

# Lewis & Clark



## A BRIEF GUIDE TO SITES VISITED A LITERARY HIKE THROUGH SCOTLAND WITH POET KIM STAFFORD

**Sunday September 4**

### **EDINBURGH - OLD AND NEW TOWN**

The Old Town of Edinburgh is built on a narrow, sloping crest between the Castle and Holyrood Palace, so limited in space by its steep-sides and the deep valleys on either side that houses had to become taller and taller. The ultimate response, in the late 18th century, was the beginning of an entirely 'New Town' to the north (especially) and to the south, with bridges and 'the Mound' linking old and new. This tradition of tall housing in Scotland continued in the 19th century in the form of the 4 or 5 storey tenement buildings common in all our large towns and cities, in contrast to the 2-storey terrace houses then going up in England's industrial towns. The Scottish Writers' Museum focuses on Burns, Scott and Stevenson.



**Monday September 5**

### **EDINBURGH - ALLERMUIR HILL, SWANSTON AND COLINTON**

#### **Allermuir Hill and Swanston**

Swanston is almost more of a hamlet than a village, conversely Swanston Cottage is more of a white-harled country house than a cottage, if that implies a rather tiny house; tiny it certainly isn't. Most people come here to walk in the hills, and that's what we will do too. There are good paths, and if we make it to the top of Allermuir Hill or Caerketton the views cover much of central Scotland; Edinburgh is at our feet, the Firth of Forth and Fife beyond, and the Highlands in the distance to the north and north-west.





## Colinton

Colinton Dell is a fine example of a gorge cut by glacial meltwaters. In Stevenson's day, there were several paper mills along the river, not to mention grain and snuff mills - the railway that would later serve them is now supplying part of the line of our walk.

We'll walk down along the long steps with Stevenson's poems along the way to Colinton Parish Church and then on to the old Colinton railway tunnel with murals inspired by Stevenson's poem "From a Railway Carriage".



**Tuesday September 6**

## LOCH LOMOND AND INVERARAY

### Loch Lomond

The Wordsworths were impressed by Loch Lomond near Inchtavannach, an island just south of Luss. Dorothy wrote: '...when we came nearer, we saw three or four thatched huts under the trees, and at the same moment felt that it was a paradise. This was a place where we should have liked to have lived.'

Dr. Johnson, thirty years earlier, found here 'nothing more than uncultivated ruggedness.' How quickly attitudes change. To be fair, it was raining.

### Inveraray

Inveraray is an excellent example of an 18th century planned town. The Dukes of Argyll, the Chiefs of Clan Campbell, who planned it, entirely demolished both the old town and the old tower-house castle to build it. Inveraray Castle is their home, and Inveraray, through history, their town. In the style of a true capital, it used to contain the town houses of a court of gentry comprising many important Campbell families whose estates were elsewhere in Argyll and the Highlands, and featured in both the story of the Glencoe Massacre (through its Sheriff) and the trial of James of the Glens (through its court and jail).

Johnson and Boswell, and later the Wordsworths, all stayed at the Inveraray Inn (then the New Inn) and on the whole, were pleased with it. Though Dorothy found it 'over-rich in waiters and large rooms to be exactly to our taste', she was impressed by the view from her bedroom window, describing it as part of 'one of the most splendid moonlight prospects that can be conceived' mentioning particularly Dun na Cuaiche and its hilltop watchtower.



**Wednesday September 7**

## **MULL AND ERRAID**

### **Isle of Mull**

Our road from Craignure on Mull to Erraid and Iona broadly reverses that taken by Johnson and Boswell, as well as the fictional David Balfour, though no road worth a wheel existed for either party west of Loch Don. The first part of our route traverses mountains that are the remaining stumps of a huge volcano that contributed to the opening of the North Atlantic Ocean about 60 million years ago. The local geology eventually changes to the distinctive red granite of the Ross of Mull which was quarried on behalf of the Stevenson family for four different lighthouses.

### **Isle of Erraid**

We'll walk across the sand to the granite island of Erraid, tide permitting, and, - despite David Balfour's four day 'imprisonment' on the island - it does dry for really quite long periods at each low tide.

