

Di Gilbert Mountaineering – The Skye Ridge

“There is no such thing as bad weather, only inappropriate clothing” Sir Rannulph Fiennes

Introduction

Never a truer statement said when I think about Skye.

Honesty is the best way to speak about Skye. So, I have very, very mixed feelings about the Black Cuillin of Skye. On the one hand, I never really understood what it meant to get truly soaked until I started visiting Skye. Even soaked doesn't do it any justice. I'm speaking about getting a proper drenching every day. A soaking that your boots don't ever recover from. A soaking that would classify as a Himalayan monsoon anywhere else in the world.

So, why offer courses in Skye? Well, when the weather decides to play, Skye is without a doubt one of the most spectacular mountain areas that we have in the entire country. Nothing comes anywhere close in terms of 'harrowing' rocky ridges, 'treacherous' drops, immaculate rock and gob smacking views. An almost Alpine atmosphere, the biggest rewards are gained from the most challenging mountains, and Skye never fails to deliver.

The Course

This is a 5 day course aimed at individuals who have previous scrambling and easy rock climbing experience and wish to spend as much time as possible on the Black Cuillin. Our aim is to complete all 11 Ridge Munro's, and potentially all sections of the Ridge from the comfort of a valley base – all weather and conditions dependant.

We will attempt some of the most famous classic scrambles and easy rock climbs that the Black Cuillin has to offer.

This can be a very physically and mentally demanding course and you should be prepared for 5 long mountain days.

Ratio:

This course is run on a 1:2 ratio.

Dates

We are available from May – Oct for this course, although strongly recommend either May/June or September/Oct.

We arrange to meet on the Sunday evening where you get the chance to meet your course companions and discuss, as a team, your aspirations.

We then spend 5 quality days on the hill with you and finish on the Friday evening – normally over a hot chocolate or a pint.

Prices

£475.00 per person. This course requires a minimum of 2 people to run.

This price includes instruction/guiding services and any technical equipment required.

Accommodation can be arranged in either a Bunkhouse, B&B or Hotel depending on your personal preference.

It is recommended that you provide your own transport which allows us to carry out journeys on the ridge which can start and finish at different points along the Ridge – this makes the logistics much easier.

Equipment

- Waterproofs** You will require waterproof jacket & trousers. Essential to keep the wind and rain out and the warmth in. I prefer hard wearing waterproofs that will survive the notorious rough Gabro on the Ridge. Trousers with at least a half leg zip will ensure that they can be put on over boots.
- Clothes** I recommend the layering system so that you can easily regulate your temperature depending on what the weather is doing. I tend to wear a thermal base layer along with a mid layer thin fleece and a secondary fleece. Any kind of wicking fabric is recommended and cotton is to be avoided at all costs. Trousers which can dry out fast are ideal.
- I also carry a thin pair of gloves and a woolly hat with even the best weather forecast. A sun hat is a good idea too on those hot & sunny days.
- Spare Clothes** Apart from the clothes that I expect to wear during the day, I'll always have an extra layer with me. I'm a big fan of the synthetic 'belay jacket' which is a lightweight jacket that can be worn over all my clothes. If you don't have one of these, an extra fleece will suffice. I'll also carry a spare pair of big gloves with me.
- Rucksack** Roughly 40 - 45 litres will be fine for Skye scrambling courses. You want to be able to comfortably get all your kit inside. I like simplistic designs with a good size pocket in the lid. I highly recommend www.deutergb.co.uk.
- Everything in your rucksack wants to remain dry so a waterproof liner is a good idea. I'm a big fan of Exped's Fold Dry bags. Failing this, lots of plastic bags will also work.

Food & Drink	Like any engine, your body needs fuel to perform at its best. Lots of small items that can be munched on throughout the day are ideal. A 1 litre water bottle should provide enough liquid and/or a flask depending on personal preference.
Walking boots	There is a huge array of scrambling boots on the market now. I want a light weight boot that is comfortable and has a stiff vibram sole. Have a look at Scarpa's Cristallo and Charmoz boots www.scarpa.co.uk .
First Aid	Any personal medication and a small first aid kit to deal with common problems such as blisters, sunburn and insect bites
Head torch	A small head torch with spare batteries. Either Halogen or strong LED's are the best.
Navigation tools	For Skye I prefer to use the specific Harvey map. Silva compasses are the best in my opinion.
Climbing helmet	Essential for any type of scrambling activity. This can be provided if indicated on your booking form.
Climbing harness	This makes things much easier – trust me. This can be provided if indicated on your booking form.
Emergency kit	A cheap orange plastic emergency bivouac bag which can live in the bottom of your rucksack. A little whistle is good for attracting attention and weighs nothing.