

Scottish Sea Stacks Climbing Week

On our Scottish Sea Stacks climbing week, we climb Britain's highest sea stack – the Old Man of Hoy, off the coast of the Orkney Islands in Northern Scotland. Hoy is the most iconic of all the great sea stacks in Britain and a brilliant adventure, complete with big exposure, some sandy rock, seagulls and the huge backdrop of St Johns head nearby. We aim to combine Hoy with the Old Man of Stoer and other sea cliff or mountain crag venues, on a mini road trip across this amazing part of the UK.

Dates and Availability

This trip is available through May and June when the conditions/weather are usually at their best for Scottish rock climbing. Please contact us to discuss your preferred dates.

Trip Info

We aim to climb the Old Man of Hoy first, followed by whatever else suits the team, the weather and tides. Other venues we have visited on previous trips include the Old Man of Stoer, the Caithness sea cliffs, the wonderful Sheigra sea cliffs including a wild camp by the beach, long mountain routes on Stac Pollaidh and the famous sea cliffs at Reiff.

Any items of specialist safety equipment that you need are also included in the cost (eg helmet, harness, rock shoes etc) and afterwards, we'll send you plenty of great photos and video of your trip to share with family and friends.

- Fully qualified IFMGA British Mountain Guide
- 4 days guiding and instruction
- Equipment hire included
- Photos and videos of your trip!

Sample Itinerary

Subject to weather and climbing conditions, a typical course looks something like this:

Day 1

Travel to Orkney

Your guide will liaise with you to arrange a meet up point in the afternoon at Inverness eg airport, train station etc. Drive to Scrabster, take the 7.30pm ferry to Orkney and overnight in BnB in Stromness.

Briefing

Your guide will run through **safety routines** and **kit checks**, as well as hand out any rental equipment – before going on to discuss plans and the **current weather** and **conditions**. We'll also have maps and guidebooks to show you, so if you've any further questions or last minute requests, then this is the ideal time to bring them up before we start the climbing.

Day 2

The Old Man of Hoy

Take early ferry to Hoy, then taxi to Rackwick Bay. Walk in and climb The Old Man of Hoy. The classic route is around 5 pitches long, mainly at VS standard, but with a crux pitch of E1 taking a stunning crack/chimney feature in a wildly exposed position. Crack climbing skills are essential!

The last pitch is perhaps the best on the route however, taking a clean corner of immaculate sandstone – steep positive laybacking, bridging and jamming, leading directly to the summit of this iconic British rock climb.

Return to Orkney mainland on last ferry pm. Overnight in Stromness.

Day 3

Return to Mainland, Climbing at Sheigra

Early ferry to the mainland. Drive to Sheigra and climb here for the afternoon – excellent remote sea cliffs near the NW tip of Scotland. Wild camp near the beach at Sheigra.

Day 4 The Old Man of Stoer

Drive to the Point of Stoer, climb Old Man of Stoer (VS) – the second most famous sea stack in Scotland, involving an exciting tyrolean traverse above the sea! Overnight in Ullapool.

Day 5 Climbing at Reiff

Climb at the excellent sea cliffs of Reiff. Drive to Inverness pm, drop off and goodbyes.

NB This is a very flexible itinerary, as ferries can usually be changed at short notice to suit the weather. The main objective is the Old Man of Hoy, so in the event of bad weather the time spent on Orkney can be extended/timings altered as necessary to complete the route – we have a 100% summiting record on the Old Man of Hoy.

Fitness and Experience

This is an advanced level 3 trip. Previous multi-pitch rock climbing experience is required, seconding at HVS, with good crack climbing technique. You should also be very comfortable on exposed multi-pitch abseil descents. **Please see our website Fitness Levels and Tech Levels as a further reference point (detailed on this trip's course page > Fitness and Experience section)** - you should be at **Fitness Level 2 and Tech Level 4** to enjoy this trip. If you need to top up your fitness before the trip and need some help, then please contact us, or check out the training advice page on our Knowledge Base:

<https://www.alpine-guides.com/climb/insider-knowledge-climb/>

Guiding Team

All our UK programmes are staffed by IFMGA British Mountain Guides working at a maximum ratio of 1:2 on the Scottish Sea Stacks Week. We work with a small team of regular guides who's profiles can be found on our website, but we occasionally employ other guides during peak season.

