

Walk Islay 2017

Booking

It is not vital to book any walks this year however we would appreciate a quick email to tell us you are interested in attending any of our walks to footstep@walkislay.co.uk or post your interest on our facebook site <https://www.facebook.com/WalkIslay/?ref=hl>

Fees and advice

A fee of £4 will be charged for each walk. The cost of a return foot passenger to Jura is £3.50 and to Colonsay £8.00

Bus timetable can be viewed here <http://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/sites/default/files/btt196-450-451.pdf> note school holiday timetable should be used.

Refreshments as well as suitable footwear and clothing are strongly recommended. We request that smoking is permitted only at the discretion of the walk leader and kindly ask you not to bring your dog due to the presence of livestock with young across the islands. We have tried to grade the walks as easy, moderate, challenging and strenuous.

Transport

This year we are trialling a shared transport group, un through facebook. We hope those with cars will be able to provide lifts to walks that the public transport service does not reach. Please join the group if you are seeking a lift or are able to offer a space or two in your car <https://www.facebook.com/groups/1644688679165939/>

Walks Programme

Sunday 9th April – The Oa and Beinn Mhor

Meet: 10.30am
Park: The Oa RSPB American Monument carpark NR282423
Walk Leader: David Wood and Phill Catton
Level: Moderate and Strenuous in places across heather and on high cliff edges
Distance: 6 miles (plus optional 3 miles of road walking – Allow 5-6 hours
What to bring: Packed lunch and suitable footwear/clothing
On a bus route: No – see Facebook Group ‘Walk Islay Shared Transport Group’

A linear walk on the Oa with stunning views to Northern Ireland and the Mull of Kintyre if the weather is fine. Our walk leaders are RSPB staff members Dave Wood and Phill Catton. The walk will begin in the RSPB Oa reserve carpark – approx. 40 minute drive from Bowmore. From here we will traverse some beautiful bays on top of high craggy cliffs. Walkers will summit Beinn Mhor before continuing to walk around part of the Oa very few get to see. You are likely to see wild goats, golden eagles and chough along the way. The walk will continue past Stremnishmore and the site of an ancient chapel before joining up with a farm track and heading back inland to the road. We will then transfer walkers who have ‘had enough’ 3 miles up the road back to the carpark.

Monday 10th April – Three Distilleries and the plague village of Solum

Meet: 10.00am
Park: Opposite the Ramsey Hall, Port Ellen – next to public toilets
Walk Leader: Pat and Jane McGrann
Level: Morning option easy. Afternoon option moderate to strenuous
Distance: Approx. 6 miles (3 miles in morning, 3 miles in afternoon allow 6 hours)
What to bring: Suitable footwear/clothing/money for lunch at Ardbeg or a pack up
On a bus route: Yes bus arrives at 09.10 – suggest amble around the village or coffee at Islay Hotel whilst you wait for walk to commence. [View bus timetable here.](#)

Today's walk leaders are husband and wife team Pat and Jane McGrann. Walking from Port Ellen on a purpose built accessible pathway we will pass the distilleries of Laphroaig, Laguvulin and Ardbeg. Along the way we should have fine views across to the Mull of Kintyre and the nearby island of Texa. We will stop for lunch at Ardbeg Old Kiln Café where walkers can purchase lunch of soup and sandwich for £7 a head. Picnic tables are provided outside if you choose to bring a packed lunch.

For those walkers that want to head back to Port Ellen, you can take the bus that leaves Ardbeg at 2.13pm, or walk back to Port Ellen yourself. You might like to stop for a wee dram or a tour at one of the distilleries on your return route. Please note walk leaders will not be accompanying you back along the pathway at this point.

For keen explorers our walk will continue onwards in the afternoon up through Callumkill estate to the plague village of Solum, whose inhabitants are understood to have been wiped out in the 18th century. This circular walk will see us returning past the carved portraits on the rugged stone at Callumkill. This element of the walk is approximately 3 miles and will take a couple of hours.

