Cairngorms Guided Walking with Sightseeing



Trip style:	Destination:	Walking Grade	Carbon Footprint:
Walking with sightseeing	Scotland & Scottish Highlands	3	121kg CO2

HOLIDAY OVERVIEW

Scotland's second largest national park not only boasts glistening lochs, wildlife-filled woodland, and heather-clad mountains, but centuries of stories, too. Discover the Cairngorms on a small-group guided walking holiday that combines easier walks with time spent sightseeing. On foot, we'll admire dramatic Scottish scenery as we seek out a hidden lochan and follow the royal cairn trail to Prince Albert's pyramid, on the grounds of Balmoral Castle estate. Along the way, experience a host of highlights including a funicular ride to Cairn Gorm summit, a trip on the Strathspey heritage railway, and a tour and tasting session at a highland distillery.

WHAT YOU'LL LOVE

- Enjoying easier walks whilst touring this beautiful region in a small group (max 15 people)
- Highland scenery of rugged mountains and views over lochs and ancient pine forests
- Riding the historic Strathspey Railway to Boat of Garten
- Taking the funicular up to Cairn Gorm summit

- Staying at a traditional Highland hotel in the charming town of Aviemore
- A tour of Scotland's highest distillery with a whisky and artisan chocolate tasting

WHAT'S INCLUDED

- Comfortable en-suite rooms in our partner accommodation
- Cooked or continental breakfast every morning
- Daily packed lunches
- Three-course evening meals, plus tea & coffee
- All transport to and from walks where necessary
- Distillery visit with whisky and chocolate tasting, Strathspey railway from Aviemore to Boat of Garten, paddock visit to Cairngorm Reindeer Herd, mountain railway/funicular pass to the summit of Cairn Gorm

ITINERARY - ITINERARY

Day 1 ARRIVAL DAY AT AVIEMORE

Make your way to Aviemore, a popular town located in the northwest corner of the majestic Cairngorms National Park. Your leader will be at reception to meet the group for a quick introduction to the holiday before going into dinner.

Day 2 WILDCAT TRAIL AND THE HIGHLAND FOLK MUSEUM

Start the morning with a transfer to Newtonmore, where we will join the Wildcat Trail, passing through woodland and following the River Spey to the Highland Folk Museum. We'll have time to explore this fascinating open-air museum, founded in 1936 and home to over 35 reconstructed historical buildings showing life, traditions and stories from the 1700s to the mid-20th Century.

4.5 miles (7.5km) with 390ft (120m) of ascent

Day 3 RUTHVEN BARRACKS, INVERTROMIE TRAIL AND DALWHINNIE DISTILLERY

After a hearty breakfast we transfer to Kingussie, previously known for its thriving local linen industry and now famed for its successful shinty team – a traditional Gaelic sport played with sticks and a ball. From here, it's a short walk to Ruthven Barracks, a collection of buildings established by King George I following the failed Jacobite uprising of 1715. We continue on foot towards Insh Marshes RSPB nature reserve and join the Invertromie Trail; binoculars are recommended for the three bird hides. This afternoon we travel to Dalwhinnie Distillery, the highest in Scotland. After a tour of the distillery, we can look forward to sampling their whisky and artisan chocolate.

4 miles (6.5km) with 310ft (95m) of ascent.

Day 4 STRATHSPEY HERITAGE RAILWAY TO BOAT OF GARTEN AND LOCH GARTEN RSPB NATURE RESERVE

This morning we enjoy a short ride on a historic locomotive* along the Strathspey Railway heritage line to Boat of Garten, where we alight for our walk to the Loch Garten Nature Centre, the ancestral home of the UK's ospreys. We will explore around the loch, woodland and wetland of this wildlife rich area. During spring and summer visits keep a

look out for breeding osprey, crested tits, red squirrels, voles, great spotted woodpeckers, siskins and common lizards. In Autumn the wild greylag and pink-footed geese arrive on Loch Garten. The Nature Centre is surrounded by the largest remnant of ancient Caledonian pine forest.

* The Strathspey Heritage Railway always aims to operate a steam hauled service but on occasion, operational issues may mean a diesel engine is used.

4.5 miles (7km) with 130ft (40m) of ascent

Day 5 FREE DAY – CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK

Each holiday there is a free day when no guided walks are offered. This is an ideal opportunity to relax around the hotel, walk independently or visit local places of interest.

