Swansea University Summer Trip - Scotland

By Chris Laidler

Summary

This is a trip we will be running this summer from June 18th to July 2nd. Basically the trip is split into 3 stages comprising 4 nights in the Cairngorms, 3 nights in an area called Assynt, and finally a week on the Isle of Skye. I've spent a fair amount of time in the areas I plan to visit and so I've included some photos of my previous adventures with family and friends.
The trip would be organized and run by the hiking club and hence we would do a walk most days but we are also likely to do some touristy stuff, eg. visit a whiskey distillery, whilst up there.

Stage 1

Day 1,2,3,4
18th June -21st June

Day one we'd drive from Swansea to Aviemore.

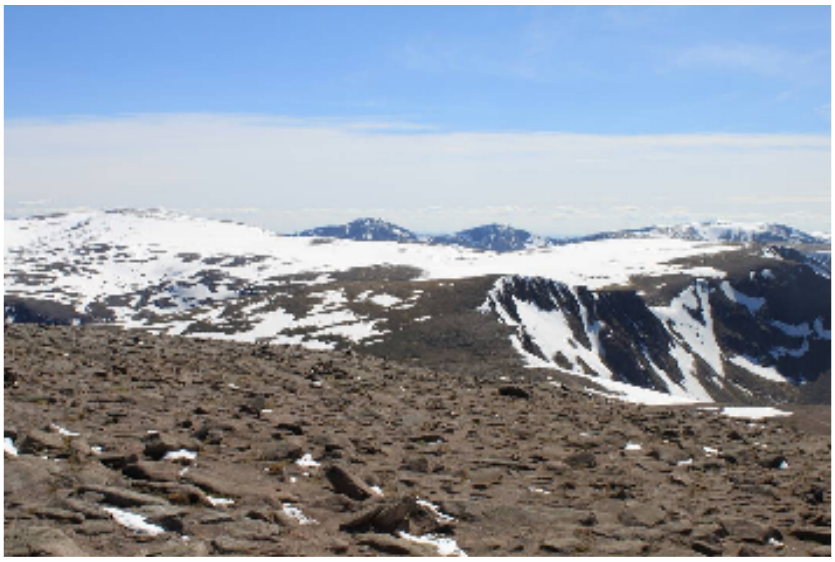
Accommodation; For this stage we are planning to camp in the forest campsites close to the Cairngorm mountain range.

Walks and Things to do in the Cairngorms;

- There are many mountain walks within the Cairngorm national park
- Walks in the Spey Valley.
- Walks around Lochness and the Great Glen.
- Spey Valley Steam railway.
- Loch Morlich and the Rothiemurchus estate walks.
- Mountain walks in the Cairngorms (soooo many and many shorter walks too).
- Hire bikes - all the cross country ski routes are bike routes when not snow covered.
- Numerous lochs to walk to or around.
- Visit the polar bears that live down the road at Kingussie

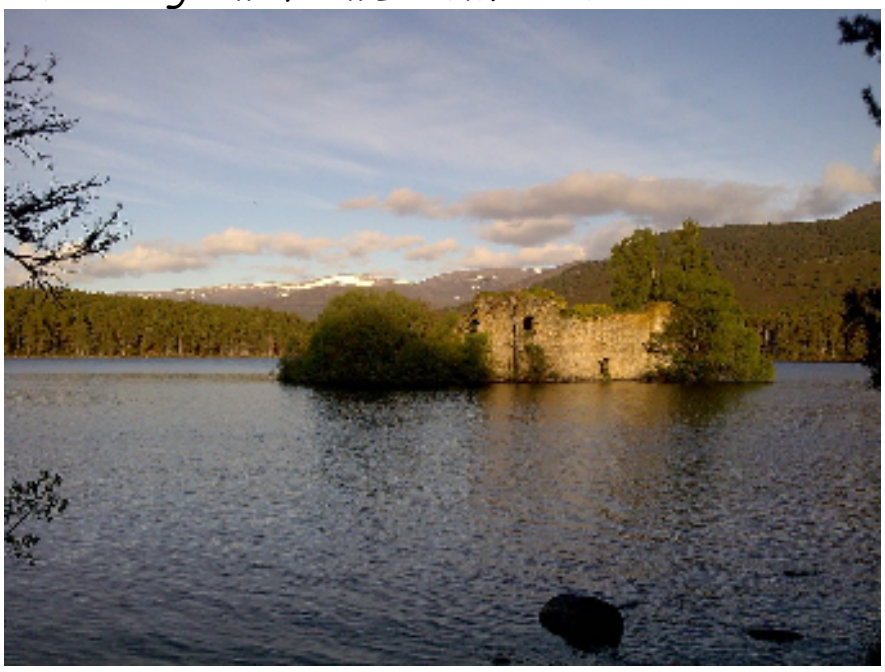
Photos of the Cairngorms area

The A9. The main road through the Cairngorms



Up on the Cairngorm plateau.

