

CLAN MATHESON GATHERING 2024

INFORMATION SHEET

General.

The Gathering will take place 20-23 July 2024 inclusive – 20-21 in Lochalsh, 22-23 on the Isle of Skye. The outline plan at this stage is:

Sat 20 July	Lochcarron Games at Attadale all day (for planning purposes, aim to arrive at 11.00am)
	Supper under own arrangements
Sun 21 July	Church service (a shorter one than in 2014!)
	Visit local sites of clan interest, all TBC, bring own picnic lunch
	late afternoon, move to Portree area.
	Clan Council (Chief's Lieutenants, UK Branch Secretary) in Portree
	Supper under own arrangements
Mon 22 July	Clan Parliament in Portree Gathering Hall
	Organised visits to places of interest on Skye, bring own picnic lunch
	Clan cocktail party in Portree Gathering Hall 6.00 – 8.00pm (drinks & canapés)
Tue 23 July	Organised visits to places of interest on Skye, bring own picnic lunch
	Late afternoon, Gathering ends

Cost.

I shall be trying to keep the costs down wherever possible. Clan Society members should organise their own accommodation and transport, sharing as desired. I want to avoid hiring coaches.

Numbers.

I will ask branches for expressions of interest in December 2023, firmer numbers in February 2024, and final numbers in approx April 2024 to enable me to conduct planning, especially for catering. Please will Clan Society members keep their Chief's Lieutenants informed of their intentions.

Accommodation.

Book early! Short-let rentals often get booked up quickly for the high season (May-August). NB tough new Scottish Government legislation for the owners of short-let rentals comes into force on 1 October 2023, which *may* lead to fewer rental properties being available, so I recommend that you get organised sooner rather than later and, for peace of mind, before the end of 2023. Possible websites include:

- Airbnb <https://www.airbnb.co.uk>
- VRBO <https://www.vrbo.com>
- Islands & Highlands Cottages, Portree, Isle of Skye IV51 9ER. +44 1478 612123 / 312123. <https://www.ihcottages.com>

Or you might want to go to a hotel. Worth looking at <https://www.booking.com> or similar.

If you are wondering whether or not to find different accommodation for the Lochalsh and Skye phases, my recommendation is that you should. The car journey (there is no rail link) between the Kyle of Lochalsh and Portree is approx 1 hour. While this journey is certainly feasible, you may not wish to do it 4 times in 2 days, and anyway Portree itself is most picturesque and enjoyable.

Getting to Lochalsh and Isle of Skye.

Air. The closest airport is Inverness, from which you can either get a bus/train into Inverness if you want to use the Inverness-Kyle of Lochalsh railway, or hire a car and drive to Kyle. There are more air connections to Glasgow, the next nearest airport, but it is a longer road journey from there to Kyle.

Car Hire. It is easy to hire from Inverness airport (Dalcross) or Inverness railway station, but you might also be lucky with:

- Stephen Morrison in Portree (07810 560977, 01478 612688, <https://www.morrisoncarhire.co.uk>).
- Kyle Taxis (01599 534323, <http://www.lochalsh.net/taxi/>).

Rail. The quickest rail journey would be to get a train to Inverness (main line service from anywhere in the UK). From Inverness you could either change to the Kyle of Lochalsh line (a famous scenic journey and one to be savoured) or hire a car (approx 2¾ hours). Or you could travel to Glasgow which has more travel links from the rest of the UK, but it is a longer car journey from Glasgow to Kyle (approx 4 hrs).

If you have time to spend in Inverness railway station, keep an eye out for the memorial tablet on a wall, which names the Directors of the railway company which pushed the line through in the late C19th (chairman Sir Alexander Matheson) and for photographs in the waiting room of Duncraig station in the 1900s.

Buses.

- https://www.lochalsh.com/bus_services_in_skye_and_lochalsh.html
- <https://bustimes.org/localities/kyle-of-lochalsh>
- <https://www.geopunk.co.uk/locality/ES002246>

Lochcarron Games, Attadale.

This will be the first day of our Gathering. The organisers have not yet held their first meeting (the 2023 Games were only a few days ago), but we hope to have our own tent as a focal point, and to march on as a clan behind a pipe band at the start, for which we need to arrive punctually. For planning purposes, arrive no later than

11.00am, clan photos 11.00-11.25am, the march steps off at 11.30am (all timings TBC).

Share cars wherever possible to keep delays to a minimum.

NB that Attadale is a halt on the Inverness – Kyle railway line. The park where the Games are held is a short walk from the halt.

The entry fee in 2023 was £10 a head for adults and free for children. This may be reviewed for 2024.

At our last attendance at the Games, Clan Matheson acquitted itself remarkably well in the Hill Race and other athletic events, so please encourage those who would like to take part. See <https://www.lochcarrongames.org.uk> for information as it comes out.

There will probably be a number of stalls selling clan merchandise. Beware of any who sell unapproved items (last time there were several, eg wrong motto on clan badges, ill-designed clan badges, spelling mistakes etc). Lochcarron Weavers will almost certainly have a stand and they are trustworthy. We hope to arrive at an arrangement whereby those clan members who order items (a number of days) before the Games will benefit from a discount, and the items will be brought to the Games for you to collect. More news of this will be coming out over the coming months. See <https://www.lochcarron.co.uk/visit-us/lochcarron-visitor-centre/weavers-shop>

NB Dress to keep the weather and midges out! Food is available from stalls all day.

Transfer from Lochalsh to Portree at the end of Day 2.

35 miles by road; the journey normally takes 50-60 minutes.

Skye is joined to the mainland at Kyle by a major road bridge – no toll to pay and no ferry required.

The railway terminus is at Kyle; there is no rail link to Portree.

There is a bus service (see link above).

Clan merchandise.

The UK Branch is presently considering items of clan merchandise for sale to members attending. It is likely that pre-orders will be taken during the months to come, so that members can collect on arrival.

Weather.

Fine weather is not an everyday occurrence on the west coast of Scotland. Most important to plan on wet weather, have rainproof clothing and be pleasantly surprised if the sun shines. Work on the old saying “There is no such thing as bad weather, only inadequate clothing”. Midges can be a nuisance; you should consider insect repellent and perhaps a midge net to cover your head and hat down to neck level; if you don’t have to use the net, consider it a bonus!

Other activities.

If you want to spend more time in the area before or after the Gathering, here are some ideas for visits:

- The Outer Hebrides, especially Lewis (Stornoway Castle built by Sir James Matheson) and Harris.
- The west coast railway from Kyle to Inverness, 4 trains per day, >2.5 hours journey time. <https://www.scotrail.co.uk/train-times/inverness-to-kyle-lochalsh>
- Lochalsh:
 - Eilean Donan Castle <https://www.eileandonancastle.com>
- Isle of Skye:
 - Kinloch Lodge Hotel <https://kinloch-lodge.co.uk>
 - Three Chimneys Hotel <https://threechimneys.co.uk>
 - Talisker Distillery <https://www.malts.com/en-gb/distilleries/talisker>
 - Skye Weavers <https://www.skyeweavers.co.uk>
 - Oyster Shed <https://www.theoysterman.co.uk>
 - Dunvegan Castle <https://www.dunvegancastle.com>

And further afield don't forget:

- Fri 26 Jul – Sun 11 Aug, Olympic Games in Paris.
- Sat 3 – Mon 26 Aug, Edinburgh Tattoo.