

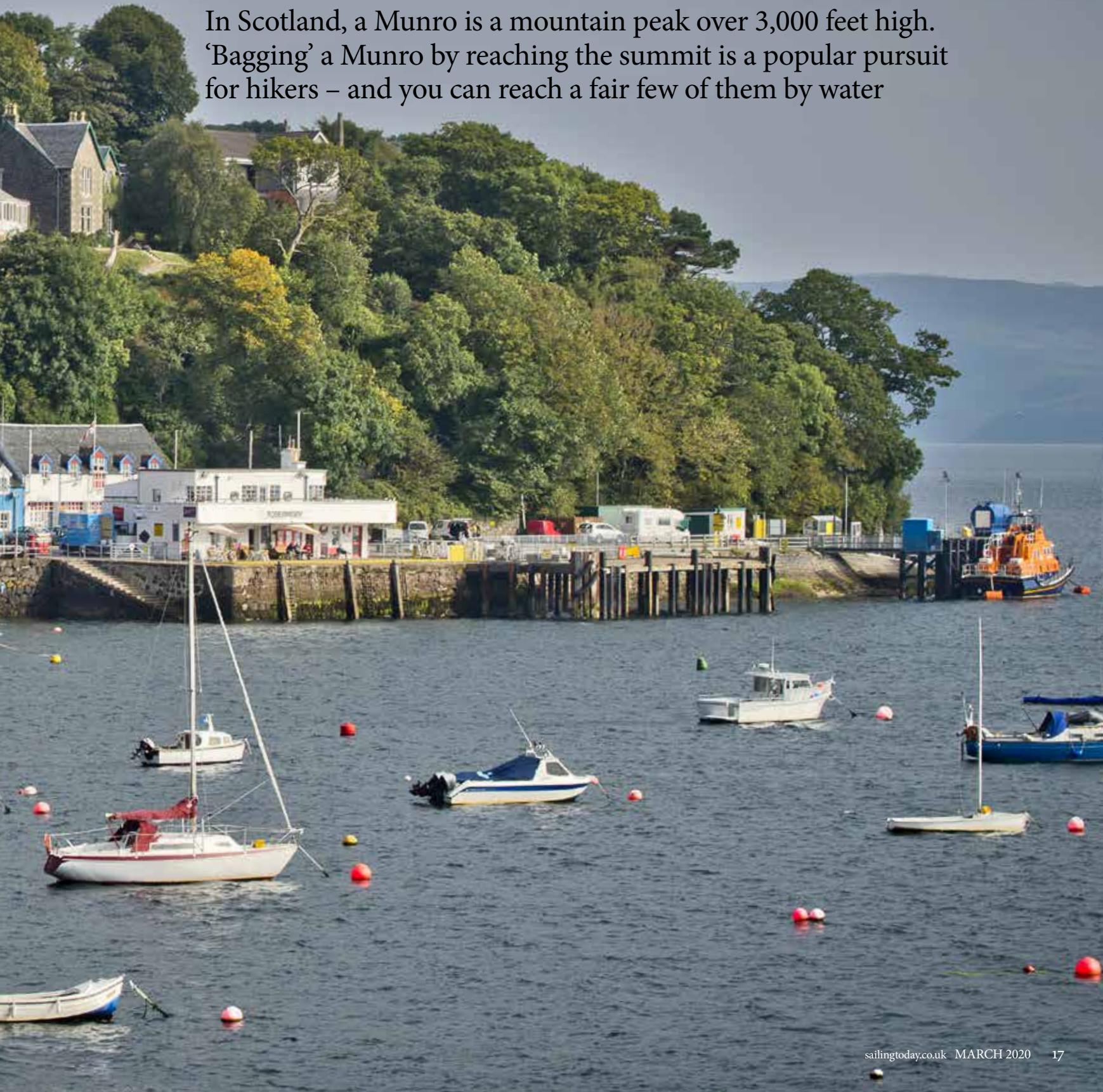


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# Summit to peak your interest

In Scotland, a Munro is a mountain peak over 3,000 feet high. 'Bagging' a Munro by reaching the summit is a popular pursuit for hikers – and you can reach a fair few of them by water





Anyone who has sailed on the west coast of Scotland will appreciate that there are two ingredients that make it one of the most beautiful cruising grounds in the world – the sea and the stunning hills and mountains. To combine the pursuits of hiking and sailing means you can make the most of both of these ingredients. The key is to work out an itinerary. Happily, we have one ready made, thanks to a little help from the experts at Sail Scotland.

