

# In brief

**Category:** moderate – exacting walk

**Walking Distance:** approx 13km / 8 miles

**Time:** at least four hours to complete the full circuit

**Map Reference:** OS Landranger 14 and Pathfinder 108 (NG 19 / 26)

Scalpay



## How to get there?

### By Car

By road, 5 miles south east of Tarbert. Scalpay is connected to the Harris mainland by bridge.

Turn left after the bridge, then right at the junction, and follow the road to the community centre, where parking is available. Light refreshments and snacks can be purchased here during the school holidays and in the nearby Scalpay mini-mart.

### By Bus

For details of local buses from Tarbert, contact Tarbert Tourist Information. Tel: 01851 502011.



Experience Life on the Edge

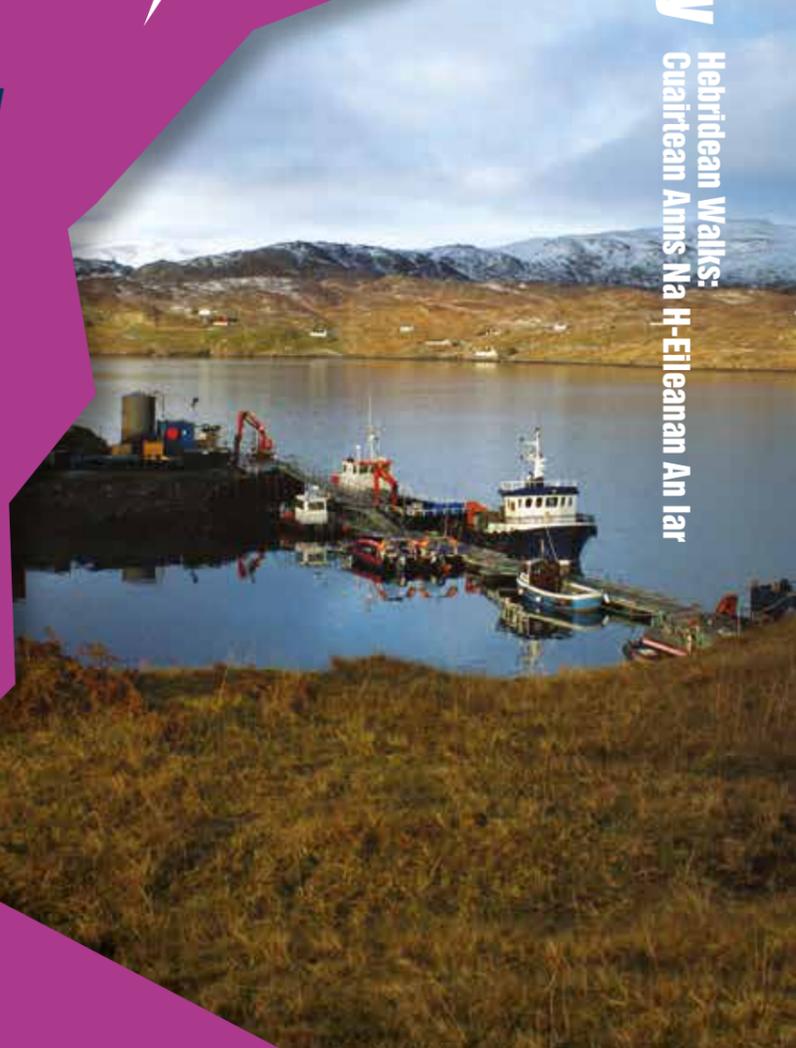
[www.visitouterhebrides.co.uk](http://www.visitouterhebrides.co.uk)



OUTER  
HEBRIDES

Scalpay

Hebridean Walks:  
Cuirrean Anns Na H-Eileanan An Iar



Explore the rest of our Hebridean Walks!

## Follow the Crofting Code

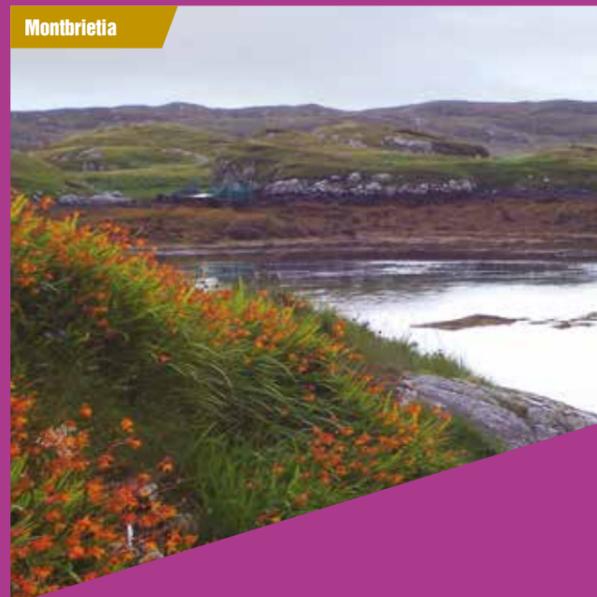
- Please leave dogs behind, or ensure they are on a leash as they can be a danger to livestock.
- Park your car without blocking access for other vehicles.
- Please fasten gates.
- Leave no litter.
- Do not disturb breeding birds.
- Protect wildlife and plants.
- Avoid damaging archaeological sites.

