



Inveraray, Loch Fyne

Scotland Through Writers' Eyes hiking adventure

With Johnson and Boswell, the Wordsworths and Stevenson

September 3-13, 2022

No twenty-first century person's conception of 'Scotland Today' could aspire to be the 'correct' one, even if the way things are now could somehow be all that mattered. It can't be and it isn't. Fortunately, the past has always had observers inclined to record what they have seen. Scotland has raised great writers of its own and has also attracted the attention of many literary outsiders; taken together, their contemporary accounts can give us remarkable insights, not only into days gone by, but also into the evolution of modern society. Their 'snapshots' can bring the past to life and help us to see things a little more clearly and 'in the round'. For us, whether they meant to be or not, these writers are the very best of companions along the way.

Highlights

- Edinburgh - Athens of the north
- Visit to Inveraray and Inveraray Castle where Johnson and Boswell had dinner with the Duke of Argyll.
- Walk across the sands to Erraid where Davie Balfour was shipwrecked
- 2 nights stay on the tiny island of Iona - Icolmkill in the 18th century
- Hiking between the impressive mountains of Glen Coe
- Stirling and Stirling Castle



Our literary guides

So, then, our literary guides for these 10 days – always intelligent, sometimes sympathetic, sometimes opinionated – are principally, but not solely, these:

- **Dr. Samuel Johnson**, and his friend and biographer **James Boswell**, who completed their autumnal Hebridean tour via Mull, Iona and Inveraray in 1773
- **Dorothy Wordsworth**,

who travelled in the southern and western highlands via Glasgow and Edinburgh with her brother, **William**, and, for part of the way,

Coleridge, in August and September 1803 and, to illustrate the successful shaping of landscape and history into page-turning fiction.

- **Robert Louis Stevenson**, whose *Kidnapped* takes the reader – and us – from 18th century Edinburgh to the Hebrides and back via Glen Coe and Stirling, always with a vividly descriptive feel for the country that his heroes are passing through.

Stevenson, as a Scot who was born in early Victorian Edinburgh and who lived there until early adulthood, also offers us a chance to explore the city and to reflect upon its influence on someone who was to become one of Scotland's greatest writers.

The Wordsworths are representative of a Romantic attitude to wild highland scenery that is commonplace today, but was then in the process of replacing the long- and deeply-held view of all 'civilised' people that such landscapes were simply rude and abhorrent.

Johnson and Boswell's separate and complementary accounts (read both!) are particularly important, coming not so very long after the



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Edinburgh from Calton Hill

political and social earthquake that shook the highlands following on from the Jacobite rebellion - or revolution - of 1745. They were in a position to observe and to record the effects on highland society of the disintegration of traditional clan relationships, particularly since they had access to all social levels.

Our major ports of call are

Edinburgh - the hill-strewn, sea-surveying capital where Johnson arrived in Scotland, from whence the Wordsworths left it and the place where Stevenson was born and grew up.

Argyll and the Isles - visited by each of our literary 'guides' and the setting for some of the central events in Stevenson's *Kidnapped*.

- *Inveraray*
- *Isle of Mull*
- *Isle of Iona*
- *Isle of Erraid*
- *Isle of Staffa*

Appin and Glen Coe – scene of the Appin murder and the flight of the heroes of *Kidnapped*

Stirling – a frontier town on the edge of the highlands – scene of crucial battles in Scotland's independence struggles.

The programme

B = Breakfast, L= Packed Lunch, D = Dinner

September 3 - Depart USA

September 4 - Edinburgh

Arrival at Edinburgh Airport and settle into our hotel. We'll have time to draw breath, and for coffee or tea, before taking a tour of the central Edinburgh that Stevenson knew. We will see both the elegant 18th century New Town, where he was brought up, the University and the Old Town where he pursued his studies erratically - but his cultural pursuits and pleasures with much greater enthusiasm. Overnight in Leonardo Edinburgh Townhouse, 2 nights. (L, D)

2 to 5 miles around the town, depending on time available. Take into account that Edinburgh is quite hilly.

September 5 - Edinburgh and around
In the morning, a walk in the Pentland Hills via Swanston, where the Stevenson family rented a second home in the country for thirteen years of Robert Louis' youth. Weather permitting, there are wide views over southern and central Scotland, with the highland line beckoning away to the north-west. In the afternoon, to Colinton, home of Stevenson's mother, Margaret Balfour, and to Cramond and the Almond



- 1+2. Edinburgh
- 3. Loch Lomond, Inveraray
- 4. Isles of Mull and Erraid
- 5. Isle of Iona

- 6. Isle of Staffa, Morvern, Glencoe
- 7. Appin and Ballachulish
- 8. Glen Coe, Calander and Stirling
- 9. Edinburgh



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Walking across the sand to Erraid

valley in search of the House of Shaws. (B, L, D)
4 miles and 1000 feet

September 6 - Loch Lomond and Inveraray

Famous in song, Loch Lomond lives up to expectations. A long loch of contrasts; a deep glacial trough in the highland north widening to a wide, island-studded expanse in the lowland south where we first encounter it. Johnson stayed on its shores as guest of the Colquhouns at Rose Dhu (Rossdhu), and the Wordsworths explored it thoroughly, almost end to end, visiting Rob Roy's Caves near Inversnaid en route. Rob Roy (a real person as well as a character from Scott) was a MacGregor chief, outlawed for cattle thieving and because his clan had massacred numbers of the better-connected Colquhouns at Glen Fruin. In the afternoon we'll explore Inveraray, where both Johnson and the Wordsworths stayed. Seat of the Dukes of Argyll, Inveraray Castle is at the heart of Campbell clan territory and Campbells play an important role as villains in Kidnapped. Overnight in Knipoch House Hotel, 1 night. (B, L, D)
4 miles and 800 feet

