



# Slow down in Wester Ross



### **Quality of Service Provision:**

Celtic Fringe can accept no direct responsibility for the services described in this booklet. Inclusion and naming of such services should not be taken to imply recommendation or endorsement of these.

### **Contact / feedback:**

Notwithstanding this, we are interested in receiving feedback on any aspect of the guidebook, and are more than happy to update future editions accordingly. For comments, feedback, and suggested alterations, please email: [contact@celticfringe.org.uk](mailto:contact@celticfringe.org.uk), or write to: Celtic Fringe, c/o 13 Strath, Gairloch, Ross shire, IV21 2BX. Our website is at [www.celticfringe.org.uk](http://www.celticfringe.org.uk)

### **About Celtic Fringe:**

We are a community based tourism association representing over 100 Wester Ross based tourism businesses. Originating in 1997, we have developed a number of projects within the tourist industry in this area. These include guidebooks, the Wester Ross Coastal Trail, support for local events, training projects, and a members email network covering the area. For full details of our work, including annual reports, have a look at [www.celticfringe.org.uk](http://www.celticfringe.org.uk)

We also manage the Wester Ross Brand on behalf of a number of local organisations. Members details can be found on [www.visitwester-ross.com](http://www.visitwester-ross.com) Brand members are committed to giving the visitor a quality experience of Wester Ross. This website also acts as a portal site, carrying a range of information on the culture, wildlife, and scenic attractions of the entire area.



### **Text / production**

Douglas Gibson

### **Design & layout**

Helen Meek  
[ardessie publishing](http://ardessiepublishing.com)

### **Photography**

Steve Carter (cover)  
[www.stevcarter.com](http://www.stevcarter.com)

Gordon Harrison  
[www.gordon-c-harrison.co.uk](http://www.gordon-c-harrison.co.uk)

Jim Buchanan, Douglas Gibson, [www.eoghainmacleanphotography.co.uk](http://www.eoghainmacleanphotography.co.uk),  
Lorne Gill /Scottish Natural Heritage

### **Map**

Jim Buchanan



# The Wester Ross Coastal Trail

A Journey through some of the most spectacular scenery the Highlands can offer ...



To get here (from Inverness) the journey will take approximately 50 minutes – Take the A9 past Inverness towards Dingwall, and follow the signs to Ullapool and Gairloch. Just after the village of “Garve”, take the road to the left towards Achnasheen and Gairloch - a distance of approx: 16 miles to reach Achnasheen, which is a remote village formed beside the railway station, and which has a small picnic area where you can stop for a break in your journey. There is also an excellent craft shop, café, and jewellery manufacturer here for you to browse through and buy some local products. The local hotel is just a few yards down the road towards Strathcarron. Turning left at the roundabout (the only one of its kind in Wester Ross!) towards this, follow the A890 along Glencarron to the shores of Loch Carron. The hills on either side provide excellent walking and climbing, with stunning views in all directions. Many hill tracks lead through passes to remote adjoining glens, and provide less strenuous but just as rewarding walking. On reaching Lochcarron (40 minutes from Achnasheen), you are now poised to turn Northwards along the “Coastal Trail”.

To reach this point **from the South** (if travelling from Fort William or Kyle of Lochalsh), you must take the turnoff between Dornie and Kyle – about six miles from either village). This is quite clearly and unambiguously signposted to “The North”, just in case you are in any doubt as to the

direction you are travelling! The road takes in some excellent views of the surrounding mountains, particularly towards Applecross, where huge rock faces jut out over the surrounding countryside. On reaching “Stromeferry”, which once had a ferry across to Lochcarron, the road becomes single track for about five miles, running high over the Lochside with views that take in its entire length. Lochcarron is on the opposite shore. Total journey time from Dornie is about 50 minutes. ■

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# Lohcarron



Lohcarron village

Lohcarron itself is a long narrow village directly beside the shore of Loch Carron, with views across the loch to the hills beyond. There are plenty of amenities here (hotels, shops, bike hire etc) to make this a good base for a more detailed exploration of the surrounding area.

The main road out of Lochcarron to the North quickly gains height, but soon drops down again to the village of Kishorn, which has shops and an excellent seafood restaurant to offer passers by. A few miles further on, the road to Applecross turns off to the left - you now have one of the most dramatic and beautiful stretches of road in the country in front of you,

and a drive which has been described as **“one of the top ten road journeys in the world”** – yes, really!

Just as you gain height, you will see some concrete structures on the left of the road – to satisfy your curiosity, we had better explain that the water here is extremely deep, and this was the site of a major construction yard for deepwater oil platforms during the mid 1970’s. The 600,000 tonne “Ninian Central” platform, at the time the worlds largest moveable structure, was constructed here!

