

In brief

Total Distance: 185 miles (297km)

Distance by Islands:

1 Watersay and Barra: 13 miles (21km)
Category: Easy

Sound of Barra Ferry Journey Time: 40 mins

2 Eriskay and South Uist: 32 miles (50km)
Category: Easy

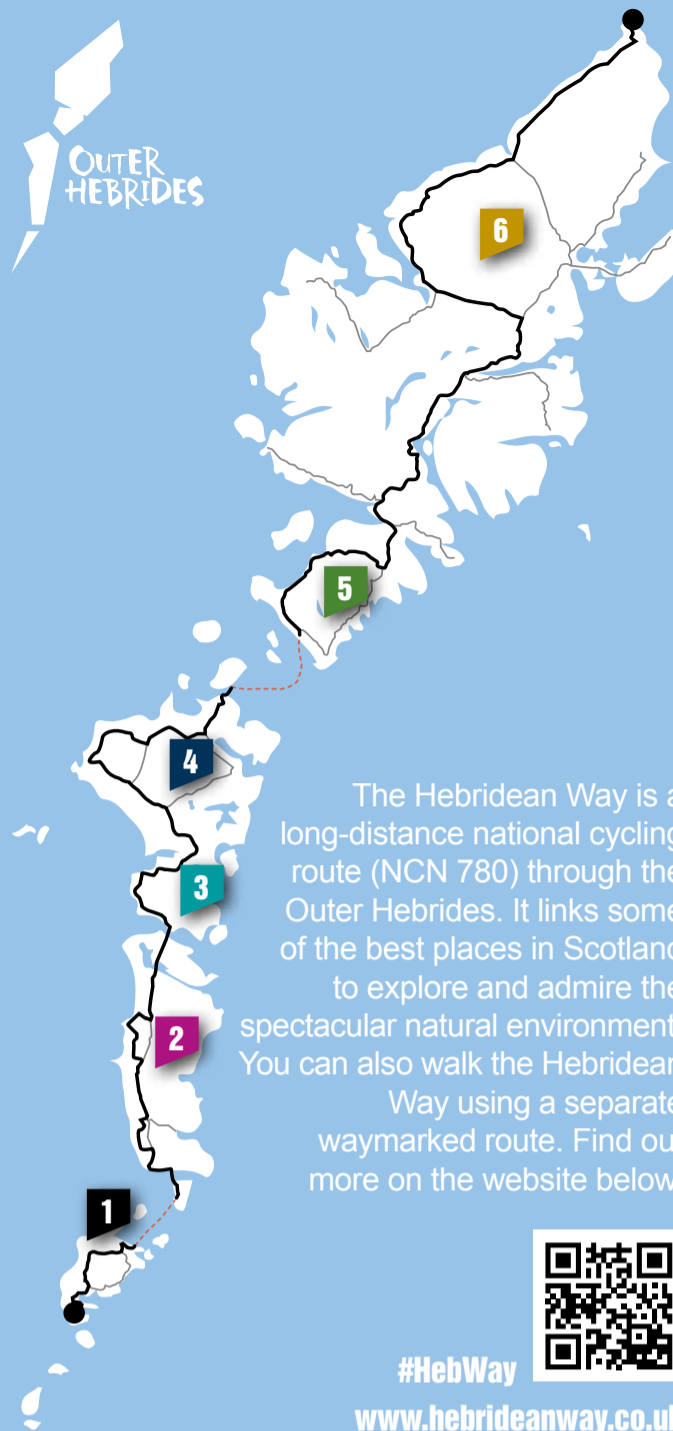
3 Benbecula and Grimsay: 13 miles (21km)
Category: Easy

4 North Uist and Berneray: 32 miles (51km)
Category: Easy/Moderate

Sound of Harris Ferry Journey Time: 1 hour

5 Harris: 33 miles (54km)
Category: Moderate/Difficult

6 Lewis: 62 miles (100km)
Category: Moderate/Difficult



The Hebridean Way is a long-distance national cycling route (NCN 780) through the Outer Hebrides. It links some of the best places in Scotland to explore and admire the spectacular natural environment. You can also walk the Hebridean Way using a separate waymarked route. Find out more on the website below.



#HebWay

www.hebrideanway.co.uk
www.visitouterhebrides.co.uk/apps



Cycling the Hebridean Way



185 Miles
10 Islands
6 Causeways
2 Ferries

The Route

The remote and spectacular islands of the Outer Hebrides have always been attractive to cyclists seeking quiet roads and a different pace of life. As you wind your way past stunning white shell beaches here at the very edge of Europe, stopping occasionally to visit an antiquity or watch eagles soar overhead, you will lose all track of time.

Using ferries and causeways to hop between islands, this popular on-road route begins on the Island of Watersay at the southern tip of the archipelago and ends 185 miles (297km) later at the Butt of Lewis lighthouse. Following the route is easy as it is signposted as NCN Route 780 all the way. You might want to consult a map to help you plan detours to historic sites and other attractions.

You will encounter awe-inspiring scenery, that subtly changes along the route – one minute riding above turquoise seas and passing flower-strewn machair, then the next, heading inland through rugged hills formed from some of the oldest rock in the world.

There is absolutely no hurry. This is a journey to savour so take it steady using our suggested schedule to plan your ride and make the most of the time you have available.

