

In brief

Category: Moderate walk

Map Reference: OS Landranger 18 and Pathfinder 116 (NF88 / 98)

Walking Distance: Approx 12km / 7.5 miles

Time: Allow 5 - 6 hours to complete the full circuit



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 the Bonnie Prince Charlie trail walks in Uist, 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 and cycling 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
- Wear appropriate clothing and footwear
- Always tell your accommodation owners what time you expect to arrive
- Always bring a map and compass with you – and know how to use them
- Take bus timetables and phone numbers for local taxis in case you have problems on the walk or return www.visitouterhebrides.co.uk/visitor-info
- Ticks are often found in the heather. Dress appropriately to avoid them hitching a lift! Cover your arms and make sure your trousers are tucked into your socks and check yourself after walking. Further advice can be found at: www.nhs.uk/Conditions/Lyme-disease
- Similarly, midges are prevalent at certain times of year. Wear repellent and they will be less likely to bother you!

Scottish Outdoor Access Code

Scotland has some of the best access laws in the world - you have the right to walk on most land, provided you 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
- Park your car without blocking access for other vehicles.

“For a small island, Berneray has a rich history and its natural habitats support a varied and abundant wildlife.”

Berneray sunrise



Explore...

This stunning circular walk takes in views from Beinn a'Chlaidh, Loch a' Bhaigh where you may spot common seals, Macleod's Gunnery at Baile, the Old Telford Church and the beautiful white sands of Traigh Iar (West Beach).

The walk starts and finishes at the Community Hall, Borgh, where car parking is available. To reach the hall from the causeway and ferry terminal, turn right at the main road and then left through Borgh to the end of the road. The route takes you up Beinn a'Claidh and then along the main road to Baile, and along east beach, Tràigh Bheasdaire, up Beinn Shleibhe and back to the community hall along Taigh Iar (west beach).

Beinn a'chlaidh

1 Leave the Community Hall, go through a gate on your right and follow the way markers up Beinn a' Claidh (hill of the graveyard) to the standing stone at Cladh Maolorithe. On this island of wells, Tobar Leathad Ullaraidh (the well on the slope) was renowned for its pure water and the Pabbay folk sailed over to Berneray to draw water from this well, which was used for distilling the whisky for which they were famous!

Cladh Maolorithe (the standing stone) stands eight feet in height and dates back

to the Bronze Age about 2000 BC. The present remains mark the site of a later church, possibly 13th century, dedicated to St Maolrubha. A more elusive place to find is Leac an Rìgh (flat stone of the King), a rock ledge lying about 120m south of Cladh Maolorithe. On it is the imprint of a small foot carved into the rock. Possibly Pictish, it is a much later relic than the standing stone and was used to initiate a leader into the kingship.

Way markers will guide you down to the main road where you will turn left along the road.



Baile

3 Follow the road on to Baile and here you will find the oldest surviving building on the island, MacLeod's Gunnery.

The Gunnery dates back to the 16th century and was the seat of the MacLeods of Berneray and the birthplace of Sir Norman MacLeod (1614-1705), the third son of Ruairidh Mor MacLeod of Harris and Dunvegan, who granted the island in life rent to his son. There is an inscription on a marble slab over the door lintel which reads: "Hic natus est illustris ille Normanus MacLeod de Berneray eques auratus" (Here was born Sir Norman Macleod of Berneray

distinguished knight). The Gunnery was a fortified building of two storeys with narrow splayed windows for defence in times of feuding with rival clans, chiefly the MacDonald's. The house was converted into an armoury when Sir Norman moved to a bigger domicile close by, a few stones of which still remain.

The walk continues along Tràigh Bheasdaire (East Beach) with views across the Sound of Harris to the Harris hills. Then follow the road along the machair for 1.3km, go through the gate and follow the way markers along the shore, keeping off the slopes of Beinn Ghainche (Sand Hill).



Beinn Ghainche

4 The Old Established Church of Scotland building stands on a rocky bluff in Lagachella. It was built in 1827, from a standard design by Thomas Telford, but had two entrances, one for the Berneray congregation and the other for the Pabbay folk. In recent years it has been sympathetically converted into a private home.

Beinn Ghainche is green and fertile and on its slope you will see the old cemetery, which was used as a burial site for countless generations.

Once past the fenceline, follow the waymarkers up to the summit of Beinn Shleibhe, where you can enjoy spectacular views over the Sound of Pabbay. Look for St Kilda on the western horizon, just beyond the north tip of Boreray, the island lying out to the west of Berneray. The mountains of mainland Wester Ross can be seen to the east. Descend the hill and then walk for 3.5km along the most breath-taking beach or on the dune above it.

Dunes and machair

5 Tràigh Iar (West Beach) is a magnificent beach almost three miles long. It is a solitary strand, where all that is usually seen of the otter are its tracks in the sand, where ravens and gulls glide above the high dunes and clumps of sea rocket grow in the summer above the high tide line.

Having rounded Rubh' a'Chorrain you walk about half the remaining distance of the beach and then turn inland to strike out in a south easterly

direction across the machair, the undulating land behind the dunes, in the general direction of the Community Hall. Much of this land is flooded in winter and transformed into a network of small lochs.

