

Cape Wrath Trail, Scotland

DATE: TBC

£1550 per person | Deposit £350 | Payment plans available

[About]

The Cape Wrath Trail is an unofficial, unmarked and magnificently wild long-distance route from Fort William to Cape Wrath, the most north westerly point of mainland Scotland. A superb and challenging route for experienced long-distance backpackers, the Trail passes through some of Scotland's most spectacular landscapes. There is no officially sanctioned route for the Trail and one of its joys is that every walker can plan the exact route for him or herself. The original idea for the trail was by David Paterson who published a photographic book in 1996; since then, there have been several different routes suggested by a variety of authors and other walkers. The trail is approximately 200 miles in length and is considered to be one of the most challenging long-distance walks in the UK.

This trek usually takes around three weeks. My plan is to run it over two separate weeks covering the most remote sections to enable anyone to attempt it and not be restricted by work, fitness, time away from family. Three weeks is a long time and big commitment. Please discuss with me if you have the time and want to trek the full trip in one go.

My vision is to enable everyone to have the chance to try this incredible route and not feel like it is a trek too far. I plan to provide a support package on this enabling those who can't carry 7 days equipment and food supplies, by having a team ready to drop in kit, food and offer support. Heavier kit items will be transported or carried for those who feel it is a little beyond them. Equally for those who wish to carry their full or partial kit, by all means go for it and we will support this. There will be escape options with transport waiting in various locations should you need to get out. Please be aware though, this is not a trip with easy access at any point. It is wild and most walk out options are still a full day.

You will need to be as fit as possible to complete this route and the terrain will be varied. With forestry tracks, good footpaths to boggy sections, tree routes, boulders and pathless terrain. Please get in touch if you have trouble negotiating rocky areas. There are not any particularly steep areas, other than the Glomach falls section which does have a trail.

There are 2 variation options to start, the Glenfinnan and the Great Glen. Our start will be the ***Glenfinnan route***.

Brief Route Outline

This route begins by using the passenger ferry to cross Loch Linnhe from Fort William, with the first walking of the trek leading perversely southwards before heading up the Cona Glen. **A pass leads down to the dramatic monument at Glenfinnan. It is here that we will start our route.** From here the route heads through the fringes of the Rough Bounds of Knoydart, giving some of the most rugged and challenging going on the whole trail. There are a good number of bothies available on the route, we will be camping but have the use of bothies nearby to cook under shelter if the weather dictates the need to. The rough bounds continue on to Barrisdale Bay and then to Kinloch Hourn. A final climb beneath the Saddle leads to Morvich in Kintail, **which I have opted to miss in favour of continuing past the wonderful Glomach falls a little further on.** Prior to Glomach is a rest day in Kintail area, with two nights in beds,

drying out facilities (an essential planning tool from experience) and hearty food to fuel you up for the next 4 days. Leaving Morvich following up through yet more remote landscapes towards Strathcarron, passing the Glomach Falls and crossing many rivers, we emerge to Kinlochewe our final destination having wandered amongst the Torridon landscapes. Tough underfoot walking hopefully kept at bay with the sheer magnificence of the surrounding mountains as the trail winds underneath Beinn Eighe to finalise our trip.

DAY TO DAY ITINERARY

DAY 1. GLENFINNAN TO GLENDESSARRY – 18.1KM/600M ASCENT.

Although not a particularly long leg, this covers the first rough ground and is harder than it looks on paper, particularly for legs and shoulders that are new to the trail.

Before you leave Glenfinnan and as you pass under the arc of the viaduct, it's worth taking a moment to savour this wonderful location. Photos galore, and maybe we can time it for the steam train to pass over. Mingling with crowds of people for the last time in a week. The viaduct and monument guard the head of the loch and for once human endeavour and the wild landscape seem strangely at peace. The viaduct has been made famous of late by its appearances in the Harry Potter films, we will pass the scrum of tourists as we head into the void of remote mountain countryside. Built by Sir Robert McAlpine between 1897 and 1901 it forms part of the Mallaig extension of the West Highland Line. Connecting Fort William and Mallaig, the line was a crucial artery for the local fishing industry and the highlands economy and is considered to be one of the most picturesque train journeys in the world. Passing beneath it marks the first steps onto the trail proper towards the rough bounds of Knoydart. Glenfinnan itself is stunningly beautiful and a fitting start to this adventure.

- Accommodation – Wild camp with kit transported in by vehicle. No need to carry.
- Food – camping food, dehydrated and lightweight.
- Terrain – Forestry tracks, mountain trails, small section of grassy bog.

DAY 2. GLENDESSARRY TO SOURLIES - 13.9KM/400M ASCENT

This leg is where you will start to feel the remoteness in earnest.

