Secrets of the Scottish Highlands: From Castle Grounds to Highland Glens

June 12 - 20, 2024

With American Horticultural Society
Host Katie Tukey
Dear Friends,

I am excited to invite you to join an extraordinary AHS journey to explore the breathtaking gardens of Scotland and the stunning landscapes of the Highlands.

Beginning in historic Edinburgh, we’ll cross the legendary Forth Road Bridge to discover private gardens in Fife and Angus. Along the way, we’ll admire the Highlands’ natural splendor, explore Aberdeenshire’s castles and royal connections including Balmoral Castle, and discover the mystical vistas of Cairngorms National Park. We’ll also visit the ancient fishing port of Nairn.

As we explore a wide variety of Scottish gardens including the globally renowned Royal Botanic Garden, engaging talks will provide invaluable insights and a deeper understanding of Scotland’s horticultural heritage.

I am thrilled that joining you on this program is AHS Host Katie Tukey, AHS’s Director of Development and Engagement. Katie trained in horticulture at Longwood Gardens and has worked with the Mt. Cuba Center and the Massachusetts Horticultural Society. She looks forward to sharing the latest updates about AHS programs and initiatives.

Throughout this unforgettable voyage, we will stay in an array of elegant accommodations. Our journey begins at the iconic Balmoral Hotel in Edinburgh’s Old Town, offering stunning views of Princes Street Gardens, Edinburgh Castle, and the Scott Monument. The glamourous Gleneagles Hotel offers tranquility on a spectacular 850 acre country estate beneath the Ochil Hills, while the Golf View Hotel provides refined luxury and stunning vistas of the Moray Firth. Our final destination is the Cameron House Hotel, set amidst scenic landscapes on Loch Lomond in the Trossachs National Park.

Don’t miss this enchanting AHS expedition to Scotland. Space is limited and our Travel Study programs often sell out, so please reserve early.

Most sincerely,

Suzanne Laporte
President & CEO
Itinerary

TUESDAY, JUNE 11
Depart the United States on independent flights.

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 12 — EDINBURGH (L, D)
On arrival at Edinburgh Airport, transfer to the iconic Balmoral Hotel, a 5-star luxury Rocco Forte hotel, at no 1, Princes Street, the most prestigious address in the capital. This afternoon, depart for a walking tour of Edinburgh, including the elegant 18th century ‘New Town’ and the historic ‘Old Town’, now a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Return to the hotel for an introductory lecture by tour manager Marion Mako, followed by welcome drinks and dinner in the hotel.

THURSDAY, JUNE 13 — EDINBURGH (B, L, D)
Today, discover the celebrated Royal Botanic Garden, a world-renowned center of plant science and conservation, with exemplary displays including the Azalea Terrace which will be bathed in brilliant blooms in June. Enjoy lunch at a private home with a large garden dating from the ‘Arts and Crafts’ era. Enjoy an afternoon visit to Dr Neil’s Garden, Edinburgh’s secret garden, lying next to the 12th century Duddingston Kirk where the lower slopes of Arthur’s Seat meet Duddingston Loch. In the evening, enjoy an exclusive tour and drinks reception on the Royal Yacht Britannia, the famous ship which served the Royal Family for over 44 years.

FRIDAY, JUNE 14 — EDINBURGH & FIFE (B, L, D)
After breakfast, depart for Fife, crossing the iconic Forth Road Bridge. Our first stop will be Wemyss Castle where the 6-acre walled garden has become a symphony of spring and summer flowers with its lovely clematis, roses, and ornamental trees. Continue to Cambo Gardens for lunch on the coast near St Andrews. A highlight of this extensive and varied estate garden is an Oudolf-inspired prairie which is unique in Scotland. This afternoon, visit the garden of a privately-owned 16th century castle, not open to the public, which has an impressive formal garden. Continue to the 5-star Gleneagles Hotel, an iconic luxury hotel in the heart of the Scottish countryside. Dinner at the hotel.

