

The Walks	Duration	Difficulty	Best Time	Transport	Summary	Page
Edinburgh & Glasgow						
Lothian Coast Links & Bents	2¾-3 hours	easy	year-round	bus	A finely crinkled coastline, islets and sand and shingle beaches, on Edinburgh's doorstep	48
The Pentlands' Scald Law	3¾-4 hours	moderate	Mar-Oct	bus	A classic roller-coasting walk over the highest of Edinburgh's Pentland Hills, with fantastic vistas	49
Along the Greenock Cut	3-3¼ hours	easy	year-round	private	A 19th-century engineering marvel in Glasgow's Inverclyde hills, with magnificent sea and mountain views	53
A Campsie Caper	4-4½ hours	moderate	Mar-Oct	bus	A glorious, scenic tramp over the grassy Campsie Fells near Glasgow	55
Falls of Clyde	4-4¼ hours	easy	year-round	bus	Follow the surging River Clyde to pioneering New Lanark village and beautiful waterfalls	56
The South						
Southern Upland Way	9 days	moderate-demanding	Apr-Oct	bus, train	Challenging walk across the country, full of contrasts: remote in the west, settled in the east	63
The Merrick	4-4½ hours	moderate-demanding	Apr-Oct	private	The Southern Uplands' highest peak with a stunningly scenic ridge above forests, lochs and tumbling burns	72
Grey Mare's Tail & White Coomb	5 hours	moderate-demanding	Apr-Oct	bus	From supremely beautiful Grey Mare's Tail waterfall to a classic ridge walk above spectacular Loch Skeen	73
John Buchan Way	5¾-6 hours	moderate	Apr-Oct	bus	The opulently rolling hills and remote glens that inspired a noted Scottish writer	76
Eildon Hills	4 hours	easy-moderate	Feb-Nov	bus	Scale Roman-occupied hills and follow an ancient path back to the fine old town of Melrose	79
Burnmouth to St Abb's Head	6 hours	easy	year-round	bus	A coastal walk with fishing villages, amazing geological formations, flocks of sea birds and abundant wildflowers	81
Central Highlands & Islands						
West Highland Way	7 days	moderate	Apr-Oct	train, bus	Scotland's most popular long-distance path, passing through some of the country's finest landscapes	89
A Tour Around Goatfell	6-7 hours	moderate-demanding	Apr-Oct	bus, ferry	The connoisseur's route to Arran's highest peak along rock-encrusted ridges to spectacular summit views	99
Cock of Arran	3½-4 hours	easy-moderate	Mar-Oct	bus, ferry	Easy walking spiced with rock-hopping interludes along a wild and beautiful coastline	101
The Cobbler	5 hours	moderate-demanding	Apr-Oct	bus, train	Scramble to the top of one of Scotland's most famous peaks	103
Ben Lomond	4½-5 hours	moderate	Apr-Oct	ferry	A justifiably popular outing with magnificent views of 'the bonnie, bonnie banks of Loch Lomond'	105
Ben Ledi	4 hours	moderate-demanding	Apr-Oct	bus	Walk through lush woodland and an enchanting glen, across a spectacular ridge to panoramic summit views	108
Ben Lawers	5 hours	moderate-demanding	May-Oct	private	Direct ascent of a huge mountain massif that's a haven for alpine wildflowers	111
Schiehallion	4 hours	moderate	Apr-Oct	private	Climb the famous landmark that also sired the contour lines on topographic maps	112
Ben Cleuch	5¼-5½ hours	moderate	Apr-Oct	bus	Superb scenic circuit over the glorious rolling uplands of the Ochil hills	115
Lochaber & Glen Coe						
Ben Nevis via the Mountain Track	6-8 hours	moderate-demanding	May-Sep	bus	Enjoy the camaraderie on Britain's most famous climb, to its highest summit	123
Ring of Steall	7-8 hours	moderate-demanding	Apr-Oct	private	Scale four Munros on this challenging circuit, complete with knife-edged ridge and mountain-filled views	128
The Road to the Isles	6-8 hours	moderate	Apr-Oct	train, bus	Long, remote walk along a historic route from wild Rannoch Moor to spectacular Nevis gorge	129
Buachaille Etive Mór	5-6 hours	moderate-demanding	Apr-Oct	bus	A classic exploration of the ridges and peaks of the most commanding mountain in Glen Coe	134
Glen Coe & Glen Etive Circuit	5 hours	moderate	Apr-Oct	private	A low-level walk across two dramatic passes in magnificent glaciated valleys	136
Bidean nam Bian	6-7 hours	moderate-demanding	Apr-Oct	bus	From atmospheric Lost Valley to the stunning circuit of a rugged mountain massif	136
Cairngorms						
Cairn Gorm High Circuit	4½-5 hours	moderate-demanding	May-Sep	bus	An outstanding mountain walk across a sprawling alpine plateau, with magnificent wide-ranging views	147
Chalamain Gap & the Lairig Ghru	6-6½ hours	moderate-demanding	Apr-Oct	bus	An energetic walk over a low pass into one of Scotland's most spectacular glens	151
Linn of Dee Circuit	6½-7 hours	moderate	Apr-Oct	private	A lowish-level exploration of two beautiful glens and superb Scots pine woodlands	154
Blair Atholl to Glenmore	2 days	moderate-demanding	Apr-Oct	train, bus	A classic Cairngorms traverse, through isolated glens and woodlands, surrounded by rugged peaks	156
Lochnagar	6-6½ hours	moderate	May-Sep	private	A dramatic, brooding mountain that inspired a famous poet, with fantastic wraparound views	159
Highland Glens						
Great Glen Way	4 days	moderate	Mar-Nov	bus, train	A magnificently scenic long walk through a famous glen, rich in historic features	168
Glen Affric	2 days	moderate	Apr-Oct	bus	Through Scotland's wildest, most beautiful glen and across a dramatic pass to a west-coast sea loch	174

The Walks	Duration	Difficulty	Best Time	Transport	Summary	Page
Five Sisters of Kintail	7-7½ hours	demanding	Apr-Oct	private	A classic, immensely scenic ridge walk including three Munros, far above long, deep glens	180
Gleouraich	5-5½ hours	moderate-demanding	Apr-Oct	private	An exhilarating traverse of a narrow mountain ridge with awesome, mountain-filled views	182
Creag Meagaidh	6¾-7½ hours	demanding	May-Sep	private	An immensely rewarding and scenic circuit of a magnificent mountain massif	184
Isle of Skye						
Bruach na Frithe	6-8 hours	moderate-demanding	May-Oct	bus	A superb outing with spectacular views of the Cuillin peaks, and some exciting scrambling potential	195
Red Cuillin Horseshoe	6-7 hours	moderate-demanding	Apr-Oct	bus	Explore these distinctive pink conical peaks, crossing rocky summits and steep, scree-strewn slopes	197
Coast & Cuillin	2 days	moderate	Apr-Oct	bus	A spectacular coast and glen walk to Loch Coruisk, deep in the rugged Black Cuillin mountains	199
Bla Bheinn	5½-5¾ hours	moderate-demanding	May-Oct	bus	Exceptional views reward a steep climb past a hidden chasm and secluded lochans	203
The Trotternish Traverse	7-8 hours	demanding	Apr-Oct	bus	Lots of ups and downs on the long Trotternish ridge, with plenty of first-class views	207
The Quiraing	2½-2¾ hours	moderate	Mar-Nov	private	Explore weird and wonderful pinnacles, crags and bluffs near the northern tip of Skye	209
Wester Ross						
An Teallach	7½-8½ hours	demanding	May-Oct	bus	Classic, airy ridge walk with plenty of exposure and fantastic views	214
Beinn Dearg Mhór	2 days	moderate-demanding	May-Oct	bus	A challenging circuit of a spectacular, remote peak, deep in the wilderness	216
The Great Wilderness Traverse	2 days	moderate	Apr-Oct	bus	A low-level walk through a magnificent, unspoiled fastness of rugged peaks, lonely glens and tranquil lochs	218
Slioch	7½-8 hours	moderate-demanding	May-Oct	bus	From the shores of beautiful Loch Maree to a commanding summit with excellent views	222
Beinn Eighe Mountain Trail	2½-3½ hours	easy-moderate	Apr-Oct	private	Explore the beautiful woodland and wild mountain terrain of a fine nature reserve	225
Beinn Alligin	6½-7 hours	moderate-demanding	May-Oct	private	An exciting mountain circuit, over two distinctive peaks, which could challenge your head for heights	227
Liathach	7-8 hours	demanding	May-Oct	private	A sensational walk with some airy scrambling and unforgettable views	229
Coire Mhic Fhearchair	4½-4¾ hours	moderate	Apr-Oct	private	Through impressive glens and wild moorland to one of Scotland's finest corries	231
Western Isles						
Tolsta to Ness	4-4½ hours	moderate	Apr-Oct	private	Spectacular coastal scenery, shieling villages and abundant sea birds on Lewis' east coast	237
Rhenigidale Path	4-4¼ hours	moderate	Apr-Oct	bus	Historic path through magnificent mountain, glen and coastal scenery to an isolated hamlet	241
Clisham	3½-4 hours	moderate	Apr-Oct	bus	Steep, rocky ascent to the Western Isles' commanding highest peak	245
Eaval	3½-4 hours	moderate	Apr-Oct	private	North Uist's highest peak, with superb views of myriad lochans, inlets and tiny islands	246
Hecla	7-7½ hours	demanding	Apr-Oct	private	Challenging but rewarding ascent of South Uist's second-highest peak	249
Heaval	3½-4 hours	moderate	Apr-Oct	bus	Very varied climb, over steeply undulating hills, to Barra's highest summit and unsurpassed views	251
Northwest						
Sandwood Bay & Cape Wrath	6½-7 hours	moderate	Apr-Oct	bus	From a pristine beach with superb white sand to the dramatic northwestern tip of Scotland	258
Ben Loyal	6-6 ½ hours	moderate	Apr-Oct	private	One of the north's most attractive and intriguing peaks, topped by weird and wonderful granite tors	262
Eas a' Chùal Aluinn	5¾-6¼ hours	moderate	Apr-Oct	bus	Scenic walk through wild, remote moorland to the awesome top of Scotland's highest waterfall	265
Quinag	4¼-4½ hours	moderate-demanding	Apr-Oct	private	A surprisingly straightforward walk across a formidably rugged peak with magnificent sea and mountain vistas	267
Northern Isles						
Old Man of Hoy	5½-6 hours	moderate	year-round	ferry	Through moorland to Orkney's famous landmark and stunning sea cliffs	275
The Yesnaby Coast	5-5½ hours	moderate	year-round	bus	Spectacular cliffs, magnificent sea stacks and long coastal views on Orkney Mainland	278
West Westray Coast	3-3½ hours	moderate	year-round	private	Tens of thousands of sea birds, easy walking and wonderfully wide vistas	280
Hermaness & Muckle Flugga	3-3¼ hours	easy	year-round	private	Countless sea birds crowding cliffs and crags, and Britain's magnificently wild northernmost outpost	286
Muckle Roe	3¼-3½ hours	moderate	year-round	private	An exceptionally scenic, rugged and intricately indented coast on Shetland's Mainland	288
Eshaness	2¼-2½ hours	easy	year-round	private	Some of Shetland's finest coastal cliffs, a geologist's paradise, a historic lighthouse and fantastic sea vistas	289