Soaring more than 3,000 feet (904m) into the sky and set in some of the most incredible landscapes on the planet, sailing in the shadow of one of Scotland's 282 Munros is an awe-inspiring experience – but mooring up, donning your walking boots and conquering one on foot is a whole new adventure! Set sail for a voyage that'll have you marvelling at some of Scotland's most amazing scenery, sampling fantastic food and drink, and bagging a few of those towering peaks.

### **Ballachulish and Glencoe**

Kick off your journey towards becoming a 'Munroist' with a trip to the glassy waters of Loch Linnhe and the dramatic scenery of Ballachulish and Glencoe. This is a land of crystal-clear rivers, monumental snow-capped mountains and hidden, hauntingly beautiful glens. From the moment you leave it behind, this landscape is where your busy mind will wander every time you close your eyes. The towering twin peaks of Beinn a' Bheithir are first on your Munro bagging list. Clamber up the knife-edged cauldron that glowers over Ballachulish and you'll be rewarded with spectacular views of Loch Leven, Loch Linnhe, and – dominating the skyline – Ben Nevis. Take a good look – one day, you'll gaze down the Great Glen as you stand triumphant on its summit.

### **Oban**

Sail around 30 nautical miles southwest through Loch Linnhe for some well-earned rest in the 'Gateway to the Isles' – beautiful



Oban. The largest town in Argyll & the Isles, it's home to some of the finest seafood found anywhere in Scotland. Stretch your sea legs on dry land and work up an appetite with a trip to McCaig's Tower – the coliseum lookalike that crowns the heights overlooking the town – before slaking your thirst with a tour of Oban Distillery – one of the oldest (and smallest – it only has two stills!) distilleries in Scotland. Sláinte!

### **Mull**

Cruise west and skirt the southern coast of the iconic Isle of Mull, where picture postcard villages stand alongside towering medieval castles, and soaring sea eagles, majestic basking sharks and curious puffins can be spotted. But leave the wonderful wildlife behind for the moment. Berth in the sheltered bay of Loch Beg and ready yourself to tackle mighty Ben More, with an elevation of 3,852 ft (1,174m), beckoning you forth. The only island Munro outside of Skye, Ben More's grand ridged summit offers unforgettable views of the many islands dotted around the Minches. Breathe it all in – the view from the top of your first Munro is something that will stay with you.

ABOVE  
Sail Scotland's west coast itinerary mapped out

PREVIOUS PAGE  
Tobermory, capital of the island of Mull

### **Tobermory**

With a couple of Munros already bagged, spectacular sights seen, and drams put away, it's time to take a wee break on your journey towards becoming a 'completionist' as you continue around magnificent Mull. Sail about 35nm north and around the western coast to make your way to the pastel-coloured port of Tobermory – the island's capital and setting for iconic kids' TV show *Balamory* (What's the story in Balamory?) – but there is plenty more to discover in this island town.

Take to the greens of Tobermory's clifftop, nine-hole golf course for some of the most spectacular views from the tee you'll ever see; explore the culture of the area at art gallery and live music venue, An Tobar; or, if Munro-bagging hasn't slaked your thirst for adventure, search for the lost fortune of the Spanish galleon that is rumoured to lie sunken in a watery grave in Tobermory's silt – carrying £300,000 worth of gold bullion! Of course, you could always just head for a tour of the Tobermory distillery instead.

When it comes to seafood, the phrase 'straight off the boat' is much more than just a cliché at Tobermory's Café Fish. Set on the





## Silver Sands of Morar

Don't miss the chance to see the Silver Sands of Morar – a stunning string of beautiful sandy beaches peppering the coastline from Arisaig to Morar, just south of Mallaig. Featured in films such as Highlander and Local Hero, its spectacularly blue shallows and sparkling sands have long lured photographers and film-makers.

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corner of the picture postcard town's beautiful bay, the café has been wowing visitors with an array of delectable and supremely fresh seafood delights for over a decade. Don't miss their famous fish pie.

### **Mallaig**

Sail around 30nm north along the west coast to Mallaig to set foot on impossibly white sandy beaches and take in unforgettable sea views with magnificent sunsets over the Isles of Rum, Eigg, Muck, Canna, Skye and the remote wilderness of Knoydart. Unsurprisingly, Mallaig is a haven for

wildlife, with the chance to spot everything from sea eagles and otters to basking sharks and dolphins out among the area's rugged headlands and sheltered bays.

