

Cape Wrath Classic Guided Trail

Tour Style: Guided walking

Destinations: Scotland & United Kingdom

Trip code: XILDW

Trip Walking Grade: 4



HOLIDAY OVERVIEW

Walk through the wild and dramatic landscapes of mainland Britain's most north-westerly point with a guided trail around Cape Wrath. Journey along rugged wave-washed coastline home to some of the highest sea cliffs in the country, marvel at sky-high Scottish mountains, and keep your eyes peeled for rare wildlife including red deer and golden eagles.

WHAT'S INCLUDED

- Comfortable en-suite rooms in our partner accommodation(s)
- Cooked or continental breakfast every morning
- Daily packed lunches
- Three-course evening meals, plus tea & coffee
- Guided walks with an experienced HF Holidays Leader
- All transport to and from walks where necessary
- Luggage transfers

HOLIDAY HIGHLIGHTS

- Walking from Cape Wrath to Lochinver
- Exploring mainland Britain's most north-westerly point
- Marvelling at the dramatic mountains of Ben Stack and Suilven
- Taking the ferry to Handa Island Wildlife Reserve
- Strolling along the banks of the salmon-filled River Laxford
- The warm and welcoming hospitality of our partner hotels

TRIP SUITABILITY

Cape Wrath Classic is graded 4, with walks/hikes of long distances in remote countryside and rough and often pathless terrain, occasionally requiring river crossings. Sustained ascents and descents and occasional sections of rocky and steep ground are encountered. Weather can be unpredictable. You will require a good level of fitness as you will be walking every day. It is your responsibility to ensure you have the relevant fitness and equipment required to join this holiday. A sustained effort is required to complete each walk and provision cannot be made for anyone who opts out. Please be sure you can manage the mileage and ascent detailed in the daily itineraries. Each walking day on this holiday will vary between approximately 6 and 9 hours and it is important for your own enjoyment, and that of your fellow guests that you can maintain the pace.

Your fitness

Having a solid base of fitness before your holiday will ensure you've the best chance of completing the holiday and enjoying it to boot. Here's a few simple tips to help you get fit and ready for your challenge:

- Get out walking – whatever the weather, get out there, and start building your fitness months before your holiday
- Build your distance gradually and get a number of 6-8hr hill days in
- Ideally, try and do two consecutive days training if possible
- Take the stairs every time
- Train on different terrain
- Train with your day pack and your walking boots too, to ensure they're well worn in before your holiday
- Other sports help improve your walking fitness too. The best ones are jogging, cycling, swimming, which will build your stamina, and yoga which will help strengthen your core and improve balance

Time training will help ensure you enjoy your holiday to the max.



ITINERARY

Day 1: Arrival Day

Join us in Inverness for a group transfer to your accommodation. The journey takes approximately 2 hours 30 minutes and includes a short stop on the way.

Your leader will be at reception at 6:30pm to meet the group and provide an introduction to the holiday before dinner.

Day 2: Highlights Of Durness

Our first day gives us a chance to familiarise with the area and the type of walking we can expect for the next two days. We start on the coast just east of Durness and explore the abandoned township of Ceannabeine, before heading steeply up Beinn Ceannabeinne itself with stunning views in all directions. Taking an easier route down, we head for the famous Smoo Cave and the beautiful coastal scenery of the area. Passing the delightful Sango Sands beach and the village of Durness, we finish our walk at Balnakeil Craft Village, with time for an explore or maybe a paddle on Balnakeil Beach.

8½ miles (13.5km) with 1,600 feet (490m) of ascent.

Day 3: Cape Wrath

We use a ferry to cross the Kyle of Durness and a minibus takes us to Cape Wrath, the most north-westerly point on the mainland in a stunning setting with its lighthouse sitting on top of some of the highest cliffs in Britain. From Cape Wrath you'll walk across pathless terrain to Sandwood Bay and its famous sea stack, Am Buchaille. This is a wild and remote area. There are no escape routes or vehicular access and the route can involve crossing rivers, bog and peat hags. The rewards however are spectacular.

14 miles (22 km) with 1,500 feet (450m) of ascent.

Day 4: Ben Stack

Walk along the delightful banks of the River Laxford, one of Scotland's finest salmon rivers, followed by an ascent of the pyramidal Ben Stack. The walk on Ben Stack is steep in places with only intermittent paths and leads to a fine summit ridge with fine views to Arkle and Foinavon.

