Highland Wildlife & Bird Watching Holidays
Nature Photography & Wildlife Art Courses

"Aigas lives and breathes nature and wildlife, a fabulous place to see pine martens and wildcats."
Chris Packham, wildlife presenter and author

Sharing the Wonders of the Wild Highlands
Welcome

Aigas is unique. It is both the family home of Sir John & Lady Lister-Kaye and Scotland’s premier field studies centre dedicated to environmental education and nature conservation. John is one of the UK’s best-loved conservationists and nature writers and his wife, Lucy, is a passionate gardener and hostess. Individuals and travel study groups from all over the world stay here to learn about our abundant wildlife and ancient cultural heritage of the Highlands, while enjoying the special atmosphere of a family home. A very warm welcome awaits you.

The Aigas Experience

Aigas Field Centre is Scotland’s first and foremost centre for nature study and wildlife holidays. From here, a team of dedicated rangers will lead you throughout the wild Highlands, showcasing the best of this special area’s natural history and rich cultural heritage.

The House of Aigas, located on the south facing side of Strathglass – a beautiful wooded glen through which the River Glass flows from the high mountainous peaks of Glen Affric to the estuarine mud flats of the Beauly Firth - is home to Sir John & Lady Lister-Kaye who treat their guests as part of the family. Guests dine in the great Victorian hall every night on homemade and hearty fare.

The staff are friendly, well trained and, as well as guiding you during the day, will be there in the evening to pour a glass of wine and discuss the adventures of the day.

The estate boasts a myriad of wildlife including pine martens, badgers, otters and beavers in the loch, red and roe deer and red squirrels. Our private network of nature trails and wildlife hides are free for guests to use as they like.

"I am convinced that man has suffered in his separation from the soil and from the other living creatures of the world; the evolution of his intellect has outrun his needs as an animal, and as yet he must still, for security, look long at some portion of the earth as it was before he tampered with it"    
Gavin Maxwell

“Aigas includes:

Our holiday programmes are fully inclusive of:

- Transfers to and from Inverness at set times
- Comfortable serviced accommodation
- All meals
- All travel, tolls and entrance fees
- Leadership by qualified Aigas Rangers
- Use of all hides, trails and Swarovski Optik telescopes in vehicles.

What’s not included?

- Personal costs such as laundry
- Travel insurance
- Swarovski Optik binocular hire is available for just £20 per week
- A single supplement may be applied for hotel nights spent away from Aigas.

For more details, dates and costs please visit our website www.aigas.co.uk

© Laurie Campbell

Staying at Aigas

Anyone can come to Aigas at any time from April until the end of October, either on a full week holiday programme, on a specially designed tailored holiday or B&B basis.

For Ellen Edwards, Aigas Guest:

"The Lister-Kaye family have created a marvellous place, a full and wholesome experience of the Scottish Highlands - they really are the most generous and gracious hosts."
Accommodation & Food

AIGAS LODGES
In 25 acres of tranquil gardens, lawns and Victorian arboretum, guests at Aigas stay in cosy timber lodges dotted amongst the gardens. Personally supervised by Lady Lister-Kaye and her household team, the lodges are cozy and warm. Heated and carpeted, they contain twin and double rooms with ensuite bathrooms with a shower or bath, hand basin and loo. While guests enjoy complete privacy in their rooms, there is a comfortable lounge area in each lodge.

Single supplements are never charged for programmes based at Aigas.

DELICIOUS HOME COOKING
Cordon Bleu trained Lucy Lister-Kaye is one of life’s natural hostesses. She oversees the Aigas kitchen with the seasoned eye of a mother to seven and is always the first to detect a guest’s slightest requirements. She buys the food from local producers wherever possible and writes the menus every week.

Dinner is a three course set menu, and breakfast is a Continental buffet with hot porridge and a variety of cereals, yoghurts and fruits to choose from. Every day fresh rolls or sandwiches are made up for guests to enjoy in the field where rangers will provide tea, coffee and hot chocolate. We always strive to meet all special dietary needs.

