

Geowalks: the islands of Eigg & Rum Friday 11 to Friday 18 May 2018

The small Hebridean islands of Eigg and Rum offer superb opportunities to explore a range of geological features and landscapes associated with the birth of the North Atlantic Ocean.

There was significant volcanic activity here around 60 million years ago, firstly extensive basalt lava flows that now form the bulk of the island of Eigg, and then focused on a large central volcano above what is now Rum. Features such as the Sgurr ridge on Eigg and the magma chamber rocks of Rum give a glimpse of the power and complexity of the volcanic activity.

The volcanic rocks sit on top and within a range of interesting sedimentary rocks, including ancient sandstone on Rum, bereft of any visible fossil evidence of life, and the much younger limestone and sandstone of Eigg, where a dinosaur leg bone was found in 2017.

The programme comprises a variety of day walks on both islands, and a sail journey between Eigg and Rum that will include a circumnavigation of Rum in the right conditions. This is rough terrain for walking, but the main features of the story can be appreciated in day walks, with optional extensions for the keen and the fit. The longest walks, in suitable conditions, will take us right across Rum to Harris and Guirdal (round trip distances of 15 miles).



Outline Programme – subject to weather and the interests of the group

Friday 11 May Meet in Mallaig, catch the morning ferry to Eigg. Explore the wild south-east coastline of Eigg close to the pier, for a first introduction to the lava flows that form the main part of the island.

Saturday and Sunday Day walks from the Glebe Barn exploring the west coast of Eigg from Laig Bay to the Singing Sands, with a possible extension around the north coast, and climb An Sgùrr.

Monday Day sail on the yacht Selkie from Eigg to Rum, and around Rum if conditions permit.

Tuesday – Wednesday – Thursday Day walks from Kinloch to explore the wild interior of Rum: Climb towards Coire Dubh, going from the ancient sandstones of the north of Rum across the ring fault and into the volcanic centre. We will visit the famous layered intrusions of the Rum Cuillin and explore the complicated margin of the volcanic centre.

Visit the centre of Rum, taking a good track westwards from Kinloch, to explore features of the central intrusion.

Full day walk towards Harris on the southwest coast, or drop down into the Guirdil glen to find samples of bloodstone on the beach.

Friday 18 May A final day to visit Kinloch Castle or other places of interest, perhaps exploring the path towards Dibidil on the east coast. Depart Rum around 4pm for Mallaig.



Angus Miller, Geowalks

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Details

Accommodation & Catering

On Eigg we'll stay in the Glebe Barn bunkhouse www.glebebarn.co.uk, the Barn is a very comfortable and superior bunkhouse in a fantastic setting overlooking the harbour bay. We will be in small shared rooms (2-4 people).

All food will be provided by Eigg Bread catering at the Glebe Barn, this includes hearty breakfasts, ingredients for packed lunches and substantial two-course evening meals.

On Rum we will be based at the bunkhouse in Kinloch, a community-run hostel in small rooms (maximum 4 people). The rooms are comfortable and bedding is supplied.

On Rum, food will be self-catering, which is a bit of a challenge! We will organise ourselves into small groups to do this; you can take some food with us and there is a small but well-stocked shop.

Level of fitness required

On Eigg, the itinerary includes short walks on rough ground, of around 5-7 miles but with longer extensions possible. There's no doubt that the terrain on Rum is tough, and we will often be walking on rough, wet ground; the longest walks can be 12-15 miles mostly on good tracks. You will need to be reasonably fit and used to rough walking, but the pace will be moderate with plenty of stops. There will be some flexibility in the programme, allowing you to opt out if you wish.

Transport to Mallaig

Mallaig is accessible by public transport, either by bus or on the famed West Highland railway, although this would involve an overnight stay before the start of the trip. If you plan to drive, it is possible to depart Edinburgh or Glasgow early morning and connect with the ferry. Car sharing is encouraged.

Cost

The cost will be £550 per person. This includes your geology guide Angus Miller throughout, three nights hostel accommodation and all food on Eigg, sail from Eigg to Rum, four nights hostel accommodation on Rum, and ferry journeys from Mallaig to/from the islands. Transport to Mallaig is not included.

Booking Conditions

To book, please send a deposit of £50 per person cheque payable to Geowalks or bank transfer to Geowalks: Sort code 09-06-66 Account number 40260854. Final payment is due four weeks in advance – programme and reminder will be sent in advance of this.

If you cancel your booking, refunds will be at my discretion and will usually only be available if someone else takes your place. Travel insurance is recommended. In the unlikely event of the trip being cancelled, you will be informed immediately and receive a full refund.

Recommended Reading

Rum and the Small Isles, in the SNH Landscape Fashioned by Geology Series, 2004. ISBN 1-85397-370.

The Cruise of the Betsey, Hugh Miller, 1858. Facsimile edition published by NMS Publishing, ISBN 1-901663-54-X.

A geological excursion guide to Rum, CH Emeleus & VR Troll, 2009, ISBN 978-1-905267-22-4.

Volcanoes and the Making of Scotland, Brian Upton, 2nd edition, 2015. Dunedin, ISBN 978-1-78046-056-7.

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