

SCOTLAND

# The Scottish Highlands

A Self-Guided Walking Adventure





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## Travel Style

Our Self-Guided Walking Adventures are ideal for travelers with an independent spirit who enjoy exploring at their own pace. We provide authentic accommodations, luggage transfers, and some meals, along with comprehensive Route Notes, detailed maps, and 24-hour emergency assistance. This gives you the freedom to focus on the things that matter to you—no group, no guide, and no set schedule to stand in the way of enjoying your adventure, your way.



## Overview

This self-guided walking tour combines the two most scenic regions of the Scottish Highlands. Beginning in Perthshire, at the foothills of the Highlands, you walk through an almost idyllic Scottish landscape of turreted castles framed by hills of purple heather, clear streams, deep, tree-lined lochs, and whisky distilleries. From the manicured Atholl Estate, a scenic transfer takes you to the Western Highlands, with wild landscapes of glens and open moorland with endless views, including Scotland's highest peak, Ben Nevis. Steeped in Scottish history, legendary routes pass near Birnam Wood from Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, the West Highland Way into Fort William, and to Bonnie Prince Charlie's safe havens. Accommodations are impeccable, inviting you to taste contemporary Scottish fare that starts with local produce, game, meat, and fish from the surrounding hills and waters, followed perhaps by the best single malt whisky.



# Daily Itinerary

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## DAY 1

Arrival in Dunkeld. Fiddlers Path and Inver Path; 6 miles, easy, no significant elevation gain or loss

As you step off the train at the Dunkeld & Birnam station, you take in the crisp fresh air of the Highlands, with the wild mountains of Perthshire nearby.

Following an orientation meeting, you check into your beautiful hotel, set on 280 acres, before departing for your walk. The well-maintained Dunkeld Path Network winds along the bank of the River Tay, Scotland's longest river, most famous for salmon fishing. A short ascent on the Inver Path leads to the manicured grounds of the Hermitage, with its impressive Douglas fir trees. The route continues to the edge of the early to mid-Victorian Highland resort of Birnam, home of the "Birnam Oak," considered the last remnant of the great Birnam Wood made famous in Shakespeare's *Macbeth*. You cross the Dunkeld Bridge linking the towns of Dunkeld and Birnam. The bridge was designed by Scottish engineer Thomas Telford and financed mainly by the 4th Duke of Atholl. Time permitting, you may peruse the artisan shops or admire the cathedral before strolling back to your hotel just outside of town.

## Dunkeld House Hotel, Dunkeld

This beautiful property is set within 280 acres of pristine land on the bank of the River Tay, Scotland's premier salmon fishing river. Bright guest rooms combine contemporary furnishings with rich, warm accents. The oak-paneled bar with its grand piano and log fire is ideal for relaxing with an aperitif before dining on fine fare from locally sourced ingredients at the on-site restaurant overlooking the river. A heated indoor pool, sauna, gym, and spa treatments are available, and tennis, golf, fishing, or horseback riding can be arranged. Walks start at the hotel's front step, located just a mile outside of town.



## DAY 2

Loch of the Lowes Path; 6.2 miles, easy to moderate, no significant elevation gain or loss, OR Birnam Hill Path, 8 miles, moderate to challenging, 1,000-ft. elevation gain and loss

Today offers several walk options right from the doorstep of your hotel. Our suggested route follows the now-familiar riverside path to Dunkeld. While the beginning and ending sections of the walk follow the quiet road past the Dunkeld Golf Club, the path soon leads to open country where great crested grebes, goldeneye ducks, and coots can be spotted. From this vantage point, you also enjoy views of the day's destination, the Loch of the Lowes Nature Reserve. Here, at the Scottish Wildlife Trust visitor center, you can observe live and recorded footage of a pair of breeding ospreys who call the reserve home. You retrace your steps and complete the loop back to the village where, time permitting, you may wish to visit the Beatrix Potter Exhibition and Garden located down the street from the Birnam train station. A moderate option is also available, culminating at the King's Seat viewpoint on Birnam Hill.