“Our holiday was outstanding - from the warm welcome into a family home and excellent home cooked food, to the wonderful wildlife experiences we had both at Aigas and on our ranger led days out.”
Michael Byrne, Aigas Guest
The Aigas Rangers and ARTS

GENEROUSLY SPONSORED BY SWAROVSKI OPTIK

We are very proud of our ranger team and the huge success of the Aigas Ranger Training Scheme (ARTS), which has been running for more than 30 years. During that time we have trained nearly 180 rangers who have gone on to full time career posts in wildlife management, nature conservation or environmental education.

The intensive Ranger Training Scheme is supported by The Aigas Trust for Environmental Education. Subjects cover Highland natural history (birds, mammals, wild flowers, soils, native trees, invertebrates, reptiles and amphibians etc), glaciology and landforms, fresh water, woodland and moorland ecology, marine biology, local history and archaeology, land-use, crofting, farming, forestry, wildcat husbandry and the Highland sporting tradition. We also provide formal training in first-aid, minibus driving, health & safety at work and lecturing and presentation skills.

"Congratulations to the hugely dedicated Aigas staff who all teach the importance of our connectedness with nature - we are all part of it, not apart from it.”

HRH The Prince of Wales, Duke of Rothesay

The Famous Aigas Wildlife Weeks

With over 40 years of experience and excellence, our Wildlife Weeks have become internationally renowned.

Based at Aigas, guests spend six full days (7 nights) exploring the stunning hills, glens, forests, coasts and marshes of the Highlands of Scotland.

Programmes shift with the turning season, specialising in whatever aspect of wildlife is current. We regularly see well over 100 species of birds in a week and many delightful mammals, all in spectacular scenery.

A TYPICAL WEEK WILL INCLUDE:

• Dawn outings to search for otters or black grouse.
• Short walks in local habitats such as Caledonian pine forests to look for crested tits and crossbills.
• Exploring the Highland glens looking for golden eagles, black and red throated divers, peregrines, red and roe deer and wonderful wildflowers.
• An estuary visit for coastal and sea birds; guillemots, razorbills, waders, gulls, geese and ducks, as well as coastal flowers in season.
• Loch and wetland sites for ospreys, waders and wildfowl.
• Ranger-led evening badger and pine marten watches in on-site hides.
• A day on the west coast to look for sea eagles and great northern divers.
• Time spent at Aigas exploring the estate and gardens.
• EcoVentures boat trip to search for the bottlenose dolphins and seals of the Moray Firth.
Bird Watching Weeks at Aigas

From black grouse to sea eagles, ring ouzels to great skuas – discover the rich bird life of the Highlands in spring, summer or autumn. Aigas’ knowledgeable and enthusiastic rangers are keen on helping beginners master bird identification and use of telescopes and binoculars, whilst being able to offer the more experienced bird watchers expert advice and interpretation on the rich and varied birdlife of the Highlands.

Guests can explore a wide range of habitats including the rugged west coast, estuarine mudflats of the Moray Firth, remnant Caledonian pinewood, heather moorland, freshwater lochs and deciduous woodland, to name but a few. All our guests can spend an evening at the Aigas pine marten and badger hides. Every week has its seasonal highlights, but all programmes tend to record over 100 species of bird, whatever the time of year.

SPRING BIRDS

The Spring Birds programme offers early morning visits to watch lekking black grouse at our local RSPB reserve. The middle of April is when the Highlands bid farewell to thousands of pink-footed and greylag geese and welcome back ospreys, cuckoos, wheatears and many other summering birds. Tits, finches, chats and warblers are all showing wonderfully well in breeding plumage, just before the burst of leaves in the trees. With luck guests could see large numbers of long-tailed duck inshore and even elusive species such as hen harrier and purple sandpiper.

