

# Skye and the Cairngorms - 6 days, 7 nights



## SKYE AND THE CAIRNGORMS (Grade 2)

What an extravaganza of exploration across the Scottish Highlands. Our focus is on showing you the highlights of Skye and the Cairngorms National Park off the beaten track, away from the crowds. An exclusive opportunity for a small group of adventurers.

### Included highlights:

- a visit to Loch Ness/Urquhart Castle
- Glenelg ferry to Skye
- Mountain hikes in the Cuillin mountains, the Trotternish ridge on Skye and in the heart of the Cairngorms National Park
- wildlife - visit an otter hide, boat trip to see seals,
- a whisky tour and day out in Speyside
- 3 nights Yurt accommodation (each yurt sleeps up to 5 people)
- 4 nights at Fraoch Lodge (5\* hostel in the Cairngorms)
- full board throughout your trip (any exceptions noted on itinerary)

- transport from pick up to drop off

- guided trip

**Day of arrival:** You'll be met at your point of arrival whether that's Aviemore station (by 2.45pm) or Inverness airport (by 3.30pm) or at Fraoch Lodge (from 5pm onwards)

Try to aim for arrival by 7.30pm so you have the opportunity to settle in and meet the other members of the group before dinner. After dinner, over tea and coffee by the fire, Andy will go over the planned itinerary.

### Day 1:

We'll depart from Fraoch Lodge after breakfast heading for Skye but along the way we have a full day of sights to see and things to do. Our route over to Skye will take us along the length of Loch Ness (though we may not have time to make any of the usual tourist visits). We may still make a couple of photo stops along the way. We'll then travel through the dramatic scenery of Glen Shiel, sight of a famous Jacobite battle and lined by the famous





Five Sisters munro peaks.

We'll travel over to Skye on the traditional Glenelg ferry from which we hope to spot eagles or if we're really lucky the odd sea eagle.

We should get to Skye in plenty of time to visit the otter hide and take a short hike up a small local peak, Sgurr na Coinnich from which we'll get stunning views back to the mainland and on to the Cuillin Ridge north of us.

After our hike we'll check in at Skye Yurts and get our dinner set up. If we've time we'll pop in at the local pub and see if we can catch any of the local Gaelic college students jamming.

**490m (1600ft) ascent on moderate and steep gradients. 6km (4 miles) across initially rough and then easier mountain moorland terrain. Approx walking time, excluding breaks: 2h 44min**



### Day 2:

We're heading off to the Black Cuillin today which dominate the skyline of Skye. The hill we're planning to climb is at the end of the picturesque Loch Scavaig. It's arguably the finest viewpoint in the UK.

Sgurr na Stri (or Peak of Strife) is a relatively small peak at only 494m but the route to reach it affords us with some spectacular views of some of the most amazing rock formations and views in Skye. We'll be able to see along Loch Coriusk, up to the Inaccessible Pinnacle, over to Mull and Rum and from the summit the whole Cuillin Ridge.

We return to Skye Yurts at the end of the day to rest and enjoy our dinner.

**1000m (3350ft) of ascent on gentle, moderate and steep gradients. 10 miles (16km) mainly on vehicle tracks, footpaths but also some rough mountain moorland terrain. Approx walking time, excluding breaks: 6h 37min**



### Day 3:

Today we'll be aiming to head out early up to the Trotternish Peninsula above Portree to make an attempt to reach the Quirang before any other groups of visitors so we can appreciate these bizarre rock formations.

We won't just be taking a stroll up to the rocks and back to the bus, we'll explore the area in full on a circular walk which will take us above the pinnacles as well as below.

If we have time, we'll stop in Portree on the way home to have a look around and potentially indulge in some retail therapy before heading back down to Skye Yurts.

**990m (3260ft) of ascent on mainly moderate and gentle gradients, but also some steep ascent. 12km (7.5m) of mountain walking on paths and across mountain moorland. Approx walking time, excluding breaks: 5h 31min**

### Day 4:

There's no hiking today as we've so much else to do. We'll give the feet a bit of a rest while we travel back across to the Cairngorms and Fraoch Lodge. We'll depart Skye Yurts after breakfast and head over the bridge to the mainland. En route we'll stop to take a look at Eilean Donan Castle and take pictures. We may not have time to go in the castle but the most amazing viewpoints are from outside the castle itself.

From here it's a short hop to Plockton where we're booked on a boat trip to see the seals.

After the boat tour we'll have lunch and the Plockton Inn (famous for seafood alternatives) then we'll head over to Fraoch Lodge, via Rogie Falls salmon leap.

