



LOCH LOMOND & GLENCOE TOUR ITINERARY

Day 1

Drymen to Balmaha

8 miles (13km) easy to moderate, 4 hours, ascent 390 feet (292m)

After meeting up with your fellow travellers and guides we head to Drymen on the southern edge of the Loch Lomond and Trossachs National Park. After a lunch stop we begin our walk along this section of the famous West Highland Way, through conifer plantations to the foot of Conic Hill which sits directly on the Highland Boundary Fault, a massive geological tear in the earth's crust which denotes the divide between lowland and highland Scotland, both culturally and physically.

Our trail follows paths and tracks up over Conic Hill - ascent 390 feet (292m) - where on a fine day you can see Goat Fell on the Isle of Arran some 50 miles to the south and further Ailsa Craig, a small volcanic island where granite was once used to make curling stones. The views all around are tremendous with Loch Lomond itself visible in front of us as we descend gradually down towards Balmaha, where our transport awaits us for the short drive to our accommodation at Cameron House on the eastern shores of Loch Lomond.

Day 2

Balmaha to Rowardennan

7.5 miles (12km) easy to moderate, 3.5 hours, low level

After a short transfer to Balmaha our route today is along the Bonnie Banks of Loch Lomond, where from time to time the trail hugs the shoreline of Scotland's most famous Loch.

Some 26 miles long and holding the largest body of fresh water anywhere in the British Isles, Loch Lomond is home to some 200 species of birds, including the very rare Golden Eagle.

The trail starts on the small pier at Balmaha opposite Inchailloch Island which is the first island that marks a series of stepping stones across the loch on the 'Highland Line'. This line marks the sharp change in topography, weather, vegetation, wildlife and land use and played a pivotal role in Scotland's historical and cultural development.

Through forest trails of Scots pine, beech, oak and silver birch the trail winds its way along the shores of the Loch towards Rowardennan which sits at the foot of Ben Lomond, Scotland's most climbed mountain, which at 3,195 is the most southerly of all Scotland's munros. (A name given to any mountain in Scotland over 3,000 feet)

After our lunch at the local Inn, we take the road back to our start point and on to Cameron House where you will have the opportunity to use the excellent leisure facilities provided by the Hotel.

Day 3

Inveroran to Kingshouse

10 miles (16km) easy to moderate, 4 to 5 hours, ascent 700 feet (439m)

Today we travel north for an hour and enter the Southern Highlands. The landscape changes dramatically as we encounter mountains that are volcanic in origin, but have been shaped by glaciations down through the ages.

The trail begins today at Inveroran near Loch Tulla, home to ancient crannogs built centuries ago on stilts in the loch itself. At low water it's still possible to make these structures out.

We are now about to enter one of the UK's largest and most remote areas, Rannoch Moor. It is a huge expanse of open, windswept moorland where very little grows and where nobody lives. The scenery is breathtaking with the trail surrounded by the massive dark mountains of the Black Mount. The trail itself is a combination of old military road and drovers trail, good underfoot for the most part, but flanked on all sides by deep peat bog, which is to be avoided. The moor itself is strewn with large craters, giving the appearance of a moonscape and owing its origins to the last Ice Age which was centered upon the moor some 10,000 years ago.

As we make our way from the summit at 1,500 feet (450m) down towards Kingshouse we catch our first glimpse of Buchaille Etive Mor standing sentry at the entrance to Glencoe, Scotland's most beautiful and infamous glen.

Our transport will ferry us the short 10 minute journey down to our new lodgings for the next two nights, The Clachaig Inn.

Day 4

The Devil's Staircase - Altnafeadh to Kinlochleven
7 miles (11km) easy to moderate, 3 hours, ascent 690 feet (430m), descent 1100 feet (660m)

Today's walk follows the most dramatic section of the West Highland Way from the northern end of Glencoe over a pass which is the highest point on the Way, using an old military road built by General Wade. It was given its infamous name by the 400 soldiers under Wade's command who built it during the 1720's. It formed part of the road linking the garrison towns

of Stirling and Fort William enabling the government to react quickly during the Jacobite risings of the early 18th century, culminating in the disastrous Rising of 1745 which saw Bonnie Prince Charlie and his Highlanders make one last desperate effort to restore the Stuart dynasty to the British throne.

