Itinerary

9 Day In-Depth Scotland Small Group Tour

***IMPORTANT NOTE: Any extra nights, optional tours or other amendments, will not be visible on this itinerary.**

Day 1: Edinburgh ~ West Highlands ~ Oban

Welcome to Scotland! Make your own way to the pick-up location to meet your driver-guide and the rest of you group. At 09:00 you will depart Edinburgh and travel through the gentle Lowlands, passing Stirling Castle before crossing the ancient geological fault line into the majestic Scottish Highlands, where rugged peaks and forest-filled glens define Loch Lomond & The Trossachs National Park. Explore Scotland's first national park, renowned for its natural beauty and the legends of Rob Roy, the famous outlaw. Stop beside one of the shimmering lochs to enjoy the peaceful surroundings and fresh Highland air before continuing through the dramatic Arrochar Alps, with their steep-sided mountains. Pause at the famous Rest and Be Thankful viewpoint before travelling onwards to Inveraray.

You will stop around lunch time in Inveraray, a picturesque town on the shores of Loch Fyne, where you can sample local seafood and admire views of the loch and surrounding hills. Afterwards, continue towards Oban, with possible sightseeing stops depending on the weather and your group's interests. Discover Kilmartin Glen, home to over 350 ancient monuments, including standing stones, stone circles and burial cairns dating back more than 5,000 years, or visit Loch Awe to admire the romantic ruins of Kilchurn Castle, dramatically set against the surrounding mountains and tranquil waters. Arrive in Oban in the early evening. Known as the "Gateway to the Isles", this charming port town was once home to powerful feuding Highland clans. Settle in for a two-night stay and enjoy your evening at leisure, with the option to savour fresh seafood or traditional Scottish cuisine at a local restaurant before strolling along the waterfront to take in the beautiful sunset views over the harbour.

PICK-UP LOCATION: Gate J And Gate K, Inside Edinburgh Bus Station, St Andrew Square, Edinburgh, EH1 3DQ. Boarding starts at 8:45 and closes at 9:00

APPROXIMATE TRAVEL TIME: Approximately 4 hours total driving time, excluding stops along the way.

MEALS: Nil

OVERNIGHT: Traditional B&B, Oban

Day 2: Mull & Iona Day Tour

After breakfast, travel to the ferry terminal in Oban and board the ferry to the Isle of Mull, one of the largest islands in the Inner Hebrides, known for its rugged landscapes, wildlife and traditional villages.

During the crossing, look out for Duart Castle, which stands on a rocky headland overlooking the sea. Arrive at Craignure and travel across the island through green pastures, woodlands and open moorland towards Fionnphort, where you can choose between different sightseeing options.

From Fionnphort, take the passenger ferry to the Isle of Iona, an important centre of early Christianity in Scotland and the historic burial place of several Scottish kings. Enjoy free time to explore the island, including Iona Abbey, famous for its history and carved stone crosses, or take a walk along its coastal paths, sandy beaches and peaceful coves. Alternatively, you can choose an optional excursion combining a visit to Iona with a boat trip to the Isle of Staffa, famous for its striking basalt columns and Fingal's Cave, a remarkable sea cave that inspired composer Felix Mendelssohn. After exploring Iona and Staffa, return to Mull and travel back across the island towards Craignure. Enjoy the changing scenery along the way, with views of the island's mountains, lochs and open countryside, before boarding the ferry back to Oban.

Arrive in Oban in the early evening and enjoy your second evening at leisure. You may wish to visit McCaig's Tower, a distinctive circular stone structure overlooking the town, offering panoramic views across Oban Harbour and the surrounding islands. Alternatively, relax at one of the local pubs and enjoy a traditional Scottish whisky before returning to your accommodation for the night.

APPROXIMATE TRAVEL TIME: Approximately 3 hours total driving time, excluding stops along the way.

MEALS: Breakfast

OVERNIGHT: Traditional B&B, Oban

Day 3: Oban ~ Glencoe ~ Plockton

Leave Oban behind and travel north along the shores of Loch Linnhe, passing through some of the beautiful landscapes of the western Highlands. This region is rich in Scottish history, with stories of powerful clans, historic battles and local legends adding to the character of the surrounding countryside.

