

West Highland Way Guided Trail Holiday

Tour Style: Guided trails

Destinations: Scotland & United Kingdom

Trip code: ZHLDW

Trip Walking Grade: 4



HOLIDAY OVERVIEW

Journey through stunning highland scenery on one of Scotland's most famous trails. A firm favourite of our guests, this superb walk winds its way from Milngavie to the foot of Ben Nevis at Fort William. You'll hike from the sparkling shores of Loch Lomond to the wilderness of Rannoch Moor, surrounded by wow-worthy Scottish Munros and mountains.

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

- Journeying through spectacular Highland scenery
- Exploring trails steeped in Scottish history
- Enjoying stunning views of Ben Nevis
- A ferry ride across Loch Lomond
- The bragging rights of conquering all 96 miles of this famous trail
- Staying in carefully-selected partner hotels and our country house in Glen Coe

TRIP SUITABILITY

This Guided Walking/Hiking Trail is graded 4 which involves walks/hikes over long distances in remote countryside and rough terrain. Underfoot conditions can be rough, boggy and pathless in places. Sustained ascents and descents require a good level of fitness. Some sections, particularly along the side of Loch Lomond can be rough and muddy. Whilst we are not actually climbing mountains, we will be walking through Scottish mountain country, where the weather can change abruptly. So please bear this in mind and be prepared for the Scottish weather! It is your responsibility to ensure you have the relevant fitness required to join this holiday. A sustained effort is required to complete this trail and provision cannot be made for anyone who opts out. Please be sure you can manage the daily mileage and ascent as listed below. The walking day is normally 6 to 7 hours and it is important for your own enjoyment, and that of your fellow guests that you can maintain the pace. It makes a lot of sense to spend time getting some additional exercise before your holiday.

Your fitness

This holiday has been designed for experienced walkers with a good level of 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 At Glasgow

Check-in at the Grand Central from 15:00. Your leader will be at reception at 18:30 to meet the group and for a quick introduction to the holiday before dinner.

Day 2: Milngavie To Drymen

Leaving Milngavie, we are into pleasant parkland, woods and fields. The first section to Drymen is an easy walk most of the way. Undulating at first, the path flattens out following the trackbed of the now disused railway line between Glasgow and Aberfoyle. We pass the Dumgoyach Standing Stones, thought to date from the Bronze Age, and also the Glengoyne Distillery, which is well worth a visit if time allows. We pass stone cottages at the hamlet of Gartness, before some minor road walking through rolling farmland leads us into the village of Drymen.

12½ miles (20km) with 900 feet (280m) of ascent.

Day 3: Drymen To Rowardennan

We follow forest tracks, paths and minor roads through gently rolling countryside, gradually gaining views of the hills around us, including Ben Lomond to the north. The section over Conic Hill (1,184 feet), involves some 700 feet of ascent, but we are rewarded with fine views of Loch Lomond from the summit. Once past Balmaha we join woodland paths winding pleasantly by the shores of Loch Lomond with a good chance of seeing Ospreys. We can have welcome refreshments at the end at the Rowardennan Hotel on the edge of the loch.

14½ miles (23.5km) with 2,150 feet (650m) of ascent.

Day 4: Rowardennan To Ardlui

Although low level, this is a tough day. It is however a beautiful walk along this side of Loch Lomond, below Ben Lomond, and quiet once we have left Rowardennan. We have the option of the shore path to Inversnaid, rebuilt in 2014, or the higher forest path. We go through much natural oak woodland, including the RSPB

Inversnaid reserve which is full of bird and animal wildlife. This is an area much associated with the outlaw Rob Roy MacGregor - the path passes close by 'Rob Roy's Prison' and 'Rob Roy's Cave'. At the north east shore a ferry takes us across the loch, to Ardlui.

11½ miles (19km) with 1,400 feet (430m) of ascent.

