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THE VISITOR

Skye & Lochalsh

SPRING
2017



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Photograph: WILLIE URQUHART/www.whfp.com

Welcome to The Visitor

Welcome to The Visitor 2017. The magazine is intended to give the visitor to our home a flavour of where we live.

You will find information on the eateries, attractions, places to stay, culture and landscape of an area of which we are very proud. Please take the time to explore and sample the beauty which the Isle of Skye, Lochalsh and the West Highlands uniquely offers; you will not be disappointed.

Our intention is to guide you and, if we can help point you in a direction which adds that little bit extra to your holiday here, then this magazine has served its purpose.

From the team that publishes The Visitor 2017, The Wester Ross Visitor and the West Highland Free Press, we hope you enjoy this guide and your holiday.

www.thevisitor.scot

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FRONT COVER
PHOTOGRAPH

A Highland cow: One of Skye's most iconic landscapes, the Old Man of Storr can be seen in the background.

Photograph: WILLIE URQUHART/www.whfp.com



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Directory ●Police ●Fire ●Ambulance ●Coastguard ●Mountain Rescue IN AN EMERGENCY DIAL 999 OR 112

Police

Dial **999** or **112** only in an emergency where there is danger to life or a crime in progress.
Non emergency call dial **101**

Health Care

NHS 24 is a 24-hour telephone health advice and information service. You can telephone NHS 24 on 111 (Textphone 18001 111) at any time of the day or night.

Portree Hospital
Tel: 01478 613200

Dr MacKinnon Memorial Hospital, Broadford (A&E)
IV49 9AA
Tel: 01471 822491

Portree Health Centre
IV51 9BZ
Tel: 01478 612013

Broadford Health Centre
IV49 9AA
Tel: 01471 822460

Dunvegan Health Centre
IV55 8GU
Tel: 01470 521203

Kyle Medical Practice
IV40 8AE
Tel: 01599 534257

Lochalsh Health Centre
Station Road, Kyle
Tel: 01599 530 930

Ferguson Medical Centre
Lochcarron IV54 8YD
Tel: 01520 722215

Ullapool Health Centre
North Road, Ullapool
Tel: 01854 612015

Vets

Old School Veterinary Clinic, Broadford
Tel: 01471 822922

O'Connor-Pierce Veterinary Surgeons, Portree
Tel: 01470 532385

Rhona Campbell Veterinary Centre, Portree
Tel: 01478 611269



WEST HIGHLANDS AND ISLANDS

What's on...

at a glance

Additional entertainment and events can be found in the **West Highland Free Press**, published every Thursday, and covering the west Highlands and islands.

EXHIBITIONS

Lesley Linley Studio and Gallery, Sconser, Skye: Open all year round; Watercolour paintings; local landscape and waterfalls, Highland cattle, cats, flowers. Opening hours March to end May, Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday, 11am to 3pm; Saturday, 11am to 1pm. At other times please ring 07919 465222 to arrange. Studio is opposite the Sconser Golf Course and 1km from the ferry terminal.

Brae Fasach, Waternish, Skye: Unique artwork by Ian and Gill Williams as well as a range of originals in oil and watercolour, ceramics and sculpture. Cyclists warmly welcomed. For more information call 01470 592732 or see ianwilliams-skye.co.uk

Waterside Café and Bistro, Dunvegan, Skye: Year-round display by a variety of artists including Arlene MacPhie, Anne Salter, Linda Jackson, Tom Lumley, Jane Davies, Joan K Cooper, Rosie Cameron, Ophir Caitlin, Pamela Budge and Ian Williams. For more information call 01470 521674.

Gale Centre, Gairloch, Wester Ross: Home to the Tourist Information Service, a community shop and host to exhibitions from local artists, historians, photographers and community groups. For more information see galeactionforum.co.uk

Talla Dearg, Eilean Iarmain, Sleat, Skye: Changing programme of artists. See eileanarmain.co.uk for details.

School House, Dornie: Mixed media exhibitions throughout the year. For more information call 01599 555 378.

Lochcarron Gallery: A different artist will be featured each month:
• April – Alison Dunlop

• May – Suzie MacKenzie
Regular exhibitors include Helena Emmans, Rona MacLean, Steven Proudfoot plus resident artists Cindie Reiter, Aileen Grant and Mairi Young. Open all year. Summer opening hours (Easter to October), Monday to Saturday, 10am to 5pm. See lochcarrongallery.co.uk for latest news or call 01520 722510.

REGULAR EVENTS

Shinty and football matches take place across the area regularly; see the **West Highland Free Press** for fixtures.

Sligachan Hotel, Skye: Live music in Seumas' Bar. For details call 01478 650204.

Lochalsh: Sea kayaking taster days (April–October), explore the amazing Lochalsh coastline under the expert guidance of the National Trust for Scotland ranger. No experience necessary, all equipment supplied. Arranged on demand. Duration: five hours. Adults £50, Children (over 10 years) £25, Family discounts available. Meet at Plockton or the Kintail Ranger Service office at Morvich. Booking essential: phone 01599 511231 or email Kintail@nts.org.uk

King Haakon Bar, Kyleakin, Skye: Regular live music. For details call 01599 534164.

North West Coast and Hebrides: Sea kayaking expeditions (April to October) with the National Trust for Scotland rangers based at Kintail. Expeditions available at a variety of locations around Scotland's magnificent north west coast and islands, ranging from two to seven days, for those with little or no previous experience to long time paddlers. Locations include the Isle of Canna, the Inner Sound including the coast of Skye, Raasay and Applecross, and the Outer Hebrides including the Uists and Barra. For more information phone 01599 511231 or email Kintail@nts.org.uk

Elgol, Skye: 'Misty Isle' boat trips from Elgol to Loch Coruisk, in the heart of the Cuillins, with local skipper Seumas MacKinnon. Enjoy wildlife and beautiful scenery while looking out for dolphins, eagles and more. Whale spotting, fishing trips and boat trips to islands such as Rum and Canna also available. For more information call 01471 866288 or see mistyisleboattrips.co.uk

Plockton: Calum's Seal Boat Trips with a unique 'free if no seals' guarantee. Also try crab fishing from the pontoons with bait, lines and nets all available from Calum's wee shop. Weekly sailings from Plockton to Stromeferry every Thursday at 7pm let you travel back to Plockton on the famous railway line. Booking essential on 07776 126 3828.

Edinbane: Live traditional music sessions. For more information call 01470 582414.

Kyleakin, Skye: 'Seaprobe Atlantis' glass bottom boat runs a regular service throughout the season, seven days a week, 10.30am to 4.30pm, visiting seals, spotting otters and exploring underwater. Suitable for all ages. For more information call 01471 822 716.

Wester Ross: Wester Ross Walktober, Saturday 14th to Saturday 21st October – a week of walks spread across the impressive range of properties under the care of the National Trust for Scotland in Wester Ross. Events will be running at Inverewe, Torridon, Balmacara Estate and Kintail. Experience the unique autumn atmosphere of the Highlands, amongst some of the country's finest backdrops, with the local National Trust for Scotland Rangers. See nts.org.uk

Lesley Linley Studio/Gallery, Sconser, Skye: Watercolour workshops available all year. One to one sessions or bring a friend; booking essential. Days and dates in addition to those advertised in daily

listings may be available. Larger classes at other venues. For more information ring 07919 465222, email lesleylinley1@gmail.com or see lesleylinley.co.uk

CRAFT FAIRS

Lochcarron Hall: Market, 11am to 3pm, with lunches available 12pm to 2pm, on the last Friday of every month (8th April to 7th October).

Gale Centre, Gairloch: Market, 10am to 2.30pm, every Monday, selling local produce, arts and crafts, plus a café serving Fairtrade tea and coffee, home baking and soup. See galeactionforum.co.uk

Plockton Hall, Lochalsh: Craft Fair selling quality local arts and crafts, 10.30am to 4pm. Light refreshments available.

- Friday 14th and Saturday 15th April
- Friday 19th and Saturday 20th May
- Friday 23rd and Saturday 24th June
- Friday 18th and Saturday 19th August
- Friday 29th and Saturday 30th September
- Friday 20th and Saturday 21st October

Dornie Hall, Lochalsh: Craft Fair selling quality crafts by local artists and crafters, 10.30am to 5pm. Demonstrations, refreshments and light lunches.

- Friday 21st April
- Friday 12th May
- Friday 9th June
- Friday 14th July
- Friday 11th August
- Friday 8th September
- Friday 13th October
- Friday 17th and Saturday 18th November – Christmas Craft Fair

Minginish Hall, Skye: Easter Fair on Saturday 15th April, 11am to 4pm. Free admission, refreshments available.

DAILY LISTINGS

MARCH

Thursday 23rd March

Sabhal Mòr Ostaig, Sleat, Skye: Seall present Plan B Dance with 'Citizen' at 7.30pm. For more information see seall.co.uk or call 01471 844207.

Wednesday 29th March

Tarskavaig Hall, Sleat, Skye: Seall present a fiddle concert with Charlie McKerron, Ross Ainslie, Mark Clement and Tim Edey at 7.30pm. For more information see seall.co.uk or call 01471 844207.

Thursday 30th March

Attadale Gardens, Strathcarron: Lochcarron Gallery host a drawing workshop with Sarah Longley exploring form, tone and atmosphere, 10am to 4pm.

Booking essential on 01520 722510.

Sabhal Mòr Ostaig, Sleat, Skye: Seall present a traditional concert, from the Sabhal Mòr Ostaig music department with guests Christine Primrose, Decker Forrest, Angus MacKenzie and Murdo Cameron at 7.30pm. For more information see seall.co.uk or call 01471 844207.

Friday 31st March

Sabhal Mòr Ostaig, Sleat, Skye: Seall present Dead Man's Waltz at 7.30pm. For more information see seall.co.uk or call 01471 844207.

APRIL

Saturday 1st April

Sabhal Mòr Ostaig, Sleat, Skye: Seall present the Skye and Lochalsh Orchestra playing Beethoven's Piano Concerto no 4 and other classical and lighter works at

7.30pm. For more information see seall.co.uk or call 01471 844207.

Monday 3rd April

Sabhal Mòr Ostaig, Sleat, Skye: Children's Theatre – Seall present the Puppet Animation Festival and Giddy Aunt Theatre with 'A Stone's Throw' at 2pm for 5+. For more information see seall.co.uk or call 01471 844207.

Thursday 6th April

Sabhal Mòr Ostaig, Sleat, Skye: Seall present comedian Shappi Khorsandi with 'Oh My Country' at 8pm. For more information see seall.co.uk or call 01471 844207.

Friday 7th April

Sabhal Mòr Ostaig, Sleat, Skye: Seall present the Inner Sound Spring Concert at 7.30pm. For more information see

seall.co.uk or call 01471 844207.

Saturday 8th April

Portree, Skye: Skye Chamber Music concert with the Kosmos, violin, viola and accordion, 8pm. Tickets £10. For more info see skychambermusic.org.uk

Sunday 9th April

Sabhal Mòr Ostaig, Sleat, Skye: Seall present Màiri Chaimbeul and Jenna Moynihan, (harp and fiddle) with Radio 2 Young Folk winner Brighde Chaimbeul and the SpeyFest Entertainers at 8pm. For more information see seall.co.uk or call 01471 844207.

Tuesday 11th April

Sabhal Mòr Ostaig, Sleat, Skye: Seall present a traditional concert with Dallahan at 8pm. For more information see seall.co.uk or call 01471 844207.



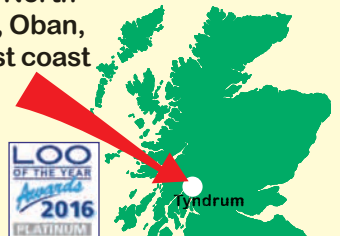
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camping, drinks, off sales,
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Nov – March

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7am – 9pm

8.30am - 5pm

4pm – 9pm

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8.30am - 5.30pm

Nov - March

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Photo: www.ed-duncan-photography.co.uk

Friday 14th April

Sabhal Mòr Ostaig, Sleat, Skye: Children's Theatre – Seall present the Puppet Animation Festival and Yugen Puppet Company with 'The Magic Horse' for 3+ at 2pm. For more information see seall.co.uk or call 01471 844207.

Saturday 15th April

Minginish Hall, Skye: Easter Fair on Saturday 15th April, 11am to 4pm. Artist Lesley Linley will be among the stalls. Free admission, refreshments available.

Tuesday 18th April

An Talla Mòr, Sabhal Mòr Ostaig, Sleat, Skye: Seall present a traditional concert with Imar and guest Gaelic singers Mairead Stewart and Ewen Henderson at 8pm. For more information see seall.co.uk or call 01471 844207.

Wednesday 19th April

Sabhal Mòr Ostaig, Sleat, Skye: Seall present George Egg, 'Anarchist Cook' at 8pm. For more information see seall.co.uk or call 01471 844207.

Friday 21st April

Raasay: Meditative walk on Raasay to enjoy the peace, beauty and silence of the island. Meet at the ferry terminal on Raasay at 10am for a three hour walk. Booking essential. Free of charge – bring your own refreshments. Other dates on request – call Jen on 07833 140247 (evenings).

Saturday 22nd April

Raasay: Meditative walk on Raasay to enjoy the peace, beauty and silence of the island. Meet at the ferry terminal on Raasay at 10am for a three hour walk. Booking essential. Free of charge – bring your own refreshments. Other dates on request – call Jen on 07833 140247 (evenings).

Monday 24th April

Kintail: Intermediate sea kayaking course with the National Trust for Scotland with the option of either a three- or five-day course aimed at paddlers who have some experience but want to broaden their skills and techniques to cope with more challenging conditions. The course may involve a one or two-night camping expedition should conditions be suitable.

Cost: £225 - £375 per person includes the supply of all equipment and self-catering accommodation at the Kintail Outdoor Centre. Booking essential: phone 01599 511231 or email Kintail@nts.org.uk

An Talla Mòr, Sabhal Mòr Ostaig, Sleat, Skye: Seall present Veronica and Max of 'The Red Wine Serenaders' at 8pm. For more information see seall.co.uk or call 01471 844207.

Saturday 29th April

Lesley Linley Studio/Gallery, Sconser, Skye: Watercolour workshop, to book a place ring 07919 465222 or email lesleylinley1@gmail.com

MAY

Wednesday 3rd May

An Talla Mòr, Sabhal Mòr Ostaig, Sleat, Skye: Seall present Kathleen MacInnes, Laoise Kelly and Tiarnan O'Duinnchinn in concert at 8pm. For more information see seall.co.uk or call 01471 844207.

Saturday 6th May

Lesley Linley Studio/Gallery, Sconser, Skye: Watercolour workshop, to book a place ring 07919 465222 or email lesleylinley1@gmail.com

Friday 12th May

Raasay: Meditative walk on Raasay to enjoy the peace, beauty and silence of the island. Meet at the ferry terminal on Raasay at 10am for a three hour walk. Booking essential. Free of charge – bring your own refreshments. Other dates on request – call Jen on 07833 140247 (evenings).

Saturday 13th May

Raasay: Meditative walk on Raasay to enjoy the peace, beauty and silence of the island. Meet at the ferry terminal on Raasay at 10am for a three hour walk. Booking essential. Free of charge – bring your own refreshments. Other dates on request – call Jen on 07833 140247 (evenings).

Glen Affric to Kintail: A two-day guided walk (meeting at Morvich) taking in the most scenic and remote sections of the new Affric-Kintail Way long distance route and led by a National Trust for Scotland ranger. The walk follows the historic route from Glen Affric to Kintail, spending one

night in the remote Glen Affric Youth Hostel. Accommodation is also available in the Kintail Outdoor Centre before and after the walk, and transport is provided.

Cost: £120 per person (includes transport and accommodation fees) Booking essential: phone 01599 511231 or email Kintail@nts.org.uk

Lesley Linley Studio/Gallery, Sconser, Skye: Watercolour workshop, to book a place ring 07919 465222 or email lesleylinley1@gmail.com

Saturday 20th May

South Glen Shiel Ridge: A very strenuous all-day guided mountain walk led by the National Trust for Scotland ranger at Kintail. Take in seven Munros (hills over 3,000ft) in a single day and enjoy one of the country's greatest ridge walks. Good fitness levels are essential. Cost: £40 per person. Meet at the Kintail Ranger Service office at Morvich. 8am-7pm. Booking essential: phone 01599 511231 email Kintail@nts.org.uk

Lesley Linley Studio/Gallery, Sconser, Skye: Watercolour workshop, to book a place ring 07919 465222 or email lesleylinley1@gmail.com

An Talla Mòr, Sabhal Mòr Ostaig, Sleat, Skye: Seall present jazz quartet New Focus

in concert at 8pm. For more information see seall.co.uk or call 01471 844207.

Saturday 27th May

Five Sisters of Kintail: A guided walk on one of the finest hill walks in the Highlands led by the National Trust for Scotland ranger. Good fitness levels essential. Cost: £40 per person. Meet at the Kintail Ranger Service office at Morvich. 8am-6pm. Booking essential: phone 01599 511231 or email Kintail@nts.org.uk

Lesley Linley Studio/Gallery, Sconser, Skye: Watercolour workshop, to book a place ring 07919 465222 or email lesleylinley1@gmail.com

Tuesday 30th May

West Glen Affric: A three-day guided walk (meeting at Morvich) led by the National Trust for Scotland ranger at Kintail, ascending six Munros (hills over 3,000ft) including An Socach, Sgurr nan Ceathreamhnan and Mulluch na Dheiragain. This includes two nights in the Glen Affric Youth Hostel and the ascent of some of the country's most remote Munros. Cost: £190 per person (includes transport and accommodation fees). Booking essential: phone 01599 511231 or email Kintail@nts.org.uk

Visit the Gairloch and Loch Ewe area

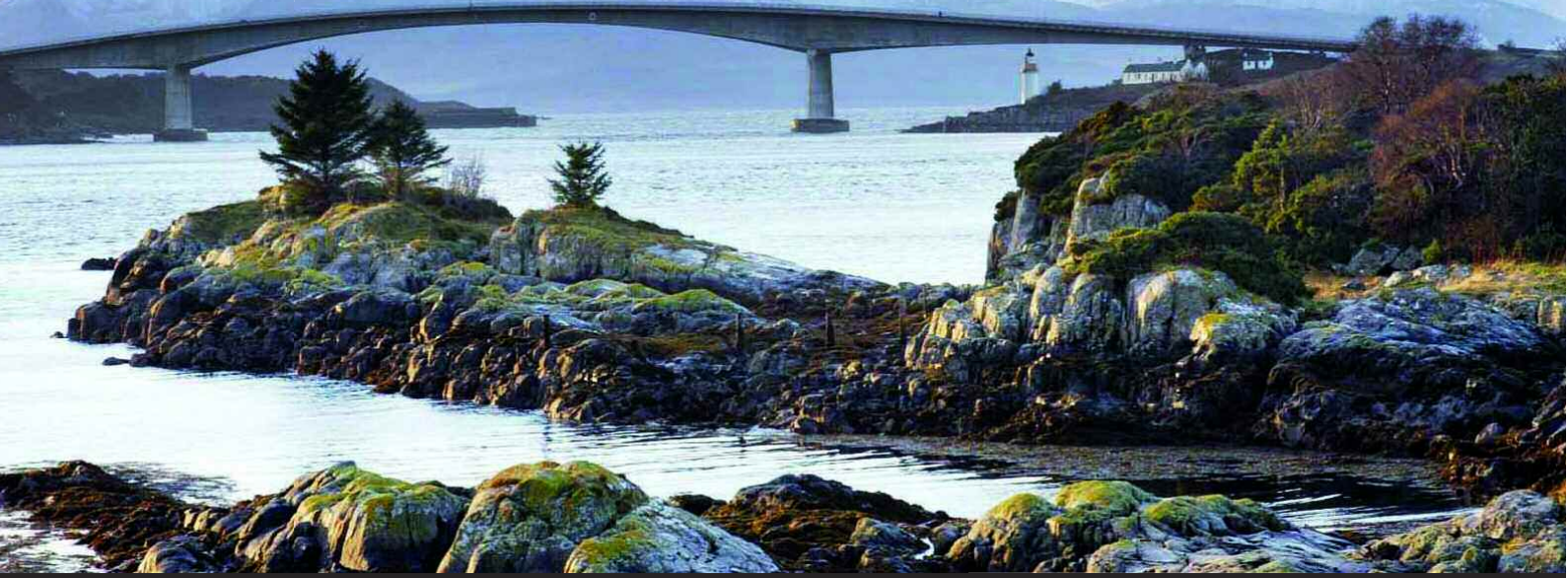
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The Kyle Hotel is situated in the small Highland town of Kyle of Lochalsh which provides an ideal base for exploring both the stunning Isle of Skye and the famous Cuillin Hills. The hotel comprises 30 fully equipped en-suite rooms with a selection of deluxe rooms offering king size beds.

**MAIN STREET,
KYLE OF LOCHALSH,
ROSS-SHIRE
IV40 8AB**

TEL: 0843 178 7131



KINGS ARMS HOTEL, ISLE OF SKYE ★★

Situated close to the Skye Bridge in the charming village of Kyleakin, the Kings Arms Hotel holds panoramic views across Loch Alsh to mainland Scotland. The hotel is one of the oldest remaining on the Island dating back to the 1600s and has retained many traditional features and now has 81 newly refurbished bedrooms.

**KING STREET,
KYLEAKIN,
ISLE OF SKYE
IV41 8PH**

TEL: 0843 178 7129



DUNOLLIE HOTEL, ISLE OF SKYE ★★★

The Dunollie Hotel is set in the serene waterside location of Broadford Bay at the foot of the mountains, leading to the famous Cuillin Hills. The Dunollie is a charming property with 84 refurbished en-suite bedrooms, some offering incredible panoramic sea views.

