



A Literary Hike Through Scotland with Poet Kim Stafford September 4-13, 2022

THE HIKING

You must be reasonably fit to participate in this tour. Hikes will be 3 to 8.5 miles per day, sometimes uphill (up to 1300ft of ascent), and over uneven ground. Terrain will be varied: city walks, open and rough moorland, hill, and coastal cliff tops. On most days, the hikes will involve two or three shorter hikes.

There is always the option to opt out for a hike and there is a minibus available to take you to a place of interest instead, but please be aware that a number of places of interest during the tour can only be reached on foot.

WEATHER IN SEPTEMBER

September conditions vary from cool to warm and back again within a week - or even within a day - but 'hot' is certainly overdoing it (a daytime maximum of 15°C-20°C/60-70°F will be as good as we can expect and we may not get it - we are on the latitude of Sweden after all. Night time temperatures will usually drop to around 10°C/50°F. September isn't, on average, one of our driest months; fortunately, in the West Highlands, 'on average' is almost a meaningless phrase but you do need to be prepared with clothes to cope with rain, which could be blustery and heavy, and with anything from cool, windy weather to warmth. Coastal walks in particular are likely to be breezy (again, plenty of warm clothes have to be in the luggage) and on the hills it can turn cold in a very short time.

CLOTHING AND OTHER KIT FOR WALKING EACH DAY

To stay warm dry and cosy during the walks, you should be able to use your outdoor clothing to regulate your body temperature easily and protect yourself from the elements. The three-layer system is a versatile way of ensuring comfort and protection from the outdoor elements. Its means you can change your layers

according to the conditions and your exertion level. In general you would use the three-layer system on your upper body, but don't forget you can apply the same principles to your hands and feet and legs to full benefit.

1. **Base Layer: the next-to-skin garment**

The base layer should be soft against the skin. Seamless garments tend to make good base layers as there is usually less chafing. In terms of performance properties, base layers with moisture wicking properties are usually a good option as they have the ability to wick perspiration away from the skin helping you to stay dry and comfortable.

2. **Mid Layer: the insulating bit in-between**

A mid layer keeps you warm, it does this generally by trapping air between the fibres. Fleece is great at doing this and makes an ideal breathable mid-layer. Mid-layers may also come lined with a wind-blocking membrane, so you can keep the wind out without the need to put your outer waterproof jacket on.

3. **Outer Layer: the water- and windproof jacket and over-trousers**

The outer layer should be a durable layer which provides protection against the elements. It should keep the wind and rain out and if the weather demands it, be breathable to allow internal moisture out.

Jeans/cotton trousers are not recommended as it takes a long time to dry and do not insulate when wet.

It's worth bringing two of your main hiking clothing - trousers, socks, sweaters etc. in case they don't dry overnight for any reason. Lightweight, quick-drying materials are best.

Good, settled weather may mean you can do without them, but in a cool breeze on the hill, an exposed shore and during ferry crossings and boat trips, you may well

find yourself glad of a hat and gloves or mittens. Since you can't be sure of the weather very far ahead, they should certainly be in your luggage.

WALKING/HIKING BOOTS

Your boots must have a firm sole with a secure grip and they should be waterproof and provide adequate ankle support. Your boots needn't be heavy, but if they're very lightweight you'll probably end up with wet feet. Smooth or nearly smooth soles might be lethal, to the extent that we might not be able to take you on the walks for safety reasons. For all these reasons, trainers and walking/hiking shoes aren't suitable. If your boots are new, don't forget to walk them in before you arrive - even if it's around the house - blisters from unaccustomed footwear could really spoil your week.

GAITERS

Almost everyday you will walk on rough ground where ticks are abundant. Ticks are known to transmit several diseases including Borreliosis (Lyme disease). Gaiters prevent ticks from crawling into your trousers and they also prevent that your trousers will get wet from the undergrowth. If you don't use gaiters, tuck your trousers into your socks.

You could also wear insect-repellent clothing. These clothes give some protection against ticks and other biting insects, including midges.

Walking poles can be very useful for the rough ground we will walk on every day.

DRINKING WATER

Use a camelbag, water bottle and/or a vacuum flask for your drinking water. We will give you an aluminium water bottle on arrival. We kindly ask you to refill it with tap water. The tap water in Scotland is of drinking water quality and using tap water is much better for the environment: less waste and no transport of bottled water.

Bring a small thermos flask if you like to have a hot drink during your walks. Ask the breakfast staff to fill it with coffee or tea.

DAY RUCKSACK WITH WATERPROOF COVER OR LINER

There is a packed lunch to take with you each walking day. We will give you a packed lunch bag at the beginning of your holiday. You'll need a 25 litre day rucksack to carry this plus anything in the way of spare clothes (sweater or fleece), waterproofs, maps, cameras, binoculars etc. that you normally carry. A folding sit mat will keep you dry during the breaks when the ground is wet.

A small bag to leave in the minibus, with a pair of shoes and a dry top might be useful, too.

FIRST AID

There are also a few seasonable items that you may want to pack, in particular the summer, that include insect repellent, sunglasses, and sun block as even when it is cloudy you will still be exposed to the ultraviolet rays from the sun.

We'll carry a first aid kit, which should cover most eventualities, but if you have any favourite remedy for anything from sore feet and blisters to the plague don't forget to bring it with you.

EVENINGS

It's really up to you, of course. You won't need anything formal!

PLEASE NOTE

You do not need to bring the following clothing and equipment, because we will provide these for use during your holiday with us:

- Hiking poles
- Gaiters
- Folding sit mat