As you travel along the coast, stop at a viewpoint overlooking Castle Stalker, an impressive 14th-century tower castle set on a small island near Appin. Once a stronghold of Clan MacDougall and later held by the Stewarts of Appin, the castle has a fascinating history connected to Scotland's famous clan rivalries. Take some time to admire the setting and capture photographs before continuing towards Glencoe, one of Scotland's most famous Highland valleys. Known for its rugged mountains and dramatic scenery, Glencoe has featured in several films and is also the site of the tragic Massacre of Glencoe in 1692. Here, you will have time to enjoy the scenery, take photographs or go for a short walk while learning more about this important chapter in Scottish history.

Next, travel along Loch Linnhe to Fort William, a popular Highland town situated at the foot of Ben Nevis, Britain's highest mountain. Stop here for lunch and enjoy some free time to explore the town centre, browse the local shops or relax at one of the cafés or restaurants. Afterwards, continue through the Great Glen, a remarkable natural fault line that stretches across the Scottish Highlands. Travel alongside peaceful lochs and through mountain scenery, passing the impressive Five Sisters of Kintail, a striking mountain range with five distinctive peaks. Continue towards Eilean Donan Castle, one of Scotland's most

recognisable landmarks, beautifully positioned on a small island where three sea lochs meet. Take time to admire the castle and its spectacular surroundings, with opportunities for photographs and short stops along the way.

Arrive in Plocktona charming Highland village known for its sheltered harbour, waterfront cottages and views across Loch Carron. Check in to your accommodation and enjoy the remainder of the evening at leisure.

APPROXIMATE TRAVEL TIME: Approximately 3-4 hours total driving time, excluding stops along the way.

MEALS: Breakfast

OVERNIGHT: Traditional B&B, Plockton

Day 4: Isle of Skye Day Tour

Leave Plockton and travel towards the Skye Bridge, crossing over to the Isle of Skye, often known as the Misty Isle. Famous for its dramatic mountain scenery, rugged coastline and remarkable rock formations, Skye is one of Scotland's most spectacular islands. Today, your driver-guide will make the most of the available time and weather conditions to explore some of the island's highlights and discover its beautiful landscapes.

Exploring Skye feels like stepping into a dream, with countless places to explore. You may head north towards the Trotternish Ridge, discover the Old Man of Storr, an impressive rock pinnacle rising above the surrounding landscape, and Kilt Rock, a striking coastal cliff with distinctive vertical rock formations and a waterfall cascading into the sea. You may also visit the Quiraing, a dramatic mountain pass known for its unusual rock formations, steep cliffs and sweeping views across the island. Take time to explore the area, enjoy the scenery and capture photographs of these remarkable natural attractions. After a morning of exploring, stop in one of the island's towns or villages for lunch, with time to relax and enjoy some local food before continuing your sightseeing. In the afternoon, your driver-guide may take you to Dunvegan Castle, the historic ancestral home of the Clan MacLeod and one of the oldest continuously inhabited castles in Scotland. Learn about the history, traditions and legends of the Highland clans, or discover another of Skye's lesser-known attractions depending on the weather and the interests of the group.

In the late afternoon, leave Skye behind and travel back across the Skye Bridge to Plockton. Return to your accommodation and enjoy another relaxing evening at leisure, perhaps taking a walk along the harbour or enjoying dinner at one of the village's local restaurants or pubs.

APPROXIMATE TRAVEL TIME: Approximately 3 hours total driving time, excluding stops along the way.

MEALS: Breakfast

OVERNIGHT: Traditional B&B, Plockton

Day 5: Plocton ~ Loch Ness ~ Iverness

Leave Plockton behind and travel south towards Eilean Donan Castle, one of Scotland's most iconic landmarks. Set on a small island surrounded by beautiful Highland scenery, the castle has become famous as a filming location and has many fascinating stories to tell. Take a stroll along the shoreline to admire the views, or explore the castle's historic rooms and discover a collection of artefacts belonging to the MacKenzie and MacRae clans.

After your visit, continue through the Highland countryside to Fort Augustus, a charming village nestled on the banks of Loch Ness. Stop here for lunch and enjoy some free time to explore the village, stroll along the shores of the mysterious loch or perhaps catch a glimpse of the legendary Loch Ness Monster. Afterwards, continue to Spean Bridge, where you will meet your new driver-guide and join the second part of your tour with a different group of travellers. From here, travel towards the Falls of Foyers, where you can enjoy a short walk to admire this beautiful waterfall, once a favourite spot of Scottish poet Robert Burns.