Day 5: Ardlui To Tyndrum

We re-cross the Loch on the ferry to rejoin the path and begin to really travel into the hills, but the walking is much easier. There are excellent views south over Loch Lomond from the side of the small hill of Cnap Mor. A gentle ascent up Glen Falloch takes us past the Falls of Falloch. Near the top of the pass, we join, for the first time, the old 18th century military road built by General Wade's successors. From now on the walking gets easier, as much of the Way follows this military road almost through to Fort William.

We stay high above Crianlarich, in forestry that is being sympathetically managed by the Forestry Commission, featuring some interesting and varied tree species, and maintaining an openness allowing good views out over Strath Fillan and the surrounding hills. We drop down to Tyndrum (pronounced "Tyne-drum") a small village, now a busy little tourist centre. The village originally became prosperous from lead mining and the spoil heaps are still clearly visible on the southern hill slopes. More recently it experienced renewed fame as a gold mining centre. Despite its small size it also has the distinction of possessing two railway stations, as the lines from Glasgow to Fort William and Oban diverge at this point.

14 miles (22km) with 2,150 feet (660m) of ascent.

Day 6: Tyndrum To Inveroran

This is an easy day, mostly along the good tracks of the military road. From Tyndrum we head up over the top of the pass to face the magnificent Beinn Dorain, an imposing hill rising almost 3,000 feet from the valley floor in a single steep and craggy slope. We descend to the wide flat valley floor where we are likely to meet the Highland cattle of the Auch Estate and enjoy easy walking to Bridge of Orchy. We see the last of the railway line to Fort William here as it departs north-eastwards across lonely and uninhabited stretches of Rannoch Moor. A short ascent through forestry takes us out into the open for superb views of the mountains of The Black Mount to the north before we drop down to Inveroran.

9 miles (14km) with 1,050 feet (320m) of ascent.

Day 7: Inveroran To Kingshouse

We encounter the longest and most exposed stretch of the whole Way, reaching an altitude of almost 1,500 feet amongst the open country of Rannoch Moor. Bad weather can be experienced, with no shelter for more than six miles. We walk over a landscape of wild, open moorland, scenery of heather, rocks and lochans, always with the chance to spot an eagle. In good weather it can be a beautiful, if lonely, place with clear views for miles around and encircled by mountains. Eventually we drop down to The Kingshouse Hotel, newly built on the site of what is believed to be one of Scotland's oldest licensed inns. The original inn was built in the eighteenth century.

9½ miles (15.5km) with 1,080 feet (330m) of ascent.

Day 8: Kingshouse To Kinlochleven

We are now in the upper end of Glencoe, which is guarded by the imposing rocky mountain of Buachaille Etive Mor (the Great Herdsman of Etive). This is magnificent scenery, which we can take time to admire as we climb the "Devil's Staircase"; a zig-zag track winding its way upwards. From the high point of 1,850 feet at the Staircase summit, also the highest point of the West Highland Way. The way from the top of "Devil's Staircase" to Kinlochleven holds a sting in the tail; it is a hard road which seems to double back away from Kinlochleven. We descend to Kinlochleven, the former site of Britain's second aluminium smelting plant. The complex was built between 1904 and 1909, although the first aluminium was produced in 1908, in a small temporary factory. On the way we pass close by the water conduit and pipelines bringing water down from Blackwater Reservoir

to power the former plant by hydro-electricity.

8½ miles (13.5km) with 1,360 feet (410m) of ascent.

Day 9: Kinlochleven To Fort William

A steep but short climb out of Kinlochleven takes us on to easy walking through Lairigmor. There are magnificent mountains on both sides before a final ascent through forestry, cuts across the hillsides bringing us out above Glen Nevis, with spectacular Ben Nevis, Britain's highest mountain at 4,414 feet, immediately opposite. We then continue down the glen to the end of the walk in Fort William

15½ miles (24.5 km) with 2,230 feet (680m) of ascent.

