

Walkislay

A walking week for all on Islay and Jura ("guaranteed midge free, we believe")

Saturday 12th April To start walkislay this year, we have "A pilgrimage with DJ visiting 6 ancient chapels". We meet up with Donald James MacPhee at 10 am sharp at Dunlossit Kennels, Ballygrant and aim to be on our way by 10.15. From the Kennels we walk out to the "lost chapel" at Lossit, and then head north to Dun Bhoraiac and on to Kilslevin chapel site which is dedicated to St. Slevin. From here we head west to Keills and to the old chapel, St Colm-cille. We then take the old road to Mulreesh, passing the lead works en route to Cill Eileagain chapel which is dedicated to St. Eligius. Heading south, we arrive at Eilean Mor to the remains of the chapel dedicated to St Finlaggan where we can view the carved stones. Walking along the east side of the loch, we head for Robolls Hill, passing a hill fort, Dun Cheapasaidh Mor, and then on to Robolls. From here, we follow the road round to the last site, Kilmeny cemetery, Cill a Mbanach, dedicated to the monks. We then go east to upper Kilmeny and over the ridge to the Glen Road, returning to the Kennels for well earned tea and pancakes. This is circular walk of around 8 miles and taking about 6 hours. Please remember to bring wet weather gear, and suitable footwear. Please also remember to bring your packed lunch with you. This walk is not suitable for dogs. On this walk, we will pass through roe deer habitat and is a good area to observe the Dunlossit rare breed pigs, as well as birds of prey and wild fowl. A good 3* walk to start the week with, see note at end relating our new stars! We reckon this is a strenuous walk!

Sunday 13th April Today we meet up at Bunnahabhain at 10.15 for a 10.30 am start, Lindy MacLellan and Bryony MacFarlane are our leaders. From Bunnahabhain, we head out past the shielings to Margadale and then climb up Margadale Hill then head down before making the ascent of Sgarbh Breac, taking in the tremendous views all around. From the summit, we go down to the Sound of Islay, and then return to Bunnahabhain along the coastline. This is a fairly strenuous walk, about 8+ miles, taking about 6 hours, but another 3* well earned. On this walk we would welcome well behaved, sociable dogs (no fighters allowed!). The dogs may have to go a lead in certain areas where we may encounter deer. Please remember to bring your packed lunch with you.

For those of you, who wish an easier option, meet Susan MacGhie at 2pm at the junction on the High Road which leads back into Bowmore via Cruach. Susan's walk is a linear walk along the "Burma Road", a track built after the Great War by returning servicemen to Islay. This "road" leads down towards the Low road meeting it at just below Corrary, with "road" itself, roughly following the River Laggan. This is around a 3 hour walk of moderate walking covering 4 miles, giving you plenty time to take in the views and the wildlife all around. A moderate 2* walk. Don't forget to take some light refreshments with you!

At 9pm in the Port Charlotte Hotel, there will be some light music along with some of the locals, so come along for a pint and enjoy the craic! No stars for this one, sorry.

Monday 14th April Today, Walter and Beth Ramsay are our leaders. We meet with them at 9.45 for 10am start from the Cask warehouses at Bruichladdich Distillery! From there, we head up to Conisby, and across the moorland, down Gleann Osamail to Rockside and to Kilchoman Distillery, where you may purchase your lunch, rather having to make sandwiches! From Rockside, we head out over the moor to Sunderland Hill, and return over Cnoc Breac to Conisby and Bruichladdich. The heather out in Gleann Osamail could be quite long, so it could be tough going! Another 3* walk this time, about 8 miles of challenging walking, taking about 6 hours! There may even be a dram waiting for you on your return to Bruichladdich.

An easier option is to meet with LindyMacLellan and Florrie MacAllister at 9.45 pm at the car park Ardbeg Distillery. We leave at 10am sharp. Their walk will go out to Solum, and the fever village taking in some of the carved stones and local history. From Solum, we return to Ardbeg Distillery passing St

Catherine's well and for those who wish, they may purchase their lunch at the Distillery. We reckon this should take around 2.5 hours, about 4 miles of moderate walking. Another 2* walk.

There will be a "Visitors Welcome evening", at 8 p.m., to be held in Gaelic College, Bowmore. Listen to some of our local musicians, sample Rae's cloutie dumpling and wash it down with a local dram. Even better, there is no charge for this! Come and share some Islay hospitality at its best.

Tuesday 15th April This morning we meet with Jack Adamson at 9.00am sharp at the car park at the Auction Market, Bridgend. We shall be sharing transport, leaving at 9.15am. We will be walking from Gortantoid, across the moorland to the caves at Bolsa. From Bolsa, we follow the coastline to the lighthouse at Rhuvaal and then head south along the Sound of Jura to Bunnahabhain. We return to our cars at the market after being picked up at Bunnahabhain. Do not forget your food as there are no shops en route! The views, weather permitting are not to be missed, both of the scenery and of herds of Red Deer. A good strenuous 3* walk, around about 14 miles, for all you hardy walkers. **This walk will be limited in numbers to the first 14 names to Ian Brooke on 01496 850 382. This walk is the same as the successful one that Jack led two years ago.**

An alternative, shorter walk will be led by Michel Copleston starting from the car park at the ROPB Oa reserve, Upper Killyen at 10am sharp. This is a circular walk taking in the American Monument returning along the coastline to Upper Killyen. On a clear day, Rathlin Island and the Irish coast can be seen. This is about 4 miles of moderate walking and 3 hours of your time and is a 2 * walk. Light snacks advisable for those who wish one.

