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Allt Thomnava with Clisham in the background



HARRIS (Na Hearadh), possibly from ON *Herað*, Parish) is divided from Lewis by Loch Resort on the west and Loch Seaforth on the east, with Loch Langavat in the middle. The Harris Mountains complete the barrier between the two parts of the island. The split is said to date back to Norse times.

The north of Harris is mostly wild, mountainous country and ideal for hillwalkers. Approaching from Lewis, **Loch Seaforth**

divides Lewis from Harris and as the road climbs the steep hill after Ardvourlie a fine panoramic view unfolds along the way.

Clisham (ON *Klif Hamar*, Cliff Hill), 799m) and its sisters dominate the landscape on a clear day. The remote township of **Rhenigidale** (NB229018) was only recently provided with vehicular access, and prior to that was one of the most isolated settlements in the Western Isles. An excursion into this beautiful and untamed countryside is well worthwhile, as is a brisk stroll to the top of **Toddum** (528m NB210030) for spectacular views all around.

Before reaching Tarbert the B887 turns off to the west, passing the abandoned whaling station at **Bunavoneader**, set up by a Norwegian company in the 1890s, to make the giant carcasses into fertiliser. After a break during WWI Leverhulme bought the facility in 1922 with the idea of making sausages for sale in Africa, however the enterprise was a failure and shut down after his death in 1925.

The road continues through wild

West Loch Tarbert



Loch Seaforth



Cravadale from Braith Buidhe



Bunavoneader and Abhainn Eadarra

NORTH HARRIS

Loch Seaforth
Clisham
Rhenigidale
Bunavoneader
West Loch Tarbert
Hushinish
Scarp
Tarbert
Scalpay



MV Hebrides at Tarbert

and beautiful scenery with spectacular views over to Taransay, and West Loch Tarbert. Suggested walks include taking the track north from *Meanaig* (NB101063) which leads eventually to Loch Vishimid through a remote and dramatic landscape. Further on, another track leads inland to a hydro power station and finally to the remote and deserted village of Kinlochresort.

Amhuinnsuidhe Castle was built in 1868 by the Earl of Dunmore. Next to it is a dramatic waterfall up which Salmon leap as they return to spawn. The castle along with the 55,000 acre Amhuinnsuidhe Estate was bought for £4.5m by the North Harris Trust in 2003.

Hushinish At the end of the road is the sandy beach of Hushinish. The island of Scalpay lies just offshore to the west. A track leads north

Waterfall at Loch Leosavay



from here to Cravadale where there is an old fishing lodge. The golden sands of Traigh Mheilén (ON Miel, Sand) face Scarp over the shallow and often turquoise Kyle of Scarp.

Rocket Post In July 1934 a German engineer, Gerhard Zucher, tried to show that rockets might be useful to deliver mail and other light supplies to isolated places. However the missile exploded on landing near Hushinish and scattered its cargo in all directions. The unique *Western Isles Rocket Post* covers are now much sought after by philatelists.

Tarbert The main road continues through the mountains before descending to West Loch Tarbert and finally reaches the village of Tarbert which is the main ferry port. With its range of accommo-

dation and services this makes a convenient base to explore Harris. Nestling in its sheltered position at the head of East Loch Tarbert, Tarbert is the main settlement on Harris. From the ferry the bare rock which characterises so much of Harris glints in the sunshine, especially after rain. The town's steep streets and interesting shops are well worth exploring. The Harris Tweed shop in Tarbert stocks a wide variety of tweeds and garments.

From Tarbert the ferry *MV Hebrides* operates regular services to Uig on Skye and Lochmaddy on North Uist. She entered service in 2001 and can do up to three return trips per day. She is 99m long, cruises at 16.5 knots and is 5,506 tons. Over 600 passengers and 90 cars can be carried.

Caolas an Scarp from Hushinish slipway



SCALPAY has thrived in a way that few other areas in the Western Isles have. In the 1840s about 40 families who had been cleared from Harris and Pabbay were resettled on Scalpay. Today most of the *Scalpachs* are either fishermen or merchant seamen, and some of the crofts are still worked. The western bays are excellent harbours and the neat houses cluster around the shores. Catches are mostly lobsters, crabs, scallops and prawns.