### Day 5:

Andy's going to take you into his favourite stamping ground of the northern Cairngorms National Park today, though not over the highest peaks. The route you're following today doesn't take in any munro\* peaks, which makes it instantly less popular with British hikers. Nonetheless it is a fabulous route with plenty of opportunities for sighting wildlife like elusive ptarmigan, red deer and mountain hare.

\*A munro is a Scottish peak over 3000ft high

**590m (1950ft) of ascent on gentle and moderate gradients: 13km (8 miles) of walking on good footpaths but with a little rough moorland terrain. Approx walking time, excluding breaks: 4h 50min**

### Day 6:

This is our favourite complete whisky day out. We'll start off with a visit to Speyside Cooperage where they make and refurbish the casks for most of the whisky distilleries in Speyside. The most under-rated trade associated with the whisky trade in the past has always been the Cooper, but without the Cooper there would be no whisky or else it would have a completely different flavour. It's the quality of the wood which gives the whisky its distinctive taste, but you'll learn all about that at the Cooperage during their amazing tour during which you'll see the coopers hard at work.





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After the visit to the Cooperage we'll take a hike up Carn Daimh, a local viewpoint across Speyside which will mean we'll be able to pick out numerous distilleries and possibly the sites of various ancient illicit stills plus the routes smugglers must have followed through the countryside ahead of the excise men (police).

We'll also book in on a tour at Glenlivet distillery so we can see the next stage of the whisky production process (after the coopers finish with the barrels).

We should also have time to pop in at the Whisky Castle specialist shop if you're interested in a tutored tasting of whiskies you're unlikely to have seen or heard of before as the shop stocks mostly independently bottled whiskies. It's also attached to a gift shop for those of you not so interested in the whisky story.

**430m (1400ft) of ascent on moderate and gentle gradients: 12km (7 miles) on tracks and paths: approx walking time, excluding breaks: 4h 11min**

#### Day of departure:

What ever time your onward plane or train is, we will get you there for it. Most guests depart after breakfast leaving requests for Rebecca's recipes

**Price:** as per website (6 days, 7 nights)

**fully inclusive of:** all guiding or instruction, accommodation at Fraoch Lodge and Skye Yurts, full board, transport, and transfers to Aviemore Station or Inverness airport\* if required.

**Not included:** transport to Scotland, alcohol and other personal expenses

We advise guests to arrive at Fraoch Lodge between 5 - 7 pm if possible.

Scot Mountain Holidays advises all clients to take out suitable insurance cover.

\* Scot Mountain Holidays will pick up from Inverness airport at approx. 5pm, unless otherwise arranged.

#### GRADING INFORMATION

We have a 5 level grading system.

**Grade 1 - all ages**

**Grade 2 - Moderate**

**Grade 3 - Fit**

**Grade 4 - Challenging**

**Grade 5 - Extreme**

Most of our trips fall into the grade 3 and 4 category. Skye and the Cairngorms is a Grade 2 trip. For full details of routes and length of day involved please contact Andy directly; he is in the process of producing route statistics for all the walks. Please bear in mind that the estimated length of day is only an estimate and will depend on prevailing weather, speed of the group, photo opportunities etc.

## Adventure Holidays and Mountain courses

**Our base:** Fraoch Lodge, Boat of Garten, PH24 3BN

**Web:** [www.scotmountainholidays.com](http://www.scotmountainholidays.com)

[info@scotmountainholidays.com](mailto:info@scotmountainholidays.com)

**Tel:** 01479 831 331

#### ABOUT US

Established in 1998, we're an owner-run provider of guided walking holidays and mountain courses in the Highlands of Scotland. We firmly believe 'the day' doesn't finish with the walk; we don't hand you over to someone else, you arrive back to 'Cake O'Clock' - a welcoming mug of tea and some of Rebecca's home baking.

Andrew's knowledge of the mountain environment is extensive. Having a background in geology and being interested in natural history and conservation from an early age, he's a mine of information. The fine food and relaxed atmosphere mean that access to some of the wildest places in Britain is a safe, fun and exhilarating experience.

We are always on hand to ensure your stay exceeds expectations and are very proud of all the great testimonials we receive. Come and enjoy an adventure with us.

#### YOUR HOSTS

Both Andrew and Rebecca have travelled widely. Andrew's mountaineering experience of 15 years is complemented by a number of independent expeditions to such places as the Karakoram mountains of Pakistan, the Indian Himalaya, the Alps, Mount Kenya and the High Atlas of Morocco.

