



Cnoc a' Bhùtain Viewpoint

## ENJOY SCOTLAND'S OUTDOORS RESPONSIBLY

Everyone has the right to be on most land and inland water providing that they act responsibly. Your access rights and responsibilities are fully explained in the Scottish Outdoor Access Code.

Whether you're in the outdoors or managing the outdoors, the key things are to:

- Take responsibility for your own actions
- Respect the interests of other people
- Care for the environment

# PATHS AROUND SCOURIE



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Loch Leathad nan Cruineachd

This leaflet is produced by Scourie Community Development Company Ltd in association with Scourie & District Community Council.

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For more information on Scourie visit:  
[www.scourie.co.uk](http://www.scourie.co.uk) | [www.nwhgeopark.com](http://www.nwhgeopark.com)

The Highland Council Countryside Rangers provide guided walks in the area. For details see:  
[www.outdoorhighlands.co.uk](http://www.outdoorhighlands.co.uk)

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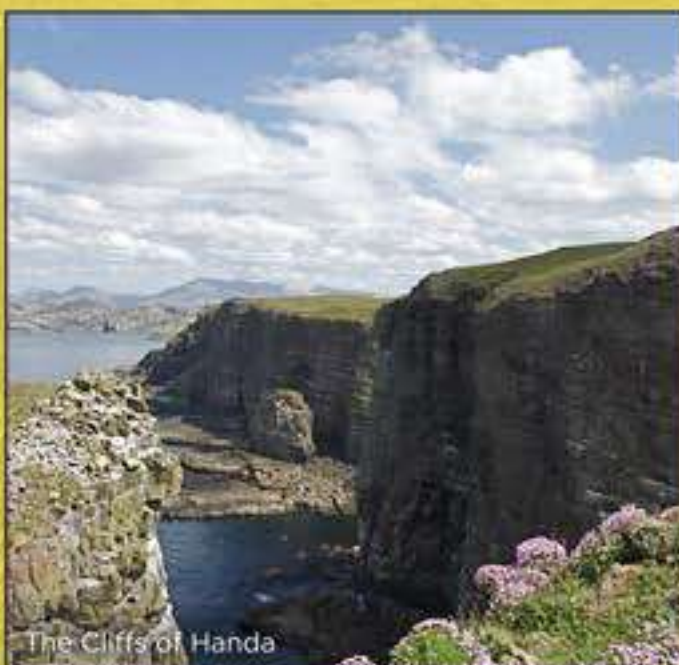
## HANDA ISLAND

Handa Island is owned by Scourie Estate and is managed in association with the Scottish Wildlife Trust. The island is only accessible by ferry from Tarbet pier, six miles north of Scourie.

On the island's north coast, Torridonian Sandstone cliffs tower four hundred feet above the sea. The cliff edges are home to Britain's largest breeding colony of guillemots. Here you can also view noisy kittiwake colonies, puffins, razorbills and fulmars at close quarters.

Magnificent scenery, great skuas diving close by, seals, lizards and possible sightings of dolphins and porpoises make a visit here an unforgettable experience.

Sturdy walking boots or shoes and suitable outdoor clothing are advised. The circuit of the island, on a way-marked path, is 6.5km (approx. 3hrs). No dogs are allowed. Open to visitors from April - September. Outward sailings from 9am - 2pm. Last return 5.00pm.



The Cliffs of Handa

## THE GEOLOGY OF SCOURIE



Exposure of Lewisian Gneiss with Quartz vein

The Scourie area is world-famous for its very special rocks and geological heritage and is regularly visited by geology students, teachers and researchers from other countries. When you are here, you are in the "Cradle of Geology" and the essential rock-features can be easily seen from the paths. Much of the area you are walking over has been designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).

The rocks are of two main types. The first is Lewisian Gneiss (pronounced "nice") which, dated at 3 billion years old, is the oldest rock to be found anywhere in Europe and is almost the oldest rock in the World. It was made when Scotland formed part of the North American crustal plate (Laurentia) and can therefore be regarded as a (Scottish) part of today's Canadian Shield. Lewisian Gneiss is an example of a metamorphic rock which was formed at great depth close to the base of the Earth's crust by the application of immense crustal pressures and heat on pre-existing rocks over millions of years. It is therefore extremely hard and typically exhibits a light to dark grey coarsely banded crystalline structure.

The second rock is Dolerite which was injected as hot molten material (magma) forced up through extensive vertical fissures in the Lewisian Gneiss 2.4 billion years ago. The landscape cooled to form the world-famous Scourie Dykes. These vertical Scourie Dykes range in thickness from a few to many metres across and traverse the landscape in a NW - SE direction. Although extremely hard, the dark grey Dolerite of the Scourie Dykes is frequently seen within lower-lying NW - SE gulleys, flanked on both sides by the even harder Lewisian Gneiss.