## For your safety

- Remember the weather here can be unpredictable!
- Wear sensible clothing and footwear.
- Take an OS map and a compass.
- Tell someone where you are going or leave a note visible on the dashboard of your car – stating your destination and estimated time of return.

“Scalpay is a close-knit community of some three hundred and fifty people with many of the inhabitants related.”

Montbrietia



Explore...

## From the Community Centre, walk along the road around South Harbour, and follow the pleasant winding road through Ceann a' Bhaigh (Kennavay), 3.4km in all.

Shortly before the road end, follow the waymarkers slightly uphill on the left past Bonnie Prince Charlie's cave at Lag na Laire - This well concealed cave is difficult to find in the summer, concealed by bracken. Continue to follow the waymarkers around the indented coastline. When Eilean Glas Lighthouse comes into view, you can head straight towards it along the coast until you come to its magnificent stone wall. Turn left and follow the wall, going through the first gateway which takes you to the lighthouse.

Leave Eilean Glas by the main path, where you have the option of taking the newly built path back to Outend or by turning right immediately outside the wall, continue on the longer path and follow the wall almost to the end. Then follow the waymarkers uphill to the left, and continue to the top of Beinn Scorabhaigh (Ben Scoravick - 104m). The gentle descent will lead you down to Loch an Duin, the route threading its way along the northern shore. At its western end, cross the stile and pick up the track which brings you back to the road (make sure you close the gates here). Turn left and return to the starting point.



Golf Star

### Ceann a' Bhaigh

As you walk out of Ceann a' Bhaigh (Kennavay) a clear view of Skye can be seen at the road end. The 'Golf Star', an Antiguan-registered cargo ship, which ran aground in October 1995, lies beneath the waves. At this end of the island some of the crofters keep pigs which

can be seen at the roadside, sheep graze in abundance, hens are a common sight and may rabbits hop around the rocks. By the roadside and on the way to Lag na Laire in summer you will see a rich profusion of moorland flowers – tormentil, bog, asphodel and devil's-bit scabious amongst them.

### Lag na Laire

Here, marked with a yellow pole, is a cave which is said to have once been occupied by Bonnie Prince Charlie while he was on Scalpay seeking refuge. Whilst on the run after Culloden, Prince Charlie arrived via North Harbour on Scalpay and stayed in a house on the site of the Free Church Manse with the local tacksman Donald Campbell.

When his whereabouts were discovered he was forced to flee, and according to Scalpay tradition Campbell directed him to a cave at Lag na Laire where he hid until the coast was clear.

Legend has it that the cave goes right under the Minch to Skye! Indiscreet remarks from one of his helpers after a glass or two too many meant a hasty exit south to Uist. From there, Flora MacDonald rowed Prince Charlie across the Minch – this is the origin of the popular ballad "Over the sea to Skye". Among the thick bracken in this area many foxgloves can be seen, flowering in July / August.



### Wildlife

The route from Lag na Laire to the lighthouse is clearly indicated by waymarkers, which now form a favourite perch for birds! On the coast herons can be seen along with the many different birds, plants and animals which inhabit this natural and unspoilt area.

Typical birds you might see are puffins, gannets, cormorants, shags (especially on the offshore skerries), guillemots, gulls and terns, buzzards, ravens, crows and oystercatchers. Grouse can also be seen occasionally on the heather moorland.

As you travel along the coast you will notice many otter-holes and may see them among the rocks or swimming among the kelp. Their presence can also be indicated by droppings or spraints marking their territory.

This impressive hunter is known for its playful habits and feeds on fish, crabs and birds eggs. The otter is a protected species and is easily disturbed, so please take care to avoid disturbance to their habitat.

Marine life includes porpoises, pilot and occasionally killer whales, basking sharks and seals.



### Eilean Glas

As a result of an Act of Parliament passed in 1786 an organisation was set up with the task of establishing four lighthouses on the Scottish coast. Eilean Glas (grey island) was the first of them. However, plans for building the lighthouses came to a standstill, so the local tacksman of the time secretly obtained the blueprints and hired local labour to construct it himself! Next summer, a passing ship reported the activity to Edinburgh and officials hurried across to

discover the work half-completed. The work had been done to such a high standard that they were paid the going rate for their work, but the lighthouse was finished by skilled workmen.