Eilean Glas on the east side of Scalpay is the site of the oldest lighthouse in the Western Isles, which was first lit in 1789. The present tower was built in 1824, and the light became automatic in 1978. There is a fine walk over the moor to it from Kennavay (NG230950) and panoramic views from Ben Scravick (104m, NG237958).

Scalpay was connected to Harris in 1997 by a rather elegant steel bridge, which makes access much easier than in the past. The population of over 400 is proof that vigorous communities can survive in such apparently challenging environments.



Hushinish, West Loch Tarbert



Eilean Glas lighthouse, Scalpay

Harris mountains from Ardhaisaig, north of Tarbert





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Traigh Rosamol at Luskentye has a huge expanse of white sand, backed by large dunes with a backdrop of the Harris mountains

WEST HARRIS In contrast to the east coast, the west coast of Harris consists of a fringe of beautiful golden sandy beaches interspersed by headlands. The road passes through a nearly lunar landscape before the large sandy estuarine beach of Luskentye opens up.

A series of stunning beaches, each different and seemingly more dramatic than the others unfolds as the road winds around the coast. All are backed by dunes, machai and rocky hills. The names are as lovely as the beaches, Seilebost, Traigh Iar, Horgabost, Borve, Traigh Steinige and Scarista.

The Harris beaches are spectacular in all weathers and at all times of year. On a fine summer's day they are ideal for a family outing or a pleasant stroll. On a rough winter's day with large waves crashing in and clouds scudding they present an altogether different, yet equally satisfying aspect.

Broch The township of *Na Buirgh* (Borve) takes its name from Dun Buirgh (NG033940) overlooking the Sound of Taransay. This is a very good example of a placename transition from Old Norse through English to modern Gaelic orthography.

Taransay The attractive island of Taransay lies off the west side of Harris. Day trips run from Horgabost beach during the summer. The BBC series *Castaway 2000* was made on the island.

Taran have been St Ternan, a 5th century Pict from Angus who was converted by St Ninian during his mission among the Picts. Ternan founded a Christian establishment or *banchor* at present day Banchory. He is often referred to as the *Bishop of the Picts*.

St Taran's Cross, now in the National Museum of Scotland,

was found at Paible. There are two ancient chapels near the landing (NG030992). One is dedicated to St Taran (where women were buried) and the other to St Keith, (where men were buried). The name *Clach na Teampall* (NG013008) suggests another chapel site but there are no ruins. There are three duns, one near Paible on the coast ((NG036996), another at *Corran Raab* (NB041005) and one on *Loch an Dun* (NB022013). The south-facing sands on *Loch na-h Uidhe* is one of the finest of all the Harris beaches.

Golf Course The 9 hole Isle of Harris Golf Club on the links at Scarista is in a dramatic and scenic location. It was established in 1939 and has been described as

"one of the world's top hidden sporting gems". Visitors are welcome, but the course is closed on Sundays. It claims to be one of the world's finest settings for a game of golf.

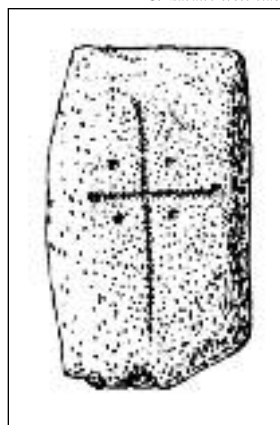


Traigh Iar, Horgabost

Raigh Seilebost faces the Sound of Taransay and Luskentyre



St Taran's cross slab



Traigh Steinige is a beautiful little beach east of the golf course



WEST HARRIS

Luskentyre
Traigh Rosamol
Seilebost
Nisabost
Traigh Iar
Borve
Dun Borve
Traigh Steinige
Scarista
Northton
Ceapabhal (365m)
Taransay



Traigh Scarista from Northton

At **Northton** (*Taobh Tuath*) there is a large area of tidal salt flats, sheltered from the west by Chapaval (339m) and Toe Head. This is one of the best places in the Western Isles to see waders, which breed on the machair and feed on the marsh. Excavations in the machair on Toe Head have shown

a sequence of occupation from Neolithic to Iron Age times. A large number of artefacts including Hebridean and Unstan Ware pottery, Beaker Ware and Iron Age burials were found. Occupation periods range from before 3000BC to after 2000BC.

