

Skye is an island steeped in legend and natural beauty. Mythical tales of fairies and giants are woven together with stories of dramatic mountain ranges and coastlines. It is a place that engages and inspires all who visit, and for those with a wayfaring disposition, there is a trail spanning its length that encapsulates all of the many wonders for which it is renowned.

The Skye Trail extends 128 km (80 mi) from Broadford in the south to Rubha Hunish in the north. It is unmarked, often remote, and best suited to fit and experienced ramblers. The route follows a diverse course along rugged coasts and exposed mountain ridges, passing through storied glens and deserted villages with tragic histories. It is a highland tour de force from start to finish, and according to Cameron McNeish, award-winning outdoors writer and one of the most respected backpacking authorities in Britain,



“Any argument that says this is not the most astonishing landscape in Britain is surely indefensible.”

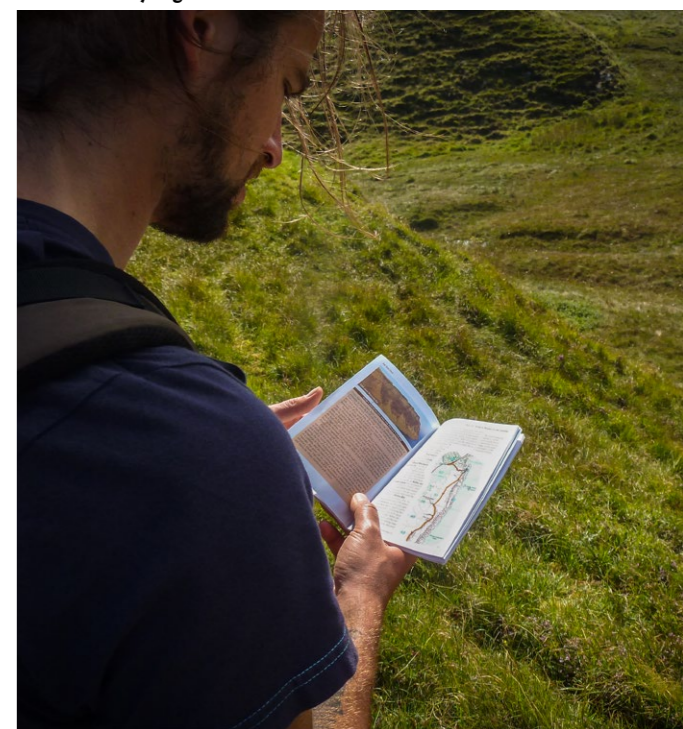
Most hikers take about seven days to complete the Skye Trail. Although the hike can be done in either direction, it is recommended to head northward, thereby potentially gifting yourself a grand finale in the form of Trotternish Ridge and

Above: A four-legged visitor in the deserted village of Borerraig.  
Below: Portree, the capital of the Isle of Skye and a great place to kick back mid-hike.



Rainbow over Quiraing.

Surveying the route ahead.



the spectacular headland of Rubha Hunish. The operative word is “potentially,” because there are no guarantees that you will actually reach Skye’s landmarks in clear weather. The island is notorious for its inclement conditions, and its name is said to derive from the Norse word *Skuyö*, or “isle of cloud;” an etymological heads-up if ever there was one.

Not long after departing the southern trailhead of Broadford, the Skye Trail passes through the haunting village of Borerraig. One of the most well-preserved relics from the Highland Clearances of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Borerraig was abandoned in 1852, when landowners forcibly removed its tenants in favor of more profitable sheep farmers. Walking among the burnt and surprisingly intact ruins makes for a somber reminder of one of the darkest periods in Scottish history, during which thousands of evicted Highlanders fled and relocated to places as far off as Australia and New Zealand. ▶