SUMMER BIRDS & HANDA ISLAND

Raptors, especially osprey and golden eagle, are regularly seen hunting, with well grown chicks to feed at the eyrie, whilst honey buzzards and red kites circle above woods, meadows and moorland, each choc-a-bloc with warblers, tits and finches. With a visit to Handa Island, a vibrant colony of over 200,000 seabirds, complete with puffins, black and common guillemots, eider, razorbills, fulmars and kittiwakes, not forgetting the exciting walks through great and Arctic skua territories.

AUTUMN BIRDS

Migration is in full swing, with a huge diversity stopping by, some to stay the winter. Others, like the hundreds of whooper swans that congregate in nearby fields, will only refuel for a few weeks before heading further south. Summer migrants have left by the autumn, to be replaced by thousands of continental fieldfare, redwing, goldcrest and robins. With luck guests will pick up a brambling or waxwing, perhaps something much rarer at this exciting time of year.

Walking & Wildlife

This popular programme showcases a selection of the best lowland leg stretches for wildlife and landscape in the Highlands. Striding out on long but low level walks, guests will explore coastlines and rivers, through glens and around lochs. Destinations may include the remarkable spit of Chanonry Point from where bottlenose dolphins can be watched, the iconic landscapes of Glen Torridon and remnant ancient Caledonian pine forest in Glen Affric National Nature Reserve, with an average of 5 miles per day led by an Aigas ranger.

"I will remember my week at Aigas for the rest of my days. It was a rare treat."

Linda Bone, Aigas Guest.
Laurie Campbell is widely recognised as one of Scotland’s foremost nature photographers. In 2015 he was the recipient of a Lifetime Achievement Award from the RSPB. His latest of several books is entitled Highlands: Scotland’s Wild Heart (Bloomsbury 2016) and is co-authored by Stephen Moss. His patient teaching style, individual attention and limitless knowledge are always hugely appreciated by Aigas’ photography guests. These programmes suit photographers with digital SLRs with interchangeable lenses. The courses will also include a one-to-one review and photo-editing session with Laurie, during which he will provide constructive feedback on guests’ images.

Highland House Party

Perfect for the all-rounder, this programme combines some of our finest wildlife spectacles with the Highlands’ most important historical sites. Watch pine martens from the Aigas hides, discover the ancient and mystical Clava Cairns and wander the streets of the charming Georgian village of Cromarty. This programme has something for everyone.

Evenings will include dinners in the baronial hall followed by after dinner talks.

HIGHLIGHTS INCLUDE:

• An introductory exploration of archaeology, history and wildlife on our private trails, which wind through the gardens and arboretum, around the loch and up onto the moorland to remains of Bronze and Iron Age sites.
• Bottlenose dolphins, Fortrose Cathedral and the historic village of Cromarty.
• Ancient flora and fauna in the magnificent remnant Caledonian pinewood of Glen Affric.
• Historical day including Culloden battlefield, Neolithic burial chambers and Cawdor Castle.
• A day of local historical sites and looking for eagles and red deer in stunning Glen Strathfarrar.

Nature & Landscape Photography with Laurie Campbell

NATURE PHOTOGRAPHY WORKSHOP:

Now limited to only ten participants, this course is suitable for everyone from very proficient photographers to relative beginners in the dSLR world. The range of possible wildlife subjects is extensive and will also include a well balanced mixture of opportunities to photograph anything from fungi to landscape.

LAURIE’S MASTERCLASSES:

Laurie’s masterclasses are limited to a maximum of six participants. The programmes are designed for those who are already proficient with their cameras and are looking for more specialised help, both with specific technical information, and also in developing their fieldcraft skills. Practical tuition sessions will include guidance on all aspects of macro photography, different uses for electronic flash and triggering systems and improvised hide construction and usage.

For equipment requirements, itinerary and online booking go to our website.

“A place to be immersed in nature and Scottish history, all wrapped up in wonderful hospitality and delicious meals, the whole experience is rewarding, relaxing and wholly restorative”

Martha Bessac, Aigas Guest

www.aigas.co.uk  T. +44 (0)1463 782443
Nature’s Child

Intergenerational wildlife fun and discovery for children and adults alike.

