

What's the rush?

To appreciate the immense beauty of this area one needs to allow plenty of time. So instead of driving on, stop awhile, put a tape of Gaelic music on the car stereo and watch the light sweep the view before you.

Below is a wee suggestion on how long to linger at the locations listed over:

Key:

Soak **U**p **T**he **S**cene
Get **O**ut **A**nd **W**alk

1. 30 mins (GOAW)
2. 15 mins (SUTS)
3. 1 hour (GOAW)
4. 5 hours (GOAW)
5. 10 mins (SUTS)
6. 30 mins (SUTS)
7. 2 hours (GOAW)
8. 2 hours (GOAW)
9. 30 mins (SUTS)
10. 1 hour (GOAW)
11. 1 hour (GOAW)
12. 2 hours (GOAW)
13. 2 hours (GOAW)
14. 5 hours (GOAW)
15. 5 hours (GOAW)
16. 4 hours (GOAW)
17. 45 mins (SUTS)
18. 2 hours (SUTS)
19. 1 hour (GOAW)
20. 20 mins (SUTS)
21. 45 mins (GOAW)
22. 30 mins (GOAW)
23. 20 mins (GOAW)
24. 20 mins (GOAW)
25. 45 mins (GOAW)



Gaelic

Gaelic is the traditional language of the Highlands and Islands and is currently undergoing a rich revival thanks to the efforts of many dedicated institutions and individuals throughout the length and breadth of Scotland.

Pronounced 'GALIC', not 'gaylic' or 'garlic', the language is particularly lyrical and illustrative. Below is a glossary of words you are sure to come across whilst with us, but beware, their pronunciation is very different to their spelling! If in doubt why not ask a local for help.

Abhainn - river
Acarsaid - anchorage
Ailean - green field
Aird - promontory
Airidh - shieling
Allt - burn
Ath - ford

Bac - bank
Bàgh - bay
Baile - town
Bàn - white
Beag - little
Bealach - pass or coll
Beinne - ben or hill
Beithe - birch tree
Bodach - old man
Brae - top or summit
Breac - speckled
Bruach - steep hillside
Buidhe - yellow

Cailleach - old woman
Caisteal - castle
Camas - bay
Caol - kyle or narrow strait
Cioch - woman's breast
Clach - stone
Clachan - village
Cladh - churchyard
Cnoc - small hill
Coille - wood or forest
Coire - corrie
Cruach - stack or heap

Darach - oak
Dearg - red
Dubh - black or dark
Dùn - mound or fort

Each - horse
Eas - waterfall
Eilean - island
Fada - long

Fang - sheep pen
Faoghail - ford or sea channel
Fraoch - heather
Fuar - cold

Garbh - rough or harsh
Geal - bright / white
Glas - stream
Glas - grey or green
Gleann - glen or valley
Gobhar - goat

Inbhir - rivermouth
Iolaire - eagle

Lagan - hollow
Leac - flat stone
Learg - hillside
Leitir - slope
Loch - lake
Lòn - stream or marsh

Machair - low grassy land
Maol - headland / rounded hill
Meall - rounded hill / lump
Mòine - mossy place
Mhòr - large or tall

Ob - bay
Ord - conical hill

Ruadh - red or reddish
Rubha - headland

Sean - old
Sgùrr - peak
Sith - fairy
Srath - river valley
Sruthan - stream
Suidhe - resting place

Traigh - beach

Uisge - water



FOR MORE INFORMATION:

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www.highland.freedom.com
www.scotinfo.co.uk
www.smo.uhi.ac.uk
www.ealaghol.co.uk
www.kyleakin.com
www.lochalsh.com
www.gardenofskye.co.uk
www.skye.ws
www.plockton.com

The official web site for the communities of Skye, Lochalsh and Raasay.

Discover a wealth of information about the area and way of life, even make contact with local people.