## Dunkeld House Hotel, Dunkeld





### DAY 3

Transfer to Killiecrankie. Killiecrankie to Pitlochry via Bealach route and Moulin; 6.2 miles, moderate, 1,400-ft. elevation gain and loss or Killiecrankie loop via River Garry and Loch Faskally; 9.4 miles, easy to moderate, no significant elevation gain and loss

Today you transfer to Killiecrankie and your home for the next two nights, a small hotel nestled in forest and rose gardens. Today's route starts with a gradual uphill section (approximately two hours) through fields of heather, offering some of the best views in Scotland. Before reaching the Bealach Pass, there is a challenging option (two miles round-trip) all the way to the summit of Ben Vrackie, at 2,760 feet. The path then descends to the town of Moulin with its 1965 brewery (which won the Scottish Pub of the Year award twice), where you may stop to refuel with a hearty lunch and a pint of Braveheart. There are several easy walk options through fields and woodlands, including one past the Edradour Distillery, the smallest in Scotland. You may spend a leisurely afternoon in Pitlochry and return by taxi (at your own expense). A longer, but easier option is to walk the Killiecrankie loop following a tranquil route alongside Loch Faskally and the River Garry, ideal for bird watching and plant identification.

#### **The Killiecrankie Hotel**

An intimate award-winning hotel and restaurant overlooking the Pass of Killiecrankie—the deep gorge of the River Garry. Recently refurbished elegant guest rooms are individually decorated with rich colors, fabrics, and fresh flowers. The fine-dining restaurant serves exceptional cuisine, and the cozy wood-paneled bar is a magnet for guests and locals. An inviting living room has a fireplace for cool weather or opens to manicured gardens and patio in warmer days. Surrounded by expansive lawns and woodlands, the hotel is just three miles from the Highland Victorian town of Pitlochry.

## DAY 4

Killiecrankie to Blair Atholl via River Garry and Blair Atholl back to Killiecrankie via Atholl Estates; 10.2 miles, easy to moderate, 950-ft. elevation gain and loss. Blair Castle Discovery

After a full Scottish breakfast, you head out on a gentle path following the River Garry, leading to the Atholl Estates and Blair Castle. The ancient seat of the Dukes and Earls of Atholl, Blair Castle presides over the heart of Highland Perthshire. Dating from the 13th century, Blair Castle's history extends over some 740 years, and it is still home to Europe's last private army, the Atholl Highlanders. You join a guided tour of the castle, a fascinating historical introduction, before enjoying a picnic or lunch at the local tearoom, a working 1590 water mill known for outstanding homemade soups and scones. The return to your cozy home offers some beautiful open vistas.

### The Killiecrankie Hotel, Killiecrankie

## DAY 5

Transfer to Fort William. Great Glen Way from Gairloch to Fort William; 10 miles, easy, no elevation gain or loss

Following breakfast, you depart Killiecrankie to make the stunning voyage (approximately two hours by car) west to Fort William. Today's walking route is on the final section of the Great Glen Way toward Fort William. You walk near Old Inverloch Castle, with beautiful views of Ben Nevis, and along the Caledonian Canal, with its "Pepper Pot" lighthouse and Neptune's Staircase—an impressive series of eight locks raising the canal by 50 feet. The largest town in the western Highlands, Fort William is picturesquely located on the shores of Loch Linnhe and is named after its original settlement around the fort, constructed to control the local population after Oliver Cromwell's invasion of Scotland during the English Civil War. You may want to stop at the West Highland Museum, which has an interesting exhibit.





### Nevis Bank Inn, Fort William

A modern inn on the banks of the River Nevis and a 10-min. walk from the center of Fort William. Spacious rooms are stylishly decorated with wooden furniture and luxurious fabrics. Browns Bar and Restaurant combines dark wood accents, oak floors, and large windows in a contemporary style, serving a wide selection of pasta, meat, and seafood.

