

Wild Boar / Argyll Castles Trail **2009 Itinerary**



Day 1 Saturday

Transport will be at Glasgow Airport (GLA) at 12:00 noon. A representative of the riding centre will meet the riders at the International Arrivals Lounge. If you arrive early there is a coffee bar and lounge for you to relax in after your flight. The journey from Glasgow takes them deep into the western highlands of Argyll, along the picturesque banks of Loch Lomond and over the 'Rest and be Thankful', the high mountain pass into Argyll, then along the shores of the beautiful sea loch, Loch Fyne, arriving at your first hotel, the Loch Fyne Spa Hotel in Inveraray, where you will stay for the first 3 nights.

The Loch Fyne Spa Hotel is of a 4 star standard with a swimming pool & spa and magnificent views overlooking Loch Fyne – they even have an outdoor Jacuzzi!

Tonight you will meet your trail host over dinner in the evening and discuss the week to come.

The Argyll Castles Trail is ideal for non riders to join in with their riding partners, as there is plenty for them to do and they can meet the ride most days for lunch.

Day 2 Sunday

You will meet your horse in the grounds of Inveraray Castle home to the Duke and Duchess of Argyll, whose beautiful historic estate we have the privilege of riding through. After riding through Glen Shira and onto high ground with splendid views of Inveraray and Loch Fyne below, the ride then ascends to Dun na Cuaiche, the famous watch tower built by the 7th Duke of Argyll, with stunning views of Inveraray and the beautiful 16th century castle. Make sure to bring your camera every day! We will take a late lunch in the Castle's tea room, giving the opportunity to explore this famous castle, before visiting the Loch Fyne Whisky shop for a drop of the amber nectar!

We will then return to the Loch Fyne Spa Hotel to enjoy the facilities before relaxing over dinner.

Day 3 Monday

We ride from Inveraray castle through estate grounds along the River Aray, which has Salmon ladders which if you're lucky you may even see a salmon leaping. After passing the Dovecot and Princess Louise's fishing pool we cross into ancient woodlands, where you may jump the odd fallen tree, passing small lochans and see ruins from the Highland Clearances.

A picnic lunch is taken by Dalchenna, situated on the shores of Loch Fyne.

In the afternoon the ride passes through the River Douglas (which if it is high tide you may have the opportunity to swim on horseback!).

We then follow the coast through Kenmore Forest passing the settlement of Pennymore before finishing at the village of Furnace, where we have a rare opportunity to look around the open air Victorian crofting museum of Auchindrain. We then return to the Loch Fyne Spa Hotel.

Day 4 Tuesday

Today's ride follows an ancient droving trail between Auchindrain on Loch Fyne and Ederline on Loch Awe.

This is the oldest track in Argyll, a former stage coach route and drove road for moving cattle from the Inner Hebrides to the markets of Stirling and Falkirk.

We have lunch in an old bothy at the abandoned village of Carron on Ederline Estate, this was the resting place for the horses and stagecoach. We usually have the picnic lunch (which has been carried by the horses) by candlelight and with a log fire, followed by tea and coffee heated over the open fire.

After lunch the trail goes onto the heather covered open hill. We climb to several mountain tops with 360 degree views overlooking the vast expanses of Loch Awe to the North and Loch Fyne to the South. Over 32 Lochs and Lochans can be seen from this vantage point!

The ride continues down across hills and moorland passing ruins of ancient settlements and onto the very old chapel of St Columba, who brought Christianity to Scotland in 497AD, which nestles between the trees and ferns and the later built Kilneuair Church overlooking Loch Awe. We continue on Ederline Estate through hills and woodland passing Ederline House and down through the Glen overlooking the Lochans where we may see the Osprey (the fish eagle). This day is a long ride with lots of canters & fast paced action finishing near to the village of Ford.

This evening riders are taken to the famous Crinan Hotel which is renowned for its superb seafood menu. The hotel is set in the picturesque fishing village of Crinan and every room boasts a sea view. Guests are invited to explore the hotel's secret garden before settling down to dinner – which was probably landed less than 50 metres from the hotel!

Day 5 Wednesday

Today we ride to the famous ruin of Carnasserie Castle, the 16th century home of Bishop Carswell who as Bishop of the West Highlands of Scotland used this as his base when he translated the Bible into Gaelic for the Scottish people.

After we climb to the top of the fortified towers take the chance to enjoy a nip from your leader's hip flask.

There is the opportunity to jump stone walls at the castle then gallop on to two Neolithic standing stones. The ride then takes you through Ormag Forest, which has superb views of the Craignish peninsula and on towards the Isle of Mull, before finishing at Kilmartin House Museum for a late lunch followed by a short film and a walk round this interactive museum showing early life in Scotland.

After lunch we will visit the ancient burial cairns and stone circles of Temple Wood (circa 5000 years old) and then on to see the remains of Dunadd Fort the location of the first crowning of the King of the original Scots in 500AD.

This is usually the perfect evening for traditional Scottish fare and live music.

Day 6 Thursday

This is the day of our famous three mile beach gallop across the head of Loch Crinan with Duntrune Castle (the oldest continuously inhabited castle in Scotland) in the background! There is the strong possibility of being able to swim our horses across the River Add.

The ride then goes West along the tow path of the scenic Crinan Canal (opened in 1801 as a safe passage for boats to avoid having to navigate the treacherous waters around the Mull of Kintyre) passing local artist Fraser McIver and his unique “art studio” gypsy wagon (!) and picturesque lock keepers cottages. A steep and challenging ride up through dense woodland brings you to a clearing in the forest for a gourmet picnic lunch. After lunch we pass through forest tracks with fantastic views out over Loch Scotnish with blankets of purple heather in the foreground.

Fast riding to the “fairy isles” on soft grass verges and a visit to a medieval settlement are the order of the afternoon. A holy cross and well can clearly be seen, along with a water powered corn mill at the deserted village of Kilmory Oib.

We then return to enjoy our final night at the Crinan Hotel.

Day 7 Friday

Riding from Gartnagrenoch you are taken through a maze of forestry tracks, around small lochans with superb views of Loch Sween and Loch Coalisport, which brings you to the East end of the Crinan canal and Cairnbaan Hotel for lunch. The hotel is situated beside lock number 5, where we can watch the boats passing through the lock system as we enjoy our excellent cuisine!

The afternoon takes you homewards towards Brenfield estate, riding high in the hills above the town of Lochgilphead with magnificent views down Loch Fyne to the Isle of Arran.

We reach Brenfield in time for afternoon tea in the garden overlooking the water and hills beyond.

This evening is spent back at the Loch Fyne Spa Hotel for a final opportunity to benefit from their spa facilities before your return journey home.

Day 8 Saturday

We will collect you from your hotel around about 10am to get you to Glasgow Airport (GLA) by 12 noon.

Note: The above itinerary is an approximate description of the trail. The route may vary due to many factors, such as forestry work, farming activities or deer stalking, and tides making changes and detours necessary. Locations of night stops can in some circumstances vary too.

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