Continue your journey along the shores of legendary Loch Ness, whose dark, peat-stained waters have inspired stories of the elusive Loch Ness Monster for generations. Stop at Dores, a peaceful village offering lovely views across the loch, where you might even spot the famous creature. As the day draws to a close, travel onwards to Inverness, the Capital of the Highlands. Arrive in the early evening and enjoy the remainder of the day at leisure. Perhaps sample some local Scottish cuisine, take a stroll through the charming city streets or visit Inverness Castle and the scenic River Ness islands.

APPROXIMATE TRAVEL TIME: Approximately 4 hours total driving time, excluding stops along the way.

MEALS: Breakfast

OVERNIGHT: Traditional B&B, Iverness

Day 6: Iverness ~ Kirkwall

Leave Inverness, the Capital of the Highlands, and head north across the Black Isle, following the famous North Coast 500 route towards Golspie, where you will stop briefly. From here, continue to Dunrobin Castle, a beautiful historic castle known for its fairytale-style towers, impressive architecture and gardens. Take some time to admire the castle and capture a few photographs before continuing along the east coast, passing areas once inhabited by the ancient Picts and Vikings.

Follow the North Sea coastline, stopping along the way to take in the changing scenery, from dramatic cliffs and sweeping sandy beaches to small harbours and traditional Highland villages. As you travel further north, the landscape changes to open moorlands, gentle glens and winding rivers, offering a glimpse of the quieter side of the Highlands. Around midday, arrive at John O'Groats, one of the most northerly villages on mainland Scotland, famous for its location at the northern tip of the country. Continue along the coast towards Gills Bay, where you will board the ferry for the crossing to the Orkney Islands. The journey takes approximately one hour across the Pentland Firth, a stretch of water known for its

strong tides and currents. Keep an eye out for the distant Orkney coastline as you approach the archipelago, which consists of around 70 islands, with approximately 20 inhabited. Arrive at St Margaret's Hope on South Ronaldsay, a small village with a picturesque harbour. From here, cross the Churchill Barriers, built during World War II to protect the naval base at Scapa Flow. Stop to visit the Italian Chapel, a remarkable little church decorated with detailed artwork and frescoes, before continuing to Kirkwall, the historic capital of Orkney and your home for the next two nights.

Enjoy the remainder of the evening at leisure in Kirkwall, a charming town with a rich Viking heritage and fascinating history. Perhaps take a stroll through its historic streets and admire the magnificent St Magnus Cathedral, dating back to the Viking era, before enjoying a relaxing evening in the town.

APPROXIMATE TRAVEL TIME: Approximately 4 hours total driving time, excluding stops along the way.

MEALS: Breakfast

OVERNIGHT: Traditional B&B, Kirkwall

Day 7: Skara Brae & Orkney Day Tour

Today is your chance to discover more of the Orkney Islands, with their green pastures, sandy beaches and coastlines surrounded by the waters of the North Sea and the Atlantic Ocean. As you travel through the islands, you will explore the Heart of Neolithic Orkney, a UNESCO World Heritage Site recognised for its remarkable collection of prehistoric monuments, some of the best preserved in Europe.

Begin with a visit to Maeshowe, an impressive chambered tomb and passage grave dating back more than 5,000 years. This remarkable prehistoric structure is carefully aligned with the winter solstice, when the setting sun shines down the entrance passage. Inside, you can also see Viking graffiti, with runes carved into the stone walls by Norse visitors during the 12th century. Continue to the Ring of Brodgar, an ancient stone circle dating back more than 4,000 years. Set among the surrounding hills and open countryside, this important prehistoric site offers a fascinating insight into the rituals and ceremonies of Orkney's early inhabitants. Next, visit Skara Brae, a remarkably preserved 5,000-year-old Neolithic village. Explore its stone-built homes, original furnishings and the remains of everyday life, offering a glimpse into how people lived thousands of years ago. Afterwards, travel to Stromness for lunch, where you can sample fresh local seafood or traditional dishes. Take some time to explore the town's winding streets and charming harbour before continuing your afternoon sightseeing. Your driver-guide may take you to additional attractions, such as Kirbuster Museum, where you can discover more about Orkney's traditional rural life, or perhaps visit one of the area's tidal islands, depending on the day's conditions.v

Return to Kirkwall in the early evening and enjoy the remainder of the day at leisure. Perhaps enjoy dinner before taking a stroll along the harbour, or visit one of the local pubs and venues where you may find traditional Scottish music sessions. Enjoy another evening exploring the atmosphere of Orkney's historic capital.

