

# Walkers Directory

## CONTENTS

Accommodation	292
Business Hours	294
Children	294
Climate	295
Customs	297
Embassies & Consulates	297
Food & Drink	297
Holidays	299
Insurance	299
Internet Access	299
Maps	299
Money	300
Telephone	300
Time	301
Tourist Information	302
Visas	302
Walking Festivals	302

## PRACTICALITIES

- Pick up a copy of *tgo* magazine – ‘by hillwalkers for hillwalkers’ – for news, walk ideas, gear and book reviews; its Scottish coverage is usually better than the otherwise recommendable *Trail* and *Country Walking* magazines.
- Buy or watch videos on the PAL system.
- Plug into a square three-pin adaptor (different from the Australian three-pin) before connecting to the electricity supply (240V, 50Hz AC)
- Scotland uses the metric system for weights and measures, except for road distances (in miles) and beer (in pints).

## ACCOMMODATION

Visitors are spoilt for choice of accommodation in Scotland. You can camp in the wild or stay at bothies for free. Budget travellers (spending £5 to £20 per person per night) have the choice of camping grounds, hostels and, increasingly rarely, inexpensive B&Bs. Midrange travellers (£20 to £45 per person per night) will find a plethora of

comfortable B&Bs, guesthouses and small hotels. At the top end are luxury B&Bs, guesthouses and, of course, hotels. B&Bs, guesthouses and hotels (and the odd hostel) usually serve breakfast; the more you pay, the greater the choice.

Prices are higher during the busy season (June to September), peaking in July and August when some establishments will not take single-night bookings. At other times, special deals are often available at guesthouses and hotels. Many smaller establishments close between November and March, particularly in remote areas.

**VisitScotland's** ([www.visitscotland.com](http://www.visitscotland.com)) tourist information centres (TICs) and website provide an accommodation booking service (£3 per reservation, local and national). Alternatively, you can use the site to obtain contact details and make the bookings yourself, possibly saving quite a few pounds.

## Bothies

These are privately owned, simple shelters in remote areas. They're not locked, they're free and you can't book a space. You'll need your own cooking equipment, sleeping bag and mat, map, lighting and food. They are not meant for extended stays – two nights at the most. Many are maintained by the **Mountain Bothies Association** ([www.mountainbothies.org.uk](http://www.mountainbothies.org.uk)). For details about staying in bothies, see p21.

## Camping & Caravan Parks

There are plenty of camping and caravan parks in most parts of the country, though they're rather scarce in the Northern and Western Isles. For many, caravans and campervans are the main business, and tents are allocated only limited space. However, around major walking areas you will find sites with (usually) well-grassed spaces for tents. Tariffs vary from £10 to £16 for two people occupying an unpowered site; you'll pay an extra few pounds for an electrical hook-up. Hot showers are free in some places, others charge a modest fee. Camper kitchens, where you can cook and wash up under cover, are fairly rare; most parks do have laundries, where a wash and

spin-dry costs around £3. On-site shops and cafés are quite common, especially at sites well away from a town or village. Many sites participate in VisitScotland's grading scheme and are listed in its *Caravan and Camping Parks Map*, published annually.

### WILD CAMPING

The scope for wild camping – in the hills, glens and along the coast – is almost infinite. However, keeping in mind the changeable climate and the favourite haunts of midges (see the boxed text, p313), you will need to choose your site carefully. See also p21 for some camping tips.

### Guesthouses & B&Bs

B&Bs are a Scottish institution and their hosts' hospitality is almost legendary. At the very least you'll have a bedroom in a private house, a shared bathroom and breakfast, either cooked or continental. Pay a little more and you'll enjoy an en suite room with TV and tea- and coffee-making facilities and a wider choice for breakfast. The best have a separate sitting (lounge) room for guests, where you can relax and enjoy a cup of tea in comfort. In popular walking areas some establishments have a drying room, and the hosts will provide a pick-up and drop-off service and a packed lunch; look for the 'Walkers Welcome' symbol in accommodation guides. Expect to pay as little as £22 and as much as £40 per person per night for a B&B. Many of those in more remote locations offer a two-, three- or even four-course evening meal, usually excellent value, ranging from around £12 to £25.

Guesthouses are larger than B&Bs, and perhaps a little more formal, but not necessarily any more luxurious. Pubs may also offer relatively inexpensive B&B accommodation, which can be convenient, with room and meals under one roof, but they may not be as peaceful as a private home. Rates start at about £26 per person per night.

Single rooms are scarce and some hosts are reluctant to let a twin room to one person, even in the off-season, without charging a supplement of as much as £10.

### Hostels

Scotland's many hostels offer inexpensive accommodation and are great places for meeting fellow travellers and walkers. The

### WALKING CLUBS

If you're a sociable type, joining a walking club can make all the difference to your enjoyment of exploring Scotland on foot. There are scores of clubs across the country (though they are mainly in the more populous central regions) which run regular programs of walks and, usually, social events throughout the year. Some may also offer instruction in navigation (maps, compass, GPS). Walks are always organised and led by competent and experienced members, and are graded in much the same way as the walks in this book.

The **Ramblers Association** (☎ 01577 861222; [www.ramblers.org.uk](http://www.ramblers.org.uk)) has more than 50 groups around Scotland, while the **Scottish Mountaineering Council** ([www.smc.org.uk](http://www.smc.org.uk)) website has links to many other clubs.

standard of facilities is generally very good; it's fast becoming the norm for hostels to have small dorms with en suite. Kitchens are provided for self-catering and many hostels provide internet access.

From May to September, and on public holidays, hostels can be booked solid, sometimes by large groups, so book well ahead.

The **Scottish Youth Hostel Association** (SYHA; ☎ 0870 155 3255; [www.syha.org.uk](http://www.syha.org.uk); 7 Glebe Cres, Stirling FK8 2JA) operates a wide variety of reasonably priced hostels from one end of the country to the other. They range from the brand new Edinburgh Central palace (opened in 2006), to a magnificent mansion beside Loch Lomond, to small, homely hostels at Inverey in the Cairngorms and Broadford on the Southern Upland Way. The average tariff during summer is around £14; an online booking service is available. A booklet listing the hostels is widely available from the hostels themselves and from TICs.

Many of the numerous independent hostels belong to **Scottish Independent Hostels** (SIH; [www.hostel-scotland.co.uk](http://www.hostel-scotland.co.uk); PO Box 7024, Fort William, PH33 6RE), an association that represents only hostels that have been approved by SIH's independent assessor. Most are privately owned and the majority are family run. The greatest concentration is across the Highlands; they're very scarce south of Glasgow and Edinburgh, and in the far north. SIH's