And finally… the weather

Usually, dress for "cool summer" weather is appropriate on the Scottish islands this time of year. Waterproof (or easily dried) comfortable shoes and outerwear that will also stand up to the wind are good to have. A small folding umbrella may become your constant companion.

Advice about dealing with the midges (local bothersome insects) can be found in the Parliament pamphlet "Parliamentarian Etiquette and Cultural Guide".

There are several Internet weather sources that report on the islands, including:

- The Scotsman on-line at http://www.scotsman.com
- Weather Underground at http://www.wunderground.com

In the Dunvegan area

EMERGENCY INFORMATION

Police and fire

- The Emergency number for Ambulance, Police and Fire in the UK is 999.
- 999 can be dialed from a mobile phone or telephone booth at no charge.

Medical and dental emergencies

- Regardless of your nationality or your home health care program, if you need ambulatory health care or advice, you can call the National Health Service at 08454 242424.

CONVENIENCE INFORMATION

Banking

- There are two "big" banks in the square in Portree: Halifax Bank of Scotland and Royal Bank of Scotland. Both banks have 24 hour ATM machines.
- In Dunvegan, cash withdrawals can be made from the Link ATM at Fasgadh (food store) or the Royal Bank of Scotland's mobile banking unit, which will be at Fasgadh's between about 13.30 – 14.30 on Tuesday and 12.00 – 13.00 on Thursday.

Taxis

- Dunvegan Taxis 01470 521560 (within the Village).

Internet

- At the time this leaflet was written, it looked like we would have Internet access at the Village Hall. If this doesn't work out, the Clan Information Point will have a list of alternative sites.

Mobile phone top-ups

- Locations where mobile phone top-up cards can be purchased will also be posted at the Village Hall.
- Mobile phone top-ups (without cards) can also be done at the Royal Bank of Scotland in Portree.

FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION DURING THE MACLEOD PARLIAMENT

- Registration and event sign-ups in Dunvegan are open in the Village Hall from 12.00 to 18.00 on Saturday 29 July, and from 16.00 to 18.00 on Sunday 30 July. .
- During our time on Skye, an Information Point will be staffed by NRG at the Dunvegan Village Hall at the following times: during registration, and from 9AM until noon Monday 25 July through Saturday 05 August. You may also call the Information Point at +44 (0)777 450-5038 during these hours.
- All event reservations or cancellations must be made at Parliament registration or else through the Information Point.
- A lost and found will be maintained at the Information Point in the Village Hall. Articles left unclaimed after Saturday 05 August will be recycled or else donated to charity.

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The 15th Clan MacLeod Jubilee Parliament

Lewis ~ Harris ~ Skye ~ Raasay

26 July ~ 5 August 2006

Travel tips

This booklet was put together using advice from CMS members and in most cases should be treated as suggestions and not absolute rules. (Although we have travel experience, we are not experts.) Please be sure to verify business hours, terms, and the availability of the services described in this pamphlet.

Insurance

Parliament attendees are advised that participation in any events or activities by themselves or any of their party is done so on a voluntary basis. The ACMS therefore disclaims all responsibility for any injury or mishap which those attending Parliament may incur. The ACMS strongly advises all Parliament attendees to take out holiday insurance, with coverage for cancellation, accidents, and medical and dental care, as well as the usual inclusions typical of these policies.

Accommodation tips

- For the Harris and Lewis part of Parliament, please reserve your accommodation THROUGH PARLIAMENT REGISTRATION. To be sure we have places for all attendees, we have arranged accommodation in the outer islands.
- For the Dunvegan part of Parliament, please MAKE YOUR OWN RESERVATIONS. While still limited, there is significantly more accommodation available on Skye than the outer islands. We recommend that you use Visit Scotland (formerly the Scottish Tourist Board):

  Internet http://www.visitscotland.com/
  E-mail: info@visitscotland.com
  Telephone: 0845 22 55 121 (UK) or +44 1506 832 121 (outside UK)

Cash tips

- International bank exchange rates are available at http://www.oanda.com.
- If you have a credit or debit card that allows you to make ATM withdrawals, you might consider using it instead of travelers' cheques or FOREX. Check with your bank to see if your card can be used internationally in ATMs. If this feature is enabled, you can use it in a Scottish ATM to withdraw cash (pound notes will be dispensed).
- Also, new fraud prevention measures mean that many Scottish businesses may not accept Visa or Mastercard charges without "chip and PIN" security. However, you can still use cards without "chip and PIN" to make ATM withdrawals.

Visas, legal, medical, etc.

The nations who host MacLeod Societies currently have no unusual restrictions on tourist travel to the UK. The British Tourist Authority (http://www.visitbritain.com/) has a good source of legal and medical information for all travelers.

