

## **Wildlife of Highland & Coastal Scotland** *The Isle of Mull, Cairngorm Mountains and Moray Firth*



*Visit the wild places of highland and coastal Scotland in search of diverse wildlife on this 7-day wildlife & walking adventure. Go spotting for golden eagles on the Isle of Mull; kayak among seals and sea otters in the Sound of Arisaig; experience a wilderness hide in the Cairngorm Mountains; and watch for dolphins and porpoises in the Moray Firth.*

*Though the emphasis is on wildlife viewing, this itinerary also involves a good amount of walking, and is best-suited for active travellers who are reasonably fit and enjoy moderate hikes. You should expect to be out for 5-6 hours a day. The terrain will be mostly good paths and hill trails, but these can still be muddy and rough in places.*

*This is a scheduled group tour accommodating a maximum of 8 and requiring a minimum of only 2 persons to run. It will be led by a highly experienced walking and wildlife guide.*

### **Day 1 – Loch Ness en route to Strontian (D)**

Our tour starts with an early afternoon rendezvous at Inverness Railway Station. After meeting with the rest of the group and following a short introduction from our guide, we'll depart Inverness and drive south-west to Strontian, stopping en route to see Loch Ness and Urquhart Castle, the famous ruined castle on the banks of the loch.

Overnight at the Strontian Hotel in the Ardnamurchan region.



### **Day 2 – Isle of Mull (B, L, D)**

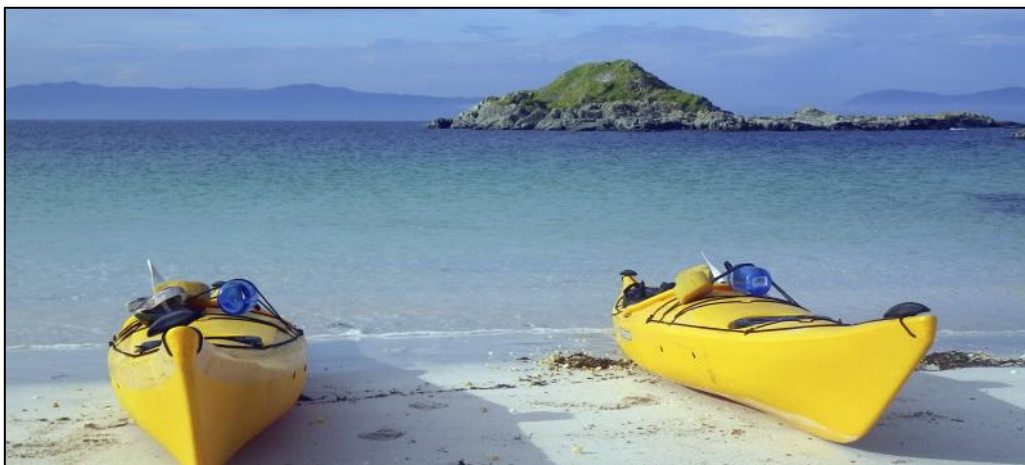
We start the day with a short transfer to the pier at Lochaline, from where we take a 15-minute ferry journey to the Isle of Mull. Though inhabited, Mull is a fantastic destination for wildlife viewing. With luck, our wildlife sightings may begin with the ferry ride across the Sound of Mull, where dolphins, basking sharks, and very occasionally even whales are sighted.

Once we arrive on the island, we'll spend a portion of the day spotting for birds of prey, chief among them sea eagles and golden eagles, with time also spent on the coast looking for wild otters.

At the end of the day, we return to our Highland guesthouse near Strontian and enjoy a shared meal as we discuss the day's sightings.

### **Day 3 – Sea kayaking with seals (B, L, D)**

After a generous breakfast, we journey north from Strontian to the village of Arisaig, on the shores of Loch nan Ceall, where we'll enjoy a day of sea kayaking in search of marine life. The waters around Arisaig are home to a large colony of seals, which are often seen frolicking in the waters and lolling on the many rocky skerries of Loch nan Ceall. More rarely sighted are sea otters, who hunt for urchins in the waters of the Arisaig sound, and the elusive porpoise. Today should also provide more opportunities to spot sea eagles as well as marine birds such as storm petrels.



Loch nan Ceall is a sheltered loch and the waters generally calm, meaning no prior experience is needed to enjoy the sea kayaking. Throughout the day, you'll be looked after by suitably qualified, expert guides.

Late afternoon, we'll return to our guesthouse near Strontian for dinner and overnight.

#### **Day 4 – Cairngorms – RSPB reserve and evening hide visit (B, L, D)**

This morning we say goodbye to our hosts and journey east to the beautiful Cairngorms National Park. Our first stop for the day will be at the Insh Marshes. An RSPB Reserve, the Insh Marshes are one of the most important wetlands in Europe, hosting myriad rare bird species including lapwing, redshank and curlew. Roe deer can also be seen here.

Following an afternoon spent exploring the Insh Marshes, we'll check in at tonight's hotel, Dalrachney Lodge in Carrbridge, with the rest of the afternoon at leisure.

This evening, we'll head out for a night excursion to a wildlife hide. As dusk falls, we hope to see species such as pine marten and badger.

#### **Day 5 – Mountain species of the Cairngorms (B, L, D)**

Today will see us further explore the wildlife of the Cairngorm Mountains. We begin with a driven transfer up on to the higher hills at approx. 2000 feet, and then make an easy hike into the Northern Corries. Here we can hope to see Scotland's only herd of reindeer. Also look out for red deer, mountain hares, ptarmigan and golden eagles – as well, of course, the spectacular scenery!

Late afternoon, we'll return to Dalrachney for dinner and overnight.



#### **Day 6 – Moray Firth (B, L, D)**

Today we head north of the Cairngorms National Park to the coast for a boat excursion on the Moray Firth, one of the best places in Scotland to see bottlenose dolphins in the wild. Also occasionally seen on the Moray Firth are otters and porpoise.

After the morning's boat trip on the Moray Firth, we'll enjoy an afternoon coastal walk to explore the wildlife, beaches and dunes of the beautiful Moray coast, before returning to Carrbridge.

**Day 7 – Red Squirrels and Forest Birds (B)**

Our final morning will be spent exploring the RSPB Abernethy Nature Reserve, located close to Carrbridge. This pocket of ancient pine forest is home to a number of species including red squirrels and the rare Crested tit.

Late morning, we'll make the approx. 1 hour journey back to Inverness, arriving around 1pm.

**Price Guide:**

The cost to join this scheduled small group departure is **£2,195 per person**. For a full list of available departure dates, please refer to our [Wildlife of the Scottish Highlands overview page](#).

This itinerary can also be organised on a private basis for groups of 2 or more. For more detail, including rates, please [contact us](#).

**Includes:**

- A qualified and highly experienced tour leader accompanying you from day 1-7
- Transport from and back to Inverness at itinerary start and finish
- 3 nights at the Strontian Hotel, Ardnamurchan, on full board basis
- 3 nights at Dalrachney Lodge in Carrbridge, Cairngorms, on full board basis
- All activities as detailed in itinerary

**Excludes:**

- Flights or rail travel to Scotland
- Drinks unless otherwise stated in itinerary
- Lunches on days 1 and 7 (if required)
- Sundry travel expenses
- Tips
- Travel insurance
- Single room supplement is £435 and subject to availability

*Gane and Marshall acts as an appointed representative for **Wilderness Scotland** (ABTA #Y5844).*