

Exploring Scotland's Highlands and the Isle of Skye

May 13, 2023 – May 24, 2023 (trip# 2339)



Loch Lomond from the Ben Lomond summit

*Oh! ye'll take the high road and I'll take the low road,
And I'll be in Scotland afore ye;
But me and my true love
Will never meet again
On the bonnie, bonnie banks of Loch Lomond.*

From "The Bonnie Banks o' Loch Lomond", a traditional Scottish song

Trip Overview

After a morning tour of Glasgow we transfer to the Bridge of Orchy to start our tour. We follow the western shore of [The Bonnie Banks of Loch Lomond](#) [here sung by the remarkable tenor John Hollens]. After stopping at the lake-side [Luss village](#) to do a short walk along the shores of Loch Lomond we continue onto the Bridge of Orchy. The next day we start our three-day trek through the second half [and most scenic half] of the West Highland Way, Scotland's most famous long distance trail. After we reach our terminus in Fort Williams we board a historic steam-powered train to the seaside town of Mallaig.

The next day a ferry transfers us to the Isle of Skye where we spend five splendid days. The Isle of Skye, renowned for its rugged landscapes, picturesque fishing villages and medieval structures, has been [inhabited for over 8,000 years](#). With the pretty town of Portree as our base, we will climb several of the 'Munros' including one of Skye's best-known peaks, Bruach na Frith in the Currin Hills. We will also visit the historic Armadale and Dunvegan castles. One day a guide/naturalist will accompany us and inform us of Skye's history, flora/fauna, and geological attributes. When the trip finally ends after eleven days of enchanting travels together participants can take public transportation direct from Portree to the Glasgow airport.



Trip route and highlights

Trip attributes

Difficulty: This trip is rated [5 - vigorous](#). Excluding breaks, on a typical day we will hike five to seven hours per day, between 8 and 15 miles, with an elevation gain of about 2,500 - 3,500 feet. The terrain is rugged and steep in places, and requires agility. There will be sections on narrow trails with steep drop-offs. We will hike at a moderate pace, which will permit time for photos and rest breaks. Participants should be in excellent shape and be able to hike for most of every day. We will carry daypacks and lunch each day. Our luggage will be transported for us during our trek.

Accommodations and meals: The accommodations include guesthouses, inns, hotels and bed and breakfast establishments. Accommodations during the trip will be two persons per room. Our bags will be transferred for us each day. The trip will pay for most breakfasts and dinners as indicated in the daily itinerary. Lunches will be purchased by the participants.

