

# A romantic return to the Isle of Skye

Carol and Anthony revisit their budget honeymoon-in-a-tent destination in their campervan...

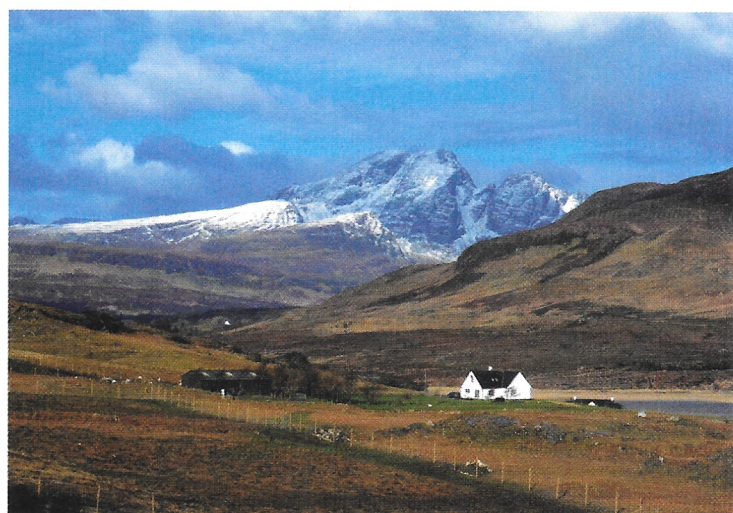
Words and photos by Carol Kubicki



Anthony & Carol  
Campervan fans

Campervan fan and travel writer, Carol, lives near the Lake District with her husband, Anthony. The couple enjoy all things outdoors and exploring the UK and beyond in their blue campervan, called Blue Bus





MAIN The sandy bay at Point of Sleat

ABOVE LEFT TO RIGHT Coire Lagan will always be a special place for us; Blà Bheinn looks stunning in snow

To be honest, I can't remember how the conversation went, but, somehow, I was persuaded to spend our honeymoon camping in a tent on the Isle of Skye along with 14 other people!

We were married in the mid-1980s, have never worried about being conventional and, beyond a cake and rings, there was little traditional about our intimate DIY wedding. All our pennies had been swallowed up with house buying and, on the big day, I was awake at dawn making quiche for lunch. There were no blushing bridesmaids and a good friend drove me to the registry office in his newly washed Vauxhall.

### A moving event

Due to delays in the mysterious conveyance process, the purchase of our house was completed on the eve of our wedding and so we gobbled a slice of quiche, cut the cake and waved farewell from a hired van. Our sticks of furniture were in the back and some joker had strung old trainers to the rear bumper that thudded against the road all 60 miles to our new life. That night, we snuggled up exhausted in our new home, feasting on warm champagne (no fridge) with leftover quiche, surrounded by unopened boxes.

A honeymoon wasn't in the budget but, when the Vauxhall-owning friend offered us a lift to Glenbrittle Campsite on Skye for a week, we grabbed the opportunity for a cheap Scottish holiday. A few days later, we had found the tent, packed the rucksacks and were heading north on a sunny June day.

In the intervening years, we have swapped the tent for a campervan, the campsite has been refurbished and Skye has reached new heights of popularity. It was time to revisit the island and have a more comfortable second honeymoon in our Blue Bus. On the way, we wondered how the campervan would compare to the tent experience and if Skye would be as spectacular as we remembered. Driving across the Skye Bridge, the glorious sunshine and breathtaking views were just the same, but we looked wistfully at the water, feeling nostalgic for the ferry we had to queue for in the 1980s.

The 14 people sharing our honeymoon were a loose merger of mountaineers, walkers and sightseers, all heading for Glenbrittle Campsite nestled below the dramatic rugged Black Cuillin and at the end of an eight-mile-long road. As a car-less honeymoon couple, we relied on the whims of others to see the sights. In our campervan, we had the freedom of our own wheels and we toured Skye for a few days before taking our Blue Bus to our honeymoon

destination, apprehensive that our return wouldn't be the amazing experience I hoped.

Skye is a large island with loads to see and highlights on our recent trip included walking on the Ardnish Peninsula from Broadford, stumbling upon a cake fridge full of goodies in Edinbane, hiking among the strange and fascinating rocks of the Quiraing in the north of the island, enjoying a delicious lunch in Staffin and watching seals at the Point of Sleat, the island's southernmost tip.

A memorable day of sunshine saw us crossing moorland on foot to Borerraig, a cleared coastal village on Loch Eishort. The views of the snowy crags of Blà Bheinn were dramatic and, across the sea, the hills on the Isle of Rum had white tops. We watched spellbound as a golden eagle circled above the sheer black cliffs and the magic continued when I conjured up two otters playing in the loch.

