

Wonderful gems of the Hebrides



choughs and hen harriers as well as a variety of wading birds and birds of prey.

An enormous colony of barnacle geese flies in each October to take advantage of rich feeding grounds through the winter before another mammoth flight.

Islay's climate is a temperate one because the Gulf stream passes its shores, making it a fertile island, ideal for birds to stopover for a time to rest and feed.

Go for some game fishing on Islay if you like casting for a brown trout or two. The island offers some of the finest brown trout fishing in Europe. Five years ago a top European fishing competition was held on five of Islay's lochs, so the word has certainly got round. Fishing on its rivers and lochs is managed by the islands estates, which also maintain the banks. Sea angling is also popular especially round the many shipwrecks lying beneath Islay's coastal waters.

Although many of Islay's churches are now ruins they are definitely worth visiting as they are of considerable historical interest. Kildalton, has one of a local blue stone. There are also some prehistoric cupstones at Kilchoman church, Kilchiaran church and other places. Kilharrow round church at Bowmore serves the community and was built in 1767. It contains artefacts connected with Bowmore-born Reverend Donald Caskie, known as the Tartan Pimpernel for his exploits in helping more than 2,000 prisoners-of-war to escape from occupied France in the second world war.

Islay's near neighbour is Jura, just five minutes away by ferry. Jura offers long, white, sandy beaches, caves and cliffs along its 115 mile coastline as well as the famous Paps of Jura mountains which rise to 2,600ft. like Islay, Jura is another of the west coast's secrets. It has a

population of around 200 people and over 5,000 deer and is rich in both history and wildlife. Associations with Columba and the Lord of the Isles are just two of its attractions; otters frolic in its waters, seals bask on its rocks, and you can spot anything up to 100 species of bird. Many rare plants grow on Jura as well as on Islay. The view from the top of the Paps is awe-inspiring and stretch away to other Hebridean islands basking in the distant sea and Northern Ireland.

For those seeking a gentler form of exercise Jura's bus service offers tours from Feolin in the south to Ardlussa in the north.

Jura's heritage is a reflection of Islay's. Flints and fragments of flints can still be found washed down to Lussa bay by the River Lussa. There are Bronze Age cairns, circles, hut circles and cupstones. There are eight standing stone sites, thought to have been used to read the stars or as calendars. The tallest is Camus an Staca, 150 yards off the road at Ardfin. Iron Age forts and duns abound on the south east coast and form a chain of signalling stations. The principal fort is An Dunan near Lowlandsman's bay.

The Highland clearances saw many Jura people leaving for the New World, particularly North Carolina. The 1840s potato famine in which millions of Irish people starved to death also affected Jura and Islay and resulted in more emigration to Canada, America and Australia.

In 1946 the author George Orwell wrote his famous novel '1984' on the island, where he was known as Eric Blair. He lived at Barnhill, a remote farmhouse in the north, and loved being there because he was 'un-gettable' to use his own word. *Islay of Jura - not so remote now!*

The new passenger service from Tayvallich into Craighouse launched on the 16th June 2008 after almost four years work by the Isle of Jura Initiative at the Edge programme. The twelve-passenger vessel has already had a modest positive impact on

both Tayvallich and Jura local economies. The service will open up the island to far easier access to visitors coming direct from mainland Argyll.

The vessel, operated by Islay Sea Safari, is based at Craighouse on Jura and runs to Tayvallich on sheltered Loch Sween on the west coast of mainland Argyll's Kintyre peninsula.

- Two return services a day, six days a week - No service on Tuesdays.
- Mondays and Fridays see departures from Craighouse at 0700 and 1700 with departures from Tayvallich at 1000 and 1815.
- Wednesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays see departures from Craighouse at 0845 and 1515; with departures from Tayvallich at 1000 and 1630
- Sundays see departures from Craighouse at 0915 and 1700; with departures from Tayvallich at 1030 and 1815.

The isle of Jura offers breathtaking scenery, wildlife walks, delicious food at the Jura Hotel, Jura Distillery tours, colourful walled Jura Garden walks & tea tent, camping and a well stocked local store. Visit www.argyll-bute.gov.uk for further timetable information or visit your nearest tourist information centre and pick up a brochure. Jura Initiative at the Edge wishes to express its gratitude to all its funders and supporters.

Highland hospitality is legendary but in the old days people were so poor they could not offer travellers much, so a law was passed setting up 'change houses' or inns with moderate charges. One of these is Corran House, near Krockrome, another is the Jura Hotel at Craighouse.

The name Jura means 'island of deer' and

could not be more aptly named as the deer outnumber the islanders by 25:1.

Ron Steenvoorden from the Netherlands has created wonderful websites for Islay & Jura; visit www.islayinfo.com and www.jurainfo.com to learn all about the islands on these beautiful websites, created with the love he feels for the islands. Also available is a blog site he has developed <http://blog.islayinfo.com> for news and reading/posting comments. He has kindly provided all the fabulous photographs you see on this Islay Jura feature.

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Shop and Café

The shop sells a range of branded goods and gifts and the café is open all day for cakes, soups, paninis and our famous Cullen Skink - all home-made.

Distillery Experience

We are offering the opportunity for individuals to come and work at one of the only distilleries that does the whole process from growing the barley to bottling the malt whisky after maturation. The course lasts five days, Monday to Friday - and at the end of the week you will be presented with a certificate and a miniature bottle of the new spirit you have helped create.

Available Dates in 2008:
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