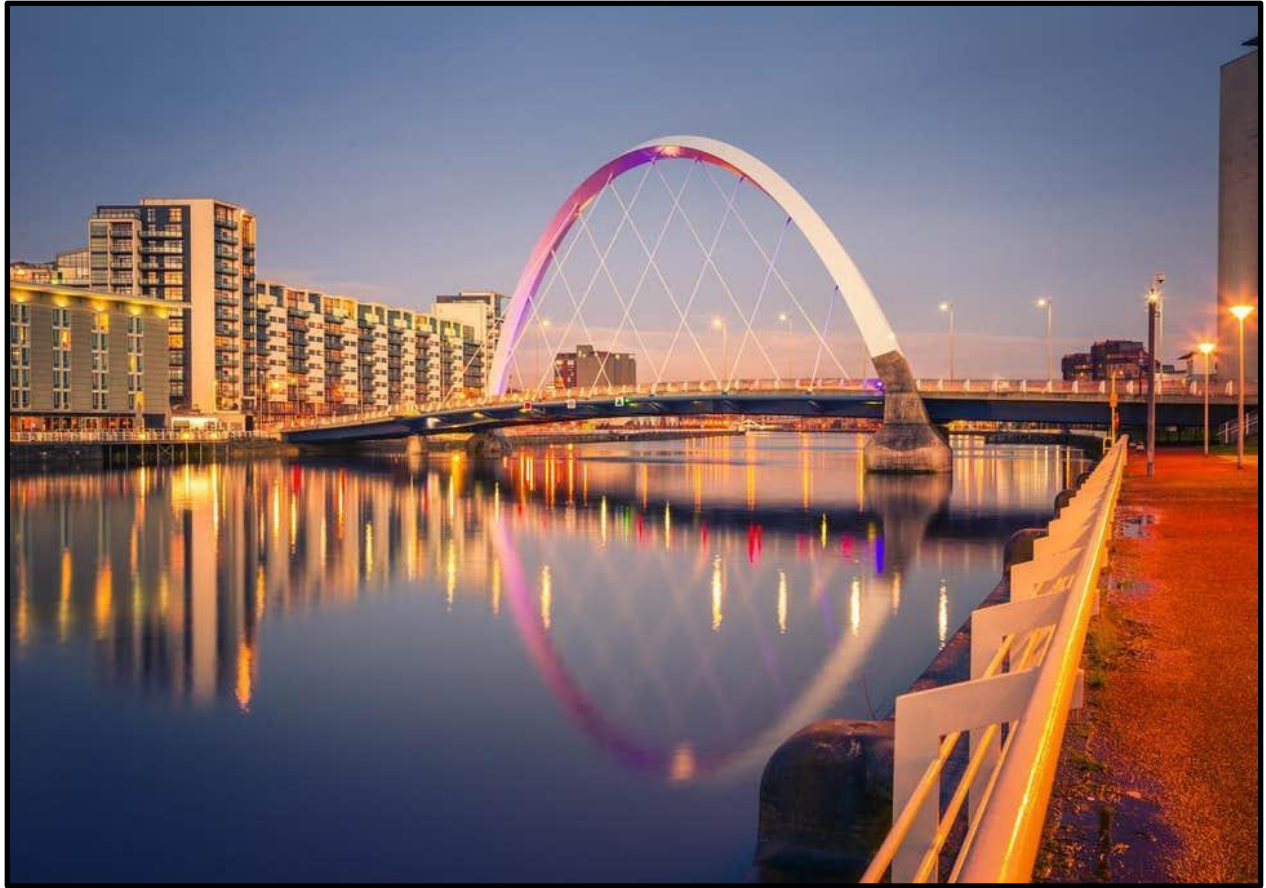
Weather: The unpredictable nature of the climate means it's not uncommon to experience all four seasons in one day, so it is important to be prepared for variable weather. May temperatures typically range from 41-55 degrees. You can count on using your rain gear.

Trip Details

The itinerary below describes our daily plans. The following abbreviations are used to indicate meals provided by the trip: B = breakfast, D = dinner. Time is hiking time only, excluding all breaks. Elevation gain is listed as ascent/descent in feet.

Day 0 [Friday May 12] Depart the US.

Day 1 [Saturday May 13] Arrive Glasgow - Trip begins: meetup and group dinner. [Glasgow](#) is the largest city in Scotland and the third largest in the UK. This former industrial city has a revitalized city center with a thriving cultural, music and tourism scene. It is known for both its Victorian and art nouveau architecture. (D)



The River Clyde - Glasgow

Day 2 [Sunday May 14] Guided tour of Glasgow in the morning. Transfer by private bus to the Bridge of Orchy with a stop at the historic [Luss village](#) on the shores of Loch Lomond. Overnight Bridge of Orchy. (B, D)

Day 3 [Monday May 15] We begin our three day trek on the West Highland Way by hiking to Kingshouse (12 miles, 1,800' ascent /1,500' descent, 5 hours). Along this stretch we traverse Rannoch Moor, the great peat bog of Scotland. Overnight in Kingshouse. (B, D)

Day 4 [Tuesday May 16] Hike [Kingshouse to Kinlochleven](#) (8.8 miles, 1410'/2130', 5 hours). We hike into Glencoe then climb the trail known as the "Devil's Staircase." It is steep with some switchbacks and the ascent is steady and constant. At the top of the pass at 1795', you get great views of Glencoe and Loch Leven. Descend on a good trail to the small village of Kinlochleven. Overnight Kinlochleven. (B, D)

Day 5 [Wednesday May 17] Hike [Kinlochleven to Fort William](#) (15.3 miles, 2,400'/2,300', 7 hours) - On the last day on the West Highland Way we climb over a final pass at 895'. With views across to Ben Nevis – the highest mountain in Scotland – the trail descends into Glen Nevis and down to the end of the route in Fort William. Overnight in Fort William. (B)

Day 6 [Thursday May 18] In the morning we do a short scenic hike to the [Steall Falls](#) (3 miles, 700'/700', 2 hours). In the afternoon we take the historic Jacobite steam engine train to Maillaidg.

