

SCOTLAND

HARRIS

February 8 - 15 2025

white shell sand beaches | wild
winter seas | old buildings | island
life | ancient gneiss landforms

7 nights, GBP 2850

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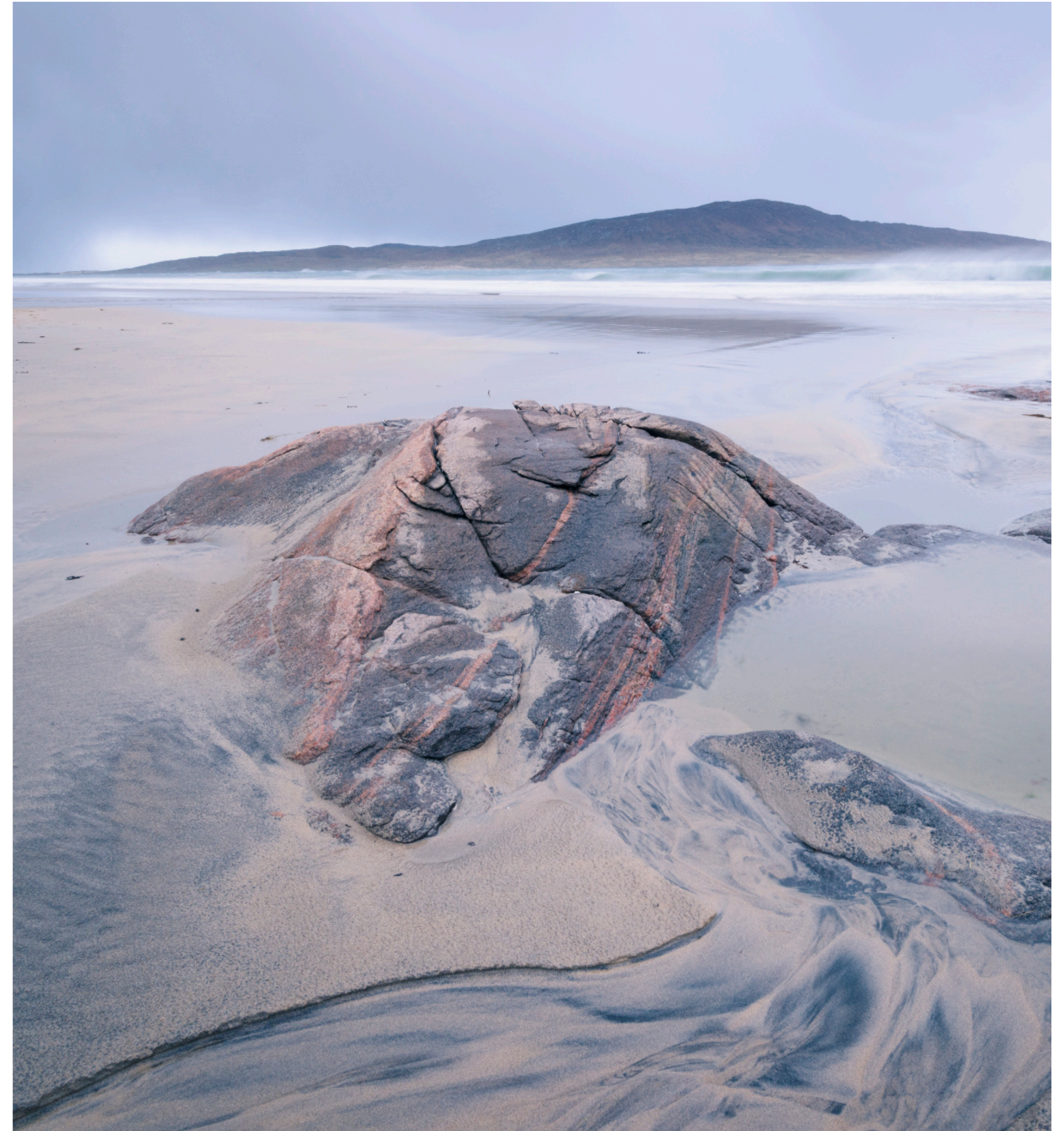
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our formula

FOOD AND PHOTOGRAPHY RETREATS combines a high standard of hospitality with the sharing of professional photographic experience accumulated over 30 years. We create a home-from-home for you in the large comfortable houses we rent for the Retreats, freeing you of the restrictions of hotels. Over the course of the week, this space and our field locations become the settings for learning, sharing and enjoying good food and conversation with like-minded people.

