

In brief

Category: Easy

Map Reference: OS Landranger Map 22 (Benbecula & South Uist) : OS Explorer Map 453 (Benbecula & South Uist)

Start and End Grid Reference:
NF 744 274

Walking Distance: 8 km / 5 miles

Time: 2 hours with stops



Flora MacDonald

Our walking and cycling routes are part of a series of self-guided trails through the Outer Hebrides. For more information scan here.



www.visitouterhebrides.co.uk



Our islands offer great opportunities to explore the outdoors, with walks providing you with the chance to get close to nature, history and heritage of our islands or just to get out, enjoy the fresh air and get fit.

Choose coastal walks around the Outer Hebrides or opt for wildlife walks, such as hiking through the nature reserves or walks to spot eagles, deer and other exciting island inhabitants.

History lovers can choose to walk the Bonnie Prince Charlie trail in Uist whole or part, while a selection of hiking trails take in historic sites and monuments providing ample points of interest along the way.

Whether you are looking for leisurely strolls along island beaches, or challenging hikes through rugged mountain terrain, walking on our islands gives you a chance to really connect with the outdoors and keep fit at the same time.



For more information and to download other walking routes, visit:

www.visitouterhebrides.co.uk

Outdoor Safety

Staying safe whilst walking is mostly a matter of common sense:

- Check the weather forecast before you set out.
- Take appropriate clothing – this walk covers some rough, wet ground, so wear your boots. A coat is almost always advisable.
- Take extra care as some of this walk is along steep cliffs. This walk is not for windy days!
- Carry water and a bite to eat.
- Always tell someone where you are going.

Scottish Outdoor Access Code

In Scotland we have some of the best access laws in the world – we have the right to walk on most land provided we behave responsibly and respect the rights of others. Full information on access rights and responsibilities can be found at

www.outdooraccess-scotland.com

If you keep to the following guidelines you won't go far wrong:

- Do not disturb livestock or wildlife.
- Keep dogs under control, especially at lambing time.
- Leave gates as you found them.
- Take all your litter home.

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Flora MacDonald's Birthplace



The Route

This is a great walk, which is well worth a full day out with a picnic lunch on the amazing silver sand beach and then finishing with cake and a cup of tea at the café at the Kildonan Museum.

The walk takes in the Flora Macdonald birthplace monument, quiet roads through crofting communities, the outstanding machair of South Uist and a secluded beach. In spring and summer, you will see a multitude of flowers, and probably see and hear many birds too. Many of these have become rare breeders in much of Britain.

The Kildonan Museum

1 Park at the Kildonan Museum on the east side of the A865. This has a fascinating collection of exhibits and recreations of rooms from different houses and buildings that give a compelling series of pictures of island life. It holds a collection of items about the island collected by a local parish priest, Father John Morrison, during the 1950s and 60s, and the carved Clanranald Stone from the

Teampull Mor complex at Howmore. There are also toilets, a café and a shop with local crafts.

From the museum, turn left and walk down the main road to the sign pointing to 'Flora Macdonald's Birthplace'. Here you turn right before a house and walk a short way across a field to a memorial inside some low walls. This is the township of Airigh-mhuilinn (Milton), an old settlement with houses on drier land among boggy hollows. Dry ridges nearby were used for cultivating oats and potatoes.

Flora's Birthplace



Flora MacDonald

2 Flora Macdonald is most famous for her role in helping Bonnie Prince Charlie escape from South Uist "over the sea to Skye". However, this was just one incident in her amazing life. Following the Prince's escape to France, she was arrested, taken to London and imprisoned in the Tower. Her story and courage led to her being pardoned. She married and later emigrated to North Carolina where her husband fought for the British in the American Revolutionary War. He was captured by the

American rebels and she returned to Britain on a ship that was attacked by privateers. She returned to Skye, where her husband eventually joined her and where she ended her years.

Despite the signs, there is uncertainty that Flora Macdonald was born in this house, though possibly she lived here as a child. The monument was placed here by Clan Donald to commemorate her life. It is a marvellous viewpoint, looking out over the low fields on all sides.

Sanderlings



Crofting Communities

3 Return to the main road and continue south. Take the first turning on the right and follow this all the way to the sea. After a mile or so, the surfaced road finishes, becoming a track. The loch to your left - Loch Eilean an Staor - has a small island in it. This is a crannog - an artificial island - with a small building, on it. You are now

walking through machair fields. Machair (a Gaelic word meaning fertile plain) is formed by the sand from the beach, the remains of crushed up shells, being blown inland onto the naturally peaty soils. In spring and summer the machair boasts a multitude of flowers: daisies, primroses, buttercups, bedstraws, trefoil, vetches and more. Exactly which flowers are in bloom depend upon the time of year and the individual location.

