

Tramping the Scottish Highlands: The West Highland Way and the Munros (#0924)

August 20-29, 2009

Thanks for your interest in our Scottish adventure. Please read the information carefully, and then contact us if you have specific questions about this trip or would like us to forward an application form: L, Sam Jamke at 603-472-2536, samjamke@myfairpoint.net; or CL, Betsy Fowler at 603-447-5077, betsyfowler@roadrunner.com).

Location

The West Highland Way is generally regarded as THE premier long distance path in the British Isles. It begins just outside of Glasgow in the village of Milngavie and ends some 95 miles later in Fort William, near the famed Ben Nevis, Great Britain's highest summit. We will spend three days walking 35 delightful miles of its length. On three other days we will climb three of the most well known Munros, as the nearly 300 peaks over 3000' in the UK are known. In addition, we will have a mid-trip rest day in the historic Glencoe area, the site of the 1692 massacre of the Macdonald clan. Sightseeing and local hike opportunities are found in this area.. The Brits, in their understated way, call what we are doing hill-walking, not hiking, not climbing. Trust us—it is hiking as we know it, and the Munro climbs are strenuous.

Typical Participants

This is a trip for experienced hikers who enjoy an active vacation. You should be fit enough to walk 10-15 miles per day for several days in a row with a day pack containing full rain gear, extra clothing and your food and water, plus your camera(s) and any personal medical supplies. Elevation gains will be about 1000-4400' per day. Our accommodations will be small hotels, inns and B&Bs, twin rooms, generally en suite (private baths). Solo travelers will be paired with same gender roommates.

What to Expect

Our pace will be moderate so that we may enjoy the scenery, visit historic sites and gain an appreciation for this beautiful countryside. We will see primitive bothies (shelters), ancient churches, mountain tarns, Highland cattle, possibly feral goats and we may spend time in local pubs. We will stay in one hotel, one inn and comfortable B&B's en route, with full Scottish breakfast included each morning and, on our six hiking days, a packed lunch. Dinners will be on our own—lots of good pubs to pick from. We will carry day packs each day, with the rest of our luggage being moved as needed between our overnight accommodations. Elevation gains shown in the itinerary are estimates only. The hiking is moderate to strenuous.



Itinerary

Aug 20: Travel by air to Glasgow; arriving early the following morning.

Aug 21: Transport to our first night's hotel from Glasgow will be provided. We are spending two nights at the Rowardennan Hotel on the banks of Loch Lomond in the magnificent Queen Elizabeth Forest. The Rowardennan Hotel has breathtaking views of Ben Lomond, Loch Lomond and the mountains to the North. Located virtually at the base of Ben Lomond, the Rowardennan is the ideal place to meet fellow travelers and share tales of adventures over a malt whisky.



Aug 22: Guided ascent of Ben Lomond. This southerly Munro is a relatively high mountain and a long day's walk, and the views from this summit are spectacular, looking out over Loch Lomond and to the many mountains further north. It provides a worthy challenge for the start of our week! Final elevation (and approximate gain) is 3195' and the distance is about 7 miles RT, 6-7 hrs. Spend the night at the hotel.

Aug 23: Walk the section of the famed West Highland Way from Rowardennan to Ardluish. This 12 mile section hugs the eastern shore of Loch Lomond - sometimes near the water's edge, at other times traversing the forests higher on the steep slopes below Ben Lomond. Elevation gain is less than 1000' but the path ranges from forest roads and excellent paths to very rough tracks. This is considered one of the more difficult sections of the WHW. Halfway through the day, the Way comes to the Inversnaid Hotel near a couple of spectacular waterfalls. While the hotel is a curious interruption of the wilderness by civilization, it is handy for a lunch break. In fine



weather this is a great stroll through sun-dappled woods with wonderful views over the glistening loch, listening to the birds and admiring nature. In less fine weather it is an atmospheric route through gloomy woods with glimpses of mist rolling over the loch waters. We will try to spot the cave of notorious outlaw and cattle rustler Rob Roy MacGregor near our path about a half mile north of the hotel. At the end of our hike we'll take a ferry for the trip across Loch Lomond from Ardluish to Ardlui and transfer by minibus to village of Glencoe. Overnight in the Clachaig Inn, a well known hotel for climbers and walkers. We opted for this rather than B&Bs because it is also the best place to eat locally, with good beer and whiskey, and a great atmosphere in the bar. We should have a cozy bar to ourselves for eating, but will still be part of the atmosphere for the rest of the evening, when there is often live Scottish traditional music, and always good "craic" among other walkers and climbers.

