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SkyeConnect

Working for Skye and its Neighbouring Areas

PRESS RELEASE



LAUNCH OF #SKYETIME – STAY LONGER, SEE LESS, EXPERIENCE MORE

Visitors to Skye are being encouraged to experience more of what the island has to offer and embrace the growing 'slow tourism' movement.

SKYECONNECT – the official destination management organisation for Skye and its neighbouring areas - has launched a new marketing campaign, #Skyetime, to demonstrate how much more the island has to offer in addition to the tourist hotspots such as the Fairy Pools, the Quiraing and the Old Man of Storr.

While there is no doubt that the hotspots can become congested in the peak season, Skye is a big island with over 1600 square kilometres to explore and enjoy away from the crowds.

Residents and businesses on Skye are all too familiar with so-called 'tick-box-tourists' spending just a few hours on the island while they grab selfies at some of the iconic locations. These visitors will always come to Skye and they will always be welcome, but SKYECONNECT wants to encourage people to consider slowing the pace, planning longer stays, exploring and experiencing so much more.

The campaign will feature a website www.skye-time.com , Facebook page and most importantly an Instagram presence with the aim of creating a viral message. Individuals and businesses will be able to post their photos and videos demonstrating what Skye has to offer and how to enjoy the island at a slower pace.

The marketing campaign - designed by McD Creative on Skye – will be supported by a Public Relations campaign promoting the individual tourism businesses that have bought into the notion of a slower form of tourism. Two examples – Seaflower Skye and Skye Adventures – are featured in press releases appended below.

The Chair of SKYECONNECT, Shirley Spear, is excited to finally launch the campaign.

“#Skyetime is a great initiative which we hope will capture the imagination not just of islanders, but of potential visitors from around the world. Holidays are about making memories to last a lifetime. By taking the time to engage with the island, its people, culture and food visitors will experience so much more and make memories that will last far longer than a hastily grabbed selfie. Since #Skyetime went live a few weeks ago we have been delighted with the level of engagement and the great stories and images that are being seen around the globe. Encouraging visitors to stay just a little bit longer will have a transformational impact on the island economy.”

Here are some thoughts and images on the meaning of #Skyetime from some other members of the SKYECONNECT Board.



“Time to take the second cup of coffee, time to take that byway, the less travelled way to a new discovery, to watch the sun sink below the far horizon.”

Dave Till, Skye Skyns



'Finding a deserted beach with a spectacular Cuillin and being swept away.....'

Clare Winskill, Coruisk House



“Growing up on Skye, swimming in rivers, fishing in lochs and walks in the hill were the special days I remember the most. These are the days I seek out now, where peace can be found from daily life, often in a beautiful spot that seems quite dreamlike and time stands still, for a while. This is my Skyetime.”

John Coghil, Sligachan Hotel

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Here are two sample stories to support the online #Skyetime campaign.

SEAFLOWER SKYE

Busting the myth of an overcrowded island



Meet Ewen Grant and Janice Cooney – life and business partners in a venture offering tourists a unique and unforgettable experience.

Seaflower Skye takes visitors on a luxury cruise to the remote, magical and barely populated island of Rona. For Ewen and Janice their business is their passion and this comes across in the ambience on the boat as it leaves Portree harbour. It feels more like a day-trip with friends rather than a commercial cruise. They provide a sensory bombardment of scenery, history and wildlife washed down with an endless supply of generous hospitality.....and that's all in advance of arriving on Rona for a luxury seafood lunch and fine wine on the ample deck of their Catamaran, before a couple of hours exploring this magical island.

It's been a long journey for the crew of Seaflower Skye. Ewen was born and bred on the island but like many young islanders didn't really appreciate what he had on his doorstep until he left home. He set off to travel the world and met Janice, who hails from Ireland, in Thailand. They settled in Australia for three years but the lure of home drew them back to Ireland where Janice worked as a theatre nurse and Ewen drove heavy plant vehicles on windfarm construction sites.

Ewen was really missing Skye, his family and their connection with the sea. Both his father and brother run Creel boats out of Portree catching some of the finest shellfish on the planet. Janice agreed to move as long as she could find work. They started to look for boats suitable for carrying fee-paying passengers on pleasure cruises around Skye. Eventually, Seaflower came on the market. Janice says they knew instantly it was "the tool for the job".

They soon won the contract to carry out a ferry service for the privately-owned island of Rona. This contract helps cover the mortgage on the boat and provides a year-round income.