**BROADFORD,
ISLE OF SKYE
IV49 9AE**

TEL: 0843 178 7118



THE GAIRLOCH HOTEL, GAIRLOCH ★★★

Located in the small town of Gairloch it stands in a superb location, situated at the centre point of Gairloch Bay giving panoramic views towards the Isle of Skye. The hotel offers 70 bedrooms with a selection of Premier and Superior rooms and provides the perfect base to explore the natural beauty of the West Coast.

**GAIRLOCH,
WESTER ROSS
IV21 2BL**

TEL: 01445 712001



CALEDONIAN HOTEL, ULLAPOOL ★★

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HOTELS

Wester Ross



Snap shot

Wester Ross boasts some of the most beautiful and rugged scenery to be found anywhere in Scotland, not to mention miles of golden, sandy beaches

Prince Charles visits Attadale Gardens



Photograph: Willie Urquhart/www.whfp.com

Wester Ross

Dramatic landscapes, and miles of sandy beaches

For the unsuspecting traveller, you're in luck — the main road north from the A87 is unambiguously signposted "The North", with the road taking in spectacular views of the surrounding mountains. The road becomes single-track for about five miles, running high over the lochside with views that take in its entire length and Lochcarron on the opposite shore.

Lochcarron has plenty of amenities making this a good base for exploration of the surrounding area. The main road out of Lochcarron to the north quickly gains height, dropping down again to the village of Kishorn which has shops and a seafood restaurant. A few miles further on, the road to Applecross turns off to the left — an old drove road, and one of the most dramatic and beautiful stretches of road in the country.

The Bealach Na Ba (Pass of the Cattle) road has several hairpin bends and has been described as the closest thing in this country to an Alpine pass. From its summit you can see many of the Hebridean islands. The views inland from near the summit are also spectacular. Applecross itself is a tranquil village providing a contrast to the scenery you have just travelled through.

Following the road around the coast, you find yourself on one of the most remote peninsulas in the Highlands. The road provides an endless stream of views across to Raasay, Skye and Rona. This is single-track road all the way to Shildaig, an attractive village located just off the main road with a hotel, shops and services. However, this soon broadens out to double-track and follows the

coast along the shore of Loch Torridon, eventually arriving at Torridon village.

From Torridon, there is a worthwhile nine-mile detour along a twisty road to the beautiful fishing village of Diabaig, situated on a dramatic cliff-encircled bay. Along the main road to Kinlochewe, still on the coastal trail, you pass below the towering ramparts of Liathach, then the long ridge of Beinn Eighe. These mountains seem to rise vertically from the road, ending up over 3,000 ft above you with the tops often hidden in the clouds.

Much of this area is a National Nature Reserve, with the Beinn Eighe reserve rightly honoured as one of the finest in Europe. Along the south side of the A832 towards Gairloch, ancient Scots Pines cover the hillsides on your left. This is one of the rare surviving fragments of the "Great Wood of Caledon" that once clothed much of the Highlands.

Only a mile or so outside Kinlochewe, a visit to the Beinn Eighe Visitor Centre is well worthwhile. This has walks to suit all abilities and a fascinating exhibition explaining the natural history of the region.

As you follow the shore of Loch Maree — one of the most beautiful lochs in the Highlands — the mass of Slioch fills much of the skyline on the eastern shore.

Past the wooded area of Talladale to Victoria Falls on your left, Slattadale comes into view. There are some rough tracks leading to parking and picnic areas by the lochside.

As you come closer to Gairloch, the road winds and runs past the small hydro-electric power station on your left; one of the earliest in the country.

You now arrive at one of the main centres in Wester Ross — a collection of settlements arranged around Loch Gairloch, collectively referred to as Gairloch. Continuing past the busy harbour area, you pass the golf course, bank, beach and garage. Interesting diversions out to Rhu Reidh lighthouse and Redpoint are worthwhile.

The road rises steeply from Gairloch to Poolewe, traversing a moorland plateau close to Loch Tollaidh, then drops abruptly to sea level at Poolewe — an attractive village at the head of the sheltered sea loch ▶

Applecross: Gently Warmed by Cider Light



Photograph: www.ed-duncan-photography.co.uk



Loch Maree: Island Trees and Distant Spear

Photograph: www.ed-duncan-photography.co.uk

► of Loch Ewe — and a mile down the road is the world-famous Inverewe Garden and Estate.

Frequently described as “one of the world’s great gardens”, Inverewe Garden and Estate stands today as the realisation of one man’s dream and, for thousands of people each year, visiting this beautiful, tranquil place is an unforgettable experience.

The setting, beside Loch Ewe, is stunning. This 50-acre garden was started by Osgood Mackenzie in 1862 and, over time, a kaleidoscope of exotic plants has been cultivated, providing a show of colour and interest throughout the year, all nurtured by the warm currents of the North Atlantic Drift. Plants from all over the world flourish here — Chinese rhododendrons, Tasmanian eucalypts, Himalayan blue poppies, New Zealand daisy bushes, Chilean lantern trees, Mediterranean rock roses and many, many more.

The garden has a network of walks leading out into the surrounding landscape, offering great opportunities to spot some of the diverse wildlife here and, of course, enjoy the spectacular views. Among these are the “pinewood trail”, a 30-45 minute walk through the hillside next to the garden, and the “Kernsary path”, which is a low-level walk.

After exploring the garden, visitors can enjoy the

delights of the licensed restaurant, offering a wide range of drinks, snacks and meals, and browse through the wide range of books, gifts and souvenirs (including plants!) in the extensive shop.

The coast road to Cove offers a scenic trip, with panoramas of almost all the hills to the north-west of Ross-shire. Loch Ewe was one of the main naval convoy assembly points during WWII, and a string of disused fortifications along the lochside testifies to its strategic importance. Towards Aultbea, the road gains height over Loch Ewe, showing the full extent of the loch with the Isle of Ewe at its centre. ●



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WILDLIFE, ACCOMMODATION AND ACTIVITIES
IN WESTER ROSS

Beauty held in trust for the nation

Some of the most stunning scenery in the West Highlands is in the care of the National Trust for Scotland. Many people automatically think of the trust as a guardian of castles and historic houses, but it cares for 78,000 hectares of Scotland's finest countryside. It is, in fact, the third largest landowner in Scotland and the largest managing the land for conservation purposes. Over one million people visit the countryside properties, which include one sixth of all Munros, each year.

In the West Highlands, the magnificent stretch of scenery at Kintail provides a walkers' paradise. The area includes the Falls of Glomach and the Five Sisters of Kintail, three of which are over 915m (3,000ft). The best access point to the mountains is the Countryside Centre at Morvich Farm, just off the A87, where you can also find out more about the ranger-led events – guided walks are offered regularly and now the ranger service offers sea kayaking taster days, allowing visitors to enjoy the views from a different perspective. Further north is Torridon (north of A896), famed for its mountains composed mainly of Torridonian sandstone dating back some 750 million years. Torridon provides some

fine opportunities for wildlife watching – red deer, Highland cattle, oystercatchers, golden eagles and pine marten are among the species you might spot.

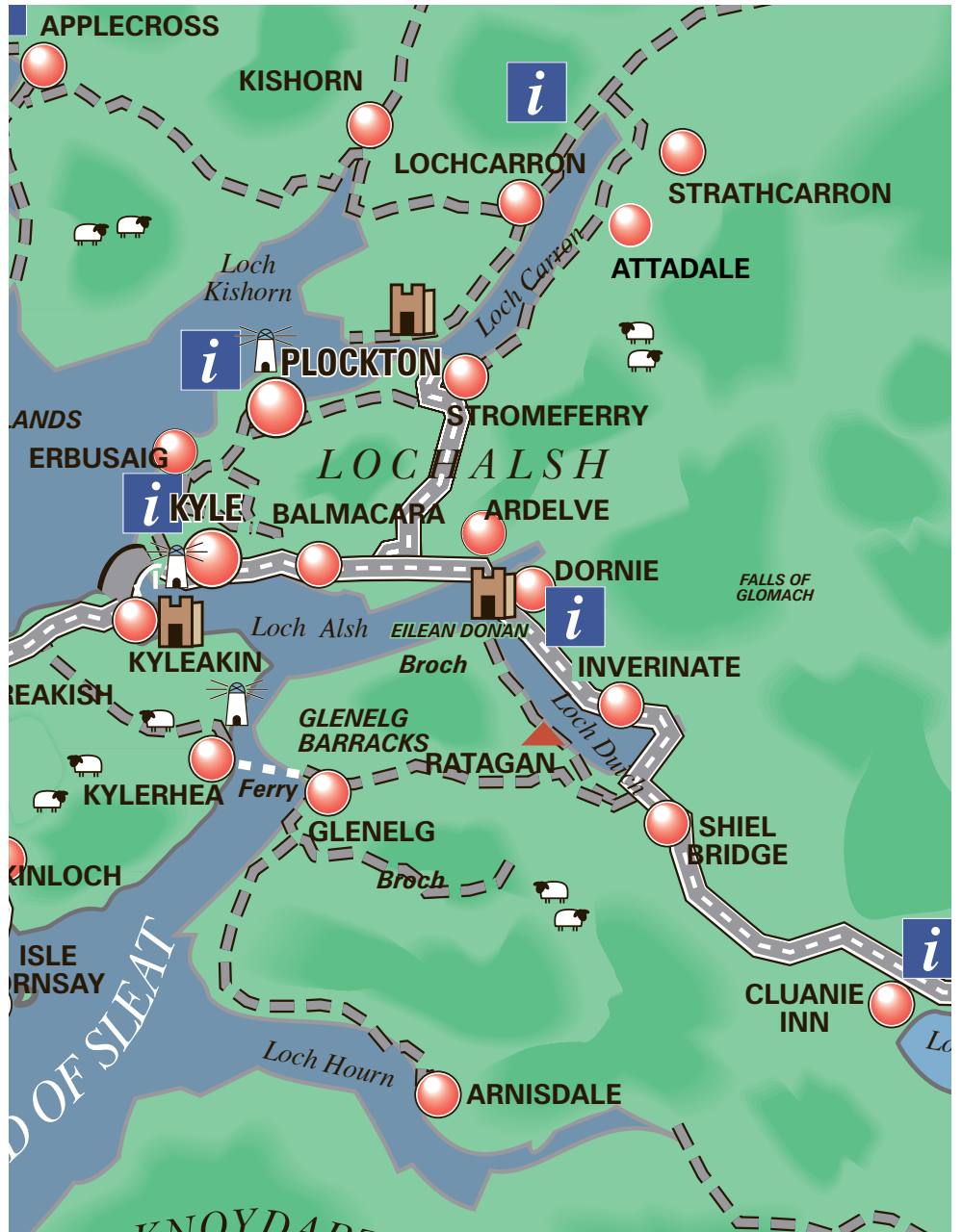
The Trust's Balmacara Estate provides opportunities for lower level walking and exploring. The estate takes in most of the Lochalsh peninsula and is criss-crossed with walking trails taking visitors through native woodland and open moorland to sheltered bays and the pretty villages of Drumbuie, Duirinish and Plockton. By the lochside, Lochalsh Woodland blends mature woodland, gardens and terraces with the natural features of the rugged coastline. Garden lovers should not miss a trip to the renowned Inverewe Garden and Estate, by Poolewe. This 50-acre garden was created by Osgood Mackenzie in 1862 and today is an oasis of exotic plants, bursting with vibrant colour, all year round, thanks to the warm currents of the Gulf Stream.

The National Trust for Scotland is a charity and each time you visit, you can help support the Trust's vital conservation work. Make sure that your visit to the area includes at least one of the Trust's properties and see the West Highlands at their very best. ●



Photograph: Willie Urquhart/www.whfp.com

South West Ross



Snap shot

Like many parts of the Highlands, the biggest attraction South West Ross has to offer for visitors is its many and varied hill, mountain and woodland walks – all naturally unspoilt

South West Ross



Savour the unspoilt beauty of South West Ross

Morvich at Kintail is the starting-off point for the Falls of Glomach, one of the highest waterfalls in Britain at 370ft.

The falls can also be approached from Killilan, but this involves some difficult terrain and is not advised for the inexperienced. However, the Falls of Glomach are a must for the energetic walker.

Five miles further on is Dornie, and the much-photographed Eilean Donan Castle which is open to the

public most days from the beginning of February to end of December. Check www.eileandonancastle.com for times. After Dornie you can turn right and travel up the shore of Loch Long to Sallachy, Killilan and Camusluinie — a beautiful, isolated little corner of Wester Ross or press on instead for Balmacara.

The National Trust for Scotland have established a very interesting woodland area at Glaick near ►

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► Balmacara which is definitely worth a visit, and the Forestry Commission have forest walks at Balmacara and Reraig.

As one of the major landowners in the area the commission realises its responsibility to encourage public recreation. Visitors are welcome to walk in its forests, but the emphasis is on "walk": cars and motorcycles are definitely not allowed.

Kyle of Lochalsh is a busy little village. Not only is it the railhead on the world-famous Inverness-Kyle railway line, but it was also formerly the ferry point for the crossing to Skye — now motorists cross from Kyle to Skye on the bridge. Timber is shipped out by sea from Kyle, which is also a busy fishing port and a naval base.

There are many worthwhile walks around the Kyle area, affording views across to Skye and the great central mass of the Cuillin Hills.

The road north-east from Kyle leads through the quiet townships of Erbusaig, Drumbuie and Duirinish to the picturesque village of Plockton, with its palm tree-lined main street. Plockton has a well-deserved reputation as one of the scenic jewels of the west coast, and a stop here will be amply rewarded. It is also a haven for small boats and boasts its own sailing club with regular races during summer.

Overlooking Plockton is Duncraig Castle. The original building was erected in 1866 by Sir Alexander Matheson and was bought in the 1920s by Sir Daniel

and Lady Hamilton who already owned the adjoining Balmacara Estate. During the Second World War the castle served as a naval hospital, and at the end of the war Lady Hamilton handed it over to the local education authority who used it as a centre for domestic training for girls of school-leaving age.

The back roads to Balmacara and Stromeferry are worth exploring. At Stromeferry you join the bypass road to Lochcarron which winds along beside the railway line and then climbs to offer stunning views across Loch Carron and back down the loch to Skye.

The village of Lochcarron itself is beautifully situated, with its shops and houses and hotels strung along the shore of the loch. In the 1970s and early '80s it was something of a boom town, catering for workers at the nearby oil platform "Kishorn Commandos" construction yard on Loch Kishorn which is now a marine transport facility and quarry. Lochcarron still has a life of its own, however, and has much to offer the visitor including beautiful walks and a nine-hole golf course. ●



Rush hour in Drumbuie

Photograph: Willie Urquhart/www.whfp.com



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Glenelg – welcome to a quiet corner off the beaten track

Glenelg is a place that isn't known to many tourists, but for those who do venture into this hidden corner of the West Highlands it becomes a very special and magical place. There are few who come here who are not enchanted by its peace, its haunting beauty, its wildlife and the mysteries of its past.

The first thing to say about Glenelg is that it isn't a glen. At least not a single glen, for the name is plural. It is really best described as a peninsula, bounded on its north shore by Loch Duich and on the south by Loch Hourn. To the west is the Sound of Sleat with the Isle of Skye a short ferry ride away; and to the east, a formidable mountain plateau which includes two Munros —

Sgurr na Sgine and the Saddle, with its magnificent Forcan Ridge.

These natural boundaries have conspired to give Glenelg the character akin to that of a small island, with a strong sense of itself and its culture among the tightly-knit group of its local inhabitants. Glenelg ceilidhs are justifiably renowned and are regularly held both in the local community hall or in a more informal way in the Glenelg Inn. Music, song and dance, traditional and contemporary, are regular features here and you can be guaranteed a warm welcome at any local event.

But it is in the extraordinary relics of its past that Glenelg really comes into its own as a place to visit and explore. Here are to be found the mysterious broch towers and galleried duns which

date back as much as two millennia in time. No-one really knows why they were built, although they clearly have strong defensive characteristics, and no-one really knows very much about those remarkably artistic and creative people, whom we generally call "The Picts" — literally, "The Painted People" — who built them.

The two brochs in Glen Beag, Dun Troddan and Dun Telve, are the two best examples of these ancient structures in mainland Scotland. A few miles walk further on from them at the head of the glen is the fascinating galleried dun known as Dun Grugaig, like the brochs built entirely of dry-stone with much of the structure still standing. It still maintains its dominating presence over the old road that crosses the pass here.

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It is hard to envisage it amongst these quiet hills where only deer and sheep graze today, but this was once the main artery leading south from Skye and the Western Isles, and the route that the cattle drovers used to take the island cattle to the southern markets.

Also to be found in Glenelg are the ruined Hanoverian Barracks of Bernera, built in the 1720s as part of the government's military solution to the troublesome Highlands. These barracks lie at the end of a military road built by General Wade and improved in Victorian times by Thomas Telford. Some of Wade's original road, and some of Telford's beautiful corbelled bridges, lie on the route of the present road into Glenelg from Shiel Bridge.

Many people come to Glenelg to make a pilgrimage to the bay and islands of Sandaig which lie on the western tip of the Glenelg peninsula. This is where the writer Gavin Maxwell lived and where his book, "Ring of

Bright Water", is set. There are memorials here to both the writer and his pet otter, Edal; and wild otters can still be seen in this magical place, especially on quiet summer evenings.

Continuing round to the south side of the peninsula are to be found the tiny hamlets of Arnisdale and Corran

nestling together on the shores of Loch Hour. The road ends at Corran but there is an old path, once a pony-track, that leads from here all the way to Kinlochhourn. Other walks from here include many challenging scrambles, not least of which is the climb to the peak of the 3,200ft Beinn Sgritheall. ●



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Lochcarron, the ideal base for exploring

Lochcarron is an ideal base from which to explore this beautiful part of the west coast, with its mountains, sea lochs, forests and wildlife.

The village of Lochcarron itself hugs the lochside, offering views across to the hills above Attadale and Strome ferry and the world-famous Kyle railway line.

As far as accommodation is concerned, there are two hotels in and around Lochcarron, as well as bed-and-breakfast houses and self-catering options. The village also has shops to cater for most of your needs, from groceries to locally-produced craft goods and souvenirs.

If you enjoy the outdoor life then the rugged hills or gentle littoral offer a wide range of activities. You can choose between hill loch, river or sea fishing, or relax with a game of golf on the nine-hole course on the outskirts of the village. After your trek or leisurely round, a number of cafes and hotels will help satisfy your appetite.

For those simply interested in enjoying the natural beauty and rich wildlife of the area there's plenty to see and do. Good walks abound, but don't forget to wear warm clothing and stout footwear — and don't underestimate the chill and the wind on the heights.

You can see Smugglers' Cove, Strome Castle or the Taodail Gorge with the Eas an Teampuill waterfall (Gaelic for the Temple Fall).

If you are touring by car, there are plenty of places nearby worth seeing — the Applecross peninsula, for example (although the steep, winding hill road the Bealach na Ba is not for the fainthearted!), or the picturesque village of Shieldaig. You'll find you want to spend more than just a day or two in the area — the rugged Highlands don't come much better than this. ●



Photograph: Willie Urquhart/www.whfp.com



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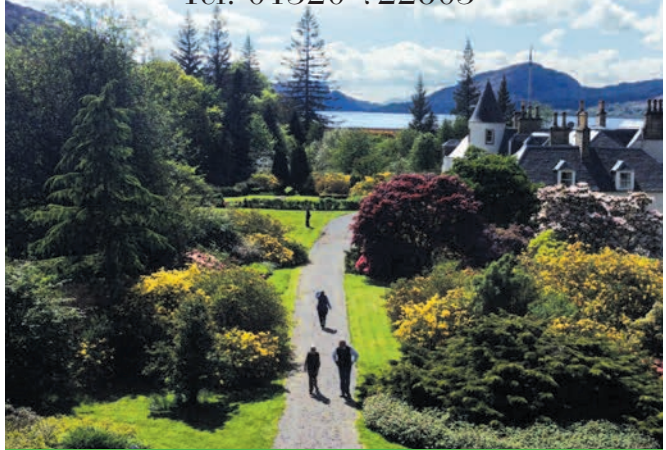
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Plockton



Photograph: Willie Urquhart/www.whfp.com

Plockton continues to be an extremely popular place for holidays. Singletons, couples and families alike can find things to do during the day and entertainment in the evenings.

Most activities are easily accessible as the village consists of the main street, meandering between the houses, their front gardens and their famous palm trees, which skirts the harbour looking across Loch Carron to Creag nan Darach, the mountain below which nestles Duncraig Castle.

In the village are a shop, post office, library, bowling green, studios, arts and crafts shops and art galleries. For accommodation, Plockton has a choice of hotels, numerous bed and breakfast houses, self-catering cottages and a bunkhouse. Meals are available at all

the hotels and elsewhere around the village.

There are more bed and breakfast houses and self-catering cottages available in the surrounding villages of Duirinish (two miles from Plockton), Drumbuie and Achnandarach (both three miles), Erbusaig (four miles) and Balmacara (six miles). All these small villages offer an enchanting glimpse into a crofting scene which was a way of life in this Highland area for centuries and which still exists, as far as possible, alongside modern life.

The sea features strongly in the life of Plockton. There are a few boats still fishing out of the harbour for prawns (langoustines) and crabs. The seafood can be purchased in the local hotels and restaurants or, if you

are self-catering, from the fishermen at the pier. Regular boat trips are available from the village, taking the

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visitor around the nearby seal colonies where they can see an abundance of wildlife.

From May onwards there are sailing races culminating in the Regatta, held annually since 1933 during the last week in July and the first week in August. This safe harbour is popular with yachts, many visiting year after year.

