



Highland Dress

How to Care for your Kilt

A good kilt is a major investment so it makes sense to look after it so that it might last a generation or two!

Storage

Ideally, use a clamp hanger (sold for men's trousers or ladies' skirts). Just fold your kilt in half at the waist (with pleats to the outside) and then fold it again and secure to the hanger. Don't cram it into a wardrobe but ensure it hangs free and uncrushed. If you have a garment bag, then use that to protect the kilt from dust, moths etc.

Travelling

If wearing a kilt when travelling, always smooth the pleats out under your bottom as you sit down. It is a gesture that you'll have seen women do with their skirts or dresses and it is particularly important with the kilt. Don't worry about it looking effeminate — do it with vigour and panache and no one will think a thing of it!

Getting into a car sometimes causes problems for newly kilted drivers. One of the best — and least revealing — methods is to sit down on the car seat (having smoothed the pleats out as suggested above) but with your legs out of the car. Then, with one hand holding the outboard side of the kilt, pivot round, bringing your legs into the car. The pleats should lie flat for the whole journey.

If you find that method awkward, then with a hand on the steering wheel, put one leg into the car and then sweep the pleats out flat with the free arm as you sit down and bring the second leg on board — all in one smooth and debonair manner!

Packing

For long distances when you're unable to travel with the garments on a hanger, fasten the kilt buckles and then lay the kilt flat on a flat surface with the apron uppermost. Starting from the left, roll the pleats towards the right (fringe) side. Slip the rolled kilt into an old nylon stocking (or one leg of a pair of tights) with the foot cut off. Place the sausage thus formed into your suitcase and, even if you have to bend the top a little bit, it will not come to any harm. When you remove the kilt, you will have no problems with it creasing and it should be ready to wear. The remainder of the outfit should be packed as a normal dinner suit. Do remember to pack your skean dhu in your hold luggage if travelling by air — if it is in hand baggage or in your sock, you are liable to be incarcerated!

If for any reason you do not happen to have a footless lady's stocking to hand or an old pair of tights, just fasten the kilt buckles and lay the kilt flat in the bottom of your suitcase. As long as you hang it up immediately at journey's end, it should be fine.

Cleaning

When faced with any light spot-cleaning jobs, Ruthven Milne of Piob Mhor and his kilt makers always use a proprietary baby wipe (those sweet-smelling ones for cleaning baby bots!). Ideally, if you spill anything on your kilt, clean it immediately. Since you are unlikely to have any baby wipes at the party, just use a clean

cloth and warm or cold water and take the worst off. If cleaning a stubborn stain later, use the baby wipes or, failing that, a proprietary spot cleaner — but do test it on the inside of the kilt apron first, to make sure the cleaning does not leave a bigger mark than was there in the first place.

Some kilt makers advocate not sending your kilt to a dry cleaner — they say the process takes the stuffing out of it and if they press it, you may end up with disastrous results. Ruthven Milne recommends the dry cleaning route but suggests you check out your dry cleaner first — make sure they know what they are doing. **Warning:** do not send your kilt to the cleaners without first basting the pleats: basting is putting a tacking stitch right round the bottom of the kilt to hold each pleat in place. Make sure each pleat is the same width all the way down!

Pressing

As the pleats don't lose all of their press when they're cleaned, it's only necessary to identify the edge of each pleat and then press on that same line. Use a steam iron with a pressing cloth.