This week-long programme is inspired by John Lister-Kaye’s book Nature’s Child, which is a meditation on the delights of sharing nature with his youngest daughter, Hermione. He remembers those ‘fat, Arcadian, literally wonder-full years of childhood’, which usher back memories of his own childhood and the elation of simple discovery.

This week is ideal for busy parents or grandparents who want to spend some quality time with their youngsters - learning and exploring the countryside together in a fun, relaxed and enjoyable environment.

“Aigas is the perfect natural playground for a family. I felt complete freedom in letting my children roam and explore the natural wilderness there and make their own remarkable discoveries”

Miranda Krestovnikoff, President of the RSPB

Wildflowers & Gardens

Exquisite private gardens and myriad wildflowers.

Led by Aigas rangers and with guest leadership by Lucy Lister-Kaye and local garden and wildflowers expert Sue Pomeroy, this gentle exploring programme takes you across the Highlands through wonderful private and public gardens and to glades of rare wildflowers.

HIGHLIGHTS INCLUDE:

- Introduction to the Aigas garden with its creator, Lucy Lister-Kaye.
- Exploration of a local glen looking for northern marsh, heath spotted and fragrant orchids, clubmoss, yellow pimpernel, the insectivorous butterwort and sundews.
- A day and a night on the west coast includes the famous Inverewe Gardens and a visit to the private House of Gruinard and its fabulous informal garden. After an overnight stay we visit Dundonnell House and gardens, the Highland home of Lady Rice.
- The jaw-dropping Corrieshalloch Gorge and a short stroll along the verdant shores of Loch Kinellan.
- Nature reserves on the east coast looking for one-flowered wintergreen and twin-flower and a visit to Coul Links, an extensive dune complex where over 200 species of vascular plants have been recorded.
- Train trip to Attadale Gardens’ private stop on the west coast. An exquisite private garden of magnificent specimen trees, sculpture grottos, a fernery and water features.

“A most enjoyable holiday, full of interest and wonderfully varied gardens with excellent guides”

Mary Wills, Aigas Guest

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T. +44 (0)1463 782443    www.aigas.co.uk
Monarchs of the Glen
The majestic red deer and golden eagle are icons of the Scottish Highlands, and here at Aigas we are privileged to live amongst them every single day. This programme allows guests to experience the evocative roar of the stags during rutting season in nearby straths and glens, whilst golden eagles soar high above the peaks and mountainous ridges.

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Fascinating Fungi
Fungi are fascinating - by turns they are colourful, deadly, delicious, predatory, vital to ecosystems, luminous, rare, ubiquitous and laden with folklore associations. Join Liz Holden, one of Scotland’s leading fungi experts on a week of discovery and identification workshops.

To view our current or upcoming programmes please visit www.aigas.co.uk

Whisky & Wildlife
Discover the drama and evocative scenery, wildlife and natural ecology of the Highlands of Scotland, whilst learning about our national tipple along the way. This programme will include visits to distilleries and tasting sessions with an expert, looking specifically at the way this iconic spirit has influenced the culture and heritage of the Highlands.

This experience has enriched my life and is a must for those wishing to see, feel and understand the Highlands of Scotland and its people”
David Bone, Aigas Guest
Island Expeditions

Aigas is delighted to be working in association with our friends at Speyside Wildlife for our island programmes on Orkney, Shetland, Islay and the Western Isles. We have every confidence that Aigas’ high standards will be perpetuated and upheld by the Speyside Wildlife team. Enquiries can be made through the Aigas office or direct to Speyside Wildlife.

Tailor-mades

For those who want to experience Aigas and all it has to offer on a more flexible basis, bespoke, specially tailored holidays can be arranged. Guests can stay on a B&B or full-board basis with options for ranger-led days out, as well as visits to our onsite hides. Find out much more at www.aigas.co.uk

Orkney

Revel in Orkney’s low-lying and gentle landscapes, where the sea and sky are vast and all consuming. The Orkney archipelago boasts the UK’s highest concentration of ancient archaeological sites and is renowned for its stunning wildflowers and wildlife reserves.

