Naturalist Studies in the Highlands of Scotland

Saturday, July 23 - Saturday, July 30, 2016

Johns Hopkins Center for Talented Youth
Naturalist Studies in the Highlands of Scotland: Program Itinerary

Saturday, July 23: Arrival
Aigas minibuses will collect CTY families on July 23rd at the railway station around 4:00 p.m. Following arrival at Aigas Field Centre, the group will meet for afternoon tea and cake. In the evening, we have our first dinner together and a relaxed evening to settle in and get to know each other.
Overnight: Aigas Field Centre (D)

Sunday, July 24: Aigas and Glen Strathfarrar
We’ll spend the morning exploring the estate itself. We will play games, discover its wildlife, look for critters great and small, and delve into the ancient history of this area at Aigas’ Bronze Age site that dates back over 3,000 years. In the afternoon we’ll head out to one of the local glens—the stunning and secluded Glen Strathfarrar. Here we’ll search the landscape for the supreme hunter, the golden eagle, and other wildlife such as the majestic red deer. Exploring Scotland’s iconic landscape by foot reveals the hidden truth and beauty.
Overnight: Aigas Field Centre (B,L,D)

Monday, July 25: The Black Isle
Aigas is fortunate to boast a huge variety of habitats right on their doorstep, and this fertile, estuary bound peninsula is proof of that. Abounding with wildlife, we’ll search for creatures of the foreshore and also the dolphins living in the Moray Firth, which are the largest bottlenose dolphins in the world. We’ll investigate the strange folklore of this land and look into its unique geology, and we may also have a boat trip, weather permitting.
Overnight: Aigas Field Centre (B,L,D)
Tuesday, July 26: West Coast
No visit would be complete without a trip to the stunning, rugged west coast of the Highlands. We will take a walk down to the hugely impressive Corrieshalloch Gorge, play on the white sandy beaches, and even hope to find Britain’s largest bird of prey - the white-tailed sea eagle - which has been re-introduced to the area.
Overnight: Aigas Field Centre (B,L,D)

Wednesday, July 27: History and Nessie!
Today we’ll dive into Scotland’s bloody past, with a visit to Culloden Battlefield, the site of the last battle on British soil in 1746 and we’ll have our own battle re-enactment. We also visit the mysterious Clava Cairns, an ancient and secretive site dated to 2000 BC. In the afternoon, we’ll travel along the shores of the world famous Loch Ness and search for its most celebrated inhabitant while exploring the ruins of Urquhart Castle - once one of the most important buildings in the north of Scotland.
Overnight: Aigas Field Centre (B,L,D)

Thursday, July 28: Dornoch and Dunrobin Castle
Heading up the east coast, we will arrive at Dunrobin Castle, the largest building in the north of Scotland and home of the Earl of Sutherland. Some parts of the castle could be older than 600 years. We hope to see a falconry display, explore the fascinating history of the castle and its museum of death (you have to see it to understand) as well as the role played by the Sutherland family in the notorious clearances of the early 19th Century.
Overnight: Aigas Field Centre (B,L,D)
Friday, July 29: Aigas and Beauly
For the kids, we’ll spend the day having fun on site with options of different activities and time to complete the group project that we will work on throughout the week. For the adults, there is the option of a trip to Beauly, our local village, a tour around the ancient priory and a tour around our local whisky distillery. Alternatively, you can take some time off to relax on the estate. In the afternoon, we will have a chance to learn some of the moves for our evening ceilidh, plus more activities and time to relax with our new friends.
Overnight: Aigas Field Centre (B,L,D)

Saturday, July 30: Departure
You will depart shortly after breakfast. However, we are sure that you’ll be leaving on a high; with new friends, new knowledge, and new memories.
Program Information

Trip length: 8 days/7 nights

Cost per person: $2,850 adults/$1,850 students 16 and under

Program includes:
- Accommodations for seven nights at Aigas Field Centre’s Beauloy Campus. Accommodations include comfortable and spacious timber lodges set in the gardens and wooded grounds of the House of Aigas. Bedrooms are furnished with comfortable twin divan beds, plenty of storage space, reading lights and chairs. All bedrooms have ensuite bathrooms. Each lodge has a spacious communal lounge area with tea and coffee making facilities and comfortable seating.
- All meals during the duration of the program. Meals are served in the baronial dining hall of the House of Aigas, family home of Sir John and Lady Lister-Kaye, and special diets are catered for by prior arrangement.
- Commentary from Centre’s professional educational staff.
- All activities as noted in itinerary, including park and museum entrance fees.
- Land transport during the program, including transportation from Inverness to the Aigas Field Centre.

