Down to Earth

"Earth science learning for all"

Oban & the Hebridean Isles
September 30-October 8 027

Great scenery around the Falls of Cruachan (Images TripAdvisor)

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 only once before managed to get to the smaller islands of Lismore and Kerrera. For the first time we are basing the entire 8-night trip in Oban which gives us the opportunity to take in so much more, including at least one day on Mull and possibly also including Iona.

This trip is based at the comfortable Royal Hotel which is well placed in Oban. The hotel will provide us with all our main meals and they can offer us a mixture of single, double and twin rooms. They are used to catering for groups of adults.

From our base, we'll spend a day on the island of Lismore and another on Kerrera. Both show excellent Dalradian rocks with Tertiary intrusions. We'll also visit Easdale and Luing the so-called slate islands, where large amounts of the roofing material was quarried for use in Glasgow. We'll take in the geology of Tobermory and Northern Mull and also possibly the island of Iona in the south of the island. We'll also enjoy an inland day by taking the train towards Crianlarich for some excellent mountain scenery along with glacial deposits. To get around during the trip we'll be making use of local buses, trains and, of course, the CalMac ferries. We may also have a couple of days of a locally hired minibus or coach.

As we've never based an entire trip at Oban and there are some new locations involved, we expect this trip 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 port town of Oban. For those of you arriving by train, there's a service of several trains a day from Glasgow Queen Street. For those looking to drive, Oban is around 100 miles from Glasgow by the A82 which runs up the side of Loch Lomond and then by the A85 to Oban.

Getting around on the trip

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

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?

The only reason that we've never based an entire trip in Oban before is that we have failed to find a suitable hotel base. We discovered the Royal Hotel by chance when we became aware that it was pat of the same hotel group that owns the Cumbria Grand in Grange over Sands that we are visiting earlier in the year.

Oban is renowned as 'the gateway to the isles' with around eight islands close by, connected by regular ferries. It also has local bus routes and train services.

The oldest rocks can be found on the Island of Iona and are part of the ancient Lewisian Complex. Iona also has rocks from the Rhinns complex. The base rock of the mainland is the Dalradian metamorphics which also outcrops on Lismore and Kerrera and the Slate Islands. The oldest sediments form part of the Devonian Old Red Sandstones. On Mull we may also encounter sediments from the Jurassic with fossils. The youngest solid rocks are the igneous rocks from the Tertiary including basalt lavas and dolerite dykes.

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. 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.

Part of the fabulous coastline of Lismore.

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 earth-tremors 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.

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 Royal Hotel in Oban, 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 (as kus about availability).

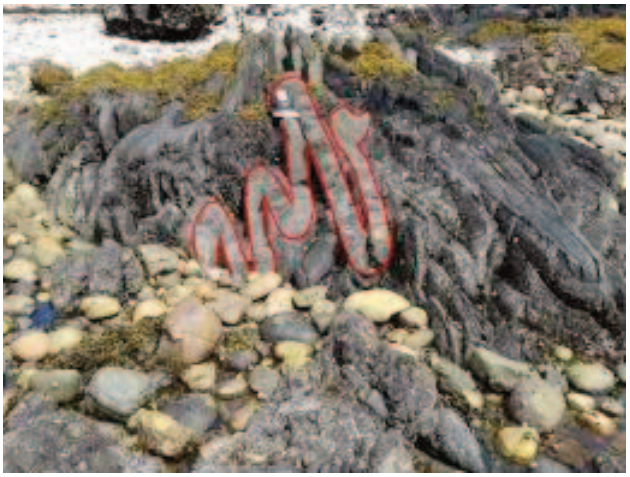
Single accommodation is available (maximum 6) for a modest supplement. We are happy to help anyone looking for someone to share a twin bedded room - simply indicate on the booking form.

Itinerary

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

- The Dalradian metamorphics of Tyndrum and Crianlarich
- The Devonian Old Red Sandstones of Oban

- The varied rocks of the island of Iona - Lewisian and Rhinns Complex
- The basalts of Tobermory and Ardnamurchan
- The limestones and intrusions of Lismore
- The Lismore coastline
- The slates of Kerrera, Luing and Easdale
- Sea level changes along the Oban coastline
- Geology and scenery around the Falls of Cruachan



Cost

For 2 people sharing a double or twin room, the cost of the 8-night tour will be £1495.00 per person; for single occupancy, the cost will be £1695.00 per person and is limited to a maximum of 6. Double room upgrades are also available - lease ask us.

Folded Dalradian rocks on the Island of Kerrera

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 June 30th. 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.

A beautiful shoreline on the Island of Iona (Image: Scottish Geology Trust)

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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