MAPS:

Ordnance Survey maps for Traveller's Companion guides:
ORDNANCE SURVEY LANDRANGER SERIES 1:50,000
SHEET 32 SOUTH SKYE & CUILLIN HILLS
SHEET 33 LOCHALSH, GLEN SHIEL & LOCH HOURN
SHEET 25 GLEN CARRON & GLEN AFFRIC
SHEET 24 RAASAY & APPECROSS, LOCH TORRIDON & PLOCKTON
SHEET 23 NORTH SKYE, DUNVEGAN & PORTREE



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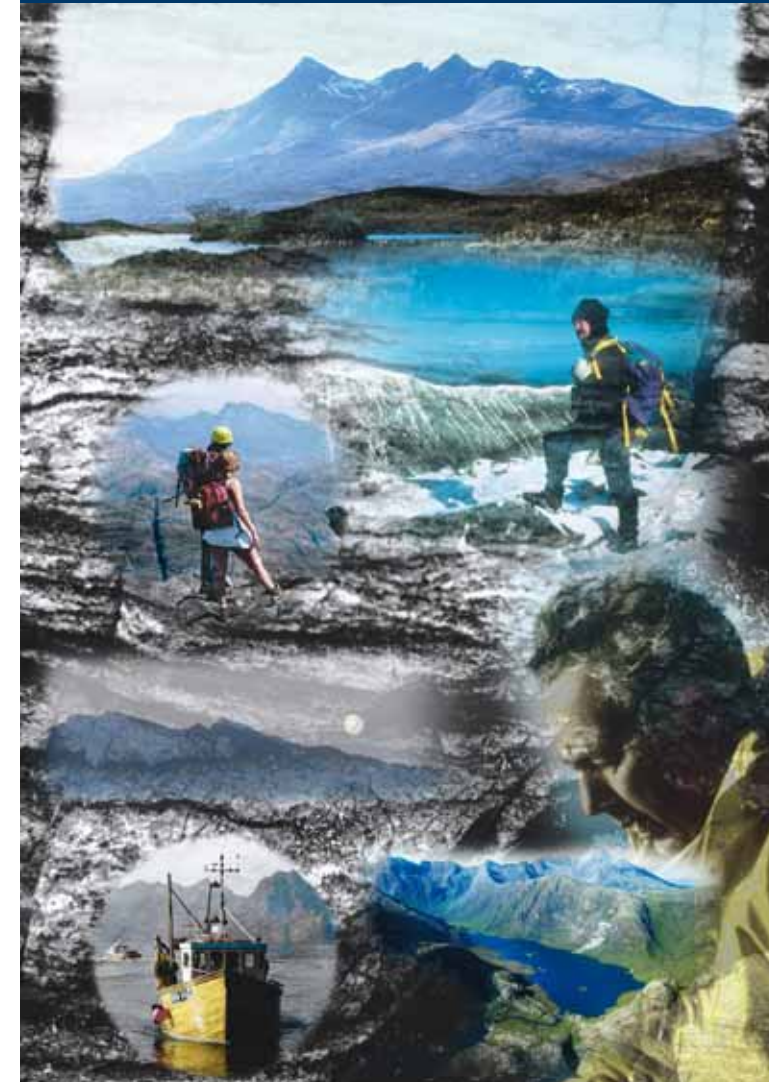
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TRAVELLER'S COMPANION



Central Skye



1. Moon rise over the Cuillin
2. From the summit of Sgur Alasdair
3. Loch Harport and Carlost village
4. Talisker Bay
5. The road to Elgol
6. The rocks of Strathaird
7. The black Cuillin from the Dunvegan Road - Sligachan

the sights and sounds, present and past
of Skye & Lochalsh



The great Irish poet, WB Yeats, once wrote: **“Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold”**, for he, of course, knew that without a centre, nothing can be held together.

Imagine, therefore, Skye without the Cuillin: it is (almost) like a world without God, a sea without water, a heart without a beat.

Those great areas of Skye - Duirinish and Minginish and Bracadale and Waternish and Sleat and Trotternish and so on and so forth - are but spokes round the hub of the Cuillin. As Skye's greatest poet, Sorley MacLean, put it in Gaelic and English:

**“Latha dhomh air Sgùrr a' Ghreadaidh,
na mo sheasamh air an roinn aird eagaich.
Ag amharc sìos air Coire 'n Uaigneis
Troimh bharcadh a' cheò mun cuairt orm...”**

(you can find this original Gaelic in any local bookshop, but the English version of it continues) ...