There is a ruined chapel at **Rubhian Teampall** (NF970913) called *An Teampall*, which is said to have been built by the same Alasdair Crotach who built Rodel Church, in the 16th century. It is worth continuing on to the top of **Chapaval** (365m) from where on a clear day a panoramic view extends from St

Northton (*Taobh Tuath*) saltmarsh



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Kilda in the west (65km) then over the Sound of Harris and on to North Uist and finally to Skye in the east (75km).

The village of *An t-Ob* (Leverburgh) was planned by Leverhulme to be a major fishing port after he abandoned the excellent harbour of Stornoway.

Rodel with its impressive church and tidal harbour lies at the southern tip of Harris. This was once the main port on the island. The basin in the harbour is quite deep and visiting yachts often moor here. There is a ledge at the entrance so entry is dependent on tide.



An t-Ob (Leverburgh)



Traigh Scarista Ceapabhal (365m)

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St Clement's Church, Rodel

St Clement's Church at Rodel (NG467832) is a splendid 16th century church which stands out as it is the only medieval building of any size to survive intact in the Western Isles. It was built on a rocky knoll overlooking Loch Rodel by Alasdair Crotach (humpback) MacLeod, of Harris and Dunvegan, who died about 1547.

The church was established in the 1520s and was probably complete by the 1540s. It is about 25m long with a 30m tower at the west end and is

built of local gneiss. The sandstone detailing, which is said to come from Carsaig on Mull. The tower is decorated with a corbelled string course half way up with sculpted panels on each wall face.

On the north is a bull's head, a symbol of the MacLeod's. On the west a there is figure, who may represent St Clement, with a bull's head at his feet, and on the east a woman who is exposing her genitals, and holding a child. This type of decoration is called *Sheela na gig* and was common on early

Irish churches. It may be that the charms of the *Sheela na gigs* were intended to distract the evil so that the faithful could carry on with their devotions free from Earthly temptation. The west wall panel depicts two males, one in a kilt, and the other in jerkin and hose in a suggestive pose.

Restored in 1784, and again in 1787, after being damaged by fire, the church was last renovated by the Dunmores in 1873. It is now maintained by Historic Scotland.

The building is approximately 20m by 5m inside with arched entrances to the transepts, the north being decorated with schist, the south with sandstone. On the south wall of the nave is the tomb of William MacLeod, son of Alasdair Crotach, who died in 1551. This tomb was badly damaged by a fire in 1786, but the date 1539 can still be seen.

The tomb of Alasdair Crotach MacLeod is said to be one of the best

such sculptured tombs to survive in Scotland. Nine carved panels are arranged between an upper moulding and the recessed arch which encloses the tomb. The centre panel represents Christ on a cross, while the other panels depict the apostles.

The recess under the arch has three rows of panels of which the top three are angels. The centre five have the Virgin and Child in the centre with panels showing bishops on either side. To the left is a castle and to the right a galley under sail. The bottom panel is a hunting scene where Satan and Michael weigh the souls of the departed. The inscription reads "*This tomb was prepared by Lord Alexander, son of William MacLeod, Lord of Dunvegan in the year of our Lord 1528*".

The north transept has a selection of graveslabs which used to cover burials in the floor. They date from the 16th and 17th centuries. A stairway leads from the nave into the tower, the top of which can then be reached by another stair and ladders. A window looks west across the Sound of Harris.



Interior from north transept

16th and 17th century graveslabs to various MacLeods

Interior with Alasdair Crotach MacLeod's tomb on left



Detail with bishops and hunting scene



Man in jerkin and hose



Man in kilt



Sheela na gig





EAST HARRIS South from Tarbert the east coast road, or *Golden Road* passes through The Bays, a wild and inhospitable coast where the

ancient rocks are mostly bare. This area only became inhabited when the fertile west side of Harris was cleared for sheep farming in the 1800s.

Cottage at Manish



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The little settlements have interesting names, and include Lickisto (*Liceasto*), Geocrab (*Geòcrab*), Manish (*Mànais*), Flodabay (*Fleòideabagh*), Ardway (*Àird Mhighe*), Finsbay (*Fionnsbagh*) and Lingarabay (*Lingreabagh*). They were for long only accessible by sea or by tracks across the hills.