When you've explored enough to work up an appetite, the Cornerstone Seafood Restaurant, which overlooks Mallaig's busy harbour, offers a range of freshly caught west coast delights, from home-made Cullen Skink to hand-dived scallops.

Sit back and relax after a hard day treading the sands and watch the

BELOW  
A boat's eye view of  
Skye's Cuillin Ridge

sun slink beneath the horizon with a hearty meal in your belly and a dram in your hand. Bliss!

### **Skye**

Wave goodbye to Mallaig and cruise around 20nm northwest to say 'Hello, Skye' – an island alive with magic. The largest of the Inner Hebrides, it's home to some of Scotland's most iconic landscapes. From the Old Man of Storr to the Quiraing and the Cuillin mountain range, Skye offers a plethora of sights to enthral the senses – and twist the tongue! Berth at Loch Scavaig – a rugged, rural mooring at the base of the range and one of the most spectacular anchorages you'll ever have the pleasure to visit – to see the Black Cuillin in all its jaw-dropping glory.

With no less than five of the Munros that make up the iconic range within walking distance, this is your chance to scale peaks that dreams are made of – raw, rugged, and brutally beautiful. Take care, however; many Cuillin summits require scrambling or rock-climbing to reach and can challenge even the veteran Munro-bagger. There are several shorter walks that still provide spectacular views, while



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## Cruising ~ Scotland

guides are available for those intent on conquering the toughest climbs the Cuillin can offer. For much-needed nourishment, the Three Chimneys is worth the effort to get to. The renowned restaurant offers up an array of delicious food that reflects the amazing variety of Skye's authentic, natural larder from sky, land and sea. Prepare yourself for a meal that'll dance on your palette like the moonlight on the Fairy Pools.

Once you've bagged your fill of Munros (for now), cruise on to Loch Harport for a well-earned dram (or three) at Talisker Distillery – home of the only single-malt whisky produced on Skye.

### **Dunvegan**

Sail about 11nm north around the dramatic Skye coastline and step back into the island's storied past with a stopover in Dunvegan. Home of the oldest continuously inhabited castle in Scotland – the ancestral seat of the Chiefs of Clan MacLeod – this idyllic lochside village is full of myths, majesty and more than a little magic. Recharge with a visit to Dunvegan Castle and its five acres of beautifully maintained gardens, complete with woodland glades, waterfalls and a wonderful array of vibrant blooms, before paying a visit to the aptly named Old School Restaurant. This much-loved family-run bistro has been serving up classic Scottish fare for over 30 years. Settle in, sample food so good you'd swear your mammy had made it, and get ready for your next adventure above 3,000 feet.

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### **Torridon**

Leave Skye behind, skirting its northern coast and cruise east back towards the mainland for around 55nm, where the mighty sea lochs and dramatic, desolate peaks of Torridon await. Berth in Upper Loch Torridon, in the shadow of the seemingly impenetrable peaks of Beinn Alligin (Jewelled Hill in Gaelic) and Liatach (The Grey One), and steel yourself to tackle the ascents – and prepare your camera for the stunning views that await you at their summits. With two (or more) of the most spectacular Munros in the country in the bag, you'll no doubt be ready for some well-earned rest and relaxation. Cruise to the southern shores of Upper Loch Torridon, where the elegant stone turrets and towers of imaginatively titled The Torridon await.

ABOVE  
The magnificent Iona Abbey on the Isle of Iona

BELOW  
White-capped Munros stand majestically beyond Loch Torridon

Overlooking the loch and the bubbling Allt Coire Roill burn, the only thing more spectacular than its views is the food served up in its restaurant. With three AA rosettes to boast of and an ever-evolving, best-of-Scottish menu featuring everything from Dornoch lamb to Scrabster hake and Orkney scallops, it's the perfect place for a Munroist in the making to refuel.

### **Iona**

Take a detour to the incomparable Isle of Iona off the coast of Mull, where magnificent scenery, myths and majesty await. Be sure and stop by the isle's iconic abbey, as well as St Oran's Chapel and the ancient cemetery of Reilig Odhran, which is reputed to be the burial place of 48 kings of Scotland, including Macbeth.



## Geotourist

Thanks to online tour guide Geotourist, this article can be accessed as an audio file, narrated by the venerable Dame Shirley Robertson. Simply scan the QR code below or go to [geotourist.com](http://geotourist.com)



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