

SQUAM LAKES NATURAL SCIENCE CENTER'S

HIGHLANDS & HEBRIDES

A UNIQUE & PERSONAL TOUR IN SCOTLAND



May 17-30, 2019



Led by Iain MacLeod

ITINERARY

Join native Scot Iain MacLeod for a very personal, small-group tour of Scotland's Hebrides and Highlands. Iain is an experienced group tour leader who has organized and led tours of Scotland more than a dozen times. The hotels are chosen by Iain for their comfort, ambiance, hospitality, and excellent food. Iain personally arranges every detail — flights, meals, transportation and daily destinations.

May 17: Fly from Logan Airport, Boston.

May 18: Arrive Glasgow. We will load up the van and head north towards the Spey Valley. Along the way we will pass through Stirling and Perth and visit the Loch of the Lowes Reserve to see the nesting Ospreys, Great crested Grebes and lots of songbirds. As we near the Sp[ey Valley, we will visit the Highland Heritage Museum in Newtownmore. We'll arrive in Aviemore at the end of the day and stay at Rowan Tree Country House Hotel (<http://www.rowantreehotel.com/>). This will be our base for the next six nights.

May 19: Today, we'll head for the Bird Reserve at Loch Garten to view the world-famous Osprey nest and visitor center. We'll take a walk through the ancient Caledonian pine forest and have a picnic lunch next to beautiful Loch Mallachie. Crested Tits, Scottish Crossbills, Coal Tits, Redstarts and Great Spotted Woodpeckers live here. As dusk settles back at the hotel we might see a Woodcock and Pipistrelle Bats.

May 20: Today we will explore the Black Isle and the Cromarty Firth. We'll spend some time at Udale Bay and Nigg Bay to view hundreds of feeding Curlews, gulls, and Shelduck. We'll visit "Tollie Red Kites" to learn about the reintroduction of this spectacular raptor and watch the afternoon feeding of the kites.

May 21: We'll continue our exploration of the Spey Valley with a visit to the Insh Marshes Reserve. This huge flooded section of the River Spey is one of the most expansive areas of marsh in Scotland. It is home to huge numbers of nesting Black-headed Gulls, Lapwings, and Redshanks. Common Buzzards hunt the many rabbits and the birch woods are home to many songbirds. This is a great place to see Roe Deer feeding in the lush marsh grass and if we are really lucky, we might find a Marsh Harrier. In the afternoon we'll visit the Highland Wildlife Park where we can see



native birds and animals of the Scottish Highlands. The drive-through the park includes herds of European Bison and Red Deer. There are enclosures with Otters, Beavers, Pine Martens, and Scottish Wildcats. Recent additions include Tigers, Snow Monkeys and Polar Bears. This is a great place to see some of Scotland's current (and past) wildlife up-close.



May 22: Today we'll take a day trip to Royal Deeside. We'll travel over the remote "Lecht" — one of the highest roads in the country — through the village of Tomintoul where we will stop at the Whiskey Castle Shop. Here we'll look for Red Grouse, Golden Plovers, and Northern Wheatears. We'll stop at Corgarff Castle, built in the 16th century, which was an English garrison after the Jacobite uprising. Its rooms have been restored by Historic Scotland. Then it's down into the Valley of the River Dee. We'll briefly travel west to visit Royal Deeside where the royal family has their summer home. We'll visit Balmoral Castle and its beautiful grounds.



May 23: Today we'll head northwest towards Loch Ness. Along the way we'll visit Loch Ruthven to see the rare nesting Slavonian Grebes. Then we'll loop around the Loch via Fort Augustus and travel the length of the loch to Inverness with a stop at Urquhart Castle. Keep an eye out for monsters.



May 24: We leave Aviemore and head west and south through Fort William and towards the coast of Argyll and the lovely town of Oban. We'll catch the 4:00 pm ferry over to Craignure on Mull. We'll head for the Tiroran House Hotel (<http://tiroran.com>) which will be our base for five nights.



May 25: We'll have four days on Mull. Mull is the fourth largest island in the Hebrides (roughly 24 miles from north to south and 26 miles wide, with more than 300 miles of coastline). Today we will explore the northern end of the island including one of the most beautiful towns in all of Scotland — Tobermory with its lovely brightly painted harbor-front.



May 26: Today we'll visit Staffa — home of Fingal's Cave (of Mendelssohn's *Hebrides Overture* fame). The whole island is sculpted from hexagonal basalt columns formed by ancient volcanic activity. We'll land on the island and have a chance to walk on the eroded tops of the columns (like stepping stones) and go into the cave. The same boat will take us to the Treshnish Islands to see the huge seabird colonies. Here you can indulge in what the locals call "puffin therapy." You can lie down in



the colonies of nesting puffins; so close you can almost touch them. We'll also see lots of seals on the rocks and the scenery is spectacular.

May 27: We'll take a scenic drive across to the west side of the island through the imposing Glen More on our way to Iona. We'll stop at Ardalanish Isle of Mull Weavers. We will take a boat trip to the Island of Iona and visit the ancient Abbey which was founded in 563 by the monk who would become known as Saint Columba. The beautiful village allows only foot or bicycle travel and the gardens are filled with flowers and birds including the rare and elusive Corncrake.

May 28: Today we'll visit spectacular Loch na Keal. We'll look for White-tailed Sea Eagles nesting in the surrounding woods. We will take a boat trip on the loch and see Sea Eagles really close up. Golden Eagles also nest here and Otters and Gray Seals inhabit the tidal edge.

May 29: We'll leave Mull on the ferry and drive east and south towards Glasgow. Along the way we will pass through spectacular West Highland scenery and stop at Tyndrum. We'll arrive back in Glasgow in the late afternoon and stay at the Holiday Inn at the airport.

May 30: After breakfast, we'll walk across the road to the airport and head back to Boston.

All-inclusive cost includes hotel accommodations and all meals round-trip airfare from Boston to Glasgow,* van transportation in Scotland, ferry and boat trips and admission fees to nature reserves and other destinations listed on the itinerary.

Cost per person: \$5,950 (assumes double or twin occupancy room. There is an additional \$500 single room supplement).

For details or to book a space, call Iain at 603-968-7194.

* Arrangements can be made for participants to fly from other U.S. airports direct to Glasgow -- with any incremental cost increase added to the fee, or participant can make own arrangements to fly to Boston and join group.

Note: All photos taken on previous Scotland trips led by Iain.

