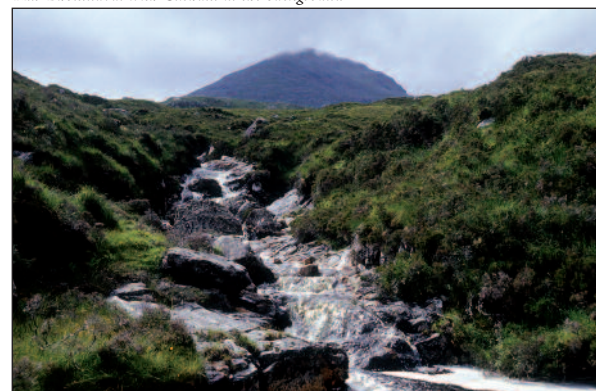








Allt Thomnavail with Clisham in the background



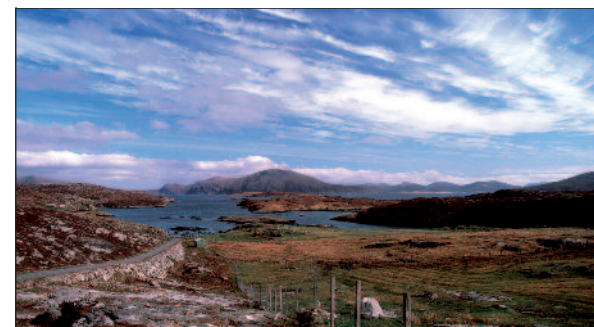
**HARRIS** (G Na Hearadh, from ON Herad, Parish) is divided from Lewis by Loch Resort on the west and Loch Seafort on the east, with Loch Langavat in the middle. The Harris Mountains complete the barrier between the two parts of the island. The split is said to date back to Norse times, but is probably much earlier. The topography of the north of Harris is mostly wild and mountainous, ideal for hillwalkers.

**Loch Seafort** Approaching from Lewis, Loch Seafort divides Lewis from Harris. 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 *Toddun* (528m NB210030) for spectacular views all around.

**Bunavoneader** 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.

West Loch Tarbert



Loch Seafort



Cravadale from Braigh Buidhe



Bunavoneader and Abbainn Eadarra

## NORTH HARRIS

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





"MV Hebrides" at Tarbert

**West Loch Tarbert** The road continues through wild and beautiful scenery with spectacular views over to Taransay, and West Loch Tarbert. Suggested walks include taking the track north from *Meavaig* (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 waterfall at Loch Leosavay is a major Salmon leap



The island of Scarp (ON *Skarpr-oy*, Clifty Isle) lies just offshore to the west. A track leads north from here to Cravadale (ON *Grafir*, ravine) where there is an old fishing lodge. The golden sands of Traigh Mheilen (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 used to deliver mail and other light supplies to isolated places. The missile exploded on landing near Hushinish and scattered its cargo widely. The unique *Western Isles Rocket Post* covers are 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 accommodation and services this makes a convenient base. Nestling in its sheltered position at the head of East Loch Tarbert, Tarbert is the main settlement on Harris. From the ferry the characteristic bare rock 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 books, tweeds and garments.

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

Caolas an Scarp from Hushinish slipway



**SCALPAY** (ON *Skalpr-oy*, Ship Isle) has thrived in a way unusual in the Western Isles. In the 1840s about 40 families cleared from Harris and Pabbay were resettled here. Today most of the *Scalpaths* are either fishermen or merchant seamen, but some of the crofts are still worked. The western bays are excellent harbours and neat houses cluster around the shores. Catches are mainly lobsters, crabs, scallops and prawns.

**Eilean Glas** (G White Isle) on the east side of Scalpay is the site of the oldest lighthouse in the Western Isles, first lit in 1789. The present tower was built in 1824, and the light was made automatic in 1978. There is a fine walk over the moor to it from Kennavay (NG230950) and panoramic views from Ben Scoravick (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 Luskentyre 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 lunar like landscape before the large sandy estuarine beach of Luskentyre opens up.

