

VALLAY

Outer Hebrides

Distance: 15.7 km (9.7 miles)
Difficulty: Moderate
Terrain: tidal sands; foreshore; grass path through dunes
Height gain: 251 metres
Map: OS Explorer 454
Starting point: Pull-in at Aird Glas Lat/Long 57.6361, -7.3972; GR NF 780 735

Highlights

- Fabulous tidal crossing
- Extraordinary machair with abundant wild flowers and wildlife
- Deserted white-shell beaches for swimming or surfing
- Panoramic views to distant St Kilda
- Wild camping or marooning yourself to spend more time here
- Surprising an otter who rarely sees any visitors

Pubs and cafes near the route

- Westford Inn; and Kirkibost Café

Dogs

- Yes (but livestock on the island)

Vallay Island circular walk

Vallay sits off the northwest coast of North Uist in the Outer Hebrides. It was first settled in Neolithic times and inhabited until the middle of last century so there are plenty of ruins to discover. To the south is a sheltered lagoon, to the north are wild Atlantic beaches with views extending to St Kilda and Harris. This is definitely a coastline of contrasts. Inland, horned Highland cattle bring to mind the Vikings that once invaded these shores. Vallay is a remote destination for nature lovers and pioneering outdoor enthusiasts – walkers, swimmers, surfers, kite-surfers, and windsurfers – although you'll rarely see another soul.

Directions

1. From the pull-in walk 200m along the farm track to the coast and follow the tracks left by vehicles, heading almost due north. Keep to the right of the two

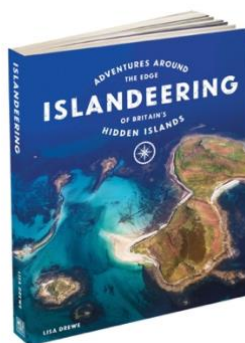


smaller islands of Torogaigh and Stangram and aim for the ruined buildings on the island.

2. After 2.9kms arrive on the foreshore of Vallay, just below the main house. Head west on the foreshore and pass the walls of Dun Thomaid and continue around the western tip at Rubha and Camas Mor. From here walk over the shingle bank past the beacon and take any one of the various animal tracks east through the sand dunes.
3. Reach the huge beach at Camas na Criche and after 1km climb up onto the rocks at the end to cross the fence on the rocks. Walk along the sands of Bagh nan Craobhag and across the south end of Orasaigh. At the end of Cuil na Muice beach climb up onto the rocks, cross to the beach of Traigh Himligh and follow the animal tracks through the dunes and to the east tip of the island.
4. Follow the shoreline, passing the standing stones and continue to head west. After 600m pass between two parallel fences and exit via the metal gate onto the sands to return to the ruined buildings. Retrace your steps across Traigh Bhalaign.

Special notes: Access is 4 hrs either side of low tide, but wind and spring times will reduce this window.

This is one of 50 circular walks around the islands of Britain described in greater detail in our book "Islandeering: adventures around the edge of Britain's hidden islands".



Happy Islandeering
Lisa, Charlie and Goose
www.islandeering.com