SATURDAY, JUNE 15 — ANGUS (B, L, D)
Head east today to visit Pitmuies House, whose garden walls date back to 1780. Renowned for its grand formal garden and kitchen garden, the estate features ancient fruit trees and a remarkable greenhouse with vibrant pink passion flowers. Continue to the nearby gardens of a 16th century tower house which remains a private home. These captivating gardens boast a romantic double border and a meticulously designed knot garden adorned with box, yew, white roses, and lavender. Enjoy a private lunch by kind arrangements with the owner. This afternoon, visit another private garden before returning to the hotel for dinner.

SECRETIONS OF THE SCOTTISH HIGHLANDS:
FROM CASTLE GROUNDS TO HIGHLAND GLENS
WITH AMERICAN HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY HOST KATIE TUKEY
SUNDAY, JUNE 16 — ABERDEENSHIRE / MORAY (B, L, D)
Discover enchanting Balmoral Castle, the much-loved Scottish home of the Royal Family that was purchased by Prince Albert for Queen Victoria in 1852. The garden, initiated by Prince Albert, has been expanded by subsequent generations. Queen Mary created the charming garden with a semi-circular rock wall and fountain, later extended by the late Duke of Edinburgh to include a kitchen garden for the Royal Family’s summer holiday. Continue to Braemar, an authentic Highland village in the Cairngorms National Park known for the famous annual Braemar Games. Enjoy lunch at The Fife Arms, Scotland’s hippest hotel showcasing Hauser and Wirth’s artwork and serving top-notch seasonal Scottish cuisine. Continue to the historic port town of Nairn and check in at the 4-star Golf View Hotel, where all rooms have glorious views of the Moray Firth and Black Isle peninsula.

MONDAY, JUNE 17 — MORAY (B, L, D)
Leave for historic Gordon Castle to visit the walled garden, one of Britain’s oldest kitchen gardens that was built over 200 years ago by the Duke of Gordon. Restored by Arne Maynard, this 8-acre garden impressively showcases its rich heritage. Then discover Logie House’s superb garden in the Findhorn Valley which is constantly evolving under the creative eye of the owner, who likes to “paint with plants”. Enjoy lunch at the Logie Steading, originally built as a model farm and now a hub of creativity with artisan workshops and an excellent café. Depart for Cawdor Castle, dating from the late 14th century, which was built as a private fortress by the Thanes of Cawdor. Its three distinct gardens—the flower garden, walled garden, and wild garden—each hold their allure, including rare species from Tibet. Return to the hotel for dinner.

TUESDAY, JUNE 18 — MORAY / LOCH LOMOND (B, D)
Check out of the hotel and head to Blair Atholl, a charming village at the confluence of the Rivers Tilt and Garry. Visit Blair Castle, home of the Atholl family for over 7 centuries. Explore the 9-acre Hercules Garden, a restored walled garden with ponds, an orchard, a folly, a Chinese bridge, and lush herbaceous borders. Then, stop at the House of Bruar, a well-known emporium of Scottish country clothing and gifts. Enjoy free time to explore and for independent lunch. Continue to Loch Lomond and check in to Cameron House Hotel, a 5-star hotel acclaimed for its prime location and recent restoration.

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 19 — ARGYLL (B, L, D)
Set off to Inveraray on the shores of Loch Fyne, Scotland’s longest sea loch. Inveraray Castle, a prime example of Gothic revival architecture, serves as the ancestral seat of the Duke of Argyll and Clan Campbell. Marvel at the splendid formal flowerbeds and the coastal abundance of rhododendrons and azaleas. Enjoy lunch in a restaurant on the edge of the loch before exploring the captivating gardens of Crarae. Created in 1912 by Lady Grace Campbell, the aunt of intrepid plant hunter Reginald Farrer, who sourced trees and shrubs from China, Nepal and Tibet, these woodland gardens boast a Himalayan-style glen and a remarkable collection of trees, including the National Collection of southern beech.

THURSDAY, JUNE 20 — LOCH LOMOND / GLASGOW / USA (B)
This morning, check out of the hotel for an organized transfer to Glasgow Airport for independently booked flights home.