Walk Descriptions

This book contains 66 walk descriptions, ranging from day trips through to multiday megawalks, as well as suggestions for other walks, side trips and alternative routes. Each walk description has a brief introduction outlining the natural and cultural features you may encounter, plus extra information to help you plan your walk, such as transport options, the level of difficulty and time-frame involved, and any permits that are required.

Day walks are often circular and are located in areas of uncommon beauty. Multiday walk descriptions include information on camp sites, mountain huts, hostels and other accommodation, and point out places where you can obtain water and supplies.

TIMES & DISTANCES

These are provided only as a guide. Times are based on actual walking time and do not include stops for snacks, taking photographs, rests or side trips. Be sure to factor these in when planning your walk.

Distances are provided but should be read in conjunction with the altitudes you expect to reach, as significant elevation changes can make a greater difference to your walking time than lateral distance. In this book we have reflected the rather wacky British system of mixing imperial and metric measurements. In route descriptions, daily distances along footpaths are given in miles, with some kilometre equivalents, while shorter distances are given in metres and heights of mountains are given in metres with some feet equivalents.

In most cases, the daily stages are flexible and can be varied. It is important to recognise that short stages are sometimes recommended because of difficult terrain in mountain areas, or perhaps because there are interesting features to explore en route.

LEVEL OF DIFFICULTY

Grading systems are always arbitrary. However, having an indication of the grade may help you choose between walks. Our authors use the following grading guidelines:

Easy A walk on flat terrain or with minor elevation changes, usually over short distances on well-travelled routes with no navigational difficulties.

Moderate A walk with challenging terrain, often involving longer distances and steep climbs.

Demanding A walk with long daily distances and difficult terrain with significant elevation changes; may involve challenging route-finding and periods of scrambling.

TRUE LEFT & TRUE RIGHT

The terms 'true left' and 'true right', used to describe the bank of a stream or river, sometimes throw readers. The 'true left bank' simply means the left bank as you look downstream.

Planning

If Scotland is unknown territory, the question you must ask sooner or later is, 'What kind of walks can I do in Scotland?'. The best answer is, 'Whatever you wish'. You can walk independently, handling all the planning and arranging accommodation and transport yourself, or you can join a guided walk, sitting back while all the arranging is done for you. A good compromise is to have the best of both worlds – enjoy having the accommodation and maps provided, then do the walks by yourself or with friends.

Day walks are the most popular style of walking in Scotland, from a base at a camping ground, hostel or B&B. They can range from easy strolls along clear paths (some feature in this book in the Short Walks boxes) to challenging circuits of several mountain peaks. Some walks are waymarked, though many aren't – these are easy enough to follow with the help of this guide and the recommended maps. If you're looking for walking trips of a few days or more, whether following the official long-distance routes, rights of way or a route of your own, then you're spoilt for choice throughout the country. Accommodation can be in a tent, bothies, hostels, B&Bs or a combination of these. The range of places waiting to welcome you is vast, from rustic hostels in remote locations to B&Bs in grand mansions.

Munro bagging (p108) is a uniquely Scottish pastime and one that's open to anyone keen and fit (some would say crazy) enough to take on climbing 3000ft-plus mountains. Most of these, and the many and varied other mountain walks, are hands-in-pockets outings not requiring rock-climbing skills. Some do call for confidence in exposed places and experience in scrambling (see p216), and if this is exactly your kind of walking then Scotland is for you: there are scores of scrambling routes throughout the Highlands and many of the islands.

WHEN TO WALK

Scotland's peak walking season starts in late April and runs through until the end of September, even sneaking into October for lower-level walks on the mainland. By late April (spring) hours of daylight are generous and snow should have receded from the glens and lower mountains. Wildflowers are at their best during May (late spring) and June (early summer); these are also generally the driest, sunniest months, and the

See Climate (p295) for more information

DON'T LEAVE HOME WITHOUT...

- Industrial strength 24/7 midge repellent (p313)
- Motion-sickness pills for crossing the Minch/Pentland Firth/North Sea (p306)
- Windproof jacket and headgear (p316)
- Tough, easy-to-put-on gaiters (p316)
- Binoculars for bird-watching in the Northern Isles (p272)
- Checking for black holes in your mobile phone's reception (p301)
- Your ID card or passport and driving licence (p307)
- Lonely Planet's *Scotland* guide
- Tartan-coloured haggis net



A carefully planned assault on Carn Mór Dearg Arête (p127)

EOIN CLARKE

massed onslaught of midges (p313) has yet to arrive. Cruelly, the busiest time of the year, the summer high season during July and August, coincides with peak midge activity and unsettled, humid weather. It's not all bad news though; the soft purple heather usually starts to transform the moors from late July.

Autumn (September and October) often brings spells of calm, mellow weather and glorious displays of rich colour in the woodlands and forests. What's more, the midges start to dwindle and have gone by October.

Perhaps surprisingly, there are parts of Scotland where walking is possible year-round. Even in midwinter, plenty of lowland and coastal walks are accessible and safe. Frequent spells of fine weather bring incredibly clear skies, exhilarating low temperatures and light winds, especially in the north and west. Occasional bursts of bitterly cold weather, with snow down to sea level and paths turning to skating rinks, make walking problematic. The best seasons for each walk in this book are given in the walks table (p12–15).

COSTS & MONEY

Next to many other European countries, public transport, accommodation and eating and drinking out are quite expensive in Scotland. Petrol in larger towns and cities is on a par with Continental Europe but more expensive in remote areas and the islands, and vastly more costly than in Australia or the USA. While it can be an expensive country to visit, you can save money by self-catering when possible, hiring a small car, staying in hostels and travelling with a partner or friend. Generally, accommodation prices are higher during June, July and August (the so-called high season), but May and September also enjoy good weather.

If you spend most nights in a tent and do your own cooking, expect to spend around £18 per day; upgrade to hostels and you'll be up for around £25. Go for cheaper B&Bs and an evening meal at a pub and you're looking at a minimum of £35.

HOW MUCH

Camping ground (tent & person): £8

Night at SYHA hostel: £15

Modest B&B (per person sharing): £28

Bar meal (main course & one drink): £12

1L of unleaded petrol: £1

Ordnance Survey map: £8

BACKGROUND READING

Walking Through Scotland's History by Ian R Mitchell reminds us that the gentle pastime of walking is the culmination of a long history in which the Scottish had no choice but to leg it. His light-hearted but erudite survey of the exploits of an extraordinary cavalcade, from Roman legions to fishwives and travelling people, is brought up to date with suggestions about walks you can do today.

By the same very readable and companionable author, *Scotland's Mountains Before the Mountaineers* shifts from the doers to the arena, to look at ideas about Scotland's high places before they became a popular playground. Ever in quest of a new take on the familiar, Mitchell answers such questions as 'How many Munros did Bonnie Prince Charlie bag?' Abundant references open up months and years of further reading.

Dave Hewitt is a zany iconoclast who once set out to walk the full length of Scotland's watershed. Not for him the list-ticking odysseys of Munro and Corbett baggers, but a far more challenging expedition following the watershed's wriggly line from the border several miles south of Jedburgh to Cape Wrath. His very entertaining account, *Walking the Watershed*, is factually a bit out of date, but timeless for its huge enjoyment of life.

Colin Prior is one of two truly outstanding landscape photographers working in Scotland. His *Scotland: The Wild Places* is a magnificent evocation of mountains, lochs, glens, rocks and trees, with his own sensitive, inspirational text. The only disappointment is the exclusion of any of the islands; hopefully they will be the subject of a future volume.

Many walks in this book have a distinctly historical flavour or particular associations, so it's worth having a feel for Scotland's long and

GUIDED WALKS

Many reputable, experienced companies run guided walks throughout Scotland, including on long-distance paths. The many countryside ranger services run guided day-walk programs in their areas, many of which are mentioned in the walk chapters. Including a guided walk or two in your visit gives you a break from doing all the organising, and offers the chance to learn more about the countryside from experienced guides and to meet like-minded people. **Walk Scotland** (<http://walking.visitscotland.com>) has links to many local companies.

