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LANDFALL SCOTLAND · AREA GUIDE

Living in Highlands & Islands

Mountains, lochs and island life, for people who can work from anywhere.

AVERAGE HOME PRICE

£225,000

Highland council area, Aug 2026, up 7.4% in a year

MAIN CITY

Inverness

Hospital, airport, shops and services

FLIGHTS

To London and Amsterdam

From Inverness Airport; connect for the US

INVERNESS TO EDINBURGH

About 3½ hours by train

Or the Caledonian Sleeper to London

Cover photo: Katia De Juan / Unsplash

The Highlands and Islands cover most of Scotland's land but only a small share of its people. Inverness is the one city, and beyond it are small towns, crofting communities and islands from Skye to Orkney and Shetland.

Americans who move here usually come for the landscape and a slower pace, often with remote jobs. It is a wonderful place to live if you plan for the distances: to hospitals, airports, specialist shops and sometimes to the nearest school.

GOOD FOR

- Remote workers
- Outdoor lovers: hillwalking, skiing, sailing
- People who want a close-knit community
- Anyone ready to plan around distance and weather

PROPERTY

Buying and renting

In the Highland council area, the average home sold for about £225,000 in August 2026, above the Scottish average and up 7.4% on a year earlier. Demand from remote workers, retirees and holiday-home buyers pushes prices up in the most scenic spots.

Rentals can be hard to find, especially on the islands and in tourist areas, because many homes are let to visitors. Holiday lets in Scotland need a short-term let licence, and some areas are tightening rules to protect housing for local people.

Island and rural homes often run on oil, LPG or electric heating rather than mains gas, and broadband speeds vary a lot from village to village. Check both before you commit.

BEFORE YOU COMMIT

- Confirm broadband and mobile coverage at the exact address if you work remotely.
- Ask about heating type, insulation and running costs: winters are long.
- Some rural homes come with crofting rules attached. Take advice before buying croft land.

FAMILY & SCHOOLS

Schools and family life

Highland Council runs state schools by catchment, and in rural areas that can mean a small village primary and a longer journey to secondary school, sometimes with a school bus or boarding for island pupils. Classes are often small and closely knit.

Gaelic-medium education is available in some schools, including in Inverness and on Skye, which is a unique option for bilingual children. Inverness has the main hospital, Raigmore, and most specialist services.



Inverness and the River Ness on a sunny day. Photo: Robin Canfield / Unsplash

SOCIAL LIFE

Outdoors and community life

Life here revolves around the outdoors: hillwalking and climbing, skiing in the Cairngorms and at Nevis Range, sailing, cycling and wild swimming for the brave. The North Coast 500 driving route starts and ends in Inverness.

Evenings are more about the local hall than the city: ceilidhs, music sessions, Gaelic culture and community events, with Eden Court theatre and arts center in Inverness for bigger shows.

TRAVEL

Getting around and getting home

Inverness Airport has flights to London and other UK cities, plus Amsterdam for international connections. There are no direct US flights, so most trips home mean connecting in London or Amsterdam, or getting to Edinburgh or Glasgow.

Trains from Inverness to Edinburgh take about three and a half hours, and the Caledonian Sleeper runs overnight to London. On the islands, life runs on ferry and island-flight timetables, and winter weather can cancel sailings. A car is close to essential.



The Old Man of Storr on the Isle of Skye. Photo: Diane Rish / Unsplash

COMMUNITY

Finding your people

There are fewer Americans here than in the cities, but small communities are often very welcoming to people who join in. Volunteering with the local hall, mountain rescue, the community council or a development trust is how many newcomers become part of a place.

University of the Highlands and Islands campuses and the hospitality, renewable energy and tourism sectors also bring people from all over the world.

WHERE TO LOOK

A starting shortlist

Inverness

The Highland capital: city services, the airport and the train, with countryside minutes away.

Black Isle & Nairn

Villages and coast within easy reach of Inverness, popular with families.

Aviemore & Badenoch

Mountain towns in the Cairngorms National Park, on the main railway line.

Skye & the islands

Spectacular and remote. Housing is scarce, and ferries, weather and distance shape daily life.

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Landfall guides for this move

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yourlandfall.com/guides/buying-a-home-in-scotland

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Sources. Figures checked in November 2026. The Scottish average home price was £198,000 in August 2026. Prices and rents change, so check current listings before you decide.

- UK House Price Index Scotland: August 2026 (GOV.UK): https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/uk-house-price-index-for-august-2026/uk-house-price-index-scotland-august-2026
- Trainline: Inverness to Edinburgh train times: https://www.business.thetrainline.com/train-times/inverness-to-edinburgh
- ONS: Private rent and house prices, UK, October 2026: https://www.ons.gov.uk/economy/inflationandpriceindices/bulletins/privaterentandhousepricesuk/october2026

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