7½ miles (12.5 km) with 2,500 feet (760m) of ascent.

Day 5: Achfary To Glen Coul

Follow a good path across to Kylesku at the mouth of Loch Coul, with spectacular views of the local mountains and amazing geology and bird life. If the weather's looking good, we've time to climb one of those mountains too, Ben Dreavie.

8 miles (13km) with 1,320 feet (400m) of ascent.

(including Ben Dreavie 11 miles (18km) with 1,640 feet (500m) of ascent)

Day 6: Handa Island

A short ferry crossing takes you to this RSPB Bird Reserve where we have plenty of time to watch the sea birds and enjoy a superb cliff top walk around the island visiting the Great Stack of Handa. Occasionally dolphins and even whales can be seen.

4 miles (6.5 km) with 500 feet (150m) of ascent.

Day 7: Bealach Na H-Uidhe

A walk from Loch an Gainmhich through wild and remote scenery to the delightful Loch Bealach a Bhuirich. From here an excellent stalkers' path brings us up to the pass between Glas Bheinn and Beinn Uidhe, where ptarmigan can sometimes be seen, before descending across country to our hotel at Inchnadamph.

10 miles (16km) with 2,250 feet (680m) of ascent.

Day 8: In The Shadows Of Suilven

Trek through some of the wildest and most dramatic scenery in Scotland beneath Canisp and the iconic Suilven, whose ever changing form and dramatic outline will captivate you. The route finishes at Lochinver.

12 miles (19km) with 800 feet (245m) of ascent.

Day 9: Departure Day

Transfer back to Inverness airport and rail station.

ACCOMMODATION

Kinlochbervie Hotel

Situated in one of north west Scotland's most stunning coastal locations, the Kinlochbervie Hotel offers a warm and welcoming stay. Just 10 miles south of Cape Wrath and overlooking Loch Clash, this family-run hotel is the perfect base from which to explore. Public areas take advantage of the beautiful panoramic views over lochs and hills to the open sea, and locally caught fish is served in the bistro. En-suite bedrooms are basic but

comfortable, and all come equipped with tea and coffee making facilities, flat screen TVs, and hairdryers. What's more, there's free internet access and parking available, too. This hotel is dog-friendly so you may meet four legged friends in some of the communal areas.

Inchnadamp Hotel

Inchnadamp means 'meeting place of the deer' and you'll see plenty of red deer here. The rather isolated Inchnadamp Hotel lies at the foot of the main mountains of Assynt such as Ben More Assynt and Conival and nearby are the well-known 'Bone Caves', where relics of lynx, arctic fox, reindeer, polar bear and human skeletons have been found. The area is also a mecca for geologists. The hotel offers a public and residents' dining area along with a popular walkers' bar. Many rooms have views out to Quinag. Rooms have tea and coffee making facilities and hairdryer (on request). There are no TV facilities at this hotel, limited WiFi and very poor mobile phone reception. Drying facilities for clothing and boots is excellent. This hotel is dog-friendly so you may meet four legged friends in some of the communal areas.

USEFUL HOLIDAY INFORMATION

Holiday Information

We try to create a relaxed atmosphere on the walk but please listen to safety instructions from your leader.

Keep members of the group in view especially when weather or visibility is poor. If you leave the group, then your leader will no longer have responsibility for you. Our leaders consider the safety of the group as a whole and are likely to be more cautious over potential risks such as bad weather.

The Cape Wrath Trail is unusual in that there is no set route – walkers effectively make their own version of the trail, taking a line between Fort William and Cape Wrath. Our Cape Wrath Classic takes in some of the best sections of the north western part. The quality of the landscape and wildlife is exceptional. We may occasionally see golden eagles, otters and possibly sea eagles. There is a very good chance of seeing red deer, ravens and ptarmigan on the higher slopes. In the Handa Island bird reserve we may see puffins, divers, gannets, as well as arctic and great skua.

Most of the area where we walk sits inside the North West Highlands Geopark and is one of the most famous areas for geology in the British Isles. Assynt in particular has been described as an 'internationally acclaimed geological showpiece'. The area has some of the oldest rock formations on earth, as well as limestone caves where traces of early man, wolves and bears have been found.

The Cape Wrath Trail visits terrain both remote and pristine. The coast and mountains of Sutherland present one of Europe's last great wildernesses and when you sign up for this trail, you're signing up to a truly memorable experience.

