



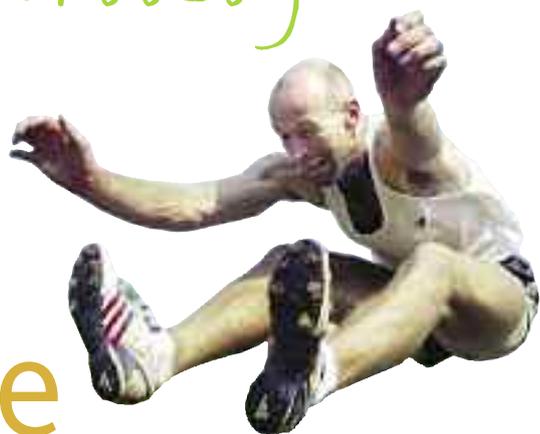
Skye and Raasay Portree, Central



Snap shot

Home to the island's capital, visitors get their first glimpse of the majestic, mist covered Cuillin mountains, the inspiration for many a poem and song

Portree, Central Skye and Raasay



Don't miss the wild beauty of Raasay and central Skye

Eight miles south of Portree, under the shadow of Glamaig, is the Sligachan Hotel which acts as a gateway to Glenbrittle and the Cuillins, Carbost and the Talisker distillery, and the north-west coast of Skye. Both the hotel (with its wet-weather centre) and adjoining campsite are very popular stopping points for climbers and hillwalkers.

The road west from Sligachan leads to the small townships of Carbost and Portnalong, where families from Harris came to settle after the First World War on crofting land more fertile than the rocky outcrops which were all that was available to them on their overcrowded native island. From the Portnalong road there are marvellous views of the Cuillins. And if you turn off before you reach these townships you can drive across the flanks of these magnificent hills to the dark sandy beach at Glenbrittle, which has its own camping site.

Another road branches off to Carbost, where you will find the distillery that produces Talisker malt whisky. Turn off from Carbost and head west to Talisker, which has a lovely bay with views out to the Western Isles of the Uists.

Let's go back now to Sligachan, and take the road south to the mouth of Loch Sligachan where lies the crofting township of Sconser. This is the ferry point for the island of Raasay. The 15-minute crossing offers a magnificent seascape across to Skye with the Cuillin hills, the island of Scalpay to the south and north up the sound to Ben Tianavaig. During the summer months the ferry shuttles

back and forth across the sound allowing those on foot or with vehicles to spend as little or as long as they wish on the island.

Raasay, 14 miles long and four miles wide, is a beautiful and fertile island. The wooded slopes and green fields contrast sharply with the more barren moorland of central Skye. If you take your car to Raasay remember to fill up on Skye as there are no pumps on the island.

The village, shop and Raasay House are all a short distance from the ferry terminal in Churchton Bay.

The island has a population of about 140 although at one time it had a much healthier figure. After the rising of 1745 nearly every house in Raasay was burnt to the ground during

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government reprisals, and a century later 120 families were removed from their homes by the landlord and shipped to Australia to make way for sheep and cattle.

Much of Raasay's tragic history and beauty are captured in the verses of the late poet Sorley Maclean, who was born on the island. Widely regarded as one of the greatest European poets, he chose to write in Gaelic — a language used by about one per cent of the Scottish population.

Raasay House, a fine Georgian mansion which was once the seat of the clan chief MacLeod of Raasay, was badly damaged by fire in 2009. However, a magnificent new building has risen from the ashes and offers accommodation as well as a base for a range of outdoor activities.

Directly opposite the former ferry pier at Suisinish is an abandoned processing plant connected with the iron ore mine which used to operate in the hill above Inverarish, and in the village you will see the row of miners' cottages which are still occupied. During the First World War the mines were worked mainly by German prisoners-of-war.

If industrial archaeology is not to your taste then you should take a trip to the east coast to Brochel Castle. Now a ruin, it was the clan seat of the MacLeods of Raasay before they moved to Raasay House.

Beyond Brochel Castle is an entirely different kind of monument — 3,000 yards of tarred road weaving and switching its way to Arnish and the home of the late Calum MacLeod, who constructed it single-handed over a period of more than 10 years.

For years the authorities had refused to build the road to the township which Calum always maintained caused the depopulation. When he started building it in 1966 there were seven families in the area. When it was finished there was no one left except his wife and himself. He built the road with his own hands, wearing out two wheelbarrows, six picks, six shovels, four spades and five hammers in the process.

Calum died many years ago, but thanks to his road the trend of depopulation was reversed. It is very unfortunate that he is no longer there to greet the many travellers who come to view his Herculean achievement.

Calum's story is now the subject of a best-selling book, "Calum's Road", by author Roger Hutchinson, who lives on Raasay.

To get the best view of this beautiful island it is worth expending a little energy to climb to the top of Dun Caan, the extinct volcano which dominates the centre of the island. According to Samuel Johnson, who travelled with James Boswell on a "Tour of the Hebrides" in 1773, this is the effect the peak had on his companion: "Boswell climbed to the top of Duncaan, and danced a reel in sheer exuberance."

