

# In brief

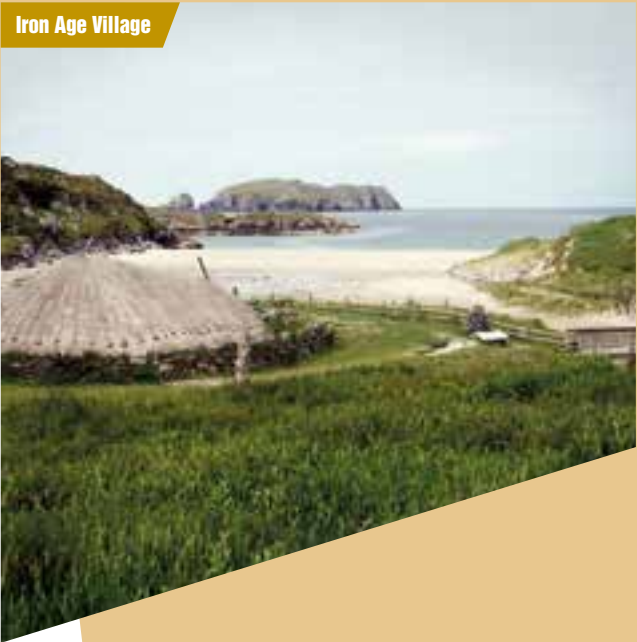
**Category:** Moderate walk

**Walking Distance:** 12km / 7.5 miles

**Time:** Allow 4.5 hours

**Map Reference:** OS Landranger 13 and Pathfinder NB 13 / 23 and NB 14 / 24

Iron Age Village



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](http://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 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 routes, visit:  
[www.visitouterhebrides.co.uk](http://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](http://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](http://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](http://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.

# Explore...

“Today, the people of Bernera earn their livelihoods by fishing, fishfarming, weaving, tourism-related work and commuting to jobs in Stornoway.”



Valasay



From the community centre, follow the Tacleit (Hacklete) road for 1.25km (0.75 mile), until the turn-off to Bhalasaigh (Valasay) on the right. Continue to the end of Bhalasagh road, over the footbridge crossing Tob Bhalasaigh, and then, past the first cottage. As you approach the second house turn right through three gates.

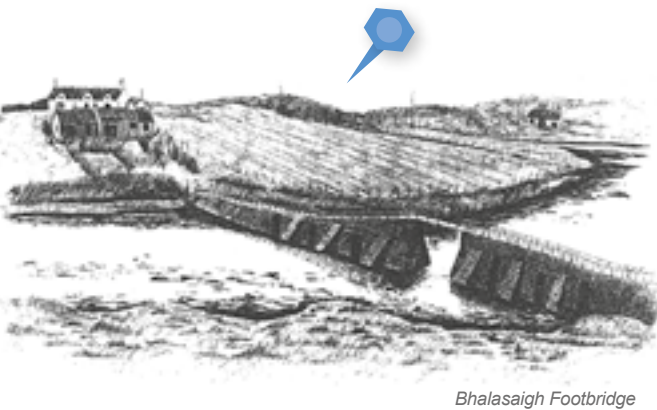
Follow the waymarkers along the west coast of the island (taking care to avoid the geos and sea-caves which are inaccessible from land) to an old track which will lead you towards the village of Tobson.

Turn left when you reach the road at Tobson, then left again. A little further on turn right through the gate and follow the waymarkers up Beinn an Toib, enjoying spectacular views over Loch Roag and the islands to the west. The route continues through a gate in the stone wall, and down through the beautiful valley and deserted village of Bostadh, to one of Lewis's loveliest beaches. The remains of a late Iron Age village can also be seen here, and a reconstructed Iron Age House.

Continue to the single track tarmac road at Bostadh, and follow its winding course for 4.5km along the rocky shore and through croftland and moorland and along the delightful banks of Loch na Muilne. At the crossroads to Tobson, pause to consider the memorial to the Bernera Riots, before returning to the Community Centre at Breacleit. Make sure you visit the local Museum at the centre (open April – September, with small admission charge) and have some refreshments in the Centre Café before you leave.

Alternatively, you can be picked up by the local bus which calls at Bostadh twice a day on request in the summer months. To Contact Stornoway Bus Station on 01851 704327 or enquire at the Community Centre, Breacleit.

Public toilets are available all year round at Bostadh and during the season at the Community Centre.



Bhalasaigh Footbridge

Bhalasaigh

Tob Bhalasaigh has been designated as a priority site of special scientific interest, as a sheltered lagoon with a rare mixture of seaweeds only found in this unusual mix of salt and fresh water.

