

In brief

Category: Moderate

Map Reference: OS Landranger Map 18 (Sound of Harris): OS Explorer Map 454 (North Uist & Berneray)

Start and End Grid Reference:
NF 819 756

Walking Distance: 11 km / 7 miles

Time: 3 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



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 – 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.

“Explore a strangely-shaped peninsula where sea and sand meet under a magic, open sky. Follow shorelines and paths through flower-studded fields to an old cemetery for another island. Climb a hill for fabulous views, and return via untrodden coves and ancient archaeological sites that rank as some of the most important in the Outer Hebrides.”

Stunning Beaches



The Route

Explore a strangely-shaped peninsula where sea and sand meet under a magic, open sky. Follow shorelines and paths through flower-studded fields to an old cemetery for another island.

Climb a hill for fabulous views, and return via untrodden coves and ancient archaeological sites that rank as some of the most important in the Outer Hebrides. Along the way, you'll barely see a soul. You will feel as though you are the only folk in the world, though history will surround you, and who knows what birds you will chance upon.

The Inland Sea

1 Park at the picnic area along the minor road that leaves the A865 at Greinetobht. Follow the track, crossing the burn on stepping-stones (or go left a little way to find the bridge). Continue round the vast beach-bowl expanse of Traigh Ear. Depending on the tide, you could venture out onto the sands, or keep to the track around the edge of

the fields. Far out is the strange spit of Corran Aird a Mhorain, a broken series of dunes enclosing the other side of the Traigh Ear bowl like a breakwater. Wading birds may fill the air with their calls. Above the fields, there may be skylarks, and perhaps the jangling key calls of corn buntings. Aim for the corner where the sand spit leaves the mainland. Pass through the broken dunes leaving the inland sea behind.

The Cemetery



The Cemetery

2 Once through the dunes, the beach becomes rockier after a while: it's easier to take the track through the machair fields. These sandy soils, formed from shell fragments blown inland, are lime-rich and boast a riot of colourful flowers in summer. The tracks wander, but keep the sea to your right and you won't go far wrong. Look out across the now deeper waters and you may see

gannets or terns diving for fish. Raptors may surprise you as they hunt among the dunes. The track leads to the cemetery of the Macleans of Boreray, the island directly north-west of here. The large tomb is that of John Maclean, the last laird on the island, who was buried in 1821. It's worth investigating the lichen covered stub-toothed old stones (and more modern toppled ones), pondering past lives on now almost deserted islands.



To the Trig Point!

3 It's time to climb the hill: just head up from the cemetery. Even though it is only 40 metres high, it feels like a sharp tug up to the trig point. From the top, the view on a clear day is fantastic - across to the distant hills of Harris and the islands in the Sound, round to curving Berneray and back to North Uist. The seas will be different colours and textures in every

direction. Below, to the north, there's a boggy area and low rock platforms where geese and ducks gather and feed. In June, there's a splash of yellow iris. Below to the south-east and south-west, white sandy beaches. The peninsula you have been walking on is a tombolo, a feature where an island (where you are standing now) is linked to the mainland (where you started) by deposited sand.

Peace and Quiet



Dunes & Beaches

4 Drag yourself away from the view and descend to the south. Go down, then up and down, and find a path through the dunes. The coves here are fascinating: you may find otter tracks (five toes) and see many birds along the shorelines. On a sunny day, this can be the place to linger or enjoy a picnic lunch.

First there's one cove with a beach to die for, and then another. But remember that sand dunes are fragile, mobile environments. Rising sea levels and increasingly stormy weather threaten the dunes and machair. Cross the first beach (Traigh Udal) and pick up a grassy track heading inland. After about 300 metres, you will come across some prominent mounds.

Wheelhouses & Other Buildings

5 These are the archaeological sites of the Udal, once a major medieval settlement. Excavations on the two main mounds from the 1960s to the 1990s by the late Iain Crawford revealed successive layers in the larger mound: houses overwhelmed by sand-blows in the 1690s, Viking enclosures (perhaps a fort) and turf buildings. Lower still were older, Pictish houses, sometimes called "jelly-baby" houses from their shape. On the smaller mound a succession of four Iron Age

wheelhouses were found, so-called after their resemblance to spoked wheels. Close-by on the headland were also found Neolithic and Bronze Age remains – the former predating the fragile, sandy Machair environment which adds so much to the area's unique identity.

Follow the track towards Rubha Bellis, taking the left fork. Maybe visit the perfect long curve of Traigh Iar beach, before taking the main track across the fields. It cuts inland between two fences to cross the peninsula back towards Traigh Ear. Cross the burn to return to the car park.



“Aim for the corner where the sand spit leaves the mainland. Pass through the broken dunes leaving the inland sea behind.”

Machair Pansies



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