



**Down to Earth**

*"Earth science learning for all"*

# Oban & The Isle of Colonsay May 11-19



**Fabulous rocks of Kiloran Bay, Colonsay**  
(Photo: Colonsay photoblog)

## A word from your leaders...

Over the many years that we've been visiting Scotland, aside from the Northwest Highlands, the every best places seem to be the glorious islands. Whilst we've been to islands in the Inner Hebrides, the Outer Hebrides, the Clyde and the islands of Argyll, we've never managed to get to Colonsay, or the smaller islands of Lismore and Kerera. So this is very much a 'first' for us!

This trip is based in two centres. We have four nights on the Island of Colonsay, from enabling us to explore the island in some detail. This is followed by four nights in Oban. Colonsay is a very special place geologically, as it is composed primarily of rocks from the Rhinns Complex. These rocks, which are about 1.3 billion years old, are only found on Islay, Colonsay and Iona. Aside from these metamorphic rocks, there are also sediments from the Torridonian and Devonian and more recent igneous rocks. The islands is extremely scenic and peaceful, ideal for a trip such as ours. We've booked all the Colonsay Hotels bedrooms and will stay in a quality guest house in Oban.

From our Oban base, we'll spend a day on the island of Lismore and another on Kerera. Both show excellent Dalradian rocks with Tertiary intrusions. Kerera is one of the so-called slate islands, where large amounts of the roofing material was quarried for use in Glasgow. We also enjoy an inland day looking at the rocks of Glencoe and Ballachulish with some Carboniferous volcanics and intrusions.

We'll have the use of our own minibus to get around and with the trip starting and finishing in Oban, everyone should be able to reach the area. As this is a new venture for us, and organised trips to Colonsay are something of a rarity, we expect this trip to fill up fast, so you are strongly advised to make an early booking, especially if you are looking for a single room.

**Chris Darmon & Colin Schofield**  
Field trip Organisers/Leaders

**Email: [downtoearth@geosupplies.co.uk](mailto:downtoearth@geosupplies.co.uk)**

## Getting to the area

The trip starts and finishes at the port town of Oban. For those of you arriving by train, there's a service from Glasgow Queen Street that connects with the ferry to Colonsay at 16.30. At the end of the week, there's a convenient morning train from Oban back to Glasgow. If you are travelling to Oban by car, please arrange to park there for the time that we are on Colonsay.

## Getting around on the trip

For this trip we will make use of a hired 17-seater minibus driven by Colin Schofield. Dependent upon how many book, we may also need to use a couple of cars. If you are willing to help us in this way, please indicate on the booking form.

## Walking

Everything should be within the capabilities of all of the party. We will always try to get as close as possible to the sites, but this may mean that there are some walks of a mile or so, to see the best exposures. There may be some short sections of steep ascents and descents. However, if at any time you wish to 'opt out' that will be fully acceptable and understood. In view of the uncertainties of the weather you are strongly advised to bring all waterproofs and walking boots, particularly as you will be walking over rough ground.

## Why Oban & Colonsay?

It seems amazing that we haven't visited this area before, as there's so much splendid geology! Here's what Colonsay's own website says about the island's geology:

"The islands of Colonsay and Oronsay, which are connected by a narrow strand that becomes dry at low water, are among the most fertile of the Hebrides. They lie at the entrance to the Firth of Lorn, with Mull to the north, Islay to the south and Jura to the east; on the west, however, the islands are exposed to the full force of the Atlantic gales.

### **One of the standing stones on the Island of Colonsay.**

The islands are formed of rocks that are described as Lower Torridonian in age (Rhinn's Complex), comprising limestone, phyllites, mudstones, flags, grits and conglomerates. Plutonic intrusive rocks outcrop at Scalasaig, and to the north there are dykes and sills of lamprophyre and dolerite. Colonsay and Oronsay are at the south-west end of the Great Glen Fault, with the main line running to the east. The conspicuous ridging, which plays an important role in the topography of Colonsay, results from fault lines.

The islands were greatly affected during the glacial period, when ice, radiating outwards from a centre on Rannoch Moor on Scotland's mainland, flowed south-westwards over them. Remarkable, too, are the traces of pre-glacial marine erosion and the lines of the pre-glacial sea-cliffs, most notably between Scalasaig and Machrins, at Uragaig, and to the south of Balnahard. Traces of the so-called "50 foot" raised beach may be seen at Uragaig and Balnahard, and the "100 foot" beach may be seen at Kilchattan.