Road Through Crofts



The Coast: Birds

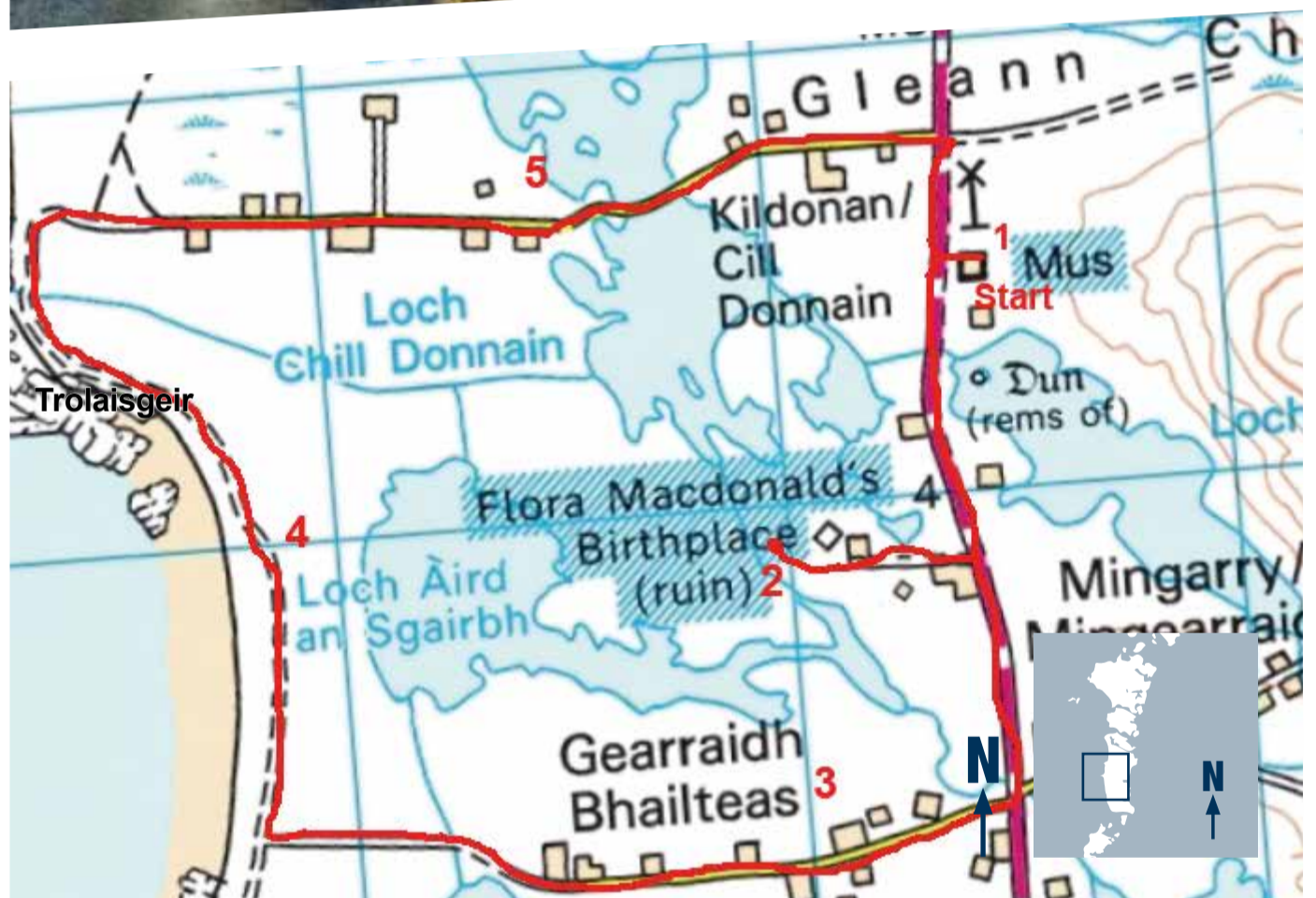
4 When you get to the coast, you have a choice - You can go on the beach or on the path, known as the Machair Way. If you go on to the beach, turn right and aim for a gate in the distance before the shore curves round. Here, you rejoin the Machair Way. The glorious white sandy beach is just part of the seemingly endless strand stretching up the West coast. Out to sea, in spring or

summer, you may see gannets or terns diving for fish. Along the shoreline, you may see waders: sanderling running back and forth at the edge of the tide or larger, orange-billed oystercatchers. At dawn or dusk you may see an otter. If you go on the machair path, just follow the track north. Continue round the corner as it rises gently. This spot, Trolaisgeir, is a good viewpoint over bays to North and South. It is a great place for a picnic.

Chill Donnain

4 Before the path descends, take the track to the right, heading back inland. As well as being good for flowers, the machair has a rich variety of insects, including rare bumblebees. Large numbers of wading birds, oystercatchers, dunlin, redshank and lapwing breed here. In spring or summer, you may hear skylarks singing, and perhaps the jangling key calls of the corn bunting. There are corn crakes in this area too. Once common across the whole

of Britain, changing farming practices mean that they now breed almost exclusively in the Outer Hebrides. You are unlikely to see one, but you may hear it: it sounds like a piece of paper rubbed along a comb. This noise gives rise to its Latin name: *Crex crex*. The path soon becomes a surfaced road. It runs across a causeway between the two parts of Loch Chill Donnain. Go to the end of the road and turn right on the main road to return to the museum.



The Beach

"The glorious white sandy beach is just part of the seemingly endless strand stretching up the West coast."



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