

WILD PHOTOGRAPHY HOLIDAYS



ISLAY & JURA SCOTLAND'S HEBRIDES

LANDSCAPES AND WILDLIFE

HIGHLIGHTS

- Common and grey seals in Portnahaven harbour
- Thousands of barnacle geese wintering on the island
- Rock formations in Saligo bay
- Big seas near Portnahaven
- Red deer on Jura
- Pretty fishing villages
- The Paps of Jura
- Huge sandy beach of Machir Bay
- Coastal scenery around Loch Indaal
- Light painting the Port Ellen Lighthouse
- Possibility to photograph the aurora
- Superb home cooked meals

INTRODUCTION

Islay the 'Queen of the Hebrides' has long been a favourite destination for birdwatchers although it has surprisingly been overlooked by the outdoor photographic community, so we are thrilled to offer this workshop tutored by Niall Benvie and hosted by Charlotte Benvie. Niall has been visiting Islay and Jura since 1984, he knows the islands intimately and will get you to the best locations at the right time of the day. His tutoring on location follows his proven "method" which works for all levels of expertise. The greater the photographer's existing knowledge, the more this method can be elaborated. Working together you will learn to make the best of the

opportunities that present themselves which in turn leads to an understanding of why something has worked, how to repeat successes and where to find images when things look unpromising. You can expect to leave Islay with some great ideas that you can use on other photographic trips and help you to develop as a photographer. Charlotte will be in charge of hospitality ensuring that you are looked after well. You will be sure to enjoy a high standard of meals throughout the workshop. In 2011 she won through to the final seventy four of the television series Masterchef; there were 24,000 entrants! When time permits Charlotte will assist Niall in the field.



GENERAL SUMMARY

One of the most beautiful and varied island landscapes in the Inner Hebrides, Islay is something of a photographer's dream location. On the coast we find a wilderness unmediated by people where the principal agent of change is the Atlantic itself. The island's geology and glacial history have given rise to the whole gamut of coastal geomorphology from cliffs and geos to sandy beaches and mudflats. Rich in texture, form and colour, the dynamic coastline of Islay is spellbinding.

The Jura skyline seen from Islay is defined by the Paps, three conical mounds of quartzite rising to over seven hundred metres, below them endless moorland hosts over five thousand red deer; this is one of Scotland's last wildernesses. Much of our attention will focus on the coast, the animals that live there, the patterns to be found in sand, rocks and the ocean itself. We will find pretty unspoilt fishing villages, vistas of wild mountains, dramatic coastal landscapes, huge numbers of wintering barnacle and white fronted geese, seals and spectacular sunrise and sunset locations.

DAILY ITINERARY

Our itinerary will depend on the weather conditions and state of the tides but we plan to visit all the destinations described here at least once. Evenings will be spent on editing, post processing, viewing our images and of course enjoying a splendid meal cooked by Charlotte. We will aim to catch dawn and dusk each day unless the forecast is poor. We will spend the days outside in all but the worst of conditions. If we have to stay indoors, we will work on our images and have more photographic tutorials. Night-time sees us scanning the skies for the northern lights!

Portnahaven

This little village in the very south west of Islay is sheltered from the full force of the Atlantic. There are interesting details to photograph around the village and one of the most reliable places in Scotland to get close to seals, they are nevertheless wild animals and can't be taken for granted. If you have a long lens (400mm upwards), a beanbag to rest the lens on and tough waterproofs to crawl over the rocks, you may be rewarded with some close encounters. A little further up the coast is a splendid place to photograph large rollers if there is a big sea. Ideally, we are looking for a strong easterly to blow the spray away from us. Nearby "Milkshake Gully" is noted for the incredible froth that is beaten up as the sea hammers into the narrow channel.

Machir Bay

Here we find is a long west facing sandy beach and a large sand dune system. Given a falling tide with a dramatic sunset it is a stunning location, in reality we find pictures there whatever the conditions.



Saligo Bay

In Saligo Bay the turbulent geological history of Islay is most evident. A fascinating location where we encounter interesting patterns where quartz and other minerals have extruded through the lava rocks that dominate this part of the coast.

The RSPB Reserve of Loch Gruinart

Expect to see huge numbers of wintering barnacle and white fronted geese. They flock into the loch at dusk making for some fine images. Keep your eyes peeled for brown hares too.

Loch Indaal

The large bay of affords many scenic opportunities on still days while the white-washed shoreline villages of Port Charlotte, Bruichladdich and Bowmore are attractive and interesting photographic subjects.



The Mull of Oa

The empty moorland, high cliffs and big seas of the Oa, pronounced “Oh” afford dramatic landscapes. Depending on the fitness and willingness of the group, we may make the 5 mile round trip to photograph the little known Soldier’s Rock – an imposing, half-concealed sea stack.

Claggain Beach and Port Ellen Lighthouse

The character of the south east coast of Islay is quite different from that of the rest of the island. Following a drive past famous distilleries we enter a gentle landscape of small bays backed by low hills, bogs and some old hazel woodland. Claggain Bay itself has a long beach of grey pebbles that come alive after sunset. Light painting the square lighthouse here is an interesting project

Jura

Weather permitting, we will spend one day on Jura. Accessed by ferry from Islay, the landscape is generally austere and wooded along the only road. Perhaps there will be an opportunity to photograph the deer on open moor-

land. We’ll also have a look at the old graveyard near Ardlussa.