Wednesday 16th April Today, we meet up at Port Askaig at 9.45 sharp with James How to catch the ferry over to Colonsay. Our walk will be from The Strand, up to Garvard and over to Cnocbreac and then down to the coast line at Traigh nam Barc. We head down to Ardskenish and then turn north along the back of the dunes, go up past Turigil and head over towards the Airport and also the golf course and return along the road to Scalascaig. This walk will be around 5 miles off road, of moderate walking. We will be providing transport on Colonsay to help you having to do so much leg work on the roads. We should return to Islay around 7pm evening. Remember your lunch again or you will be able to purchase food on the Cal Mac ferry, especially if you have worked up an appetite after this walk. James's walk is another good 2 * for your card.

Meanwhile back on Islay in the afternoon, James and Mary MacAulay will take us for our guided walk with a surprise cuppa en route. Meet 1.30 p.m. at MacAulay & Torrie's shop in Port Ellen. A leisurely walk, about 5 miles of moderate walking taking about 3 hours, depending on how long you take over Mary's tablet! Another 2* walk, for the other James!

For those who wish a shorter, easier option, meet at the Service Point, Jamieson Street, Bowmore at 1.30pm for one of "walkaboutabit" walks. More details of the actual walk will be announced nearer the time.

Thursday 17th April For those wishing, some of Jura, we will meet up at Port Askaig at 09.10 for shared transport on the 0930 ferry. We will meet in with Gordon Muir and Louise Gregory at Craighouse for their walk out to the Market Loch. This is a shorter walk, compared with other epic walks that Gordon has led for us in previous years, about 6 miles taking around 3 hours of challenging walking, and earning you 3*. We may be lucky and find the standing stone in the middle of the plantation. You may purchase lunch at the Jura Hotel on our return to Craighouse, for those who wish not to face another day of sandwiches! The rest of the afternoon is yours to discover Jura, returning to Islay whenever you wish.

For those not wishing to go overseas (Jura!), meet at Visitor centre, R.S.P.B. Loch Gruinart Reserve, 9.30 for 9.45a.m. start. This walk will be led by Catherine Fotheringham. On leaving the visitors centre we head out onto the moorland and head North and return 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! (Only 2*). James How will also lead the shorter walk down to the hide, returning through the woodland trail. James's walk will leave at 10am prompt, along tracks and paths, about 2 miles and 2 hours to allow for twitching en route (1* walk, sorry James!). There will be soup and some snacks available after the RSPB walks in the visitor centre.

At 8 p.m. on Thursday evening there will be an illustrated talk, on Islay wildlife by George Jackson at the Wildlife Centre, Port Charlotte. There will be a small entrance fee, but there will be some refreshments available afterwards.

Friday 18th April, our last day and Tom Dunn will meet with us at 10 am for shared transport at the car park opposite the Ramsay Hall, Port Ellen. Tom's walk will start from Ardtalla will take us out to the summit of Bheinn Bheigier, (NR430565) Islay's highest hill. The walk is around 5 miles of moderate to challenging walking and should take us not more than 3 - 4 hours. Please remember that although we meet at Port Ellen our walk will actually commence from out towards Ardtalla. The views from the summit are not to be missed, see Islay and all around from a different viewpoint. The last walk for those dreaded sarnies, thankfully....., Tom's walk is worth every step to gain you another 3* and take in some of our spectacular scenery.

For those of you who wish a shorter alternative, meet with Iain MacPherson at 10 am at Ardnave, for a walk round Ardnave Point taking in the former Herring fishery at Tayovullin, hear about the battle at Traigh Ghruinneart, just come and enjoy the scenery and possibly see the odd Seal, on Nave Island. This is a circular walk, about 5 miles, graded moderate and 3- 4 hours of your time. Remember to bring your refreshments with you. Another 2* walk!

For our final walk we meet with Michael Copleston at the Visitor centre, RSPB Loch Gruinart reserve. This walk is billed as a "Ghost walk". We will meet at the Visitor Centre at 18.00 and share transport to Kilnave Chapel and then return along the shoreline and through the woods and possibly have some spooky tales on the way! We would recommend that torches are brought on this walk as it could be dark by the time we finish up back at the Visitor Centre. This is a linear walk, around 3 miles moderate walking and only 2 hours of your time. Only 2*, but you will get a well deserved plate of soup and sandwiches to refresh you when we get back to visitor centre.

A nominal fee will be charged for each walk, and **suitable footwear and clothing is strongly recommended**. We regret that dogs will be allowed only on the Sunday walk, with smoking only at the discretion of the walk leader. We have tried to grade the walks as easy, moderate, challenging and strenuous.

*For those of you who had been wondering what the star rating are for, well here goes. This year as an incentive for you to come and join us on the walks we will be giving you **walkislay prize**. All you have to do is to do the walks to attain a total of 8 stars to aim for your **walkislay prize**.*

We wish to thank the various land managers who kindly allowed us to hold **walkislay** over their properties, and all the walkleaders gave their valuable time and help to make the walks possible.

If you require further information on **walkislay**, phone Ian Brooke on 01496 850 382, or e mail us on footsteps@walkislay.co.uk