

WILD PHOTOGRAPHY HOLIDAYS



Torridon – Raw Beauty of the Scottish Highlands

Led by Niall and Charlotte Benvie

Photographic highlights

- Rugged Scottish mountain landscapes with lochs and islands
- Sea lochs, harbour, old boats and white beach
- Detail-rich old pine woodland
- Waterfalls
- Freshly leafed-out birch woods and flowers
- Light painting opportunities
- “Field studio” techniques
- Post production tuition

Introduction

After a number of years showing guests Torridon just before winter closes in, this year we visit in spring while the birchwoods are fresh, the lambs still cute and the midges less active. We've moved our base too, close to Gairloch, which gives us easier access to more interesting coastal areas as well as to the north end of Loch Maree. But at its heart, this tour remains focused on the fabulous mountains that dominate the north west Highlands of Scotland. In some places, such as Glen Torridon, they tower overhead. In others, they provide a beguiling, distant horizon over a shell sand beach. This is not a National Scenic Area without good reason.

A turbulent geological past and intensive glacial activity have shaped the mountains of Wester Ross into some of Scotland's most impressive upland scenery. It's not necessary to climb too high to change your viewpoint entirely and at many locations we needn't stray far to find great spots to shoot from. Ancient Scots pines rise above birches that clothe the lower slopes of the pale quartz massif of Beinn Eighe, Britain's first National Nature Reserve. These dense woods are damp and extraordinarily rich in lichens, mosses, liverworts and ferns that can engross a macro photographer all day long. Tansley Bog, within the pinewood, is a renowned breeding site of the northern emerald dragonfly. The same glaciers that worked on the mountains have gouged out fabulous lochs such as Loch Maree, decorating its shore with boulders left behind as they retreated.

The mountains conjure with incoming weather systems to produce squalls then drizzle then brilliant sunshine then hail- all within an hour. Some days it is tranquil and the skies are blue. Mostly, it's a lot more interesting than that!

Whether your interest is in the grand vista or intimate landscape, macro or movement, there is a great deal to work with in the area. This is a tour in which we give guests enough time to immerse themselves in a location, sometimes returning to it under different conditions, rather than try to fit in as many "beauty spots" as possible.

General Summary

Our tours weave tuition into our time in the field – as much or as little as you need or want. Niall has worked in this area many times during his 25 year career so knows the best places to head. He is known internationally for his innovative approach to outdoor photography and is generous in sharing his ideas and methods. Guests often come away from our tours having learned something they didn't even know they were interested in before!

Hospitality

We care a great deal about your comfort on our tours, choosing shooting locations best suited to the abilities of the group. We run this tour as a house party, using a lovely, large, well-appointed house near Gairloch which is exclusively ours for the week. Charlotte belongs to the "nothing is too much trouble" school of hospitality and is an imaginative, adaptable and talented

cook (as well as a chocolatier by profession!) Freed from the constraints of hotel timetables, we can arrange meals time around when we need to be out shooting.

We believe there's value in providing feedback as we progress through the week build in time to give it.

Locations

Most locations are easily accessible and require only a short walk. If the fitness of the group allows, we will do some trekking in places to gain altitude. Here are the main areas we will visit, as and when the weather dictates:

- Loch Maree with views over to Slioch. A great evening location, the loch provides a mirror for the dramatic massif of Slioch on calm days. A couple of small bays we know provide the very best foregrounds, even if there is a slight breeze. The end of Loch Maree is overlooked by a dramatic cliff rising above an incredibly lush, boulder filled woodland with the feeling of a lost world.
- Beinn Eighe NNR. The woodlands and mountains of Britain's first National Nature Reserve offer a glimpse into a wilder past. High rainfall encourages a lushness rarely seen in the eastern pine forests and ferns, mosses, liverworts and lichens abound. And above the old pines, the Beinn Eighe ridge, composed of white quartzite, rises dramatically. We'll take our time and go part of the way up the "down" section of the Mountain Trail to get some great views into a large wooded gorge and over Loch Maree.
- Loch Clair. Get your wellies on for the very best positions along Loch Clair, reflecting Liatach and part of Beinn Eighe. This is an iconic view that is worth returning to until the light is just right and the conditions calm. It's a little bit of a drive from our base - about 50 minutes - but it's worth it.
- Lower Diabaig. We drive up out of Glen Torridon, taking in familiar panoramas over Loch Torridon, visit a fascinating set of falls then head over the moors before descending into Lower Diabaig. Used a location in a number of movies, the village's setting in a secluded corner of the sea loch looks more Norwegian than Scottish. Normally, this will mark the furthest point we drive from base.