JOINING ARRANGEMENTS

The tour departs from the Calmac Ferry Terminal at Kennacraig. If you are using public transport, a bus service runs between Glasgow Buchanan Bus Station and Campbeltown, stopping at Kennacraig. Islay has a small airport served by Flybe, with departures from Glasgow. There are three tiers of payment, the most expensive allowing you to take a 30kg hold bag.

[Calmac Ferry timetables](#)

[Flybe airline](#)

WHAT’S INCLUDED

- 7 nights accommodation, en suite twin bedded rooms. There is a possibility of single rooms depending on the make up of the group. There will be an extra charge for a single room. Check online for details.
- All meals
- Photographic tuition
- Transfers
- Jura ferry

WHAT’S NOT INCLUDED

- Alcoholic drinks
- Insurance
- International flights

SPENDING MONEY

Bowmore has a number of good shops to buy books and souvenirs. Locally produced Islay malts are the same price



elsewhere. Prices are generally a little higher than on the mainland.

PASSPORT AND VISA REQUIREMENTS

There will be Visa requirements for guests travelling from some countries outside the UK.

[UK Visa information](#)

LANGUAGE

English

CLIMATE

Prepare for windy and, most likely, damp conditions. The wind can get pretty biting, especially waiting around for dusk to fall.

CLOTHING SUGGESTIONS

As we will often be standing around in one location it’s important to have some warm clothes. The best solution to temperature control is to have a number of layers available from lightweight thermal underwear through mid-

layer insulation to a windproof jacket. A warm down jacket is great for standing around. For the lower body choose a pair of warm trousers. There are numerous makes and types of warm trousers to choose from, just ensure that the cut is generous to allow freedom of movement.

CLOTHING LIST

- Backpack to contain camera gear and few spare items
- Pair warm trousers, fleece lined are great
- Thermal tops e.g. 'smartwool' (base layer)
- Thermal leggings e.g. 'smartwool' (base layer)
- Light fleece/wool jumper
- Duvet jacket, down or synthetic
- Waterproof jacket
- Waterproof trousers
- Quality warm walking socks
- Leather/waterproof walking boots
- Wellington boots
- Warm hat
- Fleece neck-warmer
- Light warm gloves
- Warm windproof over-mittens
- Casual clothes for inside wear
- Sun cream, sunglasses
- Head torch
- Small, basic first aid to include plasters, blister repair and any medication that you normally use

If you have any questions feel free to contact us at any-time before the trip.

PHOTOGRAPHIC EQUIPMENT/INFORMATION

- In addition to your chosen camera equipment you will need to carry a day pack that will also hold a few extra



items such as water, spare layer etc. Specially designed camera rucksack such as the Vertex or Trekker series designed by Lowepro will be fine.

- You may need a hard case for transporting camera equipment in an aircraft hold, however, a hard case will not be either comfortable or practical when we are on location so you will also need the above.
- Camera and a spare if you have one
- Tripod – not only useful for steadying the camera for long exposures or close-up work but also useful for accurate framing and composition of landscape/plant.

- Wide angle zoom – ideally 16–35mm for full frame camera, 12–24mm for smaller sensor.
- Macro lens or close focusing zoom. 105mm is ideal.
- A telephoto zoom such as a 70–200mm.
- As long a telephoto as you own and a beanbag to support it on.
- Cable release – mechanical or electronic remote to avoid shake on long exposures
- Neutral density, graduated filters and polariser, if you use these. Please do not buy especially for this tour.
- Lens cloth
- Lightweight 'trekking' absorbent towel, for drying cameras and equipment
- Sufficient memory cards for the whole holiday as it may not be possible to buy more during the trip.
- Backup storage device
- Laptop computer preferably with Lightroom or Adobe Camera RAW loaded. A laptop is essential for checking and presenting images during the trip and for one-on-one sessions with the tutor.
- Spare batteries and chargers
- Sensor cleaning device
- Film users should bring enough film, as it may not be possible to buy in many places.
- Camera rain cover that can be left on while taking pictures.
- International all-in-one travel plug adapter, if you're coming from outside the UK. These are on sale at airports. All electrical sockets are UK three-pin. Niall will have a portable studio flash set to demonstrate mixing daylight and flash. He will also have a spot light for light painting. Feel free to bring your own.



MAPS AND BOOKS

Map: [Islay OS Landranger Map sheet 60](#)

Book: [Islay – Biography of an Island](#). Margaret Storrie

BOOKING THIS HOLIDAY

Contact us [through our website](#), where you can also fill in the [online booking form](#), or phone +44 (0)1630 647828.

PARTNERS

Non photographer partners will be very welcome although this primarily a photography holiday we also visit some very beautiful and relaxing places. If any participants do

not wish to join the walks/photographic sessions they will be able to relax in and around the accommodation. The cost will be the same for photographers and non photographers.

OUTDOOR TRAVEL

This is an outdoor travel holiday and the itinerary is dependent on the weather, local conditions and other variables. Wild Photography Holidays may use their discretion to change the itinerary should conditions dictate this; your health, safety and enjoyment will always be our primary concern when making such changes.

MORE INFORMATION

We hope that this information has answered some of your questions about the holiday, It doesn't hope to answer everything. If you have any questions please get in touch.

LINKS

View [images and information](#) for this tour on the website.

Visit [Niall Benvie's website](#)

["The Field Studio"](#) eBook by Niall Benvie

Read about [our approach to teaching photography](#)