Airline tips

There is a lot of pressure on the travel industry, and it is getting increasingly difficult to find inexpensive travel to the UK, especially in the summer months. Bargains may be hard to find. These are suggestions for finding the best fare:

- Revised fare programs are generally published on the internet every Sunday. Fare programs from previous weeks also may not necessarily be carried into subsequent weeks.
- Airline travel on Tuesdays or Wednesdays is usually less expensive.
- Consider flying into Inverness instead of Glasgow or Edinburgh. It is a much shorter drive from Inverness to the islands, and car rentals are usually a little cheaper.

Some internet websites are very helpful in finding the best fares on major airlines. These *.com sites are oriented toward USA travelers, but there are also Expedia and Travelocity sites for UK and Europe (*.co.uk), and Canada (*.ca):

- Travelocity (http://www.travelocity.com) lists all the lowest published fares for the trip you want, but it's up to you to find out if the fares are still available.
- Expedia (http://www.expedia.com) will give you the low fares that are immediately available for your route. If you spot a fare you like on Expedia, sometimes you can get it a little cheaper if you call the airline directly.

IcelandAir (http://www.icelandair.com), AerLingus (http://www.aerlingus.com) or GlobeSpan (http://www.globespan.com) are sometimes a good value and shorter travel time from North America as they bypass London and go directly to Scotland.

Rampant Scotland (http://www.rampantscotland.com/know/blknow_airlines.htm) is a website that maintains a thorough list of all the airlines that fly into Scotland from Europe and is also a good source of information for flights from London into Scotland. This list includes discount airlines and airlines to the minor Scottish airports. Keep in mind that many of these cheaper flights from London originate in smaller airports – Luton, Stansted, London City, etc. Another one of the ways that some of these smaller airlines or airports are able to offer reduced fares is by offering flights on off-hours, either very early or very late in the day, so note the times offered for your flights.

Making connections

You will be responsible for making your own connecting travel arrangements between airports. The public transportation between airports is generally good and easy to follow. However, dragging your luggage up and down the London Underground stairs can be a "memorable" experience. It's a good idea to ask the attendants which Underground stops have elevators (lifts), if you need them.

Technology tips

- The standard electrical voltage in Britain is 240 v AC, 50HZ. A three square pronged adapter plug and/or electric converter for appliances is required.
- Converters are relatively expensive at the airport. If you can't buy one before you leave, it's better to buy one at a UK discount pharmacy.
- If you need small personal appliances such as a hairdryer or iron, it makes sense to buy inexpensive UK travelers' devices rather than to buy converters to make devices from outside the UK work here.
- Magellans (http://www.magellans.com/store/tips/Electricity) has detailed information on the use of electrical goods when traveling.

Digital camera and video tips

- There are digital photo print kiosks and digital media for sale throughout Scotland. (Disposable camera development services will create CDs.)
- Bring extra batteries for your personal camera, especially if there's any question about whether or not you will be able to re-charge it in the UK.
- VHS and other digital video and broadcast formats are different between North America (NTSC, VHS) and most parts of the UK (PAL, S-VHS). This is a huge subject so it makes no sense to try and explain it all here, but if you think there might be an issue with your equipment or media, contact your device manufacturer or electronics specialty store.

Special tips for computer geeks

- If you will be making a presentation at Parliament, please be aware that we will have a PC data projector available (sometimes called a "beamer") that you can use with your laptop.
- If you don't have or don't wish to bring your laptop, there is also a Windows XP laptop available (for presentations only). In this case you should format your presentation in a conventional Microsoft Office format (Word, PowerPoint, etc.) and bring it on diskette, CD, or USB thumb drive.
- Check with your local ISP or e-mail provider to find out if they support a web browser interface for e-mail. If so, you can use any public PC to access your mail.
- If you want to bring your own laptop, please note that laptops typically include power converters in their power supplies, so you only need a plug/outlet adapter. These can be purchased in any airport or other store that carries travel supplies.
- UK analogue cables (for phones or modems) require adaptors in order for UK telephone lines to be plugged into your non-UK laptop.
- You can alternatively charge your mobile phone using a charging cable that plugs into the USB port on your laptop, rather than buying a separate UK charger for your phone. One less adaptor and electrical outlet to worry about! Your local phone shop or electronics store should stock these.

