



Wilderness Scotland

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Learn about Scotland in some of our favourite books and websites.



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Discover Scotland's rich heritage and traditions.



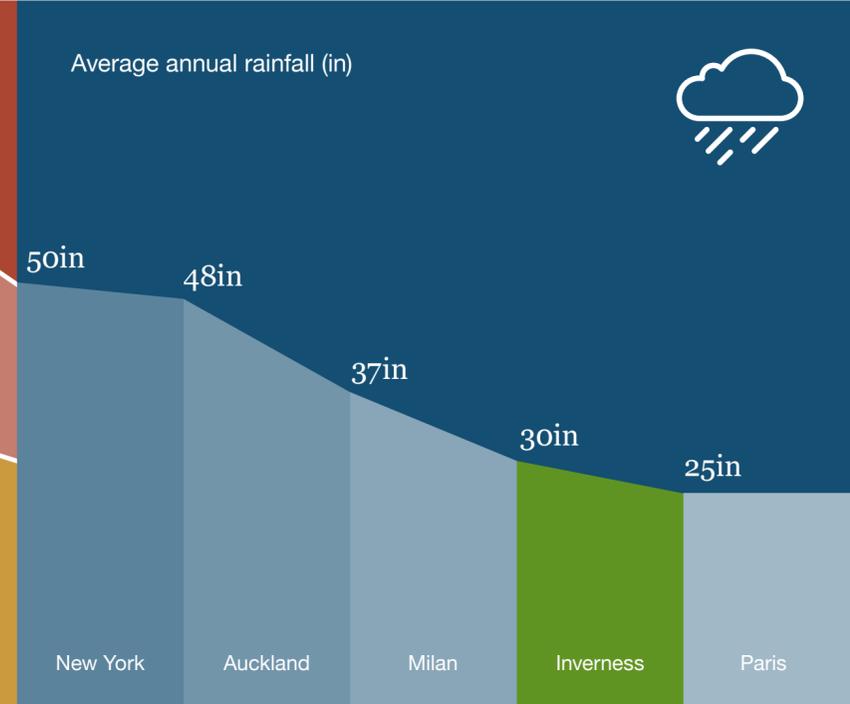
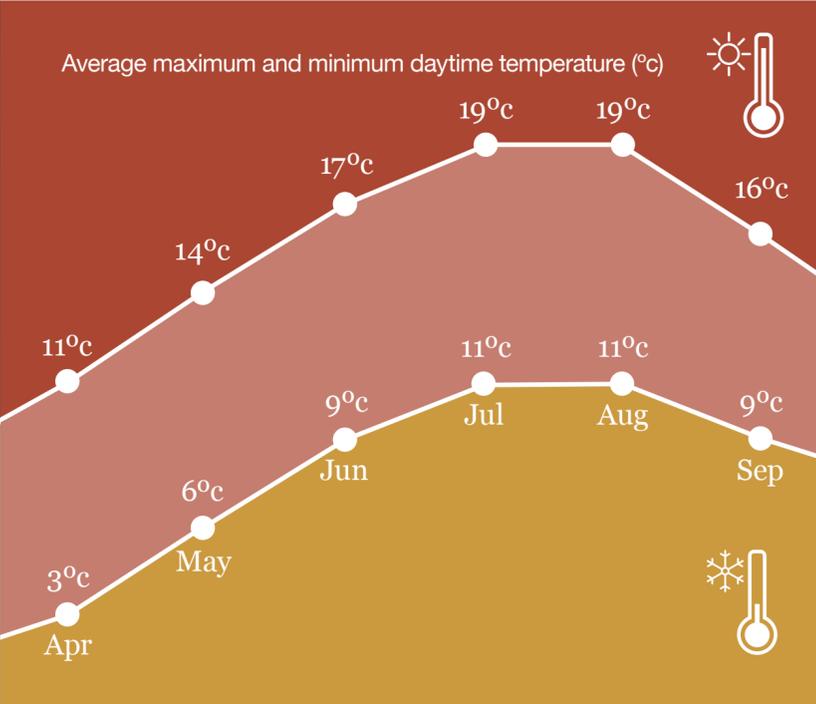
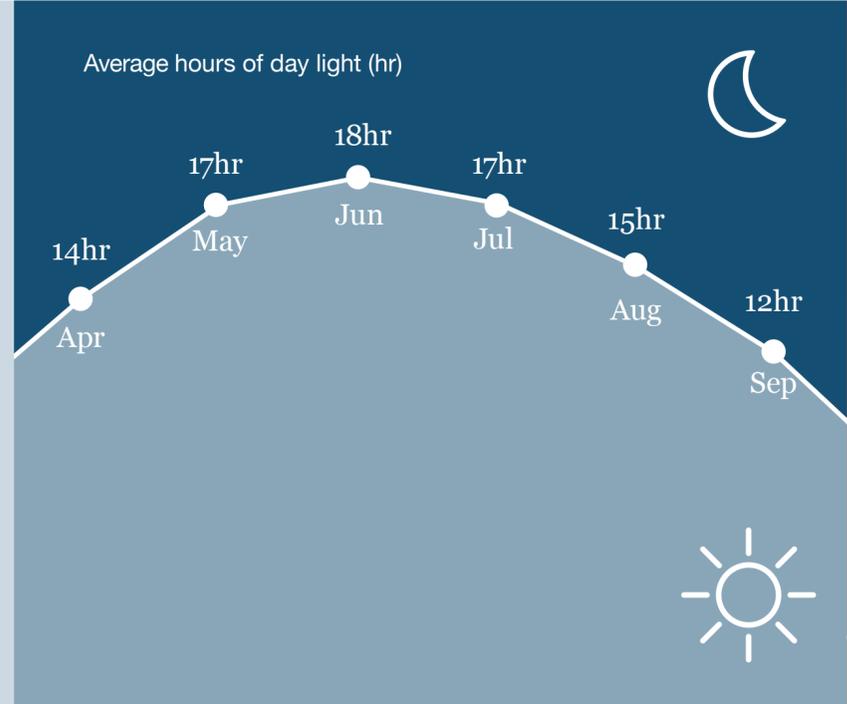
Myths and Legends

