



Great Glen Way (Self-Guided)

Please email us at info@ukexploratory.com or call us on +44 (0)1729 823 197 to chat about this holiday. You'll find all the latest information at www.alpineexploratory.com/holidays/great-glen-way.html.



Loch Oich from the Great Glen Way

About these Holiday Notes

These Holiday Notes help you decide whether this holiday is right for you. Before your trip we send you an info pack with final details.

Details

- Start Fort William
Finish Inverness
Region Scottish Highlands
Country Scotland
Length 6 walking days and 7 nights (or other lengths, for example 4 or 5 walking days)
Total distance 111km or 69.5 miles
Typical day 18.5km, 230m ascent
Longest day 29km, 550m ascent
Highest altitude 382m
Grade Intermediate

Introduction

The Great Glen Way runs for 111km (69.5 miles) from Fort William to Inverness. It follows the length of the Great Glen, the obvious geological fault in the Scottish Highlands, linking an outdoors town on the West Coast with Scotland's city in the Highlands.

The route sticks to good tracks and paths, often in forests and alongside the Caledonian Canal, but also running across open moorland. As long-distance paths go, the GGW is one of the easier ones. The terrain is simple and the ascent is moderate, so that the main challenge comes in the distance walked. The last stage to Inverness is the hardest of all but a fitting finish to the trek. After days in the countryside, find yourself walking through riverside gardens into a bustling town centre.

The Great Glen Way complements the West Highland Way. To walk one after the other makes a magnificent trek from Glasgow to Inverness in a fortnight or less. The GGW can easily be walked North to South as well as the usual South to North direction, and we can advise on the merits of each direction.

Once in Inverness you are well positioned to explore further North and West in Scotland.

Our approach to the Way

Your route

Your route follows the official Great Glen Way. Set off from Fort William and pick up the Caledonian Canal, followed as far as Gairloch. Lanes and forest tracks run beside Loch Lochy to Laggan. Now on the other side of the glen, follow the shore of Loch Oich and pick up the canal again to Fort Augustus. Now three stages with large sections in forests follow, mostly above Loch Ness. Link the villages of Invermoriston and Drumnadrochit before the tough final stage to Inverness.

Routecards and maps

Each day's route is explained in detail on your routecards, to bring you to your night's accommodation. We give you the real map for you to follow, not printouts or photocopies.

Getting there and back

Your holiday starts in Fort William and ends in Inverness. Travel to Fort William and from Inverness is not included in the holiday price - we leave it to you to make the arrangements that suit you best. Fort William and Inverness both have good bus and rail connections to Glasgow and Edinburgh. Also, sleeper trains link both Fort William and Inverness with London and the North West of England, allowing a day's travel to be saved. Your info pack contains full information on travel options. It is possible to leave a car at either your first or last night's accommodation. If you would like to do this, please let us know.

Itinerary

Day 1: Arrival in Fort William

Evening arrival in Fort William. There are plenty of restaurants and pubs in the town centre.

Guesthouse, Fort William

Day 2: Fort William to Gairloch

(16km or 10 miles) A short first day gives chance to explore Fort William and settle into the walk. The route begins by heading West to Caol at the head of Loch Linnhe, before picking up the Caledonian Canal at Corpach. The miles pass easily to the small village of Gairloch.

B&B, Gairloch

Day 3: Gairloch to Laggan

(19km or 12 miles) Clunes Forest is the main event of this second stage. Terrain is again easy. A mix of lochside path and quiet road takes you to the hamlet of Clunes where the forest track begins. In the

course of the day you walk the length of Loch Lochy, the first of three Great Glen lochs.

B&B, Laggan

Day 4: Laggan to Fort Augustus

(14km or 9 miles) This is a stage of two halves. Loch Oich, the smallest of the three in the Great Glen, is walked from end to end on a wooded path not far from the shore. Then at Aberchalder follow the Caledonian Canal, the link to Loch Ness at Fort Augustus. Fort Augustus is the largest village between Fort William and Inverness and is a useful and pleasant stop just before the half-way point in the trek.

Guesthouse, Fort Augustus

Day 5: Fort Augustus to Invermoriston

(12km or 7.5 miles) Leave the Caledonian Canal behind, not to be seen again until Inverness, and instead take to the forests on this short day to Invermoriston. Loch Ness is in view below. Invermoriston is a pleasant little village at the foot of Glen Moriston. The Skye road comes in through the glen.

B&B, Invermoriston

Day 6: Invermoriston to Drumnadrochit

(21km or 13 miles) This penultimate stage is a good length and covers a mix of forested and open areas. Views above Loch Ness are superb. At Drumnadrochit a detour can be made to Urquart Castle in its fine position on the loch.

Inn, Drumnadrochit

Day 7: Drumnadrochit to Inverness

(29km or 18 miles) A last stage and a grand finale, in terms of distance! The ascent is gentle and the ground underfoot is firm, so the miles to Inverness go quickly. Enjoy the changing landscape and the unfolding views to the North and West, before gaining a view over Inverness and dropping through parks and riverside walkways into the city centre. The route finishes at the city's castle.