APPROXIMATE TRAVEL TIME: Approximately 2-3 hours total driving time, excluding stops along the way.

MEALS: Breakfast

OVERNIGHT: Traditional B&B, Kirkwall

Day 8: Kirkwall ~ Ullapool

Say farewell to Kirkwall as you travel south across the Orkney Islands towards St Margaret's Hope. Pass the rugged island landscapes and the calm, deep waters of Scapa Flow before arriving at the ferry terminal for your crossing back to mainland Scotland. Board the ferry and enjoy the approximately one-hour journey across the Pentland Firth, the stretch of water separating Orkney from the Scottish mainland. Keep an eye out along the way, as whales and dolphins are sometimes spotted in these waters.

Back on the mainland, continue along the northern section of the famous North Coast 500, travelling through some of Scotland's most remote and rugged landscapes. Your driver-guide will take you to some of the most scenic spots along the route, with dramatic coastal cliffs, windswept beaches and rolling Highland hills along the way. Visit Smoo Cave, an impressive sea cave formed over thousands of years by the forces of the sea and freshwater, with a series of chambers to explore. Continue into the far northwest Highlands towards the spectacular Assynt mountains, where you can admire the surrounding wilderness before stopping at the 15th-century ruins of Ardvreck Castle. Set on the shores of a loch, these atmospheric castle ruins are steeped in local legends.

After exploring the area, continue through the remote Highland countryside towards Ullapool, passing open moorlands and peat bogs along the way. Arrive in this charming fishing village on the shores of Loch Broom, known for its traditional whitewashed cottages and beautiful coastal setting. Check in to your accommodation and enjoy the remainder of the evening at leisure.

APPROXIMATE TRAVEL TIME: Approximately 5 hours total driving time, excluding stops along the way.

MEALS: Breakfast

OVERNIGHT: Traditional B&B, Ullapool

Day 9: Ullapool ~ Culloden Battlefield ~ Edinburgh

Leave Ullapool and continue south through the Northwest Highlands, beginning the day with a visit to Corrieshalloch Gorge. Here, the River Droma plunges approximately 60 metres into a dramatic wooded gorge. Enjoy a short walk through the surrounding forest to admire the waterfall, with opportunities to take in the views from the viewing platforms or experience the suspension bridge crossing above the gorge.

Continue through the Highland countryside, passing mountain ridges, beautiful lochs and wide-open landscapes along the way. Arrive at Culloden Battlefield, the site of the tragic final battle of the Jacobite

Rising in 1746. Take time to explore this historic battlefield and reflect on one of the most significant events in Scottish history. The site is also familiar to fans of Outlander, where it features as an important location in the story. Next, visit Clava Cairns, an ancient site of burial cairns and standing stones dating back thousands of years. Known for its prehistoric stone circles, the site is also believed to have inspired Craigh na Dun in Outlander. Afterwards, begin the journey south through the Cairngorms National Park, with opportunities for photographs and comfort breaks along the way. Stop in Newtonmore to visit the Highland Folk Museum, where you can discover traditional Highland life through its collection of historic buildings, including 18th-century blackhouses, a working croft and a 1930s schoolroom. Continue through Perthshire, where the rugged Highland scenery gradually gives way to forests and rolling countryside. Make a final stop in the historic town of Dunkeld, where you can explore its charming streets and visit Dunkeld Cathedral before continuing south.

Leave the Highlands behind and travel through the rolling hills and fertile countryside of the Kingdom of Fife. Along the way, enjoy views of the iconic Forth Rail Bridge, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, before continuing to Edinburgh. Arrive in the city at approximately 7:00 pm, marking the end of your Scottish Highland adventure!

DROP-OFF LOCATION:7.00pm (approx.) Edinburgh Bus Station Drop Off, George St / St. Andrews Square area, (Within 5 mins of Edinburgh Bus Station), Edinburgh.

APPROXIMATE TRAVEL TIME: Approximately 5-6 hours total driving time, excluding stops along the way.

MEALS: Breakfast