Aug 24: Walk the section of West Highland Way from Kingshouse to Kinlochleven. This 9 mile stretch of the Way includes an 850' ascent of the Devil's Staircase as we leave Glencoe behind. Weather-permitting we'll have great views of Ben Nevis and surrounding peaks from the high point of our route. Our destination, Kinlochleven, was once home to a thriving aluminum smelting operation, the remains of which we will pass, as well as Blackwater Reservoir and its dam that supplied the hydroelectric power to the smelter and which still functions today, sending its power to the grid. If time permits, we'll stop at the visitors' center in town. Total elevation gain is about 1600'. Overnight in Clachaig Inn.

Aug 25: Rest Day – Explore Glencoe, site of the massacre of Clan Macdonald – or try some other local walks (low level or high level) - there are plenty to choose from. Overnight in Clachaig Inn.



Aug 26: Guided ascent of Buachaille Etive Mhor – the mountain that dominates the eastern end of Glencoe. The famous Buachaille Etive Mhor ('Great Herdsman of Etive') guards the entrance to Glencoe and is reportedly Scotland's most photographed mountain. The ascent is by rough path and is fairly challenging but the effort is well worth it! The wide vista over Rannoch Moor is one of the most extensive in the country (4 to 7 miles, 2500' of gain, rough rocky ground, 6-8 hrs). Overnight in Clachaig Inn.

Aug 27: Walk the final 14-mile section of West Highland Way from Kinlochleven to Fort William. A steep climb up under the steep slopes of the Mamore hills at the beginning of the day follows old Victorian hunting tracks and then you are back on the old military road and crossing over Lairigmor Pass and through dense coniferous forest to Glen Nevis, past the foot of Ben Nevis, Britain's highest peak. Estimated elevation gain is about 1500'. Overnight in B&Bs at Glen Nevis end of Fort William.

Aug 28: *Ascent of Ben Nevis.* The "Ben" is the UK's highest mountain – it's the snowcapped one with the long ridge in the photo. Our ascent is on good paths but the hike will be physically challenging with over 4000' of elevation gain. The view from the top (when it's not blanketed by mist), is all encompassing and well worth the effort. Final elevation (and the gain, since we start near sea level) is 4406' and we'll cover about 7-9 miles in 8-9 hrs.



Aug 29: After breakfast in Fort William we will depart for Glasgow. Afternoon or evening flights can be accommodated.

Cost of the Trip

The trip will cost \$1650 for AMC members, \$1700 for non-members; your airfare to Glasgow, which we currently estimate at about \$1200, is *not* included. The leaders will be glad to provide information on suggested airlines and schedules or book your flights if you prefer. **Note:** If we have at least ten people booked early enough who are willing to travel from Boston to Glasgow, we may be able to book group airfare at a reduced rate. Our overnight accommodations and full Scottish breakfasts are included, as is all internal transport during the trip. On our six scheduled hiking days packed lunches are included. Other days' lunches are *not* included in the trip price but may be purchased from our hotels or inns. Dinners are not included in order that participants may experience a wider choice of the region's hearty foods and interesting pubs and inns.

In accordance with AMC policy, you are subsidizing some of the leaders' costs, but not all of them. The trip fee also includes an AMC overhead charge to cover the administrative expenses of offering Major Excursions. The trip fee includes emergency medical and evacuation insurance coverage, which is required by the AMC. It does not include insurance for travel delay, interruption, or cancellation, or for baggage loss. Such insurance is strongly suggested.