Suggested schedules

It's a ride to relish rather than rush and our long summer evenings when it's light until late mean you can spend all day in the saddle. However, most people will have some time constraints, so here is a suggested schedule that can be comfortably ridden in a week. Remember you may need to adapt your plans to reach your overnight accommodation and to fit in with ferry timetables on the two crossings. To enable you to easily plan your cycle, we've split the route into 6 sections as listed A - F below. Each of these sections cover a typical day's cycle. You could always incorporate some rest days and explore what our islands have to offer. For places to stay, and things to see and do, check out our destination website:

www.visitouterhebrides.co.uk

Suggested schedule

Section	Distance Miles (km)	Riding Time at 6mph/10kph	Ferry Crossing Time
A Watersay to Daliburgh	26 (41)	4hrs 15mins	40mins
B Daliburgh to Clachan	37 (59)	6hrs	
C Clachan to Berneray	27 (44)	4hrs 30mins	
D Berneray to Tarbert	21 (34)	3hrs 30mins	1 hr
E Tarbert to Callanish	38 (61)	6hrs 15mins	
F Callanish to the Butt of Lewis	36 (58)	6hrs	

Courteous and Safe Cycling

Most of the vehicles that pass you on your bike are going about their daily business, so we would ask you to respect these few guidelines to keep everyone safe and moving with ease:

- There are some roads that are single track with passing places. Please cycle in single file and keep to the left.
- Use passing places to allow cars behind to overtake and to allow cars coming towards you to keep moving.
- Do not block passing places - leave them clear to allow traffic to keep flowing.
- If you require to leave your bicycle, leave it off road and not in the way of other road users.

Planning your ride

What type of bike?

Any will do as long as it is comfortable, road-worthy and equipped to carry your luggage safely. If you plan to use a mountain bike, fitting lower profile urban tyres will give less rolling resistance and a quieter ride.

Which direction should I ride?

As the prevailing wind is from the south-west, it is best to ride the route northwards from Watersay to Lewis so you have greater chance of having the wind behind you.

Does anyone offer it as a guided tour?

If you search the web, you will find a couple of holiday operators that have the Hebridean Way on their summer schedule. See our website for further information:

www.hebrideanway.co.uk

Can I ride it alone?

Yes, but if you leave your vehicle on the mainland, you will need to plan how you are going to get here and back. If you have time you could ride back, or alternatively you could use public transport. See our website for further information:

www.hebrideanway.co.uk



Start point, Watersay



HEBRIDEAN WAY



South Harris

6 Lewis

Antiquities in Lewis can be found at every turn. First up are the famous Callanish Stones with the nearby visitor centre, which also has a shop and café. Just along the road is Dun Carloway - a broch which is thought to date from the last century BC.

About a mile off-route, you can experience what it was like to live and work in a Hebridean blackhouse at Gearrannan - a style of building which had survived for centuries but almost disappeared in the last half of the 20th century.

Brothers David and Thomas Stevenson - of the famous "Lighthouse Stevensons" family - built the red-brick lighthouse that marks the end of the route in 1862. Thomas's son, Robert Louis Stevenson, wrote the novel 'Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde'.



Laxay, South Lewis

Malacleit, North Uist



4 North Uist and Berneray

The route goes right past the RSPB Reserve at Balranald which is renowned for its work in re-establishing the corncrake - a notoriously secretive bird, but you might just be lucky enough to catch a glimpse! On a clear day, you will have a good chance of seeing the famous archipelago of St Kilda in the distance - a World Heritage Site - from further up the road, near Scolpaig Tower.

Berneray is rich in wildlife and history and with a three mile long sweep of white sand on the west coast, it is an easy island to fall in love with.

The ferry crossing offers a great opportunity to see seals basking on the skerries as well as many different types of sea duck, diver and other birds.

5 Harris

You will definitely want to linger a while along the west side of South Harris, both to enjoy the magnificent views out across to Taransay and to drop down onto one of the many sandy beaches for a paddle.

Tarbert is the main port on Harris with plenty of places to enjoy local food, buy world famous Harris Tweed and visit the distillery.

Climbing through the hills of North Harris takes some effort but it's soon over - the views are superb and there is an exhilarating descent back down to sea level. It is also a good place to look for golden eagles and even white-tailed eagles as they hang and soar along the steep cliffs of Loch Seaforth.



Rum from South Uist

2 Eriskay and South Uist

On the magical island of Eriskay, there is a good community shop and the Am Politician, a pub named after the SS Politician which ran aground offshore in 1941. The road climbs above the beach, where Bonnie Prince Charlie landed on his way to his disastrous defeat at Culloden in the 1745 Rebellion, then passes through the village and over the causeway to South Uist.

The terrain is largely moorland and lochs with hills to the east. The route then heads west towards the machair of the Atlantic coast, before re-joining the main road at Daliburgh. Further north, the route again loops out onto the machair. Back on the main road, the route leads you north through the watery landscape of South Uist.



Bagh Mor, Grimsay



3 Benbecula and Grimsay

In Gaelic, Benbecula means the 'mountain of the ford'. Once, crossing to the Uists meant fording the dangerous stretches of sands at low tide, but today the islands are connected by a series of causeways.

Soon after the turning for Balivanich is a museum, housed within the local school. You then reach the machair and the stunning beach at Culla Bay. From Balivanich, the route meets the main road once more.



Sound of Barra Ferry

1 Vatersay and Barra

Before you start your cycle, and if it is clear day, a short walk up the hill beyond the burial ground near the start of the route gives fine views of the now uninhabited Bishops Isles - the most southerly point of the Outer Hebrides.

Barra and Vatersay have everything you could wish for - high hills, white sandy beaches, machair, deeply incut sea lochs and a castle - all neatly contained within 27 square miles.

In fine weather, the 40 minute ferry ride across the Sound of Barra gives good views of the offshore islands including Eilean Leathan immediately to the south of Eriskay where the ruin of Caisteal an Reubadair - the home of a notorious pirate, MacNeil - is clearly visible.

Leaflet produced by



The Hebridean Way Cycling Route was funded by