Story-telling was a favourite art and among Gaelic-speaking people. See how these ancient tales live on.



Scotland's Weather

One of the great things about Scotland is that you never know what you are going to wake up to! On a typical week you may encounter some showers but some beautiful sunshine as well. We will keep all our fingers and toes crossed for sun throughout your trip but Scotland can be just as beautiful in the rain, thousands of little waterfalls cascading down the mountains and lush green plants that you just wouldn't experience without rain. You just have to be prepared for any weather, after all, there is no such thing as bad weather, only unsuitable clothes!



Spring

Spring's a great time for wildflowers and plants bursting in to life after the winter, it's also a good time to see lots of different bird life.



Source: Met Office - Average monthly rainfall in Inverness (1981-2010)

Mar = 2in

Apr = 1in

May = 2in

Summer

The summer months are a fantastic time to see a variety of different wildlife including marine animals. In August the heather turns a breath-taking purple.



Jun = 2.5in

Jul = 2in

Aug = 2.5in

Autumn

Autumn is generally pretty settled, and the light is beautiful, particularly as the leaves and bracken are starting to turn golden.



Sep = 3in

Oct = 3.5in

Nov = 3in

Winter

With snow capped mountains, a walk on a clear, crisp winter's day can mean seeing nature at its most impressive.



Dec = 3in

Jan = 3.5in

Feb = 2in

Stats & Facts

From kilts to unicorns, we've got you covered on everything you need to know about Scotland.



Thistle

Although the thistle is Scotland's national flower, no one knows for certain how the purple-flowered plant claimed its position.

One legend has it a sleeping party of Scots warriors were saved from ambush by an invading Norse army when one of the enemies trod on the spiky plant.

His anguished cry roused the slumbering warriors who duly vanquished the invader and adopted the thistle as their national symbol.



The Kilt

The kilt originated in the Highlands and was an untailed, 5m long piece of cloth.

Similar to a modern kilt, it was worn around the waist, but the remaining fabric then draped over the shoulder, then pinned in place.

It grew in popularity after being chosen by Highland regiments serving with the British Army.

Nowadays the kilt is as popular as ever with many people wearing it to black tie events and weddings, as well as less formal gatherings such as ceilidhs.