### DAY 6

Cow Hill Circuit; 6.4 miles, easy to moderate, 1,000-ft. elevation gain and loss or train to Mallaig (non-walking option; at your own expense)

A wonderful loop walk departs Fort William for the top of Cow Hill, with superb views of the surrounding area. Or you may choose to take a train-ride excursion along the West Highland Railway through some of Scotland's most atmospheric scenery (at your own expense; advance reservation highly recommended; please visit [westcoastrailways.co.uk](http://westcoastrailways.co.uk)). The two-hour train ride to Mallaig crosses the famous 21-arched Glen Finnan viaduct (featured in the Harry Potter movies) and stops at the poignant Glen Finnan monument at the head of Loch Shiel that was erected in honor of the clansmen behind Bonnie Prince Charlie's attempt to gain the British throne in 1745. The end point, the town of Mallaig, is a thriving fishing community and one of the gateways to the islands of the Inner Hebrides. You can see the jagged peaks of the Isle of Skye just a few miles away across the Sound of Sleat. Mallaig is a good place to have lunch, with many seafood restaurants.

### Nevis Bank Inn, Fort William

### DAY 7

Departure from Fort William

You depart at your leisure after breakfast.



## **ITINERARY CHANGES**

Please bear in mind that this is a typical itinerary, and the actual activities, sites, and accommodations may vary due to season, special events, weather, or transportation schedules. We reserve the right to alter the itinerary, since tour arrangements are made up to a year in advance and unforeseen circumstances may arise that mandate change. Itinerary changes are made to improve the tour and your experience.

## **EDINBURGH'S INTERNATIONAL FESTIVALS**

Cultural activity in Edinburgh reaches its peak during the month of August. All art forms are presented during the prestigious Edinburgh International Festival. In 2017, this festival will occur from August 4–28. Please visit the following website for information: [eif.co.uk](http://eif.co.uk). There is also the annual Royal Edinburgh Military Tattoo—this performance by the British Armed Forces, Commonwealth, and International military bands and display teams on the esplanade of Edinburgh Castle is rich in tradition and pageantry. Information on the Tattoo can be found at [edintattoo.co.uk](http://edintattoo.co.uk). The official dates of the Tattoo in 2017 are August 4–26. Due to the popularity of the festivals, it is recommended that you make travel arrangements, including hotel reservations, as far in advance as possible.

## **RESPONSIBLE TRAVEL**

Country Walkers is a leader in active travel with responsible tourism an integral part of our core values. Our tours reflect our dedication to best travel practices—and to the preservation of indigenous cultures and the environment. Country Walkers has made a donation on behalf of every traveler to the CW Travelers Fund, which supports designated projects in the communities and habitats in which we travel. We invite you to learn more about our efforts and initiatives for giving back.

# Itinerary Overview

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**PLEASE NOTE:** your detailed Route Notes will be mailed to you approximately one month prior to your departure. While these Route Notes may list a number of accommodation options, **your specific accommodations are listed below**. Please make sure to bring this Itinerary Overview with you.

## STARTING POINT

**Dunkeld & Birnam Train Station, Dunkeld, Scotland**

**Based upon individual arrival times**

## NIGHTS 1 & 2

### **Dunkeld House Hotel**

Blairgowrie Road

Dunkeld, Scotland

Tel 011 44 1350 728333

Email [reservations@dunkeldhousehotel.co.uk](mailto:reservations@dunkeldhousehotel.co.uk)

[dunkeldhousehotel.co.uk](http://dunkeldhousehotel.co.uk)

Wireless Internet, hair dryers, and laundry service available.

## NIGHTS 3 & 4

### **The Killiecrankie Hotel**

Killiecrankie, Scotland

Tel 011 44 1796 473 220

Email [enquiries@killiecrankiehotel.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@killiecrankiehotel.co.uk)

[killiecrankiehotel.co.uk](http://killiecrankiehotel.co.uk)

Wireless Internet, hair dryers, and laundry service available.