Of course it may not have the same effect on everyone, but you should not miss out on the chance to savour Raasay's unique atmosphere and wild, beautiful scenery when you travel west. ●

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Portree: Island capital and the ideal base for touring

The main centre of population on Skye, and by virtue of that the focus of commerce and trade on the island, is the town of Portree. As well as being a busy fishing port set in a sheltered and picturesque bay, Portree is the administrative centre for local government in Skye and Lochalsh and houses the island's only secondary school.

Its central geographical location, halfway up the east coast of Skye, makes it an ideal base from which to explore the rest of the island, and since tourism now plays a major role in the town's economy it is well developed to cater for the needs of visitors.

There are several interpretations of where the name Portree came from.

The most popular one is that the title is the anglicisation of the Gaelic Port Rìgh, the King's Port, marking the occasion of a visit of an early tourist to the area, King James V. However, Gaelic scholars will point out that the town's proper name is Port Ruighe, the Port of the Slopes. Either way the name rolls off the tongue pleasantly enough.

The starting point for most visitors to Portree should be the tourist office, situated in the centre of the village. Information on all the surrounding attractions is available from the office, with booklets, maps and leaflets on areas of South-West Ross and Skye for sale at the counter.

The tourist office is also the best place to find accommodation in

Portree and the surrounding area. The staff will have up-to-date information on vacancies in all registered establishments offering visitors an overnight stay. The best way to avoid frustration is to use the tourist board's booking service.

Portree is home to branches of the major Scottish banks which as well as providing normal banking and currency exchange services have "hole in the wall" cash dispensers.

Wentworth Street, the main thoroughfare of the town, is packed with hotels and shops catering for every need. Finding a place to eat that will suit your palate and your budget should be no problem, and the large number of public and lounge bars in



Portree

the town have a relaxed and welcoming atmosphere. During the summer months many of them lay on free musical entertainment.

While Skye is noted for its spectacular mountainous scenery there are sadly very few sandy stretches of coastline to go swimming from. This may be a blessing in disguise as the west-coast weather and the sea temperatures are rarely kind to bathers anyway. To get in the swim safely and comfortably a visit to the public swimming pool in Portree is well worthwhile. The pool is situated within the high school, which has ample parking space. Sailing can be accessed through the Skye Sailing Club on Portree Harbour's north shore – visitors are welcome.

Nearby is Portree's community centre — its Gaelic name is Aitreabh an Eilein, which translates as "fine big building of the island". The 500-seater hall can accommodate concerts and dances.

The town also has a superb sports field on the Struan Road. Pairc nan Laoch ("Field of the Heroes") is home to the island's shinty team — shinty is the traditional stick-and-ball game of the Highlands, an exciting spectacle which can be seen most Saturdays from March through until October — with its well-appointed clubhouse.

And Portree has one of the island's foremost visitor attractions in the heritage centre Aros, situated in forest land on the outskirts of the village. "Aros" is the old Gaelic word for "home" or "homestead". With its shop and restaurant, and a small theatre/cinema as well, Aros is well worth a visit.

If you tire of Portree itself there are plenty of easy scenic walks on the outskirts which do not require major planning or

heavy-duty footwear. One of the most popular is the footpath to Black Rock, the tidal islet at the northern mouth of Portree bay, which can be reached by heading out towards Staffin from the town centre and then turning off to the right along the coastline. The route can be followed uphill beyond Black Rock to Torvaig and then Dùn Gerashader, an ancient iron-age fort. From there one can take the main road back into Portree.

Heading south from Portree there is the Forest Enterprise walk in Glen Varigall forest and a short climb to Fingal's Seat, an easy hill with good views to the west. For a slightly higher and more panoramic view put on walking boots and head for Ben Tianavaig which overlooks Portree from the south. On the way you pass through the village of Camustianavaig and the road goes on through the villages of Upper and Lower Ollach and ends at Peinchorran. On the way it passes the site of the Battle of the Braes where in 1882 crofters clashed with the constabulary in a celebrated incident in the Highland-wide struggle to secure crofting rights of tenancy.