Highest Peak

Ben Nevis: 4,413 feet (1,345m)

Longest River

The River Tay: 117 miles (188km)

Population

5.4 million people



6.6 million sheep



1 Monster



Unicorns

In Celtic mythology the unicorn was a symbol of purity and innocence, as well as masculinity and power. Tales of dominance and chivalry associated with the unicorn may be why it was chosen as Scotland's national animal.



Whisky



Culture and Customs

Scotland's rich culture and heritage has been formed over 1000s of years and is still just as alive today as it ever was.

Language

English is the official language of the UK, and comes with a wide range of regional accents in Scotland. One of only four surviving Celtic languages, Scottish Gaelic also remains a living language, particularly in the Outer Hebrides and Skye.



Tipping

Tipping in Scotland is never expected but always appreciated! It is a lovely way to show you really enjoyed your experience. Unlike some destinations our guides receive a fair wage so tips are seen as a bonus rather than making up part of their wage. If you want to thank you guides for outstanding service they will welcome any monetary gift at the end of a trip. Gratuity for hospitality services is normally 10-15% of the bill and it is usual to tip in restaurants, hotels. It is also usual to tip local guides. Taxi drivers, bar tenders and baggage carriers do not expect tips.



Music

Scotland has deep rooted musical traditions and through It's poetry and songs many myths and legends have been kept alive for generations.

The instrument that springs to mind for most people is of course the bagpipe, but the traditional music scene is much broader, taking in instruments such as the fiddle, accordion, bodhrán drum and clàrsach (Scottish harp) each with strong and distinct traditions of their own.

Follow us on [Spotify](#) to discover the perfect music to accompany your Scottish adventure.

Food and Drink

Food in Scotland is delicious, and most of the hotels and restaurants pride themselves on using produce grown or sourced locally. Fresh and flavoursome produce like seafood and all kinds of meat will generally be part of the daily menus. Be sure to sample some of the wonderful Scottish beer and ale, as well as the whisky that Scotland is famous for. Dietary requirements such as vegetarian and gluten-free will be catered for with advance notice although choice is normally less than for those without special requirements or who eat meat.



Myths and Legends

Scotland's ancient lands are well known for their rich folklore, made up of myths, legends and stories passed down from generation to generation.

Kelpies

Legend has it that the kelpie emits a plaintive cry eerily reminiscent of a drowning man or woman to attract its prey. Others say it will sometimes appear at the water's edge as a gentle and bereft white horse, urging onlookers to join it for a ride on its back before violently plunging them down to a watery grave.

For proof of their existence look no further than the grounds of the ruined Vayne Castle in Angus. Here you will find a hoof-shaped imprint on sandstone near the river bank left behind by this supernatural predator. It is said that if you are by the water and listen carefully enough, you might just catch its mournful song floating along the gently flowing current. But venture no further than that, unless you wish to meet your doom.

Selkies

Eternally lustful, a selkie will capture the hearts of human beings and then disappear forever into the ocean, leaving behind broken hearts.

It is thought that both male and female selkies can elegantly emerge from the water as beautiful people and have powerful seductive powers over humans. After finding love and spending years on land, 'selkie folk' will always crave a return to the sea, their rightful home. In some tales, humans hide the seal skins to prevent them returning home to the ocean.

Other stories say that selkies have a moral conscience, and return to play with their children at the seashore and visit them regularly once they've gone back to the sea.

Have you ever seen a seal bobbing its head above water? They may seem adorable, but think twice when you see them, especially in the waters off the coast of Orkney and Shetland. You might end up falling head over heels in love!

Fingal's Cave

Fingal's Cave, situated on the uninhabited island of Staffa, is wrapped in myth.

It became known as Fingal's Cave, following the publication of Macpherson's poem about the hero Fingal, or Fionn mac Cumhaill. In Gaelic and Irish mythology, he was a courageous warrior who built a causeway between Scotland and Northern Ireland, called the Giant's Causeway, still seen today off the coast of Northern Ireland. The columns on Staffa are thought to be remains of this connecting bridge, and both are made from the same basalt columns. But was Fionn a normal-sized man, or a giant? Did he build the causeway to fight another giant or to be friends? Whatever story you believe, Fingal's Cave is certainly an incredible feat.

Another striking feature of the cave is the incredible acoustics and sounds that resonate through the walls, giving it the name Uamh-Binn in Gaelic, which means the 'Cave of Melody'.

