

MULL



**D** trip to a Scottish island comes with various expectations attached, and Mull meets every one. The pace of life is slow, the welcome is warm and the seafood is fresh – but unlike most islands, getting there doesn't require a hefty journey.

Part of the same archipelago as Skye, the hilly, hospitable island offers spectacular rewards for walkers and wildlife lovers – as well as any clients in search of somewhere special close to home. Whether they want to stay in a Scottish castle, mooch around in a camper van, eat at the Michelin-recognised Ninth Wave Restaurant in Fionnphort, or pick up battered scallops from the fish-and-chip van at Tobermory, Mull ticks all the requisite boxes.



See

**Pore over a map of Mull and you'll see lots of green space, a few spaghetti-strand roads and a handful of small settlements – which is precisely what makes the island attractive. The 45-minute car ferry from Oban (one of three short sea crossings from the mainland) transports visitors to a broad-shouldered land where slopes soar, ridges form jagged skylines and sea lochs furl out for miles.**

The island's proximity to big Scottish draws such as Fort William and Loch Lomond means Mull often gets relegated to a day trip. Many short-term visitors see only the northern stretch of road between the ferry port and the enjoyable island 'capital' of Tobermory, a harbour town known for its brightly painted waterside buildings and a starring role in the BBC kids' show *Balamory*.

“ The scenery, particularly around the Ardmeanach peninsula and the Ross of Mull in the south, is wild, high and cinematic

An itinerary like this makes for a pleasant day out, but barely skims the surface of what makes Mull special.

Unless clients are cycling – plenty of two-wheeled tourists wend their way around the island – it's best thought of as a self-drive destination. Mull's main selling point is its landscape. The scenery, particularly around the Ardmeanach peninsula and the Ross of Mull in the

south, is wild, high and cinematic. To give you a sense of scale, it takes about an hour and 40 minutes to drive from Tobermory at the top of the island to the village of Fionnphort on the southwest tip. Single-track roads, interspersed with passing points and lay-bys for wildlife-spotting, add to the sense of adventure.

Exploring the numberless bays and headlands is half the fun, but a few highlights jump out. The coastal hamlet of Calgary, which gave the Canadian city its name, has a wide silvery beach and the excellent Calgary Art In Nature gallery.

Another standout – literally – is the 966m-high Ben More, a simple but rewarding uphill hike from the shores of Loch na Keal. Elsewhere, Glengorm Castle has a dramatic setting, good walks and a top-notch cafe. ➤

Main pic: Tobermory  
Top right: Calgary Bay  
Above right: Ninth Wave Restaurant



BOOK IT

**Brightwater Holidays** offers a four-day tour of Mull, Staffa and Iona, staying at the Isle of Mull Hotel & Spa, with sight-seeing in Tobermory, the Ross of Mull and Duart Castle, as well as a wildlife-spotting cruise. Prices start at £735, departing September 13, including some meals, all ferry crossings and a tour leader. [brightwaterholidays.com](http://brightwaterholidays.com)

**McKinlay Kidd's** Mull Week of Wildlife holiday features an eagle-spotting safari, a whale-watching cruise and a boat trip to spot puffins. Prices start at £760 staying in Dervaig or £975 in Tobermory, for a six-night break between May and September, with ferry crossings and guided wildlife spotting. [mckinlaykidd.com](http://mckinlaykidd.com)

# Stay



Glengorm Castle

**It's easy to fall for Tobermory. The pubs are lively, the harbour setting is spectacular and the daily papers don't arrive until noon. It has a distillery, a catch-and-release aquarium and easy waterside walks.**

The town is also the most obvious base for accommodation on the island, although don't expect large-scale properties – on Mull, B&Bs, self-catering cottages and boutique hotels rule the roost.

Benefiting from the far-reaching views of the hills above the town, Strongarbh House is an excellent option for clients looking for somewhere memorable. It has just four rooms, but a focus on art and design and à la carte breakfasts make it a classy proposition.

A bigger option in Tobermory itself is the 28-room Western

Isles Hotel, which has been in situ since 1882 and offers a generous whisky list.

Meanwhile, just outside Tobermory, the four-room Fairways Lodge has a plum location for golfers – it overlooks Tobermory Golf Club, once named Scotland's best nine-hole course.

Slightly farther afield, Glengorm Castle has options for B&B, self-catering and serviced apartments. Some of these are in the grounds, others are in the castle itself – a grand, turreted affair built in the mid-1800s.