## NIGHTS 5 & 6

### **Nevis Bank Inn**

Belford Road

Fort William, Scotland

Tel 011 44 01397 705 721

Email [stay@nevisbankinn.co.uk](mailto:stay@nevisbankinn.co.uk)

[nevisbankinn.co.uk](http://nevisbankinn.co.uk)

Wireless Internet and hair dryers available. Laundry service unavailable.

## ENDING POINT

**Nevis Bank Inn, Fort William, Scotland**

**At leisure after breakfast**

# Tour Facts at a Glance

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## TOUR LENGTH

7 days, 6 nights

## DEPARTURES

This tour is available daily, on request, from May 1 through October 31, 2017. Please note that the tiered tour price is based on a guarantee of a specified number of guests—should your group decrease in size, we reserve the right to alter the per person price if necessary as reflected in the Tour Price table. Please also note that the tour price includes one arrival transfer and orientation meeting on Day 1 of the tour. If traveling in a group of two or more with separate arrival times, additional charges will apply for multiple transfers and orientation meetings.

## TOUR PRICE

2017 departures	Per person 2–3 guests	Per person 4+ guests	Single +	Solo Surcharge
May 1–May 31	\$2,298	\$2,198	\$650	\$270
June 1–September 30	\$2,398	\$2,298	\$650	\$270
October 1–31	\$2,298	\$2,198	\$650	\$270

## STARTING POINT

**Dunkeld & Birnam Train Station, Dunkeld, Scotland**

Based upon individual arrival times

## ENDING POINT

**Nevis Bank Inn, Fort William, Scotland**

At leisure after breakfast

## ACTIVITY LEVEL

This tour is one of our Self-Guided Walking Adventures, rated easy to moderate, with an average of 5-11 miles per day, with options on some days. The terrain is sometimes gentle but also includes sustained ascents and descents on most days. Walks are on well-maintained trails combining wide paths, some of which are

paved, with single-track packed dirt or grassy tracks, with roots, gravel, and loose stones at times. The trails above tree line may feel more challenging than the terrain suggests because they are exposed to the elements. The walking routes are through woodlands or framed by heather, and offer dramatic views of typical Highland scenery.

## **INCLUSIONS**

- » Breakfast daily, one lunch (day 5), and four dinners (days 1, 3, 4, and 5); beverages not included
- » All accommodations while on tour
- » Local transfers as noted in the itinerary
- » Orientation meeting with a Country Walkers representative
- » Luggage transfers between the hotels
- » Detailed Route Notes and maps (mailed to you approximately one month prior to your departure)
- » 24-hour tour-related support provided by Country Walkers' local partner
- » 24-hour One Call International Emergency Hotline and Travel Assistance
- » The unbeatable and cumulative experience of the Country Walkers staff

## **LET THE JOURNEY BEGIN**

Prior to your adventure you will be asked to sign a Participation Agreement and you will receive:

- » A Guest Information Form to complete and return at least 45 days prior to your tour
- » Luggage tags
- » Route Notes and maps
- » Your trip invoice

## **GRATUITIES**

Standard gratuities for all hotels, meals, and services that are included in your tour price will be paid by Country Walkers; however additional tips are always welcome. Should you wish to tip for meals or services not included in the cost of the tour, please do so at your discretion. Local currency is preferred.

# Traveling To and From Your Tour

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## STARTING POINT

### Dunkeld & Birnam Train Station, Dunkeld, Scotland

#### Based upon individual arrival times

A tour representative will meet you at the Dunkeld & Birnam train station in Dunkeld (holding a sign with Country Walkers and/or your name on it) and take you for a hot drink and orientation meeting at a local café before delivering you to the Dunkeld House Hotel.

**In order to arrange your arrival transfer and orientation meeting, please provide us with your arrival and departure details by returning your Guest Information Form at least 45 days prior to the departure.**

Please note that the tour price includes one arrival transfer and orientation meeting on Day 1 of the tour. If traveling in a group of two or more with separate arrival times, additional charges will apply for multiple transfers and orientation meetings.