Course Briefing

This will take place on the first evening of the trip, usually on the ferry to Orkney.

Included in the Price

- Guides fees and all guides expenses, including ferries, taxis, food and accommodation
- Local travel in the guides vehicle to complete the course itinerary
- Communal safety equipment (ropes etc)
- Hire of personal equipment including harness, helmet, belay equipment and rock shoes

Not included in the Price (see below for further info)

- Food and accommodation
- Ferries and taxis
- Travel to Scotland
- Insurance

Food

Bring at least enough food for lunches and a couple of evening meals/breakfasts, which can be cooked on camping stoves (for an overnight on Hoy and possible camping at Sheigra). Other meals can be taken in BnB's/local pubs as preferred. We will be in touch to coordinate any shopping required en route.

Accommodation

This is a very flexible week with various accommodation options, to work around the ferry logistics, weather and

other variables. It's possible to use bed and breakfasts for the duration of the trip, but typically we use a BnB on the first night, then nights camping/using bothies or hostels. The guide will liaise with you and book suitable accommodation - simply pay direct as we go along.

Ferries

Cars will be left on the mainland. Ferries crossings are required as a foot passenger: 1 return journey from Scrabster to Stromness on Orkney mainland and 1 return journey from Stromness to Hoy. We will organise all ferries required.

Taxis

A taxi ride is required from Hoy ferry terminal to Rackwick bay, where the approach walk starts to the Old Man of Hoy. For climbing on the Orkney sea cliffs (Yesnaby) a local taxi ride is required from Stromness. We will organise all taxis (taxi costs will be split between the team).

Budget approx. £200 per person for food, accommodation, ferries and taxis for the duration of the trip (plus extra for any drinks). Alpine Guides will make all the necessary bookings in advance for the team.

Travel to Orkney

You need to travel to our base, which is the town of Stromness on Orkney, the gateway to the island of Hoy. However we frequently meet in Inverness and co-ordinate travel from there. You should arrange outward travel on day 1, arriving in Stromness that evening. Return travel should be arranged on the evening of day 5 or the following morning, from Inverness. There are various ways to reach Stromness, all involving a long journey (from anywhere!)

- **Road** - Drive to Scrabster ferry terminal on the North East coast of Scotland via Inverness, car sharing with your guide - approx 9 hours from Yorkshire, but meet at a suitable location in the UK. We will leave our car on the mainland and take the ferry from Scrabster to Stromness (1.5 hrs crossing), arrive Stromness pm.
- **Rail** - Take the train to Inverness, meet your guide, then drive as above (3 hrs to Scrabster).
- **Flights** - Fly to Inverness, meet your guide, then drive as above - Or, fly to Kirkwall on Orkney mainland and take a taxi from Kirkwall to Stromness (25 mins). Meet guide in Stromness pm.

Insurance

Although not compulsory, we recommend you buy holiday insurance covering cancellation and curtailment risks.

****Once we have confirmed that your trip is running, we strongly advise that you arrange your insurance immediately, so that you're covered for loss of course fees and other travel related costs if you need to cancel your holiday due to personal circumstances. Once you are insured, please email us the policy details, and carry a hard copy with you during the trip****

More information, including advice for non-UK residents, can be found on the Insurance page of our website here

<https://www.alpine-guides.com/climb/planning-your-climbing-trip/insurance/>

Equipment

A full kit list is enclosed. We will provide all climbing and communal safety equipment (ropes etc), although we recommend people use their own harness/helmet if they have them. You are responsible for providing your own mountain boots or approach shoes. Clients are expected to supply their own personal clothing, waterproofs and a rucksack. If you need to purchase boots - then please check out the advice articles on our Knowledge Base <https://www.alpine-guides.com/climb/insider-knowlege-climb/> Boots should be suitable for the planned activity and should ideally be well broken in beforehand, in order to prevent sore feet and blisters from spoiling your trip.