The road you are on now is an old drove road, and takes you to Applecross over the Bealach Na Ba (Pass of

## Interesting Diversions

**Strome 4 miles/6.5km (15 min) from Lochcarron.** Continue west along the road by the shore from Lochcarron to Stromemore where at one time the ferry ran across the loch. You can visit the ruins of Strome Castle and return by the same route.

the Cattle). It has several tight hairpin bends and has been described as the closest thing in this country to an Alpine Pass ... from its summit you can see many of the Hebridean Islands – Skye, Rona, Raasay, Rum, Harris, Lewis etc (on a clear day!). At the top, there is also the possibility of an easy walk up to a radio mast which must be one of the most exposed and remote locations in the country. The views inland from here are particularly spectacular.

Applecross itself was one of earliest seats of Christianity in Scotland, and is a tranquil village providing a contrast to the scenery you have just come through to get there. ■

## Walks

OS Landranger Series Sheet 25. Here are just a few of the many interesting walks in the area. Most are on good paths or tracks.

- Scardroy from Loch Gowan (cross river at footbridge)
- Glenuaig Lodge (Glenn Fhiodhaig) from Craig
- Loch Coulin from Achnashellach Station, over the Coulin Pass
- Bealach na Lice and Loch an Eion from the bridge beside Coulags

## Place Names

- **Achnasheen** (ach-na-sheen) **Field of the Storm** [*Gaelic*]
- **Carron** (karon) **Rough and Rocky River Bed** [*Gaelic*]
- **Strome** (strome) **Current of Water** [*Norse*]
- **Applecross** (apel-kros) **The Estuary of the River Crosan** [*Gaelic*]
- **Bealach na Bà** (bee-alach-na-ba) **The Pass of the Cattle** [*Gaelic*]



Loch Carron and Duncraig

## Services

Tourist Information Centre in Strathcarron ☎ 01520 722918

### Achnasheen

- Craft shop
- PO
- Telephone
- Hotel

### Lochcarron

- Shops & PO
- Petrol stations & garages
- Telephone & toilets
- Hotels & restaurants
- 9 hole golf course, 2 miles outside Lochcarron

### Kishorn

- Award winning seafood bar

## Places of interest

**Strome Castle** (NTS) ruins of 14th century castle

**Rasaal Ashwood** protected wood & limestone flora in area beside gorge

## Rail journey

The railway line from Inverness to Kyle of Lochalsh via Achnasheen has great views. Service details from Strathcarron or Gairloch Information Centres, or Inverness Station.



# Applecross

Applecross village, with its permanent population of just 250 souls, is made up of a number of small hamlets; Millton, Camusterach, Camusteel, Culduie, Toscaig and Aird Dudh, each with its own unique characters. Although Applecross now has modern tourist facilities, it has managed to maintain its old world charm where visitors really feel part of village life. ■



The Russell Burn, on the spectacular Bealach na Ba road that runs from Lochcarron to Applecross

## Places of interest

Sands beach is approximately 4 miles from Applecross, but definitely the best beach in the area. It was the home of TV presenter "Monty Halls" during his popular television series in the summer of 2009 with a large sandy beach, sand dune, and shallow sandy bay it will definitely give the kids a good run around. On your way back from the beach to the car park you will see a rock shelter which is a Mesolithic dwelling used 9,500 years ago.

Clachan church is the site of St. Maelrubha's monastic settlement. Although nothing remains of the monastery, you can go to the heritage centre next door. This is full of interesting information and objects to give a more in-depth look at Applecross through the ages.

## Services

### Applecross

- Shop & PO
- Petrol station
- Applecross Inn
- Walled Garden Restaurant
- The Flower Tunnel Cafe
- Mountain and sea guides for outdoor activities ( kayaking, hill walking, mountaineering)
- Campsite for tents & caravans with facilities
- ATM
- Public telephone and toilets
- Heritage centre
- Large sandy beaches
- Pier at Milton and Aird Dubh



Abbot's Stone, Clachan

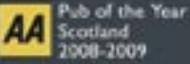
## Local facts

In 2004 there was a Time Team dig on the banking in the middle of the campsite. This has unearthed what looks like a Broch, but also has earlier buildings in and around it. Since Time Team came, the project has been taken on by Applecross Archaeology Society who have held two digs per year on the site. 2010 was the last year this was planned for, as the team are taking a break.

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# Loch Torridon

Follow the road around the coast, and you find yourself travelling around on of the most remote peninsulas in the Highlands. The road itself is relatively flat, but more than enough interest is provided by the endless stream of views across to Raasay, Skye, and Rona – occasionally you might also see a submarine on exercises off the coast, for this area of water is used for “silent running” tests – that’s what the modern building a few miles along the road on your

left is apparently for. There are also the ruined remains of several settlements to be seen - a poignant reminder of the more recent history of the Highlands. As much as the Caithness and Sutherland area, this part of the West Coast had its own clearances, with many people being shifted off their land against their will by unscrupulous landlords.