Rebecca has trekked extensively in New Zealand and Australia. She has worked in Taiwan and travelled throughout Asia. She brings her knowledge of global cuisines to the preparation of her highly regarded and creative menus.

Gregor, born in 2008, loves to host guests and will more often than not happily invite you up to "play" or read with him. Gregor is a big fan of mountain biking and can also be persuaded to go swimming, sledging and occasionally walking.

#### FRAOCH LODGE & SKYE YURTS - YOUR ACCOMMODATION

Our Cairngorms base is Fraoch Lodge. The Lodge has VisitScotland 4 star grading as a hostel. It provides private rooms with their own hand basins, which share shower/toilet facilities, as you would expect from an Edwardian building. There is also a very comfortable dining room with wood burning stove & a





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separate lounge with open fire; plus a dedicated, efficient drying room.

Guests who book our trips as single travellers are offered sole occupancy of their rooms. We have some en suite facilities installed in Feb 2015. Full details of Fraoch Lodge are available from our web site at [www.scotmountainholidays.com](http://www.scotmountainholidays.com)

#### **Skye Yurts:**

There are 3 Yurts on the site. The larger 2 yurts are big enough to accommodate up to 5 people. There will be no option of single occupancy during our stay at the Yurts.

The Yurts all share communal cooking and composting toilet facilities though there is running mains water and a hot shower.

#### **THE FOOD**

Rebecca takes great pride in the food she serves and is the first in our category to receive a "Taste our Best" Award from VisitScotland. Where possible we source ingredients from our garden or as locally as we can, including sourcing our meat from Balliefurth Farm in Nethybridge (neighbouring Boat of Garten).

All cakes and bread are made on the premises and meals prepared around any declared likes and dislikes.

There are a variety of options for breakfast.

Packed lunches are imaginative but practical.

There are home made cakes on our return and the evening meal consists of 2 courses, with the option for seconds, followed by tea or coffee.

We operate a BYO policy for dinner.

#### **RECOMMENDED KIT LIST**

- Waterproof jacket
- Waterproof trousers/salopettes
- Gaiters
- Walking boots with stiff soles
- Rucksack of adequate size (approx. 50 litres plus)
- Fleece jacket/tops
- Hat & spare
- Good Gloves & spare
- Warm trousers (not jeans, preferably fleece or salopettes)
- Walking socks
- Sun block (optional)
- Water bottle/flask
- Thermal underwear
- lunch box
- camera (optional)

## **Adventure Holidays and Mountain courses**

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Clients are advised to avoid wearing clothing made out of 100% cotton since cotton loses a lot of its thermal potential when wet. It is far more versatile to opt for a number of thin layers, as opposed to a couple of thick layers with regards to warm clothing.

If you have any doubts on the suitability of your kit please don't hesitate to contact us: =44 (0) 1479 831 331.

#### **OUR ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY**

Both Scot Mountain Holidays and Fraoch Lodge have both achieved the Gold Award from the Green Tourism Business Scheme - the world's leading environmental accreditation scheme. Both businesses were also awarded Highly Commended in their 2013 Gold Star Awards. On all our holidays we have a 'leave no trace' policy. Our guides are asked to explain and encourage this policy. For example, leaving an apple core or feeding a seagull on a mountain summit may seem innocuous but it detracts from the 'untouched wilderness' aspect and can have a detrimental knock-on effect on the indigenous wildlife. Our guides are there your safety & enjoyment & to informally share their knowledge of the mountain environment - from its geological beginnings through to contemporary land management and its associated politics.

We compost all biodegradable waste in 3 large compost heaps built from scrap wood and use this to fertilise the garden, especially our vegetable patch. We have reorganised our plot with the help of volunteers on the WWOOF scheme, so we can supply more fruit and vegetables from the garden.

The lodge is mainly heated by radiators fed from a biomass boiler fuelled by Scottish wood pellets.

1% of the cost of this trip is also donated to the RSPB's ambitious Native Re-forestation Project on their local Abernethy National Nature Reserve. Abernethy is one of the best examples of our native Caledonian Pine Forest.

#### **TRAVEL TO THE HIGHLANDS**

If you are intending to fly you can find all options on the Inverness airport web site at [www.hial.co.uk](http://www.hial.co.uk)

Alternatively you could take the train to Aviemore. Direct services run from London with GNER & Scotrail (the sleeper).

Scot Mountain Holidays are offering a £15 GREEN TRAVEL DISCOUNT for clients travelling to Fraoch Lodge/ Aviemore by train or bus.

