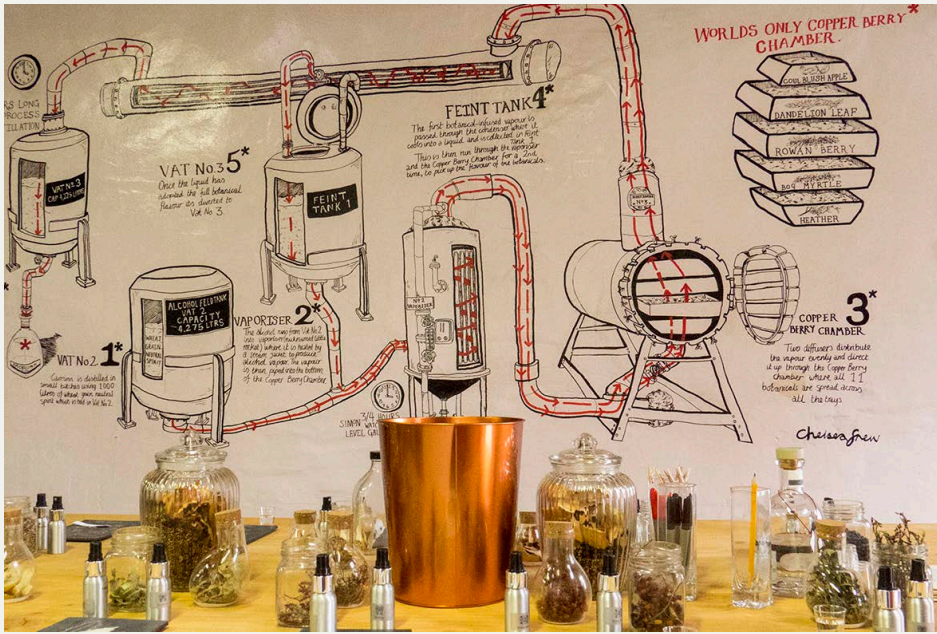


BIRDS, BOTANY AND BOTANICALS



"Orchids, wintergreens, creeping ladies tresses, stunning jewels from the forest floor that we shall hope to discover whilst exploring the forests, woodland canopy and Highland skies for birds and mammals of Scotland. I am so excited about this holiday!"

Sally Nowell

Dates Sat 7 - Sat 14 Jul 2018
 Price £1,175
 Deposit £200 Single Supp £100

Leaders Sally Nowell and Duncan Macdonald

Weather The weather can vary enormously. During a typical week in this season we would expect mixed sun and showers with temperatures in the range of 10-25°C.

Walking There'll be some short easy strolls on wide paths, but also a longer more strenuous "at-your-pace" 3 mile round trip walk into the Cairngorms. Walking boots are recommended

Meals All included from dinner on Day 1 to breakfast on Day 8

Insects Biting midges can occasionally be a nuisance by lochs and shores, especially in the west.

Accom Double, twin and single ensuite rooms at our very special, delightfully furnished converted barn, the Steading.

Group 12

Just some of what we hope to see:

Twinflower	Dwarf Cornel
Common Wintergreen	Pine Marten
Serrated-leaved	Red Squirrel
Wintergreen	Mountain Hare
Lesser Butterfly	Golden Eagle
Orchid	White-tailed Eagle
Creeping Ladies	Peregrine
Tresses	Black-throated Diver
Heath Fragrant Orchid	Red-throated Diver
Small White Orchid	Crested Tit
Frog Orchid	Scottish Crossbill
Lesser Twayblade	Slavonian Grebe
Globe Flower	Osprey
Roseroot	Black Guillemot
Starry Saxifrage	Great Skua

This holiday combines all aspects of Highland flora and fauna, with a fascinating glimpse into the world of Highland craft gins.

- Private visits to craft gin distilleries in the Highlands
- Walk the mountains and moors for the unique flora that infuse the drink
- Ten species of orchid possible, including Small White and Lesser Twayblade
- Cairngorm walk for alpine flowers as well as Frog Orchid
- Twinflower, wintergreens and other special Highland flowers
- Based at our fabulous Steading with a chance to savour our local gin!
- Throughout the week, a great list of Scottish birds and mammals too

Our holiday starts with dinner together at the Steading on Saturday evening.

2-7 Whilst a lot of our focus this week will be on the unique flora of the Highlands, we shall be doing this in combination with seeking out the bird and mammal specialities which inhabit the area.

We shall be searching the forest for Red Squirrel, Crested Tit and Scottish Crossbill, though we shall need to check these carefully, as both Common and Parrot Crossbill breed here too. We'll also make a visit to our mammal hide, with fingers crossed for close up views of Badger and delightful Pine Martens!

