

## THE GRAND WHISKY TRAIL

### Introduction

- 8 Days / 7 Nights
- Any Day Start
- First Class Hotels
- Any Group Size

Scotland's breathtaking landscape stretches from the lush green hills of the Borders to the remote and mountainous Shetland Isles, just a few degrees south of the Arctic Circle. The terrain has a diversity unparalleled in Britain and it's challenging characteristics are reflected in the tough and self-reliant people. Steeped in history, Scotland's story is characterized by its resistance to foreign domination, and the lochs and glens are peppered with imposing castles and grand defensive houses.

Scotland is a land of distinctive flavours, and includes haggis, Aberdeen Angus beef, full flavoured venison, wild Salmon and trout, lobster, crab and wonderful game from the Highlands such as grouse and capercaillie. Of course, the most famous of all is Whisky. Made just from barley, yeast and stream water, Scottish single malt whiskies have a myriad of flavours, reflecting the unique craft of each distillery, the local peat and water and barrels used to age the whisky.

### Trip Profile

The aim of this tour is to give you a taste of the two most famous areas for malt whisky, the remote island of Islay on the west coast and Speyside, the home of malt whisky on the eastern side of the Highlands. Throw a stone here and it will land on a distillery. Speyside has everything required for whisky production, from the barley grown on the coastal plains to the rivers and springs which feed the distilleries.

You will have the opportunity to experience the whole process, from the malting and mashing to fermentation, distillation, maturation and bottling. Your tours will include tastings, often direct from the casks themselves. Many of the distilleries are in beautiful coastal and river locations with stunning scenery and you will be able to explore the attractions and delights of the local villages and towns.

**What's your favourite Whisky? Create Your Own Tour.** As with all our tours, the attractions and distilleries you visit will take account of your interests and can be adapted to what you want to see.

Your tour may be planned to coincide with one of the Islay or Speyside whisky festivals which occur through the year.

**Ferry times:** This tour is dependent an external ferry. This itinerary will need to be adjusted to take account of this.

### Itinerary

#### Day One

We pick you up from your hotel or airport and travel past the stunning scenery of Loch Lomond and Loch Fyne, famous for its oysters and shellfish, to the tiny port of Kennacraig, where we catch a ferry to Islay. Passing through the narrow Sound of Islay, we pass the high mountains of Jura to arrive at Port Askaig where we stop at the distillery of **Caol Ila**, nestling in a cove near the port. The pear-shaped stills and wash stills like flat onions are housed in a building dating back to 1879.

Before arriving at your accommodation, we visit **Bunnahabhain**, the most hidden of the Islay distilleries, which is so close to the sea that a kerb has been built to stop cars from rolling into the sea. Here we sample the sweet whisky said to taste of Dundee cake, toasted nuts and sea breezes. From here, we travel to your hotel in Port Charlotte. You may wish to spend the evening fishing for wild trout on the beautiful Loch Gorm.



Bunnahabhain distillery

## Day Two

We start the morning by driving to the southern tip of the island and **Ardbeg**, a distillery originally run by smugglers and famous for its peaty flavours. The Old Kiln restaurant here is a venue used by French writer-cook Martine Nouet who writes in Whisky Magazine. He highlights the aromas and flavours of whisky by relating them to the tastes in a meal, using foods found in Scotland. **Lagavulin** means “the hollow where the mill is” and this distillery is commanded by the ruins of Dunyveg Castle, once the stronghold of the Lords of the Isles. Neighbouring distillery **Laphroaig** has the most medicinal of malts. “Love it or hate it” says their advertising slogan. Its founder died by falling into one of the vats in 1847. Now you can claim part of the peaty site at Laphroaig, and plant a flag to mark your ownership. Finally, you may wish to visit, **Port Ellen Maltings**, who supply most of the Islay distilleries.



Laphroaig

## Day Three

This morning we visit **Bruichladdich**, Scotland’s most westerly distillery. It still uses much of the original equipment dating from 1881- the great iron mash tun and the Oregon pine wash backs. Before catching the afternoon ferry, we will stop at **Bowmore**, the capital of Islay, but barely more than a hamlet. We visit the famous Bowmore Vaults, where the whisky spends decades below sea level in damp cellars. From here, we return by ferry to the mainland and drive along the coast through one of the most historic landscapes in the world; **Kilmartin Glen**. Here there are 150 prehistoric sites and over 200 other ancient monuments. We finally arrive at your overnight accommodations either close to Fort William or Oban.



Bowmore Vaults

## Day Four

A short way from your overnight accommodation is the **Ben Nevis** distillery overlooked by Britain’s tallest mountain, called, Ben Nevis. One of the oldest distilleries in Scotland – it was established in 1825, incorporated in the visitors centre is the Legend of the Dew and the mythical giant; Hector McDram. North of Ben Nevis is Loch Ness and the ruined **Urquhart Castle**. This is one of the largest castles in Scotland with spectacular views across **Loch Ness** and Great Glen. It dates back to 597 AD and has a turbulent history – once a stronghold of the MacDonald family. There would be the option to cruise along the 24 miles of Loch Ness long home of the legendary monster, first sighted by St Columba in the 6<sup>th</sup> Century. Your hotel will be on Speyside where you will stay for the next three nights.



