

SCOTLAND – HIGHLANDS, WHISKY, CASTLES, LOCHS & GLENS

7-days / 6-nights QUALITY GUIDED walks in the Cairngorms National Park in the Scottish Highlands



The Cairngorms National Park is a hugely diverse, magical place. The landscape of the Cairngorms – high wild mountains, heather-covered moorlands, peat bogs, ancient forests, clear tumbling streams, glassy lochs, picturesque castles, tiny farms and crofts and small villages – is the Scotland of your dreams.

On this two-centre guided walking holiday, we are based in Royal Deeside, where Queen Elizabeth has her Scottish residence, Balmoral Castle, and Strathspey, where the high granite plateau rises above charming villages. Hiking here is a special experience, with delights at every turn. Enjoy some of the best easy walks here, using mountain paths, old droving roads and thieves' trails once used for cattle rustling and smuggling illicit whisky. There is a huge variety of possible hikes to choose from but wherever we venture, we will enjoy the fantastic scenery, sense of wilderness and rich history and heritage.

Cost from: \$2990 per person twin share Single room supplement from \$555 – limited availability

Departs: 11th May; 8th June; 20th July; 24th August; 21st September; 5th October, 2019

Includes: 6 nights' quality accommodation in carefully selected comfortable small hotels, meals during the trip from lunch on Day 1 to lunch on Day 7 (meals included indicated as B=Breakfast, L=Lunch, D=Dinner), the services of an experienced and knowledgeable guide / driver, all transport throughout starting and finishing in Inverness, entrance fees to a whisky distillery, a Highland castle and a wildlife reserve.

Not included: Drinks, meals not mentioned, transport to the start/end of trip, personal expenses, gratuities.

Grade: Easy to Moderate. We walk for about 5 hours each day, following generally good trails with no major ascents, with plenty of stops to rest or take photos. The terrain underfoot will usually be on paths or hill trails, which may be muddy or rough in places. Most daily walks are glen hikes, with some ascents of low level hills, up to around 1,500 feet / 450m high.

Accommodation: We spend our nights in welcoming and friendly country house hotels. The first 3 nights will be in Royal Deeside and the next 3 nights in Strathspey. Accommodation is in twin or double rooms with en-suite bathroom facilities. Both are owner-managed and our hosts enjoy the great outdoors as we do. A warm welcome is assured and in the evenings relax beside the wood-burning-stove or in one of the village pubs.

Single Supplement: There is no single person supplement charged to solo travellers however, you will share a room with another person of the same sex. If you require a single room, a supplement applies. Please request this at the time of booking and we will check availability for you.

Meals: Food is of paramount importance and our meals are prepared from the best of local produce. We will enjoy wonderful home-cooked meals each evening, with good, healthy portions. Naturally, vegetarians and other dietary requirements are willingly catered for – simply let us know at the time of booking.

Call OUTDOOR TRAVEL on 1800 331 582 for details & reservations



Getting there: Plan to meet the tour guide at Inverness Railway Station at 10.00am on Day 1 for the transfer to Strathspey. You should be back by 3.00pm on the last day. Inverness is well-connected by rail or air to Glasgow, Edinburgh or London. Most choose to stay in Inverness for extra nights before or after the tour.

Suggested Itinerary: *

Day 1: Hiking the whisky smugglers' trail

walking @ 6km

From Inverness, a short transfer south-east takes us to eastern Strathspey, Scotland's most famous whisky-making region. An easy, short walk to start our tour, following the ancient trails once used by whisky smugglers keen to avoid the law, before finishing up at one of Scotland's most iconic distilleries. Here we enjoy a private tour (with samples!), then transfer to Royal Deeside and our guest house accommodation. (L, D)

Day 2: Hiking Royal Deeside: The Shadow of Lochnagar

walking @ 12km

This superb circular hike explores Glen Muick, which lies in the shadow of the famous peak of Lochnagar. It takes us through ancient pine forest, past one of Queen Victoria's hunting lodges and beneath towering cliffs as we circumnavigate beautiful Loch Muick. It's also a great place for spotting wildlife – look out for red deer and golden eagles. (B, L, D)

Day 3: The Cuckoo Glen and the Devil's Punchbowl

walking @ 17km

This circular hike is one of the best in Royal Deeside. We follow a good trail north to the edge of the Cairngorm plateau, where some of the highest peaks in Scotland rise from the deep glens. The wilderness is striking and the beauty is all around. The rivers are a real highlight with the striking rock features of the Linn of Dee and the Devil's Punchbowl most notable. (B, L, D)

Day 4: Highland Perthshire and Strathspey

walking @ 9km

We transfer west into Highland Perthshire, where we make our way to a 13th Century castle to walk on its vast estate. We enjoy a level route through a beautiful forest in a steep-sided glen. We finish back at the castle, with time for a tour of its interior and perhaps the gardens too. A short transfer north takes us into Strathspey and our base for the next 3 nights, a small hotel in a sleepy Cairngorm village. (B, L, D)

Day 5: Into Glen Feshie

walking @ 12km

Despite being one of the most beautiful of all the Cairngorm valleys, Glen Feshie is overlooked by many hikers, meaning that a walk here has a real wilderness feel. Our route today follows the banks of the bubbling River Feshie, through ancient pines to an old mountain hut. The route offers great wildlife-spotting potential with red deer, golden eagles and even the rare Capercaillie found in the glen. (B, L, D)

Day 6: Abernethy Forest and Wildlife Reserve

walking @ 8km

The Abernethy Forest is perhaps the most beautiful in Scotland, with stunning lochs surrounded by ancient Scots Pine trees and framed by views of the high mountains. We hike a circuit here, perhaps taking in a section of the Speyside Way long distance trail, and finishing at a wildlife reserve where we might see red squirrels and many bird species including, in the early part of the summer, the osprey. (B, L, D)

Day 7: Hike in Cairngorms National Park

walking @ 8km

There are so many great walks in the Cairngorms that we like to keep the itinerary flexible and decide which hike to take on the day. One option is a hike close to our hotel, a favourite of the locals. It ventures into the eastern edge of the Monadh Liath Mountains on an out-and-back route to Loch Gynack. It is a wild and beautiful place, so an apt location to end our trip. After the hike, we complete our circumnavigation of the Cairngorms National Park by transferring north back to Inverness for the trip end. (B, L)

** The itinerary may be subject to change at the discretion of tour guide.*

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In Europe you will find **Outdoor Travel** has many classic walks including the **Tour du Mont Blanc** in the Swiss and French Alps, along the **Danube** or in **Bavaria**, the pilgrim's **Way of St James** or **Camino de Santiago** from Le Puy in France to Santiago in Spain or **Via Francigena** the pilgrimage 'road to Rome' in Italy.

Contact Outdoor Travel for details and reservations:

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