

OUTER HEBRIDES

Outstanding Circular Walks

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walk 13

Berneray Circular

Start

Berneray/Beàrnaraigh
Community Hall

Distance

7¾ miles (12.5km)

Height gain

590 feet (180m)

Approximate time

4 hours

Route terrain

Wet grassland;
machair; white sand
beach; lane

Parking

Hall car park, west of
Borve/Borgh

OS maps

Landranger 18 (Sound
of Harris); Explorer
454 (North Uist &
Berneray)

GPS waypoints

- NF 909 813
- A NF 901 819
- B NF 924 838
- C NF 931 831
- D NF 934 825
- E NF 931 815
- F NF 917 806

Lying between North Uist and Harris, Berneray is one of the most beautiful islands in the Outer Hebrides, famed for its tropical-looking beach. It is the only inhabited island in the Sound of Harris and offers fine views to the blue hills of Harris. Wildlife is prolific. On the rocky east coast you have a good chance of seeing seals and otters, while the machair and beaches host a wealth of farmland and seabirds. Underfoot are carpets of wildflowers with orchids being particularly prolific on the moist grassland.

■ Go through the gate beside a yellow topped post and stile at the far end of the car park. Bear left, parallel to a fence. From the first fence corner bear right for 100 yards to see the oddly-shaped Chair Stone and the remains of a prehistoric cairn then turn left to return to the farther fence corner and another yellow post. Now go across the wet machair, passing a post lying on the ground. Aim for a small patch of bare sand in the dunes ahead.

Bear right at the bare, sandy patch A to reach the high lip of the dunes. Two uninhabited islands stand offshore, Boreray/Boraraigh to the left and Pabbay/Pabaigh to the right. Either slide down the steep, loose sand or head right until the dunes are lower. Now walk north for 2 miles (3.2km) along the magnificent white sand of West Beach, which bends right



Looking north-east to the Harris hills from West Beach

Join a sandy track that runs by the shed. To walk along the beach go left (south) along it, soon bending right through the dunes **C** and down to the sand then turning right. Alternatively (if it is very windy or the tide is high) turn right on the track, which meanders along the back of the grassy dunes.

Either way, keep walking north for about 1¼ miles (2km) to where the track climbs to picnic tables on the crest of the dunes. These are visible from the beach and 200 yards further on, before a fence and post that can be seen ahead, another track accesses the beach **D**.

Turn right, away from the beach, heading back towards the mast. Cladh Hallan roundhouses are on the inside of a right-hand bend (opposite a post).

Three information panels set in the ground explain the site. Continue on the track towards the mast then turn left back to the cemetery car park.

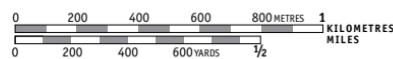
Cladh Hallan Roundhouses

This site was first occupied around 2000 BC and was inhabited until about 500 BC. The best preserved, central roundhouse was rebuilt six times, with new floors added on top of the old. The many layers of soil full of bone, pottery shards, metal working moulds and other artefacts have provided archaeologists with a picture of how the people here lived through the Bronze and into the Iron Age. Most notable were two human mummies that had been preserved in peat for about a year before being kept in the house then later buried under the floor.

Kilpheder Wheelhouse

In 1951,

one of a group of Iron Age houses was partially excavated from the dunes. Like some 30 other wheelhouses found in the Outer Hebrides, it is circular with radiating, spoke-like walls that divide the house into wedge-shaped rooms. Finds included pottery, stone, bone and antler implements, as well as a Romano-British enamelled bronze brooch, which was probably left behind when the building was abandoned about AD 200.



SCALE 1:25000 or 2½ INCHES TO 1 MILE 4CM to 1KM





The Isle of Barra Beach Hotel from across Bàigh Halaman

fortifications **D**. Take care exploring because there are sheer cliffs on its west side.

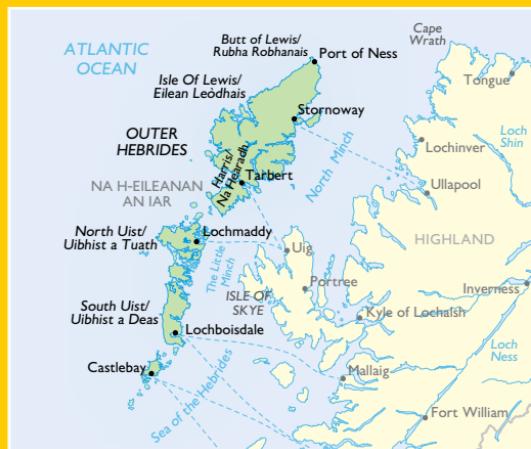
Return over the stile to the post at **C** then keep ahead uphill to the large cairn **E**. Now turn right (east) and head for the strip of land between Halaman beach and Loch na Doirlinn, which can be seen to its right. At the head of the inlet at Doirlinn, cross the grass behind the pebble beach and climb to the next

post on the far side. Here go right again to a gate in a fence **F**. Keep ahead through dunes between the shore and loch to meet a fence, ensuring you keep it on your right. Continue ahead until you reach a stream, which can be quite wide after heavy rain. It may be easier to cross on the beach. Keep ahead through the dunes to the start point, aiming for the phone box, which can be seen to the right of the largest house. ●

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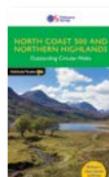
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