Scotland

- **Transcotland** (☎ 01887 820848; www.transcotland.com) Specialises in long-distance walks, both on official routes and others of the company's own devising.
- **Wilderness Scotland** (☎ 0131 625 6635; www.wildernessscotland.com) Concentrates on wild and remote areas, including the Isle of Rum, Knoydart and the Western and Northern Isles, and is committed to responsible travel.

France

- **Terres d'Aventure** (☎ 01 43 25 69 37; www.terdav.com) Trips to the Orkney Isles and North West Highlands.

USA

- **Backroads** (☎ 800 462 2848; www.backroads.com) Runs a trip to the Western Highlands and Isle of Skye with easy-moderate walks and staying in the best hotels.

To find local operators on specific walks, see the relevant regional chapter. For information on walking clubs around Scotland, see p293.

fascinating history. Fiona Watson's *Scotland from Prehistory to the Present* is very readable, taking an analytical approach to events rather than a mere narrative recitation. She's very positive and forward looking about even the darkest times, though rather brief about the later 20th century.

INTERNET RESOURCES

Best Walks (www.bestwalks.com) A direct route to books and maps for walkers, plus accommodation, guided walks and magazines.

Internet Guide to Scotland (www.scotland-info.co.uk) An excellent travel guide to Scotland.

LonelyPlanet.com (www.lonelyplanet.com) Go to the Thorn Tree link and its walking, trekking and mountaineering branch for discussion about anything and everything.

Ordnance Survey (www.ordnancesurvey.co.uk) Buy your OS maps online – click on the Leisure link.

Traveline (www.travelinescotland.com) Public transport timetables and journey planner for the entire country.

Undiscovered Scotland (www.undiscoveredscotland.co.uk) Another first-rate travel guide with loads of information arranged by area and links to long-distance paths.

Visit Scotland (www.visitscotland.com) Scotland's national tourist board, with an online accommodation service.

Walk Scotland (<http://walking.visitscotland.com>) About 860 helpful walk descriptions on its database, plus an accommodation guide and mountain weather forecast.

Walking World (www.walkingworld.com) Britain's largest online walking guide, with descriptions of 3200 walks, ranging from rather vague to very useful, and much else. To get the best out of this site you need to become a subscriber.

Environment

SCOTTISH OUTDOOR ACCESS CODE

Scotland has enjoyed a long tradition of mutual tolerance between landowners and walkers about access to the hills and moors, provided walkers observed what was known as the Country Code and respected local restrictions during lambing, deer-stalking and grouse-shooting seasons. During the 1990s the number of people going out into the mountains soared and demand for access to lowland walking areas grew. In 1996 the Access Forum brought together representatives from among land managers, recreation groups and public agencies. They came up with a Concordat on Access, which, essentially, endorsed responsible freedom of access, subject to reasonable constraints for management and conservation. However, it was felt that the agreement merited legal status, and the issue was high on the agenda of the new Scottish Parliament after 1999.

After several years of wide-ranging consultation and, at times, acrimonious debate, the Scottish Parliament passed the pioneering *Land Reform (Scotland) Act* in 2003 and the following year approved the Scottish Outdoor Access Code. This conferred statutory access rights on many outdoor activities, including walking and wild camping, and on farmers and landowners. These rights don't apply to any kind of motorised activity or to hunting, shooting or fishing.

Access rights can be exercised along paths and tracks and across open ground over most of Scotland, from urban parks and paths to hills and forests, from farmland and field margins to beaches, lochs and rivers. The rights don't apply to buildings or their immediate surroundings, houses or their gardens, or most land in which crops are growing. The key points are summarised in the boxed text on p22. The following offers detailed guidance for walkers.

Bothies

- Don't depend on bothies – always carry a tent.
- Space is available on a first-come, first-served basis and for short stays only. Some are private and not open to the public.
- Some are used by shepherds and stalkers during the lambing and stalking seasons when you may be asked not to stay overnight.
- Keep fires small and within the existing fireplaces.
- If there's a toilet, please use it.
- If there's a logbook, enter details of your trip and group; this may help if you require rescue.
- Before you leave, tidy up, ensure the fire is out, replace kindling if possible and close windows and door(s) properly. Take all your rubbish with you and don't leave any food behind – it only encourages rats and mice.
- Check the **Mountain Bothies Association** (www.mountainbothies.org.uk) website for more advice.

Camping

- Seek permission before camping near a farm or house.
- Use a recognised site rather than create a new one, and always camp at least 30m from lochs, watercourses or paths. Move on after a night or two.

The website www.outdooraccess-scotland.com goes into the Scottish Outdoor Access Code in detail; click on the 'Scottish Outdoor Access Code' link. Leaflets outlining the code are also widely available.

- Pitch your tent on well-drained ground so it won't be necessary to dig damaging trenches if it rains heavily.
- Leave minimal or no trace of your stay.

Dogs

- Do not take your dog into fields where there are young animals.
- If you enter a field of farm animals, keep your dog on a short lead or under close control and keep as far as possible from the animals.
- During the bird breeding season (April to July) keep your dog under close control or on a short lead in moorland, forests, grassland, loch shores and the coast.

Fires

- Don't depend on open fires for cooking; any wood may be too wet and it is a precious natural habitat.
- Use a lightweight liquid-fuel stove rather than one powered by disposable gas canisters.
- If you do light a fire, keep it small and use the bare minimum of fallen timber. Extinguish it thoroughly, scatter the charcoal and cover the fire site with soil and leaves.

Human Waste Disposal

- Bury your waste. Use a lightweight trowel or large tent peg to dig a small hole 15cm deep and at least 50m from any path or stream and 200m from a bothy or camp site. Cover it with soil and leaf mould. Use biodegradable toilet paper; it should ideally be burnt, but not if you're in woodland or on dry grassland. Otherwise, carry it out – burying is a last resort.
- Contamination of water sources by human faeces can lead to the transmission of *Giardia*, a human bacterial parasite; gastroenteritis is probably caused by exposed human faeces. Always check the surrounding area for contamination before collecting water; do so upstream of your camp site.
- Get hold of a copy of *How to Shit in the Woods* by Kathleen Meyer for a good laugh and plenty of useful advice.

Rubbish

- If you've carried something in, you can – and must – carry it back out again. And that means every single thing. Therefore you will need to keep a dedicated rubbish bag to hand and you might want to designate a sealable pocket or compartment of your bag for storing it in.
- Remember, sanitary napkins, tampons and condoms neither burn nor decompose readily, so carry them out.

KNOW THE CODE BEFORE YOU GO

When you're in the outdoors:

- Take personal responsibility for your own actions and act safely.
- Respect people's privacy and peace of mind.
- Help land managers and others to work safely and effectively.
- Care for your environment and take litter home.
- Keep your dog under proper control.

DEER STALKING

Managing Scotland's wild deer population is an organised and ecologically and economically important business. The 750,000-strong population comprises four species – red, roe, sika and fallow. Red deer are the biggest, most numerous and have the greatest impact. A balance must be maintained between deer numbers and their habitat, so they have enough to eat without wrecking the vegetation.

The **Deer Commission for Scotland** (☎ 01463 725000; www.dcs.gov.uk) has fostered the establishment of deer management groups – voluntary groups of landowners covering areas with distinct herds – in most parts of the country. Regular censuses govern the annual cull when older and unhealthy animals are shot by experienced professional stalkers using high-velocity rifles. The sport of deer stalking, a good income-earner for estates and local communities, is integrated into the cull.

During the stalking season, mostly between mid-August and mid-October, you can help to minimise disturbance by doing your best to find out where the activity is taking place and by heeding advice on alternative routes. Avoid crossing land where stalking is taking place. Management groups provide detailed on-site information, usually specifying preferred walking routes. This may also be available through the **Hillphones** (www.hillphones.info) service, or perhaps from local tourist information centres. The National Trust for Scotland, John Muir Trust, Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, Forestry Commission and Scottish Natural Heritage may conduct stalking on their lands but generally maintain access for walkers throughout the year.

Some estates don't belong to deer management groups and some aren't cooperative. It's worth remembering that access along rights of way is always open, and that shooting doesn't happen on Sunday.

Washing

- Don't use detergents or toothpaste, even if they're biodegradable, in or near streams or lochs.
- To wash yourself, use biodegradable soap and a water container, at least 50m from any watercourse. Disperse the waste water widely.
- Wash cooking utensils and dishes 50m from watercourses using a scourer instead of detergent. Strain food scraps and carry them out in your rubbish bag.

THE LAND

Accounting for about one-third of the area of Britain, Scotland's 30,414 sq miles are spread over four geographical areas. The Southern Uplands lie south of Edinburgh and Glasgow, and extend right to the English border. The central Lowlands are a triangular block, from Edinburgh to Stonehaven in the east and across to Glasgow in the west. North of the Highland Boundary Fault (which runs northeast from Helensburgh to Stonehaven) are the Highlands, covering about two-thirds of the country and boasting the major mountain ranges, crowned by Ben Nevis, Britain's highest mountain at 1343m (4406ft). The Highlands is almost split by the largest of several long, deep glens – the Great Glen – which lies on a fault line between Fort William and Inverness and cradles a chain of freshwater lochs, including Loch Ness. To the north are the Orkney and Shetland island groups; the Western Isles (or Outer Hebrides) parallel the northwest coast. The Inner Hebrides are a scattering of mainly small islands further south, including Jura and Islay; the larger islands, Skye and Arran, closer to the mainland aren't usually regarded as part of this group. The western coastline, north of the central Lowlands, is deeply indented with sea lochs, separated by rugged peninsulas. The east coast's profile is smoother, apart from four elongated sea lochs (firths) – Dornoch, Moray, Tay and Forth.

More than 70% of Scotland's population lives within an hour's travel of Loch Lomond & the Trossachs National Park.

Scotland occupies only one-third of Britain's mainland surface area, but has 80% of the coastline and just 10% of the people.