We will aim to catch the public bus from Ardbeg at 4.18pm back to Port Ellen.

Tuesday 11th April

Option 1 – Bunnahabhain to Bholsa – circular walk

Meet: 9.30am
Park: Grassy triangular parking area near Bunnahabhain Distillery (on the left before the hairpin bend) Grid Ref. NR 418 734
Walk Leader: David Webster and Isobel Freeman
Level: Strenuous and challenging over a long distance
Distance: Approx. 11 miles (17 km) Allow 7-9 hours
What to bring: Lunch and snacks, suitable footwear/clothing
On a bus route: No – see Facebook Group 'Walk Islay Shared Transport Group'

This is a challenging, remote walk and only fit and capable people should participate.

From Bunnahabhain walkers will head north for a short distance before turning inland and following ATV tracks to Dubh Loch and heading over the moor to the ruins of Bholsa village. Depending on time, weather and group fitness, there may be an optional ascent of Mala Bholsa. Walkers will then head east along the spectacular coast with its dramatic raised beaches and cave

systems to the beautiful sands of Baigh an da Dhoruis. From there the return route is over the moor onto the coast south of the lighthouse to pick up the ATV tracks back to Bunnahabhain.

There should be some stunning views north to Colonsay and Mull as well as east towards Jura. David is an experienced geologist and will give a fascinating insight into the unique geology along the way. If anyone has got Dave's book on the Geology of Islay, then the route follows Excursion 9.

Option 2 – The American Monument, The Oa

Meet: 10.00am
Park: The Oa RSPB American Monument carpark NR282423
Walk Leader: Dave Maynard and Phill Catton
Level: Moderate
Distance: 2 miles (allow 2-3 hours)
What to bring: Refreshments (lunch if you like yours early!), Suitable footwear/clothing
On a bus route: No – see Facebook Group 'Walk Islay Shared Transport Group'

Today we will meet at the RSPB carpark on the Oa reserve, approx. 40 minutes drive from Bowmore. Our walk leaders for today are RSPB staff members Dave Maynard and Phill Catton who will lead a circular walk around the stunning cliffs of the Oa to the American Monument. The Monument was built to commemorate the lives lost in two shipwrecks 99 years ago during the First World War. If the weather is good, walkers will enjoy breath taking views across to Northern and the Republic of Ireland.

This walk will take just under 3 hours to complete. Bring your binoculars as there will be a good chance of seeing Golden Eagle and Chough along the way.

Wednesday 12th April – The Isles of Colonsay and Oronsay

Meet: 9.30am in order to purchase ferry tickets for 10.05 sailing. Meet in passenger waiting room.
Park: Ferry Users Carpark, Port Askaig
Walk Leader: James How and Andy Knight
Level: Moderate
Distance: 6-7 miles (allow a full day for this excursion – 4-5 hours walking)
What to bring: Lunch and snacks, suitable footwear/clothing, money for ferry ticket (breakfast and dinner can be purchase on board the ferry)
On a bus route: Yes bus arrives at 9.16am [View bus timetable here.](#)

We're leaving Islay today! Please ensure you are at Port Askaig by 9.30am in order to buy your foot passenger return tickets to Colonsay for the 10.05 ferry, these will cost £8.00. At Port Askaig we will meet up with RSPB staff member James How who spent many years living on the Isle of Oronsay, our destination today!

We are very excited to be heading to Oronsay as most years the tide means we are unable to cross 'the strand' from Colonsay to Oronsay. Upon disembarking at Scalasaig at 11.15am we will

transport walkers up to the start of the strand, this will save time and mean walkers will be able to spend more time on Oronsay.

The strand is covered by the tide twice a day, so please do ensure you wear appropriate footwear. Once over on Oronsay we will meet up with RSPB site manager Andy Knight and his team. We will have a chance to explore Oronsay Priory and Cross and time for a walk around the small island.