This is single track road all the way to Shieldaig, an attractive village located just off the main road with a

hotel, shops, and services. However, this broadens out to a double road once more and follows the coast along the shore of Loch Torridon, eventually arriving at Torridon Village. ■

● **At this point, you will have driven about 35 miles / 80 minutes from Lochcarron – easily enough to allow stops, coffee breaks, or to visit some of the craft shops or seafood suppliers along the way!**



Liathach towering over Torridon village



Red deer and calf

## Services

### Torridon

- Shop
- Telephone
- Hostel (SYHA)

### Shieldaig

- Shops
- Telephone & toilets
- Hotel/bar

## Places of interest

- Shieldaig Island NTS bird sanctuary, covered in Scots Pine
- Balgy Falls series of falls on the River Balgy flowing from Loch Dampb
- Torridon Countryside Centre (NTS) information on local Highland wildlife
- Deer Museum small display and enclosure with Red Deer

## Local facts

In 1893 the minister of Shieldaig broke away from the established church along with the minister of Raasay to form the Free Presbyterian Church.

## Place Names

- **Shieldaig** (sheel-daiyg)  
Herring Bay [*Norse*]
- **Balgy** (bal-gi)  
Bubbly stream [*Gaelic*]
- **Annat** (ahn-aht)  
Mother Church [*Gaelic*]
- **Torridon** (torid-on)  
Place of transference  
– possibly to Loch Maree [*Gaelic*]
- **Fasag** (fahs-ahg)  
Dwelling [*Gaelic*]
- **Alligin** (ahl-i-gin)  
Jewel or Pretty Woman  
[*Gaelic*]
- **Diabaig** (jaiya-bek)  
Deep bay [*Norse*]

## Walks

OS Landranger Series Sheet 24. Here are just a few of the many interesting walks in the area. Most are on good paths or tracks.

- End of peninsula (Eilean à Chaoil) from Shieldaig
- Coire Mhic Fhearchair from the main car park in Glen Torridon
- Bealach na Lice from Annat (with possible continuation to Glen Carron)
- Coire Mhic Nobuil from the car park on the road to Diabaig. You can return by the same route or continue to the main car park
- Craig from Diabaig. You can return by the same route or continue to Redpoint (transport may need to be organised)

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# Kinlochewe

## Interesting Diversions

**Diabaig 9 miles (20 min) from Torridon village turn-off.** From Torridon, there is a worthwhile detour (9 miles) along a twisty road to the fishing village of Diabaig, situated on a dramatic cliff – encircled bay. One point has particular notoriety, where you come over a rounded summit on the single track road, and realise that the road immediately executes a sharp turn – the perception from the inside of a car is that the road has totally disappeared without warning, leading to some interesting comments from passengers and drivers alike!.



**The Beinn Eighe reserve**

Along the main road to Kinlochewe – still on the Coastal trail – the only thing you have to look out for is keeping your eyes on the road ahead, because all the way along this road you are passing the below the towering ramparts of Liathach, then the long ridge of Beinn Eighe. Particularly in the case of Liathach,

these mountains seem to rise almost vertically from the road, ending up 3456 ft above you, the tops often hidden in the clouds. Much of this area is a National Nature Reserve, with the National Trust looking after much of the Torridon end of the glen, and Scottish Natural Heritage bordering on to this with the Beinn

## Services

### Kinlochewe

- Cafe
- Restaurant
- Petrol station
- Car park with toilets & telephone
- Hotel, bar & bunkhouse
- Caravan park
- Basic campsite at Taagan

## Places of interest

- Beinn Eighe Visitor Centre, Aultroy (SNH) display of the geography, geology, natural history and its conservation on the nature reserve
- Beinn Eighe Glas Leitir Trails (SNH) car park & information point

Eighe reserve – rightly honoured as one of the finest in both Scotland and Europe, and indeed, the world.

Kinlochewe is a compact settlement, and provides an excellent base for a wide range of walking and climbing in this area. There are shops, hotel, and fuel services. ■



# Loch Maree

Along the South side of the A832 towards Gairloch, ancient Scots Pines cover the hillsides on your left, forming part of the Beinn Eighe National Nature Reserve. This is one of the rare surviving fragments of the "Great Wood of Caledon" that once clothed much of the Highlands. The reserve has several rare species of plants and animals, and is of geological interest as well.

A visit to the Aultroy Visitor Centre is a "must". Only a mile or so outside Kinlochewe, this has walks to suit all abilities (including pushchairs etc), and a fascinating exhibition which explains the natural history of the region.