Leaving Glendessarry in the shadow of a trio of giant munros (Sgurr na Ciche, Garbh Chioch Mhor and Sgurr nan Coireachan) on a path that can be hard to follow in places with plenty of bog, it passes the small lochans and descends along the Finiskaig river. The landscape becomes increasingly Tolkeinesque and wild. The first sight of Loch Nevis is spectacular, one of Scotland's finest sea lochs, it runs 20km inland from the open sea at the Sound of Sleat. You are now deep in the rough bounds of Knoydart and the village of Inverie on the peninsula is the closest human habitation. Accessible by foot or boat only.

Sourlies bothy, nestled at the end of the loch and frequented by a panoply of wading birds and the odd seal is an idyllic spot to stop. We will spend the night in this area with the bothy for cooking shelter if required. We could continue a little further if weather and feet are all good.

- Accommodation – Wild camp with all kit and 2 days food taken with us.
- Food – camping food, dehydrated and lightweight.
- Terrain – Forestry trail, mountain path, short pathless section of bog.

DAY 3. SOURLIES TO KINLOCH HOURN - 24KM/1000M ASCENT.

The longest and by far the toughest day on this trip, Leaving Sourlies for Kinloch Hourn will certainly show why Knoydart is known as the 'Rough bounds' of Knoydart. The knowledge of a bed this evening will keep spirits up in tired moments.

The walk upriver Carnach on a clear riverside path affords imposing views of Luinne Bheinn to the north before ascending steeply over rough ground towards the bealach that then heads down to Barrisdale and Loch Hourn. The views make up for the fight up here!

Barrisdale is a small collection of buildings huddled on the south shore of Loch Hourn enjoying a wide vista that spreads out towards Skye. There are sweeping views of Beinn Sgritheall towering above Arnisdale to the north and the imposing bulk of Ladhar Bheinn to the west. It feels remote. It is. Leaving Barrisdale after a good rest up and munch break a winding undulating trail to Kinloch Hourn awaits. The vehicle will be waiting for your tired legs as we leave Knoydart for Kintail and our accommodation. The drive from here to Morvich through Glen Shiel, passing under the five sisters of Kintail is beautiful – if your eyes are still open!

- Accommodation – Morvich National Trust outdoor centre. Small bunk rooms on shared basis. Exclusive use for our group only.
- Food – Camping breakfast, hill lunch, Hearty home cooked evening meal.
- Terrain – Everything!! Sea shore crossing dependent on tides. Tricky section along the river with no path and rocks/tree roots to negotiate. Short steep grassy section uphill. Mountain paths.

DAY 4. REST DAY.

Incorporating drying kit (if required), a spot of sightseeing, or resting, or a potential chance to paddleboard for those who wish to around the Eilean Donan Castle.

- Accommodation – 2nd night at the outdoor centre.
- Food – Home cooked hearty meals, main course and pudding. Breakfast 2 mornings. Lunch in café. *

DAY 5. MORVICH TO SOMEWHERE IN THE WILD.... 15 – 22KM/700M/1000M ASCENT.

As if the views haven't been incredible enough, this really is another of the most spectacular legs of the walk with many possible route alternatives.

The trail heads inexorably forward and making the most of a good path climbing from Morvich past Bealach na Sroine to descend past the impressive falls of Glomach (a tricky descent on a narrow path

with exposure to the ravine on one side – we will support those who are nervous of this). The main route turns east to Iron Lodge before heading north past Maol-Bhuidhe bothy a convenient overnight stop. Although there are more direct route alternatives that could be used in bad weather, this is some of the wildest, most unspoilt country in Scotland so it seems a shame to miss it. There are also plentiful wild camping opportunities. For this reason, we will take this route choosing a location suitable to our group as the day progresses. I feel it is important for you to feel some ‘ownership’ of decision making during the route and this is the perfect opportunity to come together as a group and choose our evenings camp location together. Should the weather be awful we will use an alternative due to river crossings.

- Option to walk in with a guide from a different location to slightly shorten this section and miss the Glomach descent.
- Accommodation – Wild camp, location tba on the day.
- Food – Wild camping dehydrated meals, fresh lunch made from the centre.
- Terrain – Estate tracks, mountain paths, steep descents, pathless boggy sections.

DAY 6. REMOTE CAMP TO STRATHCARRON. 16 – 22.4KM/460M-800M ASCENT.

The length of this day will depend how much distance was covered the previous day.

From Maol-Bhuidhe the track heads north then west, skirting Beinn Dronaig on a faint stalkers path before descending to the well-appointed estate bothy at Bendronaig Lodge (it even has a flushing toilet!). A welcome sight and footpaths improve for a little while too. A good rest at the lodge before leaving the bothy for the last stretch to Strathcarron.

From Bendronaig the path continues west heading up and over Creag Dubh Bheag before dropping down to small civilization.

There is a good track that can be followed for those who are tired and shortens the route a little with easier walking to be picked up at the road at Atterdale.