Eventually, we were following the single-track Glen Brittle road, which hasn't changed much over the years, except for the number of cars and campervans. Today, visitors flock here to the Fairy Pools, a series of clear waterfalls and pools from Coire na Creiche but, in the 1980s, these were just another of Skye's many picturesque burns.

Views open out as you reach the campsite that sits between the sheltered bay of black sand and the craggy mountain ridge. At reception, I was disappointed the guy didn't ask if I had stayed here before so that I could say, 'Yes, in 1984!' I looked across the large rambling site while he explained where we could camp and tried to look cool as I paid £32 for one night and calculated we could have enjoyed a three-week-long honeymoon for that much in the 1980s and still had change for beer!

### Modern joys

With the luxury of an on-board loo, we chose a pitch at the furthest corner of the campsite, where we could see the sea and the mountains; in our campervan, chilly night-time treks to the toilets aren't an issue. Our small two-person tent was quickly erected and set up but it can't beat pitching up a campervan. We were soon hugging mugs of tea and using an old photograph to figure out where our group's collection of tents had been pitched back then. Although being able to pop your head through the flap and light the gas under the kettle without leaving your sleeping bag is an awesome part of being in a tent, snapping on the electric kettle and grabbing milk from the fridge is easier.

Taking a stroll around Glenbrittle Campsite, we noticed there is now a café – something we would have been



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**GLENBRITTLÉ CAMPSITE** Carboist, Isle of Skye IV47 8TA [dunvegancastle.com](https://www.dunvegancastle.com)

**CAMPING SKYE** Pairc Nan Craobh, Broadford, Isle of Skye IV49 9DF [campingskye.com](https://www.campingskye.com)

**SKYE CAMPING AND CARAVANNING CLUB CAMPSITE** Loch, Greshornish, Edinbane, Isle of Skye IV51 9PS [campingandcaravanningclub.co.uk](https://www.campingandcaravanningclub.co.uk)

grateful for in 1984. When the wind blew, our Campingaz stove would struggle to bring water to boiling point, even with makeshift shelters. I will never forget the kind campervan owner who made us a brew one afternoon after noticing we were proving a watched kettle never boils.

As it went dark, we put the heating on and were soon snug with our towels airing on their washroom hooks. We reminisced about life under canvas when it wasn't just the cold that was unpleasant but also living with the fusty smell of damp towels festering in the back of the tent.

Of course, we had no mobile phones back in the 1980s and, in many ways, Glenbrittle continues to live in the past. Don't expect any phone reception or WiFi. A stay here is an opportunity to experiment with being truly offline with just an old-fashioned payphone to keep you connected!

Getting dressed the next morning, we remembered what a palaver this was in our tent and how headroom is an underappreciated aspect of campervan ownership. Our backpacking tent forced us to live at ground level. There was only room to get dressed in turns and we would pull

#### ABOVE CLOCKWISE

The craggy landscape of the Quiraing; The harbour and castle in Kyleakin; Pulling on the boots for a walk

#### BELOW LEFT TO

**RIGHT** Camping at Glenbrittle Campsite in 1984; We took a boat trip from Skye in 1984

on trousers while lying flat. Cooking was accomplished sitting down and, after a week of camping, it would take me a while to adjust to standing at the stove rather than being cross-legged on an insulated mat!

### A touch of romance

In 1984, we scrounged lifts from friends and visited Dunvegan Castle, the Quiraing and took a boat trip. By far the most romantic day of our unconventional honeymoon was when we escaped the group and hiked up to Coire Lagan from the campsite. This was a walk we wanted to revisit and, on a fine afternoon, we recalled those newlyweds as we climbed the steep path and scrambled by the cascading burn, stopping to enjoy the views over the islands. Coire Lagan is an impressive Cuillin feature with a lochan circled by rounded slabs of black rock and precipitous stone chutes that plunge from the jagged peaks. We took photographs and relaxed on the boulders toasting wedded bliss with a flask of hot chocolate. Returning to a place with special memories isn't always a good idea but

Coire Lagan lived up to my expectations. It is still an unforgettable spot and an awesome place to linger with someone you love.

Having a tent was a cheap way to holiday in the mountains in our youth but, nowadays, I wouldn't willingly leave my comfortable vanlife and return to tentlife. And yet there are things that never change. Heading home from Scotland, my heart was heavy and my head packed with new memories of stunning wildlife and magnificent scenery. We will be back!