It's not difficult to grasp the essentials of Scotland's extremely ancient and diverse geology if you imagine the country being divided into the Highlands and Lowlands regions. Each in turn comprises two districts, defined along geological fault lines, all running northeast and southwest.

The Highland Boundary Fault separates the two regions, and is a particularly striking feature of the landscape. Within the Highlands, the Moine Thrust (where one layer of rock was shoved over another) is the subdivider, stretching from Skye's Sleat peninsula to Loch Eriboll on the north coast. To its west, the main rock type is Lewisian gneiss, the most ancient rock in Scotland. Here also is reddish, pebbly Torridonian sandstone, eroded to create characteristic isolated, tiered peaks. The Isle of Skye is a world apart, with the Black Cuillins composed of volcanic black gabbro, and the peaks, plateaus and coastal cliffs in the north formed by great lava flows. East of the Moine Thrust, the northern and central Highlands are mainly schist and quartzite. The great granite massifs of the Cairngorms pushed up beneath these rocks and were gradually exposed by erosion.

The central Lowlands lie between the Highland Boundary and Southern Upland Faults. The rocks here, such as coal and limestone, are much younger; remnants of volcanic activity include North Berwick Law and Arthur's Seat. Between the Southern Upland Fault and the border with England, the characteristic rounded mountains consist of sedimentary rocks, interspersed with volcanic remnants, notably the Eildon Hills.

Two land-transforming events wrought great changes in the rocks. About 500 million years ago, over a long period, they were shoved, squashed and folded, creating ridges and mountains, which were then worn down into clusters of mountains and hills. Scotland has been buried under glaciers and ice sheets at least five times, most recently about 10,000 years ago. As these ice masses melted, the courses of rivers were altered, deep lochs created, corries formed and valleys widened and deepened.

Billing Scotland as 'Europe's No 1 Wildlife Destination', www.wild-scotland.co.uk promotes an enthusiastic band of wildlife tourism operators. It's a great source of ideas about where to watch an amazing variety of wildlife, with or without a guide.

WILDLIFE

Although Scotland is home to hundreds of species of mammals, birds and plants, found in a wide range of habitats, the animals don't exactly leap out at you and announce their presence. Most mammals are on the small side and rather secretive; many woodland and moorland birds are small, brown and twittery. Nevertheless, it would be a rare walking day when you didn't see a few birds, and wildflowers and trees are always present. In many parks and reserves there are informative nature trails, which are a great way to broaden your knowledge. The species you're most likely to see on the walks in this book are described in the following sections.

Animals

MAMMALS

The red deer is Scotland's largest land mammal; the stag stands to 1.3m tall and can weigh a hefty 125kg. For most of the year stags and hinds live in separate herds, usually in high, sheltered glens. During the mating season (known as the rut), the stags rope in their harems, accompanying this highly charged period with unearthly, primeval roaring – perhaps the most stirring sound you'll hear in the Scottish wilds.

Much smaller and lighter than the red, the roe deer spends its time grazing in woodlands. In summer its coat is reddish-brown. The roe is most likely to be seen in the Highlands.

During summer the mountain hare has a deep-brown coat with elegant black ear tips. Around October it begins to moult and by December it's completely white; it's back to summer attire between March and May. It's quite common on the mainland, between 300m and 750m, and on Hoy in Orkney, and in Shetland.

The hedgehog prefers open areas, rough pastures and the edges of tall forest. It's found in most mainland areas, on the Isle of Skye and in the Northern Isles. It's most active at night, hunting for the mice, lizards, frogs and earthworms that make up its varied diet. When enemies – dogs and foxes – threaten, it curls into a tight ball to maximise its main defence, the coat of sharp quills. Sadly, these are of no use against speeding vehicles and flat hedgehogs are all too numerous on rural roads.

Once common in most parts of Scotland, the red squirrel is now rarely found outside the Highlands. It's at home in coniferous forests, the source of its favourite food, pine-cone seeds, although it will also grab the eggs and chicks of small birds. Reddish-brown almost all over, it has a darker, bushy tail.

The elusive, captivating otter is equally at home in freshwater and the sea. Although it spends most of its time in the water and feeds on fish, it does hunt on land, seeking rabbits and small rodents. The male (or dog) is about 1.3m long, more than half of that being tail. With a superbly streamlined, dark-brown body, it's beautifully agile in the water. The otter's strongholds are the rocky west coast and the Western Isles.

Belying its name, the common seal is much less prevalent than its relative, the grey seal. Adults have dark-grey backs and light-grey undersides, with trademark all-over black spots, blunt noses and slanting eyes. Found all round the coast, they congregate in waters off Shetland and the Western Isles during summer.

The grey seal is Scotland's largest wild animal. The bull is three times heavier than a decent-sized red deer stag and can reach a length of 2.3m. It lives in eastern and western coastal waters and during the summer breeding season gathers on remote islands. The male's pointed noses and the absence of spots marks it out from common seals.

BIRDS

A rather shrill, plaintive mewing high above fields and moors signals the presence of the buzzard. Its broad wings spread in a shallow V-shape and the tail is spread. It often perches on fence posts, where its sandy-coloured chest, light-brown head, darker back and distinctive yellow feet are obvious. It's fairly common throughout mainland Scotland.

In coastal waters anywhere, and around estuaries, there's no mistaking the cormorant, sitting on a rock or buoy, wings bent and hung out to dry. Dark-brown to black in colour, its white lower face and larger size marks it out from the smaller shag. It's a streamlined swimmer, diving frequently to satisfy its huge appetite for fish.

The curlew ranges widely between farmland, low hills, moors and mud flats throughout Scotland. Its long, curved bill and distinctive 'cur-lee' call make identification easy. It congregates in flocks on the coast and in smaller groups inland. The brownish plumage is streaked with darker markings.

The lapwing, a wader, is easily identified, especially in the breeding season when it becomes an aerial acrobat, dipping, diving and rolling. Its black-and-white wings appear rounded in flight and it has a trademark crest. You'll hear its 'pee-wit' or 'peerst' calls throughout the country, most likely on rough grassland.

Just small enough to put in your pack, *Complete British Animals* by Paul Sterry has excellent photos and a dense page of text for each species and any relatives; sea mammals are in there too.

High in the Cairngorms, the brown back and tawny chest of the small dotterel provide good camouflage on rocky ground; a broad white strip above each eye and on the upper chest are distinctive. It runs along in short bursts, stopping for a feed in between.

The largest resident of Scotland's skies, the golden eagle stands nearly 1m tall. In flight its huge wings, splayed at the edges with white, tapering bands, and the wedge-shaped tail are distinctive. Its plumage is uniformly chocolate-brown. Once hunted to the brink of extinction, the golden eagle is now protected and has made a strong comeback in the Highlands and islands.

Stiff-winged in flight, the fulmar is common around coastal cliffs. It has distinctive tube-like nostrils, a black eye patch, grey wings and white head and chest. Resting on the cliffs where it nests, it cackles noisily to other fulmars.

Diving gannets are one of the most spectacular sights from coastal cliff tops. The bird folds its wings and plunges torpedo-like into the sea when it spots some fish. Its pure white plumage, yellow head and nape and black wing tips are sure identifiers. It nests in large numbers on western and northern islands, especially Unst in Shetland.

Among the crowds of birds on sea cliffs, the kittiwake is the smallest. It has short black legs and a yellow-green bill; the mostly grey wings are long, straight and narrow. Like the gannet, it often dives for fish from a considerable height. The largest colonies are in the Northern Isles.

Still much prized by hunters, the red grouse spends its time in heather moorland, where its rufous, rather mottled plumage provides good camouflage. It can give you quite a fright as it takes off with a clatter of wings, squawking loudly 'go-bak, go-bak'.

The grey heron is often seen standing silently on one leg near river banks and loch shores. Its elongated neck is usually retracted in flight, while its long legs trail behind. Predominantly grey in colour, its neck and chest are white.

The male's black-capped head, white back and part-black, part-white wings distinguish the eider. A large sea duck, it spends all its time cruising and feeding in the shallows around the mainland and on nearby islands. The female is a fairly ordinary mottled brown.

Possibly the most eye-catching of the waders, the oystercatcher has coal-black upper parts, is white underneath and has a trademark red eye and a pointed red bill. It spends the majority of its time on the coast, usually near rivers and on loch shores, though it ventures into fields and moorland fringes throughout Scotland. Its loud 'kleep' is often heard well into the night.

A memorable sound on walks across heather moorland is the rippling 'tlooe' call of the golden plover. This bird is well camouflaged, with golden-brown spangled upper parts and black chest. Its flight is fast and direct and it glides into a landing; it's likely to be seen in the uplands almost anywhere.

Uniquely, the ptarmigan changes plumage three times each year, from mottled brown in midsummer, through autumn greys to winter white. It lives in the mountains year-round, perhaps retreating slightly in severe weather. The harsh rattling croak as it takes off is unforgettable.

Probably Scotland's most unusual-looking bird, and its most endearing, the puffin has a vividly coloured parrot-like beak and white cheeks. It stands erect and waddles, rather than walking about, but flies strongly. It's most numerous in the Northern Isles, where it congregates between April and July.

Pocket-sized *Scottish Birds* by Valerie Thom devotes a page to almost all the commonly observed species. Colour illustrations are clear and good enough for identification; the book is handily divided by habitats.

Notorious for dive-bombing intruders during the breeding season, the great skua (or bonxie in Shetland) spends most of the summer in the Northern Isles, moving south late in the season. It's mainly dark brown in colour with white wing patches.

REPTILES

The adder is coppery brown with a dark zigzag pattern along its back. The adder's bite is poisonous but it's unlikely to be fatal. It's very excitable and more likely to flee than to attack. Adders are found only in mainland Scotland.

Plants

SHRUBS & FLOWERS

Boggy moorlands are enlivened in summer by clumps of flowering bog asphodel. In spring the underground stems sprout narrow, stiff leaves, from which a stem grows to bear the yellow flower spike.