There are some booklets available locally detailing the many walks of differing degrees of difficulty among beautiful countryside, including Lochalsh Woodlands, part of the National Trust for Scotland's Balmacara Estate. If you are interested in walking along the ebb tide there are stretches of shoreline along which it is possible to spend many hours. Tide tables are available locally.

There are two nine-hole golf courses approximately half an hour's drive from Plockton — one at Lochcarron and one at Sconser on Skye. In the village hall, there are frequent art exhibitions held by local artists and regular craft fairs.

Ten miles from Plockton at Dornie sits the world-famous Eilean Donan Castle, one of the most photographed castles in Scotland, the castle's Visitor Centre provides food, drink, shopping and information.

The Highlands have a strong tradition of music and song and Plockton is very much a part of that. Look out for music sessions in the local hotels. The School of Excellence in Traditional Music provides a source of excellent musicians to complement those already living here.

Plockton dates from 1801 and was a planned village. Originally it was a fishing and crofting village but as time passed, fishing and crofting declined. The village is now a tourist attraction second to none and, while the needs of tourism are being addressed and provided, Plockton and surrounding area still retain some elements of their origins as west Highland villages with west Highland culture. Plockton is accessible from the A87 main road west to Kyle of Lochalsh, and is serviced by rail from Inverness. The village even has its own small airstrip!

In this fast world we would like to think that you could come to our area and slow down to our speed! Find out more on the website — www.plockton.com



Gateway to Skye and the wilds of Wester Ross

Photograph: Willie Urquhart/www.whfp.com

Kyle of Lochalsh sits at the heart of Skye and Lochalsh. It is a gateway to the island over the Skye Bridge — now free to cross — and also to the wilds of Wester Ross.

From Kyle, you can catch trains to Plockton, Strathcarron and Inverness.

Bus and train timetable information is available from the Kyle Tourist Information Centre, where you will also find information on ferries, walks, wildlife, activities and attractions in the local area and beyond. The tourist information centre is open seasonally and sits in the middle of the village car park, which is free of charge.

The village has two banks, a medical

centre, post office, pharmacy and garages, as well as a wide selection of shops, hotels, B&Bs, restaurants and bars. It also has a public swimming pool with a gym and spa, as well as award-winning public toilets.

Kyle was a major naval base during World War Two — so much so that all residents were issued with security passes to enable them to move around freely. From here, minelayers set out to guard the western approaches to Britain.

Take a peacetime trip out to one of these, HMS 'Napier', which sank just along the coast from Kyle, at Loch na Beiste, in 1942 and is rated as one of

the best dives in Britain. Regular boat trips are available from Kyle round the area taking in the wreck and the wildlife in Loch Alsh.

There are excellent walks to be had both within the village and just outside it. Lochalsh Woodland is run by the National Trust for Scotland and is well worth a visit. There are visitor centres at the railway and lifeboat stations, and there is always activity at what remains an important and busy pier. ●

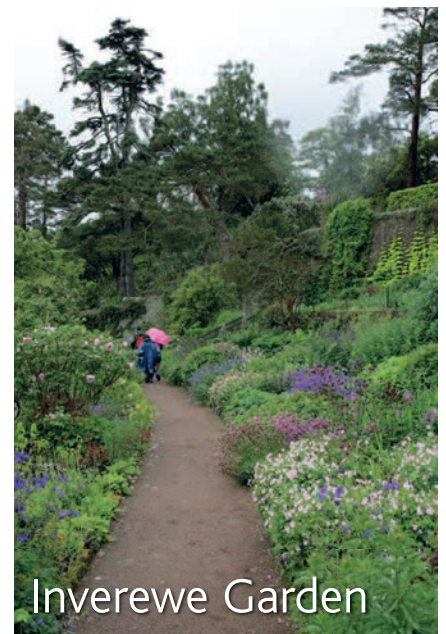


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Inverewe Garden



Photograph: Willie Urquhart/www.whfp.com

Don't miss

South West Ross

EILEAN DONAN CASTLE, by Dornie One of the most photographed tourist attractions in Scotland, it has also featured in a number of films as well as providing the backdrop for countless advertising shoots.

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Nigel Grounds in his studio at the Armadale-Ardvasar road junction in Sleat, Isle of Skye

Nigel Grounds is an artist whose career and passion is painting the landscape where he grew up. Educated at Portree High School, and Gray's School of Art in Aberdeen, he lives and works at Armadale in South Skye, where he has had a gallery since 2007. Using mostly oils, but also watercolours, his paintings showcase the unique beauty and drama of Skye and the west coast – the stunning views, strong colours, and ever-changing light.

"My paintings can best be described as contemporary but realistic and recognisable. They are dramatic but hopefully with a sense of the place," says Nigel, who has been a self-employed artist for almost 30 years.

His 'big break', he remembers, came in 1988 after a chance meeting in Plockton with an Aberdeen-based gallery owner and art dealer. On seeing his work, the dealer immediately bought all Nigel's available paintings and offered him exhibitions.

He has since exhibited successfully throughout Scotland, and his work features in public and private collections all over the world, including those of HRH Prince of Wales, The Royal Bank of Scotland, Aberdeen Asset Management and several Scottish universities.

Describing his artistic style, Nigel says the essence of a scene is captured through a process of selection – and stresses emphasis on the most important and expressive elements, while rejecting unnecessary clutter.

He adds: "The techniques I employ are

Beauty and drama captured in Nigel's art

highly dependent upon the subject, with use of the brush, palette knife, or a combination of the two underpinned by strong drawing. I generally adopt the 'plein air' method of sketching and painting quickly on small boards in preparation for larger studio works.

"The light, dependent on the weather, time of day or

year can alter a scene dramatically, and so the importance of capturing 'that' moment is paramount.

"I've painted countryside and city all over UK and Europe, but my main focus has been my locality of Skye and Lochalsh - a special and unique place. The beauty and drama of this area is always in vogue and supports many artists."



Kyleakin



Photograph: Willie Urquhart/www.whfp.com

Don't miss the model town of Kyleakin

Until the opening of the Skye Bridge the village of Kyleakin was the main entry-point to the island, with two ferries shuttling back and fore on the five-minute crossing from Kyle of Lochalsh.

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Now that the ferry traffic no longer streams through the village at regular intervals it is a peaceful place that is well worth a visit.

At the beginning of the 19th century Lord MacDonald conceived a grand plan to create a model town at Kyleakin which he proposed to call New Liverpool. However, in his classic book "Skye" (published by Birlinn in Edinburgh) the writer Derek Cooper observes: "A contemporary engraving shows the ambitious project which would have been about the same size as present-day Portree. The plans were grandiose and too far-fetched to be realised. The houses themselves, two-storeyed (compared with the traditional one-storey cottage)

would have remained empty even if they had been built — the economy of the island could not have supported such an extravagant folly.”

Kyleakin today is a pleasant little fishing village with a scattering of hotels, bars and good eating places as well as plenty of bed-and-breakfast accommodation and independent hostels. You can take boat trips into the strait that separates Skye from the mainland — Haakon’s Strait, hence the name Kyleakin — and pass under the road bridge.

The bridge, incidentally, makes one of its landfalls as it hops across the water on an island called Eilean Ban which was once owned by the author Gavin Maxwell of “Ring of Bright Water” fame who stayed there while he studied its otter population. Eilean Ban also boasts a lighthouse designed by David and Thomas Stevenson which, although no longer used, still stands on this tiny outcrop under the shadow of the bridge. A new track behind Old Kyle Farm Road also makes for a worthwhile walk or, if you feel up to it, cycle.

Another must on a visit to Kyleakin is a walk to the semi-ruinous Castle Moil, which stands on a promontory a few hundred yards from the slipway. Derek Cooper writes: “For centuries it belonged to the MacKinnons as vassals of the MacDonalds of Sleat. Legend says that it was built by Saucy Mary, the daughter of a Norwegian king, for the purpose of levying a toll on ships passing through the Kyles. Legend also says that she stretched a chain across from Kyleakin to Kyle to make sure that no ship sailed through without paying up — thus defying not only belief but all the known laws of engineering.”

The irony of the Saucy Mary legend is not lost amongst those who campaigned against the extortionate tolls which were extracted by the Skye Bridge Company from 1995 until their removal late in 2004!

So, don’t rush across the bridge and head northwards on the main road: take the brief detour into Kyleakin and stay awhile. ●

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South Skye and Sleat

Visit the glorious south and the “Garden of Skye”



There are three entry points at the south end of Skye. The most convenient is the Skye Bridge, which crosses to the island from Kyle of Lochalsh.

If you want the experience of a ferry crossing there's the Mallaig-Armadale service operated by Caledonian MacBrayne or the world's last turntable car ferry, 'Glenachulish' which plies the short crossing between Glenelg and Kylerhea from Easter through to October — but the road from Kylerhea to the main Kyleakin-Broadford artery is narrow and precipitous, so watch out!

The former ferry point and fishing village of Kyleakin boasts a number of shops and hotels as well as independent hostels, and overlooking the harbour there are the ruins of Castle Moil while in the straits between Kyle and Kyleakin you can see Eilean Ban — the lighthouse island where “Ring of Bright Water” author Gavin Maxwell once lived, and which now lies in the shadow of the Skye Bridge.

Broadford itself is the largest village in the south of the island — a hub of shops, hotels, youth hostel and restaurants

gathered round Broadford Bay. It is an ideal centre for exploring the south end.

If you cross on the ferry from Mallaig to Armadale it is worthwhile lingering in Sleat, which by virtue of its relative greenness is commonly referred to as “The Garden of Skye”.

Near Armadale is the Clan Donald Skye Visitor Centre, which includes the historic gardens surrounding the ruins of Armadale Castle, the award-winning Museum of the Isles and the Stables Restaurant and Gift Shop. There are some stunning walks on the Clan Donald Skye estate. ▶

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▶ A left hand turn before reaching Clan Donald Skye will take you down to Ardvasar and to one of the oldest hotels on Skye, the Ardvasar Hotel, built in the early 1800s. From here you will be able to enjoy the magnificent views which include the stunning Knoydart mountains whilst enjoying good Scottish cuisine.

Further along the road towards Broadford is a turning to Achnacloich. This is the start of a loop road which takes in the small crofting townships of Ord and Tarskavaig, with the ancient Tokavaig woodland and the ruined Dunscaith Castle along the way. It is well worth taking the detour on this road which offers spectacular views of the Cuillins as well as the islands of Rum and Canna to the west, and over the Sound of Sleat to Loch Nevis and the mainland hills.

Incidentally, at the turn-off for Achnacloich you will see Sabhal Mòr Ostaig, a beautifully-restored farm steading which houses part of the only further education college in Scotland where classes are taught using the Gaelic language. The main college campus in a truly magnificent building sits on the coast further south. Here, students are encouraged to learn skills in business studies and related courses which will enable them to find employment in the Highlands and Islands while at the same time fostering the use of their native tongue. Sabhal Mòr is also the venue for short summer courses in a wide range of subjects including piping, clarsach playing and the Gaelic language.

Having completed the Ord-Tarskavaig loop you rejoin the main road, and a few miles on another short detour will take you to Isle Ornsay and Camuscross which offer outstanding views across the Sound of Sleat to the rugged mainland hills of Knoydart. Hotel Eilean Iarmain and attached Am Praban bar offer a warm welcome of their own, with a wide range of ▶



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Back on the main road, and a few miles apart, are Toravaig and Duisdale House Hotels owned and operated by partners Anne Gracie and Ken Gunn. The hotels have beautiful views to the Sound of Sleat and beyond, as well as all the luxury amenities you'd expect of four-star establishments. As well as overseeing two award-winning hotels here Anne and Ken offer exclusive daily sailing trips onboard their luxury yacht 'Solus Na Mara' from April to September.

Further on you can branch off to Kinloch with its forest walk, as well as the Michelin-starred restaurant at Kinloch Lodge Hotel, or to the isolated township of Drumfearn which looks across Loch Eishort to Heaste.

While in Sleat, it's worth stopping at one of the many restaurants and hotels for a meal or just a snack — most of them use fresh local produce.

Once back in Broadford, there's yet another corner of the south end to be explored: the Elgol peninsula ought not to be missed. The road winds out of Broadford past the ancient Kilchrist church and graveyard and on to Kilbride, from where a rough track leads to the cleared townships of Suisinish and Boreraig. Further along the main road, looking down Loch Slapin, is Torrin, where the famous Skye Marble is quarried. Round the loch is Kilmarie, where another rough track winds its way some four miles to the beach at Camasunary (and for the keen walker there are paths from here through the Cuillins to Sligachan).

From Kilmarie it's only a few miles to the end of the road, at Elgol — a breathtakingly beautiful spot with views north and west into the Cuillins and south to Rum and the Small Isles. It's worth taking a walk along the rocky shore at Elgol, with its strange honeycomb cliffs, or round to Glasnakille where you can see Spar Cave. And from Elgol you can have the unforgettable experience of a boat trip into Loch Coruisk in the Cuillins. You can also find a choice of places to eat and to stay.

Around Broadford itself there are a number of walks to be enjoyed, including a Forestry Commission walk or a pleasant stroll past the pier to Irishman's Point. For the more energetic a climb to the top of Beinn na Caillich (2,400ft) is rewarded by uninterrupted panoramic views for miles around. ●

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20,000 acres of Skye

Armadale Castle & Gardens lies at the heart of a large Highland estate on the Sleat peninsula in South Skye. Once part of the traditional lands of Clan Donald, the estate was purchased by the Clan Donald Lands Trust in 1971.

The trust was established to promote and protect the history and heritage of Clan Donald and the Lordship of the Isles. As custodians of this wonderful estate, the trust has worked tirelessly to save and develop this important resource for the benefit of visitors to Skye and, importantly, for the local community.

The estate offers some stunning walks for all levels of fitness, with views eastward across the Sound of Sleat to Knoydart or, on the west of the peninsula, across to the Cuillin mountain range. It is home to iconic wildlife species including red deer, golden eagles and sea eagles.

The restored Stables Building is now a busy café serving snacks, lunches and great coffee for all our visitors, using the best of local produce. Above the café are two four-star accommodation suites with private balconies, recently refurbished with new furniture and Harris Tweed blinds and curtains. Armadale Castle & Gardens is one of only two five-star visitor attractions on the Isle of Skye.

The sweeping Lord MacDonald's drive leads the visitor to the romantic Castle ruin in the heart of a stunning 40-acre historic, woodland garden. Here, between cultivated lawns and beautifully planned terraces and herbaceous gardens, stand towering trees, centuries old, giving way to enchanted woodland walks carpeted in seasonal wildflowers and enriched with bird song. The drive ends at the imposing ruins of Armadale Castle, designed by James Gillespie Graham and a monument to the aspirations and dreams of the 19th Century Lords of Sleat.

The fully accredited Museum of the Isles, opened within the gardens in 2002, incorporates the library and study centre. Here you can discover the history of the Highlands and Islands through the story of Clan Donald, its most powerful clan.

Six interconnecting galleries, each with their own theme, take you through 1,500 years of history and culture of the area once known as the Kingdom of the Isles. The MacDonalds — or Clan Donald — were Lords of the Isles and sit at the history of Gaeldom. Our museum follows their story and that of the Highlands.

Audio guides in several languages and for the visually impaired are available. Young visitors can enjoy exploring the museum

with our children's trails. The museum has many events and activities, guided tours and talks as well as temporary exhibitions with new reasons to visit every season.

There is a lot to see, so allow yourself enough time. Most of our visitors spend between 45 minutes to an hour in the museum. You will need more time if you are researching your ancestors and planning to use the genealogical resources in the library, which is housed in the museum.

As well as the ever-popular children's adventure playground, which is suitable for all ages, Armadale Castle Gardens is the venue for exciting outdoor activities such as clay pigeon shooting and archery.

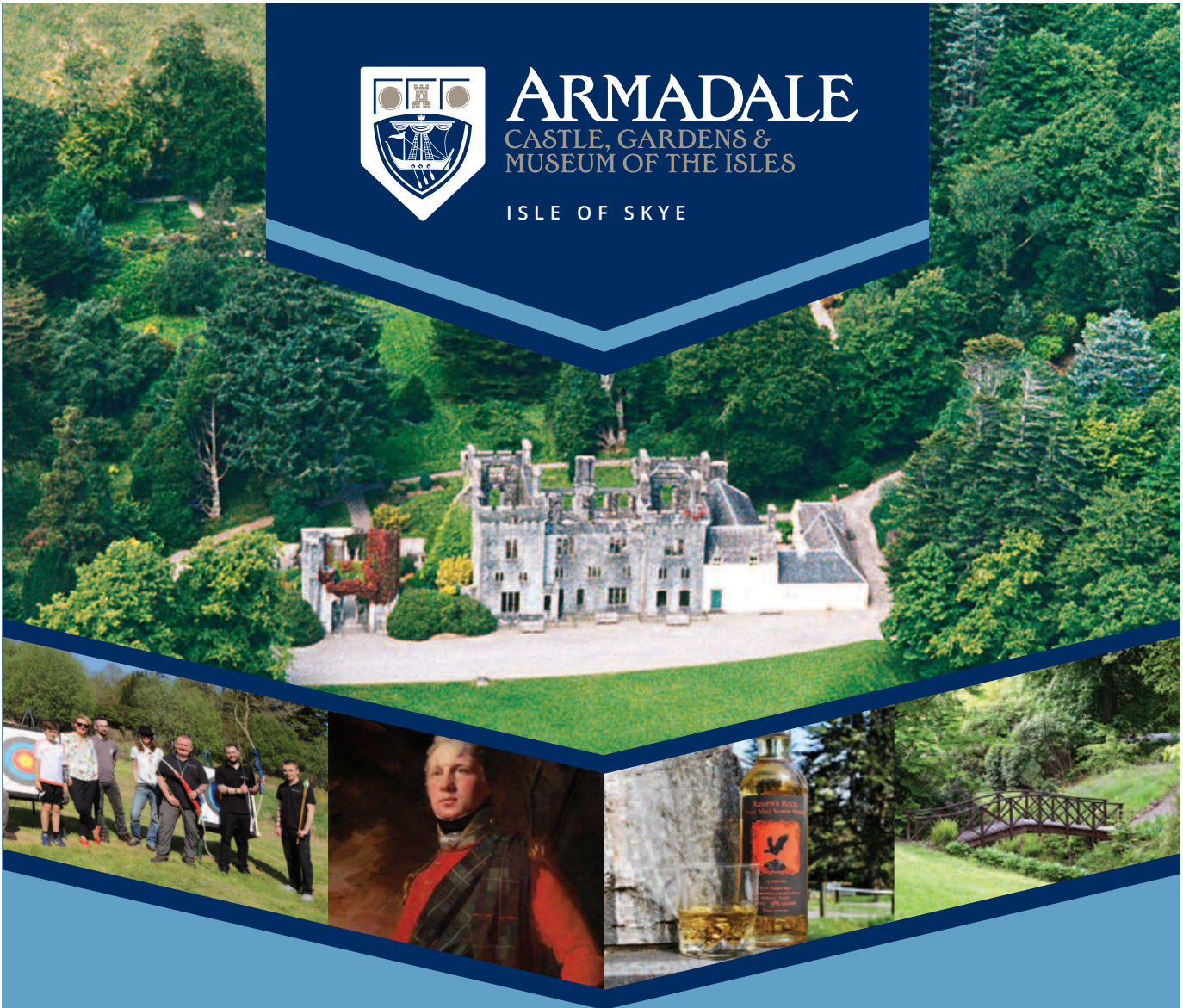
There are eight units of holiday accommodation within the grounds, available for both short breaks and longer visits. The lodges have spectacular views across the Sound of Sleat. There are two gift shops — at the ticket office and the museum with a great range of merchandise to suit all tastes, sourced mainly from Skye and Scotland. The estate produces honey and venison, which appears on our menu or you can take some home to try yourself. Disabled facilities are provided — full information can be found on our website, www.armadalecastle.com ●



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Skye Events for All - SEALL - kicks-off its 2017 programme of events with a diverse mix of top quality performing arts featuring some of the most talented artists in Scotland and beyond

After its most successful year to date, SEALL (Skye Events for All) reveals its brand new programme for 2017.

Last year, the Sleat-based community-led live arts promoters celebrated 25 years of bringing some of the country's leading performing artists to the south of Skye. It also added to its list of awards, 'Venue of the Year' for SEALL at Sabhal Mòr Ostaig in the MG Alba Scots Trad Music Awards 2015.

Working from offices and venues at Sabhal Mòr Ostaig, SEALL delivers over 80 live events a year, which include the annual two-month-long summer Fèis an Eilein (The Skye Festival) in July and August and the Skye Swing Jazz Festival at the end of October.

Scottish traditional music provides the basis for SEALL's work but the annual programme also brings the best known names in music to the south of Skye featuring jazz, opera, world folk, new music and dance.

As well as a strong music strand, SEALL hosts some of the UK's most prominent theatre companies and provides excellent opportunities for local young musicians to perform alongside leading names in the music industry.

For Spring 2017, SEALL continues its tradition in bringing world-class, award-winning performances to Sleat communities

and visitors, with music from Scottish Album of the Year winner Kathryn Joseph and twice Singer of the Year in the MG Alba Scots Trad Music Awards, Siobhan Miller.

Highlights also include Dewar Arts Award winner Màiri Chaimbeul playing with Fletcher Bright and the American Roots Music awards-winner Jenna Moynihan; Livelreland award-winning folk band Dallahan; and Veronica and Max from the Red Wine Serenaders, past winners of the European Blues Challenge.

Comedy takes centre stage during the Spring season with the "clever, diverse and very, very funny" Shappi Khorsandi and cooking the Anarchist way with Edinburgh Fringe favourite, George Egg.