Islay

Discover Islay, the ‘Queen of the Hebrides’, an island famed for its birdlife, early Christian and clan history, and its eight world-renowned whisky distilleries, highly distinguishable for their smoky taste.

Shetland

At this time of year there is virtually no darkness on the Shetland Islands, allowing ideal opportunities for wildlife watching and photography. Dolphins and minke whales are regularly seen off the coastline, whilst onshore hosts some of the UK’s largest seabird colonies of guillemots, gannets and storm petrels.

Western Isles

Explore the dramatic landscape of the Outer Hebrides, including the white sandy machair of the Uists, mysterious Neolithic standing stones, rugged Harris mountains and rocky headlands of Lewis. There is nowhere quite like it on this earth.

Hides

Aigas has four wildlife viewing hides providing different wildlife opportunities for guests on a daily, or nightly, basis.

THE KINGDOM HIDE

Built by Johnny Kingdom in 2007 to watch beavers on the Aigas loch, this hide provides elevated and protected viewing over the broad, lily-littered shallows of the south side of the loch. The hide is unlocked and available to guests at all time of the day. From here guests often see fishing ospreys, busy beavers and otters.

THE CAMPBELL HIDE

Tucked away within the thinned forestry plantation, the Campbell Hide is the ideal spot to watch pine martens and badgers in the evenings. Named after photographer Laurie Campbell, the hide is designed with careful consideration for those wishing to photograph pine martens.

THE TREETOP HIDE

An elevated viewing platform overlooking the moorland above the loch, the treetop hide is an ideal place for early risers to sit and watch passing red and roe deer, ravens and even a raptor or two, such as buzzards and red kites.

THE QUARRY HIDE

The Quarry Hide is located in an ideal wooded spot, close by some well established badger sets. With visits to this hide accompanied by an Aigas ranger, guests regularly spot pine martens, badgers, tawny and barn owls and roe deer.
Wildcats
The Aigas Wildcat Captive Breeding Programme
Since 2011 our conservation team have been breeding Scottish wildcats as part of the Scottish Government’s action plan to save this highly endangered species. Our guests will have the opportunity to see a wildcat and learn about this important project.

Please join with us to help save this iconic species.

ADOPT A WILDCAT

£25 – Information about the project and Aigas wildcat postcards.
£50 – an adoption pack and a signed copy of one of John Lister-Kaye’s books of your choice.
£150 – an adoption pack, a bone china wildcat mug designed by Becky Lister-Kaye and a signed JLK book of your choice.
£250 – an adoption pack and signed A4 Laurie Campbell print of a Scottish wildcat (5 to choose from).

John Lister-Kaye has written ten books on wildlife and living in the Highlands. Please visit his own website for full details.

www.lister-kaye.co.uk

Books by John Lister-Kaye

“A jewel in the conservation crown - this is a most remarkable project, rooted in some of Scotland’s most spellbinding scenery.”

Jon Snow, Channel 4 News presenter.

“......spreading awareness and love of nature is FANTASTIC!
I love it”

Dr Jane Goodall DBE

To find out more information please visit www.aigas.co.uk
DIRECTIONS

Aigas is easy to reach. You can come by air, road or rail. We collect groups and individuals from, and return them to, Inverness. Aigas is only a half-hour’s drive west from Inverness, the Highland capital. We are situated in Strathglass on the A831, 5 miles from the village of Beauly.

AIR LINKS

There are regular flights to Inverness from Heathrow, Gatwick, Luton, Bristol, Birmingham, Manchester, the Channel Islands, Dublin, Belfast and Amsterdam. Check www.britishairways.com, www.easyjet.com and www.flybe.com for details.

RAIL

Many of our guests come by rail to Inverness. Check www.thetrainline.com for schedules, prices and online booking. The Caledonian Sleeper can be booked at www.sleeper.scot.

“All of the rangers at Aigas are delightful and extremely knowledgeable on all sorts of topics - nothing is too much trouble at Aigas”

Rose Byrne, Aigas Guest