

In brief

Category: Easy to Moderate

Map Reference: OS Landranger Map 31 (Barra and South Uist) and OS Explorer Map 452 (Barra and Vatersay)

Start and End Grid Reference: NF64913

Walking Distance: 4 km / 2.5 miles

Time: 2 - 3 hours with stops



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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Marker Cairn Looking towards the beach at Tangasdal



The Route

This is an established trail with way-marker posts. It has a combination of cultural and natural heritage which gives a great insight to the island's past and present.

It has also some truly spectacular scenery. The walk begins and ends at the gate across the road from the telephone kiosk at Tangasdale - approximately 1.7 miles / 2.75km west from Castlebay on the A888. There is an area near the gate which is suitable for parking.

The walk leads out as far as Dun Ban, an Iron Age fortification approximately 2,000 years old. Other historical and archaeological sites to be seen are a 15th century tower, an 18th century settlement area and a 4,000 year old Bronze Age burial cairn.

Machair

1 One of the most interesting aspects of this walk is the diversity of the terrain. It begins on machair land, which is very fertile ground. Crossing the stream by the loch, the ground changes to rough moorland, which is very acidic and provides very little nutrients for vegetation. The change in plant species is instant. On the machair during the summer months, there is an abundance of flowers including clovers,

vetches and red bartsia. Once across the stream, the plant species change and there are sundews (common and oblong-leafed) and butterworts (common and pale). These are insectivorous plants which take their nutrients from the insects they manage to capture on their sticky leaves. Another plant that survives in this poor environment is lousewort which is semi-parasitic and attaches itself to the roots of surrounding grasses to draw nutrients from them.

Looking North



MacLeod's Tower

2 Once through the gate follow the marker posts leading to Loch Tangasdale. There are marker posts leading all the way to Dun Ban. On the right, shortly after entering the field, there are the remains of a bunker dating back to the 2nd World War. This is all that is left of a military camp that was here during the war. The personnel were responsible for the radar station situated on Grean Head. There was a chain of such stations through-out the

Hebrides. Their task was to look out for enemy submarine and help protect the Atlantic convoys. These stations were linked to RAF Coastal Command based in Stornoway and Tiree.

Continuing down to the loch you go through a second gate. Once in the next field, a clear view of the loch is obtained with Ben Tangaval towering above. On the loch you can also see 'MacLeod's Tower'. This was built in the early 15th century on top of an earlier structure, possible an Iron Age crannog.

MacNeil's Settlement



Old Settlement

3 There is a stile across the fence and a footbridge leading over the previously mentioned stream.

Once over the stream, approximately 300m on, you will arrive at the remains of an old settlement. There are several structures here and this is where 'Roderick the Dove,' the then MacNeil of Barra, settled after he abandoned Kisimul Castle in 1748. The castle had become uninhabitable by then and was almost totally destroyed by a fire in 1795. The castle was restored in the mid 20th century.

Looking north, in the distance is Ben Mhor in South Uist. The largest headland is Grean Head with the modern communication mast situated where the radar

station once was. Nearer is Borve headland, with the cemetery visible. Part of the wall of the cemetery is the remains of another Iron Age Dun (fort).

The sandy beach is Halaman Bay and the small loch below is Loch na Doirlinn.

The walk now leads out to a cairn. Cairns were often built by local fishermen as navigational aids when fishing near rocks. Looking southwards from the cairn, Dun Ban is clearly visible on the rocky headland.

Moving slightly inland to avoid the cliffs, the marker posts will lead you to the stile at a boundary fence. It is a clear walk to Dun Ban.

Walling at Dun Ban



Dun Ban

4 Built around 2,000 years ago, this Iron Age fortification is a combination of a promontory dun and a built structure. Some duns were built on easily defended headlands and these are known as promontory duns. Some were more built structures like Broch towers. Dun Ban appears to be a combination of both, with a defensive wall across the headland and a built tower-like

structure behind. Over the years, a lot of the stone-wall has been removed for other building works, such as boundary walls.

The change in terrain to rocky coast also sees a change in plant species. There is thrift, sea campion and roseroot to be seen clinging onto the cliffs.

You will also see fulmars nesting on the cliffs and shags gathered on the rocks.

The Way Back

5 From the Dun retrace your steps back to post 15. The route branches here, giving a choice of returning by the original path or an alternative route via the beach.