Before the woodland trees are fully in leaf in spring, the ground will be carpeted with wildflowers, including the wood anemone. Its frail stem rises from a cluster of three dark-green, deeply notched leaves, topped by a single white or pinkish flower.

On high ground, where heather can't survive in moorlands, blaeberry is the most common plant. It grows to about 60cm, with twisted stems that carry small, bright-green leaves. Its bluish-purple berries are edible and quite tasty, though it would take ages to gather even a cupful.

A member of the pea family, broom grows in dense bushes to 2m high, usually on sandy soils. It has small leaves on its profuse twigs and from early summer is covered with masses of golden-yellow flowers. These then develop into black pods that burst open with a loud 'snap' when they become ripe.

During summer many small moorland ponds will seem to be hanging onto scraps of snow. These are actually balls of white hair on the fruit of cotton grass. Its brownish-green flowers appear at the end of long stems, developing into the cotton balls.

Better known as whin in Scotland, prickly gorse grows widely on rough ground. Its golden-yellow flowers appear among the long, sharp spines, mainly from early spring, and exude an intense, almost intoxicating, perfume.

Cross-leaved heath is the heather most likely to be seen in boggy ground. It has greyish, hairy, needle-like leaves arranged in cross-shaped groups on the stems. Its slightly bell-shaped, pale-pink flowers are larger than those of the other two heathers.

The archetypal symbol of Scotland, heather grows in pine woods and on moorland. The bushy shrub can grow to 1m high without periodic burning to promote new growth for grouse food. Its stems have rows of tiny, needle-like leaves and the spikes of flowers turn the moors a glorious deep-pinkish-mauve during August and September.

The larger, dark-reddish flowers of the bell heather distinguish it from its relations, though the leaf-covered stems are similar in appearance. Bell heather is usually the first to bloom, during July.

Commonly called bluebell, the wild hyacinth carpets woodlands in most areas during early spring. Its stalks rise from a cluster of long, glossy leaves and bear several small, violet-blue, bell-shaped flowers.

A member of the cypress family, common juniper forms dense thickets in pine woodlands and on rocky ground. The needle-like leaves are usually light-grey-green and, when crushed, exude an apple-like perfume.

Scottish Wild Flowers by Michael Scott is an ideal walking companion, with a finely detailed illustration for each of 350 species. It also has a good rundown on habitats and the best viewing sites.

Bog myrtle is common throughout boglands and heaths. This low-growing plant, its stems bear small green leaves, which, when crushed, have a distinctly resinous aroma.

A colourful sight in woodlands everywhere, the yellow-flowering primrose is also found in grassy areas and on sea cliffs. The flowers form on long furry stems, emerging from a bunch of elongated crinkly leaves.

In early summer the heath spotted orchid is commonly seen, singly or in clumps, on the moors and marshy ground. The white to pale-lilac flowers, with darker pink spots, cluster in a pyramid-shaped head above the darkish-green leaves marked with purple blotches.

Sundews devour insects that land on their leaves, attracted by sweet juice. The insects are trapped by tiny, flexible hairs and then quickly swallowed. The most common species in bogs and on soggy peat is round-leaved sundew. The hairy leaves fan out from the base of a tall stalk on which tiny white flowers may appear.

A remarkably hardy plant, thrift is common on rocky coasts (hence its other name, 'sea pink') and is also found on high inland plateaus. The narrow greyish-green leaves form a thick pad from which the stalk grows, topped with a cluster of small whitish, pink or mauve flowers.

TREES

The widespread silver birch often grows with oak and rowan. A particularly beautiful tree, its branchlets bear shiny green, triangular leaves with notched edges. The bark is white with splotches. This hardy tree can survive extremes of cold and is drought-resistant.

The alder is one of the most common trees along the banks of burns and rivers. Reaching a height of about 20m, it has grey-brown bark arranged in square section, and egg-shaped leaves that are flattened across the top, slightly shiny and very dark green. It sprouts distinctive male catkins up to 5cm long.

The common hazel produces small, tasty nuts, a handy source of wild food in the woodlands, if you have time to collect a handful in autumn. A comparatively small tree, it's quite widespread. The dark-green, hairy leaves are roughly oval-shaped with a sharp point.

Its scarlet fruit, adorning the tree during winter and spring, makes identification of the holly easy. The leaves are also distinctive – glossy, dark-green and edged with sharp spines. It's usually found in oak and beech woods throughout the country, except in the far north.

Both sessile oak and English oak are found in Scotland. The two species are similar in appearance, with the characteristic lobed leaves and grey, cracked bark. The main distinguishing feature is the acorn (fruit); it grows directly on the shoot on the sessile oak but on a stem of the English oak. The sessile has a more open appearance, while the English oak's foliage is more bunched. Oaks can live for up to 800 years.

Once widespread throughout Scotland, the Scots pine is a superb-looking tree. Now confined largely to the Highlands, it reaches a height of 35m. The dark-coloured bark is deeply cracked and, on the branches, is a distinctive orange-brown or pink. The dull, grey-brown cone is roughly oval with a marked point, and the leaves are a dark, glossy green (see the boxed text on p175 for details about a Scots pine reserve in Glen Affric).

The red-berried rowan is very hardy – no other tree grows at a higher altitude than its upper limit of 1000m. Masses of white flowers appear in May or June and the fruit starts to colour in September, when it is raided by birds.

Rowans are embedded in Gaelic folklore as charms against witchcraft; it's believed that to fell a rowan brings bad luck to the axe wielder. They're traditionally grown by the front doors of houses to ward off evil spirits.

WORLD HERITAGE SITES

Four Unesco World Heritage sites have been declared in Scotland.

St Kilda (www.kilda.org.uk) became a natural site in 1986; its designation as a cultural site in 2005 conferred membership of an exclusive group of only two dozen sites around the world enjoying dual status. Owned by the **National Trust for Scotland** (www.nts.org.uk), the archipelago is the remotest part of the British Isles, 41 miles (66km) west of Benbecula in the Western Isles. St Kilda is the most important sea-bird breeding ground in northwestern Europe and has Britain's highest sea cliffs. The native population was evacuated in 1930, ending a unique way of life evolved over hundreds of years.

Edinburgh Old and New Towns (www.ewht.org.uk) was declared in 1996, recognising the superbly preserved medieval old town and the fine Georgian new town. The towns are especially notable for their contrasting architecture, parks, gardens, graveyards, statues and monuments.

The **Heart of Neolithic Orkney** (www.orkneyjar.com), designated a cultural site in 1999, comprises four prehistoric sites: Skara Brae (p278); Maeshowe chambered tomb; the Stones of Stenness, a ceremonial enclosure; and the Ring of Brodgar, a ceremonial enclosure and stone circle. All are in remarkably fine condition for their age (2500 to 5000 years) and have yielded a rich hoard of evidence of life long ago.

New Lanark (www.newlanark.org) is on the route of the Falls of Clyde walk (p56). The most recent addition to Scotland's World Heritage portfolio (declared in 2001), New Lanark is a beautifully restored 19th-century mill village, and the scene of a ground-breaking experiment in social welfare.

NATIONAL PARKS & NATURE RESERVES

In 2002 Scotland caught up with the rest of the world by opening its first national park, Loch Lomond & the Trossachs, more than 50 years after the idea of national parks was first seriously entertained in this country. The more controversial declaration of Cairngorms National Park followed in 2003.

Despite having the finest mountain and coast landscapes in Britain, relatively large areas of undeveloped lands and many sites of national and international ecological importance, Scotland was focussed on other issues until the late 1980s; nevertheless, by the end of the 20th century, protective designations galore had been heaped upon the Scottish countryside. The election of a Scottish Parliament and Executive in 1999 provided the inspiration and opportunity to set up the country's own national parks. After much public debate and consultation, the *National Parks (Scotland) Act* was passed in August 2000, giving the government power to declare parks.

Within Loch Lomond & the Trossachs' (p103) 186,500 hectares are several fine ranges of mountains, including the Arrochar Alps, the Trossachs and the Breadalbane 'hills' with 21 Munros and 20 Corbetts (p108), a score of large and small lochs, woodlands, historic sites, many small towns and villages, major roads and railways, and a fair share of the West Highland Way (p89). Some of these areas were already protected for their natural values, notably Argyll and Queen Elizabeth Forest Parks, designations that are now part of the national park. What benefits can such a large (by local standards) and diverse park bring to residents, the country at large and visitors? Many people's awareness of the park's superb natural heritage has undoubtedly been strengthened by the exhibitions at the visitor centres, publications and the activities programs. Perhaps, too, the problems facing park managers in maintaining – let alone improving – access to lochs, glens and mountains have become more obvious. It's probably too soon to pass judgment; maybe it needs

The well-organised www.lochlomond-trossachs.org offers an excellent introduction to the park, contact details, a load of links to partner organisations, and the lowdown on the Byzantine park-planning process.

a major threat to an outstanding feature (such as power lines across Ben Lomond) to put it to the test!

No-one has ever doubted that the Cairngorms is one of Scotland's finest natural assets (which is saying a lot!) but it seemed that this compelling fact was pushed aside in the wrangling over the boundaries of the national park. When it was finally opened in late 2003 (bizarrely in a restaurant at the top of a much-opposed funicular), many felt that bureaucrats had won and the Cairngorms themselves had lost, or at least been handed second prize. A sizeable swathe of what is generally regarded as Cairngorms country, in the East Perthshire Highlands, had been left out, with the southern boundary generally following that of Highland Council. Nevertheless, the 380,000-hectare park is twice the size of Loch Lomond & the Trossachs; has four of Scotland's five highest peaks; protects 25% of Britain's threatened birds, animals and plants; and is home to more than 17,000 people in seven sizeable towns.