You may check into the hotel at any time of day on the first day of the tour (if you arrive prior to the hotel's check-in time of 3:00 p.m., and your room is not yet ready, you may store your luggage at reception and set out on your walk).

## MOST CONVENIENT AIRPORTS

Edinburgh Airport (EDI), Edinburgh, Scotland

[edinburghairport.com](http://edinburghairport.com)

Glasgow Airport (GLA), Glasgow, Scotland

[glasgowairport.com](http://glasgowairport.com)

## GETTING TO THE STARTING POINT

The most convenient way to travel to Dunkeld is by train.

**From Edinburgh:** there are direct trains several times per day from Edinburgh Haymarket train station, which is located slightly out of the city center. The journey to the Dunkeld & Birnam station takes 1½ hours. Or you may depart from Edinburgh Waverley train station, which is more central; the two-hour journey requires one change.



From the Edinburgh Airport to Haymarket or Waverley train station, you may take a taxi (20 minutes) or the Airlink bus service that departs the airport every 10 minutes (30 minutes). Tickets can be purchased at the Airlink kiosk just outside the Arrivals Hall. For more information about schedules, please visit [flybybus.com](http://flybybus.com).

**From Glasgow:** there are direct trains several times per day from Glasgow Queen Street train station, located in the city center. The journey to the Dunkeld & Birnam station takes 1½ hours.

From the Glasgow Airport to Glasgow Queen Street train station, you may take a taxi (15 minutes) or the First 500 Glasgow Shuttle that departs the airport every 10 minutes (20 minutes). Tickets can be purchased online or onboard from the driver. For more information about schedules or to pre-purchase tickets, please visit

[firstgroup.com/ukbus/glasgow/journey\\_planning/glasgow\\_shuttle/](http://firstgroup.com/ukbus/glasgow/journey_planning/glasgow_shuttle/).

For further rail information, including reservations, schedules, and up-to-date fares, please call Rail Europe at 877.257.2887 or consult their website:

[raileurope.com](http://raileurope.com). Or you may consult the Scottish rail website: [scotrail.co.uk](http://scotrail.co.uk).

We recommend making train reservations in advance for major train routes.

## PRE- AND POST-TOUR ACCOMMODATIONS

We suggest arriving in Scotland at least one day prior to the tour start date. This will give you time to rest after your travels and recover from any effects of jet lag.

**In Edinburgh:** we recommend staying at the B+B Edinburgh, a 10-minute walk or a 5-minute taxi ride from Haymarket Train Station. Please note that due to the Edinburgh Festival and the Edinburgh Tattoo, hotels fill extremely quickly during the month of August; we suggest making your pre-tour reservation as early as possible. Please contact the hotel directly to make a reservation.

### B+B Edinburgh

3 Rothesay Terrace  
Edinburgh EH3 7RY Scotland  
Tel 011 44 1312 255 084  
Fax 011 44 1312 265 085  
Email [info@bb-edinburgh.com](mailto:info@bb-edinburgh.com)  
[bb-edinburgh.com](http://bb-edinburgh.com)

**In Glasgow:** you may wish to stay at the ABode Glasgow, offering comfortable accommodations in contemporary style, as well as state-of-the-art facilities. The hotel is a 10-minute walk from the Queen Street train station.

### **ABode Glasgow**

129 Bath Street  
Glasgow, Lanarkshire G2 2SZ Scotland  
Tel 011 44 (0) 141 221 6789  
Email [reservationsglasgow@abodehotels.co.uk](mailto:reservationsglasgow@abodehotels.co.uk)  
[abodehotels.co.uk](http://abodehotels.co.uk)

For an edgier alternative, also located within a few minutes from the Queen Street train station, you may consider:

### **citizenM Glasgow**

60 Renfrew Street  
Glasgow, Scotland, G2 3BW  
Tel 011 44 (0) 203 519 1111  
Email [reservations@citizenm.com](mailto:reservations@citizenm.com)  
[citizenmglasgow.com](http://citizenmglasgow.com)

For further hotel recommendations in Glasgow, please visit [seeglasgow.com](http://seeglasgow.com).

