



NEW

Walk the North West Highlands and Skye

UNITED KINGDOM - TRIP CODE WHS

WALKING AND TREKKING

Why book this trip?

This three-centre walking holiday showcases the stunning natural beauty and wild nature of Scotland's North West Highlands and Skye. Enjoy varied and rewarding walks on glacier-carved mountains, spectacular coastal scenery and the rugged interior and iconic landscapes of Skye. Expertly guided by our experienced mountain leader and intertwined with culture, cuisine, history, nature and geology.

- **North West Highlands UNESCO Geopark** - Climb iconic hills in the Assynt and Inverpolly
- **Gairloch** - Explore the coastline with stunning seascapes and pristine white-sand beaches
- **Isle of Skye** - Experience the magic of the Cuillin and Quiraing
- **Small group walking holiday** - Maximum 8 guests



INCLUDED MEALS
Breakfast: 7
Dinner: 2



TRIP STAFF
Explore Tour
Leader / Driver



TRANSPORT
Minibus
On Foot



ACCOMMODATION
2 nights
comfortable
guesthouse
2 nights
comfortable hotel
3 nights
comfortable lodge



WALKING GRADE:
Moderate



GROUP SIZE:
6 - 8

Itinerary

Itineraries on some departure dates may differ, please select the itinerary that you wish to explore.

DAY 1 - Join trip Inverness. Drive to Ullapool

The trip starts at Inverness Rail Station at 13.30. After meeting we have a scenic drive (1.5hrs) to Ullapool, a thriving fishing town nestled on the shores of beautiful Loch Broom. Founded in 1788 as a herring port, the town was designed by Thomas Telford. Despite its size with just 1500 inhabitants, it is the largest settlement in the area and an important tourist destination and port. Located just to the north of Ullapool is the UNESCO Geopark of the North West Highlands - an area of remarkable natural beauty, with dramatic mountain landscapes, pristine sandy beaches, ancient settlements and remote communities - all within one of the most sparsely populated corners of Europe. After settling into our accommodation we plan a warm up hike on Ullapool Hill with commanding views over the loch, village and the Summer Isles - a perfect introduction to our trip.

The Tour Leader will talk through the plan for the coming days in an introductory briefing this evening. Please note that the planned walks may need to be changed in accordance with the weather, to maximise your enjoyment, and the Tour Leader will discuss these on the ground if necessary.

Today's intro walk will take approximately 2 hours and will cover a distance of 3-4 kilometres along grassy trails with a total ascent and descent of 500 metres.



ACCOMMODATION:
Ladysmith Guesthouse (or similar)

Grade: Comfortable Guesthouse



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: DINNER

DAY 2 - Explore the Assynt and climb Cul Mor

After a full Scottish breakfast we embark on our first exploration of the UNESCO Geopark with a wonderful walk in the Assynt region just to the north of Ullapool. Assynt is rich in indigenous plant life such as lavender, miniature wild orchids and Scotland's national flower, the thistle. The western part of this area has distinctive-shaped mountains sculpted by the huge forces of glaciation, resulting in 800 million-year-old Torridonian sandstone \ island\ mountains that rise majestically from the loch-strewn moors. Our aim today is to climb Cul Mor and the ascent starts from Knochán Crag making use of a good path onto the upper reaches of the hill with some off-trail hiking towards the top. From the summit we enjoy a breath-taking 360\ panorama of this dramatic landscape. We descend and return to the vehicle via a different route.

Today's walk will take approximately 6 hours and will cover a distance of 14 kilometres, with a mix of trails and off-trail routes, with a total ascent and descent of 750 metres.



ACCOMMODATION:

Ladysmith Guesthouse (or similar)



Grade: Comfortable Guesthouse



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

DAY 3 - Climb Stac Pollaidh and transfer to Gairloch

We check out of the guesthouse this morning after breakfast. First we drive north again into the Geopark, this time further east into the Inverpolly area to Stac Pollaidh; arguably one of the more well-known and distinctive hills in the area. From the foot of the mountain with its distinctive sandstone pinnacles shaped by the last ice-age, it looks impressive, but the climb is relatively easy. After hiking to the easterly top and taking in the unforgettable vista, we continue our walk all around this mountain on the way back down. Back in the vehicle we make our way, on a scenic drive south (2hrs), to our next base in Gairloch. If time

permits we have a quick stop at Corrieshalloch Gorge, an impressive 200m deep chasm containing the Falls of Measach. Situated on the shore of Loch Gairloch, the small town of Gairloch is a great base for exploring the awe-inspiring scenery of Wester Ross.

