

Scotland: The Highlands

Tour-Only Itinerary

For centuries, Scotland's romantic highlands have inspired legends and lore. From your vantage point atop the Devil's Staircase on this Scotland walking tour, it's easy to see why. Windswept hillsides roll down toward distant lochs in all directions—the same dramatic landscapes that have fueled imaginations from Shakespeare to Sir Walter Scott, Harry Potter to *Outlander*. Walking these wild lands is also fueling your appreciation for Scotland's more settled charms: the village streets of Killin, the splendor of historic Blair Castle, a scenic cruise on Loch Katrine, or sipping whiskey at trail's end. Hitting the Rob Roy Way again, you descend towards the green valley of Glencoe, where your inn's cozy trio of pubs promises another welcome dose of inspiration.



Highlights

- Taste the honey-smooth, smoky flavor of handmade single-malt whiskey at the Blair Athol Distillery, where water from the Grampian mountains blends with ancient Highland malt to create the mellow and deep, well-rounded signature taste.
- Cruise on beautiful Loch Katrine, the inspiration for Sir Walter Scott's poem "Lady of the Lake" and the novel *Rob Roy*.
- Walk amid the splendor of Scotland's peaceful interior, hiking through forests of ancient pines, past verdant pastures, and alongside gentle brooks and shimmering lochs.
- Learn how the hard-working Highland cows have adapted to the extreme weather conditions in the Highlands during a visit with this ancient cattle breed.
- Enter a world of privilege and splendor at historic Blair Castle—once the center of the 17th-century

Jacobite rising, and home to the Atholl family for over seven centuries.

On all Guided Adventures you can count on ...



Expert local guides to introduce you to the best of your destination.



Gracious accommodations that are a clean, comfortable home away from home.



Off-the-beaten-path places you'd never find on your own.



Experts to handle all the details.



A maximum of 18 fun-loving fellow travelers to share the journey.



Flight + Tour Combos include plane tickets, airport car service, and pre- and post-tour accommodations.



Delicious, authentic multi-course meals—virtually all are included.

Activity Level

This tour is one of our Guided Walking Adventures, rated easy to moderate with an average of 2 to 7 miles of walking daily. The trails are a combination of flat paved roads; uneven grassy, gravel, or dirt paths, often with protruding rocks and tree roots; damp, boggy areas; working pasture land; and some small stream crossings, which may be rocky and slippery when wet. There are one or two short steep sections and

descents (some descents are longer and involve going down steps) with an average elevation gain of up to 500 feet. There are occasional wooden step stiles over fences. For those who are not interested in the more challenging walks, there will often be easier (and equally scenic!) options with shorter mileages available, over similar terrain. Scottish history and traditions are framed by the breathtaking contrasting scenery of mountains and water— islands, lochs, glens, moorland, cliffs, and forest.

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

What's Included

Tour Only

Exceptional boutique accommodations	✓
15 on-tour meals: 6 breakfasts, 4 lunches, 5 dinners	✓
Local guides with you throughout tour	✓
Local wine and/or beer with dinner	✓
Entrance fees and special events as noted in the itinerary	✓
Telescopic walking sticks provided on tour	✓