There is also puppet animation; innovative dance; contemporary jazz; classical orchestras and choirs; Gaelic song; lunchtime theatre featuring a man who conquered Everest; and songs of dark romance and small town criminality by Skye-based folk band Dead Man's Waltz.

Look out for more events coming up for June through to December and keep a date in your diary for this year's festival which takes place between **4 July and 25 August** at venues mainly on the Sleat peninsula.



SEALL SPRING PROGRAMME

Wednesday, 8 March at 7.30pm
The Siobhan Miller Trio, Scots trad singer/songwriter

Thursday, 16 March at 7.30pm
Kathryn Joseph, Scottish Album of the Year winner

Saturday, 18 March at 1.00pm
'Mallory Beyond Everest', lunchtime theatre

Thursday, 23 March at 7.30pm
Plan B Dance 'Citizen', contemporary dance

Thursday, 30 March at 7.30pm
Traditional concert from the SMO music course

Friday, 31 March at 8.30pm
Dead Man's Waltz, Skye-based folk noir

Saturday, 1 April at 7.30pm
Skye and Lochalsh Orchestra in concert

Monday, 3 April at 1.30pm
'A Stone's Throw', The Puppet Animation Festival

Thursday, 6 April at 7.30pm
Shappi Khorsandi 'O My Country' stand-up comedy

Friday, 7 April at 7.30pm
Inner Sound singers in concert

Sunday, 9 April at 8.00pm
Màiri Chaimbeul & Jenna Moynihan, clarsach and fiddle

Tuesday, 11 April at 7.30pm
'Dallahan' traditional concert

Friday, 14 April at 2.00pm
'The Magic Horse', Puppet Animation Festival

Tuesday, 18 April at 7.30pm
Traditional Gaelic song and music concert

Wednesday, 19 April at 7.30pm
George Egg 'Anarchist Cook' comedy theatre

Monday, 24 April at 7.30pm
Veronica and Max of 'The Red Wine Serenaders'

Saturday, 20 May at 7.30pm
New Focus contemporary jazz

Thursday, 1 June at 7.30pm
The Kelvin Ensemble Orchestra

Programme subject to change without notice.

For details of all our events, up-to-date programme information and to book tickets visit our website

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Don't miss South Skye and Sleat

CASTLE MOIL Ruined castle overlooking Kyleakin harbour. In the straits between Kyleakin and Kyle of Lochalsh you can also see Eilean Ban, the lighthouse island once home to "Ring of Bright Water" author Gavin Maxwell.

SABHAL MOR OSTAIG, Sleat. The restored farm steading which houses Scotland's only Gaelic college; a newer campus on the road to Armadale

offers stunning views across the Sound of Sleat.

ARMADALE CASTLE and gardens, which house the Museum of the Isles. The woodland gardens boast some lovely walks and are open all year round.

KINLOCH FOREST WALK Five-mile woodland walk, taking in the abandoned settlement of Leitir Fura.

KILCHRIST CHURCH Ancient church and graveyard just outside Broadford, on the Elgol road. It is worth following the road all the way to Elgol, a picturesque township offering superb views of the Small Isles and north into the heart of the Cuillin Hills.

IRISHMAN'S POINT, Broadford This pleasant stroll from the main pier in Broadford is just one of a number of walks around the village.



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Broadford



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Take time to enjoy what Broadford has to offer

Just eight miles north of the Skye bridge on the A87, the village of Broadford offers a wide range of accessible facilities and attractions with which to waylay the travel-weary tourist

Perfectly placed between the spectacular Red Cuillin and the distant mainland Torridon mountains, the village centrepiece is a landscaped garden area, where quiet picnics can be enjoyed while watching ducks dabble on the foreshore — a truly relaxing and tranquil spot.

If you prefer eating indoors, the village also has a wide range of cafes, restaurants and hotels, and a full range of services including a 24-hour filling station, a hospital, a post office, library, ATMs, pharmacy, supermarket and a range of gift and book shops — plenty there to cater for all your needs. The village is also home to the wildlife charity, the International Otter Survival Fund.

Broadford is an ideal base from which to explore south Skye.

So, whatever your length of stay, take time out from travelling and enjoy stunning scenery, a quiet picnic, or a wide range of services. Broadford, the second-largest village on Skye, has a lot to offer. ●



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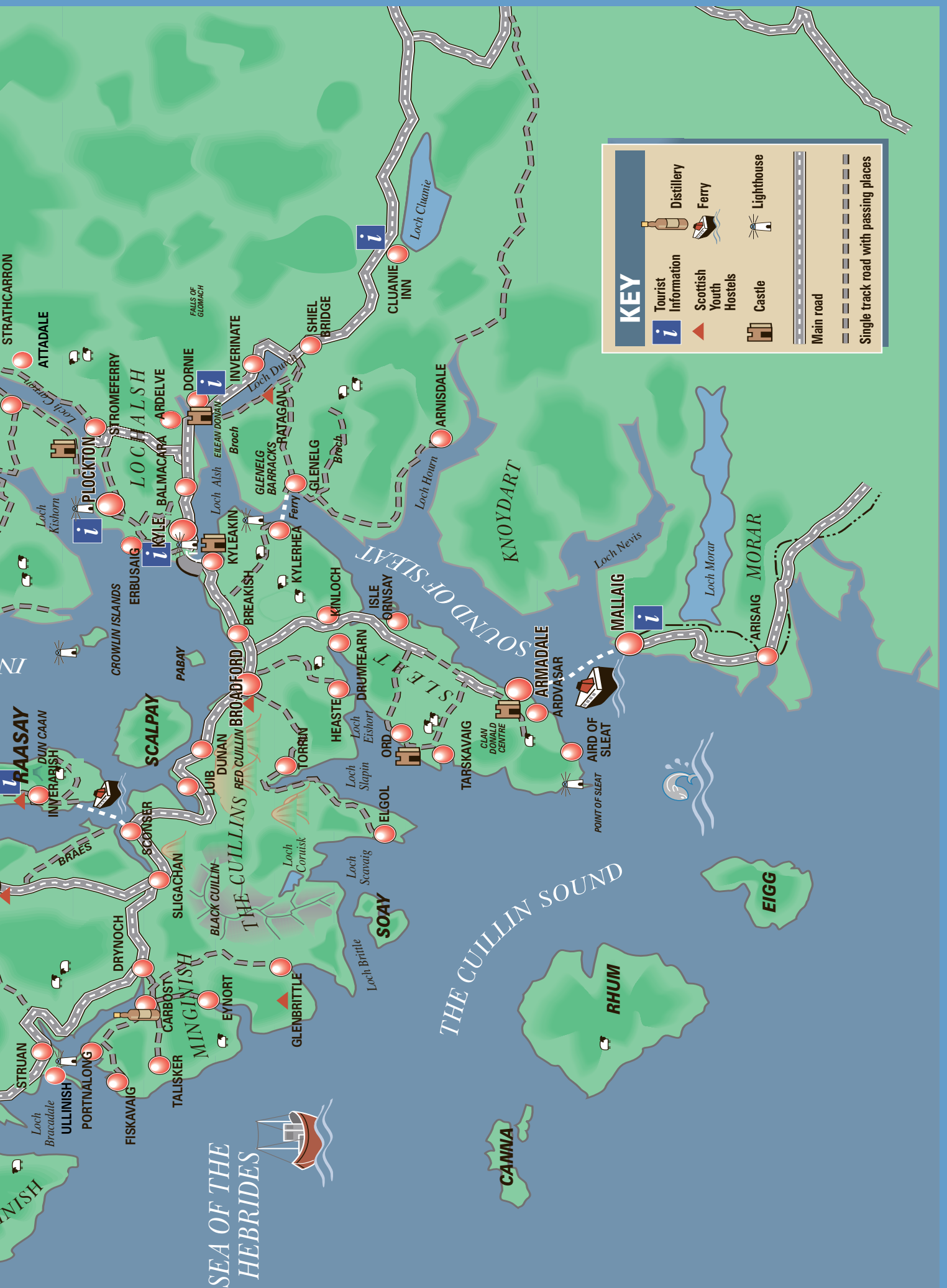
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






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-  Ferry
-  Castle
-  Lighthouse
-  Main road
-  Single track road with passing places

Skye has always been a climber's paradise

For the mountaineer and rock climber there really is nowhere else in the world quite like the Isle of Skye, the heart and focal point for over a hundred years being the Black Cuillin.

Perhaps small in comparison to the Alps and greater ranges of the world, but sweeping straight from the sea to a height of over 3,000ft, the rough grey gabbro rock of the Cuillin could hardly present a more dramatic sight. A complex ridge of naked rock, of pinnacles and fine peaks, of great cliffs and hidden passes — a lifetime's exploration could hardly do it justice.

One of the most sought-after and enjoyable mountaineering prizes to be had is the unbroken traverse of The Main Ridge of the Black Cuillin. It stretches six miles (10km) from Garsbheinn (2,935ft) above the sea to the west, to Sgurr nan Gillean (3,167ft) in the east. The elegantly-pointed peak of Sgurr nan Gillean (The Peak of the Young Men) and the distinct fang of the Bhashtier Tooth are famous landmarks seen from the main road directly beyond the Sligachan Hotel.

The traverse involves over 13,000ft of ascent and includes almost 40 separate mountain summits — the highest being Sgurr Alasdair (3,257ft). The traverse is very much a mountaineering expedition and cannot be accomplished by walkers (however hardy). Quite apart from the extreme exposure (sometimes knife edge with 1,500ft of vertical gabbro falling away on either side), many sections involve unavoidably difficult climbing. Couple this with the requirements of stamina, a highly-developed sense of route-finding ability (a compass cannot be used here as the gabbro is highly magnetic) and the ability to safely descend in bad weather, and you begin to appreciate the magnitude of this expedition, unique in the British Isles.

The first recorded ascent of Sgurr nan Gillean fell in 1836 to one Professor



Forbes. But the gauntlet thrown down to climb the remaining virgin peaks was picked up by local Skye men (who were later to act as guides to the Alpine Club). Sheriff Alexander Nicholson climbed the highest peak, now named Sgurr Alasdair after him, and John Mackenzie became the first professional Skye guide.

Mackenzie formed a famous partnership with one Norman Collie (a leading scientist of the era who played a major role in isolating and identifying the rare gases and is accredited with the first ever X-ray photograph) — they carried out much exploration and it was they who discovered and ascended the Cioch in 1906. A huge nose of rock precariously resting on the great cliff face of Sron na Ciche above Glen Brittle, The Cioch was an

important event in rock-climbing history.

The friends formed a lifelong climbing partnership. When it was too wet for climbing, they fished for trout in the plentiful hill lochs (Loch Storr being their favourite), and Collie spent his final years on the island comfortably ensconced in the Sligachan Hotel. At Collie's request they lie buried next to each other in the graveyard of the Free Presbyterian Church of Struan.

The first continuous traverse of the main Ridge was achieved by Shadbolt and Maclaren who in 1911 took 16 hours and 45 minutes from Glen Brittle to the Sligachan. Most fit and suitably experienced parties today take two days and employ one bivouac, though it has been run, summit to summit, in an incredible time of around four hours.



Photograph: www.donaldmacsween.com

Recently it has received a number of winter ascents, using crampons and ice axes, and is reported when in condition to be a mountaineering adventure of the highest calibre.

Today a wide variety of rock climbing is to be had in the Black Cuillin with grades of difficulty to suit most tastes. But within the last few years rock climbers looking for extreme technical difficulty have realised the great potential further north.

Some little way beyond Portree on the northern finger of Skye known as Trotternish are a series of mighty sea cliffs and sea stacks offering perhaps the best crack climbing in Britain.

Firstly the late great Don Whillans pioneered an ascent of the 200ft weird pinnacle of rock, plainly visible from the Portree-Staffin road, known as the Old Man of Storr. This was a formidable undertaking, for the head of the pinnacle overhangs the base and the rock is decomposing basalt lava. It is debatable whether this particular route, climbed in 1955, has yet received a second ascent.

Below and beyond Storr, however, rising above the waters of Raasay Sound are a whole family of formidably vertical cliffs which have come to be known collectively as the Kilt Rock cliffs.

The Kilt Rock itself is easily seen from the picnic area and viewpoint by the side of the road at Loch Mealt just south of Staffin. The rock is perfect dolerite (not the softer basalt as often assumed) formed as a sill when molten magma rose from the earth's crust to pool beneath softer rocks. So protected the molten rock cooled slowly to form distinctive hexagonal columns. Subsequently the softer rocks eroded to reveal the dolerite. The overall effect of the columnar structure is to resemble the pleats of a kilt — hence the name.

Generally the cracks and grooves that divide the columns provide the climbable lines of weakness but occasionally and spectacularly one column will be left standing alone. One such is the 135ft high Chimney Stack (first named and climbed by the author in 1985 — possibly the hardest technical rock climb on Skye) situated just north of Kilt Rock.

Further examples of these lone columns can be seen off Rubha Hunish, the northern-most tip of Skye. Rising directly from the sea, isolated a little way from dry land, are three sea stacks. First climbed by the author and friends (John Hargreaves and Fred Snallam) even reaching them, during heavy seas, provided an amusing problem.

Other sea cliffs to be found lie on the Neist Point off the west coast of Duirinish. Those visiting the lighthouse should walk slightly north up the coast to spot the challenge of the

main cliff. Directly up the centre of the highest point is a climb known as Supercharger first climbed by Fort William school teacher Ed Grindley in 1981.

For the majority the main attraction of Skye mountaineering will always be the wonderful Black Cuillin, the main challenge, the complete rocky traverse from Gars-bheinn to Sgurr nan Gillean. However, should it ever rain (does it ever on Skye?) or the free rock climber seek even harder technical challenge then the northern sea cliffs provide unlimited interest on this Island of Skye — the climber's paradise. ●

BILL BIRKETT is author of a dozen books on rock climbing, mountaineering and hillwalking and writes monthly for "Climber and Hill Walker" magazine.



A guide to some place names in Skye, Lochalsh and Wester Ross

Applecross (Wester Ross)

A' Chomraich (pronounced A Chom-reech) in Gaelic, means "the sanctuary". The English name comes from an older Gaelic name **Abar Crosain** (pronounced Apar Crosayn), which means "mouth of the cross river", and it used also to be known as **Comraich Maol Ruibhe** (pronounced Komreech Mool Reeya) which means "Maol Rubha's sanctuary". St Maol Rubha, originally from Bangor in Ireland, came to Applecross and founded a monastic community — his dates are given as born 642 AD, died 722 AD.

Shieldaig (Wester Ross)

Sildeag (pronounced Sheel-deg [hard 'g']) in Gaelic, comes from the Norse for "herring bay". The village, near Lochcarron and Applecross and not to be confused with Shieldaig near Gairloch, was founded in the 18th century partly with a view to train seamen for the war against Napoleon. But after the defeat of Napoleon the grants from the Admiralty ceased and the community became almost exclusively reliant on fishing for a living.

Plockton (Wester Ross)

Am Ploc (pronounced Am Plochk) in Gaelic, means "the lumpish promontory" or more literally "the pimple". The full Gaelic name is **Ploc Loch Aillse** (pronounced Plochk Loch Eye-ulsh), meaning "the pimple of Lochalsh". The first known record of Plockton as a village appears to be the 1780s and 1790s when the factor to the Earl of Seaforth talks about planning a village on the Plockton peninsula.

Gairloch (Wester Ross)

Geàrrloch (pronounced Gyaarloch) in Gaelic, means "short loch". Gairloch's history dates back to at least the Iron Age, evidenced by the Dùn or fort ruins in the village. The loch was used by the Vikings during their period of dominance on the west coast and in later centuries MacLeods and MacKenzies vied for control of the area. In 1494 King James IV granted the lands to the MacKenzies, who still manage their estates from Flowerdale House.

Poolewe (Wester Ross)

Poll Iù (pronounced Powl-you) in Gaelic, means "pool on the Ewe River" or "head of the yew river". The village is situated on the shore of Loch Ewe, where the River Ewe joins the sea. The village is less than a mile from Inverewe Gardens which is famous for its subtropical plants. The Gulf Stream helps to produce a relatively mild climate for the north of Scotland allowing the plants in the garden to survive.

Ullapool (Wester Ross)

Ulapul (pronounced Ool-a-pool) in Gaelic, is said to mean "Ulli's steading", from the Norse, or possibly "Wool Farm". Ullapool was founded in 1788 as a herring port designed by Thomas Telford on the shore of Loch Broom. The village still has a busy harbour and boasts a lively music scene. The ferry to Stornoway also runs from Ullapool.

Lochcarron (South West Ross)

Loch Carrann (pronounced Loch Caran) in Gaelic means "Loch of the rough water". The

village was formerly known as **Tòrr nan Clàr** (pronounced Tawr nan Claar), which means "hill of the flat slabs", and a native of Lochcarron is called a **Carrannach** (pronounced Caranach). WJ Watson in "The History of the Celtic Place-names of Scotland" says of the local population's previously famed tan: "The people of Lochcarron, in Ross-shire, are still called **Fìthich dhubha Loch Carrann**, the black ravens of Lochcarron, with reference to their swarthy colouring.

Kyle of Lochalsh (Lochalsh)

An Caol (pronounced Un Cooul) or **Caol Loch Aillse** (pronounced Cooul Loch Eye-ulsh) in Gaelic means, "the strait" or "the strait of Lochalsh". A possible meaning of Lochalsh is the "loch of spume". WJ Watson in his "The History of the Celtic Place-names of Scotland" says: "**Aillse** is a difficult word, but it does not stand alone, for there is another **Loch Aillse** near the source of the river Oykel, on the border of Sutherland and Ross. It may be an abstract noun from **allas**, sweat, meaning 'sweatiness', with reference to foam and scum...".

Dornie (Lochalsh)

An Dòrnaidh (pronounced Un Dawr-nee) in Gaelic, means "the pebble place". The famous and often-photographed Eilean Donan Castle is situated near the village of Dornie. There has been a fort or castle on the rock at Eilean Donan for more than 800 years and for centuries it was a stronghold for the MacRaes.

Mallaig (Lochaber)

Malaig (pronounced Mal-ayg) in Gaelic, comes from Norse and may mean “small bay”, although others suggest that the name derives from the Gaelic **Mol** or **Mal**, meaning “shingly” and the Norse **vik**, meaning “bay”. The village of Mallaig itself was founded in the 1840s when Lord Lovat, who owned the North Morar Estate, “encouraged” some of his tenants to move to the western part of the peninsula and become involved in fishing.

Kyleakin (South Skye)

Caol Àcain (pronounced Cool-Achkayn) in Gaelic, means “the strait of Haakon”. The village gets its name from King Haakon IV of Norway who moored his fleet of long-ships in the sound before the fateful Battle of Largs in 1263 which signalled the beginning of the end of Norwegian dominion over many parts of the west coast of Scotland. The main ferry to Skye from the mainland used to operate from Kyleakin, but the bridge replaced the ferry service in 1995.

Ashaig (South Skye)

Aiseag (pronounced Ash-ayg) in Gaelic, means “ferry”, the original name for the village being **Aiseag Maol Ruibhe**, or “Maol Rubha’s ferry”. For more on Saint Maol Rubha, see **Applecross**. Today there is an airstrip at Ashaig and a lovely sandy beach when the tide is low.

Armadale (South Skye)

Armadal (pronounced Arm-a-dal) in Gaelic, means “Arm Vally” and refers to the bay, whereas other sources suggest that the name comes from Norse and means “bay-dale”. The Armadale Castle Gardens and Museum of the Isles are testimony to the MacDonald dominion over this area of Skye for centuries. The MacDonalds of Sleat are the descendants of Hugh, the third son of Alexander, 3rd Lord of the Isles.

Broadford (South Skye)

An t-Àth Leathann (pronounced Un Taa Lay-un) in Gaelic, means “the broad ford”. Broadford was formerly a cattle market up until the 19th century, and in 1812 Thomas Telford built a road through the village. It then grew rapidly in the first half of the 19th century with the settlement of Napoleonic veterans.

Kylerhea (South Skye)

Caol Reatha (pronounced Cool Re-a [the ‘e’ pronounced like the ‘e’ you get in retro, but longer]) in Gaelic, is suggested by some to mean the “strait of Reatha”. Reatha was one

of the legendary warrior band known as the **Fianna** or **Fèinne**. Others say that it means “the strait of the current”. A ferry runs between Glenelg on the mainland and Kylerhea from Easter to October. There is also a lighthouse at Kylerhea which was built in 1892.

Sleat (South Skye)

Slèite (pronounced Slay-tchu) in Gaelic, means “smooth” and comes from the Norse **slétt**. Among the sayings in Gaelic associated with Sleat is **Cèilidh nam ban Slèiteach** or the visiting of the Sleat women. Alexander Nicolson explains in his “Gaelic Proverbs” (first published in 1881): “Whether the women there are more given to spending their time in afternoon calls than is the fashion elsewhere, it would be hard to say. The insinuation was, I believe, that their visits were sometimes prolonged till the next morning! Jealousy probably had something to do with this saying.”

The Cuillin (Central Skye)

An Cuilithionn (pronounced Un Cool-ee-un) in Gaelic, has a disputed meaning. There are two main theories as to meaning of the name. One suggests the range is named after the legendary Irish hero Cu Chulainn, who is said to have come from Ireland to Skye in two strides; another suggests it comes from the Old Norse word **kjölen** meaning “ridges” or “a high place”.

Sconser (Central Skye)

Sgonnsar (pronounced Skonsar) in Gaelic: the meaning of this name is unclear. The village was once an important staging post for mail, but more recently its principal role has been as the main ferry link to Raasay.

