



# Scottish Highlands Volunteer Trip Itinerary

Your Scottish Highlands Volunteer Trip is focused on helping to reforest the Scottish Highlands. What follows is a general description of activities you can expect on the Scottish Highlands itinerary. Please note, however, that local conditions and the volunteer project needs continually evolve. Detailed plans are often finalized or revised after the group arrives and the trip leaders review the conditions at the site in light of the capabilities and special interests of the volunteers.

**IMPORTANT NOTICE** Day 1 is the day you should plan to arrive at the meeting point for the trip. This may require departing your hometown one or more days in advance and traveling on an overnight flight. Since our trip begins in Edinburgh, you might want to arrive a few days early to explore Scotland's historic capital, and nearby sights.

**Day 1:** Meet the group in Edinburgh, then travel to Inverness.

Welcome to Scotland and its ancient capital, Edinburgh! Our trip begins at 8:00 a.m. with an orientation where you'll get acquainted with your ConservationVIP® Trip Leaders and fellow Volunteers and get an overview about the exciting week ahead. After our orientation, we'll load up our bus and head for Inverness, the capital of the Scottish Highlands. Along the way our expert guide will stop at a number of scenic vistas, historic sites, and engineering marvels. We plan to visit the mythical Kelpies, the Falkirk Wheel — a Ferris wheel for boats — and scenic Glencoe, the site of one of Scotland's most notorious massacres. Then we will travel along Loch Ness (keep an eye peeled out for Nessie!), arriving at Inverness at the head of Loch Ness, for dinner and an overnight stay. Lunch and Dinner included. Please make sure you eat breakfast before you arrive at our meeting location.

**Day 2:** Explore Historic Inverness, and head to Dundreggan Conservation Estate

After breakfast, our trip leaders will take us on a walking tour of historic Inverness. We will walk along the River Ness through the Ness Islands, check out Inverness Castle, explore historic downtown, and get one more chance to shop for any forgotten items. After lunch, our Trees for Life leaders will pick us up and take us back along Loch Ness to Glen Moriston, where our home and project site, Dundreggan Conservation Estate is located.

Dundreggan Conservation Estate, once a hunting estate, is the focal area of Trees for Life's restoration programs. It has a large remnant of ancient Caledonian Forest, with running brooks or "burns," waterfalls, magnificent ancient Scots pine, and rare yew. The estate houses a large native plant nursery where thousands of seedlings and cuttings are grown for reforestation efforts throughout the Highlands. The Estate is also home to legends of dragons (dreggan) and faeries, and a medieval "motte" – a stone and earthen defensive mound that was used by the local clan chief to keep an eye on Glen (valley) Moriston.

Once we settle into the homey lodge and get oriented to our week ahead, our Trees for Life leaders will take us on a guided walk into the estate to learn about the ecology of the Caledonian Forest. All meals included. Meals at Dundreggan Conservation Estate are



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vegetarian based and are planned and prepared by the trip leaders. Participants make their own breakfast and box lunches from a variety of food available. Lunch meats may be provided upon request.

### **Days 3 – 5:** Work on projects to help restore the Caledonian Forest

A typical workday consists of preparing a hearty breakfast of your choice, packing your lunch, and being geared up and ready to go at 8:30 a.m. Our projects will vary throughout the week, and may include working in the on-site native plant nursery sowing seeds or cuttings, or transplanting native plants to bags ready for planting, and other tasks assigned by the nursery staff. Other days we will work outside, removing non-native species, planting native plants, or surveying for the presence of native wildlife such as the beautiful red squirrel. This work may involve hiking 1 – 3 miles round trip per day. Throughout our days, our Trees for Life leaders and other Trees for Life experts will provide us with ecology, history and lore about the Highlands, and the critically important nature of our work. After our projects end for the day, generally around 4:30 p.m., you'll have a little time to relax before dinner. All meals included.

After dinner is free time to relax, to read, or gather around a cozy wood stove and tell stories. Keep an eye on the TV hooked up to a remote night vision camera; you might get a glimpse of the resident pine martens scurrying around the stone wall! The lodge is equipped with a small library stocked with a variety of materials and books about the Highlands for your reading pleasure.

### **Day 6:** Rest day.

We take a day off work in the middle of the project to rest and relax. On this rest day, you will have the option to visit more of the Scottish Highlands and return in time for dinner at the lodge. All meals provided.

### **Days 7 – 8:** Work on projects to help restore the Caledonian Forest.

The group will continue with the work described above for days 3 – 5.

### **Day 9:** Complete your trip to the Scottish Highlands

After breakfast, we will return to Inverness, ending our group experience at the Inverness train station at about 10:00 a.m. Breakfast included.

Note: Although we do our very best to adhere to the schedule above, the itinerary is subject to change for numerous reasons beyond our control, including weather and terrain conditions. Project locations may vary with each volunteer expedition according to the needs of local non-profit at the time the trip takes place.

**IMPORTANT NOTICE REGARDING AIR TRAVEL:** Before purchasing your airline tickets, please check with us to ensure the trip has the necessary minimum number of participants required to operate.