

# Walk the West Highland Way



## Highlights

Scotland's most popular walking trail, the West Highland Way passes through what is arguably Britain's most spectacular landscape. The 95 mile route from Milngavie to Fort William is ideal for self-guided walking, with itineraries tailored to suit any requirements.

Loch Lomond, the Trossachs, Rannoch Moor - many of Scotland's most famous and enigmatic natural wonders can be found along the West Highland Way. The route encompasses a huge array of landscapes - from lowland moors and dense forests to mighty mountains with sheers cliff faces - that are home to an abundance of plant and animal life. Starting at Milngavie on the northern outskirts of Glasgow, the West Highland Way weaves northwards, past the shores of Loch Lomond, through Strathfillan and across Rannoch Moor before reaching Glencoe and climbing the Devil's Staircase. The Way ends in the bustling town of Fort William, the self-proclaimed "Outdoor Capital of the UK", from which walkers can tackle Ben Nevis, Britain's highest mountain.

A self-guided West Highland Way walk gives you the opportunity to explore this spectacular route under your own steam. Trips can last anything between four to nine days, depending on which sections of the trail you want to see and how quickly you want to walk. You'll be supplied with a detailed map and comprehensive guidebook, and there are also plenty of historic landmarks en route where you can learn more about the region's fascinating history (don't forget to stop for a pint at the famous Drovers Inn or try a wee dram at Glengoyne Distillery, Scotland's most beautiful!). Then at the end of the day you can relax and enjoy some fine dining in the hand-picked bed and breakfasts, country inns and guesthouses dotted along the trail - your bags will be waiting for you when you arrive.

## Is it for me?

The West Highland Way is a classic trail but can be tough-going in places, with rugged terrain and varied weather. You can stretch your trip out to last anything up to nine days - we think seven or eight is optimal - but if you're intending to do the whole trail you'll still be looking at around 10 miles (five hours) per day, so a decent level of physical fitness is essential. As long as you're in pretty good shape you're bound to enjoy the West Highland Way, rightly considered one of Britain's most spectacular long-distance paths. A self-guided walk gives you the freedom to experience the landscape at your own pace, allowing you time to indulge hobbies besides walking, like bird-watching and photography. You'll meet fellow walkers from all over the world, enjoy some fantastic local cuisine and experience first-hand the legendary hospitality of the west coast. All this and the unique feeling of accomplishment that comes from completing a world-renowned passage!

## Accommodation

One of the highlights of this tour is the high standard of the accommodation. The hotels, inns, guesthouses and B&B's all offer a warm welcome to walkers, traditional hospitality and delicious local food. A hearty breakfast is included each morning. Lunch and dinner are not included so you are free to choose from the available options. Examples of the accommodation used include Bramblewood, a friendly family run B&B and Anchorage Cottage in Rowardennan which has a lovely garden and magnificent views over the loch and islands.

## Itinerary

Section 1, Milngavie to Drymen, 12 miles, 19 Km, 6 - 7 hours

Prices from

**330** GBP (4 - 9 days) per person

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If you are not staying in accommodation in Milngavie, you will meet the baggage carriers at the train station at 0930. They will collect your bags and whisk them away to your first night's accommodation. After setting off from Milngavie today's route runs through the ancient earldom of Lennox between the Campsie fells and Blane water. You follow a series of good paths through beautiful rural scenery to Drymen, a small market town. A definite stop is the Glengoyne Distillery, Scotland's most beautiful. A distillery tour is a must with a complimentary dram to send you on your way.

#### Section 2, Drymen to Balmaha, 8 miles , 13 Km, 4 - 5 hours

As you leave Drymen you start to climb towards Conic Hill, which sits astride the Great Divide and separates the highlands and lowlands of Scotland. The climb is fairly steep but on reaching the summit you can enjoy a fantastic view over Loch Lomond, Britain's largest body of fresh water covering 27sq. miles. You descend a steep path towards Balmaha, which is a small village nestling in a protected bay on the shores of Loch Lomond.

#### Section 3, Balmaha to Rowardennan, 7 miles, 11 Km, 4 - 5 Hours

This is a beautiful but deceptively tough section. The path alternates between the loch shore and natural forest and headlands on the banks of Loch Lomond. There are numerous short steep climbs and if you have walked all the way from Drymen you will be very pleased to see Rowardennan. That said the scenery, forest and birdlife is outstanding.

#### Section 4, Rowardennan to Inversnaid, 7 miles, 11 Km, 4 - 5 hours

Leaving Rowardennan the way follows forestry roads and gently climbs high up above Loch Lomond giving fantastic views over Loch Lomond and towards the Arrochar Alps. As you close in on Inversnaid the path narrows and becomes more undulating, passing over a spectacular bridge and waterfall as you arrive at Inversnaid Hotel.