If you need to hire any of the following items of specialist climbing equipment: helmet, harness, rock shoes - then please let us know when you book

Mountain clothing needs to be versatile, so a typical layering system for summer mountaineering consists of a pair of windproof midweight or lightweight softshell trousers on the bottom half, paired with a long sleeved base layer top or t shirt and a softshell

jacket on the top half (plus a light insulated jacket, or fleece carried as a spare warm layer). Outer wet weather gear should be of good quality and both fully waterproof and breathable. Key features are a helmet compatible hood and side zips allowing trousers to be pulled on over your mountain boots. See our alpine climbing clothing advice page for more info:

<https://www.alpine-guides.com/alpine-climbing-clothing-advice/>

Weather and Conditions

It's Scotland, so the weather can do anything at any time of year! – ie please check the forecast and come suitably prepared, with full waterproofs and/or sun cream. The good thing about the Scottish islands however, is that the worst weather often blows over and breaks on the mainland.

Checklist

Please make sure you have all of the following before leaving home!

- All Climbing Gear (Check kit list)
- Personal Medications
- Compeed &/or tape to stop blisters

What Next?

- Bookings can be made online via our website. A deposit of £300 per person is required to secure your place, with the balance due 8 weeks before the course start date - we will email you a balance reminder including your invoice and possible payment methods.
- Once we have the minimum required number of bookings we will email you to confirm the course is running (confirmed trips will also be visible on our website). Once confirmed, you should arrange your travel insurance and travel to resort.
- We will email you 2 weeks before the course start date with any final info including your guides contact details, hotel details/directions and any other final info.

More Info

Please contact us for more info regarding any aspect of the trip – info@alpine-guides or 0113 815 1904 (we might be out skiing or climbing – if so please leave a message and we'll get back to you asap, thanks!)

Uk Rock Climbing Equipment List

Above all, mountain kit needs to do the job, but be as light as possible. We work with various manufacturers including Arc'teryx, whose products we can thoroughly recommend.

Technical Clothing

- **Thermal tops/t-shirts** - made of synthetic material (ie not cotton!)
- **Softshell Jacket** - mid weight, wind resistant, light insulating layer (or a mid weight fleece jacket)
- **Spare warm layer** - fleece or lightweight synthetic jacket
- **Waterproof jacket** - lightweight breathable model
- **Mountain trousers** - light/mid-weight trekking or climbing trousers (leggings are Ok in good weather)
- **Waterproof Overtrousers** - with long side zips
- **Socks** - warm pair, plus lighter pair and spares
- **Thin gloves** - windproof 'hardfleece' model is good
- **Hat or Buff** - must fit under a helmet

Personal Items

- **Water Container** - at least 1 litre
- **Headtorch** and batteries
- **Map, compass and whistle** (optional, but a good idea)
- **Personal medications and blister kit** - zinc oxide tape, compeed, painkillers etc
- **Sunglasses**
- **Sun cream**
- **Sun hat**
- **Shorts**

Overnight Items

- **Personal kit**
- **Camping equipment** - tent, sleeping bag, sleeping mat, stove and fuel, cooking/eating equipment (if flying the guide may supply a spare tent etc)

Technical Equipment

- **Rucsac** - 30/40l is perfect for general use
- **Small (10-15l) rucsac** - lightweight model. Not essential, but useful for taking a waterproof and food on the climbs
- **Mountain Boots or sturdy approach shoes with good grip** - for descending the cliff face paths to Old Man of Hoy
- **Rock climbing shoes** - must be comfortable enough to wear for several hours
- **Approach shoes** - or trainers
- **Harness, locking karabiner and belay device**
- **120cm sling + locking karabiner**
- **2 prussick loops and karabiner**
- **Climbing helmet**
- **Trekking poles** - useful but not essential

Your guide will have ropes, climbing safety equipment, first aid and survival equipment.