Today's shorter walk will take approximately 3 hours and will cover a distance of 4 kilometres, mostly on trails, very steep in parts, with a total ascent and descent of 510 metres.



ACCOMMODATION:

Myrtle Bank Hotel (or similar)



Grade: Comfortable Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

DAY 4 - Walk the dramatic coast on Rua Reidh headland, looking for marine and bird life

Today we explore the dramatic coastal scenery on the headland just to the north of Gairloch, with stunning views across the Straits of Minch to the Isle of Skye and the Western Isles. We ascend from sea level to the 350-metre cliffs, looking out for marine life such as Atlantic seal, dolphin or basking shark, and abundant birdlife including gannets, fulmar, shag, kittiwakes and divers. 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 sandy beaches. After the walk we return to Gairloch and the rest of the afternoon is free. We suggest a visit to the fascinating Gairloch Museum and or the famous Inverewe Gardens by Osgood Mackenzie. The gardens are noted for their Himalayan and New Zealand plant collections, as well as their classic English garden.

Today's walk will take approximately 4-5 hours and will cover a distance of 11 kilometres, mostly off trail and undulating, with a total ascent and descent of 280 metres.



ACCOMMODATION:

Myrtle Bank Hotel (or similar)



Grade: Comfortable Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

DAY 5 - Hike Beinn Eighe Mountain Trail. Transfer to Isle of Skye

After breakfast and checking out of our accommodation we drive east and our first stop is the Beinn Eighe massif, Britain's oldest National Nature Reserve - which now forms part of the UNESCO Wester Ross Biosphere reserve. Beinn Eighe is a vast mountain ridge, between Glen Torridon and Loch Maree, with a cluster of rugged peaks and screes slopes that are home to a diversity of wildlife. The lower hillsides are home to 350-year-old Scots pines and the oldest rocks here (indeed the oldest in the world) are Lewisian gneiss, dating back some 3 billion years. Our walk climbs steeply from pinewood forest onto a bare plateau of quartzite rocks. The views over Loch Maree and the hills behind are breath-taking.

In the afternoon we continue our drive through beautiful scenery, stopping after an hour to visit the 13th century Eilean Donan Castle - one of the most spectacular in Scotland. We then drive across the bridge to Skye, the largest and northernmost of the Inner Hebrides, and on to our final base in the tiny hamlet of Sconser located on the shores of a sea loch.

Today's shorter walk will take approximately 3-4 hours and will cover a distance of 7 kilometres, mostly on marked trails, with a total ascent and descent of 680 metres.



ACCOMMODATION:
Sconser Lodge (or similar)



Grade: Comfortable Lodge



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

DAY 6 - Skye - Cuillin Hills – Climb Bruach Na Frithe

After breakfast we drive a short distance into the Cuillin Hills. Two Cuillin ranges dominate the landscape on Skye - the Black and the Red Cuillin separated by Glen Sligachan. The iconic ridge of the Black Cuillin is one of the most challenging ranges in the UK and is often the training ground for British climbers preparing for Himalayan ascents. The Munro Bruach na Frithe is considered one of the more accessible and straightforward peaks in this beautiful range and the views get better with each step on the rocky path. Once on the top, the amazing views include Ben Nevis to the east and the Outer Hebrides to the west.

Today's walk will take approximately 6-7 hours and will cover a distance of 14 kilometres, on rocky trails, with some scree and some off-trail sections, with a total ascent and descent of 950 metres.



ACCOMMODATION:
Sconser Lodge (or similar)



Grade: Comfortable Lodge



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

DAY 7 - Skye - Climb the Quiraing for dramatic views

For our final day of hiking we enjoy a scenic drive (1hr) up to the far north end of the Trotternish Ridge to the Quiraing - a stunning landscape that has been formed by a massive landslip which has created rugged cliffs, hidden plateaux and rock pinnacles. Our goal is The Table - a grassy summit plateau that offers dramatic views of the surrounding landscape including the Cuillin, the Western Isles, the mountains of Wester Ross and out to the sea. Time permitting, we plan to make a stop in charming and colourful Portree, the capital of Skye, on the way back to our accommodation.

Today's shorter walk will take approximately 4-5 hours and will cover a distance of 7 kilometres, sometimes on-trail and other times off-trail, grassy with some rocky sections, with a total ascent and descent of 380 metres.