Food & Transport

Your stay is full-board. This includes daily breakfasts, packed lunch options, and evening meals. Vegetarian choices and dietary requirements can be catered for (please give advance notice when booking).

Packed lunches

Our packed lunches will be too much food for some and not enough for others; if you feel you might need more food during the walk, please bring a supply of snacks to supplement this – it won't always be possible to buy these on the route. Your packed lunches will include: a bread sandwich or roll with a choice of filling; some fresh fruit; fruit cake/flapjack or similar, crisps and/or biscuits. For those of you tackling a level 4 or above holiday, we would highly recommend bringing some trail mix or something similar to ensure you've some fuel in reserve should you need it.

Dietary requirements

Our partner hotels can cater for most dietary requirements, but it is important you advise us of any allergies and dietary restrictions you have at the time of booking.

Luggage transfers

When you change from one hotel to another, we will arrange for your luggage to be transferred for you. This is included in the cost of your holiday. Please remember that other people will need to move your suitcase so please pack thoughtfully. If you can limit your luggage to one bag, rucksack or suitcase that would be very helpful. Make sure your bags are clearly labelled with your name and "HF Holidays".

Joining Instructions

Holiday Start

Your holiday starts in Inverness. Our group transfer will collect guests from Inverness Rail Station at:

- 2.30pm. Your HF Holidays leader will be at the meeting point in the station near WHSmiths.

A pick-up is also available from Inverness Airport (2:00pm) - this is **only available if you have pre-booked an airport transfer**. To pre-book, please let us know at least 8 weeks before your holiday start date, by emailing reservations@hfholidays.co.uk. The airport pick-up point is in front of the Terminal Building. Look out for someone holding a HF Holidays sign.

If you will not be using our transfer please let us know by emailing reservations@hfholidays.co.uk, so that the group is aware not to wait for you. The transfer from Inverness to Kinlochbervie is approximately 2 hours 30 minutes with a short stop on the way.

Holiday Finish

We will return you to Inverness railway station for 9:30am or to Inverness airport for 10:00am.

By Rail

There is a regular rail service to Inverness. For train times and route planning by train visit www.nationalrail.co.uk or call 03457 484950.

By Car

Both the Kinlochbervie Hotel and Inchnadamph Hotel offer free car parking. On the day of transfer between hotels, any guests driving themselves can follow the group transport to Tarbet, park, join the trip to Handa Island, and then continue their onward journey to the Inchnadamph Hotel.

Please note that in poor weather conditions the ferry to Handa Island is sometimes cancelled. In these circumstances we offer a linear walk between Tarbet and Scourie. Should this be the case, we recommend you explore independently for the day and meet the group at the Inchnadamph hotel.

By Air

There are a number of low-cost flights from around the UK to Inverness and if you are flying from overseas there are some international flights to Inverness.

Essential Information

The UK has a famously unpredictable climate so it's best to be prepared for weather that's sunny one minute

and raining the next. To make it easier, here's a list of items you should consider packing.

Essentials

- Suitable footwear such as waterproof walking boots that provide ankle support and good grip
- Waterproof and windproof jacket
- Comfortable clothing (jeans & waterproof capes are not suitable)
- Mid-layer(s) to keep you warm. Fleeces make a good choice
- Waterproof overtrousers
- Gloves and a warm hat
- Rucksack with waterproof liner
- Spotting scope and/or binoculars
- Flask for hot drinks
- Water bottle (at least 1 litre capacity)
- Sunscreen
- UV sunglasses

Recommended

- Several base layers (long-sleeve or short-sleeve)
- Cushioned walking socks to avoid blisters
- First aid kit, including plasters and insect repellent
- Sit mat
- Waterproof pouch for valuables
- Rubbish bag (remember to always leave no trace)
- Wallet/purse
- Camera
- First-aid kit

Useful Information

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.

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).

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

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

Suggested Reading and Maps

Your leader will carry all the necessary maps and guides. For your own interest you may consider looking at some of the following:

- www.undiscoveredscotland.co.uk
- www.johnmuirtrust.org

Ordnance Survey 1:50,000 maps

- Landranger 9: Cape Wrath, Durness & Scourie
- Landranger 15: Loch Assynt & surrounding area

Books

- North to the Cape, Denis Brook & Phil Hinchliffe (Cicerone Guide)
- Hostile Habitats, Mark Wrighttham & Nick Kempe
- Hutton's Arse: 3 billion years of extraordinary geology in Scotland's Northern Highlands, Malcolm Rider

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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