Explore the cave for yourself with a boat tour to the Isle of Staffa. During spring and early summer, the cliffs and grassy slopes provide nesting sites for various seabirds including guillemots, razorbills and puffins.

The Loch Ness Monster

Everyone knows the grainy photographs that appear to show some unidentified creature emerging from the depths of Loch Ness, many of them dismissed as hoaxes. But what explanation can there be for the countless unsettling eyewitness accounts of the Loch Ness Monster recorded over the years? The earliest sighting dates to the sixth century. The Irish monk Saint Columba was on his way to Inverness to visit the King of the Picts when he crossed paths with the fearsome creature on the shore of the loch. The monster had been terrorizing the locals however by making the sign of the cross, Columba commanded the creature to return from whence it came. The monster miraculously obeyed and disappeared beneath the waves. Throughout the centuries, the sightings have continued.

Does a monster inhabit Loch Ness to this day? At 23 miles long and a depth of 755 feet, there's certainly more than enough water to hide in. Gazing out across this vast stretch of water from the shore or the deck of a boat, keep a watchful eye for the strange ripples and swells left by the wake of some elusive but immense animal. And if you're really lucky, maybe an ink-black hump or slender neck will rise above the dark waters.



Ecotourism - Our Commitment

Wilderness Scotland is committed to the principles of ecotourism. We work very hard to ensure our engagements with local communities, wild lands and wildlife are positive.

We are a proud partner of the Leave No Trace Center for Outdoor Ethics, which enhances our commitment to responsible activity in Scotland's wild lands, as enshrined in the Scottish Outdoor Access Code (SOAC).

On our trips we hope that you will help us and support these efforts. There are of course always going to be some impacts when we go into our wild lands, but with your help we want to minimise as much of the potentially negative impacts as possible. We ask that you consider the following principles while enjoying the Highlands and Islands of Scotland.



Leave No Trace - The Seven Principles

1: Plan Ahead & Prepare

Because every outdoor activity is unique, environmental and safety concerns may vary from place to place. Before you go, check our detailed notes for any access restrictions and please observe any signage and guidance around forestry operations, stalking activity, lambing, etc.

2: Be Considerate of Others

We value our local relationships very highly and equally recognise we all enjoy the outdoors in different ways. We would ask you to be courteous when encountering other recreational users; local people and/or landowners or managers.

3: Respect Farm Animals and Wildlife

As more and more people visit the outdoors, wildlife in these areas are affected by visitors' presence. To help keep wildlife wild, it is best to give animals a wide berth and observe them from a distance. As a simple rule of thumb – if the animal moves in response to your presence, you are too close. We Recommend taking binoculars if you have them.

4: Travel and Camp on Durable Ground

Wherever practical to do so please stick to established trails. Give plants and wild animals their place in the outdoors. Creating new trails scars the landscape, causes erosion and intrudes on wildlife habitats. The land owner/manager will be grateful too, as they often put considerable time and money in creating and maintaining these trails.

5: Leave What You Find

Leave natural objects undisturbed – load your camera, not your packs. Let photos, drawings and memories comprise your souvenirs. Conserve the past; archaeological and historical artefacts such as old walls, shielings, old mine workings and hilltop cairns are reminders of the rich human history of the landscape and belong to all people for all time. Structures, dwellings and artefacts should not be disturbed.

6: Dispose of Waste Properly

Please take out all litter - yours and others. Even biodegradable materials, such as orange peel, apple cores and food scraps take years to break down, and attract scavengers that harm other wildlife.

Waste is unsightly and ruins everyone's outdoor experience. If you need to go to the toilet in the outdoors, deposit solid human waste in a hole dug 10-12 cm deep at least 30 metres (70 steps) from water, campsites, and trails. This will promote decomposition of the waste and reduce the likelihood that other visitors may have unpleasant encounters. Cover and disguise the hole when you are finished.

7: Minimise the Effects of Fire

In the unlikely event that you will use a fire or barbecue on your self guided trip. However for completeness we include this principle here.

Even though campfires have been a part of the outdoors for a long time, the legacy of campfires and barbecues, too often, are charred park benches and rocks, large rubbish-filled fire rings, damaged trees and uncontrolled wildfires.

