

THE PERFECT WEEKEND IN...

# OBAN

*The route:* Oban Bay, Kerrera, Eileach an Naomh, Seil, Loch Don, Tralee Bay

Oban Bay and the surrounding Firth of Lorn on the West Coast of Scotland are extolled worldwide for their spectacular scenery, wildlife and history, making this the ideal location for a perfect weekend cruise. Ancient castles dominate the landscape, which abounds with good eateries, anchorages and marinas. There is something here for everyone to enjoy whether shopping, beach combing, wildlife watching or searching for an ancient settlement on a secluded island.

**SATURDAY MORNING**

I'd leave Oban early, motor two miles southwards down Kerrera Sound, and anchor in Little Horseshoe Bay on the island of Kerrera. Amidst the serenity of this idyllic spot, you'll find the stresses of your week evaporate. Row ashore and walk south along the path that leads to Gylen Castle, a 16th Century clan stronghold, standing on a commanding promontory. Mountains and islands stretch ahead down the Firth of Lorn, luring you southwards to one of my favourite anchorages in the Garvellach Islands.

Head back to the boat and motor ten miles further south, leaving the tide races around Fladda Lighthouse to port and the rugged Garvellach Island chain to starboard. Enter the narrow channel between outlying skerries and anchor beside the most captivating of them all, Eileach an Naomh – rocky place of the saint. Here, Irish monks founded a monastery in 542AD where St Columba is said to

have found solitude. As you lunch aboard, the island's mysteries entice you ashore to an early Christian stone beehive cell behind the jagged rocks. Once on land, you're surrounded by wild flora including the delicate white flowers of the exotic grass of Parnassus. You could wander all day on this enchanted isle but all too soon it's time to think about an evening meal.

**SATURDAY EVENING**

For dinner head 11 miles north-eastwards to Puilladobhrain (pool of the otter), a spectacular anchorage with the magnificent peaks of the Isle of Mull rising to the west across the Firth of Lorn. For good food, take the ten-minute walk across the hill to the Tigh-an-Truigh Inn (house of the trousers), which nestles beside the old bridge spanning Seil Sound. After the Battle of Culloden in 1746, many proscriptions were imposed on the Scots, one banning males from wearing the kilt. But the Seil islanders continued to wear theirs with pride, changing into trousers at the inn before crossing to mainland Scotland, where they might encounter Redcoats.

**SUNDAY MORNING**

Make an early start and cruise a few miles across the Firth to Loch Don set below the hills of Mull. Once there, you can anchor north of the pier at the entrance or, if you feel



Dunstaffnage Marina and Castle

PROFILE

**THE AUTHORS**  
Helen and John Anderson



have cruised around the globe on a variety of different craft but still reckon their home waters on the West Coast of Scotland are some of the richest cruising grounds anywhere in the world. Their current boat is a Nordstar 26 Patrol.

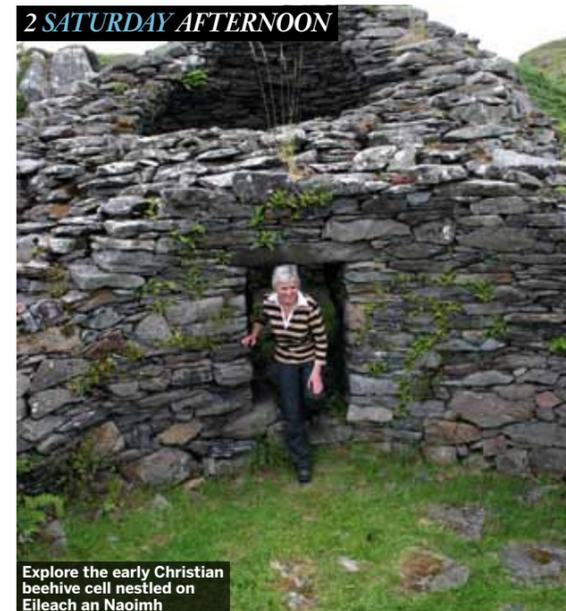
1 SATURDAY MORNING

Start the day at Waypoint Bar and Grill in Oban's friendly marina



The peaceful anchorage in the lee of Eileach an Naomh

2 SATURDAY AFTERNOON



Explore the early Christian beehive cell nestled on Eileach an Naomh



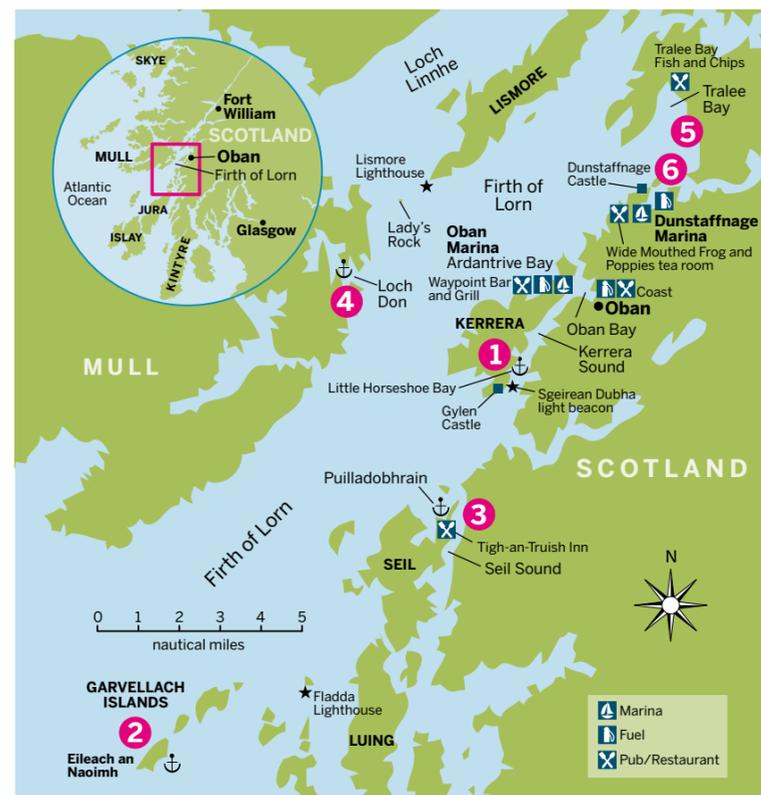
Take a stroll up to Gylen Castle on the island of Kerrera