Day 10: Departure Day

ACCOMMODATION

Grand Central Hotel, Glasgow - West Highland Way

The historic Grand Central Hotel is adjacent to Glasgow Central Station. Dating back to 1883, the hotel has original features including the grand staircase and the magnificent Champagne Central Bar with its domed ceiling and marble floor. The comfortable rooms are equipped with TV, WiFi, tea and coffee making facilities and a hairdryer. This hotel is dog-friendly so you may meet four legged friends in some of the communal areas.

Buchanan Arms Hotel

Situated in the popular tourist village of Drymen, the Buchanan Arms Hotel dates to the mid 1700's. Formerly an inn, it has been lovingly restored to its modern-day form. The hotel boasts a leisure club with swimming pool and gym which are free for guests to use. All rooms include hairdryer, tea and coffee making facilities, TV, Wi-Fi, and telephone. This hotel is dog-friendly so you may meet four legged friends in some of the communal areas.

Ardlui Hotel, Ardlui - West Highland Way

The Ardlui Hotel commands a magnificent location on the banks of Loch Lomond. Having walked along the eastern shore of the Loch we arrive at the hotel by boat, where a warm welcome is assured from the Squires family. The hotel has 10 en-suite bedrooms. All our rooms have a tea and coffee making facilities, TV, hairdryer and radio. WiFi is available but limited. This hotel is dog-friendly so you may meet four legged friends in some of the communal areas.

Alltshellach - West Highland Way

For a combination of mountain views, olde-worlde charm, and somewhere comfortable to sleep, our stately Scottish house in Glen Coe is hard to beat. With an enviable setting right on the shores of Loch Leven, the scenery here is every bit rugged and romantic as you'd expect. After a long day of walking, unwind in one of three comfortable lounges with a wee dram or two and take a post-dinner stroll around the beautiful lawns and wooded grounds that lead down to the water's edge.

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 West Highland Way became Scotland's first long distance footpath when it was officially opened in 1980. The path runs for 96 miles, from Milngavie, 7 miles north-west of Glasgow, to Fort William; passing through some of the finest lowland and highland scenery on the way. The idea of a walk linking Glasgow to Fort William originated back in the 1930's, but it was not until the late 1960's when basic survey work started to look at the real potential for such a route; the HF Holidays Glasgow Group was partly involved in this. Much of the Way features ancient and historic routes. We make use of old drove roads, along which Highlanders herded their cattle to lowland markets; the famous military roads built in the 18th century; old coaching roads; farm tracks and disused railway lines.

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. Your flight baggage allowance will be detailed on your holiday despatch documents, received 4-6 weeks prior to the start date, and 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

Our first hotel is located in Glasgow and is at Glasgow Central railway station. Your leader will meet you at the Hotel and hold an introductory meeting prior to dinner.

By Rail

For train times and route planning by train visit www.nationalrail.co.uk or call 03457 484950.

By Air

There are International flights and also flights from around the UK to Glasgow International Airport. From Glasgow International Airport take the regular airport bus to Glasgow Central station (journey time 30 minutes) (www.glasgowairport.com). There are also flights to Glasgow Prestwick Airport, which has its own railway

station with frequent trains (journey time 45 minutes to Glasgow Central station), (www.gpia.co.uk).

Holiday Finish

The last four nights are spent at Alltshellach (HF Holidays Country House). You can return to Glasgow Airport or Glasgow City using the Scottish Citylink Bus (the nearest bus stop is at **North Ballachulish (not Ballachulish)** which is a 400m walk from Alltshellach). See www.citylink.co.uk for the timetable. The nearest railway station to Alltshellach is at Fort William. Our house manager can arrange a local taxi to Fort William if required.

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. Fleece makes a good choice
- Waterproof overtrousers
- Gloves and a warm hat
- Rucksack with waterproof liner
- 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

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.

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.

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.west-highland-way.co.uk/

West Highland Way 11th edition by Bob Aitken and Roger Smith

Recreational Path Guide West Highland Way by Anthony Burton

Harvey West Highland Way Map

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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