Small hotel, Inverness

Day 8: Departure

Morning departure from Inverness.

This itinerary is typical of our standard 6-day trek staying in a mix of guesthouse, inn, B&B and small hotel accommodation.

Our usual schedule of accommodation might not be available, especially if there is not much time between booking and your trip starting. We will book accommodation as closely as possible to this itinerary and present you a schedule for you to check before we proceed.

Accommodation

This holiday stays in a mix of pleasant guesthouses, hotels, bed & breakfasts or inns along the route. We place most value on a friendly welcome, comfortable standards and a good location within the village or town.

We book ensuite accommodation except where it is not available, for example in older buildings or more remote locations.

We also offer a trek that stays in some of the hostels and bunk houses along the GW.

Your info pack contains full details of your accommodation including contact details and directions.

Food

Scotland's food is a great mixture, from hearty fish and chips to the finest venison.

You will have enough chances to buy lunch ingredients, or to stop for lunch, along the way. However, on some stages you will have to be self-sufficient throughout the day's walk. Your routecards show places to eat and stock up on the route.

The walking**Terrain**

The terrain is a mix of the following and more:

Paths in woodland
Wide stony tracks
Paths through fields
Country lanes

The Great Glen Way runs on good clear paths. For some long stretches of the route, the track underfoot is a double-track old military road or canal-side track. At other times you might be walking along narrow forest paths. The route does not climb any mountains, its high point of 382m coming at the summit of a forest track on the last stage.

The landscape should be treated as wild terrain in which you will need to be self-reliant. We strongly recommend that you know how to navigate with a map and compass; the skills are easy to learn and your notes include details of some good books.

Compared to other long-distance paths in the UK, the Great Glen Way's surface underfoot is consistently hard. This means that mud is minimal, but the downside is a pounding for the feet.

Some areas of the Great Glen are heavily forested; during forestry operations the Great Glen Way can be diverted, and in this case the diversion might encounter steeper, rockier ground and less obvious paths.

Signposts and waymarks

Paths, signposts and waymarks are common along the Great Glen Way. It is a popular route in summer and it is signposted accordingly. Waymarks are typically a thistle logo painted on wooden signposts. However,

the route crosses some areas of wild country and each party should be prepared to navigate. Not all path junctions are clear and it is essential to have a map to hand.

Your own routes

While your routecards make up the walking for the trip, you are of course free to walk wherever you choose, taking side trips or going by a different route of your own choice. We are very happy to offer suggestions. Please note that if you follow your own route you will have left the holiday for the duration.

Local transport

No local transport is needed or included on the Great Glen Way due to its nature as a continuous trek from start to finish.

Language

English is the local language.

Weather

The weather in the Highlands between April and October is generally highly suitable for walking. While snowfall is possible on higher ground all year round, it is almost unheard of in the summer months at the lower elevations taken by the Way. May is a busy month on the Way, offering the tantalising combination of warm weather and no midges. Midges, the tiny biting insects for which the Scottish summer is famed, can be an annoyance during high summer. Any time in June, July and August is likely to be warm enough for comfort but with a good chance of rain on at least some days. The Autumn months can be quieter and very pleasant, though increasingly colder.

This all means that it is sensible to come equipped and expecting all the types of weather that might be experienced in a typical summer in the UK: from heavy rain storms with a chill in the air, to hot sunshine.

Equipment

You will need the usual equipment for mountain walking in the UK. Especially important are good walking boots, waterproofs and sun protection. Your info pack contains a suggested equipment list. Please also see the Equipment page of our website for more information.

Insurance

We recommend, but it is not compulsory, that you have insurance cover for personal liability, cancellation and your baggage and money. Your info pack contains details of suitable insurance policies.

Money

The currency is the Pound Sterling (GBP).

Local expenses

Local expenses include food and drink (except breakfasts, which are included on all nights except some nights at hostels) and any local travel, local attractions and extras.

Guided days

Hire a professional mountain leader to join you on this self-guided holiday, for one or more days. A leader helps plan and carry out each day's walking and adds interest to your holiday by pointing out local features. Please contact us for prices and more information.

Groups

Walk by yourself or in your own group, or see if we can match you up with other like-minded walkers on the same holiday. Any group will be a maximum of 8 people.

Hazards**Health**

The UK does not require tourists to take any vaccinations. However, it is recommended to keep tetanus vaccines up to date.

Safety

This is adventure travel! This holiday takes you to some relatively remote areas, in particular some areas of dense forest and upland moor. The weather can also be a hazard in itself. During any walking, whether following a routecard or making your own route, you are responsible for your own actions and safety and you should join the trip with suitable skills, experience and equipment.

Further information

Please email us with any questions at info@ukexploratory.com.

Disclaimer

This information is given in good faith and is believed to be correct at the time of issue. UK Exploratory cannot be liable for any loss or injury incurred.