**“in a breaking of the drift
a glimmer of gold shone on the wings
of an eagle passing down below
beside the flanking walls;
and to me above the glory of all birds
the golden glimmer of the Skye bird.
I turned, and north and north-west
there was Minginis in her enchanted beauty
and green Bracadale
Diurinis and Trondairnis beyond.
The beauty of the great Island rose before me;
it rose, but the bullet whizzed:
how will this love keep its hold
on the icy rock of the world?”**

Today,
Blàbheinn
looks like
my father,
the first
sprinkling
of winter
snow and a
tiny whisp of
white cloud
brushing
across his

Well, of course, that may not exactly be the question you want to ponder as you holiday around the Cuillin, but at the very least it may be one of the most awesome places in the world in which to ask the question: in the shadow of the Cuillin, glory and eternity become less distant, less abstract.

You may, instead, just want a pint of beer or a sandwich, in which case the Sligachan Hotel will do just grand. I declined its attractions for a few years in case I found myself supping a pint of Guinness, but lately I have redeemed it, to discover its excellent soup, its warmth, its abundant coffee: it is also, I have discovered, a child-friendly environment which, when you have five young daughters, as I do, comes in pretty handy. Another really family-friendly place around here is the Aros Centre just on the southern outskirts of Portree, some five miles from Sligachan. When they're all, simultaneously, crying out for food-and-toilets-and-ice-cream-and-slides-and toys-to-play-with, get them along there, right away, leave them all in the safe kids' area, and go and have yourself a bun.

There is no finer whisky produced in the whole of Scotland (ach, my memory goes back a long hazy way) than at Talisker over in the Minginish district. A nice peaty flavour they tell me, and the distillery is an

important source of local employment: something never to be sniffed at. For, beautiful as it may be to live within the shadow of the Cuillin, it can be less than beautiful if you're unemployed and poor.

This area also covers the particularly beautiful Elgol peninsula: if you ever had the strange desire to live in a postcard, go over to Torrin or Elgol on one of those stunningly clear days that you can as easily get in December as in July, in May as in November and get yourself photographed between one of those red-roofed houses and the lovely mountain that is Blaven. Indescribable.

For a real adventure, get the boat from Elgol pier over to Loch Coruisk (or alternatively, the even more adventurous walking route from Sligachan, or Kilmarie, via Camusunary and the famous Bad Step). Coruisk, from the Gaelic coire uisge (literally, kettle of water or cauldron) is a spectacular corrie, scooped out of the solid rock by ice some 280,000 years ago. No wonder Walter Scott and the great painter Turner travelled all the way to see it.

Oh, and I almost forgot, the Battle of the Braes where, as Richard Hugo put it, the poor woke up a nation. Good Lord, if I only had time and space to tell it to you all.

ANGUS PETER CAMPBELL



Always with a point of view and never without passion, Angus Peter Campbell, Poet, Broadcaster, Writer, Preacher, and defender of all things Gaelic is your travelling companion through the six distinct areas which make up this beautiful region of Skye and Lochalsh. In his company expect the unexpected, find enlightenment, enjoy instruction, be argued with, even sung to! For this guide is designed to reveal the heart and soul of each area and to help you appreciate why, for many, it takes a lifetime of visitation to understand this unique place and people.

gentle
forehead

...in the shadow of the Cuillin,
glory and eternity become less
distant, less abstract.”



Central Skye

An t-Eilean Sgitheanach
The Island of Skye

Including Minginish and part of Strath, Central Skye is the wildest and least populated region on the island. And no wonder: dominated by the famous Cuillin mountain range which includes 20 peaks over 3,000 feet, it is an area whose secrets are reserved for the walker, mountaineer and Skye's innumerable wildlife. For our purposes the area is defined by Penifiler in the north, Sconser in the east, Talisker in the west and Elgol in the south.



Central Skye

1 Loch na Sguabaidh:
Legend has it that this loch was inhabited for many years by a water horse. This mythical animal was renowned for carrying away only pretty girls, leaving the rather plainer variety to work the croft. It is believed that on his way to Loch na Creitheach he was killed by MacKinnon of Strath in Bealach na Beiste (the pass of the beast).

2 Sconser:
Once the deer hunting base for the legendary Feine, who could take 5,000 head in a day, Sconser was originally only a collection of dwellings with an inn boasting a Post Office. It was here after the battle of Prestonpans that Clanranald met with the Chiefs of MacLeod and MacDonald to seek their assistance on behalf of Bonnie Prince Charlie. Unfortunately for the Prince, they had already pledged their allegiance to King George. Sconser was also the birthplace of John MacKenzie, the Cuillin's most famous guide.