There's plenty to do within easy reach, whether it's a visit to Inverness (the cultural capital of the Scottish Highlands) or an independent day trip to the historic battlefield at Culloden and the 18th century fortress of Fort George.

Day 6 THE ROYAL CAIRNS AND PRINCE ALBERT'S PYRAMID WALK, BALMORAL AREA

After our rest day, our legs will be fully charged to enjoy a walk in the Balmoral area; it is an approx. 90-minute transfer (excluding any stops) to Crathie where we will stop by the Kirk; it was to this church that Queen Victoria came in 1848 during her time at Balmoral Castle, and the Royal Family continues to worship here today. Many of the local people who served Queen Victoria, including her personal attendant John Brown, are buried in the grounds of nearby St Monire Church, which we will visit as we head out on our walk.

Our walk today explores the historical cairns erected by the Royal Family on the Balmoral Estate and includes Prince Albert's Pyramid; the largest cairn, erected by Queen Victoria in her husband's memory. The walk offers superb views over Deeside and the woodland surrounding Balmoral Castle; although the castle itself is hidden from sight. The Royals still use Balmoral as their residence, so a castle visit is not scheduled for this reason, however access to Prince Albert's Pyramid is always open. This is the more demanding of the generally easy walks on this holiday, however, is very worthwhile.

3.5 miles (6km) with 590ft (180m) of ascent

Day 7 REINDEER HERD PADDOCK VISIT, LOCH AN UAINE (GREEN LOCHAN) WALK, FUNICULAR TO CAIRN GORM SUMMIT

A busy final day begins with a visit to the Cairngorm Reindeer Herd at Glenmore, where we will see some of the herd in the paddock, and our group will enjoy a short talk and Q&A session with one of the herders. Incredibly, there are around 150 reindeer in the herd, mostly ranging on the mountains or the Glenlivet Estate. From the paddock, we head out on a walk to Lochan Uaine and Ryovan Bothy. Uaine is a small freshwater lochan also known as the Green Loch thanks to the emerald-green waters that said to derive their colour from the fairies washing their clothes at night. We continue with a short transfer to Cairngorm mountain railway station, and ascend to the summit by funicular, which offers spectacular views on a clear day. Descending with the funicular we return to our hotel, for a wonderful farewell dinner together.

5.5 miles (9km) with 310ft (95m) of ascent

Day 8 DEPARTURE DAY

Enjoy a leisurely breakfast before making your way home.

DAILY WALK OPTIONS



Gentle walking grade 3

Slightly longer walks, mostly on well-trodden paths, with some gentle gradients plus stiles and steps possible. Typically, 5-6 miles (8-10km) with around 650ft (200m) of ascent.

ACCOMMODATION

2027 - The Cairngorm Hotel - Aviemore, Cairngorms National Park

The Cairngorm Hotel is situated directly opposite the railway station in the heart of Aviemore. Offering the warm and friendly welcome you'd expect from a traditional Highland hotel, rooms are comfortably furnished with touches of tartan, and feature blackout curtains as well as tea/coffee making facilities. Popular with locals and visitors alike, the Cairngorm Hotel's bar and restaurant is a convivial and sociable space to start the day with a good breakfast and enjoy a hearty dinner after a day out exploring. This hotel is dog-friendly so you may meet four-legged friends in some of the communal areas.

TRAVEL DETAILS

Getting there

Cairngorm Hotel
Grampian Road
Aviemore
Inverness-shire
PH22 1PE

Joining Instructions

PLEASE NOTE the website www.travelinescotland.com is a fantastic resource for public transport in Scotland and planning your journey.

Holiday Start

By Air

There are International flights and also flights from around the UK to Glasgow International Airport or Edinburgh. From Glasgow International Airport take the regular airport bus to Glasgow Central station (journey time 30 minutes) (www.glasgowairport.com). From Edinburgh Airport you can take a bus or a tram into the city centre; see https://www.edinburghairport.com/transport-links . You may also wish to consider pre-booking with all-electric, intercity bus service Ember (as they operate a dynamic service based on pre-booked seats); https://www.ember.to/ or please see Traveline Scotland above. There are also flights to Glasgow Prestwick Airport, which is further outside the city and has its own railway station with frequent trains (journey time 45 minutes to Glasgow Central station), (www.gpia.co.uk).

By Rail

The nearest railway station to the accommodation is Aviemore; the hotel is just across the street from the station. From Glasgow Queen Street or Edinburgh Waverley train stations you can take the train to Aviemore. Again, please see www.travelinescotland.com for assistance with journey planning.

