

Scotland Rocks II – the islands of the west

Day 1. Saturday 2nd June 2018. Meet in Paisley, near Glasgow Airport 3pm for introductions and orientation.

Welcoming dinner in the evening.

Accommodation: Dinner, Bed & Breakfast (DBB) at Ashtree Hotel, Paisley.

Day 2. Sunday 3rd. Travel by coach to the island of Arran in the Firth of Clyde. Visit Brodick Castle and grounds, or take a low-level walk (3-4 miles) to explore the granite scenery of the northern hills. Travel around Arran's south coast, with a stop to enjoy the coastal scenery and views of Ailsa Craig. Overnight at Blackwaterfoot, southwest Arran.

Lunch: Buy your own at Brodick store or museum.

Accommodation: DBB at Blackwaterfoot Lodge / Kinloch Hotel.

Day 3. Monday 4th. Coastal walk (4 miles) from Blackwaterfoot to explore the scenery created by a variety of igneous intrusions, and caves carved in soft sandstone at the back of the raised beach, including the Kings Cave, said to be a refuge of Robert the Bruce. After lunch, visit the important historical site on Machrie Moor, where there are several impressive stone circles. Evening meal in a remote restaurant on the west coast, overnight at Blackwaterfoot.

Lunch: buy your own picnic lunch from hotel or store.

Accommodation: BB at Blackwaterfoot Lodge / Kinloch Hotel.

Dinner: Group dinner at Lighthouse Restaurant, Pirnmill.

Day 4. Tuesday 5th. Travel to the north of Arran with a visit to Glen Sannox, a beautiful glaciated glen carved in granite. Take a short coastal walk (2 miles) to James Hutton's famous unconformity, near Lochranza, before catching a small ferry from the north of Arran to Kintyre. Travel north through Argyll, with a stop at Kilmartin Glen, famous for its important concentration of Neolithic and Bronze Age standing stones and burial sites.

Lunch: buy your own picnic lunch from store, or takeaway food available at Lochranza.

Accommodation: DBB at Loch Melfort Hotel, Argyll.

Day 5. Wednesday 6th. Morning boat trip, weather permitting, around Scarba via the Gulf of Corryvreckan (whirlpool) to the remote Garvellach islands, where we can see evidence of a Precambrian glaciation recorded in the Dalradian metamorphic rocks. Visit the slate islands of Seil and Luìng (pronounced 'Ling'), with a short walk on Luìng to explore some of the history of quarrying slate and visit the Atlantic Islands Centre.

Lunch: buy your own picnic lunch or eat at the Atlantic Islands Centre.

Accommodation: DBB at Loch Melfort Hotel, Argyll.

Day 6. Thursday 7th. Visit the town of Oban, and catch the ferry to Mull. Drive through Mull with stops to take in some of the volcanic scenery. Short ferry ride to Iona.

Lunch: buy your own in Oban, variety of cafes and restaurants.

Accommodation: DBB at Argyll Hotel, Iona.

Day 7. Friday 8th. Boat trip to the island of Staffa to view some spectacular columnar lava flows, and possibly, if the weather is good, sail to Maculloch's fossil tree on a wild section of the coast of Mull. (Driver's day off - no bus day.)

Lunch: picnic lunch from stores on Iona.

Accommodation: BB at Argyll Hotel, Iona.

Dinner: own arrangements in small groups, restaurants on Iona.

Day 8. Saturday 9th. Walk to St Columba's Bay, believed to be the place where St Columba and his fellow monks landed on Iona in 563, and the marble quarries (5 miles). In the afternoon, depart Iona and drive through Mull to the town of Tobermory.

Lunch: cafes and restaurants on Iona, or picnic lunch from stores on Iona.

Accommodation: BB in Mishnish Hotel, Tobermory, Mull.

Dinner: own arrangements in small groups, restaurants in Tobermory.

Day 9. Sunday 10th. Depart Tobermory by ferry northwards to the Ardnamurchan peninsula. Visit Ardnamurchan Point, then on to Mallaig.

Lunch: picnic lunch from stores in Tobermory.

Accommodation: DBB at West Highland Hotel, Mallaig. Note that the coach will leave us at Mallaig and the rest of the trip will be on foot, ferry and public transport.

Day 10. Monday 11th. Morning ferry from Mallaig 10.15am to Eigg. Lunch at the pier or the beach, short walk (3 miles) to the Caves, the Lodge and on to our accommodation at the Glebe Barn (luggage will be transported separately). Full catering for the next three days by Eigg Bread, an excellent local catering company using local produce.

Lunch: buy your own picnic lunch at stores in Arisaig or Eigg, or eat in cafe on Eigg.

Accommodation: DBB at the Glebe Barn, Eigg. This is not a hotel, but it has plenty of space in private rooms with shared bathrooms. Laundry facilities available.

Day 11. Tuesday 12th. Walk on the west coast of Eigg, a spectacular coastline of sandstone with minor intrusions (4 miles). Adventurous geologists might want to carry on to the very north tip of the island and the beach where Hugh Miller found plesiosaur fossils (7-8 miles total). Dinner and overnight at the Glebe Barn.

Lunch: provided, make up your own picnic lunch after breakfast.

Accommodation: DBB at the Glebe Barn, Eigg.

Day 12. Wednesday 13th. South Eigg walk, including an ascent of An Sgùrr, the highest hill on Eigg, a tough ridge of glassy pitchstone formed by a pyroclastic flow 58 million years ago (5 miles). Dinner and overnight at Glebe Barn.

Lunch: provided, make up your own picnic lunch after breakfast.

Accommodation: DBB at the Glebe Barn, Eigg.

Day 13. Thursday 14th. Depart Eigg for Mallaig early afternoon, train journey along the famous West Highland line to Fort William. Farewell dinner.

Lunch: provided, make up your own picnic lunch after breakfast.

Accommodation: DBB at Nevis Bank Inn, Fort William.

Day 14. Friday 15th. Train from Fort William to Glasgow, trip ends.

GENERAL NOTES: This trip complements Scotland Rocks! I, giving an insight into the geology of the west coast of Scotland with no overlap with the first trip. We'll see some of the main rock types that were visited in Scotland Rocks! I, but with more local variety, particularly with igneous rocks. There are some important differences from the first trip, principally in travelling a shorter distance with consequently less time in the bus. Several ferry journeys are involved, and small-boat excursions, so we will spend more time on the water and be more at the mercy of the weather. There is more walking than in the first trip, with several days where the main activity will be walking a few miles over rough ground, similar to the descent to Eathie shore on the Black Isle but often covering a longer distance. Walk distances given in the programme are the total round-trip distance each day, but there will be a lot of flexibility, for example with shorter walk options.

The other aspect of this trip which is quite different is the ability to get off the beaten track, and visit places such as the Garvellach islands and Eigg that are not on the tourist trail. We are choosing to travel in a small group to allow us to get to these places. Accommodation will be varied, making the best of what is available, and there will be times that we will have to walk up to 300 yards, and on and off ferries with our luggage. Wheels will be an advantage, and pack light! The upside is that we will be embedded in contemporary Scottish culture, with more of an opportunity to see communities that are not skewed by a massive summer influx of overseas visitors.