John MacKenzie:
Born in 1856 at Sconser, MacKenzie was the Cuillin's first and most famous guide and is believed to have climbed Sgur nan Gillean at the age of ten. A great friend of the climber Norman Collie, MacKenzie spent 50 years showing thousands of climbers of varying ability the secrets of this wonderful mountain range.

3 Sligachan: 'The Shelley Place'
Here at the mouth of Loch Sligachan is probably one of the most famous venues for climbers in the country. Generations of men and women have made a pilgrimage here to pit themselves against the challenge of the Cuillin and to date none have gone away unimpressed. Here, an inn has stood for around 200 years, although the first was some half-a-mile nearer the head of the loch than the present hotel. On the present site, in 1830, a new inn was built and was remarked upon by Rev Charles Lessingham Smith, the first gentleman to scale Sgur nan Gillean, as being: "infinitely superior to the old one...the clean napkin on the table and the fine coloured tea-things invited me to a sober meal." In 1870 a corrugated-iron extension was added with seven more bedrooms and a smoking room, to satisfy the demands of the increasing number of visitors.

Famous Climbers:
The Cuillin have seen their fair share of climbers, some of the most notable being:

Rev Charles Lessingham Smith - In 1835, he, with Lord MacDonald's forester, Duncan MacIntyre, successfully scaled Sgur nan Gillean aided by Duncan's two dogs and his ever faithful umbrella, which in this case was "a sad nuisance".

James Forbes - Professor of Natural Philosophy at Glasgow University. At the age of 23 he made the first recorded ascent of Sgur nan Gillean in 1836 with the same Duncan MacIntyre mentioned above. In 1845 Forbes sketched the first accurate map of the range showing some of the peaks named for the first time.

Charles & Lawrence Pilkington - Makers of glass in St Helens. They were the first to successfully ascend the inaccessible Pinnacle using John MacKenzie as their guide (although MacKenzie refused to follow them on the final climb, preferring to do it himself the following year). It was Charles Pilkington, using ropes, who led the climb up Sgur Alasdair by the precipitous face at the head of the corrie.

Norman Collie - A professor and eminent chemist, Collie climbed extensively in Europe but his undoubted first love was Skye. First attempting a climb in the Cuillin in 1886 but failing, Collie consulted Cuillin guide John MacKenzie who pointed the way. A wonderful friendship was born which was to see Collie and MacKenzie climb regularly amongst the Cuillin peaks, trail blazing new and exciting climbs. At the end of his days Collie retired to Skye and stayed in the Sligachan Hotel where he and MacKenzie enjoyed their time setting new fishing records. Collie died in 1942 and is buried next to his friend John MacKenzie in the old graveyard at Struan.

4 The Cuillin:
Designated as Red and Black, the Cuillin are a magnificent range of mountains which attract climbers, walkers and spectators from around the world. The Red Cuillin are distinguished by their smoother more conical peaks, formed of granite, while the older Black Cuillin are formed of gabbro, a rock dark in colour and prone to forming vertical dykes and horizontal sills - perfect for rock climbing. Legend has it that the Cuillin received their name at the hands of a mighty female warrior, known as Sgathach, who inhabited the mountains. Her prowess with a bow was legendary, which led her to establish a school for archery at Dunscaith Castle in Sleat. Here Cuchullin, hero of Ulster, came to see if he could add to his already impressive skills. Regarded as the greatest warrior in the world, Cuchullin became annoyed that he wasn't being afforded the sort of treatment this title should bestow. Challenging his fellow students he defeated everyone and so earned the opportunity to fight Sgathach's daughter. This he did but was unable to overcome her, returning to Ulster sad and weary. In honour of him, Sgathach named the mountains of Skye 'Cuchullin hills'. Enjoyed by all, the Cuillin are a fitting canvas to display Skye's unique light and shade, creating within its heart places of great joy and despair. The writer HV Morton in his 1920's book, 'In search of Scotland', best sums up the visitor's first impression: "Imagine, Wagner's ride of the Valkyries frozen in stone and hung up like a colossal screen against the sky. It seems as if Nature when she hurled the Cuillin up into the light of the sun said 'I will make mountains which shall be the essence of all that can be terrible in mountains. I will pack into them all the fearful mystery of high places. I will carve them into a million queer, horrible shapes. Their scarred ravines, on which nothing shall grow, shall lead up to towering spires of rock, sharp splinters shall strike the sky along their mighty summits, and they shall be formed of rock unlike any other rock so that they will never look the same for very long, now blue, now grey, now silver, sometimes seeming to retreat or to advance, but always drenched in mystery and terrors.'"