Golden Road In 1897 a road was built which to join them all up, to Rodel which was dubbed the *Golden Road* on account of its cost. It winds tortuously along the coast through wild rocky country and among the many small townships. There are fine views across the Minch to Skye and beyond.

The *Golden Road* makes a most picturesque drive. It can be tackled from the north by turning left off the A859 about 3km south of Tarbert, or from the south from Rodel. In either case leave plenty of time to admire the views along this slow, narrow road.

Feannagan The people had to scratch a living from potatoes and oats that they grew on *lazy-beds* or *feannagan* which can be seen everywhere along this coast. These are long narrow beds of soil which have been laboriously built up using manure, domestic compost and seaweed as well as what turf is available. They are remarkably fertile, but very labour-intensive.

Geology Although mostly composed of gneiss, dykes of softer volcanic rock run across Harris which date from the same time as much of Skye. Further south the landscape becomes even more bare, with exposures of red Feldspar, and particularly so at Lingerabay. Gleaming white Anorthosite is exposed on the upper flanks of Roinebhal (460m), the large hill which dominates the south end of Harris.

A long running proposal to quarry up to 600 million tonnes of this rock for aggregate was finally turned down in 2000 after a Public Enquiry. Eventually the minister responsible ruled against the plan. Finally in 2004 Lafarge, the company which proposed the quarry, withdrew their application.

Harris Tweed is still produced in the traditional way by a small company at Procrapol. The weaver can be seen at work on his hand loom. The shop stocks tweed and knitwear.

Weaver at work on his loom at Procrapol



Sheep at Manish - dawn in midsummer



Groseybay from the northwest, an oasis of green in a rocky landscape



Old boat reused as a shed roof

GOLDEN ROAD

Some good viewpoints

Procrapol
Loch Grosbay
Loch Stockinish
Lickisto
Loch Geocrab
Manish
Flodabay
Lingarabay
Roinebhal



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may be had of many species all year round. In spring and summer numerous seabirds breed here. Gannets often follow the boat and can be seen plunge diving. Terns, Cormorants and Eider Ducks often pass close by. Flights of auks and Manx Shearwaters commute on the way from here to there. Grey and Common Seals haul out on the skerries, and Bottlenose Dolphins are sometimes also seen.

The Sound is equally good in the winter months. Long-tailed Ducks, Great Northern Divers, Velvet Scoters and the occasional Iceland or Glaucous Gull may be seen.

Tidal streams in the Sound of Harris are complex, and vary between springs and neaps, day and night, and summer and winter. Together with all the other hazards, this makes the Sound quite a challenge for the yachts-

SOUND OF HARRIS The Sound of Harris lies between the south of Harris and North Uist. This stretch of water is strewn with rocks, skerries and sandbanks. The ro-ro ferry was introduced in 1996 and has been a big success. It takes a tortuous, yet fascinating, route from Leverburgh

(An t-Ob) to the north end of the Berneray causeway. MV Loch Portain uses a jet drive system to allow it to navigate the very shallow passage.

It follows a complex buoyed course between the skerries and affords one of the best birdwatching trips in the Western Isles. Good views



Gannet



Eider Duck



Arctic Terns

Sound of Harris from the east with Rodel and Rhoineabbal on the right



Sound of Harris from Beinn an Toib, Carinish

man. The main channels are clearly marked with buoys, beacons and posts, but great care must be taken.

There are magnificent views across the Sound of Harris from Beinn an Toib (103m), the hill southeast of the Harris ferry terminal. From Berneray the best panoramic viewpoint is from Beinn Shleibhe (93m) at the north end of the island.



MV Loch Portain leaving An t-OB (Leverburgh)



Great Northern Diver



Long-tailed Ducks

Berneray from the ferry



SOUND OF HARRIS

Birds to see - summer

Gannet
Cormorant
Arctic Tern
Eider Duck
Red-breasted Merganser
Guillemot
Razorbill
Manx Shearwater

Birds to see - winter

Long-tailed Duck
Great Northern Diver
Velvet Scoter

Mammals to see

Grey Seal
Common Seal
Otter
Dolphins