Next, they set about designing their cruises and wanted to offer tourists a luxury experience. The standard trip takes visitors out to Rona where they have lunch on deck in the sheltered natural harbour. Lunch comprises local langoustine, Squat Lobster, hot and cold smoked salmon.....and on chillier days a warming bowl of Cullen Skink. The seafood is supplied by Ewen's father and brother.

Ewen says, "It feels really good to be showcasing some of Skye's great produce. Unfortunately, a lot of the best shellfish is exported to the continent but having a father and brother in the fishing industry means we can intercept the catch before it leaves Skye."

After lunch passengers can spend a couple of hours exploring the island. Sturdy footwear is required for the steep climb to the Trig point on Rona's highest peak or for the walk across the island to the cave where missionaries once preached and the island's caretakers, Bill and Lorraine were married.

On the return journey to Portree there's an opportunity to spot porpoise and dolphins or catch a glimpse of a Sea Eagle on the cliffs of Raasay.....all with a local dram to toast the end of a memorable day.

Ewen and Janice would like to run the business all year round. The unpredictability of Skye's climate means a November day could be just as nice as a May day. The principal restriction is the lack of light in the winter months. Janice says "If we could do it all year round we would. But the weather is a factor and so is the light."

2018 was the first season for Seaflower Skye. During the summer they hosted a wedding and had four other marriage proposals on board. 2019 will be their first full season and they are already inundated with booking enquiries from corporate clients and holiday-makers from across the globe impressed with their ratings on Trip Advisor.

Ewen and Janice couldn't be happier in the jobs and Ewen especially appreciates the quality of home.

"I didn't appreciate Skye until I moved away". Once I left Scotland I started to get homesick. When you are travelling the world and you're struggling to find a place as good as where you live it's a good complaint to have."

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SKYE ADVENTURE



SKYE'S SECRET COASTAL ADVENTURES

Visitors to Skye seeking thrills and adrenalin-pumping adventures to compliment the stunning serenity of the scenery just need to ask for Matt Barratt and John Smith of Skye Adventure. These two outdoor enthusiasts combine 20 years of mountaineering and adventure experience with a list of professional guiding qualifications as tall as the Cuillin hills they love so much.

Skye Adventure specialise in taking visitors and local thrill seekers off the beaten track to experience parts of Skye you will not find in any guide book. If you want to walk up the Old Man of Storr don't call John or Matt.

"It is quite a special place for visitors. Everyone goes there but it's not for us.", explains Matt.

"What we do is go into the hidden niches that are as spectacular – or even better – than the classic spots but you are not going to see another one or two hundred people there. We think we can show a side of Skye that is a little less cliched."

One way of viewing Skye from a vantage point very few people will ever have seen is by joining one of Skye Adventure's "Coasteering" expeditions.



Coasteering was developed as a commercial enterprise in Pembrokeshire in the 1980's. It's all about travelling along a stretch of shoreline by climbing along the cliffs, jumping into the sea and swimming through caves as big as cathedrals or through narrow gaps in the coastal rock. The activity developed in Pembrokeshire because of the small cliffs with very deep water. The North coast of Skye is similar making it an "ideal playground."

Matt says the activity is suitable for mixed ability groups.

"It is ideal for everybody. You can do as little or as much as you want within the realms of safety. Take a family group. The kids may want to jump off everything whereas Mum and Dad may be content swimming along the coast."

Matt and John spent months carrying out recces on potential routes around the North Skye coastline. Their clients are often left wide-eyed in awe of the scenery.

"As guides it's an easy life. We take people into a unique playground with stunning scenery and apart from keeping them safe we don't really need to do anything."

Skye Adventure has also developed alternative bus tours of Skye. Sticking to their mantra of staying off the beaten track they have developed several tours that for obvious reasons they would rather keep to themselves. Suffice to say visitors are guaranteed adventure, spectacular scenery and a distinct lack of other people.



For visitors considering booking with Skye Adventure, May and June tend to be a very busy period on the Cuillin with adventurers seeking to bag a Munro, scale the Inaccessible Pinnacle or traverse the entire Cuillin ridge.

July, August and September are the months when visitors are looking for short adventure trips ranging from half a day through to several days. Matt and John will tailor each adventure to the needs, desires and budgets of individual groups. It doesn't matter what time of year it is, or what the weather is doing there is always an adventure to be had on Skye.

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