We hope that you have a wonderful experience on our self guided trip and would like to thank you in advance for helping us to keep Scotland's amazing wild land's beautiful and unspoilt for future generations of visitors, local people and wildlife.

Recommended Reads

To find out more about Scotland, check out our books and sites below.

Online

- www.visitscotland.com
- www.scotland.org
- www.wildernessscotland.com/blog
- www.lonelyplanet.com/scotland

Weather

- www.metcheck.com
- www.bbc.co.uk/weather

Books Non Fiction

- [The Living Mountain - Nan Shepherd](#)
- [At the Loch of the Green Corrie - Andrew Greig](#)
- [The Shetland Bus - David Howarth](#)
- [Calum's Road - Roger Hutchinson](#)
- [A History of Scotland - Neil Oliver](#)

Books Fiction

- [Sunset Song - Lewis Grassic Gibbon](#)
- [The Lewis Man Trilogy - Peter May](#)
- [Shetland Island series - Ann Cleeves](#)
- [The Silver Darlings - Neil M Gunn](#)
- [The Testament of Gideon Mack - James Robertson](#)
- [Eleanor Oliphant is Completely Fine - Gail Honeyman](#)



Travel Essentials



Luggage

If you can pack a soft duffel bag it makes life easier packing up our vans. Please avoid hard suitcases. Size-wise, if you can check it on a plane with no extra fees it will be fine on one of our trips. During your trip your luggage will either be kept at your accommodation, or if you are moving on that night stored in the van. You will need a small day sack for your lunch, water and extra layers.

If you are on a camping based trip you will need to limit what you can bring. Please refer to the equipment list you will receive with your confirmation email and just let us know if you have any questions.



Time Zones

Scotland and the UK use GMT. GMT is:

- 5 hours ahead of east coast USA & Canada (Eastern time zone)
- 8 hours ahead of west coast USA & Canada (Pacific time zone)
- 8 hours behind Western Australia
- 12 hours behind New Zealand



Phones and WIFI

The international dialling code for the UK is +44. Public telephone boxes are available across Scotland – it is not unusual to see one of these in the most remote Highland village. Most hotels and restaurants will also have a telephone for public use.

Most telephone boxes now only accept credit cards, although some do still accept British coins. There will be a sign indicating which forms of payment are accepted. Alternatively, phone cards can be purchased from some newsagents. Be sure to read the card instructions carefully before use.

Mobile phone reception is good in most major cities, towns and villages throughout Scotland, however, the more remote you venture, you will find that you may lose mobile reception altogether, especially in the highlands and islands.

Some accommodations will offer WIFI in public areas but not in individual rooms.



Electricity

Electricity is available at 240V AC. Plugs are flat three-pin and a UK universal AC adaptor is required for clients visiting from outside the UK



Maps

A range of maps are available from good bookshops and outdoor shops both on the high street and online, especially www.stanfords.co.uk



Currency

The monetary unit in the UK is the Pound Sterling (£). £1 is made up of 100 pence (p). Whilst this is the same throughout the UK, Scottish and Northern Irish Bank Notes differ in appearance from English bank notes, however, all are legal tender throughout Scotland, England, Northern Ireland and Wales.

The best way to get cash is at ATMs, which are widely available. You might have difficulty finding them in the remote Scottish Highlands, but you can always ask your guide for help. Most ATMs limit withdrawals to £300 British Pounds. Most shops and cafes do accept Visa or Master Card although it is rare for them to take Amex.



Medical Information & Safety

You should have a dental and medical check-up before your trip. We recommend that you contact your GP or local medical centre well in advance of departure for the appropriate travel health advice. Please do let us know of any pre existing medical conditions, even if you don't think it will be an issue on your trip. We will pass this on your your guide so they have all relevant data in case of an emergency. In-country, all of our trip guides are qualified in first aid, carry a comprehensive first aid kit with them at all times and have experience of treating medical situations in an outdoors environment. In addition, we do encourage clients to bring their own small first aid kits. A list of suggested items is contained in the recommended equipment list. It is your own responsibility to ensure that you are physically fit enough to join any adventurous trips in Scotland.



