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2 WEEKS

A Highland Fling

This tour takes in the scenic highlights of the Highlands, including the Isle of Skye.

Begin with a visit to the Trossachs for your first taste of Highland scenery; take a cruise on Loch Katrine and spend the night in Callander. Continue north via the Falls of Dochart at Killin and the fringes of Rannoch Moor.

The mountain scenery becomes more impressive, culminating in the grandeur of Glen Coe. Keen hill walkers will pause for a day at Fort William to climb Ben Nevis (plus another day to recover!) before taking the Road to the Isles past glorious Glenfinnan and the Silver Sands of Morar to Mallaig. Overnight here and dine at one of its seafood restaurants.

Take the ferry to the Isle of Skye, spending a day or two exploring Scotland’s most famous island, before crossing the Skye Bridge back to the mainland, then head north via the pretty village of Plockton to the magnificent mountain scenery of Glen Torridon. Spend a day or two hiking here, then follow the A832 alongside lovely Loch Maree and continue north into the big-sky wilderness of Coigach and Assynt, before making your way back south with an overnight in Inverness.
Island Hopscotch

This route is usually done by car, but the Oban–Barra–Stornoway–Ullapool–Inverness loop also makes a brilliant cycle tour (around 270 miles, including the 60 miles from Ullapool ferry terminal to Inverness train station, making both start and finish accessible by rail). CalMac’s Island Hopscotch ticket No 8 includes all the ferries needed for the Outer Hebrides part of this route.

From Oban it’s a five-hour ferry crossing to Barra; you’ll arrive in the evening so plan to spend the night there (book ahead). In the morning, after a visit to romantic Kisimul Castle and a tour around the island, take the ferry to South Uist. Walk along the wild beaches of the west coast, sample the local seafood and, if you’ve brought your fishing rod, look forward to a bit of sport on the island’s many trout lochs. There are good places to stay at Polochar, Lochboisdale and Lochmaddy (two nights should be enough).

Keep your binoculars handy as you follow the road north through Benbecula and North Uist, as this is prime birdwatching country. If you’re camping or hostelling, a night at Berneray is a must before taking the ferry to Harris. Pray for sun, as the road along Harris’ west coast has some of the most spectacular beaches in Scotland. The main road continues north from Tarbert (good hotels) through the rugged Harris hills to Lewis.

Don’t go directly to Stornoway; instead head to the Callanish Standing Stones and Arnol Blackhouse museum – the highlights of the Western Isles. If you have time (two days is ideal), detour west to the beautiful beaches around Miavaig and Traigh Uige; there’s plenty of wild and semiwild camping.

Spend your final night in the Hebrides in Stornoway (eating at Digby Chick), then take the ferry to Ullapool, where you have the choice of heading straight to Inverness, or continuing north around the mainland coast through the gorgeous wilderness of Coigach and Assynt, and on via Cape Wrath and Durness to Thurso, where the ferry to the Orkney Islands awaits.
The central and western Highlands are famous for mountain scenery, ancient pine forests and whisky distilleries.

Beginning in Pitlochry, abandon the main A9 road and enjoy a day’s scenic drive east across the hills on the A924, and then north on the A93 through the ski area of Glenshee to the remote Highland outpost of Braemar. Spend a night here, and the following day either hike in the hills nearby or visit Balmoral Castle before spending your second night at Ballater.

From here the roller-coaster A939 takes you north to Tomintoul and Glenlivet, close to the heartland of Speyside whisky. Take your time visiting distilleries as you amble west along the Spey valley to Aviemore, in the Cairngorm National Park. Spend at least two nights here to explore the ancient pine forests of Rothiemurchus and take a trip on the Cairngorm Mountain Railway.

Head west, stopping at the Highland Folk Museum at Newtonmore before continuing to Fort William. Overnight here, then spend a morning exploring Glen Nevis and head north along the Great Glen to see Urquhart Castle and Loch Ness – leave time for a monster-spotting cruise – and finish up in Inverness.

Argyll and its islands offer a varied taste of Highland scenery, wildlife and history, all within a few hours’ drive of Glasgow.

Begin with a scenic drive from Dunoon to Portavadie via Benmore Botanic Garden, then take the ferry to the pretty fishing village of Tarbert. Devote a day to the Kintyre peninsula, taking in Campbeltown, the Mull of Kintyre and the Isle of Gigha. Then allow at least two days for touring Islay and its famous distilleries.