Maybe it helps that we enjoy our work with guests. We take a lot of pleasure in seeing the lights go on in the eyes of someone who realises they have just made something special. Or who has understood a setting properly for the first time. Or whose expression is pure delight as a plate is set down before them.

We enjoy sharing because, in one way or another, it always rewards. We know how ideas go out into the world from our Retreats, grow and develop with other guardians only to return to us later, mature and fully-formed. And how recipes are taken home and meals recreated for the enjoyment of friends and families we will never meet.

We hope you will join us to make some new stories together.



Charlotte and Niall Benvie, your hosts and directors of Food and Photography Retreats Ltd.

the location



THE THREE-BILLION-YEAR-OLD LEWISIAN GNEISS that comprises South Harris is some of the most ancient rock in the world, resisting erosion as if its pacing itself for eternity. When they were formed, modern-day Harris and neighbouring Lewis were part of the North American landmass, Laurentia, and the same rocks comprise the Canadian Shield and parts of Greenland today. It was only when Laurentia began to break up 65 million years ago that this area became isolated, eventually to join up with today's Scotland.

This truly is a land apart, and it feels like it. The island is best known for its exceptional white sand beaches where, on a sunny day, the shallows appear turquoise and inviting, like those of a tropical beach. But one toe in the water is enough to remind us that this is the north Atlantic and that the next day it might hurl a storm at these same gentle beaches and less quiescent rocky shores which smash the surges into spray. Away from the beguiling beaches, bare rock extends for mile after mile, with the flimsiest cover of vegetation. It is intractable, appalling, yet mesmerising. In spite of this, people have made a mark on these islands, creating ancient monoliths such as Callanish on Lewis and taking whatever meagre bounty the land provides. Evidence of hardship abounds, though, which is hardly surprising in a landscape that resists every attempt to penetrate it by plough or by pile. Thwarted hopes echo throughout the history of the island and are present in the landscape in the abandoned houses and decaying cars. There is a poignancy, as well as a beauty, to Harris that provides us with rich veins to mine as photographers.







FREED FROM HOTEL SCHEDULES, we are at liberty to plan our meals around our photography, to take advantage of the best light. The days are quite short at this time of year, giving us time for proper review and discussion sessions, covering the narrative and aesthetic aspects of our work, as well as the technical.

The locations we plan to visit include:

- Luskentyre - the famous beach, views to Taranasay and sand patterns
- Borvemore, Traigh Lar, Traigh Rosamol, Seilebost, Horgabost and Huishnish beaches
- Scalpay - old buildings and structures
- Callanish standing stones on Lewis
- Mangersta - sea stacks on Lewis
- South and east Harris - gneiss landscape and old buildings

Good food, prepared by Charlotte, is at the heart of our Retreats, from breakfast through to after-dinner chocolate. You can see some sample menus at the end of this document. She uses local ingredients, when they are available, in meals that are delicious and imaginative without being fussy. And that goes for her vegetarian dishes too. Food allergies and intolerances are catered for sensitively when notified in advance on the booking form. Expect to eat well, for breakfast, lunch and dinner.

OUR ACCOMMODATION is in [Claddach House](#) (owned by Borge Estate) and [Grimisdale](#), Leverburgh; Harris is notoriously short of the size of house we prefer to rent for Retreats - so we've rented two. They are just 10 minutes apart, modern and very well-appointed. We will eat and review work together in the one where the majority of the guests are sleeping.



Price: GBP 2850 per person

starts: 17:00, 8th February 2025, finishes 09:00, 15th February 2025

What's included:

- 7 nights' accommodation at Cladach House and Grimisdale House
- All meals
- Transfer from and to Calmac Ferry Terminal at Tarbert, Harris
- Transportation during the Retreat
- Tuition from Niall

What's not included:

- Your travel to and from Tarbert, from home
- Alcoholic drinks
- Travel insurance
- Any entry admissions.