The wave cut platforms and raised beaches frequently form level areas of well-drained land that have attracted settlement and cultivation from the earliest time to the present day. The Atlantic coastline has led to the development of sand dunes and machair landscapes that are more reminiscent of the Outer Hebrides than of the rest of Argyll!"

Whilst Kerera is almost entirely composed of Dalradian slates, Lismore is a more than a little different:



"Lismore is something of a geological freak – composed almost entirely of Dalradian limestone. Crossing from South-East to North-West are basalt dykes: one in particular projects from a cliff-face and is at least 70ft high. There are no mountains, no surviving peat bogs and little heather: the limestone based soil is fertile therefore much of Lismore's flora is unique. A raised beach extends around most of the coast-backed by cliffs. Lismore is situated over the "Great Glen" geological fault which crosses Scotland and earthquakes are fairly common – one reached 3.9 on the Richter Scale!"

Lismore is also unique in that it displays more of the Quaternary record of sea level changes than anywhere else in Scotland, due almost entirely to its sheltered position.

Finally, we'll take a look at the rocks of Ballachulish and Glencoe. Here, we have both Dalradian rocks and also an igneous complex from the Carboniferous. This includes the evidence for an ancient collapsed caldera. Put simply, we are spoilt for choice of geology on this trip!

## Accommodation & Food

Good food and a good night's rest are important elements to our trips and so we always try to use small, family run, hotels and guesthouses that offer en-suite or private facilities. For this trip we will be staying at the Colonsay Hotel for the first four nights, where we will have comfortable rooms and excellent, locally sourced food. Premium rooms are also available. In Oban we have yet to choose our accommodation, but it is likely to be a seafront guest house. Here we will have en suite rooms and breakfast with evening meals taken in one of Oban's many good restaurants. We will enjoy packed lunches for each field day. Single accommodation is very limited on this trip. We are happy to help anyone looking for someone to share a twin bedded room - simply indicate on the booking form.

*Part of the fabulous coastline of Lismore.*



## Itinerary

The following is not intended to be prescriptive, but to give you an idea of what we hope to cover during this trip:-

- The basement rocks of Colonsay in the area around Balnahard Bay
- The varied rocks of Kilchatten Bay, Colonsay
- Sediments and dykes of Kiloran Bay, Colonsay
- Rocks and Quaternary sea level changes at Scalasaig, Colonsay
- The limestones and intrusions of Lismore
- The Lismore coastline
- The slates of Kerera
- The collapsed caldera of Glencoe
- The slates of Ballachulish
- The Old Red Sandstone of Oban



**Part of the coastline of Colonsay - peace and tranquility!**

## Cost

**For 2 people sharing a double or twin room, the cost of the 8-night tour will be £1395.00 per person; for single occupancy, the cost will be £1595.00 per person and is limited to a maximum of 2. Two premium double rooms are available on Colonsay for an additional £100.00 per person.**

## What's included in the cost?

- The services of Chris Darmon and Colin Schofield who will be available to you at all reasonable times
- Accommodation and meals as specified here
- The cost of all transport used during the trip
- Admission to any museums, exhibitions etc. as visited by the group

## What's excluded from the cost?

- The cost of travel between your home and the field trip area
- Travel insurance - strongly recommended
- Incidental expenditure

## Booking



Please fill in and return a completed booking form.. Your booking will be confirmed upon receipt of either a deposit of £300.00 per person or the full payment. The balance of the brochure price will be due by January 31st. 2019.

***This trip will run provided a minimum of 12 people have booked by October 31st. 2018.***

***The Colonsay Hotel***

## Your money...

Upon receipt, all monies paid for these trips are placed in a specific 'client trust account' where it cannot be drawn by us until after completion of the tour. This is in accordance with EU Directives and ensures that your money is safe in the unlikely event of corporate failure by Geo Supplies.

## What happens next?

As soon as we are in a position of confirming that the trip will run, we will let you know. You will then be free to start making your own travel plans and to take advantage of any advance fares on the train.

Please don't make any such arrangements until we have been in touch with you.

***Please also see information contained in our 'Residential Field Trips 2019'***

**If you have any questions or queries - contact Chris Darmon as follows:-**

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