NOTE: The price of the trip is subject to an increase should the value of the dollar versus the pound decline significantly from the estimated rate of \$2.10/£. Conversely, any unspent funds resulting exchange rates actually being more favorable than our estimate of \$2.10/£ will be refunded to the participants. (As of Feb 2009, the exchange rate is about \$1.43/£, much more favorable.)

Cancellation Policy

Our cancellation policy is based on several considerations. First, a cancellation shall not raise the cost to the other participants or to the leaders. Second, we will charge a canceling participant for the expenses already incurred on his/her behalf and any unavoidable future expenses that will be incurred as a result of his/her registration, unless they can be applied toward another acceptable participant. Third, to discourage uncommitted people from applying for the trip, we have a schedule of minimum cancellation penalties: zero before January 1, 2009, \$150 from January 1, 2009 to March 31, 2009, \$300 after March 31, 2009.



Required and Essential Gear

- Passport at least six months away from expiration date at time of trip
- Medical insurance info, copies of credit cards and passport.
- Medium to large daypack (no “fanny” packs or lumbar packs).
- Broken-in hiking boots (preferably waterproof)
- Waterproof wind and rain gear (tops and bottoms)
- Water bottles/Camelback (2 - 3 liters total capacity)
- Synthetic pile/fleece jacket
- Hat, and gloves or mittens
- Long pants and/or shorts – non-cotton for all hikes!
- At least 2-3 pairs of hiking socks with liners
- Polypropylene, Coolmax®, Bergelene® or other synthetic clothing
- Flashlight or headlamp with fresh batteries (loose batteries should be in carry-on bag)
- Sunglasses
- Hat or bandanna
- Sunscreen and insect repellent
- Waterproof pack liner and/or pack cover

Recommended and Optional Gear

- Day or fanny pack (or adaptation of full pack) for in-town time.
- “Texas,” “Crocs” or sneakers for evenings and time in towns
- Gaiters (for rain)
- Hiking poles (must be in checked baggage, not carry-on)
- Personal first aid kit & medications (leaders will have group first aid kits)
- Bathing suit
- Casual clothing for non-hiking time, cotton OK
- Camera (loose batteries should be in carry-on, not checked)
- Umbrella, folding
- Trail snacks

Trip Leaders

Trip Leader – Sam (Ruth) Jamke



Sam has been a member of the AMC since 1983 and has led numerous day and weekend hiking trips. She is a Past Chair of the New Hampshire Chapter and is presently a hike leader and workshop instructor for the NH Chapter. She has completed AMC's Mountain Leadership School and is a hike leader at AMC August Camp. Sam led the 8-day NH Chapter Presidential Range Traverse in 2007 and two major excursions in 2008. In addition to the 115 Northeast 4,000 footers, other of Sam's hiking venues include Mount Rainier National Park, Washington's North Cascades, California's Sierra Nevada Mountains, Newfoundland, Colorado's Fourteeners and long distance paths in Scotland, England and New Zealand.

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Trip Co-leader – Betsy Fowler



An AMC member since 1970, Betsy Fowler and her husband ran the AMC Mountain Leadership Workshop in the 1970's and Betsy is currently a NH Chapter trip leader. Her first Major Excursion was co-leading a backpack in August 2004 to Banff, Yoho and Jasper National Parks in the Canadian Rockies. In 2005 she led a trip to Ecuador and the Galapagos and in 2006 and 2007 she led a Canadian Rockies backcountry ski trip and a Machu Picchu/Cordillera Blanca Trek. In 2007 she led trips to Patagonia and Glacier National Park. Her most recent ME trip was in June 2008, leading a trip to the Dolomites in Italy. She has Advanced Wilderness First Aid from SOLO as well as American Red Cross CPR training.

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How to Proceed

To apply, you must request, complete, and submit the Application form, enclosing with the submission a registration deposit of \$500 (by check payable to the Appalachian Mountain Club). You will not actually be accepted, and your check will not be deposited, until the leaders have determined by telephone conversation with you that you and the trip are a good match. Once accepted you will be asked to promptly complete the Confidential Medical form, and Acknowledgement and Assumption of Risk and Release. The rest of the trip fee will be due June 1st, 2009. Airfare, if booked by leaders, is due at time of booking.