



Down to Earth

"Earth science learning for all"

Strathpeffer & Cromarty May 21-29 2027

**Great coastal scenery around Cromarty - Devonian rocks near McFarquhar's Cave.
(Image: Scotland off the beaten track)**

A word from your leaders...

Scotland has many faces of geology and whilst we have explored many of those faces, we haven't covered them all, as this trip shows. The Victorians were great explorers both of the countryside, but also of their bodies. They indulged themselves in practices and beliefs that we would find strange today. One of these was 'taking the waters' - a historic practice of visiting mineral springs, spas, or wells to drink or bathe in the water for medicinal, therapeutic, and relaxation purposes. The small town of Strathpeffer was one such place and a numbers of hotels and facilities were established to cater for them.

Today Strathpeffer which is just 20 miles north of Invernes.s is an ideal base from which to explore the surrounding districts with some fine and variable geology within easy reach. We'll be staying at the 3-star Ben Wyvis Hotel, one of those original spa facilities. Today it is comfortable, modern hotel with a reputation for looking after guests well.

From our base, we'll spend some time exploring the local area, which is the ancient Moine metamorphic rocks. We'll also spread our wings a little bit, with trips out into more distant places. We'll take a train trip to Kyle of Lochalsh and Plockton and may also step onto the Island of Skye. We'll also venture into Cromarty and the Black Isle where we can see fine Devonian rocks and visit the museum dedicated to the Scottish pioneer geologist High Miller. We'll also go up the coast to see younger rocks from the Triassic and Jurassic around Golspie. Finally, we'll head off to the east and take a look at the sediments of Lossiemouth. We'll make use of hired as well as public transport during the trip.

As we've never had a trip to this area and there are some new locations involved, we expect this to fill up fast, so you are strongly advised t make an early booking, especially if you are looking for a single room.

Chris Darmon & Colin Schofield
Field trip Organisers/Leaders

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Getting to the area

The trip starts and finishes at the inland resort of Strathpeffer. The nearest mainline railway station is at Inverness some 20 miles distant. There is also a station at Dingwall which is only 5 miles away. There are buses from both Inverness and Dingwall to Strathpeffer. For those of you coming by road, the A9 offers a good route from the south and then there's good connections to your final destination. The hotel offers good guest parking.

Getting around on the trip

For this trip we will be making use of a mixture of bus and train according to what we are planning to do on each day. We will also have a hired minibus or small coach on several days.

The local hill above Strathpeffer in the Moine rocks



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 Strathpeffer?



Strathpeffer is only 20 miles from the bustling city of Inverness, yet it oozes highland charm and a sense of countryside that no city can offer. It's also a superb jumping off spot for both the local geology and the more distant parts. Crucially it also provides us with an excellent hotel base where we will be well looked after.

Strathpeffer sits at the junction between the basement Moine rocks and the overlying Devonian sediments. The local geology is fairly complex with many faults and it is these faults that are the conduits for local spring waters.

Out to the east lies the Cromarty coast where we can explore the beautiful coast around Cromarty village which is home to the Scottish pioneer geologist Hugh Miller. We'll visit his museum. The coastal rocks, some of which are fossiliferous, are of Devonian age.

Younger rocks, from the Triassic and Jurassic can be found along the Moray firth, both towards the east around Lossiemouth and also to the North around Golspie. These are all sedimentary rocks of various types, mainly sandstones and shales.

For our youngest rocks, we will travel over to the western side of Scotland to Kyle of Lochalsh where we will be able to admire the Island of Skye with its Tertiary lavas and other igneous rocks.

Added to the solid rocks, is the veneer of Quaternary sediments which overly a landscape that has been fashioned by glacial erosion.

Accommodation & Food



Good food and a good night's rest are important elements to our trips and so we always try to find hotels that provide good quality food and accommodation. For this trip we will be staying at the Ben Wyvis Hotel in Strathpeffer, a long established 3-star hotel that is used to dealing with groups. We will enjoy picnic lunches for each field day, but these may be from a variety of different sources, dependent upon where we are on a given day. All the rooms are ensuite and you can upgrade to a superior double if you wish (ask us about availability).

Single accommodation is available (maximum 6) for a modest supplement. We are happy to help anyone looking for someone to share a twin bedded room - simply indicate on the booking form.

Itinerary

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

- A day spent walking a local route in the Moine rocks of Strathpeffer.
- The Devonian Old Red Sandstones of the Cromarty coast
- A visit to the Hugh Miller museum in Cromarty
- Rocks and scenery of the Kyle of Lochalsh area - a train trip on the famous Kyle line
- Triassic and Jurassic rocks of the Golspie coast - by train.
- The geology of the Lossiemouth area.
- A day in Inverness - with a possible trip to Loch Ness (optional)

Cost

For 2 people sharing a double or twin room, the cost of the 8-night tour will be £1595.00 per person; for single occupancy, the cost will be £1795.00 per person and is limited to a maximum of 6. Double room upgrades are also available - please ask us.

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

Hugh Miller sketches of Devonian fish fossils.

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 March 31st. 2027.

This trip will run provided a minimum of 12 people have booked by December 31st 2026.

Your money...

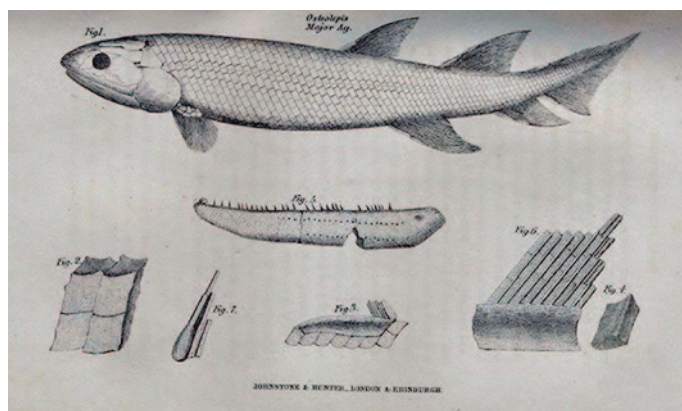
Upon receipt, all monies paid for these trips are placed in a specific 'client trust account' where it cannot be drawn by us until after completion of the tour. This is in accordance with EU Directives and ensures that your money is safe in the unlikely event of corporate failure by Geo Supplies.

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 2026/7'



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

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