- Accommodation – Campsite with facilities
- Food – We will cook for you on the campsite (unless you decide to eat at the pub!***)
- Terrain – Wild remote mountain trails, bog, estate tracks.

DAY 7. STRATHCARRON (COULAGS) TO TORRIDON. 14KM/590M ASCENT.

Starting from Coulags the route heads north along the Fionn- Abhain. Huge Munros flank the Glen making the walker feel very small in a big country.

Lovely walking on a good trail passes a bothy after an hour (second breakfast?), and ascends past Loch Coire Fionnaraich and contour to Bealach Ban where there's the odd, rough wild camping spot. Not for today however as the route continues down the other side of the Bealach where the views are breathtaking. An intermittent path, a stalkers route, is the way down, not too tricky with the road in front never seeming to get closer. Passing Ling Hut, a mountaineering accommodation for members, this place will hold some stories from climbers. The Torridon giants looming up in front, seemingly unclimbable. Ahead lies the start of the last day of this trip, one last walk into the Torridon landscape.

The vehicle will take the group on a drive west, under Liathach, the huge mass of mountain that has been the imposing view all afternoon.

- Accommodation – Campsite with basic facilities
- Food – We will cook for you on the campsite (a proper hot meal)
- Terrain – well walked mountain trail, a few rocky sections but not difficult.

DAY 8. BEINN EIGHE CAR PARK TO KINLOCHEWE. 17KM/700M ASCENT

The final day of Part 1 of the Cape Wrath with us. The going gets steadily tougher as you climb into Coire Dubh Mor and contour round Sail Mhor. The path is good with lovely sandstone boulders.

But this gradually peters out leaving you to enjoy some real wilderness. It's really rough going until you reach the pass that takes you down towards Kinlochewe, but there are superb, unspoilt views of the wonderful glens all around you – this is Torridon proper and for me really is one of the highlights of the trail. It'll be a stern test, but then isn't that what you came for?

You'll pass near to the place where in March 1951 a Lancaster bomber crashed near the summit of Beinn Eighe. All eight crew from RAF Kinloss died. Difficulties in recovering the bodies led to the formation of RAF Mountain Rescue which exists to this day. The triple buttress views in Coire Mhic Fhearchair are truly unrivalled and if the weather is good, we shall head into the Coire for a snack stop. ** A small brass plaque on part of the wreckage commemorates the accident and the area is known as Fuselage Gully. In a strange twist to the story in 2008, a climber's fall during an avalanche was broken by a propeller from the plane, he was injured but survived the incident. It is a known winter climb, using the propeller as a belay now!!

After descending from the pass, a pleasant forest track offers some respite and takes the final steps into Kinlochewe where the hotel will be waiting to greet you after the weeks tough walking.

- Accommodation – Kinlochewe Hotel on twin basis
- Food – Breakfast at campsite, lunch on the hill, dinner at the hotel***
- Terrain – Good trails, boulders, rough pathless areas, forestry tracks.

DAY 9.

After breakfast and hangovers(!), transport to train stations for journeys home. Discuss with us upon booking. Aviemore or Inverness would work well for return.

*Lunch in café not included – option to make lunch in the centre.

**If anyone is too tired for the full day, option to walk 2-3 hours into the Coire and back out the same way with a guide, making for an easier day but not missing the stunning views.

***Evening meal to be paid for by you. Not included in the cost.

PRICING

COST INCLUDES:

- 3/4 Qualified members of staff depending upon numbers and support required.
- Vehicle to transport equipment, food, dry kit, offer support to miss sections.
- Camping fees where campsites are used.
- Food – Breakfasts on Days 2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9
 - Lunches on days 2,3,4,5,6,7,8
 - Evening meals on days 2,3,4,5,6,7
- Food will be a mix of dehydrated camp meals, filling meals on campsites (pasta dishes etc), porridge breakfasts (or alternative), Lunches- crackers, cheeses, salami, sandwiches, snack bars, fruit, nuts.
- Two nights' accommodation in the Outdoor centre
- One night in Kinlochewe Hotel on shared twin basis.
- Kit being carried where applicable to support group members.
- Camping stoves for use at wild camp spots
- Water filters
- Paddleboard instruction for those who wish – with equipment
- Camping kit available to hire- tent, sleeping bag, sleeping mat (limited supply please enquire).

COST EXCLUDES

- Transport to Fort William
- Transport from Inverness/Aviemore to home (discuss with us)
- Evening meals purchased in night 4 if choosing to eat in the pub.
- Evening meal on the final night in hotel.
- Lunch in Café on rest day if chosen.
- Costs incurred for cancellations or leaving early from the trip.

Trip Cost:

Trip Cost – £1550pp

Deposit – £350pp

Please discuss payment plans with me upon booking.

Hire Cost:

Tent hire – £40

Sleeping bag hire – £40

Sleeping mat hire – £15

Costs are per person for the trip duration. Tent costs split between persons if shared.