To book

Visit www.foodandphotographyretreats.com, click on the MAKE A RESERVATION button in the top right, scroll down to read our *Terms and Conditions*, then complete and send us the booking form below. At that point will you be invoiced for the deposit, amounting to 19% of the total. The balance is due 5 weeks before departure.

Travelling to and from the Retreat

You can drive directly to the Calmac Ferry Terminal at Uig on the Isle of Skye and park your car there. Travelling as a foot passenger on the Calmac ferry, you will be met by us at the Tarbert ferry terminal on Harris. Alternatively, you can fly from Glasgow to Stornoway with Loganair and take a scheduled bus to Tarbert. It's important to understand that travel is sometimes disrupted by bad weather in the Outer Hebrides - at any time of year - and to plan accordingly. We will discuss your travel plans at the time of booking and offer what assistance we can.

Daily routine

Whatever we are shooting, it tends to look better in the early morning or late afternoon when low-angled light shows relief and colours better. With dawn at around 08:15 and dusk around 17:04, the days outside aren't unduly long.

The plan for the next day is published at dinner, outlining the weather forecast, the locations and ideas for the next day, drive times, walking distances, where and when we'll eat and what gear you'll probably need. Experience has taught that it's more productive, and satisfactory for you, to have a plan to follow than make it up as we go along. The dinner menu is published at breakfast time so that you have a chance to flag up if there is something planned that you really can't manage to eat. We've learned over the years, too, just how much guests value

being able to discuss the work they are creating, with Niall and the other guests and to this end, we'd urge you to bring a laptop. When we hold processing tutorials, bandwidth-permitting, we do so over Zoom, with everyone in the one room. This makes it much easier for Niall to help you as you share your screen with everyone—and for you to see the techniques he applies in his post-production work. Some evenings, conditions permitting, we can head back out after dinner to shoot the starry skies.

Safety during the Retreat

We take your safety seriously and make it our priority when planning the daily routine, especially in regards to the state of the sea, the road conditions and wind strength and direction on cliff tops. We ask you to respect our judgement in respect of managing risk. We lend guests two way radios for ease of communication.

COVID

As of early 2024, most parts of the world (including Europe, North America and Australasia) are judged to be in a "post-pandemic" phase and we reflect the more relaxed attitudes towards the virus of this phase. Nevertheless, should any problematic new variants emerge, we will ask guests to respect new measures introduced to limit its spread and may ask for evidence of fresh vaccinations.

Insurance

It is a requirement of booking that guests provide evidence of personal travel insurance to cover cancellation and curtailment, medical and emergency expenses (including repatriation), personal accident, injury and death in addition to loss of/damage to luggage and possessions, personal possessions and flight cancellations/delays. Please read our Terms and Conditions before booking.

Passport and visa requirements

A passport valid for at least six months beyond the length of the stay is required for non-UK visitors. UK citizens should check on the latest requirements for travelling to the EU, including the possibility of an international driving permit.

Weather and clothing

Prepare for changeable weather that will be cold and probably wet between times. And usually windy. You should have: proper walking boots; waterproof trousers; a waterproof shell; a down jacket or fleeces; and thermals. A windproof hat and fold-down mitt/ liners combination will keep head and hands warm.

The longest walk we anticipate would be about three miles, but a lot will be on flat on beaches. If you're travelling by car, pack rubber boots. You might not need them but they could be useful. You might want something smarter for the evenings, but

no tiaras, please. Out of respect to the houses's owners, we ask that guests wear slippers or indoor shoes when inside.

Equipment

If you are travelling by air, you may be concerned about carry-on luggage restrictions. The way round this Niall has used for many years is to pack as much gear as you reasonably can into a photographer's waistcoat. This counts as a garment, not hand luggage and you can still take your carry-on allowance in to the cabin. That will just about cover your notebooks, laptop, drives and power cable. With regards to equipment you'll need during the Retreat:

- If possible, please bring a laptop loaded with Adobe Lightroom, Photoshop, Capture One or Affinity Photo. A flash drive is useful for getting the documents we'll give you onto your computer.
- You could use any lens between 16 mm and 500 mm but a macro lens, a mid-range zoom and a moderate wide-angle will get most use.
- We have a spare tripod but would urge you to bring your own.
- Please pack a head torch or hand-held one, for safety and navigation.
- Bring all the chargers, cards, batteries and backup media you need, plus UK power adaptor if you're travelling from abroad.