Raasay (Raasay)

Ratharsair (pronounced Raa-ar-sayr) in Gaelic, means “Roe deer island” and comes from the Norse. The island is also known as **Eilean nam Fear Mòra**, which means “the island of the big men”. The island was ruled by the MacLeods

from 1518 until 1843 when the last laird, John Macleod, deep in debt, chose to emigrate to Australia. The main village is Inverarish, and a portion of the village served as a prisoner-of-war camp for Germans during the First World War — the prisoners were used to work an iron mine which ceased operations in 1919.

Portree (Central Skye)

Port Rìgh (pronounced Porsht Ree) in Gaelic, means “King’s Harbour” and is said to have been given as result of King James V having landed at the port in 1540. However, the name of Skye’s principle town is said originally to have been **Port Ruighe**, meaning “slope port”.

Talisker (Central Skye)

Talaisgeir (pronounced Talish-ger [with a hard ‘g’]) in Gaelic, comes from the Norse and is suggested to mean “sloping rock”. Although Alexander MacBain in his “Place Names of the Highlands and Islands of Scotland” says: “The famous Talisker is probably the hall of the rock (Norse höllr, a hall).” The place name is now better known due to the fame of Skye’s only malt whisky, Talisker. The distillery was founded in 1830 by two doctor’s sons, Hugh and Kenneth MacAskill, and it was eventually established in 1831 at Carbost, which lies to the east of Talisker itself.

Edinbane (Central Skye)

An t-Aodann Bàn (pronounced Un T-Oodun Baan) in Gaelic, means “the white hill face” and one theory holds that the name comes from the white bog cotton plants that can be found on the slopes. There has been a settlement at Edinbane since before 1600, but it was Kenneth MacLeod of Greshornish who officially “founded” the village in the 19th century.



Dunvegan (North West Skye)

Dùn Bheagain (pronounced Doon Vake-an [vake is pronounced as in bake]) in Gaelic, means "Beagan's fort". Nearby Dunvegan Castle has been the home of the chiefs of MacLeod for nearly 800 years and the castle is also home to the famous Fairy Flag whose origins are surrounded by legend which range from tales concerning the eponymous fairies to the Crusades. The village of Dunvegan itself was once a frequent port of call for steamers to the Western Isles and was home to a daily service to Oban. The ferries may now have stopped, but the harbour still offers good shelter for yachts.

Uig (North West Skye)

Ùige (pronounced Ooy-ge) in Gaelic, comes from the Norse for bay "vik". The name is very widespread as a place name and as part of many place names on the West Coast, and bears testimony to the extensive settlement of Vikings in the area. Uig today links Skye to the Western Isles via Caledonian MacBrayne's ferries. The road from Portree was built in 1812 and by 1840 a pier had been built which allowed steamers to sail between Skye and other ports in the Western Isles and on the West Coast.

Quirang (North East Skye)

Quith-raing (pronounced Kuy-rang) in Gaelic, means "round fold or pen" and comes from the Norse *quoyrand* or *kvi-*

rand. This impressive rock formation was created by a succession of landslides, the largest in Britain. Huge blocks of rock slipped down-slope when Jurassic sediments buckled under the weight of the basalt plateau which lies above.

Kilt Rock (North East Skye)

Creag an Fhèilidh (pronounced Craig un Aye-lee) in Gaelic, means "kilt rock" and is so called because of the distinctive pattern of the cliff-face rocks which drop 200ft to the shore below. The area is a popular viewpoint for visitors.

Staffin (North East Skye)

Stafainn (pronounced Staff-ayn) in Gaelic, may be derived from the Norse and contain the word "staff" or even the word *stamh* meaning seaweed. Alexander MacBain in his Place Names of the Highlands and Islands of Scotland says of the word staff: "The Staff, from Norse stafr, a staff, applied to basaltic and other pillared rocks, as in Staffa..." The area of Staffin is also sometimes referred to as **An Taobh Sear** (or "the east side").

Duntulm Castle (North East Skye)

Dùn Thuilm (pronounced Doon Hoolum) in Gaelic, has been the subject of some debate regarding its meaning. Some say that it means "fort at the island" and is derived from Gaelic (*Dùn*) and Norse (*Thuilm*), and

others contend that the name means Dun or Fort of the green grassy headland, or eminence. Alexander MacBain in his "Place Names of the Highlands and Islands of Scotland" says of the word *tulm*: "The Norse is holmr, a holm or islet in a bay." There had apparently been an Iron Age broch, a Pictish fort and a Viking stronghold on the site before it became a MacDonald stronghold in the 1500s.

The Old Man of Storr (North East Skye)

Bodach an Stòrr (pronounced Botach un Stawr) in Gaelic, means "the Old Man of Storr" and the word *storr* probably comes from Old Norse and means "big" or "great". The pinnacle The Old Man of Storr is part of The Storr, which is a rocky ridge on the Trotternish Escarpment. ●

NOTE

The place names above are in several cases open to other interpretations and the above is simply meant as an entertaining guide for visitors. The pronunciation guide for Gaelic is a rough guide to pronunciation, and for the proper Gaelic pronunciation, visitors should consult a local Gaelic speaker.

Photograph: Willie Urquhart/www.whfp.com



Portree, Central Skye and Raasay



Snap shot

Home to the island's capital, visitors get a different view of the majestic, mist covered Cuillin mountains, the inspiration for many a poem and song

are all a short distance from the ferry terminal in Churchton Bay.

The island has a population of about 140 although at one time it had a much healthier figure. After the rising of 1745 nearly every house in Raasay was burnt to the ground during government reprisals, and a century later 120 families were removed from their homes by the landlord and shipped to Australia to make way for sheep and cattle.

Much of Raasay's tragic history and beauty are captured in the verses of the late poet Sorley Maclean, who was born on the island. Widely regarded as one of the greatest European poets, he chose to write in Gaelic — his native language.

Raasay House, a fine Georgian mansion which was once the seat of the clan chief MacLeod of Raasay, was badly damaged by fire in 2009. However, a magnificent new building has risen from the ashes and offers accommodation as well as a base for a range of outdoor activities.

Directly opposite the former ferry pier at Suisinish is an abandoned processing plant connected with the iron ore mine which used to operate in the hill above Inverarish, and in the village you will see the row of miners' cottages which are still occupied. During the First World War the mines were worked mainly by German prisoners-of-war.

If industrial archaeology is not to your taste then you should take a trip to the east coast to Brochel Castle. Now a ruin, it was the clan seat of the MacLeods of Raasay before they moved to Raasay House.

Beyond Brochel Castle is an entirely different kind of monument — 3,000 yards of tarred road weaving and switching its way to Arnish and the home of the late Calum MacLeod, who constructed it single-handed over a period of more than 10 years.

For years the authorities had refused to build the road to the township which Calum always maintained caused the depopulation. When he started building it in 1966 there were seven families in the area. When it was finished there was no one left except his wife and himself. He built the road with his own hands, wearing out two wheelbarrows, six picks, six shovels, four spades and five hammers in the process.

Calum died many years ago, but thanks to his road the trend of depopulation was reversed. It is very unfortunate that he is no longer there to greet the many travellers who come to view his Herculean achievement.

Calum's story is now the subject of a best-selling book, "Calum's Road", by

author and columnist for the West Highland Free Press, Roger Hutchinson, who lives on Raasay.

To get the best view of this beautiful island it is worth expending a little energy to climb to the top of Dun Caan, the extinct volcano which dominates the centre of the island. According to Samuel Johnson, who travelled with James Boswell on a "Tour of the Hebrides" in 1773, this is the effect the peak had on his companion: "Boswell climbed to the top of Duncaan, and danced a reel in sheer exuberance."

Of course it may not have the same effect on everyone, but you should not miss out on the chance to savour Raasay's unique atmosphere and wild, beautiful scenery when you travel west. ●

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Portree: Island capital and the ideal base for touring

The main centre of population on Skye, and by virtue of that the focus of commerce and trade on the island, is the town of Portree. As well as being a busy fishing port set in a sheltered and picturesque bay, Portree is the administrative centre for local government in Skye and Lochalsh and houses the island's only secondary school.

Its central geographical location, halfway up the east coast of Skye,

makes it an ideal base from which to explore the rest of the island, and since tourism now plays a major role in the town's economy it is well developed to cater for the needs of visitors.

There are several interpretations of where the name Portree came from. The most popular one is that the title is the anglicisation of the Gaelic Port Rìgh, the King's Port, marking the occasion of a visit of an early tourist to the area, King James V. However, Gaelic

scholars will point out that the town's proper name is Port Ruighe, the Port of the Slopes. Either way the name rolls off the tongue pleasantly enough.

The starting point for most visitors to Portree should be the tourist office, situated in the centre of the village. Information on all the surrounding attractions is available from the office, with booklets, maps and leaflets on areas of South-West Ross and Skye for sale at the counter.



The tourist office is also the best place to find accommodation in Portree and the surrounding area. The staff will have up-to-date information on vacancies in all registered establishments offering visitors an overnight stay. The best way to avoid frustration is to use the tourist board's booking service.

Portree is home to branches of the major Scottish banks which as well as providing normal banking and currency exchange services have "hole in the wall" cash dispensers.

Wentworth Street, the main thoroughfare of the town, is packed with hotels and shops catering for every need. Finding a place to eat that will suit your palate and your budget should be no problem, and the large number of public and lounge bars in the town have a relaxed and welcoming atmosphere. During the summer months many of them lay on free musical entertainment.

While Skye is noted for its spectacular mountainous scenery there are sadly very few sandy stretches of coastline to go swimming from. This may be a blessing in disguise as the west-coast weather and the sea temperatures are rarely kind to bathers anyway. To get in the swim safely and comfortably a visit to the public swimming pool in Portree is well worthwhile. The pool is situated within the high school, which has ample parking space. Sailing can be accessed through the Skye Sailing Club on Portree Harbour's north shore – visitors are welcome.

Nearby is Portree's community centre — its Gaelic name is Aitreachh an Eilein, which translates as "fine big building of the island". The 500-seater hall can accommodate concerts and dances.

The town also has a superb sports field on the Struan Road. Pairc nan Laoch ("Field of the Heroes") is home to the island's shinty team — shinty is the traditional stick-and-ball game of the Highlands, an exciting spectacle which can be seen most Saturdays from March through until October — with its well-appointed clubhouse.

And Portree has one of the island's foremost visitor attractions in the heritage centre Aros, situated in forest land on the outskirts of the village. "Aros" is the old Gaelic word for "home" or "homestead". With its shop and restaurant, and a small theatre/cinema as well, Aros is well worth a visit.

If you tire of Portree itself there are plenty of easy scenic walks on the outskirts which do not require major planning or heavy-duty footwear. One of the most popular is the footpath to Black Rock, the tidal islet at the northern mouth of Portree bay, which can be reached by heading out towards Staffin from the town centre and then turning off to the right along the coastline. The route can be followed uphill beyond Black Rock to Torvaig and then Dùn Gerashader, an ancient iron-age fort. From there one can take the main road back into Portree.

Heading south from Portree there is the Forest Enterprise walk in Glen Varigall forest and a short climb to Fingal's Seat, ▶

Things to remember

Our countryside



Wild animals and farm animals can behave unpredictably if you get too close, especially if they're with their young, so give them plenty of space.

Protect plants and animals, and take your litter home. We have a responsibility to protect our countryside now and for future generations, so make sure you don't harm animals, birds, plants or trees.



Don't miss

ISLE OF RAASAY AND CALUM'S ROAD A 15-minute ferry crossing from Skye (take the ferry at Sconser), lies the beautiful, fertile island of Raasay. Home of the late, celebrated poet Sorley Maclean, the island is rich in history. Climb Dun Caan, an extinct volcano in the centre of the island, visit the ruin of Brochel Castle, once the clan seat of the MacLeods of Raasay, and take a walk or a drive along Calum's Road – 3,000 yards long and constructed single-handedly, over a 10-year period, by Calum MacLeod from Arnish at the far north of the island.

GLENBRITTLE The starting point for many walkers/climbers who wish to experience the famous Black Cuillin mountains of Skye and the magic of the Fairy Pools.

TALISKER DISTILLERY Take a tour around the whisky distillery, on the shores of Loch Harport, which was built in 1830.

BRAES The site of the Battle of the Braes during which crofters, inspired by the land struggle in Ireland, rose up against their landlords. Legislation was later passed giving rights to crofters. A monument stands at Braes to commemorate the event.

PORTREE The main town on Skye has a pretty, colourful harbour and plenty of shops, restaurants, galleries and other tourist attractions.

SLIGACHAN Worth stopping for fantastic views of the famous Cuillin mountains, with the rounded Red Cuillin on one side and the dramatic peaks of the Black Cuillin on the other.



► an easy hill with good views to the west. For a slightly higher and more panoramic view put on walking boots and head for Ben Tianavaig which overlooks Portree from the south. On the way you pass through the village of Camustianavaig and the road goes on

through the villages of Upper and Lower Ollach and ends at Peinchorran. On the way it passes the site of the Battle of the Braes where in 1882 crofters clashed with the constabulary in a celebrated incident in the Highland-wide struggle to secure crofting rights of tenancy.

To travel further afield some form of transport is needed. Garages in Portree hire cars but during the summer season there are organised bus tours round the island leaving from Somerled Square, as well as regular services to other areas. ●



Photographs: Isle of Skye Highland Games 2015 Willie Urquhart/www.whfp.com. Isle of Skye Highland Games 2017 is taking place this year on 9th August at The Lump, Portree



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Screen trail in Skye and Lochalsh

Skye and Lochalsh has become a magnet for film and TV companies – with the area featuring in several productions over the years.

Picturesque **Plockton** was the backdrop for scenes in the 1973 horror classic 'The Wicker Man', which starred Edward Woodward and Britt Ekland.

In the film Sgt Howie (Edward Woodward) is seen landing a plane on Loch Carron, before making his way through the village (which doubles as Summerisle) to begin investigating the mysterious disappearance of a young girl. Although most of the film was set in Galloway in the south of Scotland, 'The Wicker Man's opening credits also feature the **Old Man of Storr** in Skye.

A few years later **Plockton** was the main backdrop for the BBC 1 series 'Hamish Macbeth' – the show which helped set 'Trainspotting' actor Robert Carlyle on the path to stardom as the local Policeman in the fictional west Highland village of Lochdubh. 'Hamish Macbeth' ran for three series between 1995 and 1997.

At **Dornie**, a few miles to the south, **Eilean Donan Castle** and surrounding **Loch Duich** featured in the 1986 fantasy adventure 'Highlander'. The film stars Christopher Lambert as the immortal clansman Connor MacLeod, and went on to become a cult classic. A sword fighting scene in the film was filmed in Skye's **Cuillin** mountains.

'Flash Gordon' - another cult movie which like 'Highlander' featured Freddy Mercury and Queen on the soundtrack – has a link to the Isle of Skye. Scenes for the 1980 movie starring Sam J Jones were shot at **Ashaig airfield**, near Broadford.

At **Kylerhea**, the ferry which plies the narrows to **Glenelg** featured prominently in 'Made of Honour', a 2008 romantic comedy which starred Patrick Dempsey, Kevin McKidd and Michelle Monaghan. The film also includes scenes shot in **Dunvegan** and **Portree**.

Stunning **Loch Coruisk**, which can be accessed on foot or by boat from **Elgol**, featured in the 2007 fantasy film 'Stardust'. Fans of the film – which starred Michelle Pfeiffer, Robert De Niro and Claire Danes –

might also recognise the **Fairy Glen** near **Uig**, as well as the **Quiraing** near **Staffin**.

The north-west coast of Skye doubled as Medieval Japan for '47 Ronin'. **Neist Point** near Glendale, enhanced by CGI, is the most recognisable location in the 2013 Samurai-themed adventure which starred Keanu Reeves.

The **Neist Point** lighthouse can also be seen in 'Breaking the Waves', the acclaimed 1996 drama directed by Lars von Trier.

The dramatic landscape of Skye's **Trotternish** peninsula is the island's most-well known, and well-used film location.

Only last year shooting for 'Transformers: The Last Knight' – the fifth in the blockbuster series of science fiction films based on the popular 1980s toys – took place near the **Quiraing**.

The distinctive rock formations which overlook **Staffin** were also depicted in the 2016 Disney adaptation of Roald Dahl's 'BFG', which was directed by Steven Spielberg, as well as the 2012 movie Snow White and the Huntsman, and the 'Land That Time Forgot' (1975).

Scenes for the 2015 big-screen version of 'Macbeth', which stars Michael Fassbender, were shot throughout Trotternish, while the famed landmark of the **Old Man of Storr** was used in the opening scenes of Ridley Scott's 2012 'Alien' prequel 'Prometheus'.

Film-making much closer to home also makes good use of the Skye landscape. The first ever Scottish Gaelic feature film – 'Seachd: The Inaccessible Pinnacle' includes scenes shot in the **Cuillins**, **Isleornsay** and **Elgol**. The **Sleat** peninsula is also the main location for BBC Alba's Gaelic soap Bannan.

Major companies like Adidas, Volvo and travel firm Kayak have all filmed recent adverts in Skye. Yet perhaps the most-watched depiction of the island came not via a film or TV production, but a seven minute YouTube clip which came out in 2014. At the last count 'The Ridge' – which is Skye-born stunt cyclist Danny MacAskill traversing the Cuillins on a mountain bike - had been viewed over 49 million times.




Filming 'Macbeth'

Photograph: Willie Urquhart/www.whfp.com

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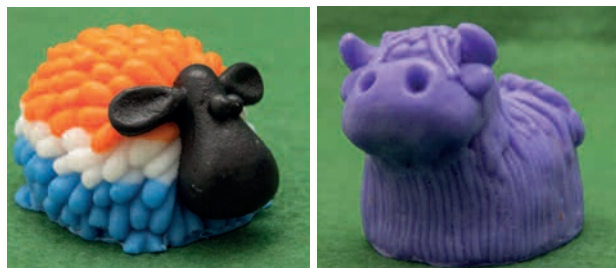
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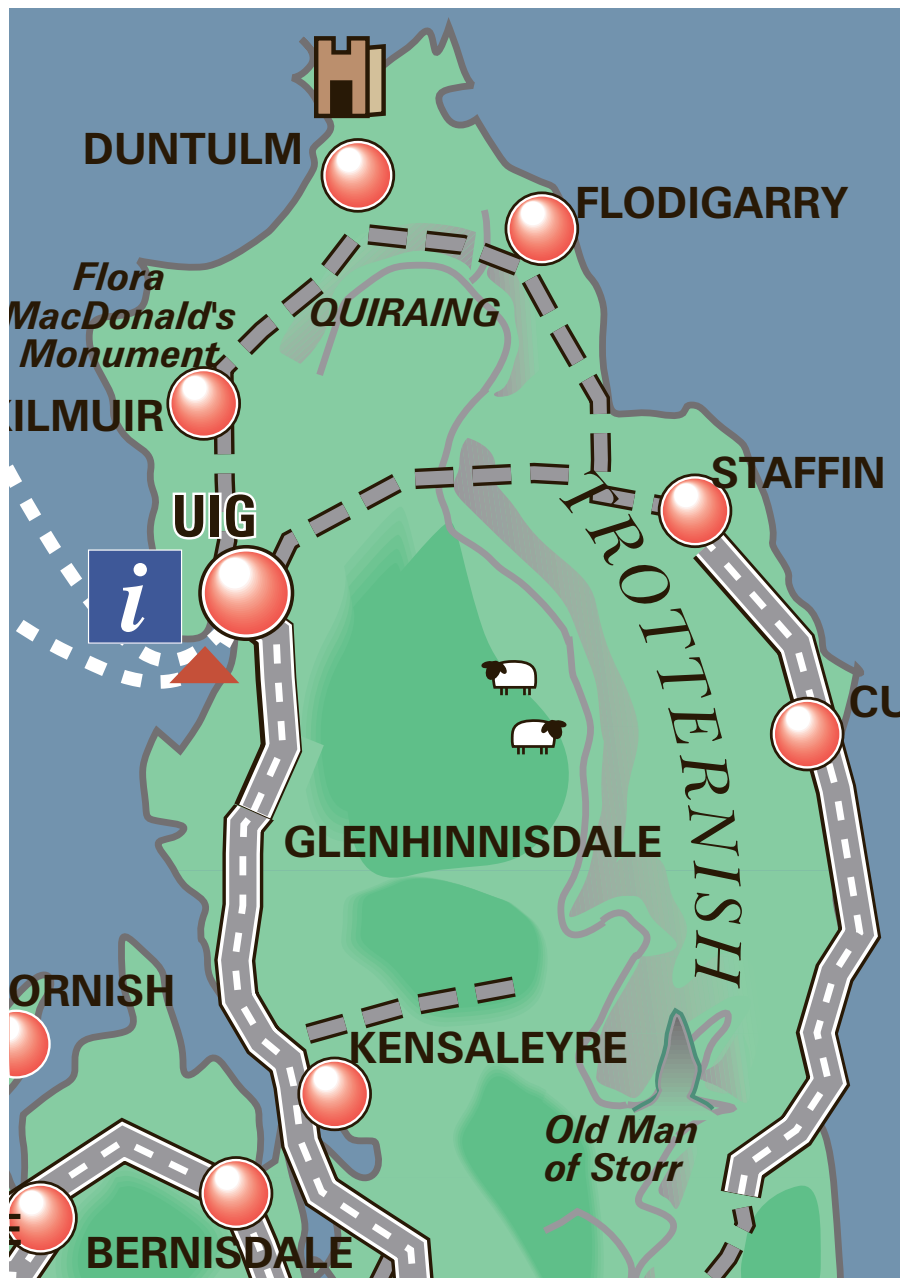


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North East Skye



Snap shot

Spectacular landscape and incredible rock formations make a leisurely drive through the North East of Skye a must do for any itinerary

North East Skye



Spectacular scenic delights abound in North East Skye

In an island of dramatic contrasts, the Trotternish peninsula of north-east Skye has its own particular scenic delights to offer — including the bizarre land formations of the Quiraing and Trotternish Ridge. Winter brings out the harsh majesty of this dramatic geology.