#### Section 5, Inversnaid to Inverarnan, 7 Miles, 11 Km, 4 - 6 hours

Leaving Inversnaid you pass through the RSPB Inversnaid nature reserve and then Rob Roy's Cave (which is not really worth the detour). The path from Inversnaid to the head of the loch is hard going with numerous ups and downs and a generally rough surface. After passing leaving the loch side and passing Doune Bothy the path does improve but it is a very long two miles from Ardleish to Inverarnan. If you are staying at Ardlui look out for the sign pointing to the ferry 2 miles before the end of this section. Walk down to the loch shore and call the ferry by raising the ball.

#### Section 6, Inverarnan to Crianlarich, 6 Miles, 10 Km, 5 - 6 Hours

Today provides fantastic relaxing walking after the ups and downs of the previous day. The way climbs slowly out of Inverarnan through Glen Falloch towards Crianlarich. Ben More and Stob Binnean provide a fantastic backdrop and the views back down Loch Lomond are first class. The way bypasses Crianlarich but if you need any supplies or are staying in Crianlarich follow the signs down to town.

#### Section 7, Crianlarich to Tyndrum, 6 Miles, 10 Km, 3 - 4 Hours

After Crianlarich you enjoy a period of secluded woodland walking before making your way back to the valley floor and through farmland surrounded by towering highland scenery. There is a small shop at Strathfillan Farm two miles before Tyndrum if you need some supplies to get you through to the finish of the day.

#### Section 8, Tyndrum to Inveroran, 10 Miles, 16 Km, 4 - 5 Hours

Get ready for a great days walking. The scenery is great and now that you are getting into your stride you will love the fast going on military roads. Initially you follow the valley to Bridge of Orchy, a small hamlet and sometimes used as an overnight. The Hotel does delicious meals if you fancy and early lunch. There is a steep climb as you leave Bridge of Orchy but you are rewarded with the best views in Scotland (my opinion). A short descent brings you to the isolated Inveroran Hotel.

#### Section 9, Inveroran to Kingshouse, 10 Miles, 16 Km, 5 - 6 Hours

Leaving Inveroran you skirt Loch Tulla and then join the military road across Rannoch Moor, a wonderful, lonely and exposed place that was once covered by a giant icecap and is today covered in bog. There is no shelter and in bad weather it can be exposed. In good weather it is simply inspiring. Kingshouse provides great views of Buachaille Etive Mor, Scotland's most photographed mountain.

#### Section 10, Kingshouse to Kinlochleven, 9 Miles , 14 Km, 4.5 - 6 Hours

From Kingshouse you follow an old military road to Altnafeadh, which gives great views of the famous 'weeping glen' and site of the Glencoe Massacre in 1692. Then you zigzag up the Devil's Staircase to the highpoint of the Way at 548m, which gives stunning views towards Ben Nevis, given clear weather. From here you wind our way down into the pretty little town of Kinlochleven, the end to a very pleasant day. Kinlochleven Facilities: Hotels, pubs, Co-op supermarket, cash machine, post office, internet, Ice Factor Climbing Centre. Lunch/Dinner: Both the Tailrace Inn and The Macdonald Hotel do good evening meals and packed lunches are available from the Co-Op or your accommodation. The Tailrace Inn also has live music on weekends during the summer.

#### Section 11, Kinlochleven to Fort William, 14 Miles, 23 Km, 6 - 8 Hours

The initial sharp climb out of Kinlochleven is worth it for the fantastic views it brings and once over the top you follow a wonderfully remote valley past deserted sheilings towards Fort William. Approximately half way through the day you enter a beautiful area of cultivated forest and follow a narrow winding track until you reach the saddle which brings you into Glen Nevis. Ben Nevis towers ahead and you can clearly see the mountain track which snakes up the southern side of Britain's highest mountain. At this point you bear left and follow a wide forestry road down to the Ben Nevis visitor centre and then the final two miles are along the Glen Nevis road. This brings you to the end of your Scottish odyssey on the outskirts of Fort William and time for a few well earned beers.

### **Getting there**

The walk starts in Milngraive which can be reached by air (Glasgow or Prestwick airport) by rail (Glasgow) or by car. The walk ends in Fort William (return transport not included) from where there is a Citylink bus (3 per day) or a First Scotrail train service (2-3 daily).

### **Price includes**

B&B accommodation as close as possible to the trail (en-suite wherever possible), baggage transfer, transfers to your accommodation if necessary, detailed map, guidebook and information pack are all included. Travel insurance, transport to the start or from the finish of the walk, lunches, dinners, snacks, drinks and walking equipment are not included.

Prices are per person sharing and depend on the itinerary chosen.

### **Available**

Mar—Oct

### **Typical Duration**

4 days - 9 days

### **Comfort level**

Reasonably comfortable (Inns, B&Bs, luxury camping etc.)

### **Experience required**

A reasonable level of fitness and interest is all that is needed

### **Travellers should bring**

The way is fully waymarked and easy to follow, you will need a reasonable level of fitness and standard walking kit including walking shoes or boots, waterproof clothes and a daypack.