We aim to see, not only those species special to the area, but also those plants that are used in the ever-growing craft gin distillation industry. These small-scale hand-crafted products utilise fragrant plants, from Juniper and Bilberry

to Rowan and Bog Myrtle and as we explore the Cairngorms and other wild areas, we shall look out for the many flowers and plants that are being used to add interesting flavours to the gin. We can then see how this is done on our private visits to local craft distilleries, where we shall see the making of these highly distinctive local drinks.

It won't just be the fragrant plants for gin making that we search for, so we may start by visiting the ancient Caledonian Pines, where delicate Twinflower spread in patches on the forest floor - their tiny paired flowers are exquisite and surely one of the most beautiful of the flowers we shall see this week. Intermediate, Serrated-leaved and Common Wintergreen are here too and we'll find the slim spikes of Creeping Ladies Tresses and star-like flowers of Chickweed Wintergreen beneath the trees.



"Sharing a love of nature is a constant theme I hear from guests. Come and join us on this holiday, to share a love of birds, with a chance to discover some of the hidden Highland gems of the plant world. This journey of discovery will be blended with visits to our Highland Gin distilleries, where we shall hear how our Highland flora influences some of the gins you find on your supermarket shelves today."

Sally Nowell



Orchid meadows host Small White, Greater and Lesser Butterfly, Northern Marsh, Heath Spotted and Heath Fragrant Orchids and we'll search for Lesser Twayblade, always a tricky one with its minute flowers and habit of growing under the heather!

On two days we shall match the flora of the Cairngorms with private visits to local distilleries, where we shall meet the master distillers whose job it is to take these plants and create craft gin. They will show us the process and we shall be able to sample the fruits of their labours. Each one is different and each one reflects the areas from which the plants are gathered.

The Findhorn Valley provides a chance of Golden Eagle and Mountain Hare, plus Red Deer, Dipper and Peregrine. Mountain Pansy, Stagshorn Clubmoss, Alpine Bistort and Bearberry are likely as we cross the moorland to Loch Ruthven, the stronghold of beautiful Slavonian Grebe, here in colourful breeding plumage. There is always a chance of fishing Osprey here as well.

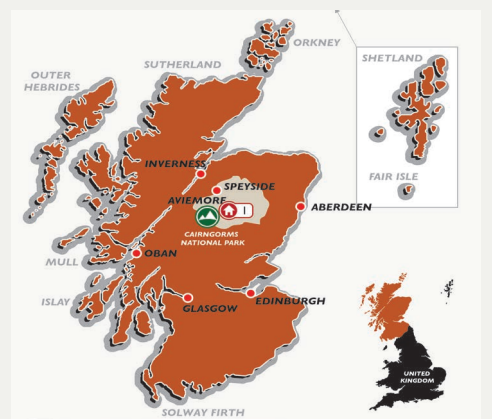
Further west, we'll visit sea lochs where White-tailed Eagle, Golden Eagle, Rock Dove, Black Guillemot and Red-throated and Black-throated Divers are possible. Common Seals haul out on the rocks, Great Skua cruise over the islands and Arctic Terns breed. Great and Round-leaved Sundews trap midges here, as does Butterwort and we'll see other typical moorland species such as Bog Asphodel, Lousewort and Bog Myrtle.

Our route up into the alpine world of the Cairngorm Corries is not too steep and we can stop for rests to enjoy the flowers on the way. We can compare up to six berry-bearing bushes as we walk, including Bog Bilberry, Crowberry, Bearberry and Cloudberry.

As we gain height, the beautiful alpine flowers around us include Starry Saxifrage, Dwarf Cornel, Globe Flower and Trailing Azalea. We'll get excited about club-mosses with Fir, Interrupted and Alpine, then as we get higher, we hope to find more alpine flowers, including Alpine Ladies Mantle, Alpine Sawwort, Alpine Meadow Rue, Roseroot and perhaps the rare Alpine Speedwell - with tiny deep blue flowers.

We have found patches of Frog Orchid in the past and if we have time to get beyond the large boulders in the corrie, we may even add Moss Campion and Arctic Mouse-ear.

8 We say our farewells after breakfast on Saturday.



Outline Itinerary

- Day 1** Arrive in Glen Feshie in time for an evening meal and a chat about our plans for the coming week. 7 nights at the Steading.
- Days 2-7** Exploration of the local area, including Abernethy Forest, the Cairngorms, Loch Maree, and West Coast, plus two visits to local gin distilleries.
- Day 8** After breakfast we say our farewells and depart.

Jane Hope: Caorunn Diagram, Red Squirrel, Caorunn Garden
Loch Ness Gin: Juniper
Simon Eaves: Crossbill
Roy Atkins: Twin Flower, Small White Orchid