The coastal road north from Portree to Staffin passes the Storr Lochs — Lochs Fada and Leathan — which feed the island's small hydro-electric station. Inland, above the road, towers the plateau of Storr with the giant pillar of the Old Man of Storr. As you

drive further north, there are breathtaking views across the islands of South Rona and Raasay to the mainland beyond.

Lealt Gorge contains one of Skye's most spectacular waterfalls. Further on is another dramatic landmark — the aptly-named Kilt Rock cliffs, plunging down to the sea.

The townships of the Staffin area offer some of the best examples of crofting on Skye. Crofting is a system of agriculture based on a unique form of landholding, which offers statutory security of tenure. It was introduced last

century in an attempt to bring to an end the iniquities of the Highland Clearances in which hundreds of thousands of people were forced off the land by the big landowners to make way for "improvements", be it large-scale sheep farming or deer forests.

Today, crofting is largely a part-time form of agriculture based usually on sheep and cattle production. The crofter will usually have a job — full-time or part-time — as well as working the croft, and many crofters provide bed and breakfast accommodation for visitors. ▶▶



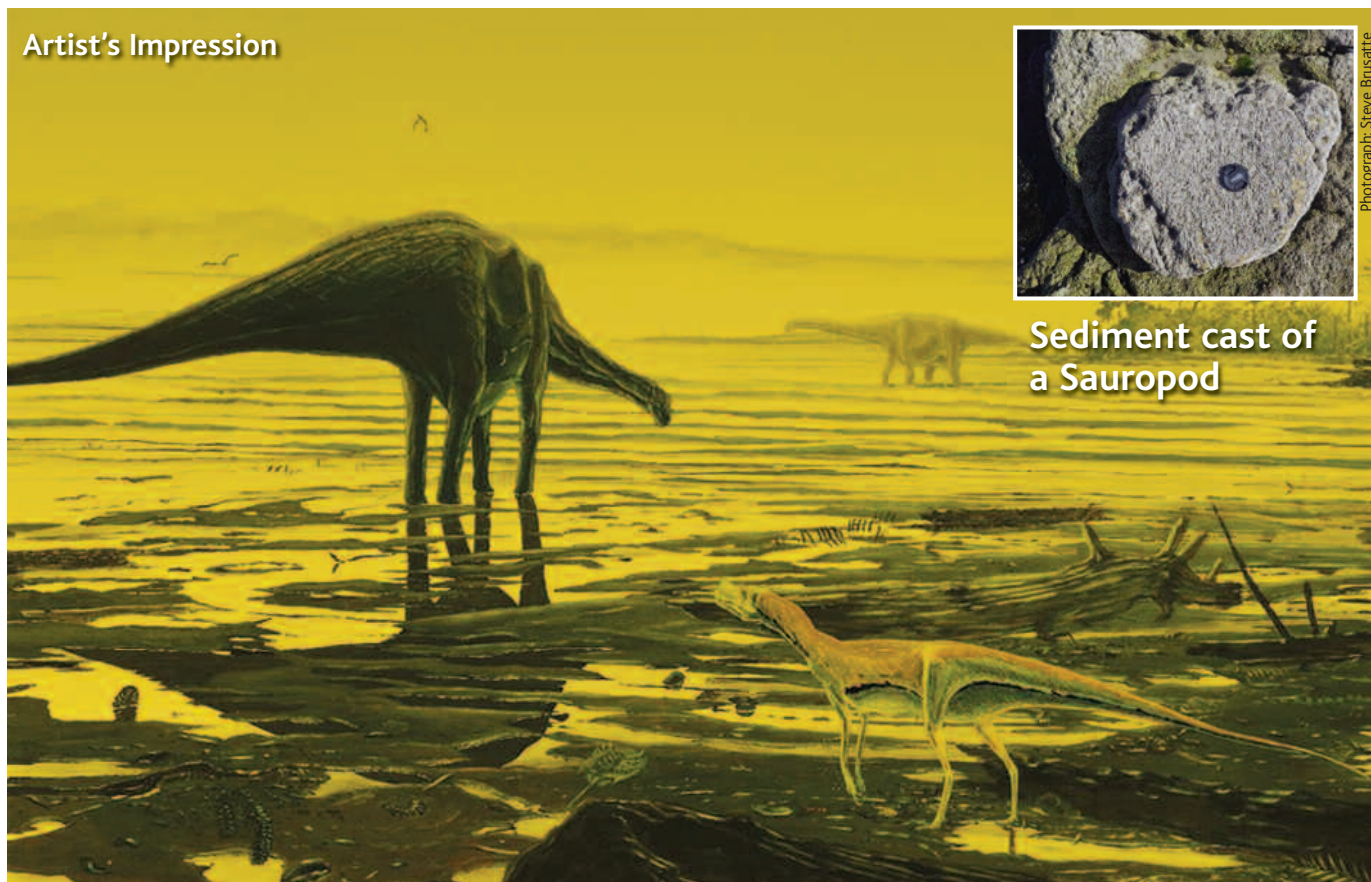
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Artist's Impression



Photograph: Steve Brusatte

Sediment cast of a Sauropod

Artist: Jon Hoad

Walking with Dinosaurs on the 'Jurassic' island

by Keith MacKenzie

In 1994, not long after Hollywood blockbuster Jurassic Park hit the big screen, a fossil find took the Isle of Skye back some 170 million years.

BP geologists - on a field trip to Valtos in Staffin - made a discovery which was confirmed by Glasgow's Hunterian Museum to be the fossilised remains of a Humerus bone from a Sauropod, dating to the Middle-Jurassic period. Although a footprint had been identified more than ten years before that, this was the first physical evidence that dinosaurs had once roamed in the area we now know as Skye.

Since then a series of discoveries have followed - the latest of them a highly significant find near Duntulm, at the very northern tip of Skye.

In the winter the bay known locally as Cairidh Ghluimaig - sitting just beneath the ruins of Duntulm Castle - can take a battering from the fierce winter gales swirling in from the Minch. But 170 million years ago, when the climate in the area which would become the Scottish Highlands was much more temperate, this stretch of the Trotternish coast was bathed within a shallow salt water lagoon.

There, undiscovered until a study by a team from Edinburgh

University in December 2015, were left hundreds of foot and hand prints - made by plant-eating, large-necked Sauropods.

Experts lined-up to hail the importance of the find, which has enhanced Skye's status as one of the world's foremost dinosaur destinations.

With every new discovery comes more information on the habits and habitats of these prehistoric giants.

For example, the Duntulm footprints - the largest of which is 70 centimetres in diameter - are the first Sauropod tracks to be found in Scotland. Until now, the only evidence that Sauropods once lived here came from a small number of bone and teeth fragments.

Scientists also say that the footprints reveal that the dinosaurs were early, distant relatives of more well-known species, such as Brontosaurus and Diplodocus. The Skye dinosaurs likely grew to at least 15 metres in length and weighed more than 10 tonnes. The recently-identified trackways also indicate that Sauropods spent lots of time in coastal areas and shallow water, whereas it was previously believed that large dinosaurs were purely land-dwellers.

Dugald Ross, a local palaeontology expert who runs the

Staffin Museum, explains: "One footprint on its own is significant, but it is the fact that these are in line – you can clearly see a pattern has emerged and it is this which makes this latest discovery so important.

"The footprints look a little bit like potholes, but it's the formation of the line which shows that this could not have been made accidentally. They are 'in-situ' - that's what makes them spectacular."

Through the small museum, which he operates at Culnacnoc, Dugald has seen a gradual rise in the number of intrigued visitors over the years.

He added: "Every time there is a new find it creates interest and you get more people coming to Skye to see for themselves.

"Staffin beach (where footprints from a meat-eating dinosaur were discovered in 2002) is an area that is easily accessible, and there has been a huge interest in what is there.

"Over the last 20 years that interest has grown steadily. Many people are now coming to Skye solely to find out about these fossils."

But with curiosity, comes pitfalls. And even 170 million-year old dinosaurs aren't immune from the black market.

In 2011 there were even reports that rock had been ripped from cliffs at Berreraig Bay as looters searched for the valuable ammonites - molluscs of the ancient oceans which lived around the same time as the dinosaurs.

Explains Dugald: "There is a market for fossils and significant archaeological finds – and it's something which has been brought to our attention here in Skye. There are ammonite fossils for sale on the internet. I would say that these can only have originated from Skye."

Nevertheless, searching and collecting fossils is by no means illegal, and it is a popular thing to do while visiting Skye.

"Each location can't be kept a secret, and of course collecting isn't banned - there is usually no harm in collecting fossils," Dugald added. "Even last summer I had a Dutch family in at the museum wanting to hunt for fossils, and I advised them to a site in Digg. When they came back they had found fossil vertebrae – something which is extremely rare. The family donated it to the museum and more information could yet come out of that."

And the good news for Skye is that there could be many more discoveries yet to come. That's the conclusion of Dr Steve Brusatte, of the University of Edinburgh's School of GeoSciences, who led the study at Duntulm.

He said: "We will keep working on Skye. It is emerging as one of the world's most interesting and important places for finding dinosaurs.

"The first dinosaurs were found there only 30 years ago, so we're just scratching the surface. Skye is one of the only places in the world where you can find dinosaurs from the Middle Jurassic period (about 170 million years ago), so it is a globally important site.

"We hope all of these finds help put Skye on the palaeontological map. The scientific world is taking notice of Skye. Hopefully that means that someday a dinosaur/fossil museum and visitor centre can be built on the island, as has been the case in so many other parts of the world where there are important dinosaur fossils."

This article is an amended version of one which appeared in the West Highland Free Press by Keith MacKenzie on 11th December 2015 ●

TIMELINE OF DISCOVERY ON SKYE

1982 Leicester University students find a single footprint of a Hadrosaur – now on display in the Hunterian Museum in Glasgow.

1994 Fossilised remains of a humerus bone from a Sauropod are discovered by BP geologists on a field trip in Staffin. Soon after the National Museum in Scotland reports that a year earlier it had received part of a tibia from a Theropod discovered by a German collector on the Strathaird peninsula.

1996 Dugald Ross of the Staffin museum finds Sauropod vertebrae to the north of the Kilt Rock.

1997 Colin Aitken from Edinburgh finds a fossilised elbow fragment from a Stegosaur-like dinosaur near Berreraig Bay in Trotternish.

2002 Local woman Cathy Booth finds 'in situ' footprints at Staffin Beach. They are thought to have been left by a large meat-eating predator such as the Megalosaurus.

2004 The smallest dinosaur footprint, measuring just 1.78 cm was discovered on Skye by Dr Neil Clark of the Hunterian Museum.

2007 Collector Patrick Gavin finds a Sauropod tooth at Valtos. Just four dinosaur teeth have been found in the UK – all of them on Skye.

2008 London University students find the fossilised skeleton of a 164-million year old turtle at Cladach a' Ghlinne near Elgol.

2016 170-million-year old foot and hand prints – made by plant-eating, large-necked sauropods – are discovered at Cairidh Ghlumaig in Duntulm, North Skye



Photograph: Steve Brusatte



Don't miss North East Skye

► The crofts at Staffin are clustered around a beautiful sandy bay, and as you leave Staffin you are faced with a difficult choice: whether to follow the road around the north coast, or to take the link road to Uig across the Quiraing. If time permits you really shouldn't miss out on either.

The weird rock formations of the Quiraing are like nothing you will see elsewhere in Skye or anywhere in Scotland for that matter. After the steep and tortuous climb over the Quiraing, the road winds through moor and peat bog before rejoining the coast road for the drop into Uig, with fine views out across the Minch and over Loch Snizort to the Waternish peninsula.

Meanwhile, the road north from Staffin passes Flodigarry (what is now the Flodigarry Hotel was once the home of Flora MacDonald of Bonnie Prince Charlie fame) and winds round to Duntulm and Kilmuir. The ruined Duntulm Castle — once a stronghold of the MacDonalds—is easily reached by a short walk along the grassy headland, and while at Kilmuir you should pause to see Flora MacDonald's monument.

On round to Uig, the ferry point for Lochmaddy in North Uist and Tarbert in Harris, and itself a lovely village with a fine bay and wooded glens. From here the road leads back to Portree, past Kingsburgh and through Kensaleyre with its standing stones and views over Loch Snizort Beag. ●

THE OLD MAN OF STORR A few miles north of Portree, the Old Man is a huge pinnacle of rock standing in front of the Storr Ridge which rises to around 2,300 feet.

KILT ROCK WATERFALL The vertiginous 200-foot high cliffs, so called because they resemble the pleats of a kilt, is where you will find the Kilt Rock Waterfall flowing over the cliff edge and into the sea below.

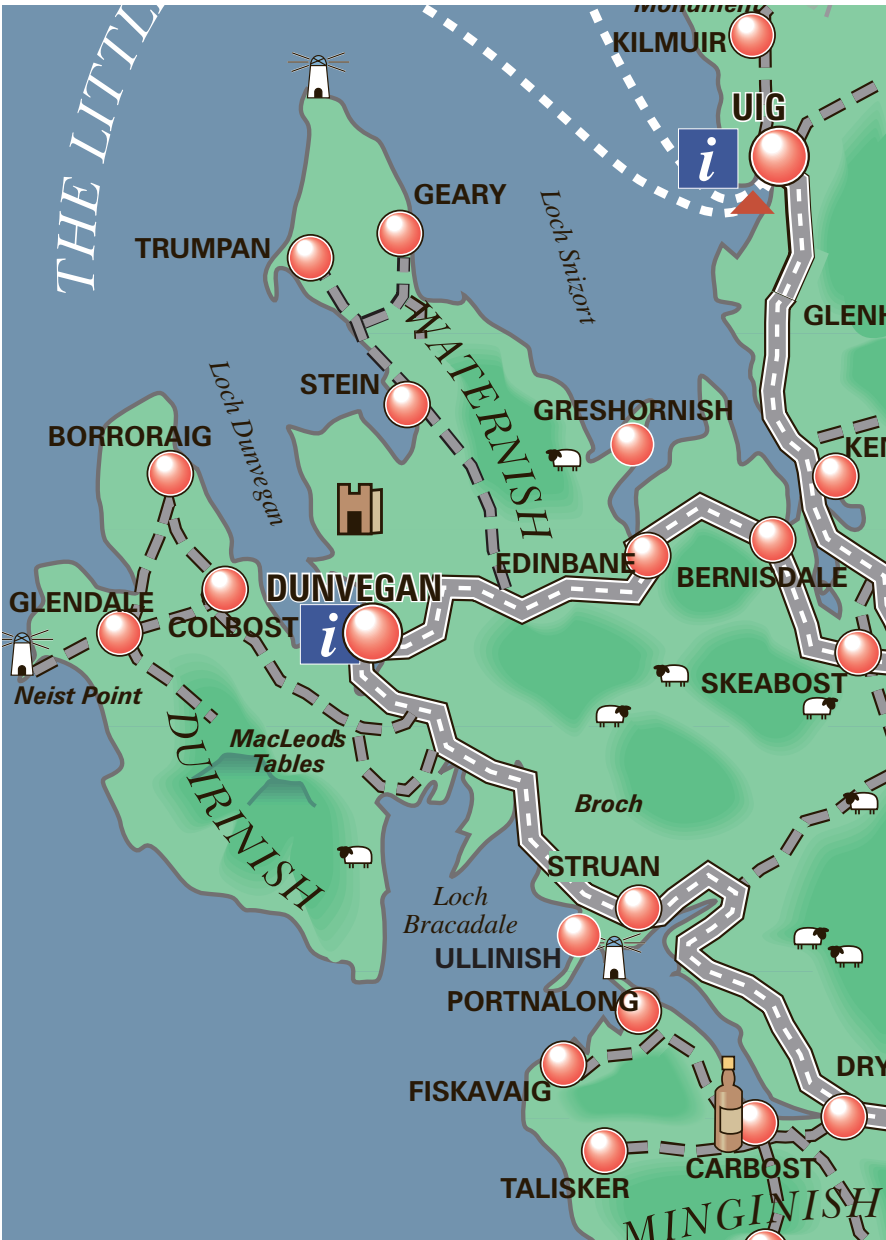
FLORA MACDONALD'S MONUMENT AND SKYE MUSEUM OF ISLAND LIFE A collection of traditional thatched blackhouses which show how islanders used to live. Nearby is the monument to Flora MacDonald who helped Bonnie Prince Charlie escape from his enemies.

STAFFIN A traditional crofting township overlooking Staffin Island and Staffin Bay.

DUNTULM CASTLE A Viking stronghold which later became home to the MacLeods and then the MacDonalds. King James V visited the castle in the 16th century. The castle is situated atop cliffs and has great views of the Outer Hebrides.

THE QUIRAING Incredible rock formations caused by a landslide millions of years ago – drive over the Quiraing to the pretty village of Uig, gateway to the Outer Hebrides.

North West Skye



Snap shot

The impressive flat-topped mountains, MacLeod's Tables, offer exhilarating climbs and fantastic views

North West Skye



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Giant MacAskil Museum

Photograph: Willie Urquhart/www.whfp.com

For an eagle's-eye view of the north west of Skye let's imagine we are on the summit of one of MacLeod's Tables, Healabhal Mhor and Healabhal Bheag, twin flat-topped basalt hills which dominate the skyline of this most dramatic corner of Skye.

From this lofty viewing point, the eye can wander over quiet crofting townships which have changed little over many generations. There's the rugged splendour of Dunvegan Castle on its rock by the seashore on Loch Dunvegan. Mighty Loch Bracadale, Loch Dunvegan and Loch Snizort, which cut their way into the landscape of north west Skye, create the most dramatic vista of land and sea to be found anywhere in the British Isles. The jagged Cuillin ridge to the south, the hills of Trotternish to the east and out across the Minch to the west the islands of Lewis, Harris and the Uists all add to the splendour.

But let's descend and explore the places of interest.

On to the most westerly point in Skye, Neist Point and its lighthouse. Here can be seen some of the most magnificent cliffs in the Hebrides, towering to over 1,000 feet and home of the golden eagle and many varied species of seabird.

On the other side of the peninsula is Borreraig, where the famed MacCrimmon pipers had their piping school from about 1500 to 1800. Here there is a memorial cairn to the MacCrimmons, who were pipers to the chiefs of Clan MacLeod.

Looking over Loch Dunvegan to the north you will see at Clagain one of the few beaches on Skye, the Coral Beach with its creamy white coral sand — perfect for a warm summer's day.

Onward then to Dunvegan and its castle, ancient home of the Clan MacLeod for over 700 years. Visit Dunvegan Castle and enjoy woodland walks and the castle gardens.

The Waterness peninsula on the

north side of Loch Dunvegan, overlooking the Minch and the Outer Isles, is perhaps the best place to enjoy a west-coast sunset. Stein village boasts the oldest pub on Skye. Further on there's Trumpan Church which the MacDonalds of Uist set on fire, burning within the MacLeod congregation.

There are many sites of historical interest throughout the area, the most accessible being the broch at Struan — a fortified round tower built in the Iron Age, and many of which were still in use when the Norsemen began their Hebridean raids.

The visitor to the area will find friendly bed-and-breakfast available in many of the croft houses. There are good hotels, camping sites, self-catering accommodation, restaurants and many fine craft and woollen shops. So spend a few days among the villages and people of north west Skye and enjoy the hospitality you will find here. ●

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Sample the magic of the Waternish peninsula

The Waternish peninsula offers something special for every visitor to Skye who ventures off the main Portree-Dunvegan road. Passing magical Fairy Bridge, views quickly open out across the wee islands of Loch Dunvegan and beyond to vistas of the Outer Hebrides, the Atlantic surf and the wide open sky. Work up an appetite with a stroll from one of the many self-catering establishments or bed and breakfasts to sample local fare and craic at the Stein Inn, the oldest inn on Skye at the heart of the community, and don't miss the world-famous Loch Bay Restaurant. Five-star visitor attraction Skyeskyns offers free guided tours of their traditional exhibition tannery and showroom and Shilasdair shop and dye-

house provides another fascinating experience.

Brae Fasach and Dandelion Designs are among the galleries you'll find exhibiting paintings, photography, ceramics, print works and crafts on hand. For a little inspiration, try the pop-up quirky antiques shop or step into an artist's life on a local painting workshop. Visitors can walk forestry and coastal trails, see the legendary Annat's Temple, the Boy's Cairn, Trumpan Church, the ancient fort of Dun Hallin or trek to the lighthouse at panoramic Waternish Point. Keep watch for our regularly-sighted white-tailed sea eagles as you go.

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Wealth of clan history to be found at Dunvegan Castle

Nowadays Dunvegan Castle and Gardens is still the official home of the MacLeod chief and is said to be one of the oldest inhabited castles in Scotland. However, instead of repelling invaders the fortress is now open to visitors and, being one of Skye's most famous landmarks, it proves very popular.

The present chief, Hugh MacLeod of MacLeod, is the 30th chief of clan MacLeod and still resides in the home of his ancestors. There is a 12-minute audio-visual programme presenting an insight into the history of Dunvegan Castle and the clan.

The video is a good starting point to the wealth of clan history offered on display at Dunvegan Castle. There are pieces dating from the 15th century through to artefacts associated with Charles Edward Stuart by way of hunting trophies, and all manner of weapons and curiosities.

Among the prize exhibits is the famous Fairy Flag, the sacred banner of the Clan MacLeod. It is surrounded

by legends of victory and the prophecy that it will be unfurled again to bring victory in the MacLeod clan's darkest hour. Also on display is the MacLeod drinking horn which each successive chief must drain in one gulp to inherit the title.