ESSENTIAL INFORMATION

Packing list

Weather conditions in the UK can vary throughout the day, and conditions in the mountains may be cold and windy even in summer. Use the following list as a guide when preparing for your holiday.

Essentials

- Suitable waterproof walking boots with ankle support and good grip
- Waterproof, wind-resistant jacket with a hood, taped seams and a hydrostatic head rating of at least 10,000 mm
- Waterproof overtrousers
- Spare warm clothing, such as a synthetic insulated jacket
- Comfortable walking clothing (jeans & waterproof capes are not suitable)
- Warm mid-layers, such as fleeces
- Gloves and a warm hat, even in summer
- Rucksack with a waterproof liner
- Water bottle with a capacity of at least 1 litre
- Flask for hot drinks
- Sunscreen
- UV-protective sunglasses
- Spare high-energy food
- Head torch and spare batteries for holidays between October and March
- Passport (if applicable)
- Visa (if applicable)
- Copy of your travel insurance policy

Recommended

- Several base layers, with long or short sleeves
- Cushioned walking socks to avoid blisters
- First-aid kit, including plasters, insect repellent, a midge net and a tick-removal tool
- Sit mat
- Waterproof pouch for valuables
- Rubbish bags
- Wallet or purse

- Camera
- Walking poles
- Sun hat
- Gaiters
- Mobile Phones
- Swimwear (please see accommodation information for hotel facilities)
- Membership cards for English Heritage, the National Trust or similar heritage organisations in Scotland and Wales, if you are a member. These may be useful when visiting attractions during your itinerary or on your free day.

USEFUL INFORMATION

Safety Information

Walking Safety

Walks may be changed for safety reasons and are subject to a maximum and minimum number of guests.

Leaders always consider the safety of the group as a whole and may need to alter or curtail the walk if the conditions dictate. Your leader may refuse to accept a guest where clothing, equipment or behaviour is unsuitable. In the event of a problem all leaders carry a mobile phone, first aid kit, group shelter, spare maps and a compass.

Please note: If you choose to leave the group your leader is no longer responsible for you.

In the event of a problem

If you become separated from your group, please stay where you are. Your leader will retrace their steps to find you.

All our walk leaders carry a mobile phone, group shelter, spare maps and a compass. In the unlikely event your leader is incapacitated, please use any emergency kit in their rucksack and call the emergency services (call 999 in the UK, or 112 overseas).

Please then try to call the hotel where you are staying to let them know there is a problem.

We advise you carry a copy of these trip notes or note down the contact phone number for your accommodation (details in the travel section) should you need them in case of emergency.

If you have any cause for complaints regarding accommodation, you should notify your leader who can then attempt to rectify the problem.

Ticks

Ticks are tiny creatures that live in vegetation and can attach themselves to passing animals or walkers and may carry a risk of Lyme Disease. Please refer to NHS advice and guidelines for information prior to your holiday.

Your Island Hopping Leader

Our experienced and knowledgeable volunteer leaders undergo a thorough assessment to lead you on your holiday and are delighted to share their knowledge and enthusiasm with you.

Please ensure you complete and hand in your registration form on arrival and let the leader know about any medical problems you may have. This may be useful in the event of a problem on the walk and will be treated confidentially by the leader.

In the event of a problem

If you become separated from your group, please stay where you are. Your leader will retrace their steps to find you.

All our leaders carry a mobile phone, group shelter, spare maps and a compass. In the unlikely event your leader is incapacitated, please use any emergency kit in their rucksack and call the emergency services (call 999 in the UK, or 112 overseas).

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TRIPNOTE VALIDITY

TRIP NOTE VALIDITY These Trip Notes are valid based on the date printed at the bottom of the page. They will occasionally be updated post booking and pre-departure. We will send you the latest trip notes prior to departure through a link in your pre departure documents or we can send you a copy in the post if preferred. In booking this trip you should be confident in your ability to participate in all activities described in these Trip Notes. If you have any doubt about your suitability you should call HF Holidays and ask to speak to one of the team about this itinerary. The information in these Trip Notes is given in good faith. Where differences exist between the Trip Notes and our current brochure, the Trip Notes supersede the brochure. All holidays can be subject to unexpected changes; so please be prepared to be flexible where necessary. At times, it may not be possible to follow the itinerary as planned due to weather conditions, political, physical or other factors. In these circumstances we will make the best possible alternative arrangements to maintain the integrity of the original itinerary.

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