Before the tide returns we will head back to Colonsay and walk or transport people back to Scalasaig village where there will be time to explore the village, do a little bit shopping or try the local ale in the hotel. We will catch the 6.15pm ferry where walkers will be able to purchase dinner on board before arrival into Port Askaig, Islay at 7.30pm

Thursday 13th April

Option 1 – Beinn Bheigier

Meet: 10.00am
Park: Carpark opposite Ramsey Hall, next to public toilets, Port Ellen.
Walk Leader: Tam Dunn
Level: Strenuous and Challenging
Distance: Approx. 8 Miles (allow 6-7 hours)
What to bring: Lunch, snacks, suitable footwear/clothing
On a bus route: Yes bus arrives 9.10am [View bus timetable here.](#)

A big walk today, to the summit of Islay's highest peak Beinn Bheigier. Our walk leader today will be Tam Dunn who will meet us at 10am in the car park opposite the Ramsay Hall and next to the public toilets in Port Ellen. From here we will arrange shared transport and drive onto to Claggain Bay. Tam's walk will start from Ardtalla and will take us straight out to the summit of Bheinn Bheigier, (NR430565). From the summit we will head west and walk around the top of Glen Leora to the old drovers track on Stoain. This will lead south, down onto Claggain ridge where we will turn east past some old settlements and a chapel before arriving back at our cars. The walk is around 8 miles of strenuous and challenging walking and should take around 6-7 hours. The views from the summit are stunning and don't forget your packed lunch as well as snacks to keep you going on this big walk!!

Please note that this walk is very much weather dependant – an alternative from the same start point will be undertaken if the weather is inclement.

Option 2 RSPB Loch Gruinart

Meet: 10.00am
Park: RSPB Loch Gruinart Visitor Centre
Walk Leader: RSPB Staff
Level: Moderate & Easy
Distance: 3.5 miles (allow 2-2.5 hours)

What to bring: Refreshments, Suitable footwear/clothing

On a bus route: No – see Facebook Group ‘Walk Islay Shared Transport Group’

We have two walk options at Gruinart this morning.

The first leaves the visitors centre and heads out onto the moorland heading North and returning to the road beside Moulin, from there we walk along the road to Gruinart farm and then down through the fields and back along the sea wall and return alongside one of the “corncrake corridors”. A moderate walk, 3.5 miles long, about 2.5 hours allowing for bird watching en route.

An alternative shorter walk will also be led by RSPB staff down to the hide, returning through the woodland trail along tracks and paths, about 2 miles and 2 hours to allow for birding en route. Both these walks will start at 10am prompt.

Friday 14th April – Jura and the deserted village of Cnocbrec

Meet: 10.15am for 10.30am ferry

Park: Ferry Users Carpark, Port Askaig

Walk Leader: Donald Ewen Darroch

Level: Moderate

Distance: Approx. 6 miles (allow 4-5 hours)

What to bring: Lunch, suitable footwear/clothing, money for ferry £3.50 rtn

On a bus route: Yes bus arrives 9.16am [View bus timetable here.](#)

As has become a Walk Islay tradition – its Friday and time to head to Jura! Meet up with other walkers down by the Jura ferry at Port Askaig ready to depart at 10.30am. Tickets are purchased onboard for £3.50. Take the 5 minute crossing where we will meet with our walk leader Donald Ewen Darroch. Walking from Feolin, the ferry port, we will head north along the sound of Islay up to Inver Cottage and along the coast to the Raised Beach, crossing to the old village at Cnocbrec. From here we will head back along the hill track. This is a moderate walk with spectacular views of the Paps of Jura looming over us.

Ferries back to Islay depart every hour and we will likely catch the 3.25pm arriving into Islay at 3.30pm.

Upon arrival at Port Askaig walkers could enjoy a drink in the Port Askaig Hotel to celebrate the end of Walk Islay 2017.

Contact Details

If you require further information on Walk Islay, please email Bonnie Wood footsteps@walkislay.co.uk or visit our website www.walkislay.co.uk or our facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/WalkIslay/?ref=hl>