It was finally lit up in October 1789, 73 years before the Butt of Lewis. Lighthouse keepers and their families stayed on Eilean Glas over the years, with several local people gaining employment there. In recent times everything has been automated and the keepers' cottages sold. Its light can now be seen at the Royal Museum of Scotland, Edinburgh.

### Beinn Scorabhaigh

It is thought locally that a Viking settlement was once situated near the lighthouse on a seam of talc rock.

As you leave Eilean Glas breathtaking views of the North Harris hills, Loch Seaforth and the Lochs area of Lewis come into view. Beinn Scorabhaigh is the highest point on Scalpay and from there you can enjoy a magnificent panoramic view of Lewis, the Shiant Islands, Wester Ross and Skye, North and South Harris and the Uists. A cairn is on the top comprising of stones deposited there by countless visitors over the years.

As you survey the surrounding landscape you will notice the many peat banks which provide much of the fuel for the island fires. You will also see feannagan or lazybeds dotted throughout the island which bear testimony to a former intensive crofting way of life.

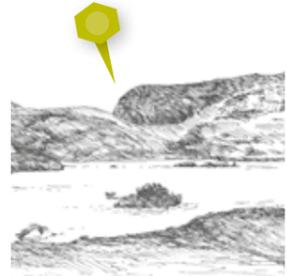


### Loch an Duin

The loch gains its name from the fortified dwelling on Dun on the island in the middle, which probably dates back 2,000 years to the Iron Age.

There is a causeway to the island, now under water since the level of the loch was raised some years ago. Along its length were a series of 'dropping stones' which, if stepped on, would rock and make a noise to warn the inhabitants of strangers approaching. Those who knew their location would avoid the stones.

Today the loch is a site for a freshwater salmon farm. Brown trout also inhabit the loch and fishing here is a popular pastime. At times tufted ducks can also be seen swimming close by the shoreline.



### The Scalpay Community

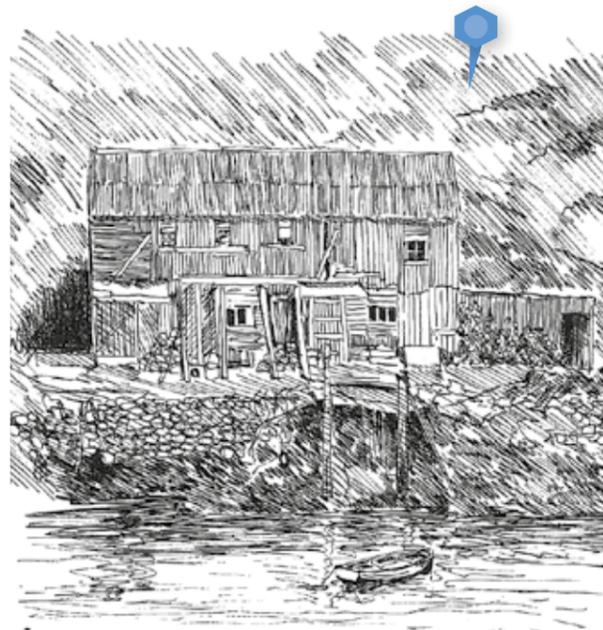
Scalpay is a close-knit community of some three hundred and fifty people with many of the inhabitants related. The main industries on the island are fishing and fish farming, although weaving and crofting are also carried out. The island for many years enjoyed economic prosperity as can be seen from the houses and cars.

The Scalpay people are independent, self-reliant and full of initiative, and this can

be seen from the island facilities they have produced – a £60,000 amenity garden, a £350,000 community centre and a £120,000 children's play area. A £6,000,000 bridge was opened in 1998 which links Scalpay to Harris.

A very religious island, Sunday is a rest day for all.

Recent history – in 2013 the island of Scalpay was gifted to the community by the landowner, Fred Taylor. The Scalpay community chose then to join with the neighbouring community owned estate of North Harris.



Net store, site of old curing station

### An Acarsaid a Tuath

The village is centred around An Acarsaid a Tuath and An Acarsaid a Deas (North and South Harbours) as both provide safe natural anchorage for boats.

The discovery of flint arrowheads at North Harbour in 1903 demonstrates that this area was favoured for settlement since earliest times. More recently, settlers came to Scalpay from Pabbay in the South of Harris, from St Kilda, and from the mainland of Harris. In the early days the entire Scalpay fleet was moored here, until the present pier was built in the 1960s.



At the turn of the century there were a number of curing stations on the island, and at one time a shipping company had several small coasting vessels carrying cargo around the west of Scotland. Fishing and the fish-farming industry are still the main employers on the island, although as elsewhere prawns have replaced herring as the main catch.