Erraid's little 'township' and quay, were built in 1867 to service the quarry and a shore station for the construction of Dhu Heartach Lighthouse. An Observatory and Signal station was added about 1870, an off-duty keeper checking that the lighthouse was functioning correctly each evening. In 1892 Erraid also took over the shore station role for Skerryvore lighthouse and continued in the double role until 1972, when its functions were transferred to Oban.



A short ferry ride will take us to the Isle of Iona where we'll continue our explorations.

Of his visit to Iona, Boswell writes: 'As we approached the shore (at dusk), the tower of the cathedral, just discernible in the air, was a picturesque object. When we had landed upon the sacred place, which, as long as I can remember, I had thought on with veneration, Dr. Johnson and I cordially embraced.'

**Thursday September 8**

## **ISLE OF IONA**

Iona, once called Innis nan Druinich (Isle of Druidic Hermits) was inhabited as far back as the Iron Age and may have been a religious centre long before St Columba established his original monastery, almost nothing of which now remains.

Columba, an Irish prince, landed by currach at Port a Churaich in the south of the island in AD563 accompanied by twelve companions. During the next 34 years he founded a monastery and turned Iona into a place of pilgrimage and Christian learning which was renowned throughout Europe. He was a strong man with the confidence of a royal upbringing who forged powerful





links with the kings of Dalriada and with the Picts in the north-east of the country. He died on the island in AD597, having achieved his goal of converting the Picts to Christianity.

Wealthy pilgrims brought money to the monastery and in the 8th century some of the finest Dark Age works of art were created to glorify Columba. The beautifully illustrated Book of Kells, removed to Ireland for safety during the Viking raids, was crafted on Iona along with the Celtic high crosses of the 8th and 9th centuries, given by wealthy patrons to promote the Cult of Columba.

In AD794 the first Viking raid on Iona took place with widespread destruction, and the monastery was razed to the ground. It was rebuilt but the Norse attacked again in 798 and 802 each time burning and levelling the buildings. Once more it was rebuilt. In 806 the Vikings again returned, destroying the monastery and murdering 68 monks at Martyrs' Bay. After a further raid in 825 the few remaining treasures on Iona, along with St Columba's remains, were removed to Kells in Ireland and Dunkeld in Scotland. Another murderous raid on Iona occurred in 986 when the abbot and 15 monks were killed at the White Strand. It is little wonder that so few relics from this ancient seat of European culture survive.

Iona may have been abandoned, but in the 10th century its power was revived when the Vikings converted to Christianity. In 1203 Reginald, son of Somerled, founded a new monastery.

The final eclipse of Iona came with the Reformation and the passing of the Act of 1561 for 'demolishing all the abbeys of monks and friars, and for suppressing whatsoever monuments of idolatry were remaining in the realm'. Iona became a target for bigoted vandalism, worse than the acts of the pagan Vikings, and was abandoned.

For almost 400 years the settlement lay in ruins until, in 1938, the Iona Community was founded and set about restoring the ruined abbey.

Iona Abbey is now a scheduled ancient monument and all work is directed by Historic Scotland.



## Friday September 9

### STAFFA , MORVERN AND TO GLENCOE

#### Isle of Staffa

Six miles NNE of Iona, the Isle of Staffa (Old Norse for Pillar Island, or Stave Island) is famous for the basalt columns of Fingal's Cave, as impressively architectural as the pillars of any great cathedral. Near-perfect columns form when basalt lava of particularly consistent composition cools slowly, without disturbance, so that the cracks that relieve the stresses of shrinkage focus around evenly-spaced cooling centres, ideally forming hexagonally-sided columns.

Widely known for Mendelssohn's Hebrides Overture, the famous tone poem, often called the Fingal's Cave overture for the particular source of its inspiration, the island was, in fact, first made widely famous in Britain and beyond in 1772 by Joseph Banks, the botanist of Cook's first voyage. He was known to Johnson and Boswell, the



former mentioning him in his 'Journey': '...Staffa, so lately raised to renown by Mr. Banks.'