Alpine Guides Ltd – Booking Conditions

1. All bookings are made with Alpine Guides Ltd, company number 4901552, whose registered office is at 14 Wrenbeck Close, Otley, West Yorkshire, LS21 2BU and whose directors are Alun Powell and Richard Cross.
2. We only accept bookings from persons over the age of 18 at the time of booking. Bookings by or on behalf of persons under the age of 18 may be accepted on certain courses, when accompanied on the course by another person over the age of 18 and subject to written parental consent.
3. Unless stated otherwise, your booking must be accompanied with a deposit of £300 per person per course booked, or if booked within 56 days (8 weeks) of the course start date by the full payment. When we receive your booking application, you will be sent a confirmation email. Once we have received payment and checked all information contained within your booking application, we will accept your booking. You will then be sent further information about the current status of your trip.
4. We will store and process your personal information securely and in line with our Privacy Policy which can be viewed on our website.
5. Email and PDF attachments are our primary contact method, so you must provide us with a valid email address. You must also ensure that our email address: info@alpine-guides.com is added to your safe senders list, as we cannot be held liable for communication problems caused by personal firewalls, spam filtering systems, or your inability to open attached email documents.
6. Balance of payment is due 56 days (8 weeks) prior to the course start date. We prefer you to pay full balance by a direct bank transfer. If full payment is not received by this date we reserve the right to cancel your booking without refund.
7. For courses taking place outside the United Kingdom you must purchase specialist mountaineering insurance covering helicopter rescue, medical treatment and repatriation (plus on and off piste skiing for ski courses). You must bring all insurance documentation with you on the course. We reserve the right to cancel your booking at any time if we are not satisfied you have adequate insurance in place.
8. If you wish to cancel you must notify us in writing, where upon the following charges will be applied from the date we receive your notice of cancellation:-
 - More than 8 weeks (56 days) before start date – loss of deposit.
 - Between 4 and 8 weeks (28-56 days) before start date – 50% of course fee or loss of deposit, whichever amount is greater.
 - Less than 4 weeks (28 days) before start date – full course fee.
9. Requests for course transfers must be made more than 56 days prior to original start date and are subject to availability. You also have the right to transfer your booking to another person who satisfies all conditions for the course (including health, fitness and experience requirements), subject to the same conditions above.
10. We reserve the right to cancel any course due to insufficient numbers, or transfer bookings between courses to make numbers viable. In either event clients will be informed of our decision as soon as possible and not less than 21 days before start date. You will be offered either a free transfer, a full refund, or a mutually agreed alternative program. You must inform us as soon as possible which you choose to accept.
11. In the event of guide injury or illness, we will endeavour to find replacement guide(s) as soon as possible. If replacement guide(s) cannot be found part way through a trip, we will refund guiding fees for any days of guiding not provided and you may still use remaining accommodation nights unguided. In the event that we cannot find replacement guide(s) for the whole of your trip, you may choose to use the accommodation portion of your trip and receive a refund of guiding fees, cancel your trip with a full refund, or accept a mutually agreed alternative program.
12. We do not accept any responsibility for changes to travel arrangements that you make in order to join your trip or course. We accept no financial liability that may arise from any enforced change to your travel plans due to any alteration of the trip or course dates, the itinerary or its cancellation, howsoever caused. You are advised to book transferable, refundable travel tickets with no penalties should a cancellation be necessary.
13. At the discretion of the course director, guiding ratios may be varied from the stated course ratio to cover eventualities such as staff absence or change of itinerary, so long as this does not breach accepted local guiding ratios or other professional guidelines laid out by the British Association of Mountain Guides.
14. We do not accept bookings from groups or individuals participating in sponsored climbs or 'challenge events' of any kind. If we discover that you are seeking sponsorship or participating in such an event in connection with one of our courses, we reserve the right to cancel your booking without refund, or exclude you from further mountain activities whilst on the course with immediate effect.
15. Whilst we maintain high professional standards of client care and safety, you must realise and accept that climbing, mountaineering and skiing are activities which carry a danger of personal injury or even death, as they take place in remote and hazardous mountain terrain. All clients must be aware of and accept these risks and be responsible for their own actions and involvement in such activities.
16. All information contained within our website, social media channels and other publicity is for guidance only. Whilst making every effort to ensure accuracy, we cannot be responsible for any inaccuracies or alterations beyond our control. Should any changes occur, clients will be notified before a booking is accepted.

