

## Secrets are for telling...

*A new internet based business aims to become the definitive Travel Guide for Scotland.*

Ayr, Scotland, March 10<sup>th</sup>, 2007 -- Native Scot, Mike Peddie, and his French partner, Aurelia Raymond-Laruinaz, have just launched Secret Scotland, an exciting new internet based business which offers travel guides 'with a difference'. Their new approach to low budget Scotland tours is aimed specifically at tourists who want to get to grips with Scotland - not just by visiting the main places of interest, but also the lesser-known, hidden-away gems that make up the real Scotland.

"The idea came about as a result of helping friends discover just how much there is to see and enjoy in our small, but unique, nation," says Peddie "this was a step we just had to take. The market place was crying out for a new style of easy to follow tour guide, but, importantly, a tour guide with sufficient flexibility to allow visitors to create really bespoke itineraries."

Appropriately named Secret Scotland, their business aims to take tourists to the many hidden away areas that often get overlooked when touring around Scotland. Peddie continues, "Of course we will help people to see the main attractions in Scotland, but it's a pity that all too often they leave our country without seeing many of the varied and special places tucked away around every corner. We have spent the last two years meticulously researching every aspect of our guides to ensure that, when a tour is selected, a really successful visit to Scotland is likely to ensue. We also believe that our guides are second to none when it comes to offering value for money."

What makes the Secret Scotland Guide so exceptional is the depth of detail it can provide compared to a normal guide. Secret Scotland provide itineraries with all the information a visitor requires along their chosen route to plan in sight-seeing stops, recommended eating places and choice of accommodation. Mike and Aurelia believe they offer the best solution for visitors who don't have time to spend hours on research and who don't want to pay the mark-up charged by package holiday providers.

Traditionally, guides are alphabetical or geographical lists of "what to see and do" and rarely help tourists plan their route and time. Thus many misinformed visitors try to see Inverness, Loch Ness and Skye in a day. Secret Scotland guides are presented in a logical, day-to-day, easy-to-follow sequence of route directions, punctuated with recommendations for sightseeing, including attractions away from the beaten tourist trails. Aurelia is passionate about their new guides, "We pride ourselves on our 'local' knowledge base of Scotland. We really do know where to find the scenic spots, quiet side roads, great pubs and eating places that other guides never mention because they only have space to focus on the major attractions".

Secret Scotland guides, unlike most guides to Scotland, don't hesitate to warn visitors of the tourist-traps – the over-priced, boring or kitsch is exposed. Whilst traveling around the country, Mike made a point of chatting with tourists to find out exactly what they wanted. A recurring theme was frustration with tour guides recommending disappointing, expensive sites. Urquhart Castle was a frequent example "Some French tourists were telling me how misled they felt by their guidebook. They had spent £6.50 each to get entry to Urquhart Castle and discovered that the Castle was mainly a ruin. In our guides, we advise people to take a picture from the car park!"

To make holiday-planning even easier, each Secret Scotland tour itinerary can be bought with an accompanying List of Recommended Accommodation. Mike and Aurelia have so far visited and selected over 150 bed and breakfasts, guesthouses and small hotels across the country. Aurelia says: "There are many great places to stay throughout Scotland, but we only recommend places that we know exude charm, hospitality and value, - in other words, our recommendations should add to the enjoyment and experience of the visitor as well as taking the worry out of 'the unknown lodging' for them".

The essential core of Secret Scotland's business philosophy is unbiased and honest guidance to Scotland's places of merit. Mike says: "We could have made money from advertising, but there are already too many websites that are just lists of B&B's which have paid to advertise. We want people to realise that Secret Scotland offers completely unbiased and honest recommendations. We aim to be the equivalent of a "Michelin Guide" for an affordable Scottish holiday".

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