The Scouriemore area also contains the UK's best exposure of dark red garnet crystals, locally developed within the Lewisian Gneiss.

The entire area was subject to a period of intense glaciation around 20,000 years ago. The landscape we see here today reflects the influence and hardness of the underlying rocks on the erosional process and typically comprises bare rocky ridges interspersed with soft peaty hollows and lochans, not dissimilar from parts of Scandinavia.

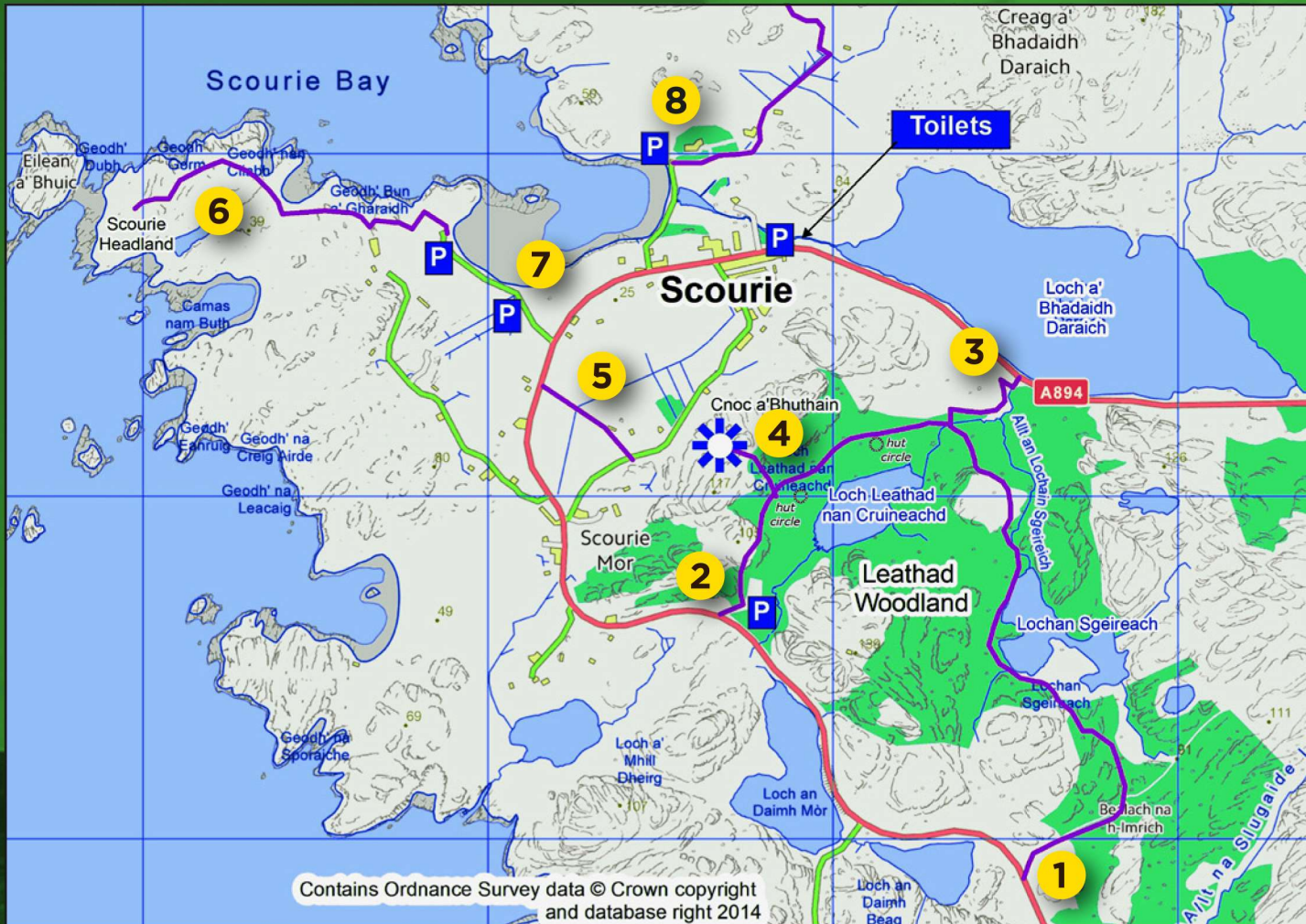


Scourie Bay



The local walks outlined here cover a relatively small area. Each walk has its own distinct character, views, habitats and wildlife to be seen or encountered. The rich mix of plants, birds and animals in the coastal moorland of the Scourie crofting community is waiting to be discovered. Many of the wild flowers are widespread, but certain species will dominate in different areas.