To travel further afield some form of transport is needed. Garages in Portree hire cars but during the summer season there are organised bus tours round the island leaving from the Square, as well as regular services to other areas. ●

Don't miss

- 1 ISLE OF RAASAY AND CALUM'S ROAD** A 15-minute ferry crossing from Skye (take the ferry at Sconser), lies the beautiful, fertile island of Raasay. Home of the late, celebrated poet Sorley Maclean, the island is rich in history. Climb Dùn Caan, an extinct volcano in the centre of the island, visit the ruin of Brochel Castle, once the clan seat of the MacLeods of Raasay, and take a walk or a drive along Calum's Road – 3,000 yards long and constructed single-handedly, over a 10-year period, by Calum MacLeod from Arnish at the far north of the island.
- 2 GLENBRITTLE** The starting point for many walkers/climbers who wish to experience the famous Black Cuillin mountains of Skye.
- 3 TALISKER DISTILLERY** Take a tour around the whisky distillery, on the shores of Loch Harport, which was built in 1830 and produces Skye's only single malt.
- 4 BRAES** The site of the Battle of the Braes during which crofters, inspired by the land struggle in Ireland, rose up against their landlords. Legislation was later passed giving rights to crofters. A monument stands at Braes to commemorate the event.
- 5 PORTREE** The main town on Skye has a pretty, colourful harbour and plenty of shops, restaurants, galleries and other tourist attractions.
- 6 SLIGACHAN** Worth stopping for fantastic views of the famous Cuillin mountains, with the rounded Red Cuillin on one side and the dramatic peaks of the Black Cuillin on the other.

Things to remember

Our Countryside

Wild animals and farm animals can behave unpredictably if you get too close, especially if they're with their young, so give them plenty of space.

Protect plants and animals, and take your litter home. We have a responsibility to protect our countryside now and for future generations, so make sure you don't harm animals, birds, plants or trees.





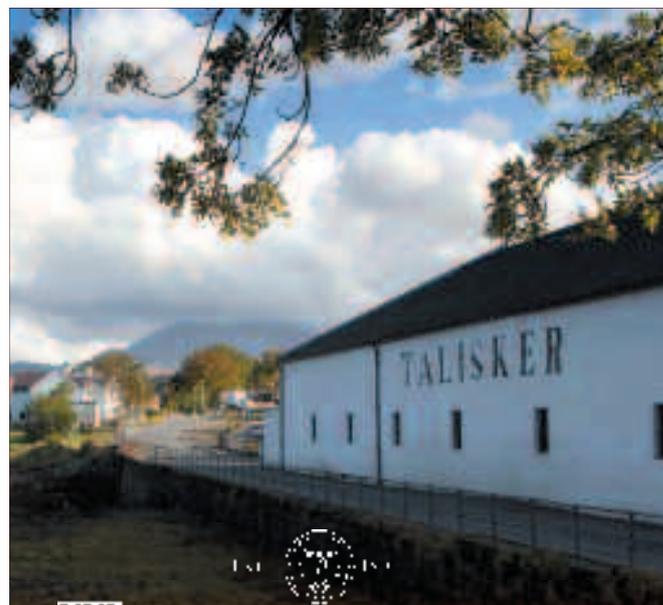
Talisker Distillery is the only distillery on the Isle of Skye, set on the shores of Loch Harport in the village of Carbost, on the beautiful Minginish Peninsula, with dramatic views of the Black Cuillin. Come and visit us for a tour and taste of Talisker Single Malt Scotch Whisky, see our five copper pot stills and the traditional worm tubs that make our Talisker so unique. Take a look in the warehouse at our oak casks where the Angels Share is lost to evaporation during the maturation process.

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Talisker Distillery Tour

Adults: £8.00 (including discount voucher and taste) / Children: (8-17) £3.00.

The Talisker Tasting Tour

For those seeking a different experience. Adults: £35 (includes a limited edition Talisker Nosing Glass and discount voucher). Available on selected weekdays please call in advance as spaces are limited.

For Health and Safety reasons children under 8 years are not permitted in the production areas of the distillery.

Please check website for up to date information. All tours subject to availability, please phone in advance to be guaranteed a place as tour numbers are limited.

Opening Times

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April - May

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June

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July - August

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Mon - Sat: 09:30 - 17:00

November - December

Mon - Fri: 10:00 - 16:30
Tours: 10:30, 12:00, 14:00 & 15:30

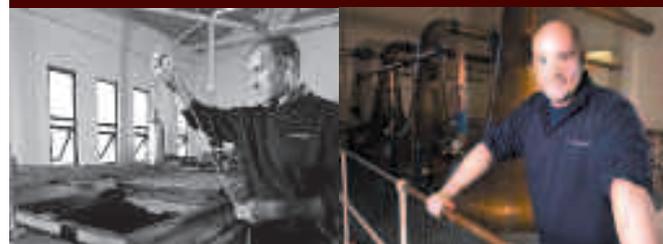
Christmas & New Year

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Contact

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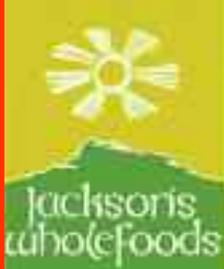
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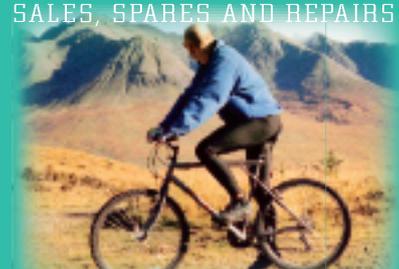
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