Keeping alive the romanticism of the 1745 rebellion and the Bonnie Prince, the castle has on display artefacts associated with Charles Edward Stuart. There are the glasses worn by Donald MacLeod of Galtrigill, who piloted the boat that took Charles on island-hopping flights from the Redcoats; a pin cushion belonging to Flora MacDonald embroidered with the names of some who suffered in the 1745 rebellion; there is even a lock of hair said to be clipped from the Prince's head by Flora MacDonald as a keepsake and, to this day, preserved in a locket.

Even the more ordinary contents of the castle built up over the centuries are of interest. There are many fine oil paintings and antiques, and the library contains many rare historical books.

Outside the castle itself visitors can enjoy a walk in the extensive gardens or take a boat trip through Loch Dunvegan to observe a seal colony at close quarters, or charter one of their traditional clinker boats for a loch cruise or fishing expedition. Souvenirs, crafts, jewellery and books can be purchased from either of the craft shops in the car park or in the castle which are open from 10am to 5.30pm (last entry 5pm). Food and drink, from snacks to a substantial meal, can be enjoyed at the MacLeod's Table Cafe at the castle or at any of the hotels and restaurants in Dunvegan village and the surrounding area. ●



Photograph: Willie Urquhart/www.whfp.com

Don't miss North West Skye

DUNVEGAN CASTLE The ancestral home of the chieftains of the Clan MacLeod, the castle can trace its history back to around 1200AD. It is one of the most popular tourist attractions on the island.

MACLEOD'S TABLES Two impressive flat-topped mountains, Healabhal Beag and Healabhal Mor, which offer an exhilarating climb and fantastic views.

NEIST POINT Skye's most westerly point and home to Neist Point Lighthouse.

STEIN VILLAGE Home of Skye's oldest inn, lovely shoreside walks and a range of watersports.

TRUMPAN CHURCH Scene of a bloody massacre of the MacLeod clan by the MacDonalds in the middle of the 16th century.

CORAL BEACH One of the few beaches on Skye, with great views of the highest sea cliffs in Skye, Dunvegan Head.

Gaelic culture

Sample the living Gaelic culture of the Highlands and Islands

Any visitor to Skye and Lochalsh and the Western Isles will quickly be made aware of the area's rich, and living, Gaelic culture.

Gaelic road signs point the way. Through Gaelic, placenames illuminate the landscape and the past. And whether it's in song or conversation, the language can be heard throughout the islands.

The language is not only a cultural asset but of economical importance to many places, as the islands are home to a number of jobs involving the language's development and promotion. Gaelic education is also a big employer, with several Gaelic-medium schools.

In Sleat on Skye there is the Gaelic College, Sabhal Mòr Ostaig, which is part of the University of the Highlands and Islands. The college offers a number of courses through the medium of Gaelic up to degree level and in the summer offers short courses in Gaelic for all levels. These courses usually have to be booked in advance and run throughout the summer. People can also learn Gaelic through the college's distance learning opportunities. For more information on the college and what they offer call 01471 888000.

Lewis Castle College in Stornoway and their campus in Benbecula again offer a range of courses in Gaelic for students interested in the language. Gaelic classes are available at the Ceòlas Summer School which takes place in South Uist, and there are other summer courses run throughout the islands. For more information visitors



Photograph: Willie Urquhart/www.whfp.com

should check with the local tourist offices and venues for details.

Gaelic song is another popular attraction for tourists and can be heard at various events and ceilidhs throughout the year.

Kilmuir and Staffin, as well as places such as Ness in Lewis and many other parts of the Western Isles, are still what may be considered Gaelic heartlands where the language is used widely in everyday life. Sleat, rejuvenated by the Gaelic college, is also a strong Gaelic-speaking area.

In short, any visitor to the area is almost certain to come across the language and there are numerous opportunities to find out more about Gaelic for those interested.

The language for many has also reached a crossroads – with the 2011 Census a slight fall in the number of speakers – and many activists and supporters of the language welcomed the passing of the Gaelic Language Act in the Scottish Parliament.

During the consultation which preceded the passing of the Act, Peter Peacock, the then minister with responsibility for Gaelic, said: "Our aim is to create a sustainable future for Gaelic in Scotland. I am clear that legislation by itself cannot achieve this. We need to see the Gaelic language passed on within families, promoted by schools, widely used in communities and valued by learners."

All of Mr Peacock's aspirations still hold largely true for Skye and Lochalsh, Wester Ross and the Western Isles. The language is still passed on in many families, promoted by schools and widely used in communities.

Anyone with an interest in the language will not be disappointed during their visit and may wish to return to learn more about the language of the Gaels. And there is no place better to do that than Skye and Lochalsh, Wester Ross and the Western Isles. ●



Sport steeped in Celtic culture

The ancient stick and ball sport of shinty is one unique feature of Highland life which visitors to the area shouldn't miss.

Shinty is steeped in Celtic tradition and has its roots deep in the mists of time when it was thought that it was played as training in preparation for combat. Games involving up to a hundred men were common, though fortunately nowadays events are a little more organised.

The game is often compared to Irish hurling and both sports share a

common ancestry, although there are significant differences.

Shinty matches consist of two teams, each possessing 12 players plus substitutes, and games are often fast and exciting, high-scoring affairs with a goal awarded every time the ball beats the goalkeeper who guards the 10ft high by 12ft wide goal.

Badenoch sides Kingussie and Newtonmore have dominated the sport in recent years, but Skye and Lochalsh has three senior clubs who all compete in league and cup competitions.

Kinlochshiel, who compete in the top-flight premiership, play their home matches at Kirkton, by Balmacara — which is about four miles east of Kyle of Lochalsh — and also field a reserve side in north division one.

Skye Camanachd's home venue is at Pairc nan Laoch — or the "Field of Heroes" — off the Struan Road in Portree.

The club's top team plays in the Premiership and it has a reserve side which plays in north division one. Matches usually take place on a

Saturday afternoon and the ground has a well-equipped clubhouse with food and drink available.

So far, Skye is the only one of the local clubs to field a women's team to compete in the women's shinty leagues. Skye Ladies normally play their games in Portree on a Saturday.

Wester Ross club Lochcarron has only one team, playing in north division two. This small village team enjoys one of the best supports in the game at their picturesque New Battery Park pitch.

Admission to shinty matches is usually free, although most clubs take a collection and there is a charge for major cup finals and semi-finals.

The playing season usually lasts from March until October, with the sport's showpiece event — the Camanachd Cup Final, which is held at a different venue each year — taking place in September.

Comprehensive details of fixtures and throw-up times are contained in the local newspaper, the **West Highland Free Press**. ●

You can find out more about shinty at www.shinty.com

Keep up to date...

...with our shinty coverage each week throughout the season.

West Highland Free Press
An Tìr, An Cànan, 'S na Daoine
THE UK'S FIRST EMPLOYEE-OWNED NEWSPAPER

Rules of the Road

One thing guaranteed to ruin your holiday in South West Ross and Skye would be a car accident, so the one sure rule is to drive carefully and cautiously at all times.

Getting to Skye by car is relatively easy using the road bridge which crosses to the island from Kyle of Lochalsh. Alternatively, you can cross by ferry from Mallaig to Armadale, or take the small turntable ferry from Glenelg to Kylerhea.

As far as roads go Skye is very fortunate compared to other parts of the Highlands. Most of the main arteries are two-lane and very easy to traverse. However, many of the more interesting parts of the island are "off the beaten track" as they say, and here you encounter a phenomenon which an amazing number of visiting motorists find difficulty in coping with—the single-track road with passing places.

These two-metre-wide strips of tarmac are really quite simple to use — their safe operation relies mainly on caution and courtesy. Passing places are provided every few hundred yards and these should be used to allow oncoming traffic to pass. Indicate, pull in (to your own side of the road, even if the passing place is on the other side), wave, and make a friend. The same rule applies to cars coming up fast behind you—pull in at a passing place and let them past if they appear to be in a hurry. Visitors who ignore the signs saying "Use passing places to permit overtaking" are a source of some frustration to local drivers accustomed to moving about the island on emptier out-of-season roads. And frustration on the roads can lead to accidents.

However, the single-track road and the frustrated local are minor inconveniences compared to the hazard presented by sheep. Let's

be clear on this one—they are not to be regarded as cuddly, friendly, woolly jumpers with a magnetic attraction for car bumpers. Treat them as devious, plotting, assassins hired by some crooked breakdown merchant to force cars off the road. In short, they are a menace.

Reduce your speed when approaching sheep. They have absolutely no road sense and, as a result of years of roadside breeding, they are chronically oblivious to car horns and flashing lights.

If you are unfortunate enough to hit an animal (and many are) you should of course stop and check its condition. You are obliged to inform the police and if the animal is injured it is only humane to do so. Another thing to remember, if you bring your dogs with you on your holiday, is to keep them under control around sheep.

On legal matters it is best to remember that the country bobby and his bicycle were divorced years ago. The police enforce motoring laws as diligently and strictly as anywhere else in the UK, and being on holiday is not an acceptable plea if you are caught breaking the rules.

Breaking down or simply running out of petrol on the roadside can be annoying but despite the emptiness all around you are never too far away from help in Skye and South West Ross. The major motoring organisations are represented in the Highlands and there are a large number of garages offering a breakdown service.

Petrol stations are dotted throughout the area but most close about 9pm and some earlier on Sundays (there is a filling station in Broadford which is open 24 hours a day, seven days a week). Holidays are about a change of pace, so enjoy your driving in Skye and Lochalsh and pride yourself in your patience. Not only will you appreciate the scenery better at a slower speed, you'll save money on petrol too. Have a nice trip.



Wildlife and Countryside

Some of the most spectacular coastal scenery in Britain

The Highlands and Islands are special even by Scottish standards.

This is home to the golden eagle, the red deer stag, and the playful otter. But it is also the land of lichen, moss and fern, with rare alpine flowers and glittering rock pools. Regular guided walks by the Highland Council Rangers or National Trust for Scotland Rangers can provide a good insight into the wildlife of the area.

The dominant feature is the coast, which provides some of the most spectacular scenery to be found anywhere in Britain. Take a walk down to the shore. Notice the lichens on the rock as they change from grey to gold and then black as you drop down into the barnacle zone.

The rock pools on the most exposed shores are full of anemones, sponges and coral seaweeds. For many visitors, this will be a new world. For others it will bring back memories of how rock pools used to be — like stepping into an Enid Blyton adventure. Check the tide-tables for times of low tide. Take the family and a picnic, and make a day of it.

As well as the 20 pairs of golden eagle, the sea eagles have successfully returned and can be seen once more over Portree Bay. During the nesting season their progress may be followed on CCTV from the Aros Centre in Portree. The basalt headlands of north Skye are home to thousands of nesting seabirds including fulmar, kittiwake, shag, razorbill and both common and black guillimots. Gannets dive close to the shore after flying in from St Kilda. Puffins nest on the Ascrib Islands in Loch Snizort.

Ravens and buzzards compete noisily for air space over their cliff nesting sites



whilst on secluded lochans you may see the red-throated diver or hear its mournful call. Wheatears arrive from Africa in early April to join the skylarks and resident pipits. Skye is now one of the last strongholds of the "Highland linnet" or twite. They can be seen along quiet roadside verges, often along the fence wire. On a summer evening near traditional croft land, you may hear the "Crex crex" call of the male corncrake proclaiming its territory, sometimes all through the night! In previous years, they have been sighted in fields near the ferry terminal at Uig.

Throughout the summer and autumn, look for minke whales and porpoises following the tidal currents in search of food. In Loch Dunvegan there are colonies of common seal, whilst the larger grey seal may be found on the more exposed rocky shores. To get a closer view, there are numerous boat trips available, based at Plockton, Armadale, Kyle, Elgol, Broadford and Dunvegan.

Otters are occasionally seen in the

middle of the day, sometimes around ferry terminals. There is a Forest Enterprise otter hide at Kylerhea and the IOSF in Broadford have displays and information. Otter tracks and signs can be seen along most sections of the coast and along the sides of rivers and inland lochs. Look for grey patches of fish scales and bones, bits of crab or rabbit fur scattered on top of raised mounds of dark-green grass. The grass looks different where it has been fertilised by the otter's droppings, or "spraints".

Badgers can be found on the mainland although there are no conclusive records in recent years for them breeding on Skye. But pine martens have crossed the bridge and are now established in the south of the island. The coastal and woodland areas between Plockton and Auchtertyre are a pine marten hotspot and numbers continue to be well above the national average.

Three species of fritillary are to be found, including the rare "pearl-bordered" in wooded glades in Lochalsh.

In south Skye you may see the “speckled wood” found here almost at its most-northerly limit. On sunny south-facing slopes amongst the birds-foot trefoil, look for the “common blue”, about the size of a thumbnail. The underside of its wings have orange spots, whilst the top surface is a staggeringly-beautiful powder-blue.

Many fast-flowing streams and inland lochans are home to the “golden-ringed dragonfly”. At four inches long this is the largest of the British species. Take a walk over the moor and stand awhile alongside one of the sedge-lined streams or pools. Bright red and electric blue damselflies shoot out from the water’s edge like sparks from a fire.

It is difficult to know which plants to single out, but the mountain avens of Suardal are special. Keep a lookout for purple saxifrage in early spring, and the rare pipewort found in some of the lochans near Sligachan. For a comprehensive account of what has been recorded, and where to find it, I would recommend “The Botanist in Skye and Adjacent Islands”, by CW Murray and HJB Birks (2005), available in Portree library and local bookshops.

Because the air is so pure and the rainfall so high, there are some very rare habitats associated with ancient woodland. These are the Atlantic hazel woods — our very own “rainforests”. Old hazel woods occur all around the coast particularly in south Skye. Some are home to the mysterious “glue fungus” which secretes a glue to hold onto dead twigs to stop them falling to the ground! Close by you will find a national rarity — the “hazel gloves” fungus, with orange-brown fingers gripping both live and dead wood.

Lichens are everywhere, hanging down in green beards or covering bark in leafy rosettes. There is the nationally-scarce lungwort which looks like patches of apple-green bubble-wrap. Dog lichens attach themselves to mossy surfaces like white Velcro. There are boulders covered in rosettes of turquoise and gold lichen, known locally as crotal, once used to dye Harris Tweed.

Old, coppiced ash woods can be found in the National Nature Reserve at Rassal (two miles north of Kishorn on the A896). This is a magical place — like entering the wardrobe into Narnia. For a really sheltered walk and the chance of a crossbill, there is the Forest Enterprise mixed woodland near Kinloch that follows an old drovers’ path to the deserted village of Letir Fura.

There will be highlights. I remember watching a family of stoats emerge from a rabbit hole. The young were completely fearless and ran around my feet performing summersaults. I remember a dolphin leaping vertically free of the water and then returning flat to the surface with a tremendous “whack”. It was at least a mile away and yet the sound carried like the crack of a whip. And then there was the golden eagle that intercepted a fulmar in flight. The two birds suddenly became one, and the lasting image was that of the eagle, continuing on its way as if nothing had happened!

But wherever you look and whatever the time of year, you will find something special. In spring the small rocky island of Mingay in Loch Dunvegan shimmers blue in a haze of bluebells. Take a walk from Trumpan to Waternish Point in early summer and you pass through fields of orchids — “common spotted”, “scented” and “butterfly”. In late summer as dusk approaches, the air above Loch Cill Chriost suddenly darkens as thousands of swallows descend to roost amongst the reed beds.

Even the ordinary is special. In the

sheltered bays at low tide you will find blue-rayed limpets feeding on kelp. Their glistening shells are covered in fine blue lines, an “impossible-blue” as if someone had drawn the lines with a fluorescent pen.

On a quiet, still evening, you can smell the sea. There is no noise of traffic or mobile phone. Stand here awhile and listen... and you will hear the actual moment when the tide turns and the waves begin to creep up the lower shore!

And then there are the peat bogs, like the ones you pass on the approach to Corrie Laggan. Here you find the carnivorous sundew and butterwort, the yellow stars of bog asphodel, and the delicate white and pink lace of bogbean. This is one of the rarest habitats in all Europe — held within a trembling sponge of sphagnum moss.

Bring the binoculars. I find 8x30s are ideal with a wide field of view for checking birds in flight or scanning large areas of sea for the fins of killer whales or basking sharks. A x10 hand lens is useful if you wish to examine a particular lichen or flower petal. Alternatively, you could use your binoculars as a magnifying glass, looking through one side and holding the eye-piece close to the material being examined.

Take time to stop and look. The wildlife is out there — just waiting to be discovered. ●

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Chris Mitchell writes a regular “Nature Notes” column for the West Highland Free Press





Memories are made of this ...

by Shirley Spear

Like a sea-washed pebble from a beautiful beach, carefully packed to take home, special memories are what holidays are all about. Those few days of freedom to roam and relax are important to all people of every age.

For those visiting Skye and Lochalsh this year, we are certain that many will want to experience the best local food and cooking available to them throughout their stay. No doubt they will also look for food and drink products to buy as souvenirs.

Scotland is soaring high in the world of good food and drink. We are building a fantastic reputation

throughout the nation for serving delicious local food in our shops, our markets, our restaurants, cafes and bars. Good food and drink has become an integral part of many festivals and special events. It has become the expectation of visitors to our castles and museums, plus many more attractions large and small.

I take huge pride in the fact that the Isle of Skye led the way in building this reputation for Scotland. There can be no doubt that Skye

was the first to successfully promote its wonderful larder to those visiting the area, way back in the late 90s and early 2000s.

Fresh local seafood of every kind, fabulous fresh vegetables, salads and herbs, soft fruits and local lamb, beef



and venison were all making regular appearances on more and more menus. Local food was becoming part of Skye's big attractions as more and more small businesses woke up to the fact that this was what their guests wanted to taste.

This "taste for tourism" has grown ever since. We now have more local food and drink producers than ever before, more food outlets of different sizes and styles and more people

making much more effort to make local ingredients available to their customers. Couple all of this with improved cooking and service skills and it makes for a much better visitor experience altogether.

It is important for the economy of every nation to export its best produce abroad and this has certainly been part of the rise of Scotland's brilliant reputation as a food-producing nation. But some items

cannot be bettered when eaten fresh, where they belong, sitting most happily upon the tables of local restaurants or on the counters of local shops and cafes. Food which has not had to travel miles is naturally of better quality, more nutritious and definitely tastes its best, when eaten in the area where it belongs.

Today there is a wide array of food-related work generating rural



lifestyle businesses throughout Skye and Lochalsh, which in turn create sustainable jobs and career opportunities. This includes brewing and distilling too, with beer and whisky high on our list of famous local products to enjoy and take home.

The Isle of Skye is famous for its seafood. Lobster, langoustines and crab are sustainably creel-caught from the cold, clear waters that surround the island's rocky coastline. Here, divers also gather scallops, grow

mussels and nurture oysters.

Foragers find age-old, traditional ingredients in hidden places. Crofters graze their livestock on the heather-clad hillsides and seaweed shorelines. Growers battle with the elements to sustain regular supplies of perfect vegetables, salad leaves, herbs and edible flowers. Many artisan producers make bread, cakes, confectionery and preserves. Some breed chickens and rare-breed pork, smoke fish, and produce gorgeous fresh eggs.

Be sure to choose local while you are visiting the area! Explore the island from top to toe, as you will never fail to be surprised by what you may find around the next corner. The best food and accommodation providers will always use the best ingredients by choice and, if you are self-catering, there are a number of retail outlets to buy from, as well as some local market days.

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SHIRLEY SPEAR Skye Restaurateur and
 Chair of the Scottish Food Commission ●

Geology of Skye and Wester Ross

Forces which gave birth to a dramatic landscape

The moment you arrive in Skye, your eyes are drawn to the mountains.

The Black Cuillin rises out of the sea to over 3,000 feet. It was once a mass of lava, hidden underground, but erosion has exposed its surface to create a landscape of dramatic peaks and ridges. The rock is called gabbro. Its coarse crystal structure is rough to the touch and provides the perfect grip for climbing.

Further north from Sligachan, as you head towards Portree or Dunvegan, you enter a flatter landscape of gentle slopes and steps. Imagine lava that's as runny as a pancake mix: alkaline not acid (acid lava is sticky and thick and erupts violently to form a volcano with steep sides, like Mt Etna or Vesuvias). This lava was "thin" and ran out quietly across the surface to cover the whole of north Skye. It shares the same chemistry as the younger gabbro but was extruded from cracks and fissures, and cooled down quickly.

Layer upon layer was laid down. You can see these layers in the sea cliffs at Dunvegan Head and in the sea stacs known as MacLeod's Maidens. Between eruptions, the top of each flow was exposed to the air, and the iron in the rock oxidised or "rusted". These layers occur as regular red bands in the cliffs, like jam in a slice of gâteau.

All across north Skye, you see these layers forming gentle slopes broken by a series of steps. A good example can be seen in the profile of MacLeod's Tables. Each vertical step is the central



core of a lava flow. The rock is called basalt — a fine-grained crumbling rock, bad for rock climbing but producing a fertile soil. Visitors returning to Uig on the ferry often remark how green the area is around Uig Bay. This is a typical basalt landscape.

Now head east from Uig across to the Quiraing, along a road famous for its dramatic descent – down through hairpin bends into a landscape that rivals Monument Valley. This is the largest landslip in the British Isles. Pinnacles, needles, table tops, secret valleys. This is what happens when basalt rests on top of weaker layers of shale and sandstone. The cliff edge cracks and complete sections slide down. Imagine dominoes standing close together on a glass table. Knock

the table gently: those at the front slide forwards whilst those at the back remain standing, and in between you have the classic profile of "slumped dominoes" that you see from the Quiraing to the Old Man of Storr.