Urquhart Castle

## Day Five

Today, we will begin a three day whisky extravaganza in the home of malt whisky. Beginning the day at **Speyside Cooperage** where you can see skilled coopers and apprentices practising their ancient craft. Then onto **Aberlour** where you can hand-fill your own personally labelled bottle of Aberlour from a sherry butt and a bourbon barrel. In the afternoon, we will stop at **The Macallan** distillery, Speyside’s best known heavyweight. Their fine collection of old whiskies range in price from \$110 to \$33,000 per bottle. Following an in depth tour of the distillery, you will have the opportunity to sample the oaky, resinous, sherried flavours of the whiskies.



Speyside Cooperage

## Day Six

On the way to Cardhu, we stop at **Ballindaloch Castle** one of the most beautiful and renowned castles in Scotland, known as the Pearl of the North. **Cardhu** (Gaelic for “black rock”) is the only malt distillery pioneered by a woman. From here, we travel to **Glenfarclas**, where the stills are the biggest in Speyside. You may wish to visit Dufftown, the whisky capital of Scotland and home to **Glenfiddich**. You can visit the famous whisky shop or visit the factories of other famous products of the area, such as Walkers Shortbread or Johnston’s Cashmere. Private tastings and cooking with whisky events are hosted by restaurants in the town.



The stills at Glenfarclas

## Day Seven

On our final day in Speyside, we visit the distilleries of two outstanding malts; **Glenmorangie** and **Glenlivet**. Glenmorangie is still the biggest selling malt in Scotland. It selects its own trees from the Ozark mountains of Missouri and loans the loans the casks for four years to the Jack Daniels factory in Tennessee.

Glenlivet is the biggest selling malt in the USA and although it may be considered commonplace, it is a whisky of structure and complexity, with a flowery, peachy style.



Glenlivet

## Day Eight

Today, we travel towards Edinburgh, passing the resort of Aviemore to the **Dalwhinnie** distillery, one of the highest in Scotland at 1073 feet. Its name means "meeting place" and it lies on the main whisky smuggling route from the highlands to the Lowlands. From here we stop at **Blair Castle**, containing the pipes of Bonnie Prince Charlie.

In the neighbouring town of Pitlochry, we visit the smallest distillery, **Edradour**, working on a farmhouse scale. Nearby is the Moulin Brewery, located by the charming Moulin Inn which has been in existence since 1695. Finally, before leaving Pitlochry for Edinburgh, we call in at the **Blair Atholl** distillery, which traces its origins to 1798. The whisky is redolent of shortbread and ginger cake and is considered by Michael Jackson to be the ideal mid-afternoon malt.



Edradour

(4 days, all accommodation with breakfast, **Blue Badge Driver / Guide**, based on the number in your group)

**Price per person – please contact us – US Toll Free: 1866 464 7389**

## Accommodation and Tour Details

### Accommodation and Meals

Accommodation is based on first class accommodation. Lunch and evening meals are not included unless specifically stated in the tour notes. We are able to offer several grades of accommodations from beautiful bed and breakfasts to whisky orientated hotels and castles.

### Guides and Entrance Fees

Each tour is lead by a fully qualified **Scottish Blue Badge Driver / Guide**. In most instances, entrances to historic attractions are included in the price we will quote you. Distillery tours will vary according to the level of tour you require and between distilleries.

### Prices

We aim to offer the best and most competitive price for each of our tours. We use our partners to get the best price at the time of booking. The cost will also depend on the services you require. Please **contact us** for the best price.

### Airport Transfers

We can provide transfers from any location and airports or cruise ports. Return transfers from London airports to the start and finish of the tour are not in the tour costs.

## Practical Information

### Climate

As some of attractions on this tour are out of doors it is advisable to take the correct clothing. With the unpredictability of the climate and forecast, wet weather clothing is essential. Sturdy footwear and waterproof clothing are advised.

Jan	Feb	Mar	April	May	June
6	7	10	13	17	20
July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
22	21	19	14	10	7

### Health

This tour involves a walking on some terrain that can be fairly rough. We ask all our travellers to carefully consider the physical demands of our tours and discuss any concerns that may arise. There is much scope for flexibility within each tour to accommodate a range of limitations and needs, but we do have to be clear what they may be before accepting any booking.

Additionally, if you find walking difficult or any other health requirement, please let us know as soon as possible. There may be motorised wheelchairs available at some attractions. These may be booked if sufficient notice is given.

### Taxes

Value Added Tax is applied to most goods. Most travellers can get a VAT refund, but you must ask and the paperwork and procedures can be long and complicated.

### Tipping

Some restaurants and hotels will automatically add a 10-15% service charge. Check your bill before tipping further. Taxis, Restaurants, Bell Boys, Porter expect a tip, bar staff in pubs, do not.

## Important information

The information in this tour profile is given in good faith and covers the planned excursions, attractions and conditions which should be available on this tour. In some instances, due to unforeseen circumstances, changes in the above itinerary might be necessary. To appreciate this tour to its best, you should be prepared to be flexible where necessary.

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