September 7 - Isles of Mull, Erraid and Iona

Journey to Mull. Visit to the Isle of Erraid
Today we board the ferry for Mull at Oban, temporarily leaving the Wordsworths behind, but continuing alongside the ghosts of both Johnson and Stevenson. They will loom large for us on Mull and its surrounding islands. After the 40 minute crossing, we drive, through increasingly spectacular scenery, to the Ross of Mull. Erraid, off the tip of the Ross of Mull, is a tidal island, but Davie Balfour didn't know that when he was shipwrecked on the fearsome Torran Rocks a mile or so offshore. Battered and weary, he thought himself trapped, and despaired - only to eventually discover, when the

tide dropped, that he could walk off to Mull and habitation. Stevenson was able to create these scenes and convincingly set them off Mull because he had spent time here working with his lighthouse-building engineering family during construction of the Dhu Heartach light. There is a lot still to see from those days, and the walk across Erraid to what locals call 'Davie Balfour's Bay' well rewards our efforts. If the weather is clear, the magnificent lighthouse itself can still be seen, 15 miles away to the south-west, as can, in ideal conditions, the still more remote and elegant Skerryvore light to the west, another family affair. After our walk we'll take the passenger ferry to the Isle of Iona. Only residents are allowed to bring their cars to Iona. Overnight St Columba Hotel, 2 nights. (B, L, D)
<3 miles and 500 feet

September 8 - Isle of Iona

Many people make the pilgrimage to 'Columba's Isle', but the island, and most importantly the village, remains quiet through the morning. By the time the day trippers arrive from Oban, we will have had plenty of time to see the abbey, the nunnery and the burial place of some 50 kings of Scotland, Ireland and Norway (if legend be believed) and will be ready to set out on our tour of the island's quietest and most beautiful corners. We'll visit the Bay at the Back of the Ocean and a second bay where Columba is said to have first set foot on the island. (B, L, D)
5.5 miles and 395 feet

September 9 - Staffa, Morvern, Glencoe

We'll take a boat from Fionnphort to Staffa, the beautiful, uninhabited island best known for its magnificent basalt columns. Mendelssohn was inspired to write his oratorio Fingal's Cave following his visit here, but Johnson was unable to land because of the weather. As we'll be going in a better season, with a better boat and a more solidly-crafted landing place, we should have more luck. We travel back to the mainland in the afternoon, following the route via Morvern Davie Balfour took. Overnight in the Clachaig Inn, Glencoe, 2 nights. (B, L, D)
Short distances and climbs



Isle of Staffa



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September 10 - Appin and Ballachulish

The country of the Appin Stewarts is where historical events, having their roots in the post-Culloden breakdown of traditional highland society, took place - eventually to be used by Stevenson in Kidnapped. The Appin Murder was notorious in its day, and is still not forgotten. The Campbell victim had administered estates forfeited by those who had supported the Jacobite revolutionaries in their failed attempt to re-establish a catholic Stuart monarchy. Accordingly he wasn't popular locally. The government needed to arrest and punish a killer – or at least a scapegoat – and found one in James Stewart of the Glens. Perhaps it was him, perhaps not, but he was certainly executed. In Kidnapped, suspicion falls on Alan Breck Stewart, Davie's companion, and the lives of both are at risk as they flee across Scotland, trying to get to Edinburgh and safety. The murder and execution sites are both on our route. (B, L, D)
5 miles and 820 feet

September 11 - Glen Coe and Rannoch Moor, Lochearnhead, Callander, Stirling

We will take a walk in Glen Coe, through which our heroes fled, to get a feel for their plight. We'll also see Rannoch Moor, across which they then made their way - a vast desolation, evocatively described by Stevenson. The Wordsworths also came this way. There will be an option to walk a section of the West Highland Way from Glen Coe to Inveroran. After the walk we continue our journey via Lochearnhead and Callander to Stirling. Overnight in the Golden Lion Hotel, Stirling, 1 night. (B, L, D)
5.5 miles and 1000 feet or 8.5 miles and 740 feet.



September 12 - Back to Edinburgh via South Queensferry and Corstorphine Hill

Stirling functioned as a heavily defended garrison town throughout the Scottish Wars of Independence. It's something of a frontier town between highlands and lowlands at a crucial crossing place where the Forth becomes tidal. Both the Wordsworths and Davie Balfour passed this way en route to Edinburgh, Davie having great difficulty in evading soldiers who were searching for him. A stroll through the old town and a walk up Dumyat Hill together provide the best way to appreciate just how crucial Stirling's position is.

On the outskirts of Edinburgh, we pass the Forth Bridges at Queensferry, where, as the name clearly indicates, ferries once ran back and forth between Lothian and Fife, and where Davie Balfour established his good faith. Finally, before going on to our hotel, it would be remiss not to visit the Davie Balfour / Alan Breck statue on the outskirts of the city at Corstorphine Hill. Overnight in Leonardo Edinburgh Townhouse, 1 night. (B, L, D)
5 miles and 950 feet plus short strolls

September 13 - Flight back to the USA
(B)



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