Mobile phone tips

There are several options for travelers who want to use mobile phones in Scotland: rent a temporary UK mobile with a UK SIM card, get a UK SIM card and insert it in your non-UK mobile, or just use your existing non-UK mobile and non-UK SIM. UK SIM cards and UK mobiles are available in UK phone retail shops, UK airports, and sometimes through your UK car rental company. Some other facts:

- The mobile phone service in Scotland uses GSM 900 and 1800Mhz frequencies. CDMA phones do not work here. All GSM phones have removable SIM cards. SIMs are small, removable plastic chips that contain your phone number.
- If you are not a UK resident, you will only be able to use a "pay as you go" mobile service. This requires that you pay for service in advance, by physically going into a retail shop "top up center" or else purchasing a "top up card" in advance.
- Using texts (SMS) will be cheaper than making voice calls.

Using a UK phone and a UK SIM card

The easiest thing is to just get both a UK mobile and a UK SIM when you are here.

Using your non-UK phone in Scotland

If you want to use your non-UK mobile phone in Scotland (with either your own non-UK SIM or a UK SIM), you should check with your home operator (Sprint, T-Mobile, etc.), from whom you got your mobile, to make sure your non-UK phone itself supports the GSM 900 and 1800 frequencies used in the UK. If it does, then you need to decide if you will use either your own non-UK SIM or a (new) UK SIM.

Using your own (non-UK) SIM in Scotland

You can use your own SIM in either your own non-UK mobile (if it supports the UK frequencies) or a (rented) UK phone. Before you decide to use this option, find out in advance from your operator exactly how much your international calls will cost, and make sure your own non-UK SIM is enabled for international roaming in the UK.

Using your own SIM in the UK is convenient, but it can be expensive. The good thing about using your own SIM (and therefore your own number) in the UK is that your friends and family can call you as if you were still in your home country, with no additional charges to *them*. The bad thing is that *your* mobile number will be charged the international tariff for any calls you receive. And any calls you *make* from Scotland using your own SIM are also charged international rates, as if you were calling from your home country -- even if you are only calling someone else in Scotland.

Using a UK SIM card in your non-UK phone

If your non-UK phone supports the UK frequencies, you might be able to use a UK SIM card with it. However, you need to find out in advance if your home operator "locks" their phones so they can't use other operators' SIM cards. If the phone is "locked", ask the operator to "unlock" the phone so you can use a different SIM when you travel. If they say no, you will have to get a UK phone to use with the UK SIM.

Train tips

Sometimes you can save significant money by flying only as far as London and then taking the train or bus to Scotland.

- The easiest points of train departure to Scotland are from Kings Cross (daytime trains) or Euston (sleeper trains) stations. If you fly into London Heathrow (http://www.heathrowairport.com/), you can take the Underground to either train station for less than £4. A taxi will cost you about £60. The Thameslink rail connection from Gatwick Airport (http://www.gatwickairport.com) goes directly to Kings Cross.
- Daytime service. The National Rail service (http://www.nationalrail.co.uk/) will help you plan your daytime trip, but will not accept reservations more than 3 months in advance. Prices can be very good if you reserve in advance. As an example, the daytime train from Kings Cross takes about 4 ½ hours to Edinburgh, and can cost as little as £25. But this goes up to £85 or higher, for purchase on the date of travel or seats in premium cars.
- Overnight train. The "Caledonian Sleeper" from London's Euston station to Glasgow, Edinburgh, or Inverness is a great old-fashioned adventure. The cabins have bunk beds and are a bit small, but they are clean and the service is good. You can reserve a berth or "airline style" sleeper seat at http://www.firstscotrail.co.uk for as little as £19, but the inexpensive ones sell out fast. You need to make reservations about 10 weeks in advance.

Bus tips

- Traveline (http://www.travelinescotland.com) maintains a huge list of bus services in the UK and Scotland in its "Journey Planner" section.
- Examples of service providers that have routes from London to Scotland are National Express (http://www.nationalexpress.com/) and Megabus (http://www.megabus.com/).
- Citylink (http://www.citylink.co.uk) supports other routes within Scotland.
- Fares and journey durations vary widely. A trip from central London to Portree can cost under £20, but can take 15-18 hours. A trip from London to Glasgow or Edinburgh is about 9 hours long, a trip from Glasgow to Inverness is an additional 4 hours.

Ferry tips

- Caledonian MacBrayne (http://www.calmac.co.uk) operates the ferries from Ullapool to Stornoway (Lewis), Uig (Skye) to Tarbert (Harris), and Tarbert (Harris) to Uig (Skye).
- Attending the portion of Parliament on Harris and Lewis requires the use of specific ferries and connecting buses. You must make your own ferry reservations.
- Please check the MacLeod Parliament web pages for further information on these ferries and the logistics regarding where to leave your automobile, etc, during the time when you are on the Parliament bus.