Munros:
Between 1889 and 1891, HT Munro (later Sir Hugh) listed all the Scottish mountain peaks which exceeded 3,000 feet. It is believed there are well over 500 in Scotland with at least 20 being on Skye. The term 'Munro bagging' is applied to the pastime of reaching the summit of these impressive peaks.

Havildar Harkabir Thapa:
In 1899 A Gurkha named Havildar Harkabir Thapa ran barefoot from the front of the Sligachan Hotel to the summit of Glamaig and back in an incredible 55 minutes, 37 up, 18 down! This feat has never been equalled to this day!

5 Cairidh:
Here on the floor of Loch Sligachan at low tide one can see lines of stone walls. These were called Cairidh, a Gaelic name for a horseshoe of stones which were built to trap fish such as herring, saithe and even salmon as the tide recedes. A very successful way to fish, most of these structures were destroyed by landlords to ensure good fishing for their rich fishing tenants.

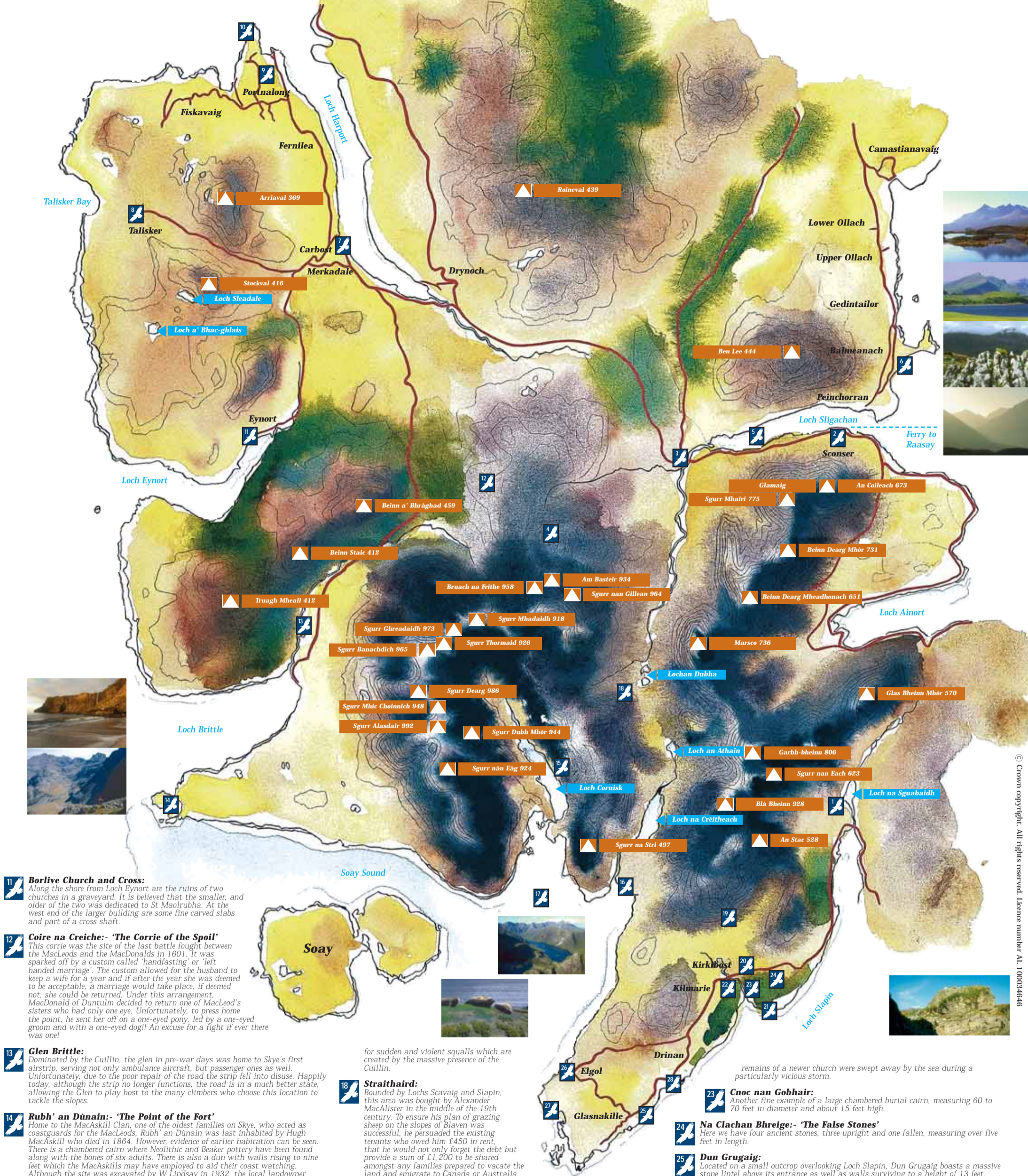
6 The Battle of the Braes:
Fought in April 1882 between local crofting families and a force of 60 policemen (50 sent from Glasgow), the encounter is said to have been the last battle fought on British soil. Ignited by the dual injustices of the Clearances and grazing rights, over 100 men, women and children fought a pitched battle with sticks and stones. This and other incidents on the island led to the setting up of a Royal Commission to look into the crofters' grievances, eventually leading to the Crofters' Holding Act of 1886.