A series of stunning beaches, each different and seemingly more dramatic than the previous unfolds as the road winds around the coast. All are backed by dunes, machair 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 in all seasons. 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 Bhuirgh* (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 may have been St Ternan, a 5<sup>th</sup> 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* form 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."

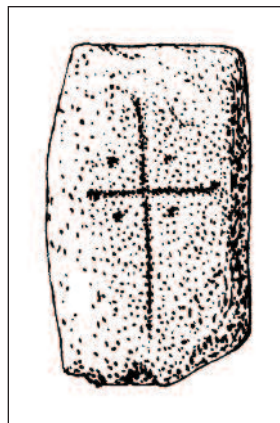


Traigh Iar, Horgabost

Traigh 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





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Age times. A wide range 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. In particular, a large quantity of Bronze Age Beaker pottery was found during detailed excavations in the 1960s.

There is a ruined chapel at *Rubh'an Teampull* (NF970913) which is said to have been built by Alasdair Crotach, who built Rodel Church, in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. It is worth continuing on to the top of Chapaval (365m) from where a panoramic view extends from St Kilda in the west (65km, 40mi) then over the Sound of Harris and on to North Uist and finally to Skye in the east (75km, 50mi).

Northton (Taobh Tuath) saltmarsh

**Northton** At Northton (*Taobh Tuath*) there is a large area of tidal salt flats, sheltered from the west by Chapaval (365m) 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. The road runs close to the sea at high tide.

Excavations in the machair on Toe Head have shown a sequence of occupation from Neolithic to Iron

## Seallam! Visitor Centre An Taobh Tuath, Harris

*Co Leis Thu? Genealogy Research  
for the Hebrides*

### EXHIBITIONS



**Books, CDs, Artworks**

*St Kildan and Hebridean Heritage*



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Traigh Scarista from Northton

**Seallam! Visitor Centre** has exhibitions on the history and natural environment of the Outer Hebrides. It is also the home of *Co Leis Thu?*, a major genealogical resource based on the work of Bill and Chris Lawson. For anyone interested in their Hebridean family tree this is the place to start.

**Scarista House**, "We have stayed at Scarista House for the past 10 years

and love it. Where do I start. The rooms are individual, with well chosen furniture, comfortable beds and lots of great books. This is a TV free zone and with the huge library and drawing room there is a chance to really escape. The food is always excellent. I have never had anything but the most elegantly presented large portions. The sea food is especially good. The owners are what makes

this place special. They are accommodating and helpful with real attention to detail."

**Traigh Scarista** extends for over 2km. The pristine sands are backed by dunes, machair and marshland. In summer breeding birds, wild flowers and bumblebees make this a fine location for naturalists. This is a place where

## SCARISTA HOUSE Isle of Harris



### Hotel and restaurant with stunning ocean views

Georgian former manse with breathtaking views: shell sand beaches and heather covered hills. Traditional comfort and open fires; no TV; lots of books and CDs.

#### Restaurant open to non-residents

Elegant candle lit dining rooms serving local fresh seafood, lamb, beef and game, organic, local or home grown vegetables and fruit, Scottish cheeses and exquisite desserts.

Fully licensed with a wide-ranging wine list. Awarded 2 AA rosettes Booking essential

**Tim and Patricia Martin**

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[timandpatricia@scaristahouse.com](mailto:timandpatricia@scaristahouse.com)





Traigh Scarista with Chapabhal (365m)

variations in the landscape due to weather, time and season are truly apparent.

**An t-Ob** South of Northton the single track A869 follows Glen Coishletter, narrow, rocky valley, to Leverburgh. The village of *An t-Ob* (ON *Hjop*, bay) was a tiny harbour until Leverhulme decided to develop a major fishing port here. Having abandoned the excellent harbour of Stornoway, work started in 1920 to develop a new pier and shoreside buildings to handle landings from up to 50 trawlers.

The plan was to supply the national chain of 400 *Mac Fisheries* fish shops and by 1924 the project was ready to start processing catches. However Leverhulme died of pneumonia in 1925 and the project was cancelled with losses of at

least £0.5million. The Board of Lever Brothers decided that the project was no longer viable due to the postwar economic recession. Work stopped immediately and the South Harris Estate was sold for only £900.