Johnson and Boswell couldn't visit because of the weather. Wind and waves always have the potential to stop anyone from landing on Staffa.

### **Morvern to Glencoe**

We set off for Morvern and Glencoe via Mull. Stevenson doesn't make David's departure place for the mainland clear (Torosay is a large parish, not a port) but it may have been Leth-Thorcaill - next to Fishnish our car ferry - where once there were cattle markets.

At Loch Aline, David saw a very early example of an emigrant ship filling with people who'd been cleared from their homes to make way for sheep.

Continuing David's route we must continue beyond Kingairloch to cross the ferry at Corran narrows. David found passage across Loch Linnhe with a fisherman.

## **Saturday September 10**

### **APPIN AND BALLACHULISH**

A cairn marks the scene of the killing of Colin Campbell mentioned in Kidnapped, for the Appin Murder was a real event that spoke eloquently to the Jacobite and Hanoverian politics of the time and is still remembered.

Campbell's job had been to manage estates forfeited by losing Jacobite rebels after their failed attempt to restore a Stuart monarchy. He would collect rents and evict recalcitrant tenants, hence he was hated, a situation not helped by his being a Campbell, a clan with a (not untarnished) history of supporting the government in a frequently rebellious part of Scotland.

Campbell had been heading towards Duror, in the north of Appin, where James Stewart, James of the Glens, lived. His birthplace still stands in Glen Duror It is now an unlocked bothy in which anyone can stay the night. James Stewart was convicted and the court condemned him to death by hanging.

Cnap a' Chaolais (Narrows Hill) was chosen as a prominent spot, above the ferry at Ballachulish, where the hanging could be seen from afar as a warning to others. His chained corpse would continue to dangle on the gibbet for eighteen months. The place is marked today by a memorial overlooking Loch Leven, close beside the south end of the Ballachulish bridge, which replaced the ferry in 1975. Surrounding trees would not have been there at the time.



## **Sunday September 11**

### **GLEN COE, RANNOCH MOOR AND STIRLING**

#### **Glen Coe and Rannoch Moor**

Dorothy thought 'the mountains all in all... the glen nothing, only green pasturage for sheep and something that tells of former cultivation'; their guide told them that formerly the glen had had many inhabitants. Dorothy wrote, 'I cannot

attempt to describe the mountains, I can only say that I thought those on our right...were the grandest I had ever seen'. That must have been the Three Sisters, with glimpses beyond up to Stob Coire nan Lochain and Bidean nam Bian.

We'll walk a section of the West Highland Way from near Kingshouse to the Inveroran Inn (both now answering to the name 'hotel'). The route follows a combination of the 1752 military road, driven by the Wordsworths before breakfast, and its parallel parliamentary successor of the early 19th century. Both inns still exist, though not necessarily inspiring the same comments! Dorothy on Kingshouse would, I suspect, like to have been libellous. Not to repeat it all for lack of space, it's enough to note that 'Never did I see such a miserable, such a wretched place...' sums up her feelings well. So bad was it that she would later forgive Inveroran their poor breakfast and write '...Inveroran still lives in our recollection as a favoured place, a flower in the desert.'



## Stirling

Stirling has been an important and often disputed place since Roman times, and probably earlier. A glance at a map tells you why. Scotland is very narrow-waisted between the Firths of Forth and Clyde, and is restricted even more by bogs and mountains to the north and west. Because of this, Stirling, a fordable place at the head of the tidal Forth that lines up with the natural north- and north-east-going route way to the Tay via Strath Allan and Strath Earn, has been a major focus of roads since Roman times, with a bridge since at least the 13th century.

Stirling Castle was the preferred residence of most of Scotland's later medieval monarchs, most adding something to its buildings; James IV and V, particularly, brought classical Renaissance ideas to their contributions in the 16th century.

## Monday September 12

### DUMYAT HILL AND RETURN TO EDINBURGH

#### Dumyat Hill

Before we leave Stirling, there is nowhere better from which to appreciate Stirling's position than the top of Dumyat (pronounced dum-eye-at) the westernmost summit of the Ochil Hills. On a clear day, the views are simply stunning. At the summit the whole of the Forth valley is at your feet to the south. To the north-west are the hills of the 'Highland Line, including the moorland of Uam Vor, where David Balfour and Alan slept before descending to the Lowlands.