7 Talisker Whisky Distillery: - Carbost
The only distillery on Skye, Talisker takes its name from Talisker Bay situated six miles down the road. The distillery was founded in 1830 by Hugh and Kenneth MacAskill who farmed sheep. In 1886 its annual output was 40,000 gallons, now it is closer to 650,000 thanks to a fire in 1960 which forced much needed modernisation and re-building. Described as having a subtle peat-smoked flavour with a hint of the sea, it's yet another way of experiencing the warmth of the Highlands.

8 Talisker House: - 'The House of the Rock'
Traditionally the dwelling place of the son of a MacLeod Chief, Boswell and Johnson visited the house on their Highland travels and commented thus: "The place beyond all that I have seen from which the gay and the jovial seem utterly excluded, and where the hermit might expect to grow old in meditation, without possibility of disturbance or interruption. It is situated very near the sea, but upon a coast no vessel lands, but when it is driven by tempest on the rocks. Towards the land are lofty hills streaming with waterfalls. The garden is sheltered by firs, or pines which grow there so prosperously that some, which the present inhabitant planted, are very thick." Destroyed by fire a few years after this visit the house was rebuilt in 1780. The present garden dates from the 1920s and is a fine testament to what can be achieved with careful planting on Skye.

9 Portnalong: - 'The Harbour of Ships'
Re-populated after World War I by young men from Harris and Lewis, the Department of Agriculture granted each man a small croft of between 15 and 20 acres. Coming from a traditional weaving background, the 'incomers' combined the two disciplines of crofting and weaving culminating each year, until 1939, in a Feill or gathering when the year's weaving output was sold.

10 Dun Ardteock:
Standing on a rocky crag looking out across the islands of Loch Braacadale is this fine broch. Constructed during the Bronze Age, the walls still rise to around eight feet and include a guard chamber.



11 Borliva Church and Cross:
Along the shore from Loch Eynort are the ruins of two churches in a graveyard. It is believed that the smaller, and older of the two was dedicated to St Maolrubha. At the west end of the larger building are some fine carved slabs and part of a cross shaft.

12 Coire na Creiche: - 'The Corrie of the Spoil'
This corrie was the site of the last battle fought between the MacLeods and the MacDonalds in 1601. It was sparked off by a custom called 'handfasting' or 'left handed marriage'. The custom allowed for the husband to keep a wife for a year and if after the year she was deemed to be acceptable, a marriage would take place. If deemed not, she could be returned. Under this arrangement, MacDonald of Duntulm decided to return one of MacLeod's sisters who had only one eye. Unfortunately, to press home the point, he sent her off on a one-eyed pony, led by a one-eyed groom and with a one-eyed dog!! An excuse for a fight if ever there was one!

13 Glen Brittle:
Dominated by the Cuillin, the glen in pre-war days was home to Skye's first airstrip, serving not only ambulance aircraft, but passenger ones as well. Unfortunately, due to the poor repair of the road the strip fell into disuse. Happily today, although the strip no longer functions, the road is in a much better state, allowing the Glen to play host to the many climbers who choose this location to tackle the slopes.

