

The Magic of Skye and the West Highlands By Public Transport



Your Detailed Itinerary

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Day 1

The Royal Mile, at the heart of Edinburgh's Old Town, is best explored on foot from the Castle, at the highest point, downhill to the Palace of Holyroodhouse. Nearby Victoria Street, leading down to the historic Grassmarket, also invites exploration. Overnight Edinburgh.

Day 2

Train or bus leads north to Perth (around an hour), with a short excursion by bus (or on foot, if fit!) to Scone Palace. Tours are self guided at your own pace, and the grounds are also interesting, with lawns, formal garden, pine-wood (the Pinetum) and wild garden. Overnight Perth.

Day 3

Continue north by train or bus, with Inverness around two and a half hours. Either take an organised tour or go by bus to Drumnadrochit on Loch Ness in the Great Glen. There are visitor centres dedicated to the Loch Ness 'phenomenon' here. Urquhart Castle, close to the village, is a

popular monster spotting vantage point. Overnight Inverness.

Day 4

From Inverness, good bus links connect with the Isle of Skye. You can also go by train to Kyle of Lochalsh, within sight of the Skye Bridge linking the island with the mainland, and connect with local bus services. The route across the backbone of Scotland is a magnificent introduction to the landscapes of the west. On arrival at Portree on Skye there will be time either to take in some of the local attractions such as The Aros Experience, an arts, heritage and wildlife centre, or to take a local bus service round the Trotternish peninsula to the north. Overnight in Portree.

Day 5

Lovers of magnificent rugged scenery should travel back to Broadford to link with the bus service to Elgol, with its peerless views across Loch Scavaig to the famous Cuillin Hills. Alternatively, buses also connect Portree with Dunvegan Castle, seat of the chief of the Clan MacLeod. Overnight Portree.

Day 6

Buses from Portree connect with the ferry at Armadale for Mallaig on the mainland. From the fishing and ferry port of Mallaig, there are train and bus connections to Fort William. A summer season highlight is the Jacobite service, hauled by a vintage steam locomotive. On the approaches to Fort William, Ben Nevis, Britain's highest mountain, is conspicuous to the east. Overnight Fort William.

Day 7

For an overview of Lochaber (the area around Fort William) pick up a local bus (from the train/bus station) in Fort William and visit the ski centre at Nevis Range, then take the gondola up the mountain. Later, take the bus to Oban (about one and a half hours away), with highlights on the way including Castle Stalker on its offshore islet and great views across the widening Loch Linnhe to the mountains of Ardgour. Another day of scenic delights. Overnight Oban.

Day 8

With its handsome waterfront along a sheltered bay, shopping choice and lots of pubs and cafes – and a distillery – Oban offers plenty to do and is the gateway to exploring the western seaboard. Day cruises from the town offer an insight into this superb landscape with its special wildlife and stunning scenery. Overnight in Oban.

Day 9

With the high peak of Ben Cruachan a landmark on the way, take the bus eastwards through the pass of Brander and by Loch Awe (Scotland's longest) to reach Inveraray, a town built by the 3rd Duke of Argyll in the mid 18th century. Inveraray Castle is close by, while Inveraray's elegant facades and handsome buildings make strolling around a pleasure. Overnight in Inveraray.

Day 10

The bus journey to Glasgow takes less than two hours and has lots of interest – up and over the high pass called 'The Rest and Be Thankful'

and into the Loch Lomond and Trossachs National Park, with superb panoramas across to high Ben Lomond and the Loch Lomond islands.

To search over 7,000 quality assured accommodations, from bed and breakfasts to castles go to: www.visitscotland.com

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Good integrated transport links make it both straightforward and very rewarding to explore the western seaboard. Clans and castles, wildlife, and one of Europe's finest rail journeys are part of the tour – but it is the sheer scenic spectacle of mountain and coast that will prove unforgettable.



1 ROYAL MILE, EDINBURGH – The Royal Mile links Edinburgh Castle to the Palace of Holyroodhouse and passes many other places of interest on the way. Atmospheric closes (little alleyways) also invite exploration.



2 SCONE PALACE – Home of the Earls of Mansfield, this castellated palace with early 19th-century embellishments displays magnificent collections of porcelain, furniture, needlework and clocks.



3 CULLODEN VISITOR CENTRE – Scene of the last battle on British soil in 1746 – Bonnie Prince Charlie's failed attempt to restore the Stuart monarchy to Britain. The National Trust for Scotland's new visitor centre vividly recreates the experience of the battle.



4 URQUHART CASTLE – Impressive 16th-century ruins of what was once one of Scotland's largest castles. On-site visitor centre tells its story.



5 ELGOL – Remote community on west coast of Skye offering boat trips as well as what is sometimes described as Scotland's finest mountain view, of the Cuillin Hills.



6 DUNVEGAN CASTLE – Historic stronghold of the Clan Macleod, set on the sea loch of Dunvegan, the home of the chiefs of Macleod for 800 years.



7 AROS CENTRE – Award winning visitor centre in Portree. Discover the heritage of Skye – and the latest on the island's sea eagles.



8 FORT WILLIAM – MALLAIG BY RAIL – Superb views of the Small Isles and the White Sands of Morar – and the famous Glenfinnan Viaduct, as featured in the Harry Potter films. Steam-hauled services in summer.



9 OBAN WILDLIFE CRUISES – See plenty of birdlife and seals, and also perhaps porpoises, dolphins, whales, basking sharks and otters, on a day-cruise from Oban.



10 INVERARAY CASTLE – Home of the Dukes of Argyll, this 18th-century castle with its distinctive towers and spires holds fine collections of tapestry, armour, furniture and works of art.



National Buses
www.citylink.co.uk

National Trains
www.scotrail.co.uk

Local Transport
www.traveline.info

For more information on Boat Trips from Oban and other attractions, please visit www.visitscotland.com