

Abhainn Dearg – the Lewis whisky



The Red River, that offers its waters to make this Lewis whisky, is the English translation of Abhainn Dearg, pronounced Aveen Jarræk. We love that they've used the Gaelic and it's located in my favourite place in Scotland, overlooking the Uig Sands on the Isle of Lewis. This is a newer distillery and the first (legal anyway) one on Lewis in nearly 200 years. It was opened in 2008 by Mark Tayburn (Marko),

On the ferry over to Lewis that year we were discussing our upcoming visit and were trying to figure out how to pronounce it. The young man sitting next to us happens to know the owner and the distillery so gave us free lessons. Although we're getting much better at recognizing Gaelic words, we're still pretty adept at butchering pronunciations.

As we hadn't visited on our previous trips to Lewis it was high on our list of must dos. Upon our arrival at the visitor centre we found a very charming tasting room. We waited until the host returned and then took what is a brief but very informative tour. Their barley is locally supplied as Marko believes in the "field to bottle" premise. Everything at the distillery is either used or recycled, including providing feed for their cattle from the leftover grain. And, there was an adorable kitten that followed us and loved being picked up and cuddled.

We tried both the Spirit of Lewis and the Single Malt. Our personal preference was the Single Malt but we were only able to buy wee bottles as we'd have been over our customs limit otherwise. It is a very pale colour and I find the nose to be mild and very faintly peated. To me there's a sense of apple on the palate and a bit of a burnt toffee finish. Because we love their logo so much we bought both Glencairns and tshirts on our visit.

We look forward to our upcoming visits and tasting the future of Adhainn Dearg's whisky. And on a personal note, it's very cool that there's a distillery so close to the home of the Uig MacAulays.