The train line has been operating under different authorities since 1901. Some of you may recognize the Jacobite as the “Hogwarts Express” from its appearance in Harry Potter movies. Overnight in Mallaig. (B, D)



Jacobite Steam Train

Day 7 [Friday May 19] After taking a morning ferry to Armadale, we visit the [Armadale Castle](#), home of Clan Donald. The grounds are well-maintained while the inspiring structures are alas in disrepair. Afternoon transport to Portree, the largest town and capitol of Skye. Portree is considered one of the prettiest towns in Scotland, with a beautiful harbor lined with brightly painted houses and great views of the surrounding hills. Overnight in Portree (B, D)



Portree

Day 8-11 [Saturday - Wednesday May 20 - 24] We stay at the same location in Portree for the next four nights and explore the island from that comfortable base. The Isle of Skye is debatably the most scenic area of Scotland. Four breakfasts and two dinners will be provided.



The Isle of Skye

We will do the three hikes and the excursion described below, although not necessarily in the order listed:

- The [Quiraing](#) circuit - This loop hike features an otherworld landscape passing fantastic rock formations, high cliffs and hidden plateaus. It is an area worth visiting even when it is not clear, as low clouds and mist add to the eerie and mystical ambiance. (4 miles, 1370'/1370', 4 hours)
- Climb [Bruach na Frith](#) in the Currin Hills. Although longer than our other Skye hikes, it is one of the easiest of the Cuillin summits to reach and has one of the best views in the area. (8.5 miles 3,100'/3,100' 6 hours)
- The [Old Man of Storr](#) - This popular hike on a well-maintained path, is one of the most photographed places on the Isle of Skye. The "Old Man" is a rock pinnacle that can be seen for miles. From the top, which is the highest point on the ridge, the views across the island of Raasay to mainland Scotland are magnificent. (5 miles 2,100'/2,100', 5 hours)



The Old Man of Storr

In addition to the hikes, we take a “rest” day and visit [Dunvegan Castle](#), the home and grounds of the MacLeod clan. This 42,000 acre estate is the only highland fortress to have been continuously occupied by the same family for over 800 years. Its five acres of cultivated gardens stand out from the surrounding barren moors and mountains. On an optional boat excursion to the Loch Dunvegan seal colony you may see many types of coastal birds including sea eagles and arctic terns.



Dunvegan Castle

Day 12 [Wednesday May 24] - End of trip after breakfast. There is a direct bus [not included in the trip price] from Portree to the Glasgow airport that currently runs three times a day. Given current bus and flight schedules, one should plan on staying near the Glasgow airport on Wednesday evening and returning to the US on Thursday.

Participant profile and expectations

You should have a keen interest in cultural explorations and enjoy moderate - strenuous hiking. On an average day we will walk for 5-8 hours and cover 6-15 miles. Daily elevation gain ranges from 1,200' to 3,500'. You need to be prepared to commit yourself to keeping in shape between the time you sign up for this trip to the time you depart on it.

You should recognize that you may find yourself in closer quarters or be less comfortable than you are used to at home. You should make it a priority to help others on the trip and contribute to their having a great time. If you do that, you will have a great time.

We will be hiking for 9 days including the excursion to Dunvegan castle. Some days will be lengthy with significant elevation gains; others will be shorter and easier. You should have at least intermediate to advanced hiking skills and be able to hike at least 15 miles every day, with moderate elevation gains, while carrying everything you need to keep you safe in the event of bad weather or injury.