Elsewhere, the elegant, six-room Pennygate Lodge is well located at Craignure, the arrival point for ferries from Oban, while farther south, the loch-side Tiroran House Hotel arguably trumps the lot. The winner of multiple awards, it has

56 acres of grounds and is also dog-friendly.

Like much of Scotland, Mull is popular territory for camper vans and motorhomes, which can be brought across on the ferries and parked at various vehicle-friendly campsites.

For budget travellers, the island also has a smattering of hostels and bunkhouses, as well as areas where 'wild' camping is possible, including a great site at Calgary Bay.

It's also worth noting that the neighbouring island of Iona is accessible only from Mull, making it a popular add-on. It has its own accommodation, notably the harbourside Argyll Hotel and the larger St Columba Hotel, both of which offer a traditional welcome and excellent local cuisine. ➤

## IONA

The crossing from Fionnphort to Iona takes just 10 minutes, but stepping off the passenger boat onto this mellow, relatively flat island feels like arriving somewhere far removed from the rest of the UK.

This is partly to do with its history. Hard-nosed missionary St Columba settled here in the year 563 and made it his aim to convert Scotland to Christianity. He succeeded. An abbey named in his honour towers over the shore, and pilgrims are still drawn here from far and wide.

You don't need to be spiritual to be won over by Iona. Its landscape rises and falls in green folds, leading out to remote beaches and hidden coves, and its birdlife is fantastic. For a few days of getting away from it all, it's hard to think of anywhere better.

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ABTA  
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Mull has everything you could want of an escape to a small Scottish island, but two elements of the Mull experience really stand out: the wildlife and the walking.

The island's tumbling hills, long lochs and coastal cliffs are home to a thrilling range of native animals. Birdlife is everywhere you go – from herons to wheatears. Golden eagles and white-tailed eagles are both resident – look for wide wings high above the ridges.

White-tailed eagles can be seen up close with Mull

“ The island's tumbling hills, long lochs and coastal cliffs are home to a thrilling range of native animals

Eagle Watch, which runs ranger-guided visits between April and September, taking people to within binocular range of a nesting site. These visits are popular, so book ahead. Tours cost £10 for adults, £5 for under-16s or £25 for a

family ticket.

There are rewards to be had offshore, too. In spring and summer, pleasure boats run from Fionnphort and Iona to the spectacular islet of Staffa, where colonies of puffins waddle unconcernedly within just a few feet of visitors.

A trip here also gives visitors the chance to see Fingal's Cave, a basalt-columned grotto that inspired Mendelssohn to write an overture.

Otters, seals, porpoises and dolphins are all regularly spotted in the waters around Mull. Tobermory is the setting-off point for popular whale-watching tours. Running from

April to October, these give visitors the chance to see minke whales, basking sharks and more.

Meanwhile, walkers can barely put a foot wrong. Sedate strolls and hard-core hikes are easy to come by. Ben More is Scotland's only Munro (a mountain 914m or higher) outside Skye or the mainland. Other highlights include the Treshnish peninsula, the natural arches at Carsaig and the gentler landscape of Aros Park near Tobermory.

If clients really want to make the most of the walking, a good guidebook is advisable: Cicerone's *Walking The Isle of Mull* has 40 routes. **TW**