Passports and Visa

Scotland is part of the United Kingdom. If you are a non-UK citizen, you are advised to check with your local UK embassy and/or online at www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk/visas-immigration to confirm if you will need a visa for travel to the UK. We recommend that you take photocopies of your passports, visas and other valuable documents. A copy should also be left at home with a relative or friend (ideally the same person for whom you have given as the appropriate emergency contact). In the event that any documents are lost or stolen, this will greatly assist the process of replacement.



Emergency Procedures & Contact

If you need to get a hold of one of our team while on a trip we recommend contacting your guide or your accommodation first.

Should you need to contact our office, please call +44 (0)1479 420020 or toll free from North America on 866-740-3890. If you are booked on a trip you will also be sent a 24 hour out of office emergency number. We would gratefully ask that this number is only used in a genuine emergency.

Personal Safety and Security

Scotland is a very safe country in terms of public health and crime. The UK's NHS (National Health Service) and emergency services (police, fire and ambulance) provide fast, excellent service.

Emergency Services

The phone numbers to call in case of emergency are 999 for the police, 101 for a non-emergency response.



Travel Essentials



Financial Protection

You can book with us in complete confidence that all trip payments made to us are fully protected.

Wilderness Group Ltd is a licensed and bonded tour operator. For trips that do not include air travel, your financial security is guaranteed through our membership and bonding with ABTOT.



Travel Insurance

We don't ask to see proof of this but we strongly recommend you have travel insurance. It should cover last minute trip cancellation, repatriation or unexpected charges if flights are delayed or cancelled. Once you have booked a trip we will provide details of our recommended insurance company but they are not the only suitable provider and we encourage you to do your own research. Please note that we are not insurance agents and cannot advise you on travel insurance or the level of cover you require. Please contact your preferred insurance company for any questions or advice.

I have dietary requirements can you cater for me?

Absolutely. Please so let us know on booking: it helps if you are specific and provide as much detail as possible. If you have an allergy please let us know how severe it is, do you carry an Epi Pen? If you are gluten-free please do clarify if you just avoid wheat or if you are coeliac and mustn't eat anything that has come into contact with wheat. It's really helpful for us to know this up front so we can alert the restaurants we visit. Vegetarian or vegan? No worries, but please be aware that you may have limited choices. We can usually cater for all dietary requirements except on our sailing trips because the limited kitchen space makes it impossible to cook different meals for each traveller. If you have any questions or want to chat through a requirement then get in touch.



Midges

Ah midges, it's amazing that these tiny wee creatures are the cause of so much worry however the stories about them are generally much worse than the reality! Yes they can be annoying but we're lucky they don't carry any diseases so the worst case scenario is an itchy red bite. The best thing is to just be prepared with some preventative measures.

We recommend Smidge insect repellent, this is DEET-free and was developed in Scotland particularly for these wee beasties. It's also a good idea to have long sleeves and trousers so you can cover up and if you are camping it's worth having a midge headnet just in case. Midges are much smaller than mosquitos so it must be a midge net otherwise they can fly right through.

If you usually react badly to bites make sure you have a supply of antihistamine. If you are looking for extra reassurance check out our [reviews](#), hardly any of them even mention midges!



Getting There and Away

Our trips tend to begin and end at train stations or ferry terminals to allow you to take public transport to and from the trip. The start and end point of each trip can be found on our website and in the trip dossier.

The principal international airports in Scotland are Edinburgh and Glasgow International although you can also fly to Glasgow Prestwick, Inverness and Aberdeen. Each airport website has links to public transport from that airport to the nearest city.

If you are travelling by train in the UK we recommend using thetrainline.com for timetables and tickets.

For more information on travelling in the UK and to your trip start point visit the Getting Here part of our website.



Still have some questions?

For more information on our trips or traveling in Scotland check out the FAQ section on our website.

Get in Touch

Please do not hesitate to contact us by telephone or e-mail on the details provided below. We are passionate about travel and adventures in the wild places of Scotland.

Our team are hugely knowledgeable and passionate about adventure travel in the wild places of Scotland and we can't wait to share our home with you.

If you have any questions about our trips or what we do then please just get in touch.

Tel UK: **+44 (0)1479 420 020**

Tel US: **1-866-740-3890**

Email: **info@wildernessscotland.com**

Wilderness Scotland
Dalfaber Drive
Aviemore
Highlands
Scotland | PH22 1ST