The Park does not and will not have a 'Gateway Centre' in the style of Loch Lomond & the Trossachs, nor any dedicated visitor centres. Instead, its many, very attractive leaflets and brochures are, or should be, available from the several tourist information centres (TICs) within its boundaries, notably Aviemore (p145), Ballater (p161) and Braemar (p154).

Also unlike Loch Lomond & the Trossachs, the Cairngorms National Park Authority does not have the last say in development issues within the park, so it remains to be seen how two of the park's four key aims are juggled: 'To conserve and enhance the natural and cultural heritage of the area' and 'To promote sustainable economic and social development of the area's communities'. It's to be hoped that a coalition of Perthshire movers and shakers, led by a local MP, can win its case when the boundaries are reviewed in 2008. Meantime, the park is still incontestably the finest in Britain, judged by natural values alone.

National Nature Reserves

To visitors from North America and the antipodes, Scotland's National Nature Reserves (NNRs) should seem more like the national parks they know and love. Almost invariably they're sizeable areas, more or less wild (or at least uninhabited) and have outstanding natural values. They are established under mid-20th-century legislation that makes Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) the responsible authority. SNH itself owns or leases about half the 50-plus reserves. The rest are owned and managed by conservation organisations such as the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds or the National Trust for Scotland.

Among SNH's own portfolio, the jewels are Beinn Eighe (p225) – Britain's first NNR – and Creag Meagaidh (p184). Other gems include Hermaness (p286), Ben Lawers (p111) and St Abb's Head (p81). Among the rest, variety is of the essence, from the remote archipelago of St Kilda (p29) and the SNH-owned island of Rum to beautiful Glen Affric (p174), Loch Druidibeg (p254) and Loch Lomond. There's also a vast NNR within Cairngorms National Park. Most are readily accessible, and the majority of popular reserves have a ranger service that can organise guided walks.

ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

During the early years of the 21st century, the single issue that has galvanised walkers (and kindred folk) has been proposals for renewable-energy projects. While there is general agreement that, as a nation and as individuals, Scotland needs to act promptly to reduce the use of fossil

fuels, the means by which this aim can be tackled, let alone achieved, remain the subject of impassioned debate. Scotland is inevitably swept up in the UK government's commitments and broad policies. Its seemingly empty open spaces, and abundance of places where winds blow frequently and fiercely, make it a prime potential location for wind farms. Proposals to plant large numbers of huge turbines in prominent, hill-top locations, and to build long transmission lines with massive pylons through the countryside, have generally been opposed, especially in areas of outstanding scenery, which are, after all, fairly plentiful in Scotland! Meantime, it has been pointed out that walkers still blithely jump into their cars and drive considerable distances at weekends in pursuit of their hobby. Since public transport services have improved in very recent times, perhaps we should slow down, aim to take longer to do the Munros or whatever, and think about the future.

With the passage of access legislation (see p21), one consuming issue was more or less laid to rest. While others cause people to jump up and down from time to time (notably payment for parking in popular walking areas), the guarantees provided by the legislation have been underpinned by a quiet revolution in land ownership in rural Scotland. The National Trust has long been a major owner and the John Muir Trust has substantially increased its holdings. At the same time, community-led buyouts of large estates have significantly increased the area of land owned and managed by local people. Starting with the renowned acquisition of the North Assynt Estate by the **Assynt Crofters' Trust** (www.assyntcrofters.co.uk), purchases have included the **North Harris Estate** (www.north-harris.org) on the Isle of Harris in the Western Isles and many others, such as the Isles of Eigg and Gigha, while Barra (p251) was gifted to the nation by its owner. All this is certainly not to imply that individual ownership of estates is undesirable, merely to recognise what is for many Scots the justified return of the land to the people after the brutal Highland Clearances of the late 18th and early to mid-19th centuries.

The major players in the nature conservation arena:

John Muir Trust (☎ 0131 554 0114; www.jmt.org; 41 Commercial St, Edinburgh EH6 6JD) Established in 1983 and commemorating the work of Scots-born US-national-parks-pioneer John Muir, the trust acquires and sensitively and sustainably manages wild areas, and repairs damage, especially to paths. The trust owns eight estates, from Sandwood in northwest Sutherland to the summit of Ben Nevis. Members can get involved by planting trees, repairing paths, collecting acorns and building dry-stone dykes.

National Trust for Scotland (☎ 0131 243 9300; www.nts.org.uk; 28 Charlotte Sq, Edinburgh EH2 4ET) Since 1931 the trust has acted as a guardian of the nation's architectural, scenic and historic treasures. Scotland's largest conservation charity, with more than 270,000 members, it cares for more than 77,000 hectares of land and more than 100 buildings. Its major land-holdings are the Brodick, Glencoe, Kintail & West Affric, Mar Lodge and Torridon Estates, which include some of the finest mountain areas in Scotland.

Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (☎ 0131 311 6500; www.rspb.org.uk; 25 Ravelston Tce, Edinburgh EH4 3TP) The society campaigns for 'wild birds and the environment'. It is Britain's largest conservation charity and owns and/or manages more than 40 reserves in Scotland, including Hoy (Orkney), Balranald (North Uist), Abernethy (Cairngorms), Inversnaid (Loch Lomond) and Loch Gruinart (Islay). Its magazine *Birds* keeps members updated on conservation issues.

Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH; ☎ 01463 725000; www.snh.org.uk; Great Glen House, Leachkin Rd, Inverness IV3 8NW) The government body responsible for caring for the country's natural heritage; its 11 area offices are the best local points of contact. It advises the government on natural heritage matters, owns and manages numerous reserves (notably National Nature Reserves), runs grant schemes to promote nature conservation, supports the countryside rangers services and produces a wide range of publications.

The Cairngorms National Park Authority (www.cairngorms.co.uk) website is easy to navigate and offers a mountain of information about the park's natural and cultural features, organised Countryside Events, public transport services and publications.

The dedicated website for National Nature Reserves, www.nnr-scotland.org.uk, provides a good lead-in to these 'world-class sites for nature', with a thumbnail sketch of each reserve and details of access, facilities and on-the-ground contacts.

The Scottish Mountaineering Council (www.smc.org.uk) tirelessly and vigorously represents walkers' interests; its website is a useful source of news and suggestions for individual action. The Ramblers Association (Scotland) is also a dedicated campaigner (check out www.ramblers.org.uk).

Scottish Rights of Way and Access Society (☎ 0131 558 1222; www.scotways.com; 24 Annandale St, Edinburgh EH7 4AN) The Society has been safeguarding public access since 1845. It works through negotiation and mediation to ensure that access legislation is successful. It publishes the excellent *Scottish Hill Tracks*, a guide to major hill paths and rights of way.

Scottish Wildlife Trust (☎ 0131 312 7765; www.swt.org.uk; Cramond Glebe Rd, Edinburgh EH4 6NS) The trust's mission is to protect Scotland's wildlife. It owns or manages around 110 wildlife reserves, from the Borders to Orkney, and places special emphasis on protecting endangered species. Members are involved in the trust's work and its trainees gain practical experience on the job.

Trees for Life (TFL; ☎ 01309 691292; www.treesforlife.org.uk; The Park, Findhorn Bay, Forres IV36 3TZ) Scarcely a household name but TFL's achievements are outstanding. Its main aim is to restore the Highlands' Caledonian forest, covering an area of 155,000 hectares. Since 1989, staff and volunteers have planted more than 500,000 native trees, grown from seed they collected. The major project is centred on Glen Affric.

Woodland Trust Scotland (☎ 01764 662554; www.woodland-trust.org.uk; Glenruthven Mill, Abbey Rd, Auchterarder PH3 1DP) Originally established in England, the trust's aims are to keep natural woodlands safe from development, and to enhance their diversity with new plantings and removal of exotic species. It cares for more than 50 woods, including Abriachan and two near Drumnadrochit by Loch Ness.



Glencoe's Aonach Eagach ridge (p139) serves up a spectrum of experiences for hikers

GARETH MCCORMACK



Autumnal evening light lingers on Slioch (p222) in Wester Ross

GARETH MCCORMACK

Walking in Scotland is all about variety, contrast and choice, but if you're new to the country, such diversity could be more bewildering than beneficial.

There are various solutions to this dilemma – such as sticking a pin in a map, drawing names from a hat, picking the oddest names – but, more rationally, we've picked out three themes among the walks: history; coasts and beaches; and the classically Scottish endeavour of Munro bagging. Woven into almost all the walks is another theme: wildlife watching. Sighting sea life is a bonus on coastal walks, and animal encounters are a pleasant surprise everywhere, whether they feature otters, ospreys, golden eagles or red deer.

HISTORY & HERITAGE

There is ample visible evidence of Scotland's long history, right from the border with England to the country's northernmost extremity, and many fascinating examples are to be found on walks in this book – in buildings or other objects that you see, in roads or tracks along which you walk, or simply through association with someone famous.

Dating from prehistoric times, you'll find Iron Age brochs (tower houses) along the **Yesnaby coast** (p278) on Orkney Mainland – a walk that starts close to the best-preserved Neolithic village in northern Europe – and on a small island on the **Eshaness coast walk** (p289) in Shetland. Forts from the same era are dotted along the Great Glen, one of them overlooking the **Great Glen Way** (p168) near Fort Augustus. The Romans occupied the countryside surrounding the **Eildon Hills** (p79), where they too built forts, and from where they

counted the miles along their roads. Still with conflict in mind, a particularly bloody period in Scotland's history, the Wars of Independence, is recalled in Bruce's Stone at the start of the **Merrick walk** (p72). The treachery and tragedy of the Massacre of Glen Coe pervades the Lost Valley, through which you pass on the way to **Bidean nam Bian** (p136) in Glen Coe. The 18th-century military roads now make for easy walking along the **West Highland Way** (p89) and **Great Glen Way** (p168), but it's sobering to recall that this extraordinary 1100-mile network of early highways was built mainly to keep rebellious Highlanders under control.

