A Wee Travel Guide To...

Highlands & Islands
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Where are the Highlands?

The Highlands is the area north and west of the Highland Boundary Fault (from Arran and Helensburgh on the west coast stretching across to Stonehaven in the east). It is the uppermost part of Scotland (made up of six smaller regions) and home to famous attractions such as Ben Nevis and Loch Ness, towns (notably Fort William, Nairn and Aviemore) and the “City of the Highlands” - Inverness.

Traditionally visitors wishing to experience the beautiful Scottish outdoors will travel to the Highlands to visit the scenic lochs, tall snow capped, mountains, vast glens, ancient monuments as well as the beaches and bays along North Scotland’s iconic coastline. Seals, puffins, whales and dolphins are often spotted on these shores.

You may want to try to catch a glimpse of the infamous Aurora Borealis (the Northern Lights), walk amongst the varied wildlife and flora or appreciate the breath-taking Scottish landscapes as part of your Highland experience. Or visit historic towns and villages for sightseeing, fine and traditional dining, shopping and a taste of Highland life.

For general information about the history of the Highlands see here!
Where are the islands?

You can reach the islands as part of your Highlands visit by ferry or air from the mainland. The island groups are:

- The Orkney Islands
- The Shetland Islands, and
- The Western Isles (or Hebrides), including:
  - Lewis
  - Harris
  - North Uist
  - Benbecula
  - South Uist
  - Barra
  - Islay
  - Skye
  - Mull
  - Jura
  - Iona, and others…

For general information about the islands go to:

- [http://visit.shetland.org/](http://visit.shetland.org/)
- [www.orkneyislands.info/](http://www.orkneyislands.info/)
There are many things to see and do in the Highlands and Islands, for example:

- Loch Ness, Loch Laggan, Loch Garten
- Castles (e.g. Mey, Eilean Donan, Dunrobin, Cawor, Brodie, Ballindalloch, Urquhart)
- Inverness (Highland Games, Botanic Gardens, Museum & Art Gallery, Moray Firth or Victorian Market and bus access to Ullapool for ferries to the Inner & Outer Hebrides Isles)
- Great Glen, Glen Affric, Glen Spean, Glen Nevis and Glen Coe
- The Pictish-dated Clava Cairns standing stones and the Pictish ramparts, promontory fort site & water-well at Burghead
- Snowboarding, skiing and climbing (indoor & outdoor)
- Fort William, Aonach Mor & Ben Nevis
- John Lennon’s childhood holiday cottage and gardens in Durness!
- Oban (picturesque seaside town, regular ferries to Inner & Outer Hebrides isles)

To find out more about attractions and where you may like to visit during your Highlands and Islands adventure, go to:

- www.scottishhighlandswebsite.co.uk
- www.visitscotland.com/about/history/highlands/
- www.lonelyplanet.com/scotland/highlands-and-northern-islands
- www.visitouterhebrides.co.uk/
- www.southernhebrides.com/

What is “Pictish”?

“Picts” were people of early settlements and communities in Scotland after the end of the Iron Age, 43 AD. The Romans first wrote of Picts in 297 AD - the word ‘Picti’ may be related to a Latin word meaning ‘to paint’. Historians say the Picts were ‘painted people’ and may have decorated and tattooed their faces and bodies with dyes. To find out more about our early Highland inhabitants go to:

www.educationscotland.gov.uk/scotlandshistory/caledonianspictsromans/pictsymbols/index.asp
Things to do – make an itinerary

When you’ve chosen the things you’d like to see and visit, you may want to make an itinerary (a plan and timeline of your day). You can create an itinerary here:

http://www.tripomatic.com/

Pre-made itineraries can be found here:

www.visitscotland.com/see-do/itineraries/highlands/
www.visitscotland.com/see-do/itineraries/islands/inner-hebrides
www.visitscotland.com/see-do/itineraries/outer-hebrides/

To plan your holiday budget effectively and spend enough time at the attractions you visit to appreciate them, you may also wish to check:

- How long it takes to travel there
- How long you would like to spend there
- Opening times
- Public transport timetables
- Entry fees? How much?
- What dates and time your train / bus / flights are booked for.