The footbridge was built in 1898 to serve isolated families on the other side of the Tob. It is still difficult to carry all life's necessities over the bridge, especially in bad weather. Some families

have since built new houses on the near side of the bridge, but the ruins of their deserted dwellings can still be seen.

The shore is a place where Otters are frequently seen, both in the Tob and along the seashore. To the west, the views of Riolf sands and the intervening islands are unforgettable. These small islands were all inhabited until the middle years of the nineteenth century when they were cleared for sheep farms.

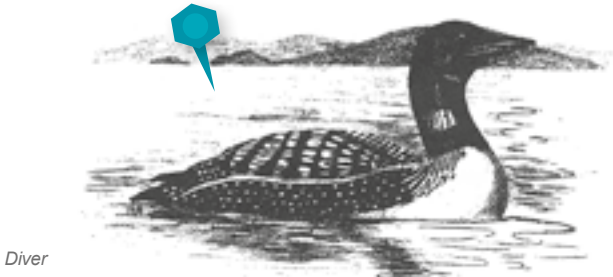
Tobson

As you walk along the Tobson shore you will notice stone ruins. On the shore are boat slips and lobster ponds, which were enclosures where live Lobsters were stored until conditions and prices were at their best. Some were communally owned, some by individual fishermen. Further on above the shore are the remains of curing houses where catches of Ling were dried and salted for export, largely to the Baltic.

Bostadh

The cliffs where Tobson and Bostadh meet is a nesting place for Shags and Cormorants. Fulmars and Gannets can be seen fishing, and Razorbills and Guillemots are plentiful in spring and autumn. The huge flat boulders along the shore were scoured by ice during the last Ice Age, as were the U-shaped valleys that run south-west to north-east throughout Bernera. Around the shore of Loch Sgeal it is common to see Sandpipers, Redshank and Golden Plovers. Ringed Plovers nest at Bostadh. The rare Great Northern Diver is present during the summer nesting season.

The ruined blackhouses through the glen were built at various times from the Middle Ages onwards. The village was finally abandoned in 1878 when the last of the peat, used for fuel, was exhausted. Most families went to nearby Circebost, but some emigrated to Canada.



Diver

Iron Age Village

Bostadh has been inhabited since prehistoric times. In 1993 a severe storm exposed a late Iron Age village which had lain concealed below the machair.

Archaeological excavations revealed a series of interlocking drystone houses which had no windows or chimneys. In each house a long low entrance passage led to a large circular room with an open hearth in the centre, with one or more other rooms opening off it.

The resourceful inhabitants made their living by a little mixed farming, fishing, and

hunting the wild deer and seabirds.

Abundant evidence of their daily life, the crafts they practiced around the fireside and their religious observances were also found. The village may have been first occupied more than 1,500 years ago, at the start of the Pictish period. At the end of its life, a Viking house was built over the ruins of the earlier village.

Remains of three of the houses can be seen on the original site. A life-size reconstruction of one of these remarkable semi-subterranean houses has been built nearby.



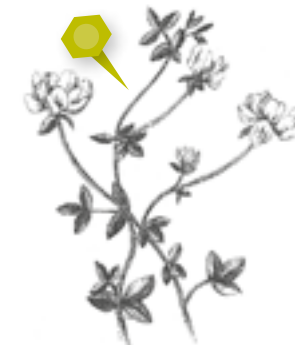
Reconstruction Drawing



Ringed Plover

Crothair – Breacleit

Continue eastwards along the tarmac road from the cemetery. From the top of the rise you can see the Flannan Isles out to sea, and across to the west side of Lewis. At the bottom of the hill is the oldest inhabited house in Bernera, built in 1883. This was part of the village of Crothair which was cleared in 1880 to make way for a sheep farm. Crothair was resettled to make a crofting township in the 1920s.



Birdfoot Trefoil



Yarrow

The road crosses a stream draining from Loch na Muilne (Mill Loch). A little distance downstream are the remains of a ruined water mill. This loch is good for trout fishing and has resident mallard duck. It is also a favourite place for Grey Herons to fish.

The cairn at Tobson crossroads commemorates the Bernera Rioters who won a famous legal battle against the landowner in 1874. Buzzards nest in the rocks to the east of the cairn. On the right hand further on, Highland cattle are pastured on a re-seeded area.

Bernera Community

Bernera and its outlying islands were owned by the late Count Robin de la Lanne Mirrlees, who lived on the island. The population, some 275 (including the three villages on the south side of the bridge), has a strong sense of community.

The community centre is used for ceilidhs, wedding receptions, carpet bowls and many other activities.