On a much more peaceable note, there is also an abundance of evidence revealing details of old lifestyles long gone, in the silent remains of stone cottages in many now-remote

'The treachery and tragedy of the Massacre of Glen Coe pervades the Lost Valley.'

places. Shielings were simple stone-built cottages, which were usually occupied only during the summer, for fishing or tending sheep and cattle. Little clusters of them can be found all along the northeast coast of **Lewis** (p237), beside the historic **Rhenigdale path** (p241) on Harris, and in **Glen Affric** (p174), to name but a few locations.

PUTTING SCOTLAND ON THE MAP

Timothy Pont was possibly the earliest Scottish map maker. Among the many places he visited in the late 16th century were Ben Nevis, Kintail, An Teallach and Torridon. His maps were published in Amsterdam in 1634.

THE TRADITIONAL HIGHLAND CAIRN

Fraser Mackenzie

Throughout the Highlands, walkers will come across traditional Highland cairns. The best constructed are beehive or conical in shape, and can vary in height from less than 1m to about 2m. Most are built after the fashion of a dry-stone dyke (or wall), but others appear to be no more than a heap of stones. More modern examples, with cemented stones, often bear an inscribed plaque.

Cairns, traditionally built to mark spots of local significance, have long been a feature of Highland culture. Mostly they mark the site of a sudden death, perhaps as the result of an accident or, in more remote times, an inter-clan skirmish. A sudden death was a *bas gun sagart* (death without a priest) and it was believed that the soul of the departed would be consigned to the hottest part of purgatory. As a result, each passer-by was expected to put a stone on the cairn and to pray for the repose of the deceased's soul.

Some cairns mark places where, in the days when coffins were carried from one district to another, mourners stopped for refreshments, placing the remains reverently by the roadside. Again, passers-by were expected to add a stone to the cairn and pray for the departed. Sadly, many old coffin cairns that used to adorn Highland roads have disappeared as roads have been widened.

Tradition also has it that in the ancient days of clan battles, the fighting men would each bring a rock to the place of muster and, after the conflict was over, survivors would each take away a stone. The remainder would be heaped together to form a cairn. Yet again passers-by were expected to add to the cairn.

'*Cuiridh mi clach 'nad charn,*' a well-known Gaelic saying, literally means 'I will put a stone on your cairn' (and thereby keep your memory fresh). Though the meaning of the expression is now more metaphysical, indicating that the speaker will undertake some action to honour his companion, its continued existence does indicate the importance of the cairn in Highland culture.

Long may the tradition continue.

Two Scottish mountains were the scene of early scientific inquiries: measurements of gravitational pull on **Schiehallion** (p112) inspired the development of those all-important wiggly lines on contour maps, while for many years meteorological data was collected daily at the observatory on the summit of **Ben Nevis** (p123).

Navigation around Scotland's often-treacherous coast was made much safer by the building of lighthouses during the 19th century, many of them in incredibly rugged, seemingly inaccessible locations. Some of the most impressive feature in this book, starting in the southeast with **St Abb's Head** (p81) and finishing with the northernmost of all, **Muckle Flugga** (p286). In between, and way up in the north, are **Stoerhead** (p271), **Eilean Glas** (p254), **Cape Wrath** (p258) at the northwestern tip of mainland Scotland, **Noup Head** (p282) on the Orkney isle of Westray, and **Eshaness** (p289) on Shetland Mainland.

Buachaille Etive Mór (p134), gateway to Glen Coe, where the MacDonalds were betrayed and massacred

MARK DAFFEY



The Great Glen Way (p168) follows much of the mighty Caledonian Canal

EOIN CLARKE

One precursor of the long phase of industrial development, which culminated in the so-called industrial revolution of the 19th century, was the short-lived ironworks that plundered the oakwoods on the shores of Loch Maree, at the foot of that fine peak **Slioch** (p222). The Caledonian Canal, which features prominently along the **Great Glen Way** (p168), was an outstanding engineering achievement, especially the flights of locks in Neptune's Staircase at Banavie, and at Fort Augustus. World Heritage-listed **New Lanark** (p58), on the upper reaches of the River Clyde, was not only the site of a large cotton mill but also of Robert Owen's pioneering social-welfare reforms. As the industrial revolution cranked up, fresh water supplies for the rapidly expanding population of Glasgow became a pressing necessity. The **Greenock Cut** (p53), a long canal in the Inverclyde hills, was part of one scheme to resolve the problem; another much larger one brought water from Loch Katrine along a pipeline at the foot of the **Campsie Fells** (p55). Large-scale industry, prompted by the abundant supplies of fresh water, came comparatively late to the Highlands. Aluminium smelters were built, one in the improbable location of **Kinlochleven** (p96) – now on the West Highland Way – where, after the smelter was shut down, one of the buildings was converted to a climbing centre. The other smelter, near Fort William, was supplied by a large hydroelectric scheme. The **Road to the Isles walk** (p129), following a historic cattle-droving route, passes right past one of the dams, Loch Treig, created for the project.

HISTORICALLY TANGLED WEB

A privately maintained website, www.scotshistoryonline.co.uk, emanating from the Scottish History Club, covers several thousand years of Scottish history and scores of topics.



Westray's Noup Head (p282)

GARETH MCCORMACK

A BUNCH OF FIVES

Another way to avoid bewilderment is to follow our selection of the best thematic walks. Rather than trawl the Munros on a near-impossible quest for the cream of them, we've shifted down a gear to the Corbetts (mountains between 2500ft and 3000ft), several of which feature in these pages. In fact, many walkers consider the Corbetts to be as challenging as the Munros, lacking only their height. The best coast walks is another obvious thematic choice, and we've distilled a favourite selection from the many short walks outlined in the book.

CORBETTS

- Goatfell (p99)
- Ben Loyal (p262)
- Quinag (p267)
- Beinn Dearg Mhór (p216)
- The Cobbler (p103)

COAST WALKS

- Muckle Roe (p288)
- West Westray Coast (p280)
- Sandwood Bay & Cape Wrath (p258)
- Vatersay (p252)
- Cock of Arran (p101)

SHORT WALKS

- Falls of Kirkaig (p269)
- Lorgill & the Hoe (p210)
- Meall Fuar-mhonaidh (p188)
- The Whangie (p59)
- Arthur's Seat (p50)

COASTS & BEACHES

With 6158 miles (9911km) of coast you'd expect Scotland to do a good line in sea-oriented walks, and it certainly does.

Along the southeast shores there are spectacular cliffs and outstanding outdoor geology case studies separating fishing villages along the **Burmouth to St Abb's Head walk** (p81). Virtually perched on Edinburgh's doorstep, the shores of **Aberlady** and **Gullane Bays** (p48) offer easy and scenic walking, often in what feels surprisingly like a remote setting. On the Isle of Arran, the north coast is an outstandingly attractive blend of rocky shores, small beaches, impressive cliffs and fine hill and glen panoramas – all seen on the **Cock of Arran walk** (p101). You then have to go a long way north, right up to the Isle of Skye, to find more coastal

experiences. The **Coast and Cuillin walk** (p199) offers the best of both worlds, from rugged cliffs and the famous Bad Step, to Loch Coruisk, overlooked by rocky mountains on three sides and separated from the sea by low rocky knolls.

Although the coast of Lewis has few of the beaches that are the glory of the rest of the Western Isles, there is some highly scenic walking along the far northeast coast between **Tolsta** and **Ness** (p237), and over on the **west side** (p239) a fine cliff-top walk finishes at the thatched cottages of a superbly restored crofting village. Some of the best of the famed Outer Hebridean beaches, pristine and gleaming white, are on the small island of **Vatersay** (p252), where on a good day all you need are palms and umbrellas and you could be in the Caribbean.

Sandwood Bay (p258), in the far northwestern corner of the country, lays claim to being the finest beach on the mainland. It's remote and totally unspoiled, a creamy-white insert in a long, cliff-lined coast that ends abruptly at spectacular Cape Wrath.

SEE BIRDS

More than 100,000 sea birds live at Hermaness, including some 50,000 puffins, 32,000 gannets, 28,000 fulmars and 7000 kittiwakes.



A nesting fulmar is unimpressed with all the puffin and blowin'

DAVID TIPLING

The coastline of Muckle Roe (p288) is resplendent with red granite

GARETH MCCORMACK



The Northern Isles offer coast-walking aficionados a magnificent feast. Hoy, the largest of the Orkney Isles, is famous for its **Old Man** (p275), an extraordinary 137m-high sea stack and the highlight of a varied day out on the island. Mile after scenic mile of **Westray's west coast** (p280) are easily accessible, and here, on the **Castle O'Burrian walk** (p282), puffin sightings are almost guaranteed in season. Some of the most stunning cliffs, geos and stacks anywhere line Orkney Mainland's west coast, including **Yesnaby Castle** (p280), a serious sea-stack rival to the Old Man of Hoy.

SIR HUGH'S HUMUNGOUS HILLS

Sir Hugh Munro, whose original list of Munros was published in 1891, didn't climb them all. He was repelled from Skye's Inaccessible Pinnacle by atrocious weather and died before doing the last on his list, in Deeside.

Almost all the walking in the Shetland Isles is along the coast. Not to be missed is the colourful, indented coast around **Muckle Roe** (p288), the gloriously easy walking across cropped grass above the rugged black cliffs of **Eshaness** (p289) and, furthest north of all, **Hermaness** (p286) – not only for the view of Muckle Flugga lighthouse and Out Stack, the most northerly outpost of the British Isles, but also for teeming colonies of sea birds.

'With 6158 miles of coast you'd expect Scotland to do a good line in sea-oriented walks, and it does.'

