

In brief

Category: Moderate to Difficult

Map Reference: OS Landranger Map 8 (Stornoway and North Lewis); OS Explorer Map 460 (North Lewis)

Start and End Grid Reference:
NB 201 429

Walking Distance: 9 km / 5.5 miles

Time: 3 - 4 hours



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



The Outer Hebrides offer great opportunities to explore the outdoors and walking provides you with the chance to get close to the nature, history and heritage of our islands or just to get out and enjoy the fresh air.

There are lots of different types of walks to choose from including coastal walks and wildlife walks. History lovers can choose – for example – to walk the Bonnie Prince Charlie trail in Uist, while a selection of hiking trails take in historic sites and monuments providing ample points of interest.

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 – these walks may cover some rough, wet ground, so wear your boots. A jacket is always advisable.
- Take extra care as some of these walks are along steep cliffs. This walk is not for windy days!
- Carry water and a bite to eat.
- Always tell someone where you are going and when you expect to be back.
- Always bring a compass and map with you.

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.

“Most people drive right up to the popular Blackhouse Village at Gearrannan, but this excellent coastal walk offers a fascinating and much more dramatic approach.”



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The walk is not signposted and there are no waymarkers. Indeed, for most of the way there is no path at all, but don't let that put you off. If you are happy walking on rough ground, you are unlikely to go wrong – should you get lost, just follow the coastline in either direction and you'll end up back at a road. An Ordnance Survey map is essential for this walk.

Note: this walk follows the edge of high sea cliffs – please take care. It is not suitable on windy days!

Shelter from the Storm

1 Start at the junction of the Gerrarannan and Borghastan roads, just beyond the wonderful Blue Pig Studio. Set off along the small road to Borghastan, following it as it winds its way above some croft land. As the road bends round to the west, Carloway pier and harbour come in to view – and what a harbour it is – the sinuous inlet of Loch Carloway providing a wonderfully sheltered

anchorage, a rare thing indeed in this part of Lewis.

Continue on through a stock gate at the end of the road and follow the obvious rough track for a few hundred metres. Keep a sharp lookout for the first cairn – this unassuming pile of stones is an important marker, and indicates where you need to follow a faint, old path branching off down to the left. Follow this as it weaves cleverly down through a long rocky outcrop, then pass through the stone dyke (wall).

Aird Laimisiadair



The Cleared Village

2 You are now entering the old abandoned township of Laimisiadair. Once a thriving settlement, in 1796 this was one of the first of many Lewis villages to fall victim to the Highland Clearances. People were cleared off the land and replaced with a sheep farm which provided more rent for the landowner. The ruins you can see today mainly relate to the sheep farm, though some of the original stone houses are still visible higher up the hillside.

Once beyond the village there are no paths, but the walking is mostly straightforward along obvious sheep tracks that meander through the low growing heather. In May and early June the grass is carpeted with attractive pale blue flowers. This is spring squill, a speciality of the coastal heath that fringes Lewis's Atlantic coastline.

As you continue towards the headland, you may be fortunate enough to spot the distinctive V – shaped wake of an otter, which can sometimes be seen swimming amongst the many sea stacks hereabouts.

Aird Laimisiadair



To the Lighthouse

3 As you near the headland, leave the shore and make your way up a small hill to the modern lighthouse at Aird Laimisiadair. This a great place for a lunch break – the views here are tremendous. Immediately off-shore is Craigeam – a lush, green island offering tasty grazing to a few hardy sheep. Across Loch Roag the silver sands of Little Bernera can be seen, with the rocky dome of Seana Chnoc standing sentinel far out to the west.

You should take a while to admire the view to the north-east too, as this is where you are heading next. Again, there are no real paths, it is just a case of carefully making your way along the coastline and picking a safe line down some of the steeper grassy slopes. Aim to keep reasonably close to the cliffs – the walking here is usually drier and easier, and the views of the precipitous rock faces and boulder strewn bays are spectacular.

At the Lighthouse - Liamisaidair



Wild Inhabitants

4 Although uninhabited today, this section of coastline was heavily cultivated in the past. Every grassy hollow is lined with lazybeds – old cultivation ridges – and the remains of old dwellings, enclosures, sheep dips and even ancient forts are reminders of more populous times. The walking is excellent, despite the lack of paths, but there are lots of small climbs and descents so give yourself plenty of time for this more difficult section of the walk.

Today the only residents are birds and the occasional wandering sheep and cattle. In early summer you may see a whooper swan in Loch Rinn na Geodha. These shy, yellow billed swans rest here before continuing their perilous flight northwards to their arctic breeding grounds in Iceland and Greenland. You may also hear the frantic piping call of oystercatchers – striking black and white wading birds which nest along the loch shore. If you do, move swiftly on, crossing the shingle between the loch and the sea and leave the birds in peace. Tread carefully here.

The Blackhouse Village

5 Keep close to the shore and you will eventually round a corner to a spectacular view of the Blackhouse Village. Nestled beneath the hillside, on a small strip of fertile land at the head of a sheltered bay, the reason for the village's location is suddenly obvious. The view from a distance is like looking back into the Iron Age – it is astonishing to realise that the last cottage here was inhabited until 1974.

Walk across the boulder beach into the village itself. Note how some of the blackhouses have curved walls and thatch that does not overhang the walls – both are design features that date from ancient times and which help the houses cope with violent winter storms.

A visit to the small museum is recommended (tickets are available from the gift shop at the top of the hill) and coffee and cake in the village teashop will set you up for the easy 15 minute stroll back along the road to your car.



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Liamisaidair



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