Day 1: Arrive at Inverness 8.45am!!
Hotel check-in at 10am:

✓ Loch Ness - boat trip on loch then Urquhart Castle OR visit Nairn (beach, Cawdor Castle & Brodie Castle) then back to Inverness - “Hootananny Ceilidh Bar & Thai Restaurant” for dinner!

Day 2:
✓ Isle of Skye day trip! – Faerie Glen, Claigan Coral Beach & Coire Lagan

Day 3:
✓ Inverness Marina - Dolphin Cruise
✓ Inverness Botanic Gardens & shopping
✓ Train home at 7pm!
**How to get there**

Plan your journey for free using [www.travelinescotland.com](http://www.travelinescotland.com)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mode of transport</th>
<th>Journey time</th>
<th>Web links</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Train</td>
<td>*3 hours 30 minutes to Inverness</td>
<td><a href="http://www.scotrail.co.uk">www.scotrail.co.uk</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ferries</td>
<td>1-4 hours, depending on the island you visit and where the ferry leaves from.</td>
<td><a href="http://www.calmac.co.uk/">http://www.calmac.co.uk/</a> <a href="http://www.visitscotland.com/travel/around-scotland/ferry">www.visitscotland.com/travel/around-scotland/ferry</a></td>
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*some train or coach journeys may take longer. Check the web links to see how long it will take to reach your destination.*
Choosing accommodation

It is a good idea to consider what you want from your accommodation before booking:

- **Location**: is it near to the train station / city centre / attractions you will visit? Is it easy to travel to?

- **Price**: is it good value? Is breakfast / Wi-Fi included in the price?

- **Privacy**: does it offer a shared or private bathroom?

- **Hostels / Twin Rooms**: are you happy sharing the room or would you prefer a private room?

- There are many types of accommodation to choose from: B&B (bed and breakfast), hotel, hostel. You will need to book on the internet or by phone.

*Confirm check-in and check-out times

*You may want to use a “left luggage” service if you will arrive a few hours before you can check-in at your lodgings.

*Available at Inverness Train Station: [www.eastcoast.co.uk/the-east-coast-experience/our-stations/inverness-station/]
Food and drink

Most places in Scotland have a wide range of cuisines on offer, but it is a good idea to check how easily you will be able to access the food you need or want of you have any dietary needs.

If you have allergies be sure to check when you order your food that it does not contain any ingredients that you cannot eat.

If you require food that is prepared in a certain way or meat-free meals for example, it is a good idea to research which cafes and restaurants will offer this option before travelling.

Use the internet to find restaurants, cafes, fast food outlets, delicatessens that you may want to visit – simply type your location, e.g. “Nairn, Scotland” and your food needs (e.g. “vegetarian”, “vegan”, “halal” etc).

If you would like to see reviews of the local eateries try websites such as:

www.tripadvisor.co.uk
www.virtualtourist.com/

Download a free app to help you find restaurants & make reservations, e.g.:

www.opentable.co.uk/start/home
www.foodspotting.com
Discounts & Saving Money

- Save money on your travel within Scotland – see here for details of discounts and offers on local Scottish public transport:
  
  http://scotlandwelcomesyou.com/money-savers/

- Many websites offer discounts on pre-booked activities, shopping and meals, for example:
  
  Groupon:  www.groupon.co.uk
  
  5pm:  www.5pm.co.uk
  
  Wowcher:  www.wowcher.co.uk

- Don’t forget to check deals available for students!
  
  Student Beans:  www.studentbeans.com
Safety tips for travellers

Before you go...

⊙ Take a guidebook/map!
⊙ Think about how you wish to pay for food, travel etc on your trip – cash? Bank card?
⊙ Will there be many ATM machines at the places you will visit?
⊙ Will you need to pay for some activities with cash?
⊙ Research travel passes before you book transport - you may make substantial savings on the cost of travel
⊙ Don’t forget your mobile phone charger if you will be away from home more than 1 day!

When you arrive...

⊙ If you catch a taxi, ensure that it is a licensed cab. Or pre-book a taxi in advance.
⊙ If your accommodation has a safe for you to use, store your valuable belongings in it if you are not taking them out with you
⊙ When not in use, keep cameras in your bag or behind your zipped coat (when wearing the carry strap around your neck)
⊙ When you are travelling on public transport, keep a close watch on your belongings