Program Revisions: While revisions of this itinerary are not anticipated, the AHS and its travel partners reserve the right to make changes, with or without notice, that may become necessary.

AHS Travel Study Activity Level Description:
AHS Travel Study programs are designed to offer immersive experiences and often involve long days filled with exploration and extensive walking on uneven terrain. To participate in a program, it is recommended to be in good physical condition and prepared to walk for a minimum of two miles each day.
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JOIN US FOR EXTRAORDINARY EXPERIENCES, INCLUDING:

• Visit the walled garden at Gordon Castle, the oldest and largest kitchen garden in Britain
• By special arrangement, enjoy an exclusive tour and lunch at privately-owned highland castles
• Explore the house and gardens of Balmoral Castle, the elegant Scottish residence of the British Royal Family
• Delight in the breathtaking sight of vibrant rhododendrons and azaleas blooming at Inveraray Castle, nestled on the banks of Scotland’s longest sea loch

OUR ACCOMMODATIONS:
The iconic 5-star Balmoral Hotel is Edinburgh’s landmark hotel located in the heart of the city center, overlooking Edinburgh Castle. With a blend of Victorian opulence and Renaissance architecture, it exudes timeless luxury. The visionary interiors by Olga Polizzi add a contemporary touch, creating a truly enchanting experience.

The iconic 5 star Gleneagles Hotel is known as the ‘the glorious playground’ in the Scottish Highlands. Originally a 1920s railway hotel, this luxurious art-deco hotel is located on a 850-acre estate and has two championship golf courses, a blissful spa and eight excellent restaurants and bars.

The 4-star Golf View Hotel is located on the coast just outside the ancient fishing town of Nairn. This contemporary coastal property with the beach on its doorstep enjoys panoramic views over the Moray Firth up to the Black Isle.

Cameron House, an elegant 5-star hotel on Loch Lomond, combines vintage charm with modern sophistication. After a complete renovation in 2017, this 18th century baronial mansion offers breathtaking views and timeless luxury.

PRICING AND PAYMENT INFORMATION

Price: $11,495 per person
Single Supplement: $1,975 per person

The tour price includes a $500 per person non-refundable tax-deductible donation to the AHS. The AHS team will be in touch to process your trip donation at the time of final payment.

We highly recommend purchasing travel insurance. One travel insurance provider to consider is USI Affinity Travel Insurance Services. For more information on the plan for AHS travelers, visit www.ahsgardening.org/travel.

Information is also available at this link regarding optional flight and travel arrangement services.

This AHS Travel Study program is offered in collaboration with Specialtours.

PRICE INCLUDES:

• Accommodation as per the itinerary
• Transportation as per the itinerary
• Group airport transfers
• All buffet breakfasts
• 7 lunches and 8 dinners including wine, water, and coffee
• 1 drinks reception
• All entrance fees as per the itinerary
• Porterage at the hotels
• Gratuities to guides, drivers, and in restaurants
• Whisper system headsets
• The services of local guides
• The services of your Specialtours Tour Manager
• $500 of your payment per person is a non-refundable tax-deductible contribution to the American Horticultural Society

PRICE EXCLUDES:

• Flights from USA to Glasgow and return
• Insurance
• Any meals indicated as independent
• Personal extras
• Housekeeping tips

Please refer to the enclosed reservation form for instructions for reserving your place on this AHS Travel Study program. For further information contact AHS@specialtours.co.uk or 011 44 20 7386 4690.

When you travel with the AHS, you make a difference. Designed for garden enthusiasts who love to explore horticultural wonders around the world, AHS Travel Study offers exceptional programs that include many exclusive experiences and unique insights. Your participation in an AHS Travel Study program supports the AHS’ nonprofit work to increase knowledge among gardeners, inspire passion for plants and the natural world, and encourage responsible stewardship of the earth.

For more information about AHS Travel Study programs, please contact travel@ahsgardening.org or (703) 768-5700, ext. 117. Information is also available at www.ahsgardening.org/travel.