**William Hesketh Lever** is remembered best for his time as Liberal MP for Wirral. In 1907 he put forward a private member's bill to increase income tax to provide a state pension for the elderly. The Old Age Pension Act was passed in 1908. Mac Fisheries was finally sold in the late 1970s, and had proved a sound investment for Lever Brothers.

Today *An t-Ob* is again a thriving village. The start of a car ferry service from here to North Uist in 1996 was the catalyst for much

new development. Several creel boats operate out of here catching prawns, crabs and lobsters.

**Viewpoint** A narrow, side road turns inland near the school. It crosses wild and rocky terrain, passing several lochs on the way, as it winds around the north flanks of Roineabhal (ON *Hraun fjall*, Rough Hill) to Ardeve. The summit (460m, NG403861) offers a superb panoramic view after a hard slog over rough ground from Lingerabay. A track leads part of the way to a quarry.

**Rodel** (ON *Raudha Dalr*, Red Dale) with its impressive church and tidal harbour lies at the southern tip of Harris. It was once the main port on the island. The inner harbour is tidal, but the outer basin is quite deep and visiting yachts often moor here. There is a ledge at the entrance so entry is dependent on tide.

Rodel House was built in 1781 for Alexander MacLeod who had recently bought Harris. He had made a fortune as the captain of an East Indiaman. His plan was to develop fishing on the island, but this was to fail on his death in 1790.

Car ferry and boats at An t-Ob or Leverburgh



Ant-Ob (Leverburgh)

In the early 1800s there were about 150 habitations in Rodel but MacLeod's son had them cleared to make a farm for himself. Eventually the house became a shooting and fishing hotel, which is now refurbished. Small fishing boats still work from the harbour. A walk to Renish Point gives a similar view to that enjoyed by the artist William Daniell nearly 100 years ago.



Aerial view of St Clement's Church, Rodel

Rodel from Renish Point in 1815 by William Daniell



Lobster boats at the pier







St Clement's Church, Rodel

**ST CLEMENT'S CHURCH** at Rodel (NG467832) is a splendid 16<sup>th</sup> 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 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, the centrepiece of the Clan MacLeod crest. 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 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 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> 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

16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century graveslabs to various MacLeods

Interior with Alasdair Crotach MacLeod's tomb on left



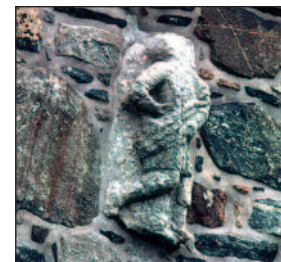
Detail with bishops and hunting scene



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, derived from Norse and Gaelic. They include Lickisto (*Liceasto*), Geocrab (*Geòcrab*), Manish (*Mànaish*), Flodabay (*Fleòideabhagh*), Ardway (*Aird Mhìghe*), Finsbay (*Fionnsbhagh*) and Lingarabay (*Lingreabhagh*). They were for long only accessible by sea or by tracks across the hills.

**Golden Road** In 1897 a road was built to join all these settlements up with 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 approached 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 lazybeds 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, 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.



*Sheep at Manish - dawn in midsummer*



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



Old boat reused as a shed roof

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*



## GOLDEN ROAD

## Some good viewpoints

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





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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.

Birdwatching is equally good in the winter months. Long-tailed Ducks, Great Northern Divers, Velvet Scoters and the occasional Iceland or Glaucous Gull all 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 yachtsman. The main channels are clear-

**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 great 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 may be had of many species all year round. In spring and summer



Gannet



Eider Duck



Arctic Terns

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



Sound of Harris from Beinn an Toib, Carinish

ly marked with buoys, beacons and posts, but great care must be taken.

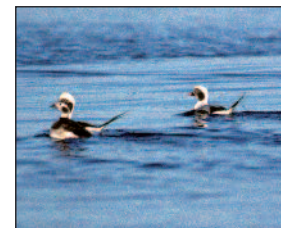
There are magnificent views across the Sound of Harris from Beinn an Toib (103m), the hill southeast of the Harris ferry terminal. From Berneray the best panoramic viewpoint is from Beinn Shleibhe (93m) at the north end of the island.



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