Relaxing together after a great day on the trail

While the itinerary in this prospectus is what the leaders have planned at the time of writing, various factors may require changes for reasons of safety, transportation or lodging availability, and unforeseeable circumstances (such as weather considerations, natural disasters in areas to be visited, or recommendations of governmental agencies). **The leaders reserve the right to make such changes as necessary, both before and during the trip. Since the Scotland weather is notoriously fickle, there is a greater than average risk that real-time changes will need to be made. Participants are expected to show their sense of adventure and 'go with the flow' if changes need to be made.**

TRIP PRICE

The trip price is \$4,500 for AMC members and \$4,600 for non-members. To join the AMC and get the lower price, (2021 membership pricing \$50 individual, \$75 family) click [here](#). This will cover the following items:

- Lodging, most breakfasts and most dinners
- All in-trip transportation
- Entrance fees to all sites
- Emergency medical and evacuation insurance coverage

All lunches, trail snacks, beverages (e.g. coffee/tea, mineral water, alcohol, etc) and other personal expenses are NOT included. Your transportation to Glasgow and return from Portree are your responsibility. The trip leaders will advise you as much as you need and will facilitate group travel. At this time, we estimate that the price for a round trip between the east coast and Glasgow will be ~ \$1000.

The final trip cost may be adjusted in accordance with the best final arrangements we can make and currency fluctuations. Any savings we achieve, as well as any cost increases, will be passed back to you. Our cost estimates are conservative, and so a refund is considerably more likely than a price increase.

AMC Adventure Travel trips are run on a non-profit basis. Leaders are volunteers who are not compensated except for their travel costs associated with the trip. The advertised trip cost includes a surcharge which goes toward the administrative expenses of the AMC Adventure Travel program.

The trip fee includes emergency medical and evacuation insurance coverage, which is required by the AMC. It does *not* include insurance for travel delay, interruption, or cancellation, or for baggage loss. If the possibility of such problems concerns you, individual travel insurance is suggested. The AMC has a recommended vendor whose material will be sent to you if your application is accepted.

Any unspent funds will be refunded to the participants. If the trip's financial position is strong enough at the start, the leaders may make partial refunds during the trip, in the form of payments toward some meals and/or free time activities which would otherwise not be included.

AMC's standard [Adventure Travel terms and conditions](#) apply.

REGISTRATION: [You can register online](#) for this trip. Mail the registration deposit of \$1,500 to Pam Wilmot, 32 Goodrich Road, Jamaica Plain, MA 02130. All payments are by check and should be payable to the *Appalachian Mountain Club*. You are only accepted onto the trip after the leaders have determined by telephone conversation that you and the trip are a good match. The final balance of \$3,000 is due December 1, 2022. Deposit checks from waitlisted applicants will not be cashed until they join the trip.

TRIP CANCELLATION: A participant may cancel without penalty any time before the trip is confirmed to run as scheduled. Once confirmation occurs, there is a minimum fee of \$200 for cancelation. See the standard terms and conditions for additional information.

This trip is likely to fill quickly. If you are interested, you should apply as soon as possible. All applications received within two weeks of the sending of AMC's adventure travel newsletter promoting this newly approved trip (sign up at [Stay Connected](#) at the bottom of the webpage) will be reviewed as a single group.

In the unlikely event that the trip is cancelled prior to being confirmed to run, all trip fees you have paid will be refunded in full.

QUESTIONS and REQUESTING APPLICATION MATERIALS

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Pam or Jess. Pam can be reached at 617 962-0034 before 9PM Eastern Time or at phwilmot@gmail.com. Jess can be reached at 203-710-6637 before 9PM Eastern Time or at jilhalvorsen@gmail.com.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

"A History of Skye" by Alexander Nicholson

TRIP LEADERS



Pam Wilmot is a four-season leader and a member of the board of the Hiking/Backpacking Committee of the AMC Boston Chapter. She leads both day hikes and backpacks primarily in the White Mountains of New Hampshire. An avid hiker, Pam has climbed the Hundred Highest Mountains in New England in calendar winter and is more than half-way through the "Grid". Pam has led five AMC Adventure travel trips: two 100 mile hut-to-hut treks in the Alps, two ascents of Mt Kilimanjaro with an optional safari, and a trip across northern Mongolia on horseback.

Jess Halvorsen is a four-season leader with AMC Boston's Hiking and Backpacking Committee, and serves as the Committee's Vice Chair. She was also the coordinator of the Boston Chapter Winter Hiking Program 2017-2021 and has completed all-season ascents of the New England 67 4,000-footers. When not hiking, she works in an office and enjoys running to stay in shape for her hiking adventures. She has been an Adventure Travel Associate Leader since 2019.