GETTING THERE

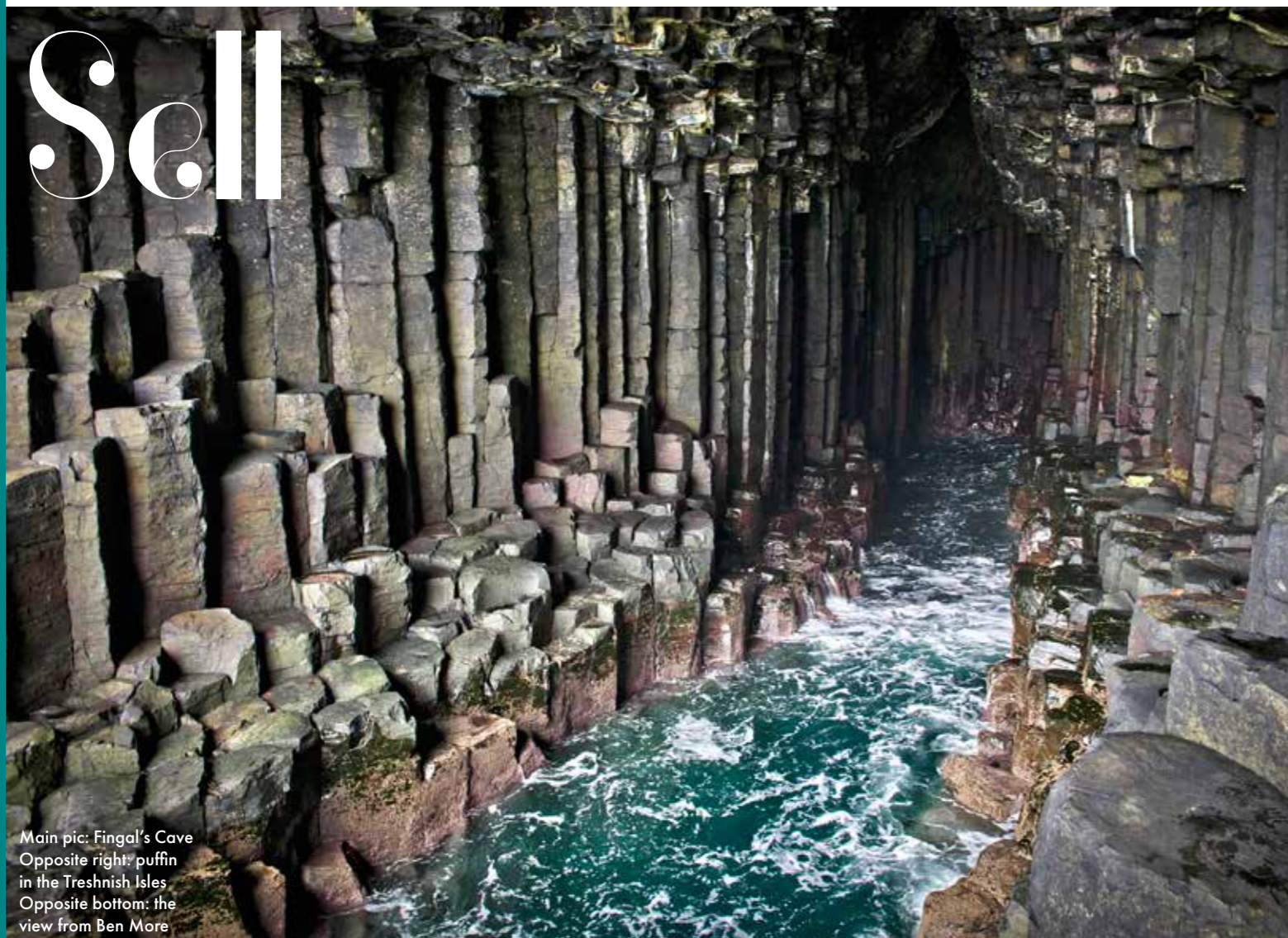


CalMac ([calmac.co.uk](http://calmac.co.uk)) runs all three ferry routes to Mull. There are up to 11 sailings daily. If clients are travelling from Oban with a vehicle, particularly during the spring or summer, reservations are near-essential.

Oban is about one hour, 10 minutes by car from Fort William; two hours, 30 minutes from Glasgow; two hours, 45 minutes from Inverness; three hours from Edinburgh; and four hours from Aberdeen.

Other than a few short stretches of double-track roads, getting around Mull requires lengthy drives on single-track roads. Getting into the routine of pulling over when meeting another vehicle isn't difficult, but it would be advisable to make clients aware of this in advance.

For more information on holidays in Scotland, go to [visitscotland.com](http://visitscotland.com).



Main pic: Fingal's Cave  
Opposite right: puffin in the Treshnish Isles  
Opposite bottom: the view from Ben More



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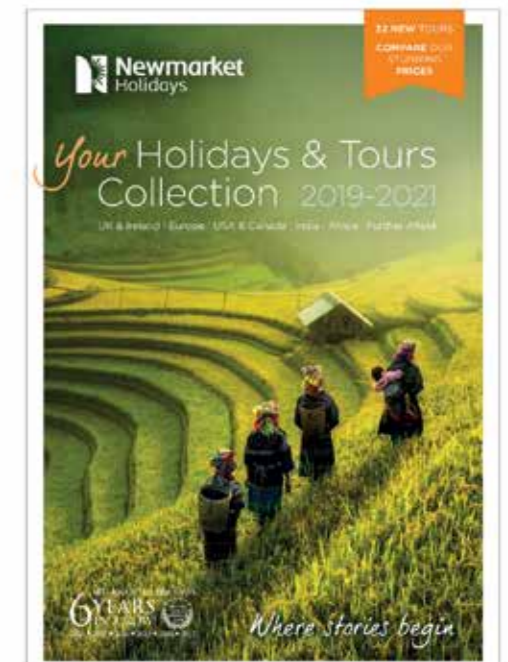
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