01 / ORIGINS & PEOPLE

Caol Ila Distillery

The sound, the smoke and the whisky between them.

Caol Ila takes its name from the Sound of Islay. Its cove linked water, sea transport and whisky making from 1846. The malt's role in Johnnie Walker blends and its own single-malt range tell two connected parts of the story. [1,2,13]

Established: 1846. **Founder:** Hector Henderson. **Home:** Port Askaig, Islay. **Family:** Diageo, with a longstanding Johnnie Walker blending connection. [2,12-14]



A name shaped by the sea

Henderson chose a rocky coastal site with fresh water and access by boat. Caol Ila grew through changing owners and rebuilding. The modern production buildings largely date to 1972-74, when two stills became six. The surviving warehouse links the older site with the visitor experience opened in 2022. A founding date, a rebuilding and a visitor opening describe different events. [1-4,11]

People behind the place

The 2018 Diageo film credits distiller Alan McGee. Sam Hale explained the spirit style during a 2023 visit; the official 2024 festival page names Eva Cumming as manager. These are dated roles. Persabus artists gave the local Striding Man statue its Islay interpretation. [4,9,13,16]

Watercolors are symbolic interpretations, not exact buildings or documentary portraits.

02 / HISTORY & PLACES

The island, the industry and the sea



1846-1897 The coastal distillery grows, expands in 1879 and appears in John Walker & Sons stock records by 1897. [2]

1927-1957 DCL and Scottish Malt Distillers take control; wartime restrictions interrupt production, while Pibroch boats connect the island and mainland. [2,3]

1972-2002 The rebuilding adds six stills. Diageo forms in 1997; the owner dates annual unpeated production to 1999 and the familiar 12-year-old arrives in 2002. [1-3,12]

2010-2022 The regular 25-year-old joins the range; further production investment precedes the Four Corners visitor transformation. [3,7,11,13]

2024-2026 Festival editions explore Ruby Port wood and then former Don Julio tequila casks, each within a specific release. [9,10]

Read the place by its role

Port Askaig: the distillery’s Islay home. **Loch nam Ban:** the named freshwater source. **Port Ellen:** the malt supply connection, separate from its own distillery. **The warehouse:** a surviving older building adapted for visitors. **The mainland:** a destination for whisky and blending, without proving every individual cask’s storage journey. [1,2,11,14,20]

The complete website preserves all 16 individually illustrated milestones and full chronology qualifications.

03 / WHISKY, STORIES & SOURCES

Smoke is one part of the story

Single Malt Scotch Whisky comes from one distillery using malted barley and copper pot stills. Peat smoke enters during malt drying. Caol Ila also makes an unpeated style. Its location on Islay does not require every release to taste equally smoky. [1,15,18,19]



The 12-,18- and 25-year-olds offer different views of maturation. Distillers Edition 2022 adds Moscatel-seasoned wood; festival editions keep their own ages and finishes. Ambrosial Feast explores an unpeated branch. [5-10,15]

The boats carried more than whisky. The Pibroch linked supplies and casks with the small necessities of island life. The sea view makes that working history easier to understand. A modern visitor centre now tells the distillery and blending stories together, while local artists give its global emblem an island voice. [2,11,16]

Research notes & linked sources

Research checked October 19,2026. Early ownership, wartime closure and some release dates differ between histories. The website preserves those conflicts. Leadership credits and product specifications remain dated; current stock and travel availability are not promised.

[1] Official brand
[2] 2022 press pack
[3] Historical reference
[4] 2023 firsthand visit
[5] 12 Year Old
[6] 18 Year Old
[7] 25 Year Old
[8] 2022 Distillers Edition
[9] 2024 festival edition
[10] 2026 issuer release
[11] 2022 reopening PR
[12] Diageo history
[13] 2018 production film
[14] Official visitor page
[15] Ambrosial Feast
[16] Persabus artists
[17] Festival context
[18] Single malt category
[19] Production FAQs
[20] Port Ellen maltings