

## Day 1 Join your Scotland: The Highlands tour

Section of the West Highland Way and Loch Lomond; 4.5 miles, easy to moderate; 3.5 miles, easy

Your guides will meet you at the Blythswood Square Hotel at 9:00 a.m. in the lobby. They'll be wearing Country Walkers shirts. Please be dressed for walking.

Once your group has gathered in Glasgow, you will drive to the picturesque village of Drymen. Your walk follows a section of the West Highland Way, Scotland's premier long-distance footpath, covering 96 miles from Milngavie, just north of Glasgow, to Fort William. Today's route passes through open countryside and wooded areas, with rewarding views over Loch Lomond. Meet the coach in Milton of Buchanan and drive a short distance to Balmaha, located on the banks of Loch Lomond.

Gather for lunch at the Oak Tree Inn, a family-run inn constructed of local slate on the shores of Loch Lomond. Throughout your journey, you'll find that Scottish cuisine has left its reputation for bland food in the past. Today, chefs infuse fresh meats and produce from local farming communities and fresh fish from the North Sea and the Atlantic Ocean with creative flair and color. Memorable meals are sure to be a rewarding part of your experience, along with a wide range of ales, malts, and whiskeys.

Balmaha is home of the Loch Lomond & the Trossachs National Park, a spellbinding canvas of hills, lochs, and glens where Scotland's renowned Highlands converge with the heather-covered Lowlands. After lunch, you set out on your pleasant and easy walk along the shores of Loch Lomond, enjoying magnificent views over the lake and its nearby islands. This is Rob Roy country, where the outlaw "Red Robert" MacGregor gained status as a local folk hero.

Afterward, travel just less than one hour, through the national park and lovely countryside to your hotel, located on the banks of Loch Ard. There will be time to relax before dinner tonight in the hotel.

Included Meals: Lunch, Dinner

## Day 2 Loch Ard Forest walk. Loch Katrine cruise.

6 miles, easy

After breakfast, set off on your day's walk directly from the hotel. This wide trail skirts the banks of Loch Ard, one of the most picturesque in Scotland, through the peaceful Loch Ard Forest, all set within the Queen Elizabeth Forest Park. Beautiful views emerge across the loch and toward the surrounding mountains. The Scottish outlaw Rob Roy MacGregor knew this area well, having been born at Glengyle, at the head of Loch Katrine. He used a small cave on the banks of this loch as a hiding place during the Jacobite risings.

Meet the coach at the end of your walk and travel a short distance along the valley to The Trossach's Pier Cafe. Take in breathtaking views across Loch Katrine and enjoy lunch before embarking on your cruise.

For more than 150 years, Loch Katrine has offered a serene and tranquil spot for visitors from all over the world and is recognized as the favored and much-loved setting of some of Sir Walter Scott's most famous poetic works. Once you've finished lunch, you'll board the Lady of the Lake, named after Sir Walter

Scott's classic poem. Sit back, relax, and admire the magnificent scenery unfold while listening to the tales and legends of the loch during your one-hour cruise. Meet the coach upon arrival back at the pier and return to your hotel. There is time to unwind, relax, and enjoy the hotel's spa amenities before meeting your guides for dinner at the hotel's award-winning restaurant.

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

### Day 3 Rob Roy's Grave. Glen Ogle Trail. Tyndrum

3 miles, easy. Afternoon options from 1 mile

Check out of your hotel and embark on a scenic drive (around one hour) and a visit to the churchyard, which holds the graves of Rob Roy, his wife, and his two sons. Continue through Lochearnhead to Glen Ogle and the start of today's walk. You will have an opportunity to visit a majestic herd of Highland cattle on route. Glen Ogle evokes emotions that are heightened in the knowledge that druids, Jacobite rebels, ancient clans, ancient Royals, famous authors, and Rob Roy McGregor have tread the path before us. The waymarked trail follows an old railway line, which is part of the famous long-distance path, the Rob Roy Way. The walk features views extending over the vast glen to Loch Earn and passes charming streams before eventually crossing the impressive Glen Ogle Viaduct.

Continue westward toward the "High Country," and notice as the landscape begins to reveal open upland hills with peaks, rocky outcrops, gullies, and screes. Visit the scenic village of Tyndrum—Scottish Gaelic for "house on the ridge"—where lunch at a local café offers incomparable views of the surrounding glens. After lunch, you will have a chance to stop for a short walk in the Loch Ba Valley before continuing to Glencoe and your accommodation for the next two nights. There is time to unwind and relax at your next inn before dinner.

Enjoy dinner this evening in the Clachaig Inn.

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

### Day 4 Glencoe

Glencoe village; 4 miles, easy. Altnafeidh to Kinlochleven; 7 miles, moderate. Afternoon options from 1.5 miles

Widely considered one of the most breathtakingly scenic corners of Scotland, the narrow, U-shaped Glencoe is part of the National Scenic Area of Ben Nevis and Glencoe. Wild and jagged mountains, shaped by volcanic activity over millions of years, surround the emerald-green valley floor. Drama also permeates the history, both real and imagined, of this magical, mysterious place. The Glencoe Massacre was one of the most infamous events in Scottish history, and one legend says that it began with the lighting of a torch near where the Clachaig Inn now stands. In fiction, Glencoe is the setting for Skyfall, the birthplace of the father of James Bond in Ian Fleming's novels.

