



IN CONVERSATION WITH...

ANDY TIBBETTS

Owner of Doune Bay Lodge and
Skipper of The Mary Doune





The Knoydart peninsula is known as one of Scotland's most remote locations, can you give us a bit of background to the area?

Knoydart has always been a difficult place to reach. It is a part of a sweep of land called Na Garbh Chriochan in Gaelic, which means the rough bounds. Before the days of the Highland Clearances it has been a place

of large, privately-owned estates, but in 1999 the community led Knoydart Foundation was successful in purchasing 17,000 acres and securing it for the future. The community and the land are now thriving - the population is now about 120 (up from 70 before the buyout), the school is well attended and over 1/2 million trees have been planted.

With it being so hard to reach, it won't be as visited as some of the better-known honeypots of Scotland, is it worth the trip?

With no road access, Knoydart is definitely one of the quieter corners of Scotland these days. A more regular ferry service to the main village of Inverie has made access easier for

people, but Doune is still another 7 miles from there ensuring us a secluded and peaceful home.

Knoydart is a large mountainous peninsula so you'll never suffer from crowds or queues here and it is easy to experience real solitude here - a rare commodity in peoples busy lives today.

How did you end up in Knoydart and how does it differ in day to day living?

I've lived in this area for most of my life and here at Doune for 30 years. Life here feels normal to me, but there are obviously differences. Access to Doune is only by sea, so our lives tend to revolve around the weather and the tides. Winters are dark and can be wet and windy, so outdoor working can be slow and when our son was young, the 3 miles of walking over rough hill ground each day to get to school was a bit of a challenge. You need a broad range of skills to live here, but the community spirit is fantastic and there is always someone to help if needed.

The community here must have a great connection to the sea, how important is a healthy marine ecosystem to the people who live here?

Our nearest port of Mallaig was one of Scotland's major fishing ports a few years ago but overfishing and regulation have made it a much quieter place. Environmentally our biggest concerns are overfishing, fish farming and marine plastics. Some of these are local issues, some not, but there are now many local groups active in campaigning on these issues.



The health of our local waters is crucial to what we do, but mostly, it is just the right thing to do.

One of the great things about Doune Bay Lodge is its green policy and focus on local food, can you tell us a little about this ethos?

We are lucky to live in an amazing place and we believe it is right to do our best to safeguard it by embracing a policy of environmental responsibility.

Sourcing as much local produce as possible is not just good for carbon reduction, it means the best in quality and freshness and supports the local economy. We use venison from the hill, fruit and vegetables from our gardens, crab from the bay, prawns from small local fishing boats and fish from local sustainable producers. We now return almost no waste to Mallaig for landfill and all glass and tins go for recycling.

Being remote from the National Grid means that we have a limited power supply. Much as we would love to, we do not have the conditions or terrain here to replace our diesel generators with a renewable resource that could service our guests, but we use it



in the most efficient way possible. Just 12 kilowatts does all our accommodation and the four homes at Doune which when divided up is a very small amount per person. To achieve this we are very careful about power consumption.

We have made our first steps into using renewable energy sources. At Doune Bay Lodge we have installed a solar water heating panel in order to help reduce our gas consumption and we now use micro hydros for power during the wetter winter months.

On this retreat we'll be utilising the Mary Doune to visit various islands, what makes these places so special for a nature lover to visit?

The key word here is variety. The Small Isles of Canna, Rum, Eigg and Muck are particularly special. Each is different from its neighbours

in every way, from their wildlife, landscape, geology, land use and community.

Using Mary Doune allows us to visit any of the islands for a day and in July, many of the seabirds are at their peak. The puffins of Canna, the shearwaters of Rum, the guillemots and razorbills of Muck or the gannets and skuas feeding around Eigg. Being out on the water also means the chance of seeing a whale, dolphins, common and grey seals or sea eagles.

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Explorer retreat on
Knoydart**