Turn to the left and follow the way markers for 1km across the machair to Scalabraig where you can see archaeological remains including the enigmatic Chair Stone, some of which may also have Viking associations.

The route returns to the Community Hall.

Harris hills from Berneray



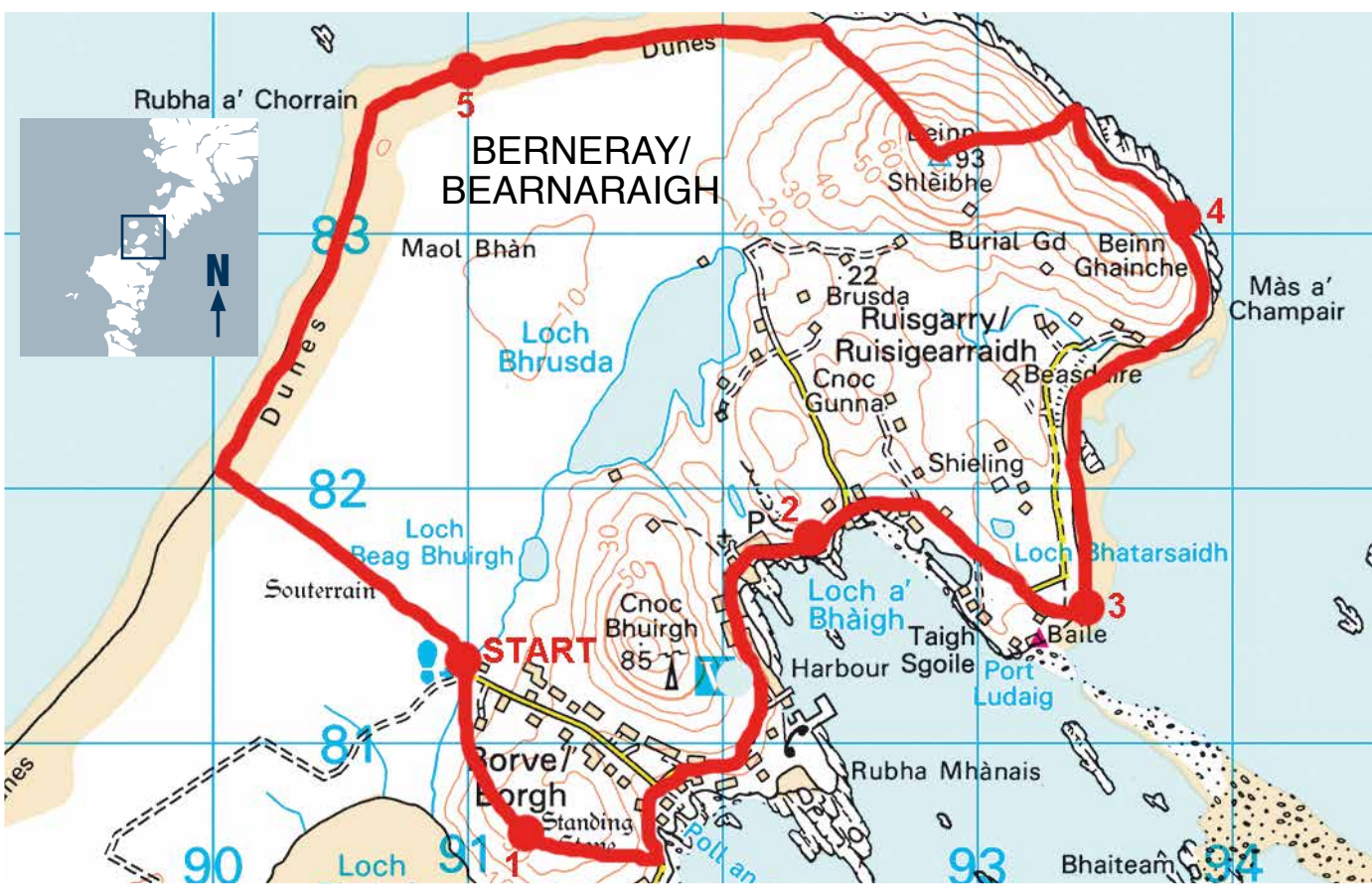
Loch a' bhaigh

2 Walk past the Borgh road-end at Pol an Oir, and on to Rubha Mhanais and in a few hundred yards past the harbour and round Loch a'Bhaigh.

The harbour was completed in 1989. Before that time, boats had to ride at anchor in Loch a'Bhàigh (Bays Loch) which afforded no shelter in rough weather. Beinn Bhuirgh (Borve Hill) rises behind the harbour and the route continues along the road Cul na Beinne (Backhill) and past the Church of

Scotland, built in 1887. The church marks the boundary between the two townships of Borgh and Ruisgearraidh. Keep to the right at Ruisgearraidh and follow the road to Baile.

The skerries in Loch a'Bhàigh are a favourite basking place for common seals and a great place to see them. Passing Quay and Loch Bhatar Seathain, there are a number of restored thatched cottages around Laimrig (landing place). The road to the former primary school (closed in 2005) branches off to the right.



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West Beach