ACCOMMODATION:
Sconser Lodge (or similar)



Grade: Comfortable Lodge



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST & DINNER

DAY 8 - Drive via Loch Ness to Inverness where our trip ends

After a last hearty breakfast we bid farewell to the Isle of Skye. The drive back to Inverness takes around

three hours and we plan to drive alongside Loch Ness for the final section of the route. We arrive back at the rail station at about 12.30 where the trip ends.



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

Trip information

Climate and country information

United Kingdom

Climate

The UK has a temperate but very variable climate. In general the summers are warm with July and August being the warmest. The winters are cool and the lowest temperatures are recorded during January and February. Whatever the season it is advisable to be prepared for rain!

| Time difference to GMT | Plugs | Religion | Language |
|------------------------|------------|-----------|----------|
| 0 | 3 Pin Flat | Christian | English |

Budgeting and packing

Optional activities

The following excursions and/or activities are usually available and may be arranged locally. Estimated costs are provided below for guidance only, are on a per person basis unless shown otherwise, and may depend on the number of participants. Prices quoted are correct as of the date these tour notes were originally issued but may change at any time due to currency fluctuations. Please note: These activities are booked and paid for direct with the supplier and do not form part of your Explore holiday contract.

Gairloch Inverewe Gardens - 8-10 GBP

Gairloch Museum - 5 GBP

Clothing

North West Scotland and the Inner Hebrides has a cool temperate climate and you can expect changeable weather from sunshine to windy days and rain. A good quality waterproof jacket and trousers are essential. We recommend hiking trousers, plenty of layers, warm hat and gloves and a sunhat. If the forecast is good T shirts and shorts will be fine. Come prepared for all seasons!

Footwear

Bring a pair of walking boots that are broken in (trail shoes are not suitable). Can be wet underfoot at times. Bring a comfortable pair of shoes, sandals or trainers for when you are not hiking.

Luggage

20Kg

Luggage: On tour

One main piece of baggage and a waterproof rucksack large enough to carry what you need for the day - waterproofs, warm layer, water, picnic, sun-cream, phone etc.

Equipment

You will need a small rucksack, thermos or water bottle. The local tap water is good to drink and we encourage re-filling water bottles rather than single use plastic. A reusable cloth bag is useful for shopping to avoid plastic bags. Binoculars can be good for wildlife spotting. Insect repellent, sunscreen, good quality sunglasses and a lip salve with sun protection are all useful. You may find walking poles helpful. Gaiters can be useful when it's wet. The Leader will carry a first aid kit for emergency use but you may choose to bring along a basic First Aid kit with antiseptic cream, painkillers, blister treatment and tick tweezers.

Midges can be present from late May until September. Generally they will not cause a problem as a bit of wind will help keep them away and our walks in the mountains and coast tend to have some prevailing wind. In case we do have a more humid, windless day you may choose to bring along (or buy locally) a midge head net or skin products such as Smidge or Avon Skin so Soft, often available in outdoor stores.

Tipping

Explore leader

At your discretion you might consider tipping your Tour Leader in appreciation of the efficiency and service you receive.

United Kingdom

Food and drink

The costs for meals may vary depending upon location, type of restaurant and number of courses eaten and so the prices given are an average guide. Local restaurants located off the beaten track may be less expensive, whereas an upmarket restaurant located in the centre of a major city may charge more.

| Lunch price | Dinner price | Beer price | Water price |
|-------------|--------------|------------|-------------|
| £10 | £18 | £4 | £0.8 |

Foreign Exchange

| Local currency | Recommended Currency For Exchange |
|------------------|--|
| Pounds Sterling. | Carry a combination of UK Sterling cash, ATM and credit cards. |

Where To Exchange

Your tour leader will advise you on arrival.

ATM Availability

ATM's are widely available in main towns.

Credit Card Acceptance

Widely accepted.

Travellers Cheques

Can be exchanged at most banks and post offices.

Transport, Accommodation & Meals**Transport Information**

Minibus, On Foot

Accommodation notes**Ullapool**

Located in the centre of Ullapool, the Ladysmith Guesthouse is a traditional Highland stone house built in 1888. Your hosts Niven and Pauline offer you a warm Highland welcome. NB - The two single rooms at the Ladysmith share a bathroom, all other rooms are ensuite.

The Sheiling is a comfortable guesthouse located on the outskirts of the village and overlooking Loch Broom. You can be sure of a warm Highland welcome by your hosts.