## **ENDING POINT**

### **Nevis Bank Inn, Fort William, Scotland**

#### **At leisure after breakfast**

You may depart the final hotel after breakfast and prior to the hotel's check-out time of 11:00 a.m. The hotel staff can assist with any taxi transfers you may require. Depending upon your destination, it may not be possible to depart the UK on the last day of the tour. Please check airline schedules carefully. If you plan to schedule return flights immediately following the tour's conclusion, please call your airline directly for specific check-in requirements.

## **MOST CONVENIENT AIRPORTS**

Glasgow Airport (GLA), Glasgow, Scotland  
[glasgowairport.com](http://glasgowairport.com)

Edinburgh Airport (EDI), Edinburgh, Scotland  
[edinburghairport.com](http://edinburghairport.com)

## **LEAVING THE TOUR**

The most convenient way to travel to Glasgow or, further on to Edinburgh, is by train. There are typically 2 or 3 departures per day to Queen Street train

station in Glasgow. The direct journey takes approximately 4 hours. If traveling to Edinburgh, a change in Glasgow required; the total travel time is 5 hours.

For further rail information, including reservations, schedules, and up-to-date fares please call Rail Europe at 877.257.2887 or consult their website:

[raileurope.com](http://raileurope.com). Or you may consult the Scottish rail website: [scotrail.co.uk](http://scotrail.co.uk).

We recommend making train reservations in advance for major train routes.

# Information & Policies

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## **GUARANTEED DEPARTURES**

Country Walkers guarantees the departure of every tour\*—no exceptions and no disappointments! From the moment you make your deposit, you can start preparing for your adventure. We take care of all the details to ensure a seamless, self-guided experience. For best availability, reserve your trip today!

*\*except in cases of force majeure*

## **RESERVATIONS**

Reservations for this tour may be made by calling Country Walkers at 800.464.9255. A \$350 per person deposit is required at the time of the reservation request. Final tour cost is due 90 days prior to tour departure date. As arrangements are confirmed at least a year in advance, the tour price is subject to change.

## **GUEST RESPONSIBILITIES**

Each guest has the responsibility to select a trip appropriate to his/her abilities and interests and to prepare for the trip by carefully reading the confirmation materials. To join this trip, you must be in good health and capable of completing activities as described in the day-to-day itinerary. Our in-house experts welcome the opportunity to discuss the tour in more detail. In order to meet your needs, we ask that you please share any relevant physical limitations or health conditions when you make your reservation.

## **CANCELLATION POLICY**

Cancellations received 91 days or more prior to the tour start date will incur a loss of \$150; cancellations received between 90 and 61 days prior to the tour start date incur a loss of 25 percent of the tour price; there are no refunds within 60 days of the tour start date. Up to 91 days prior to departure, you may transfer your reservation, depending on availability, from one departure to another in the same calendar year at no cost\*. Please notify us in writing. Please note that the tiered tour price is based on a guarantee of a specified number of guests—should your group decrease in size, we reserve the right to alter the per person price if necessary as reflected in the Tour Price table.

*\*One transfer per year; afterwards a modest per person transfer fee will apply. Please note that tours with seasonal prices may involve a higher price.*

## **TRAVEL INSURANCE**

We offer guests the opportunity to purchase a Travel Protection Plan. Please contact us for details.

## **TRAVEL ARRANGEMENTS**

Air or other travel arrangements to and from your tour are not included in the price of your trip. We encourage you to contact your local travel agent, or Better Travel, a Vermont-based agency (800.331.6996 or

[bettertravel@madriver.com](mailto:bettertravel@madriver.com)), for any additional air, hotel, rail, or transfer arrangements you may need.