seven hundred square miles, and as sea lochs riddle the island's landscape we are never more than five miles from the sea. Overnight on Skye. All meals included.

Hiking: 3-4 miles; Terrain: mostly off-trail; Elevation gain and loss: 750'-1,800'.

Day 6: On the Isle of Skye, hike a glacier-carved cirque in the Cuillin Mountains.

After breakfast we begin our day's hike in the rugged Cuillin Mountains, the training ground for British climbers preparing for Himalayan ascents. Some of the great options for today include a hike from Glenbrittle to Coire Lagan - this challenging hike follows a beautiful glacier-carved cirque. Or we may hike towards Bruach Na Frithe or "slope of the deer forest". Here we are treated to amazing views of Ben Nevis to the east, and the Outer Hebrides to the west. Overnight on Skye. All meals included.

Hiking: 4-10 miles; Terrain: off trail; Elevation gain and loss: 2,000'- 3,000'.

Day 7: Trek Trotternish Ridge to "The Table," for dramatic views.

Trotternish Ridge, filled with the strange rock pinnacles of the Storr and the Quaraing, is a long ridge hike that is considered one of the finest in Scotland. Our goal is The Table, a grassy summit plateau that offers dramatic views of the surrounding landscape including the Cuillins, the Western Isles, the mountains of Wester Ross and out to the sea. Time permitting, we make a quick shopping stop for local crafts in charming Portree, the capital of Skye. We dine on delicious local cuisine for our farewell dinner tonight. Overnight on Skye. All meals included.

Hiking: 6 miles; Terrain: on- and off-trail, grassy with some rocky sections; Elevation gain and loss: 1,800'.

Day 8: Travel past famous Loch Ness to Inverness where our adventure ends.

A last hearty breakfast is enjoyed before we bid farewell to the Isle of Skye. We head east past famous Loch Ness, generally arriving in Inverness by 12:30pm. Fly home from Inverness late this afternoon, or extend your stay to explore more of this beautiful country. Breakfast included.

Driving time: ~ 3 hours.

Note on Itinerary

Although we do our very best to adhere to the schedule above, the itinerary is subject to change for numerous reasons beyond our control, including weather and terrain conditions. Your trip leader will determine each day's hike; hikes noted on a particular day could be moved to an earlier or later day in the trip, should this provide a better group experience.