The Cairngorms from Loch Morlich



Loch Eilean, just a few miles from the campsite below

A photo of the campsite we used on my previous visit. A red squirrel would come to the trees around our tents each morning ☺

Stage 2

Day 5,6,7, 22nd – 24th June

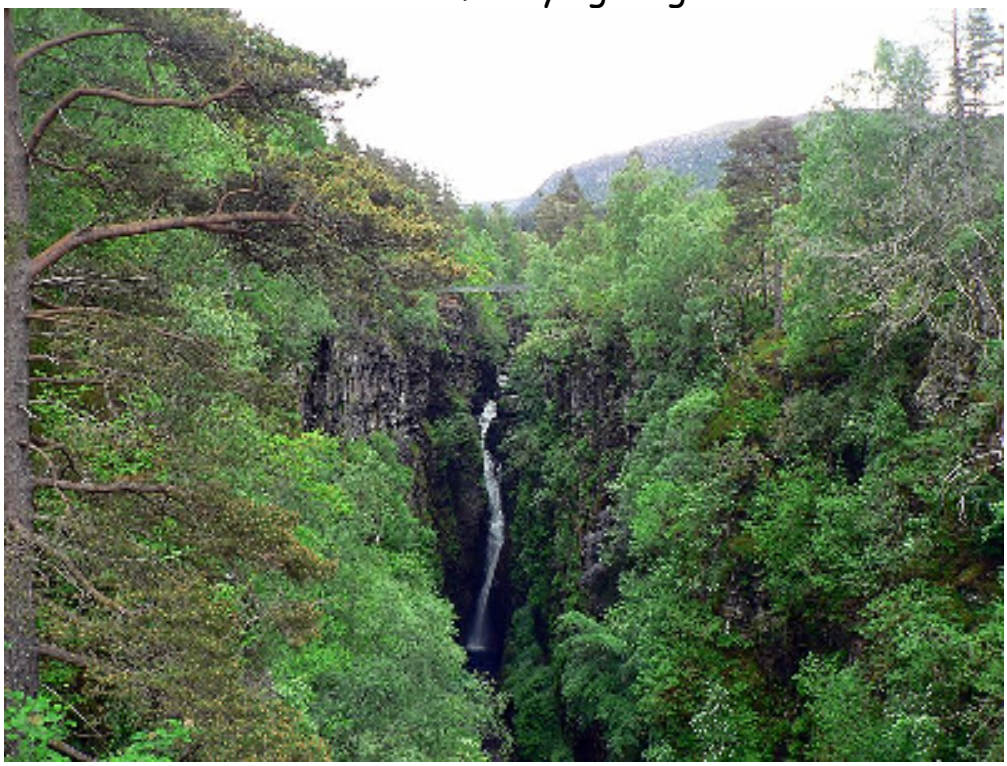
Day 5; Travel Aviemore to Achmelvich (Assynt Geo-park). This is another amazing drive, en route is the Corrieshalloch gorge, the Rogie falls, Ullapool, which has some nice touristy shops. This is actually quite a long drive but in my opinion is on some of the best roads in Britain.

Accommodation; There's a fantastic youth hostel a stones throw from the beach (if it's available), or we may camp for this stage

Things to do; This area is one of the Uk's best kept secrets, the scenery is more what you expect to see in Canada and Scandinavia.

- Suilven (A long full day walk but well worth it ☺), the walk also passes some groovy waterfalls.
- Walk to Eas a Chual Aluinn (Highest waterfall in the UK). It's a good waterfall but it really is in the back of beyond!
- Coastal walks - Point of Stoer is very good for Dolphins etc.

- Chillout on the beach!!!
- Falls of Kirkaig.
- Assynt coast road- unsuitable for caravans, busses and nervous drivers!
- Numerous other walks of varying lengths.



The Corrieshalloch gorge, for scale note the foot bridge!

Achmelvich beach.

Suilven.

The mountains of Assynt!

The proposed YHA, beach is where the green becomes horizon on the left of the picture

Suilven.

Loch Assynt

Sunset from Achmelvich beach. 30 secs walk from the YHA

Day 8,9,10,11,12,13,14
25th June -1st July

Day 8; Travel from Assynt to the Isle of Skye

Accomodation; Skye doesn't have that many bunkhouses considering it is one of

the major hiking / climbing areas in the UK and it's also a very large Island (the Gower would fit into it about 5 times). However there are a number of large self catering cottages etc which do sleep up to 12 which have to be block booked for a week from Saturday to Saturday so the dates have been set around this. The plus side is that this will be a self catering holiday cottage (and hence relatively luxurious!)

Day 8 we would travel from Achmelvich to Skye and day 15 (July 2nd) we would travel back to Swansea.

- **Things to do;**
  - Walking in the Cullins
  - Climbing in the Cullins
  - Boat trips
  - Visit some amazing rock formations
  - Coral beaches
  - Coastal walks
  - Wildcamping
  - Relaxing ☺

Transport.

I've planned this trip with the intention of keeping the group size to between 6 and 12 people (or thereabouts). Accommodation starts getting more limited if the group gets any larger. This trip requires us to use cars in some form as public transport in the Highlands of Scotland is not regular enough to be used on a daily basis and would limit us far too much.
Basically to keep the cost of the trip low we have to mostly use our own cars, however I realize that the trip covers a large distance and so I've bugdgeted in £70 per car to give to the car owner in return for their car coming along (towards wear and tear). I also suggest adding a second driver to the insurance for the trip which would also come out of the trip money.

Costs

The cost will be **£300 each** for a 15 day trip. However this allows for a certain amount of 'contingency' in case prices (e.g fuel) rise between now and the trip and so it may cost slightly less.
If you could bring along a car you would only have to pay £230.

Note that costs don't include food but you would have to buy food if you stayed at home!

The main limitation to this trip is having enough cars and additional drivers to take everyone who wants to go.

How to signup to the trip
We realize this is an expensive trip for students to afford so we've decided to ask for 3 payments of £100 spread between now and June. One by Monday 21st February, one after Easter when the next loan payment comes through and one in June just before the trip starts.

Skye photos

The Cullins

The old Man of Stoer (an inland stack)

Sunset from the doorstep of our cottage last time I stayed on Skye.

The Cullins

The Quiraing rocks and the surrounding hills

Walking in the Cullins.