- A polarising filter and graduated ND's, only if you have them.
- Hand warmers - which help to prolong your battery's life
- A tough plastic bag to put your gear inside on the beach.

About us

After many years leading tours and workshops for other companies at home and abroad we incorporated Food and Photography Retreats Ltd. in 2018. Our offer combines the cultivation of your creativity in attractive locations with great hospitality, conversation and food.

Niall has been a professional photographer, writer designer and guide for 31 years with a massive publication record including seven books and hundreds of articles. He has been involved in founding and running several of the biggest outdoor photographic initiatives of the last 15 years, including Meet Your Neighbours, Wild Wonders of Europe and 2020VISION.

For 28 years, Charlotte combined a career in the Civil Service with freelance catering and hosting roles before coming to work with husband, Niall. Guests value not only her expertise in the kitchen and dining room but her attention to detail and warmth. She has a keen eye for a picture too and can also assist with Lightroom processing. She is a trained chocolatiere.

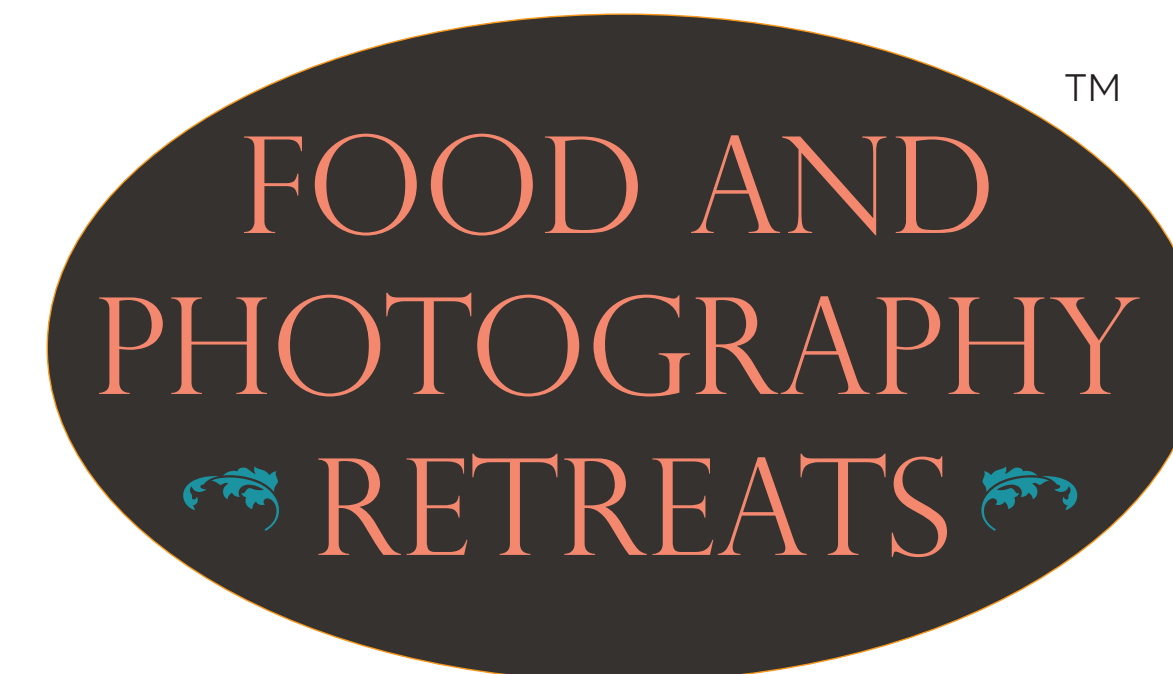
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with the Benvies



**NIALL
BENVIE**
artwork