*Amidst the serenity of this idyllic place, the stresses of the week will melt away as the surrounding mountains and islands lure you southwards*

3 SATURDAY EVENING



Anchor for the night at Puilladobhrain (centre right) looking across to Mull



Enjoy an evening meal at Tigh-an-Truigh Inn where locals swapped their kilts for trousers

**LOCAL MARINAS**

Oban Marina (Tel: +44 (0)1631 565333) has a fuel berth, repair services and restaurant. Oban Bay visitors' moorings and landing stage makes a handy alternative (Tel: +44 (0)7801 880315). Dunstaffnage Marina (Tel: +44 (0)845 640 4050) has a fuel berth, chandler's and restaurant.

**HANDY FUEL BERTHS**

Tommy Barbour (Tel: +44 (0)1631 562849) supplies fuel from Oban's railway ferry pier or, by request, from the north pier.

**NAVIGATION NOTES**

The reefs in the centre of Oban Bay are well marked but many a vessel has grounded to the east of the cardinal buoy at the north entrance to the Bay. Most of the reefs in Kerrera Sound are also well marked but beware of the drying rock two cables east of Sgeirean Dubha light beacon and Cutter Rock 1.5 cables south-south-west.

The anchorage at Eileach an Naomh is best in light winds from west through north to east.

Loch Don requires careful pilotage. When cruising from Loch Don to Tralee Bay or Dunstaffnage Marina (pictured), leave Lady's Rock and Lismore Lighthouse well to port as the

overfalls can be difficult.

Tralee Bay is exposed to the south so only anchor in offshore winds.

The Clyde Cruising Club Sailing Directions, Kintyre to Ardnamurchan is invaluable.

**FAVOURITE EATERIES**

The Waypoint Bar and Grill near Oban Marina (Tel: +44 (0)7840 650669). In Oban Coast on George St (Tel: +44 (0)1631 569900). In Dunstaffnage Bay the Wide Mouthed Frog (Tel: +44 (0)1631 567005) and Poppies (Tel: +44 (0)1631 565718). On Seil Tigh-an-Truigh Inn (Tel: +44 (0)1852 300242).

**4 SUNDAY MORNING**



Wake up to this stunning view at Loch Don

**5 SUNDAY LUNCH**



Motor north to the beach attractions at Tralee Bay



Lucky visitors might spot a golden eagle



All ages can have fun rally karting at Tralee Bay

**6 SUNDAY AFTERNOON**



Dunstaffnage Marina is another pretty stop-off

more adventurous, and preferably on a rising tide, negotiate the shallow passage to the anchorage south-west of the drying spit (see navigation notes). Here waders patrol the shoreline, the evocative call of the curlew echoing across the water. Now for a quiet breakfast on deck, keeping an eye open for deer, otters and the elusive golden or even white-tailed sea eagles. If you've only seen sheep, then as you leave, skirt by the skerries at the north of the entrance and you'll likely see some languid seals.

But now it's beach time. One of my favourites is Tralee Bay, nine nautical miles north-eastwards where, in offshore winds, you can anchor off a slipway or the long stretch of white sand. Here, everyone between the ages of seven and 70 can entertain themselves at the off-road rally karting centre (Tel: +44 (0)1631 720297) at Keils Crofts, where Kenny sells hot drinks, or have lunch at nearby Tralee Bay Fish & Chips. Another favourite, where you can go regardless of wind direction, is Dunstaffnage Marina. Take a stroll round the bay to a lovely small beach near the 13th Century Dunstaffnage Castle which, with its towers and high parapet walkway, will take you back in time. Back at the marina, the Wide Mouthed Frog bistro and nearby Poppies tea room will keep the crew well fed.

**SUNDAY AFTERNOON**

Before it's all over, I'd leave time for exploring Oban itself. There are visitors' moorings and a landing stage on the southern outskirts of the town or Oban Marina is across the bay on the island of Kerrera. A free ferry will run you back to the town where you can spend the rest of the afternoon promenading along Oban's waterfront, window shopping and watching the inter-island ferries come and go. But to end a perfect weekend, a short walk up Oban's hilly streets brings you to McCaig's Tower where the panoramic view across this magical bay of islands and mountains will soon have you planning your next trip back to the West Coast. **MBY Next Month:** The River Orwell

**DO YOU HAVE A PERFECT WEEKEND?** If you'd like to show fellow *MBY* readers how to spend the perfect weekend in your home waters please email a few sample words and digital photographs to [hugo\\_andreae@ipcmedia.com](mailto:hugo_andreae@ipcmedia.com)



Oban's waterfront is the perfect place to end a perfect weekend