

In brief

Category: Easy / Moderate

Map Reference: OS Landranger Map 14 (Tarbert & Loch Seaforth); OS Explorer Map 457 (South East Lewis)

Start and End Grid Reference:
NB 381 177

Cycling Distance: 24 km / 15 miles

Time: 2 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
www.visitouterhebrides.co.uk/apps



9 **Cromore & Calbost** Cycling Route

Cycling is a great way to discover our islands and enjoy the outdoors. With routes to suit all ages and abilities, and minimal traffic on many island roads, cycling can be as leisurely or as challenging as you choose.

If you don't own a bike, a number of establishments offer bike hire – check out www.visitouterhebrides.co.uk for more details

South Lewis



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 have to leave your bicycle, leave it off road and not in the way of other road users.

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Golden Eagle



You can also explore the islands by following the Hebridean Way Walking and Cycling Routes

www.hebrideanway.co.uk

The Route

The Pairc area of south east Lewis is one of the island's most attractive, yet least visited areas.

This rolling landscape of small, rocky hills interspersed with countless freshwater lochs also contains a number of fine little villages.

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One Island, Two Languages

1 The route starts at the junction of the B8060 at the turn off to Cromor (Cromore). If you are travelling by car, there is a parking area just before the turn-off. From the junction, head south along the B8060 towards the villages of Grabhair (Gravir) and Leumrabhagh (Lemreway). You may have noticed that villages on the islands often have both Gaelic and English names.

Modern road signs are entirely in Gaelic but some older signs still use the English village names.

Soon you will come to an exhilarating, swooping descent into the little settlement of Grabhair. Once a thriving fishing village, Grabhair lies at the head of Loch Odhairn, one of Lewis's most sheltered sea lochs. It is still an important centre for the district, containing a primary school, doctor's surgery, church and fire station.

Lemreway



Golden Eagle



Calbost

3 Soon you will arrive at the small village of Calbost. Today it is a quiet place – few people live here and many of the houses you see are holiday homes. However, in the early 1900s this was a crowded township, home to 200 people, with as many as 6 families having to share a single croft. As late as 1931, there were 32 families living here. The fate of Calbost mirrors that of the whole Pairc district, which saw

its population decline by almost two thirds during the 20th Century.

There were many reasons for this dramatic loss of population, but overcrowding, the decline of the important herring industry and a lack of alternative local employment all played a large role. More enticing opportunities in Stornoway, mainland Scotland and beyond persuaded many people to leave and seek their fortunes elsewhere.

Pairc



Eagle Country

4 Continue north and pass two freshwater lochs. A dip in the hills behind the second loch gives great views across the sea to the hills of mainland Scotland. Hidden beneath this dip is Mol nam Braithrean ("the shingle beach of the brothers") named after two brothers who were found drowned on the shore and buried here many years ago.

Look out for eagles soaring above the skyline as you

cycle along – both golden and white tailed (or sea) eagles are often seen in the area. To tell them apart look at their profile whilst soaring: golden eagles hold their wings in a shallow V-shape, whilst a sea eagle is often compared to "a flying plank of wood"!

A short way further on is the turn off for the small settlement of Marbhig (Marvig), once a lively fishing and crofting village.

Cromor

5 Head back to the main road and press on through a fine landscape of rugged little hills and freshwater lochs. Eventually you will reach a road junction. Here you can turn left and return to the start, but if you have the energy it is well worth continuing for another 2 kilometres to visit the attractive little village of Cromor (Cromore). Like all the other settlements visited on this ride there are no facilities for visitors, but its beautiful setting more than compensates.

In times past, Cromor's sheltered bay provided a safe anchorage for a large fleet of fishing boats. They would sail out to net herring in the rich waters of Loch Erisort or head out into the Minch – the notoriously rough stretch of sea between Lewis and the mainland – where they would set long baited lines to catch cod, ling and eels.

Return the way you came, turning right at the road junction to head back to the start.

"Soon you will come to an exhilarating, swooping descent into the little settlement of Grabhair."

The Long Climb

2 At the bottom of the hill you have a choice. For a longer ride you can carry straight on to the end of the road at Leumrabhagh and enjoy spectacular views over to the Shiant Islands and Skye before heading back to this junction. This option adds an extra 6 miles onto the route. Alternatively, turn left here (signposted "Grabhair") and follow the road along the north shore of Loch Odhairn.

There are usually fish farm cages near the mouth of this sea loch. The Outer Hebrides is a major producer of Scotland's farmed salmon and the industry provides vital employment in remote areas like Grabhair. After a couple of kilometres, the road heads inland and climbs steeply. This hill is a bit of a monster, so there's no shame in getting off and pushing. The effort is worthwhile however, as the road soon levels off to give beautiful cycling along the shore of Loch nam Faoileag (the loch of the seagulls).



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"Soon you will come to an exhilarating, swooping descent into the little settlement of Grabhair."

White-tailed Sea Eagle