Via the Beach

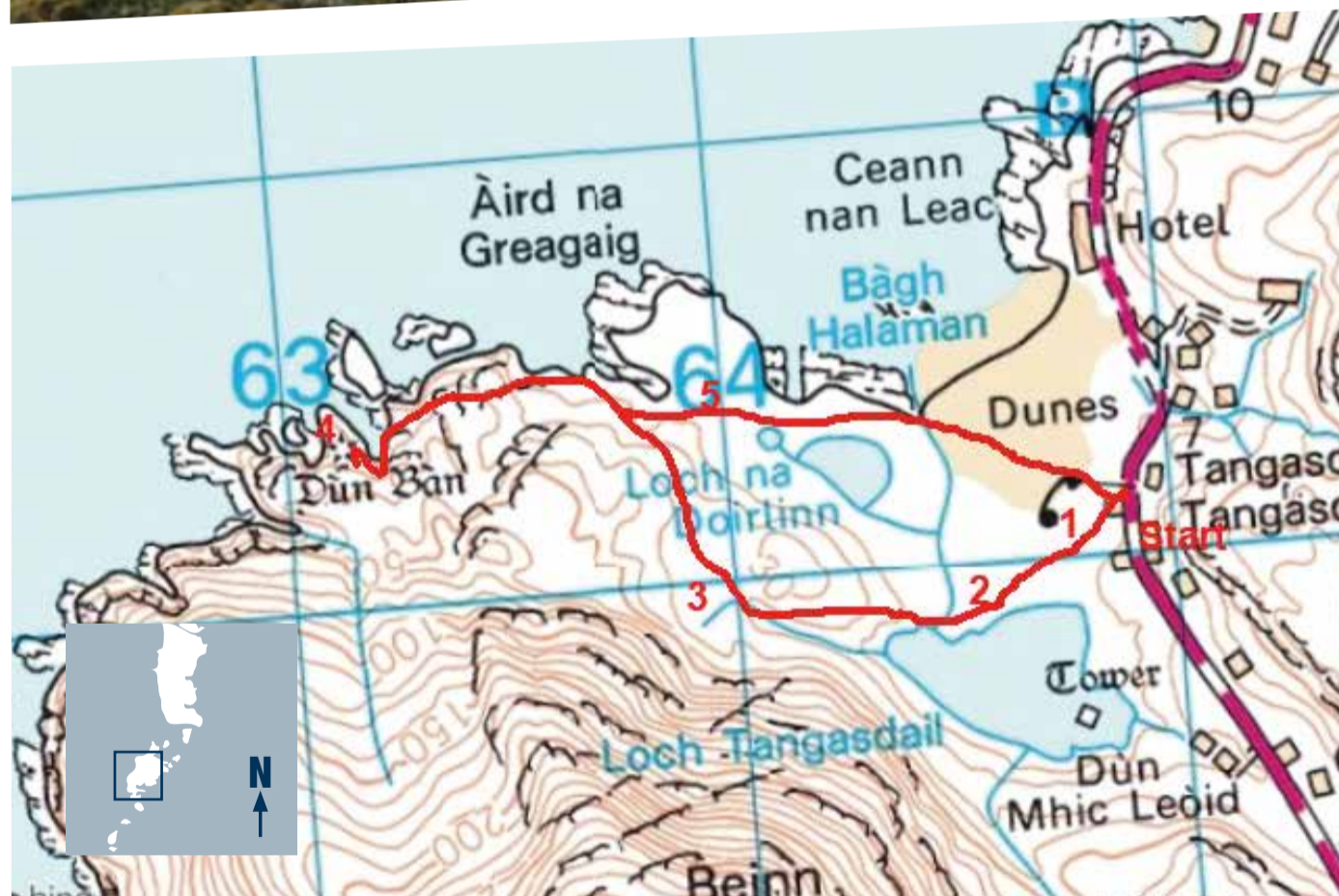
Slightly downhill and to the right from the marker post, is the remains of a Bronze Age burial cairn. This is approximately 4,000 years old.

At the bottom of the hill is a pebbly beach. It was here that

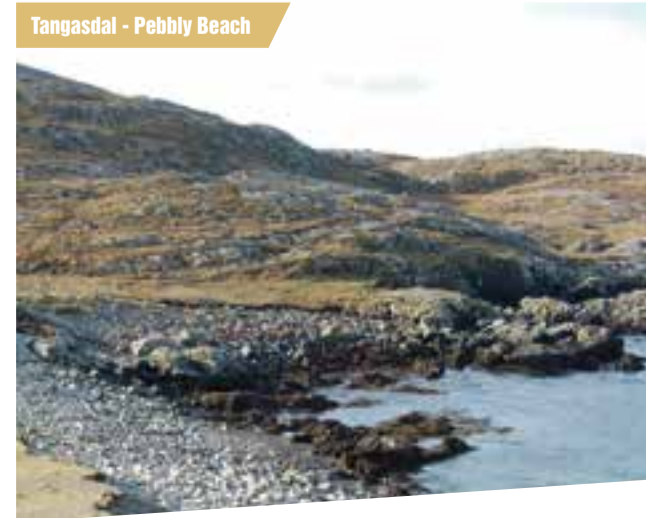
during the war a lifeboat from a torpedoed ship landed. One of the crew was from Barra, but unfortunately he had died the night before they came ashore.

From here, the walk passes Loch na Doirlinn which usually has a number of ducks and swans on it. You then arrive at the beach. There is a stream to be crossed which can become quite wide after very heavy rain. From here it is a straight walk back to the beginning of the trail over the beach and dunes.

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Tangasdal - Pebbly Beach



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