

## **BEST OF ARGYLL & ISLE OF ARRAN ITINERARY**

### **30 AUGUST - 6 SEPTEMBER 2008**

#### **INTRODUCTION TO THE AREA**

##### **Argyll**

We will be based in Port Appin near Oban, which makes it possible to give you a taste of the best walking on mainland Argyll. On our first day, we will explore Loch Awe and we will walk an old drovers' route through its neighbouring hills. After 'finding our feet' around Loch Awe, we next turn to wild Glen Coe. Although everyone has heard of Glen Coe, and may suspect a 'tourist trap', the reality always has the power to inspire, especially in wild Coire Gabhail (also known as the 'Lost Valley') where the MacDonalDs used to hide stolen cattle in the times before the massacre of 1692. We'll delve into Argyll's earliest history in Kilmartin Glen, before we travel to the isle of Arran.

##### **Isle of Arran**

Arran is often described as "Scotland in miniature" because it has mountains, beaches, cliffs, farmlands and thousands of acres of untamed forests, hills and waterfalls, all packaged together in an area approximately 20 miles long by 10 miles wide. Arran lies on the Highland Boundary Fault what makes it geologically very interesting with both Highland and Lowland landscapes. The northern part of the island is very much mini-Highlands with spectacular granite peaks, corries and wooded glens. In contrast the south of the island has sweeping moorlands and wide sandy beaches. We will explore both during our hikes.

There are traces of settlements on Arran as far back as 4,000 BC although it is thought there might have been inhabitants going back as far as 7,000 BC. It is protected on its western coast by the Kilbrannan Sound and the Mull of Kintyre while the Firth of Clyde and the Ayrshire coast stretches south by its eastern shores so it's fairly well protected all round. The Gulf Stream keeps the waters of Arran warmer than the norm and this is why there are many palm trees and other exotic plants dotted all round the island.



The Isle of Arran

## THE PROGRAMME

(We reserve the right to alter the programme to take account of weather conditions or other unforeseen circumstances. Any such alterations will always take into account the need to maintain the overall character of the holiday).



**Walks:** 2. Loch Awe and String of Lorn, 3. Glen Coe, 4. Kilmartin Glen, 5. Cock of Arran, 6. King's Cave and Machrie Moor, 7. Western Hills

### **Saturday 30 August: Glasgow - Oban**

We will meet at Glasgow Airport and/or the city centre in the afternoon and travel in our own minibuses to the accommodation in Port Appin near Oban where the group will stay 3 nights.

### **Sunday 31 August: Loch Awe and String of Lorn**

We start our day with a boat trip to Innis Chonnel, incidentally, is one of the most complete and attractive of Scotland's ruined medieval castles, and also one of its least well known. Our walk starts with a visit to the wooded gorge containing the Falls of Avich. From there we walk along the String of Lorn pass to Loch Scammadale. This is an old drovers route which traverses the lonely Lorn Plateau between Lochs Avich and Scammadale, passing a hill lochan and two attractive waterfalls on the way.

8 miles (13 km) and 1000 feet (300m).



Innis Chonnel Castle, Loch Awe

### **Monday 1 September: Glen Coe**

Wild mountain scenery in a famous setting beyond Rannoch Moor. The Lost Valley (properly Coire Gabhail, or the corrie of booty) is a dramatic glaciated 'hanging valley' situated between two of Glen Coe's famous 'three sisters' ridges. Hidden from the world behind massive piles of tumbled rock that fell from oversteepened mountainsides late in the ice age, it is reputed to have been the place where the Glen Coe MacDonalds hid their stolen cattle.

Max. 8 miles (13 km) and up to a max. of 2200 feet (650m) - but there is a shorter alternative, with much less ascent.



Lost Valley, Glen Coe

### **Tuesday 2 September: Kilmartin Glen and journey to the Isle of Arran**

An easier day, taking in the best of the prehistoric monuments around Kilmartin, in Mid-Argyll. Judging by the large number of remains hereabouts, this may well have been one of prehistoric Scotland's most densely inhabited regions, a fact hard to appreciate in to-day's thinly-populated Argyll. Burial cairns and stone circles, rock carvings and standing stones, duns and hillforts speak of millennia of continuous habitation. Mainly low-level walking on paths and tracks.

After our visit to Kilmartin Glen we will continue our journey to Claonaig in Kintyre for the ferry to the Isle of Arran, where we will stay 4 nights in Brodick.

### **Wednesday 3 September: Cock of Arran**

The initial part of the walk is a steady climb a col. From the top, we will have superb views across the sea, and also inland to Goat Fell. We continue along the path descending to the sea at Laggan to an abandoned mining village. We will follow the coastal path to the north, along cliffs with caves and beautifully sculptured sandstone. The path climbs again to join a track, and there are excellent views across to the peninsula of Kintyre.

8 miles/12 km; 850 ft/320m ascent



Rock at the Cock of Arran with footprints of a giant millipede

#### **Thursday 4 September: King's Cave and Machrie Moor**

We will start at Blackwaterfoot and walk to the Doon Fort near Drumadoon Point. We will follow the shore north to King's Cave where King Robert the Bruce is reputed to have hidden after he was defeated in 1306. We continue to the neolithic monuments at Machrie Moor. The whole moorland is littered with the remains of early man, from hut circles to chambered cairns and solitary standing stones, which make it one of the most interesting and remarkable archaeological sites in Scotland. The focus of the site is upon six stone circles of varying structures that are concentrated in a small area of the moorland. The circle which is most easily distinguished, consists of three upright red sandstone pillars, the tallest of which is just over 18 feet. The second most interesting circle is a double ring of squat, granite boulders called Fingal's Cauldron Seat. The outer circle is egg-shaped and the inner ring of eight stones forms an almost perfect circle. 6 miles/11 km



Standing stones at Machrie Moor

### **Friday 5 September: Arran's western hills**

A hill-day in the northwest of Arran. We avoid the crowds that walk up Goatfell. Instead we travel to the northwest to the solitude of the western hills. We walk up Mullach Buidhe (2365ft/721m) and along a ridge with spectacular views all around us. The ridge takes us to Beinn Bhreac (2333ft/711m), the second hill for today. We descent back to the coast via Coire Fhionn Lochan.

9 miles (14 km), 2600ft/800m ascent



Western hills from King's Cave

### **Saturday 6 September: Arran - Glasgow**

We will take the morning ferry back to the mainland and take you back to Glasgow, where we will arrive in the early afternoon.

### **ACCOMMODATION**

#### **30 August - 2 September: The Pierhouse Hotel, Port Appin**

Situated in the quiet village of Port Appin, Argyll, on the shores of Loch Linhhe and surrounded by the spectacular raw beauty of the magnificent West Coast of Scotland, you can find The Pierhouse. With breathtaking views to the islands of Lismore and Mull, this intimate twelve bedroom hotel strives to offer the guests something different - quality service, a personal and relaxed family atmosphere, stunning location and award-winning locally sourced food. All rooms are ensuite. Website: <http://www.pierhousehotel.co.uk>

## **2-6 September: Auchrannie House Hotel, Brodick**

Nestling in acres of mature and crisply landscaped gardens, the hotel displays warmth of hospitality in authentic but relaxed country house tradition. With only 28 bedrooms, Auchrannie House Hotel is able to offer a friendly, efficient and professional service to ensure a perfect visit. The interior of each of the 28 bedrooms has been designed to complement the country house style with panoramic views over Auchrannie's expansive grounds. All rooms are ensuite.

Website: [http://www.auchrannie.co.uk/house\\_hotel](http://www.auchrannie.co.uk/house_hotel)