- Glen Grudie pine wood. Given the right light, this wood right beside the road is a great location to shoot over towards Slioch. A river flows swiftly through the pines.
- Mellon Udrigle. From this lovely shell sand beach there are views to the great mountains of Assynt and Coigach in the north east- and we go past some other great spots - according to the weather - en-route along the winding road. These include the rocky beach of Mellon Charles and the impressive Gruinard Bay.

Daily itinerary

Our itinerary will depend on the weather conditions but we plan to visit all the destinations described at least once. The plan for the next day is published at dinner, laying out the weather forecast, the locations and tutorials for the next day, drive times, walking distances , where and when we'll eat and what gear you'll need. Experience has taught us that it's more productive to have a plan to follow than make it up as we go along. Evenings will be spent on editing, post-production (using Adobe Lightroom/Photoshop) and analysis - as well as enjoying a splendid meal. We will aim to catch dawn and dusk most days unless the forecast is poor. If bad weather keeps us indoors, Niall has a number of tutorials to keep you busy and your processing productive.

Joining arrangements and transfers

The tour departs from Inverness Airport although we can make collections from the railway station and you are welcome to drive directly to the accommodation in your own car. During the tour I will drive you around in a 9 seat minibus.

What's included

Full board, guiding, tuition, driving to and from Inverness airport.

What's not included

Alcoholic drinks, entry to visitor attractions.

Accommodation

[Big Sand](#), near Gairloch, Ross shire

Food

Charlotte will be cooking for the group. A chocolatier by profession, she has catered for many WPH groups in Scotland and abroad and takes care of the guests' comfort on tours. As often as her work allows, she will join us in the field where she assists with the photography tuition too. Please notify us at the time of booking of any intolerances or allergies you suffer from so that a menu can be devised for you.

Spending money

You may want to bring some cash to buy alcohol or to pay admissions fees (if that crops up) but most places take cards and there is a bank in Gairloch.

Travel Insurance

It is recommended that you take out appropriate insurance to cover personal accident, medical costs, repatriation and loss of baggage. We will need a copy of your travel insurance at the time of booking.

Passport and Visa Requirements

A valid passport is required. There will be Visa requirements for guests travelling from some countries outside the UK.

[Check here if you need a UK visa.](#)

Language

Both Niall and Charlotte speak very good English (!) as do the locals, although some speak Gaelic too.

Climate

The weather around these mountains is very changeable but we can be pretty sure that we'll see at least some rain. Daytime temperature is likely to be anything between 7 and 10 degrees Celcius (45 – 55 degrees F)

Clothing suggestions

As usual, we suggest layering: thermal undergarments; a fleece layer; a down jacket if it is very cold (which it could be if we're out light painting); and a waterproof shell for your body and legs; fine gloves inside fold-back mitts; a waterproof cap with liner. Walking boots will be fine for some locations but experience tells that it is wet underfoot just about everywhere in the north west

and wellies will be useful too. If you're worried about getting cold feet we'd recommend neoprene models such as those from Muck Boots.

Photographic equipment/information

- Camera - and a back-up if you have one.
- Memory cards, reader, cables, spare batteries and chargers.
- Tripod and head.
- Laptop or tablet with an image editing application of your choice for instance Lightroom / Adobe Camera RAW.
- Portable backup drive.
- Wide angle zoom (ideally 16mm for full frame camera, 12mm for smaller sensor.)
- Macro lens or close focusing zoom. 105mm is ideal.
- A mid-range zoom such as a 70 - 200mm.
- Electric release.
- Polarising filter, if you have one.
- Large plastic bag to keep your camera and lens dry.

Niall will bring a portable studio flash set to demonstrate mixing daylight and flash as well as a spot light for light painting. Feel free to bring your own as well.

Other items:

- a light towel for drying your gear in the field
- a head torch
- any medication you need
- an open mind and vivid imagination.

Maps and books

OS Explorer 433: Map of Torridon <https://www.ordnancesurvey.co.uk/shop/explorer-map-torridon-beinn-eighe-liathach.html> ; OS Explorer 434: Map of Gairloch and Loch Ewe <https://www.ordnancesurvey.co.uk/shop/explorer-map-gairloch-loch-ewe.html>

Book: "[Beinn Eighe: the mountain above the wood.](#)"

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 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.

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