Gairloch

Known locally as The Myrtle, from its fabulous location right on the shores of Gairloch, the Myrtle Bank Hotel offers excellent accommodation, food and drink. Facilities include a conservatory with uninterrupted views across to Skye. You will receive a warm welcome by Anita and her team.

Sconser, Skye

The Sconser Lodge was built in 1871 as a hunting lodge for the MacDonalds (clan) located on the shores of the sea loch between Broadford and Portree. It is now a lovely, small, family-run hotel, where you are assured a friendly and relaxing stay. Facilities include a dining room, bar and comfortable lounge. For stargazers on clear, dark nights the views are amazing. The owners Craig and Lisa and their team will offer a warm welcome.

Arrival and departure information

Transfers to and from our accommodation are not provided for this trip. If you are planning to arrive or depart by train, this information may be useful to you. Whilst we are unable to make a reservation for you, we have provided contact numbers to enable you to make a direct booking.

Arriving from Inverness Airport: There are a number of taxi companies that can be hailed from the airport to take you to Inverness train station to start the trip. Alternatively, you may pre-book with:

Taxi Inverness: 01463 800 069

Inverness Airport Taxi: 01463 264 064

The journey should take around 20 minutes.

Alternatively the Jet Bus line 11 is an airport shuttle that takes you to Inverness, stopping close to the central railway station.

Essential Information

Government Travel Safety Advice

We strongly recommend that you check your government's travel advisory for up-to-date information and advice about your destination: safety and security, entry requirements, health, local laws and customs. For UK citizens, check the latest Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office advice.

Please refer to our COVID-19 entry requirements page for any country-specific conditions of entry. Whilst we strive to update this on a regular basis we recommend you also check the FCDO website for the latest advice on entry requirements in this fast-evolving situation. Information can change at any time.

Under 18 immigration guidance

Please note that some countries require proof of parental consent when travelling overseas with under 18s. Please check requirements with the relevant embassy or consular office well in advance of travel if this applies to your party.

Price Guarantee

Once your booking has been confirmed we guarantee the price will not increase, whatever the circumstances. Before booking please ensure you have read our important tour pricing information. [Booking Conditions](#)

Visa and Passport Information

UK: Visas are not required by UK, Australian, New Zealand, US and Canadian citizens. Other nationalities should consult their local embassy or consular office.

If you do require assistance in obtaining a visa then you may be able to apply through Explore's recommended visa service in the UK, Travcour. See www.travcour.com to download the relevant visa application for your trip, if applicable (UK citizens only), along with details of how to apply for your visa through Travcour. The Team at Travcour will be happy to answer specific questions relating to visa applications, please call them directly on 0208 5431846.

It is your responsibility to ensure that you are in possession of a full passport, with the correct validity for your chosen destination.

Booking conditions

Before booking your Explore trip, please ensure that you read both our Essential Information and [Booking Conditions](#).

Transfers

Find out more about [Trip Transfer Terms and Conditions](#) before you book.

Booking a land only package with Explore

Customers who have chosen to book on the 'Land Only' arrangements of our tour, please ensure that you

have checked your tour specific 'Joining Instructions' prior to booking your own travel arrangements. Your joining instructions can be found below in the dates and prices information.

You may also be eligible for the Free Explore Transfer.

Joining Tour Abroad

Customers booked on the 'Land Only' arrangements will receive a Free Transfer, provided you arrive and depart on the tour only itinerary start and end dates. The complimentary transfers will be arranged from the Explore designated airport or train station to your trips joining point, and then back from the ending point to the designated airport or train station. Generally the airport or station that Explore have selected will be the one that is closest to the town or city where the trip starts, or the one nearest to the joining point. It will be either an airport or train station but not both.

The exception to this rule is customers who are booked on a tour where the joining and ending point is at the designated airport or train station.

Free transfers are not available for Self-Guided, Polar, Tailormade or Tours for Churches customers.

If you are not eligible for the Free Transfer then you will need to make your own way through to the joining and ending point. On a majority of our tours Explore will be able to provide a private transfer at an additional cost. Please ask for a quote at the time of booking.