Today's easier option starts at your inn. During this invigorating walk, you follow a footpath upward through An Tor woodland to the historic Signal Rock. Continue down the valley to the village of Glencoe. Admire sweeping views across Loch Leven and grand vistas of surrounding mountains. Later, meet in a local café for lunch.

Alternatively, choose a longer and more challenging hike, rejoining a section of the West Highland Way. You drive 10 minutes to Altnafeadh and begin walking along a stony path up a steep hill, joining The Devil's Staircase, so named by the soldiers who helped build the local roads. The workers not only had great difficulty transporting materials up this incline; it's said that the devil claimed some of them for himself as they made the journey one cold winter night.

The path soon rises into undulating exposed moorland above the plain of Rannoch Moor. The views from here are stunning. Continue on a downward trail, sometimes along stepping-stones, before ascending again. To your right, the Blackwater reservoir appears. Its dam was built in the early 20th century to run the now-defunct aluminum smelter at Kinlochleven. As you lose elevation, your footpath leads through a long, wooded slope on stone tracks, delivering you to Kinlochleven. Travel to Glencoe for lunch in a local café.

Later, you may choose from several shorter walks directly from Glencoe village through the woodlands, home to pine martens, roe deer, and red squirrels. Or begin a scenic stroll from Glencoe House, admiring spectacular scenery and loch views over Glencoe Lochan and Loch Leven.

Relax at the hotel this evening, or venture into Glencoe, where you may discover a local eatery for dinner on your own.

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

## Day 5 Loch Tay and Independent Exploration of Killin. Scottish Crannog Centre

Loch Tulla; 4 miles, easy. Afternoon 1.5 miles, easy

Nestled at the convergence of River Lochay and River Dochart, the picturesque village of Killin is steeped in history and offers a variety of shops, restaurants, and cafés to explore. Venture out for lunch on your own, and discover the Old Market Square and the beautiful Falls of Dochart, both central to the region's industrial past.

Rejoin your guides and fellow travelers for a short walk beginning on the northern edge of town that takes you through woodland alongside the River Lochay to the outflow of Loch Tay. From here, take in views to the east, far across Loch Tay and the Tarmachan Ridge to the north.

Your loch-side adventure continues as you drive east along the northern shore of Loch Tay. Listen to your guides as they share the history of crannogs—circular houses on stilts that date to the Iron Age. All across the country, in an age before roads, Scots built on the water not only because people traveled by boat, but also because waterways offered protection against threatening animals and enemies. Scientists have found evidence of 18 such crannogs on Loch Tay alone. One has been rebuilt, using mostly traditional methods, and now houses the Scottish Crannog Centre, a museum dedicated to

demonstrating the skills every crannog homeowner needed, such as making fire by rubbing sticks. Walk the footsteps of the original crannog dwellers and immerse yourself in village life with original artifacts and demonstration of textiles and traditional cooking techniques.

A final one-hour drive from the Crannog Centre will bring you to your accommodation for the next two nights in Kinclaven. There will be time to relax and settle in at the hotel before rejoining your group for dinner at the hotel's elegant restaurant.

Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

#### Day 6 Blair Castle and Pitlochry. Loch Faskally and Blair Athol Distillery

Loch Faskally; 4 miles, easy. Afternoon stroll around Blair Castle Gardens; 1.5 miles, easy

You awaken to magnificent scenery and an ample breakfast, then embark on a scenic drive through the Angus agricultural lands to the town of Pitlochry, known to some as the heart of Scotland. The town, which has been welcoming visitors for more than 170 years, sits just below Ben Vrackie beside the beautiful River Tummel. Its name comes from the Gaelic "Pit Cloich Aire," meaning "place of the Sentinel Stone," and was originally an ancient Pictish settlement. Stone circles, standing stones, and ancient sites remain, scattered throughout the region.

Your walk today begins at the small village of Killiecrankie and traces the River Garry south toward Loch Faskally and Pitlochry. Along the way, visit the historic landmark of the Soldier's Leap, and learn of the 17th-century Jacobite battles that took place close by. The walk takes you through peaceful woodlands, over viaduct bridges, and past waterfalls before reaching the confluence of the rivers Garry and Tummel. Meet your coach along the shores of Loch Faskally and continue on a short ride into downtown Pitlochry. Venture out for lunch on your own before visiting the Blair Athol Distillery. Water from the Grampian mountains blends with ancient Highland malt to create the well-rounded taste, both mellow and deep, of the distillery's signature single-malt whiskey. During a tour, discover how the distinctive honeyed richness of the spirit is created. And no tour is complete without a tasting!

This afternoon, embark on a visit to historic Blair Castle. Home to the Atholl family for over seven centuries, the castle has a diverse history, witnessing both turbulent and peaceful times. Dig deep into the story of Mary, Queen of Scots, and learn of the Jacobite rising that led to castle occupation in the 17th century. Explore how Queen Victoria's love affair with the Scottish Highlands was seeded during her frequent visits to the castle with Prince Albert in the mid-19th century. Following a tour of the castle, enjoy a short walk through the grounds and gardens, which are included in the Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes in Scotland, the national listing of historic gardens.

Afterward, return to your hotel and relax overlooking the river or maybe stroll through the grounds. Later, enjoy a final celebratory dinner at the hotel's excellent restaurant.

Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

Day 7 Your Scotland: The Highlands tour concludes

After a sumptuous included breakfast, you have time to relax before departing on your 1.25-hour drive to Edinburgh. You arrive around 11:00 a.m. at The George Hotel, Edinburgh, where your tour concludes.

Included Meals: Breakfast