Keep your eyes and ears open -



## LEATHAD WOODLAND (COILLTEACH AN LEATHAID)

A rising path network through young native woodland, skirting Loch Leathad nan Cruineachd (The Slope of the Picts Loch) and Lochan Sgeireach (The Rocky Lochan), with three access points:-

- 1 The Peat Road on the south approach to Scourie on the **A894**
- 2 By the Council Depot, which has ample parking
- 3 The former site of the cattle grid on the north approach to Scourie on the **A894**

Around Loch Leathad nan Cruineachd are the remains of a prehistoric settlement with numerous hut circles, homesteads, field systems, cairns and stone shelters recorded in the area. The hut circles or round houses, dating to the Bronze Age, would each have been occupied by an extended farming family. Now they are reduced to low earthen banks and ditches. Can you find any?

Close to the hut circles, beside a burn, are two u-shaped burnt mounds, which were probably used to heat water for bathing or cooking communal meals. Today, the lochs are visited by divers and ducks, and abloom with water lilies. Amongst the trees are an increasing number of willow warblers, wrens, robins and chaffinches. Buzzards soar the tops. On the open ground, wheatear flit from mound to mound. By the loch, redshank may shrilly call and sandpipers reply, loudly and sharply, from the shore.

Skylarks and meadow pipits will keep you company, and you might spy an eagle from here. Voles are common in the grass banks, otters use the lochs and burns, and tree-nibbling roe deer may be seen sneaking about the saplings. With the rise of the woodland, the flower pattern is altering. The heather is lengthening and more fungi are appearing, along with shade-tolerant ferns and primroses. Lichen, stonecrop, spotted orchids and yellow tormentil pepper the open ground.

## 4 CNOC A' BHÙTHAIN VIEWPOINT

A side branch leads from Leathad Woodland up to a panoramic viewpoint at Cnoc a' Bhùthain (The Hill of the Small Booth) with a superb view over the village and Scourie Bay. To the south lies the Point of Stoer, and to the north, Handa Island.

## 5 PLAYING FIELD PATH

This route provides a short village circuit from the centre of Scourie through the old village, the playing field and back by the roadside footway on the **A894**.

## 6 SCOURIE HEADLAND (3 KM CIRCULAR WALK/1 HOUR)

From the cemetery at the far end of the beach road, a rough path leads out to the Scourie Headland. The route is not a constructed path, but formed through use, so appropriate footwear is required for the terrain. All dogs must be kept under proper control when crossing crofting land. The village is soon left behind. Look out for small freshwater pools, which all have the typical signs of otter activity around them. There are stunning coastal views of Handa Island and the Point of Stoer from the headland. Looking south, Quinag, Suilven, Stac Pollaidh and Ben More Coigach rise up in the distance.

Great skuas and kittiwakes may fly by and sometimes grey seals swim through the gap between the point and Eilean a' Bhuic (The Island of the Buck Goat). Heath spotted orchids are widespread, and butterwort and sundews jewel the bogs. The white tufts of bog cotton wave in the breeze, and occasionally, you may come across clumps of white heather. On your return, look and listen for twite or skylarks in the crofts.

## 7 SCOURIE COMMUNITY BIRD HIDE

Located at the near end of the beach road, the Bird Hide is maintained by Scourie & District Community Council and the Highland Council Countryside Ranger. Entry is free and everyone is welcome.

It's a fine quiet place to observe the bay, and one of the easiest places to watch the rare red-throated divers which regularly feed in the rich shallow waters. Eider ducks, mallard, shag, common gulls, oyster catchers and many more species have been recorded in the visitors' observation book.

## 8 SCOURIE-TARBET PATH (5.1 KMS/2HRS-2.5HRS ONE WAY)

This historic route, formerly used by Tarbet villagers to attend church, is not well marked on the ground. Please take appropriate maps and navigation tools, as well as suitable clothing and footwear for the rough hill terrain. All dogs must be kept under proper control when crossing farm and crofting land. Parking is available on the pier road. Follow the path alongside Scourie Lodge walled garden, turning left through the farmyard.

A twisting, weaving trail over rocky heather-clad hills is revealed, passing dark, peaty lochans, colourful bogs and burns. Orchids are abundant in places. In amongst the heathers, look for the intense blue of tormentil. Boggy, wetter areas are rich in fly-catching butterworts, sundews and lovely pink lousewort. Later in the summer, bright yellow spikes of asphodel decorate the moss-covered ground, where meadow pipits and wheatear feed. Drier parts have bobbing blue scabious and yellow hawkweed contrasting with the deep purple bell heather.

Some of the lochs are visited by red and black-throated divers, whose evocative calls are challenged by those of the curlew and even the mewing buzzard. The North West is home to many otters, and with familiarity, their signs can be detected at most lochans and pools. Frogs and newts are commonly encountered with careful observation, and rustles in the heather can betray the presence of the harmless and very fast common lizard. About half way to Tarbet, look out for the remains of pre-clearance dwellings and lazy-beds.