14 Rubh' an Dìnaìn: - 'The Point of the Fort'
Home to the MacAskill Clan, one of the oldest families on Skye, who acted as coastguards for the MacLeods, Rubh' an Dìnaìn was last inhabited by Hugh MacAskill who died in 1864. However, evidence of earlier habitation can be seen. There is a chambered cairn where Neolithic and Beaker pottery have been found along with the bones of six adults. There is also a dun with walls rising to nine feet which the MacAskills may have employed to aid their coast watching. Although the site was excavated by W Lindsay in 1932, the local landowner refused access, requiring a yacht, moored off the coast, to be used as the dig's base.

15 Loch Coruisk: - 'The Cauldron of Water'
Probably the most famous corrie in the British Isles, Loch Coruisk is believed to have been formed over 280,000 years ago by glacial erosion. Extending to a depth of 126 feet below the present water level, the floor of the basin is 100 feet below sea level, and is barred by a large ice-worn sill through which the river Scaavaig has cut its way. Regarded by many as the 'holy of holies' of the Cuillin, the area has a brooding 'other worldly' atmosphere which is further heightened if one visits the loch via the Bad Step, a large rock that if not traversed correctly has one plummeting down into the cold waters of Loch Scaavaig!

16 Camasunary: - 'Bay of the White, Fair or Beautiful Shieling'
A beautiful unspoilt location, Camasunary nestles almost within the heart of the Cuillin and is easily reached by a sturdy track leading over the shoulder of Am Mam, affording breathtaking views of the mountains and sea.

17 Loch Scaavaig:
Celebrated in a song sung by women 'waulking' cloth, Loch Scaavaig is infamous

for sudden and violent squalls which are created by the massive presence of the Cuillin.

18 Straithaird:
Bounded by Lochs Scaavaig and Slapin, this area was bought by Alexander MacAlister in the middle of the 19th century. To ensure his plan of grazing sheep on the slopes of Blaven was successful, he persuaded the existing tenants who owed him £450 in rent, that he would not only forget the debt but provide a sum of £1,200 to be shared amongst any families prepared to vacate the land and emigrate to Canada or Australia. Five hundred people of eight townships found the offer too good to refuse!

19 The Bloody Stone:
A strange solitary boulder measuring 30 feet in height. It was here in 1395 that a marauding force of MacDonalds were butchered and beheaded by MacLeods and MacAskills. Known then as Creag an Fheannaich (the rock of the flaying), the heads of the MacDonalds were collected, numbered and sent back to Dunvegan Castle as trophies.

20 Kirkbost: 'Church Steading'
It was here around 1,000 AD that Norse invaders converted to Christianity and built a church.

21 Dun Ringill:
Now only a mass of rubble, Clan MacKinnon occupied this ancient structure up to the late 16th century before moving to Castle Maol - Kyleakin.

22 Kilmorie Church:
Believed to be the site of an ancient church dedicated to Saint Maolrubha, the

remains of a newer church were swept away by the sea during a particularly vicious storm.

23 Cnoc nan Gobhair:
Another fine example of a large chambered burial cairn, measuring 60 to 70 feet in diameter and about 15 feet high.

24 Na Clachan Bhreige: - 'The False Stones'
Here we have four ancient stones, three upright and one fallen, measuring over five feet in length.

25 Dun Grugaig:
Located on a small outcrop overlooking Loch Slapin, Dun Grugaig boasts a massive stone lintel above its entrance as well as walls surviving to a height of 13 feet. Inside the structure, one can still see traces of mural galleries and treads of stairs.

26 Elgol:
The site of a battle fought between a warrior called Aella who was sent with five ships by Vortigern and the Picts and Scots. Elgol derives its name from him: Aelia-goll! Apart from this, Elgol is the place for breathtaking views of the Cuillin from its quay, as well as providing a regular boat trip to Loch Coruisk.

27 Prince Charlie's Cave:
Believed to be his last refuge on Skye, Bonnie Prince Charlie spent six nights here before departing these shores, on the evening of July 4th 1746, never to return again.

28 Spar Cave: - Slochd Altrimen 'the Cave of the Nursling'
Once a major tourist attraction during the 19th century due to Walter Scott's inclusion of it in his work 'The Lord of the Isles', Spar Cave has suffered through over-zealous souvenir hunters of that time breaking off spars to take home. Only accessible at low tide, the cave requires a torch for illumination which when falling on the walls encrusted with calcium carbonate causes the cave to dance and sparkle with light, truly the "mermaid's alabaster grotto" written of by Scott.