

iPod Traveller

"The Best in European Travel"



▲ With your hosts:
Nick Hall and
Andrea Petzko!

Islands and Highlands: Part 1

Overview

Scotland is often described as “the best small country in the world”. This week we set off on a day-trip from Glasgow to visit the Isle of Arran - which boasts the title “Scotland in Miniature”.

There are more than 300 different islands off the coast of Scotland, 89 of which are actually inhabited. The Scottish islands are all incredibly enchanting, each with a unique character and charm. Visitors can spend months exploring the various landscapes and cultures each has to offer.

Arran has a number stone circles dating from neolithic times. It is thought that Arran was the home of the Brythonic speaking people. Later in the island’s history, it was invaded by Norwegians, which explains the number of Norwegian names on the island. Even Haakon IV of Norway visited in 1263 en route to the Battle of Largs.

What To See on the Isle of Arran

Brodick Castle (<http://www.nts.org.uk>). The castle can be seen by ferry passengers visitors from the docks in Arran’s main port at Brodick. Brodick castle is perched high overlooking Brodick Bay with rewarding panoramas for those who make the steep climb from the shore to the castle gardens.

The castle was the ancient seat of the Dukes of Hamilton, and home to the Duke and Duchess of Montrose until 1957. Now, the castle is preserved and maintained by the National Trust of Scotland. (National Trust members enjoy free entrance to the castle and gardens.) The castle also has a coffee house and restaurant.

Arran Distillery The Scots love to drink and Arran is the perfect island on which to do so. To encourage and indulge this national pastime, the Arran Distillery was opened by none other than Her Majesty the Queen in 1995. The distillery is situated in Lochranza and is accessible by bus from both sides of the island. The distillery has a visitor centre and provides regular tasting tours throughout the year.

It is believed that Robert Burns was particularly fond of some of the illicit stills being produced on Arran in the 18th century. That being said, the Isle of Arran Distillers is now a patron of the World Burns Federation. The Arran Distillery has produces and sells a range off Single Malts, Special Editions, and Wisky Blends.

Arran Brewery The Arran Brewery, founded in 2000, produces three beers; Arran Ale, Arran Blonde and Arran Dark. (We at iPod Traveller personally recommend the much-loved Isle of Arran Ale!) All three are available for purchase throughout Scotland and at selected pubs in the UK. The brewery has a visitor centre set in Cladach, a stone’s throw from Brodick castle.

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Getting there

Ferry is by far the easiest way to visit the main islands. Caledonian MacBrayne offers regular and reliable ferries to more than twenty islands off the east coast of Scotland, most of which accommodate cars. All of these are timed to link with the rest of Scotland's excellent public transport system of buses and trains. Getting to and navigating the islands is easy and hassle free. Bear in mind that railway stations will usually sell combined discounted rail-boat tickets.

For a country so underpopulated and with such difficult terrain, Scotland is surprisingly easy to navigate. Most of the islands off the west coast are easy to reach using the Caledonian McBrayne ferries and connect with local rail and bus services. Travel to the islands is affordable and enjoyable.

Rail

Glasgow has two main railways stations; Glasgow Central and Glasgow Queens Street. Glasgow is well connected with most major cities in England by GNER and Virgin services which both terminate at Glasgow Central. For those who want a more leisurely journey, the Caledonian Sleeper will take you from London to Glasgow overnight with bargain berths from £19.

Local services to Ardrossan Harbour leave Central Station frequently and travel down the Ayrshire coast. Continue a little further towards Ayr and witness some of the spectacular world famous golf courses that Ayrshire is so famous for.

Bus

There are a variety of long and short distance bus services connecting Glasgow with all the major and small towns in Scotland. Buchanan bus station is located near Queens Street station. City Link (<http://www.citylink.co.uk>) is the main provider of services in Scotland and they also provide affordable tours of the Lomand national park.

Air

Glasgow is the main international airport for Scotland and most major European and World cities are connected with regular flights.

The airport is connected with two competing bus services which cost approximately £5 to reach the city centre and take 20 minutes.

More recently, budget airlines have started using Prestwick Airport, all the way out in Ayr. easyJet were famously taken to court by British Airways for an advertising slogan aimed at snubbing Ryanair for using the Ayrshire airport. The advertisement referred to the airport as "Ayr Miles" for its actual distance from Glasgow.

Air Miles was incidentally a trade mark owned by BA, who weren't very happy about the pun and so ironically



▲ Tea-time at Brodick Castle

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Leave a message (USA):
347-427-9323

Send an SMS:
text the word 'travel' &
then your message to
+44 7766 40 41 42

took easyJet to court for their anti-Ryanair advertising.

The judge threw the case out of court after ruling that the feud between the two airlines was immature and pathetic. (Don't quote us on the accuracy of that story!)

Budget Airlines serving Glasgow & Prestwick:

BMI & BMI Baby, FlyGlobespan, Sterling, Flybe, Germanwings, Aer Arann, Ryanair, Jet2, easyJet, Central Wings and Sky Europe.

These airlines serve all of Western European destinations as well as Czech Republic and Poland.



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Visitor Links

Scotland National Tourist Board
<http://www.visitscotland.com>

Ayrshire and Arran Tourist Board
<http://www.ayrshire-arran.com>

National Trust of Scotland (search Brodick Castle)
<http://www.nts.org.uk>

Golf on the Isle of Arran
<http://www.arran.uk.com/golfing/>

Exploring the Isle of Arran

Island delicacies

Arran Distillery
<http://www.arranwhisky.com>

Arran Brewery
<http://www.arranbrewery.com>

Arran Aromatics
<http://www.arranaromatics.com>

Island Hopping

Caledonian MacBrayne

Caledonian MacBrayne provide ferry services to twenty-two different islands and four peninsulas on the Western Coast of Scotland.

If you plan to spend some time exploring more than one island then you may want to consider purchasing an Island Rover which gives you unlimited travel on all Caledonian MacBrayne ferries for a fixed price.

Islands served by Caledonian MacBrayne

Arran, Barra, Bute, Coll, Colonsay, Cowal, Cumbrae, Gigha, Harris, Lona, Islay, Kintyre, Lewis, Lismore, Mull, Raasay, Rathlin Island, Skye, Small Isles, Tiree, The Uists

<http://www.calmac.co.uk>

Links

► Rail

Virgin Trains
<http://www.virgintrains.co.uk>

GNER
<http://www.gner.co.uk>

First ScotRail
<http://www.firstgroup.com>

The Train Line (For rail bookings and timetables)
<http://www.thetrainline.com>

► Bus

National Express
<http://www.nationalexpress.com>

Megabus
<http://www.megabus.com/uk>

Eurolines
<http://www.eurolines.com>

CityLink
<http://www.citylink.co.uk>

► Air

Glasgow Airport, Edinburgh and Aberdeen airport
<http://www.baa.com>

Glasgow Prestwick Airport
<http://www.gpia.co.uk>

Skyscanner (low cost airline price search)
<http://www.skyscanner.net>

British Airways
<http://www.ba.com>

easyJet
<http://www.easyjet.com>

Ryanair
<http://www.ryanair.com>

BMI
<http://www.flybmi.com>

Flybe
<http://www.flybe.com>

Globespan
<http://www.flyglobespan.com>

Sky Europe
<http://www.skyeurope.com>

Central Wings
<http://www.centralwings.com>

Globespan
<http://www.flyglobespan.com>

Wizz
<http://www.wizzair.com>

A drunk co-presenter on the Isle of Arran!