Once we reach the pass having ascended some 400 metres the trail winds its way through open countryside with fantastic views to the north of the Mamores, a chain of 10 brooding munros in the immediate landscape and the majestic Blackwater reservoir.

Ultimately we descend to the sleepy village of Kinlochleven, once home to Europe's largest aluminium smelter, but since dismantled in the 1990's, home to an indoor climbing centre and the biggest ice wall in Europe.

Following lunch we head to the visitors centre in Glencoe itself which tells the story of the dramatic events of February 1692, when 38 members of Clan Macdonald were slaughtered by government troops, commanded by a Campbell. From here there is an optional short 2 mile walk back up to the hotel through the base of the glen, ready for another Highland feast cooked for us by Jamie the Clachaig's resident chef.

Day 5

Kinlochleven to Fort William

8 miles (12km) easy to moderate, 3 to 4 hours, ascent 500 feet (312m)

Following a short transfer up the road from Glencoe to Kinlochleven, we head off up to the Lairigmor Pass (Great Pass). The trail winds its way gracefully between towering mountains on either side and passed huge stone farmhouses that once housed the local farming community, now long since gone.

The trail is good hiking used the old drovers trail and emerges in the hills high above Fort William, the largest town in the Western Highlands. Following a very rewarding late lunch here, guests have an opportunity for some shopping in the town before making our way to our accommodation for the first of two nights in the town.

Day 6

Fort William to Mallaig on the West Highland Railway, 4 miles (6.5km) easy, 2 hours, hike near Mallaig

Today is action packed, filled with many different activities and starting with a glorious train ride through some of Scotland's most atmospheric and rugged country, known as the Rough Bounds, up to the fishing port of Mallaig on the northwestern coast. From the village we can see across the sea to Skye and with good weather we will be able to make out the majestic Cuillin Ridge on Skye, a chain of seven munro's offering some of the most technical climbing available anywhere in the British Isles. Mallaig truly is the end of the line, where the railway eventually reached the coast and enabled Mallaig

to become one of the most important fishing ports in 19th century Scotland, landing enormous quantities of herring for the domestic market. Shellfish are the catch of the day now and following a 4 mile hike through the heather clad hills beyond the village, we will have the opportunity to sample lunch in the village and where Cullen Skink can be tried, a wonderful fish chowder, a local delicacy.

After lunch we drive back towards Fort William, stopping off at Glenfinnan at the head of Loch Shiel, site of the famous Harry Potter viaduct and home to the Glenfinnan Monument, built to commemorate the thousands of clansmen who gambled everything they had to support Bonnie Prince Charlie in 1745 and paid a heavy price with their lives. The monument is a fitting tribute to the people who joined the Rising as it sits at low level surrounded by the mountains of Ardgour, Moidart and Lochaber. It's framing by the surrounding landscape gives it enormous visual power and this is why it is one of the most internationally recognised icons of the Scottish Highlands.

Arriving swiftly back in Fort William, we may just have some time to explore the town for some last minute gifts before we muster in the evening for our celebratory farewell dinner at a special location.

Day 7

Ben Nevis low level walk 5 miles easy to moderate

Our final day gives us the chance to explore the glorious trails around the foot of Ben Nevis, the UK'S highest peak at 4,406 feet (2754m) high.

The trail follows forest paths and tracks across fast flowing rivers, surrounded at all times by the massive and imposing features of Scotland's most famous mountain.

Following a hearty lunch we depart finally for the trip back to Edinburgh, arriving early evening, having explored some of the finest country Scotland has to offer. Here we say farewell to new friends gained and 'haste ye back'.