#### Edinburgh

It would be remiss of us not stop on our way into the city and walk up Corstorphine Hill to the 'Rest and be Thankful' and visit the statue of David Balfour and Alan Breck below Corstorphine Hill. Unveiled in 2004 by Sean Connery - who knew all about fictional characters - it was



designed by Alexander Stoddart. Excellent, very accessible, and seen by thousands every day, might it have been more appropriate to place it some 300 feet higher up the hill, at the 'Rest and be Thankful', the shoulder overlooking the city where Stevenson has Davie and Alan part.

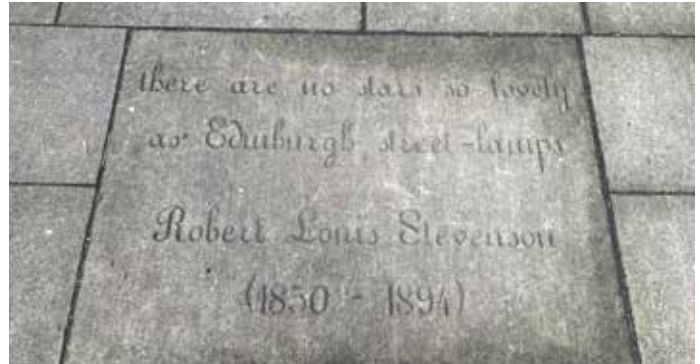
**Tuesday September 13**

## DEPART

Before you go, it seems somehow only right to allow Stevenson, as an Edinburgh native, the last word from his own city:

'The ancient and famous metropolis of the North sits overlooking a windy estuary from the slope and summit of three hills. No situation could be more commanding for the head city of a kingdom; none better chosen for noble prospects...But Edinburgh pays cruelly for her high seat in one of the vilest climates under heaven. She is liable to be beaten upon by all the winds that blow, to be drenched with rain, to be buried in cold sea fogs out of the east, and powdered with the snow as it comes flying southward from the Highland hills... Happy the passengers who shake off the dust of Edinburgh, and have heard for the last time the cry of the east wind among her chimney-tops! And yet the place establishes an interest in people's hearts; go where they will, they find no city of the same distinction; go where they will, they take a pride in their old home.'

Robert Louis Stevenson: 'Edinburgh: Picturesque Notes'



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## YOUR LOCAL GUIDES

There will be two guides and a tour manager with the group each also driving a minibus.

### John King, guide

John lives in Thurso in the far north. He is an experienced mountaineer, Summer and Winter Mountain Leader and Rock Climbing Instructor. Growing up in and around Glasgow, John developed his love of the outdoors in the Scottish Highlands. Taking every opportunity to get out into the hills he has explored many of the wilder and remote corners of the Highlands, in all seasons, and has built up an intimate knowledge of the Scottish hills and glens as well as a keen interest in the ecology, geology and history of the natural environment. John is passionate about passing on his knowledge and skills, and sharing his enthusiasm for the hills with others.



### Rachel Ashwell, guide

Rachel moved up to Scotland in her twenties and hasn't looked back; she particularly loves exploring Scotland's 'wild west' and islands. Rachel works as a Summer and Winter Mountain Leader and Expedition Leader, having lead expeditions and treks in Iceland, Norway, Nepal, Morocco and Tajikistan. Rachel balances this with a medical career and has a keen interest in the benefits of the outdoors to our health and wellbeing. She also works as an Expedition Medic and holds the Diploma in Mountain Medicine.



### Frieda Bos, tour manager

Frieda organizes the itinerary and will be your first point of contact to make sure all your questions are answered promptly. Frieda is Dutch and has lived in Scotland since 2002. She is the owner of the local tour operator and she is a keen walker. Scotland has triggered her interest in archaeology and geology, due to the amazing wealth of archaeological sites and the varied mixture of rock types.