Back on the mainland, head north through Knapdale – visiting the Beaver Detective Trail – to the prehistoric sites of Kilmartin Glen and on to Oban.

Take the ferry to Craignure for a tour of the Isle of Mull, being sure to visit Duart Castle and Iona, before spending a night at Tobermory. From here you can cross to Kilchoan, allowing a trip to Ardnamurchan Point, the most westerly point of the British mainland, before the scenic drive along Loch Sunart to Corran Ferry.

Head back south via the scenic splendour of Glen Coe and the minor road through Glen Orchy to reach Loch Awe. From here you can return to your starting point by way of Inveraray and Loch Lomond.
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WRITER THANKS

Neil Wilson
Thanks to the friendly and helpful tourist office staff all over the Highlands; to Steven Fallon, Keith Jeffrey, Fiona Garven, Derek McCrindle, Brendan Bolland, Jenny Neil, Tom and Christine Duffin, Steve Hall, Elaine Simpson, Peter Fallon and Duncan Pepper; and, as ever, to Carol Downie. Thanks also to James Smart and the editorial team at Lonely Planet.

Andy Symington
It’s always a huge pleasure to enjoy the very generous hospitality of Jenny Neil and Brendan Bolland, and to work with Neil Wilson, Cliff Wilkinson and the excellent LP team. Numerous other people have been very generous with time and information. I’d particularly like to thank Robin Mitchell, Maggie Maguire, Graeme Campbell, Jen Stewart and the staff at many tourist information offices, especially Judith and Janice at Bowmore, Sheona at John O’Groats, Susan at Callander and Neil at Kirkwall.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS


Cover photograph: Tobermory, Mull; Kathy Collins/ Getty ©

THIS BOOK

This 4th edition of Lonely Planet’s Scotland’s Highlands & Islands guidebook was curated by Neil Wilson, and was researched and written by Neil and Andy Symington. Neil and Andy also wrote the previous two editions. This guidebook was produced by the following:

Destination Editor
Clifton Wilkinson

Senior Product Editor
Genna Patterson

Product Editor
Will Allen

Senior Cartographer
Mark Griffiths

Book Designer
Clara Monitto

Assisting Editors
Michelle Bennett, Nigel Chin, Victoria Harrison, Gabrielle Stefanos

Cover Researcher
Naomi Parker

Thanks to
Sandrine Dugast, CRaitt, Lyahna Spencer, Paul G Stewart, Bob Sweet
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OUR STORY

A beat-up old car, a few dollars in the pocket and a sense of adventure. In 1972 that’s all Tony and Maureen Wheeler needed for the trip of a lifetime – across Europe and Asia overland to Australia. It took several months, and at the end – broke but inspired – they sat at their kitchen table writing and stapling together their first travel guide, Across Asia on the Cheap. Within a week they’d sold 1500 copies. Lonely Planet was born.

Today, Lonely Planet has offices in Franklin, London, Melbourne, Oakland, Dublin, Beijing and Delhi, with more than 600 staff and writers. We share Tony’s belief that ‘a great guidebook should do three things: inform, educate and amuse’.

OUR WRITERS

Neil Wilson

Neil was born in Scotland and has lived there most of his life. Based in Perthshire, he has been a full-time writer since 1988, working on more than 80 guidebooks for various publishers, including the Lonely Planet guides to Scotland, England, Ireland and Prague. An outdoors enthusiast since childhood, Neil is an active hill-walker, mountain-biker, sailor, snowboarder, fly-fisher and rock-climber, and has climbed and tramped in four continents, including ascents of Jebel Toubkal in Morocco, Mount Kinabalu in Borneo, the Old Man of Hoy in Scotland’s Orkney Islands and the Regular Northwest Face of Half Dome in California’s Yosemite Valley.

Andy Symington

Andy has written or worked on over a hundred books and other updates for Lonely Planet (especially in Europe and Latin America) and other publishing companies, and has published articles on numerous subjects for a variety of newspapers, magazines, and websites. He part-owns and operates a rock bar, has written a novel and is currently working on several fiction and non-fiction writing projects. Originally from Australia, Andy moved to northern Spain many years ago.