For more information regarding the Explore Free Transfer [click here](#)

Insurance

It is a condition of booking with Explore that you have adequate valid travel insurance. It is your responsibility to arrange appropriate travel insurance and ensure you have read and understood the full terms and conditions of your travel insurance policy to ensure that you are covered for all activities you intend to undertake whilst on the tour, including all optional activities. Your Insurance Policy must fully cover you for medical expenses and emergency repatriation to your home country. Please ensure your policy includes medical emergency helicopter evacuation in the event of illness or injury and covers the entire duration of your holiday. If you are trekking at altitude please ensure that there is no upper altitude limit which may limit or exclude cover for your trip. The cost of many of our Polar Voyages will exceed the capped amount covered by standard insurance premiums and you will be required to pay an additional premium to cover the full value of your trip. Please ensure that you are covered for the full amount of your holiday cost, as insufficient cover could invalidate a claim under the policy. Medical and repatriation insurance cover is not mandatory for UK residents who are travelling on trips within the United Kingdom.

Read more information about what travel insurance is required.

Flight information

Explore offers a wide range of flexible flying options to make joining and leaving our trips easy. Read more about them [here](#).

Flight Information

You are able to book this tour on a 'land only' basis or as a 'flight inclusive' package. Your flight inclusive package will be fully protected by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) ATOL protection scheme.

Booking a flight inclusive package with Explore

We have a good selection of flights not only from London but from many regional airports around the UK allowing us to compare fares between scheduled carriers as well as low cost and charter airlines. Our

dedicated flights team will match the best flight options to your arrival and departure airport. On our website we display a UK flight inclusive package guide price which is generally based on a London departure. To avoid paying supplements or to secure your preferred flight option, we recommend booking as early as possible, especially for peak travel dates.

Ability to swim

No

United Kingdom

Vaccinations

Nothing compulsory, we recommend protection against tetanus, diphtheria, polio and hepatitis A. The above is not an exhaustive list. Further information regarding vaccinations and travel health advice can be found by following the NHS and NaTHNaC links at <http://www.explore.co.uk/Travelhealth/> and from your local healthcare provider. Visa and vaccination requirements are subject to change and should be confirmed before departure.

Walking and Trekking information

| DAILY DISTANCES | | |
|-----------------|------|--------|
| Day 1 | 4km | 2hrs |
| Day 2 | 14km | 5-6hrs |
| Day 3 | 4km | 3hrs |
| Day 4 | 11km | 4-5hrs |
| Day 5 | 7km | 3-4hrs |
| Day 6 | 14km | 6-7hrs |
| Day 7 | 7km | 4-5hrs |

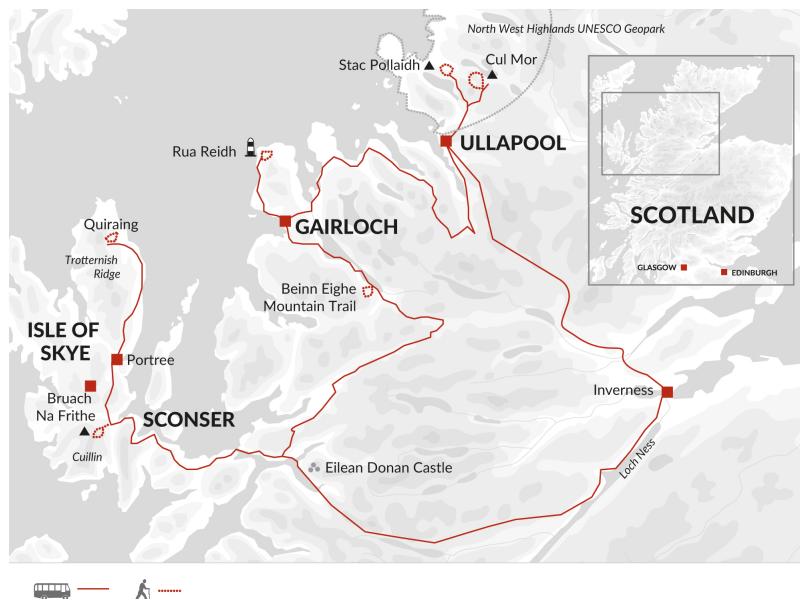
Walking grade

Moderate

Trek details

Walks on 7 days for around 3-7 hours. The longer walk in the Cuillin is 6 to 7 hours with 950 metres ascent and descent. You will be walking on a mix of grassy trails, moorland paths (boggy in places), dirt and rocky trails with some scree. Sometimes we are walking off-trail breaking path and you will need to be confident hiking on rough and uneven ground with some steep sections. The Scottish weather is unpredictable, can make the activities a little more challenging and the planned walks may need to be changed or swapped to maximise your enjoyment. We have graded the walks as Moderate.

Additional Information



Reviews



AWARD WINNING
EXPLORE LEADERS



PRICE GUARANTEE
PROMISE



AIRPORT
TRANSFERS