Peering into the jaws of Glen Sligachan from the flanks of Bla Bheinn (p203)

GARETH MCCORMACK



Goats go wild on An Teallach (p214)

MARK DAFEY



Peregrine falcons haunt the Highlands

DAVID TIPLING

MUNRO BAGGING

The pastime of Munro bagging (done casually or fast-and-furiously, depending on the bagger), is often derided as mere list ticking – more for the sake of the ticks than the mountains themselves – but working through the list of 284 peaks over 3000ft (914m) would mean that you'd travel widely across Scotland; though you'd visit only two of the islands (Skye and Mull) and never go south of the Glasgow–Edinburgh central belt. We've described in detail the ascent of 33 Munros, from Ben Nevis to some only just scraping into the list. There are also pointers to many others in the More Walks sections at the end of several chapters.

The most southerly of the Munros, Ben Lomond, is an early temptation along the West Highland Way; you can escape the crowds on the main route here by following the less-frequented **Ptarmigan route** (p105). Further north, **Ben Lawers** (p111) is the highest peak in the central highlands, a sprawling massif high enough to support unusual alpine flora. Right in the reputed geographical centre of Scotland, the elegant cone of **Schiehallion** (p112) is a comparatively easy climb along an excellent path.

Standing guard at the eastern entrance to spectacular Glen Coe, **Buachaille Etive Mór** (p134) looks to be beyond the reach of mere walkers, but appearances are deceptive and it's really quite straightforward. Nearby to the west, **Bidean nam Bian** (p136), the highest peak in the glen and a mountain of great character, is best explored along a classic circuit route. But the most eye-catching, heart-stopping peak (or rather ridge) in Glen Coe is

...AND I WOULD WALK 500 MILES

If you have the time (and the legs) for it, the ultimate Scottish walking odyssey would be to link the Southern Upland Way, the John Muir Way, the Forth and Clyde Canal from Edinburgh to Glasgow, the West Highland Way and the Great Glen Way – a total stroll of around 490 miles (784km).

LONG DISTANCE WALKS

Scotland has four official waymarked long-distance paths – the Southern Upland, West Highland, Speyside, and Great Glen Ways – and several more recognised long walks. They traverse much of the finest scenery in the country, though the idea has yet to really take hold in the islands. None are particularly difficult walks, though a good measure of stamina is called for at times, making the satisfaction at the end even greater. Three of the four official routes are described in detail in this book; the other long walks are outlined, with details about where you can go for more information. Below are 12 long haul options (at the time of research, the John Muir Way wasn't quite complete).

Walk	Distance	Duration	Page
Borders Abbeys Way	65 miles (105km)	5 days	86
Cateran Trail	64 miles (103km)	5 days	118
Great Glen Way	73 miles (117km)	4 days	168
Fife Coastal Path	81 miles (135km)	5-6 days	118
John Muir Way	50 miles (80km)	4-5 days	85
Kintyre Way	88 miles (143km)	5-7 days	118
Rob Roy Way	79 miles (126km)	5-8 days	118
St Cuthbert's Way	62.5 miles (100.5km)	5 days	85
Southern Upland Way	209.5 miles (338km)	9 days	63
Speyside Way	65 miles (104.5km)	5-7 days	163
West Highland Way	95 miles (153km)	7 days	89
West Island Way	30 miles (49km)	2 days	118

Reaching the summit of Liathach (p229) requires some serious scree scrambling

GARETH MCCORMACK



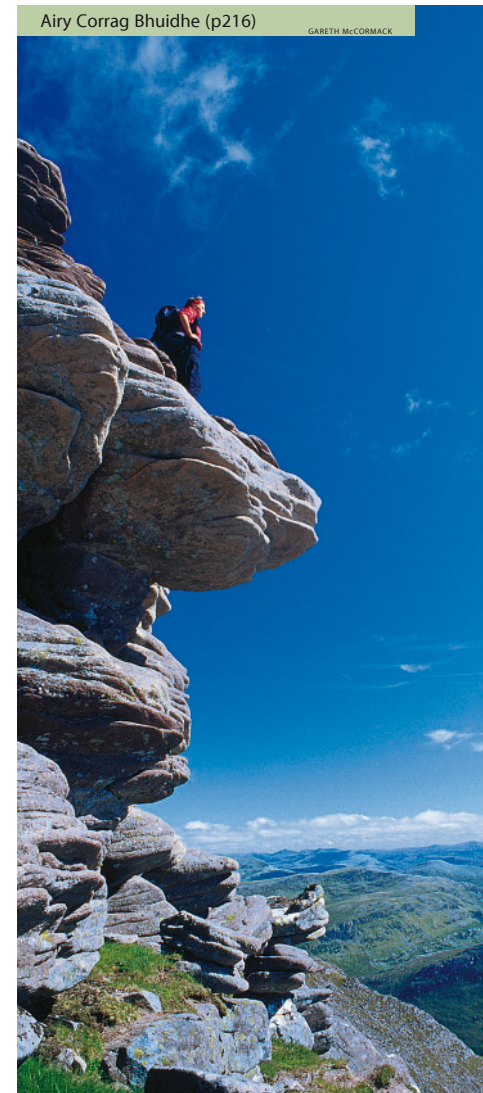
undoubtedly **Aonach Eagach** (p139): feared, admired and aspired to, with few equals among the Munros for challenging scrambling in high, airy places. Near neighbours to the north, dominating the southern side of Glen Nevis, the gracefully contoured **Mamores group** (p128) has four Munros, potentially there for the bagging on a long and rewarding day. No surprises in the next Munro on the list, on the opposite side of Glen Nevis, the mighty Ben Nevis – the only peak among Scotland's many Bens to be known simply as 'the Ben'. The ever-popular **Mountain Track** (p123) is really just a long uphill walk to one of the finest panoramic views in the country. If you're looking for a little excitement en route to the roof of Scotland, the **Carn Mór Dearg Arête** (p127) offers a breezy frisson or two along its knife edge.

Breaking away from the western side of the country to the realms of Cairngorms National Park, **Cairn Gorm** (p147) itself is a bump on the vast and gently undulating plateau; it's well worth the effort to experience the Cairngorms' unique, wide-open spaces. Nearby is **Ben Macdui** (p150), the second-highest summit in Scotland and virtually a must. Moving north, **Sgurr nan Ceathreamhnan** (p177), deep in Glen Affric, commits you to a much longer approach than do the nearby **Five Sisters of Kintail** (p180), which rise directly from the road. Accessible though the sorority may be, a traverse of the quintet, which includes three Munros and a greater total ascent than for Ben Nevis, is no mere doddle. As the raven flies, **Gleouraich** (p182) is only a matter of minutes south of Kintail, and is another Munro that can be tackled directly from the road. It's a fine peak with a much greater feeling of remoteness. **Creag Meagaidh** (p184), beyond the southeastern side of the Great Glen, is more a massif than a peak and provides a classic horseshoe route above a rugged corrie.

'En route to the roof of Scotland, the Carn Mór Dearg Arête offers a breezy frisson or two along its knife edge.'

Airy Corrag Bhuidhe (p216)

GARETH MCCORMACK





Thrilling Carn Mór Dearg Arête (p127)

EWIN CLARKE



Seeing the light at Stoerhead (p271)

MARK DAFFEY

Munros on the Isle of Skye don't come easily, though the two in this book (plus a third peak) offer a graduated approach to the really serious stuff. **Bruach na Frithe** (p195) is 'only' an energetic – if rocky – walk, while **Bla Bheinn** (p202), standing slightly apart from the central Black Cuillin mountains, does involve a little modest scrambling. **Sgurr Dearg** (p204), in the heart of the Black Cuillin, is not on the Munro list, but it does offer a good introduction to the scrambling style of ascent and the unavoidable exposure involved in climbing them.

Wester Ross is richly endowed with the big 'hills', most of them leaning towards the challenging end of the spectrum. **Slioch** (p222), which dominates Loch Maree, involves a relatively long approach, and is a good walk in its own right. In the heart of Torridon, **Beinn Alligin** (p227) provides an exhilarating introduction to the skills you will need on **Liathach** (p229) with its pinnacles and knife-edges. Then, if you've enjoyed Liathach, you should be ready for the equally adrenaline-based fun on **An Teallach** (p214), which, like almost all of its fellow Munros, offers a feast of fantastic wide views.

MAKING TRACKS

A good place to start chasing up information about long-distance walks is the VisitScotland website, <http://walking.visitscotland.com>, where you'll find walk outlines and contact details.

The Author



SANDRA BARDWELL

When I discovered a Scottish great-grandmother, I knew it must be in the genes. The first time I set eyes on the Highlands' hills I felt that I'd come home. When we settled beside Loch Ness I flung myself into the hills and climbed them, walking the glens, loch shores and coast with huge enthusiasm. This happened well into a lifetime of walking in wild, remote and not-so-remote places, mainly in Australia, and writing the odd article and book about bushwalking in that country.

With Lonely Planet I've explored some other wonderful European countries, but Scotland and especially the Highlands, in their infinite variety and ever-changing beauty, are still close to my heart.

My Favourite Walks

Faced with an embarrassment of riches, it's hard to choose, but here goes.

Almost overlooking home, **Meall Fuar-mhonaidh** (p188) is a year-round, old favourite. The path has become a highway, but the extraordinary views up and down Loch Ness are unfailingly rewarding.

You'll either love, as I do, or shun the rock-encrusted, primeval Northwest. Rugged **Quinag** (p267) is an amazingly easy climb, despite its formidable profile, and the sea and mountain vistas are sublime.

Although mountains are my near-obsession, the coast always exerts an irresistible fascination – the sea's untamed power, the birds, the endlessly varied scenery. **Shetland's** (p282) wonderful coastline is without peer, from the black Eshaness crags, to Muckle Roe's red stacks, to Hermaness' green hillsides above the teeming cliffs and the endearing puffins.



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