As you stand on the shore below the landslip, you have reached the sedimentary layers that underlie the basalt. These are Jurassic rocks that were formed in shallow estuaries about 150 million years ago, when dinosaurs roamed the planet. To see their footprints and other fossils that have recently been discovered in Skye, visit the Staffin Museum at Elishader. For ammonites, there is no better place to look than Berreraig Bay just north of Portree.

Into this landscape of fault-cracked

lava and sediment were squeezed pulses of yet more molten rock. This is mostly dolerite. It sometimes follows the rock beds forming thick "sills" (horizontal like a window sill). Kilt Rock is one of these sills that squeezed its way through the Jurassic shales. Thick layers of dolerite cool down slowly and can form flat-sided columns – good for rock climbing and good for nesting seabirds, especially fulmar.

Sometimes the intruding rock cuts across the bedding to form groups of narrow "dykes" that stand out like walls or grooves in the landscape. The Black Cuillin has a dramatic "rotten tooth" skyline of pinnacles and gullies precisely because it is shot through with these dykes. They produce lines of weakness that erode at different rates. In contrast, the younger granites of the Red Hills have a smooth rounded profile because they were formed after the main period of dyke formation.

Take the road west from Broadford towards Elgol. The grass fields look especially green; the rocks appear silvery grey. You are entering one of the most extensive exposures of Durness Limestone in Britain. At the recently-excavated High Pasture Cave, you can get a feel for this other world, of fertile landscape supporting prehistoric communities that once found shelter underground.

The high ground of Ben Suardal has fine sections of "pavement" with all the expected botanical highlights including the white flowering mountain aven and the pale green fronds of hart's tongue fern. Where the limestone comes in contact with the molten granite, it is transformed into the famous white Skye Marble which is still quarried near Torrin.

When you visit Sleat and the adjoining mainland, you encounter rock of quite a different age. The Cuillin may go back 60 million years and the Jurassic sediments 180 million years, but these are mere toddlers compared with what you are now about to see! The Lewisian Gneiss is dated at 3,000 million years! That is one of the oldest rocks on the planet. It occurs, along with two other "oldies" — the Torridonian Sandstones and the Moine Schists — along the sides of a major fault line called the "Moine Thrust" that runs down the west coast of Scotland. Exposures occur from Isleornsay down to Tarskavaig and Ord.

Geologists describe this area as a "tectonic window" which provides a view of what happens to the earth's crust when mountains collide. It is one of the best examples of a "thrust zone" in the British Isles for which it has achieved international status.

What we see today has been mainly

fashioned by ice. Glaciers from Scandinavia, and from the Cuillin itself, swept across the land carving out U-shaped valleys, scraping out rock basins and polishing rock walls. When the ice melted, it left behind scratch marks and isolated boulders. These features can be seen when you travel by boat, north from Elgol to reach the head of Loch Scavaig. Step out onto dry land here and walk over the bare rock shoulder. In front of you is Loch Coruisk framed by the Cuillin Ridge — one of the most famous mountain views in Britain.

The type of rock influences the distribution of plants and animals. When you stop to look at a wild flower, a colony of seabirds or an otter — the geology will have had some role to play. A limestone pavement, for example, not only looks different from a granite scree — it will have different lichens, more snails and different birdlife. The geology of Skye and Wester Ross is fundamental to its varied natural history. Whatever your interests, knowing what lies beneath your feet will give you a deeper understanding of this living landscape. ●

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When visiting geological sites, please keep disturbance to a minimum and leave plants and rock faces as you found them for others to enjoy.





Classified...

KEY: ■ WR – Wester Ross ■ SWR – South West Ross ■ SS&S – South Skye and Sleat ■ CS – Central Skye
 ■ NWS – North West Skye ■ NES – North East Skye ■ GEN – General

Accommodation

WR Caledonian Hotel

■ 0843 178 7107
 reservations.caledonian@
 bespokehotels.com
 www.bespokehotels.com

WR Gairloch Hotel

■ 01445 712001
 www.bespokehotels.com

SWR Kintail Lodge Hotel

■ 01599 511275
 www.kintailodgehotel.co.uk

SWR Kyle Hotel

■ 0843 178 7131
 reservations.kyle@
 bespokehotels.com
 www.bespokehotels.com

SWR The Schoolhouse Dornie Gallery

■ 01599 555378
 schoolhousedornie@gmail.com

SWR Red Moon Cruises

■ 07768 101667
 enquiries@redmooncruises.co.uk
 www.redmooncruises.co.uk

SS&S Ardsar Hotel

■ 01471 844223
 www.ardsarhotel.com

SS&S Clan Donald Skye

■ 01471 844305
 www.clandonald.com

SS&S Toravaig House Hotel

■ 01471 820200
 www.skyehotel.co.uk

SS&S Hotel Eilean Iarmain

■ 01471 833332
 www.eilean-iarmain.co.uk

SS&S Duisdale House Hotel

■ 01471 833202
 www.duisdale.com

SS&S Kinloch Lodge

■ 01471 833214
 www.claire-macdonald.com

SS&S Kings Arms Hotel

■ 0843 178 7129
 reservations.kyleakin@
 bespokehotels.com
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SS&S Dunollie Hotel

■ 0843 178 7118
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 The.HebrideanHotel@hotmail.co.uk
 www.hebrideanhotel.co.uk

CS Raasay House

■ 01478 660300
 www.raasay-house.co.uk

CS Sconser Lodge Hotel

■ 01478 650333
 www.sconserlodge.co.uk

CS Skeabost Hotel & Restaurant

■ 01470 532202
 info@skeabosthotel.com
 www.skeabosthotel.com

CS Sligachan Hotel

■ 01478 650204
 reservations@sligachan.co.uk
 www.sligachan.co.uk

NWS Dunvegan Castle & Gardens

■ 01470 521206
 Dunvegan Castle Holiday Cottages
 www.dunvegancastle.com

NWS Greshornish House Hotel

■ 01470 582266
 www.greshornishhouse.com

NWS Stein Inn

■ 01470 592362
 www.stein-inn.co.uk

NWS Old Byre, Skye

■ Gallery, café & apartment
 www.oldbyreskye.co.uk

NWS The Three Chimneys

■ 01470 511258
 eatandstay@threechimneys.co.uk
 www.threechimneys.co.uk

NES Uig Hotel

■ 01470 542205
 uighotel@gmail.com
 www.uighotel.com

Food and drink

WR Caledonian Hotel

■ 0843 178 7107
 reservations.caledonian@
 bespokehotels.com
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Love from Skye

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 01445 712001
www.bespokehotels.com

WR GALE Centre
 01445 712071
enquiries@galeactionforum.co.uk
www.galeactionforum.co.uk

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www.carronrestaurant.com

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kateellis11@btopenworld.com

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 01599 534248
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 01599 534164

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reservations.dunollie@bespokehotels.com
www.bespokehotels.com

SS&S Eilean Iarmain
 01471 833332
www.eilean-iarmain.co.uk

SS&S Kinloch Lodge
 01471 833214
www.claire-macdonald.com

SS&S The Shed
 01471 844222/844264
 The Pier, Armadale, Isle of Skye

SS&S Toravaig House Hotel
 01471 820200
www.skyehotel.co.uk

SS&S Hebridean Hotel
 01471 822486
The.HebrideanHotel@hotmail.co.uk
www.hebrideanhotel.co.uk

SS&S Café Sia
 01471 822616
www.cafesia.co.uk

SS&S The Waterfront
 01471 822158
 Broadford, Isle of Skye

SS&S An Crubh
 01471 833417
www.ancrubh.com

SS&S Elgol Shop
 www.elgolshop.com

CS Raasay House
 01478 660300
www.raasay-house.co.uk

CS Sconser Lodge Hotel
 01478 650333
www.sconserlodge.co.uk

CS Sligachan Hotel
 01478 650204
reservations@sligachan.co.uk
www.sligachan.co.uk

CS Skeabost Hotel & Restaurant
 01470 532202
info@skeabosthotel.com
www.skeabosthotel.com

CS Inga's Sweet Treats
 01478 612377

CS Taste of India
 01478 611706

NWS Old Byre, Skye
 Gallery, café & apartment
www.oldbyreskye.co.uk

NWS Dunvegan Castle & Gardens
 01470 521206
www.dunvegancastle.com

NWS Waterside Café Bistro, Dunvegan
 01470 521 487

NWS The Old School Restaurant
 01470 521 421
www.oldschoolrestaurant.co.uk

NWS Greshornish House Hotel
 01470 582266
www.greshornishhouse.com

NWS Edinbane Inn
 01470 582414
info@edinbaneinn.co.uk
www.edinbaneinn.co.uk

NWS Stein Inn
 01470 592362
www.stein-inn.co.uk

NWS Brae Fasach Gallery/Café
 www.ianwilliams-skye.co.uk

NES Uig Hotel
 01470 542205
uighotel@gmail.com
www.uighotel.com

GEN Isle of Skye Whisky
isleofskye whisky.com

Entertainment

SWR Kintail Lodge Hotel
 01599 511275
www.kintailodgehotel.co.uk

SWR Kyle Hotel
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reservations.kyle@bespokehotels.com
www.bespokehotels.com

SS&S Castle Moil Restaurant & King Haakon Bar
 01599 534164

SS&S Ardsar Hotel
 01471 844223
www.ardsarhotel.com

SS&S Eilean Iarmain
 01471 833332
www.eilean-iarmain.co.uk

SS&S Seall Arts & Entertainment
 01471 844207
www.seall.co.uk
www.skyefestival.com

SS&S Dunollie Hotel
 0843 178 7118
reservations.dunollie@bespokehotels.com
www.bespokehotels.com

SS&S Kings Arms Hotel
 0843 178 7129
reservations.kyleakin@bespokehotels.com
www.bespokehotels.com

CS Skeabost Hotel & Restaurant
 01470 532202
info@skeabosthotel.com
www.skeabosthotel.com

CS Sligachan Hotel
 01478 650204
reservations@sligachan.co.uk
www.sligachan.co.uk

NWS Edinbane Inn
 01470 582414
info@edinbaneinn.co.uk
www.edinbaneinn.co.uk

NES Uig Hotel
 01470 542205
uighotel@gmail.com
www.uighotel.com

SWR Carron Pottery
 01520 722321
www.carronpottery.com

SWR Home in the Highlands
 01599 566396
www.homeinhighlands.co.uk

SWR The Schoolhouse Dornie Gallery
 01599 555378
schoolhousedornie@gmail.com

SS&S Gallery An Talla Dearg
 01471 833439
www.eilean-iarmain.co.uk

SS&S Eilean Iarmain
 01471 833332
www.eilean-iarmain.co.uk

SS&S Ragamuffin
 01471 844217
www.ragamuffinonline.co.uk

SS&S Clan Donald Skye
 01471 844305/844227
www.clandonald.com

SS&S Duncan House
 01471 866366
enquiry@duncan-house.com
www.duncan-house.com

SS&S Love from Skye
 01471 822600
info@lovefromskye.co.uk
www.lovefromskye.co.uk

SS&S The Handspinner Having Fun
 01471 822876
bev@handspinnerhavingfun.com
www.handspinnerhavingfun.com

SS&S Isle of Skye Leather Co.
 01471 844435/733
www.isleofskyleatherco.com

SS&S Dearg
 dearg26@gmail.com

SS&S Nigel Grounds
 01471 844439
www.nigelgrounds.co.uk

CS Hebridean Jewellery/Crocks & Rocks
 01478 612670
www.hebrideanjewellery.co.uk

Art and crafts

WR GALE Centre
 01445 712071
enquiries@galeactionforum.co.uk
www.galeactionforum.co.uk

SWR Lochcarron Weavers
 01520 722212
www.lochcarron.com





- CS **Cuillin Crafts**
 01478 611119
Info@skyecullinmarbles.co.uk
www.skyecullinmarbles.co.uk
- CS **Lesley Linley Studio/Gallery**
 07919 465222
- NWS **Old Byre, Skye**
 Gallery, café & apartment
www.oldbyreskye.co.uk
- NWS **Dunvegan Castle & Gardens**
 01470 521206
www.dunvegancastle.com
- NWS **Waterside Café Bistro, Dunvegan**
 01470 521 487
- NWS **SkyeSkyns Working Tannery**
 01470 592237
www.skyeskyens.co.uk
- NWS **Brae Fasach Gallery/Café**
www.ianwilliams-skye.co.uk
- NWS **Edinbane Pottery**
 01470 582234
www.edinbane-pottery.co.uk
- NWS **The Skye Shilasdair Shop**
 01470 592297
www.theskyeshilasdairshop.co.uk
- NWS **Dandelion Designs**
 01471 592218
www.dandelion-designs.co.uk

Shopping

- WR **GALE Centre**
 01445 712071
enquiries@galeactionforum.co.uk
www.galeactionforum.co.uk
- SS&S **Home in the Highlands**
 01599 566396
www.homeinhighlands.co.uk
- SS&S **Lochcarron Weavers**
 01520 722212
www.lochcarron.com
- SS&S **Calum's Seal Trips**
 01599 544306
www.calums-sealtrips.com
- SS&S **Carron Pottery**
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www.carronpottery.com
- SS&S **Eilean Donan Castle**
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www.eileandonancastle.com
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 01471 844305
www.clandonald.com
- SS&S **The Gaelic Whiskies, Eilean Iarmain**
 01471 833496
www.gaelicwhisky.com
- SS&S **Ragamuffin**
 01471 844217
www.ragamuffinonline.co.uk
- SS&S **Duncan House**
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enquiry@duncan-house.com
www.duncan-house.com
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 01471 822600
info@lovefromskye.co.uk
www.lovefromskye.co.uk
- SS&S **The Handspinner Having Fun**
 01471 822876
bev@handspinnerhavingfun.com
www.handspinnerhavingfun.com

- SS&S **Isle of Skye Leather Co.**
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www.isleofskyeleatherco.com
- SS&S **Old School Vet**
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info@oldschoolvet.co.uk
www.oldschoolvet.co.uk
- SS&S **Nigel Grounds**
 01471 844439
www.nigelgrounds.co.uk
- SS&S **Dearg**
dearg26@gmail.com
- SS&S **Elgol Shop**
www.elgolshop.com
- CS **Island Cycles**
 01478 613121
 Above Bayfield Car Park, Portree, Isle of Skye
- CS **Cuillin Crafts**
 01478 611119
Info@skyecullinmarbles.co.uk
www.skyecullinmarbles.co.uk
- CS **Hebridean Jewellery/ Crocks & Rocks**
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www.edinbane-pottery.co.uk
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 01470 592297
www.theskyeshilasdairshop.co.uk
- NWS **Old Byre, Skye**
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www.oldbyreskye.co.uk
- GEN **Isle of Skye Whisky**
isleofskye whisky.com

Activities

- SS&S **Attadale Gardens**
 01520 722603
www.attadalegardens.com
- SS&S **Calum's Seal Trips**
 01599 544306/07761 263828
www.calums-sealtrips.com
- SS&S **Lochalsh Leisure Centre**
 01599 534848
www.lochalshleisure.org.uk
- SS&S **Seaprobe Atlantis Boat Trips**
 0800 980 4846
www.seaprobeatlantis.com
- SS&S **Red Moon Cruises**
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www.redmooncruises.co.uk
- SS&S **Kinloch Lodge**
 01471 833214
www.claire-macdonald.com
- SS&S **Toravaig House Hotel**
 01471 820200
www.skyehotel.co.uk

SS&S **Duisdale House Hotel**

■ 01471 833202
www.duisdale.com

SS&S **Misty Isle Boat Trips**

■ 01471 866 288
mistyisleboattrips.co.uk

CS **Raasay House Hotel & Activities**

■ 01478 660300
www.raasay-house.co.uk

CS **Island Cycles**

■ 01478 613121
Above Bayfield Car Park, Portree, Isle of Skye

CS **Skeabost Hotel & Restaurant**

■ 01470 532202
info@skeabosthotel.com
www.skeabosthotel.com

NWS **Dunvegan Castle & Gardens**

■ 01470 521206
Loch Dunvegan Seal Boat Trips, Fishing and Cruises
www.dunvegancastle.com

NWS **Diver's Eye Boat Trips**

■ 01470 592219
www.divers-eye.co.uk

Visitor Attractions

SWR **Attadale Gardens**

■ 01520 722603
www.attadalegardens.com

SWR **Lochcarron Weavers**

■ 01520 722212
www.lochcarron.com

SWR **Seaprobe Atlantis Boat Trips**

■ 0800 9804846
www.seaprobeatlantis.com

SWR **Eilean Donan Castle**

■ 01599 555202
www.eileandonancastle.com

SWR **Calum's Seal Trips**

■ 01599 544306/07761 263828
www.calums-sealtrips.com

SWR **Isle of Skye Ferry**

■ www.skyeferry.co.uk

SS&S **Clan Donald Skye**

■ 01471 844305
www.clandonald.com

SS&S **Misty Isle Boat Trips**

■ 01471 866 288
mistyisleboattrips.co.uk

NWS **Dunvegan Castle & Gardens**

■ 01470 521206
www.dunvegancastle.com

NWS **The Skye Shilasdair Shop**

■ 01470 592297
www.theskyeshilasdairshop.co.uk

NWS **SkyeSkyns Working Tannery**

■ 01470 592237
www.skyeskyns.co.uk

NWS **Diver's Eye Boat Trips**

■ 01470 592219
www.divers-eye.co.uk

Transport

SWR **Isle of Skye Ferry**

■ www.skyeferry.co.uk

SS&S **James Milne Taxi**

■ 07894 442209
www.skye-bus-tours.com

GEN Services

Gen **West Highland Free Press**

■ 01471 822464
admin@whfp.com
www.whfp.com

SWR **Isle of Skye Ferry**

■ www.skyeferry.co.uk

SWR **Lochcarron Food Centre –**

■ **Post Office**
01520 722209
www.lochcarronfoodcentre.co.uk

SS&S **Old School Vet**

■ 01471 822922
info@oldschoolvet.co.uk
www.oldschoolvet.co.uk

NWS **Atholl Filling Station**

■ 01470 521487

Information

WR **GALE Centre**

■ 01445 712071
enquiries@galeactionforum.co.uk
www.galeactionforum.co.uk

NWS **Waternish**

■ www.visitwaternish.co.uk



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The newspaper of the land, the language and the people...

Skye, and the West Highlands and Islands as a whole, produce many news stories of national interest and significance. The area also has a unique newspaper to report on them.

The **West Highland Free Press** was founded in 1972 as a radical weekly newspaper, but with the principal objective of providing its immediate circulation area with the service which a local paper is expected to provide.

The paper's priorities are perhaps best summarised in the slogan on its masthead: "An Tìr, An Cànan 'sna Daoine" — "The Land, the Language and the People". It is a slogan borrowed from the Highland Land League which, in the late 19th century, fought the crucial battle to win security of tenure for crofters.

The land issue is at the heart of the **Free Press's** politics. Down to the present day, where private landlordism persists, the fundamental conflict of interest also remains and is reflected in many of the most celebrated stories which the paper has reported. For the first time in decades, with the birth of the **Free Press** there was a newspaper in the Highlands which actively opposed the grotesque maldistribution of land ownership that still characterised the region and stood up for the rights of local communities and individuals.

Since 1997, the programme of land reform

instigated by the Labour Government and Scottish Executive have delivered on the issues that the **Free Press** has long campaigned on, including abolition of the feudal system and the introduction of the right of crofting communities to buy their land even if the owner does not wish to sell. More than half of the Western Isles, and many other pockets of the Highlands and Islands, are now under community ownership.

The **Free Press** has also championed the cause of the Gaelic language, both by giving it political support and by publishing more written Gaelic material than any other newspaper. Over the years, significant progress has been made in improving the status of the language, and particularly educational provision. As visitors will note, bilingual or even Gaelic-only signs are now taken for granted, and nobody seems to be any the worse for it.

Many visitors to the West Highlands and Islands have sampled the **Free Press**, and then decided to keep in touch with the area and its issues through a subscription to the paper. The team of columnists will compare with any in the land, while there are always news stories and features of much more than local interest.

The **West Highland Free Press** is available throughout the area each Thursday, priced 90p. ■

EILEAN IARMAIN



Hotel • Restaurant • Bar • Whisky Shop • Art Gallery • Floraidh Boutique

Hotel Eilean Iarmain

Renowned for its Gaelic tradition and idyllically located by the sea, with uniquely decorated rooms and beautiful suites. Quality local produce and candlelit dinners in the Birlinn restaurant, selected for the Good Food Guide 2017. Cosy wood-panelled Am Pràban bar with an excellent selection of malt whiskies and real ales to enjoy by the open fire. Far am faigh thu tàmh.



The Gaelic Whiskies

The award winning Gaelic Whiskies: Té Bheag, our connoisseurs' blend; Poit Dhubh, a fine vatted malt available at 8, 12 and 21 years old; MacNaMara, a lighter blend also available in Rum casks. Traditional, unchilfiltered whisky. Visit our Whisky Shop at Eilean Iarmain for a free tasting. Slàinte mhath a h-uile latha a chì 's nach fhaic!

www.gaelicwhisky.com



Outdoor Activities

A range of outdoor activities can be enjoyed at Eilean Iarmain, with wildlife walks, argocat safaris, photo stalking and wildlife photography workshops available throughout the year. The winter months can be particularly beautiful and dramatic. For bookings and further information contact scott@eileaniarmain.co.uk Thoiribh sgrìob air Fearann Eilean Iarmain - Cruth-tìre sònraichte, eireachdail!



Gallery An Talla Dearg

Our art gallery by the old stone pier offers a series of landscape and wildlife exhibitions by local and international artists. April - October. Abair dathan! Suidheachadh àlainn, eachdraidheil, beòthail!





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