17. Although we adhere to planned itineraries wherever possible, changes may occur to both travel and guiding itineraries due to external factors beyond our control. In particular, the guide has total discretion to alter programs at any time in the interests of client safety and current mountain, or weather conditions.

18. By booking you agree to abide by instructions and decisions made by the guide regarding individuals and the group as a whole. Our guides reserve the right to exclude individuals from a planned activity on the grounds of health, safety or the success and enjoyment of the rest of the party. Any individuals so excluded are not entitled to a refund. Any individual contravening the decisions or advice of their guide, or undertaking independent mountain activities during the course shall forfeit all protection and duty of care from the guide.

19. We accept no liability for the consequences of strikes, riots, acts of war or terrorism, disease outbreaks, government intervention, natural disasters or adverse weather conditions. If such occurrences cause us to have to cancel a course or trip we will offer an alternative holiday if possible, but accept no liability for return of fees paid prior to cancellation or curtailment.

20. If you have a complaint about the guiding or other services you receive during your holiday, you must notify ourselves or the guide involved as soon as possible, in order to give us the opportunity to put things right. Non of our guides have authority to promise refunds or compensation on behalf of Alpine Guides Ltd. Only the company directors are authorised to make such decisions.

If, despite our best efforts and having followed the above procedure for reporting and resolving your complaint, you feel that it has not been satisfactorily settled, we recommend that it is referred for arbitration under the ABTOT Travel Industry Arbitration Service. An Independent Arbitrator will review the documents relating to any complaint and deliver a binding decision to bring the matter to a close. Details of this scheme are available from The Travel Industry Arbitration Service, administered by Dispute Settlement Services Limited, 9 Savill Road, Lindfield, Haywards Heath, West Sussex, RH16 2NY. This scheme cannot however decide in cases where the sums claimed exceed £5,000 per person or £10,000 per booking form, or for claims which are solely or mainly in respect of physical injury or illness or the consequence thereof.

21. On courses that include accommodation in the course fee:

The Association of Bonded Travel Organisers Trust Limited (ABTOT) provides financial protection under The Package Travel and Linked Travel Arrangements Regulations 2018 for Alpine Guides Ltd, membership number 5394 and in the event of their insolvency, protection is provided for:

- Non-flight packages

ABTOT cover provides for a refund in the event you have not yet travelled or repatriation if transportation was included in your package. Please note that bookings made outside the UK are only protected by ABTOT when purchased directly with Alpine Guides Ltd. In the unlikely event that you require assistance whilst abroad due to our financial failure, please call our 24/7 helpline on 01702 811397 and advise you are a customer of an ABTOT protected travel company. You can access The Package Travel and Linked Travel Arrangements Regulations 2018 here: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2018/634/contents/made>

22. All contractual terms and conditions between clients and Alpine Guides Ltd are to be governed by and held under the exclusive jurisdiction of English Law.

23. Any public liability insurance claims against our suppliers, including but not exclusive to guides, transport and accommodation providers, are to be governed by and held under the exclusive jurisdiction of the country where said providers' public liability insurance is held.

24. Making your booking implies that you understand and accept the booking conditions and agree to abide by them.