Tips on renting a car

Most major car rental companies operate in Scotland, and vehicles are easily reserved from major airports and metropolitan areas. We do recommend that you place your reservations as early as possible to ensure you get the vehicle you want. Parliament takes place during the most demanding part of the year for car rental companies.

During Parliament, two rental companies have offered discounted rates to Clan MacLeod Society members. Please mention that you are a member at the time that you make your reservation, and show your membership card when you pick up and/or pay for your vehicle. The businesses we are working with are:

- Arnold Clark (http://www.arnoldclark.co.uk), a Scottish company, and
- Thrifty (http://www.thrifty.co.uk), known world-wide

Alternatively, an internet search using the key words "car rental Scotland" will reveal websites that aggregate information from the various companies.

Driving in Scotland, and around Skye

If you do not have any experience driving in the UK, it is a good idea to get a driver's manual or other reference book before you rent a vehicle. If you have trouble finding one, try an on-line bookstore such as Amazon.com.

Many of the roads on Skye are "single track roads", which are only wide enough for a single vehicle to pass. There are also frequent "passing places", extra sections of pavement that allow one vehicle to pause while the other goes by. The first person who encounters the passing place is generally the one to wait. A nod of the head and a wave between the drivers of the passing vehicles is customary.

Outside of the villages, the roads are not well lit at night. It is important to take extra care when driving after dark. In general, it's a good idea to remind yourself to watch for unexpected behavior by others – especially fellow tourists -- either on foot or in cars.

Finally, if you ordinarily drive on the right hand side of the road, there seem to be two common mistakes you are likely to make when you drive on the left hand side.

- The first common mistake occurs when you enter a roundabout or rotary. When you enter a rotary in Scotland or the UK, go CLOCKWISE.
- The second common mistake is inadvertently staying in the right hand lane after you have made a right hand turn. Make sure you stay in the LEFT lane when you make a RIGHT turn (especially on rural roads).

And when you return to your right hand driving world, you may find you are second-guessing yourself for as long as 6 months…

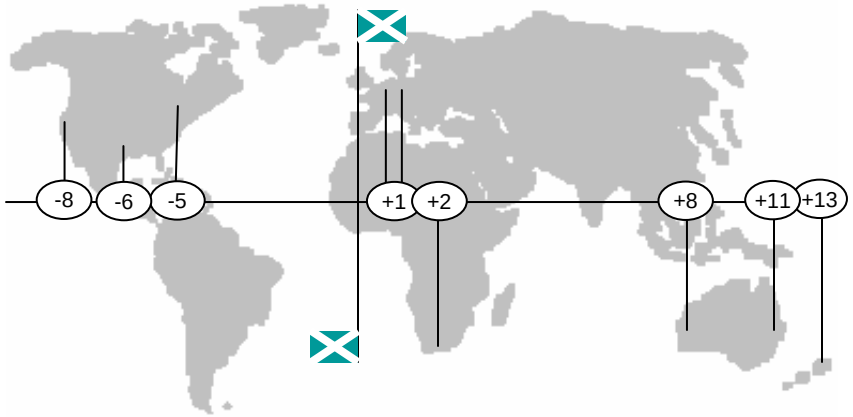
Time zones

All of Scotland is within the Greenwich mean time zone, and all of Scotland practices daylight savings time in the summer. So, heading east:

- France and Germany are 1 hour AHEAD of Scotland
- South Africa is 2 hours AHEAD of Scotland
- Western Australia is 8 hours AHEAD of Scotland
- Sydney and Melbourne are 11 hours AHEAD of Scotland
- New Zealand is 13 hours AHEAD of Scotland

and heading west:

- Toronto and the east coast of the USA are 5 hours BEHIND Scotland
- Chicago and Houston are 6 hours BEHIND Scotland
- California and Vancouver are 8 hours BEHIND Scotland



Dialing UK telephone numbers (landline information only)

A UK telephone number is typically written with a leading (0) or "0" and followed by the number. Sometimes there is a "44" in front of the (0) – this is the UK country code, to be used by international callers. For example, the published number for VisitScotland is "44 (0)1506 831 121". To call them:

- If you are inside the UK, ignore the 44 and include the "0", followed by the destination number 1506 831 121.
- If you are calling from outside the UK, drop the "0" and replace it with the UK country code "44".
- If you are in North America, international calls from a landline typically require that you dial "011" first, to access international service. Then you should dial the country code "44", followed by "1506 832 121".

If you are in the UK and you want to dial another country using a landline, you must first dial "00" to access international service, then the country code of the destination number, then the number. For example, if you want to call the White House from Scotland dial 00, then 1, then 202 456 1414. (Note that country code "1" is shared between the USA and Canada).