Not included in tour price:
- Airfare and other transportation to and from Inverness at the start and end of the program.
- Travel Insurance.
- Personal expenses such as laundry, fax/phone/email charges, and souvenirs.

Program Notes
All prices listed are in U.S. dollars. While we do everything possible to maintain the listed price and itinerary as described, they are subject to modifications due to availability of services. Rates are per person based on double occupancy. Single supplements may be available. All reservations are subject to CTY Policies, Terms and Conditions found on our website at www.cty.jhu.edu/family/travel.
Aigas House and Grounds

The House of Aigas is a family home; a place of good country fare, muddy boots, and crackling pine-log fires, where the air is full of the aroma of baking and the sound of laughter.

The house was discovered by Sir John Lister-Kaye in 1976 on the verge of demolition. It had once been a Georgian tacksman’s house dating from around 1760, before being taken over by a family of Glasgow merchants in the 1870’s as a summer sporting lodge and the impressive Victorian facade we see today was constructed.

The house was sold in the 1950’s becoming a council-run Old Folks’ Home before being abandoned in 1971 and left to rot and ruin. Sir John renovated the house, to be his own home and a base for the first field studies centre in the Highlands, for which it has been used to this day.

Meals are eaten in the Baronial hall, next to a roaring log fire, surrounded by family portraits and Victorian artefacts. The house library, with a fabulous collection of natural history, wildlife and local history books, is freely available for guests to use, as well as a huge wall map covering the north of Scotland. The old Victorian dining room is now used as a common room for guests to use as their own; to relax, have tea or engage in their own studies.

The House of Aigas is set amongst beautiful gardens, with rockeries, a large pond and an extensive arboretum. Most of the trees were planted by the Victorians over a hundred years ago, including many exotics such as Giant Sequoia and Western Red Cedar which have now reached considerable heights, with some native trees dating even further back.

The garden is Lady Lister-Kaye’s creation, a blaze of colour throughout the year, hosting a rich array of species from miniature maples to azaleas and rhododendrons and the blooms of heathers, lilies, honeysuckle and clematis. The daffodils are a fine display in spring.
Aigas Menu

Lady Lister-Kaye cooks all the meals at Aigas and has written her own cookbook. She is a Cordon Bleu trained and uses local and organic ingredients whenever possible. This includes some of Aigas’s own beef and venison.

Dinner is a 3-course set menu, and breakfast is a self-serve buffet with hot porridge and lots of cereals and fruit to choose from. Every day, fresh rolls and baguettes are made up for your packed lunch. Thermos tea and coffee is carried on all expeditions.

Lady Lister-Kaye has provided us with a sample menu with meals which will be prepared for you during the week (this is a draft and is subject to change):

- Breakfast is a self-serve buffet with choices such as hot porridge, cereals, and fresh fruit.

- Packed lunches will be prepared for your daily excursions. Lunches will be catered for special dietary needs.

- Dinners will always include fresh homemade soups, breads, and two vegetables with potatoes or rice. There will always be puddings after the main course, very often made with fruit. Entrees will include items such as roast lamb, salmon fillets with hollandaise sauce, chicken casserole, shepherd’s pie, fish pie, roast pork, highland beef casserole, and roast duck.

- Lady Lister-Kaye and her staff can cater for vegetarians, gluten-free diets, and so on.
Aigas Accommodations

Timber Lodges
Aigas accommodates guests in comfortable, heated timber lodges all with twin bedrooms and private bathrooms appealingly set in the spacious gardens and wooded grounds of the House of Aigas.

All bedrooms are carpeted and heated. They have twin divan beds with firm interior sprung mattresses, pillows, sheets, and non-allergy duvets (slumberdown) as well as spare blankets for every bed. All bedrooms contain a chest of drawers, hanging cupboard, mirror, bedside table, reading lights, and chairs. All bedrooms have en-suite bathrooms with a shower, bath, toilet, and sink. You have complete privacy in your bedroom.

Bathrooms
The bathrooms are modern and well lit. They contain a bath with shower and shower screen, a hand basin with mirror and light, a shaver-socket, a heated towel-rail, and a water closet (bathroom). All bathrooms are equipped with two towels per person and a bath mat. Each bathroom has its own hot water tank.

Sitting Rooms
Each lodge has a communal lounge area with carpets, tables and chairs, a kitchen space with fridge for making tea or coffee, an information board, and coat-hanging area. There is a small selection of books and magazines, and each lodge is equipped with umbrellas.