Past Aultroy, and for nearly 12 miles along the road, you are following the shore of Loch Maree, one of the most beautiful lochs in the Highlands, with the



**Slioch and Loch Maree**

mass of Slioch filling much of the skyline on the eastern shore. And while travelling along this road, consider the fact that the landowning structure of the Scottish Highlands is rooted in a feudalistic past, allowing (for example) ownership of the entire eastern side of the loch to be in the hands of one private estate – a scenario repeated across much of the Highlands even today. The history of the islands on Loch Maree, incidentally, can be traced as far back as the 7th century, when the Irish monk,

Maelrubha, established a religious cell on Isle Maree.

Past the more gentle wooded area of Talladale to Victoria Falls on your left, Slattadale comes into view. There are some rough (but driveable) tracks leading down to a parking / picnic area by the lochside and on your right going up the long steep hill towards Gairloch, one of the largest tree planting projects in the country is under way (at the time of writing). Trees being trees, this will still be under way in many years time as they grow to maturity! ■



## Local facts

The history of Loch Maree can be traced back to the 7th century when the Irish monk, Maelrubha established a cell on Isle Maree on the loch.

## Walks

OS Landranger Series Sheet 19. Here are just a few of the many interesting walks in the area. Most are on good paths or tracks.

- Heights of Kinlochewe, Leckie & Gleann na Muice from Kinlochewe
- Gleann Bianasdail & Lochan Fada from Kinlochewe
- Poolewe along the north shore of Loch Maree from Kinlochewe, via Strathan Buidhe
- Woodland Trail & Mountain Trail from the Glas Leitir car park
- Poolewe from Slattadale (return transport needs to be organised)
- Loch na h-Oidhche & Poca Buidhe from Loch Bad an Scalaig
- Loch Garbhaig from Victoria Falls car park



Glen Docherty

## Services

at Kinlochewe

- Self catering chalets
- Hotel restaurant
- Cafe

## Places of interest

- Victoria Falls, Slattadale Waterfalls with short woodland walk. Queen Victoria visited the area in 1877 and the waterfalls were named after her.
- Slattadale car park on the shores of Loch Maree lochside walks

## Place Names

- Kinlochewe (kin-loch-yoo) Head of Loch Ewe [*Gaelic*]  
Loch Maree may have formerly been known as Loch Ewe in pre-Christian times
- Grudie (grou-dee) Gravelly River Bed [*Gaelic*]
- Slattadale (slat-a-dale) Even Dale [*Norse*]
- Talladale (tahl-a-dale) Ledge Dale [*Norse*]



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# Loch Gairloch

As you come closer to Gairloch, the road winds through Kerrysdale, and runs past the small Hydro- electric power station on your left that supplies much of the area with electricity. This was opened in 1951, and was one of the earliest in the country. At one point during its construction, there was a slight problem created when the construction workers accidentally cut the main telephone line to Iceland, which just happened to run through the gorge they were working in!

You now arrive at one of the main centres in Wester Ross. This is a collection of settlements arranged around Loch Gairloch, which are collectively referred to as "Gairloch", although they are all essentially separate communities. Continuing past the busy harbour area, you pass the golf course, bank, beach, and garage. While most of the shops are located at "Strath", there are a scattering of shops, facilities, hotels and B&B throughout. ■



Gairloch harbour

## Services

### Gairloch

- Tourist Information Centre
- Shops & PO
- Petrol station & garage
- Hotels/bars
- Restaurants & cafes
- Caravan & camping parks with facilities
- Telephones & toilets
- Bank of Scotland
- Police station
- Sport & leisure centre
- Library
- Museum
- 9 hole golf course with clubhouse & good parking
- Slipways at the pier and near Strath Square
- Boat trips from the pier at Charlestown
- Carn Dearg Hostel (SYHA), 2 miles outside Gairloch

### Shieldaig

(on the way to Redpoint)

- Hotel

### Badachro

- Inn/bar

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Big Sand beach near Gairloch

## Places of interest

- Gairloch Beach safe, sheltered, sandy beach with good parking and toilets
- Big Sand Beach safe, sheltered, sandy beach
- Gairloch Heritage Museum interesting displays of local life through the years
- Gairloch Pier (Charlestown) relaxed harbour with fishing boats and pleasure craft. Also has a small marine life centre, shop and cafe
- Rubha Reidh Lighthouse Wildlife Visitor Centre open all year round

## Walks

OS Landranger Series Sheet 19. Here are just a few of the many interesting walks in the area. Most are on good paths or tracks.

- Flowerdale Waterfall from the car park near the pier
- An Ard from the pier or the beach car park
- The Old Road from Flowerdale to Loch Bad an Sgalaig
- Loch a’ Bhealaich from the car park beyond Shieldaig Lodge

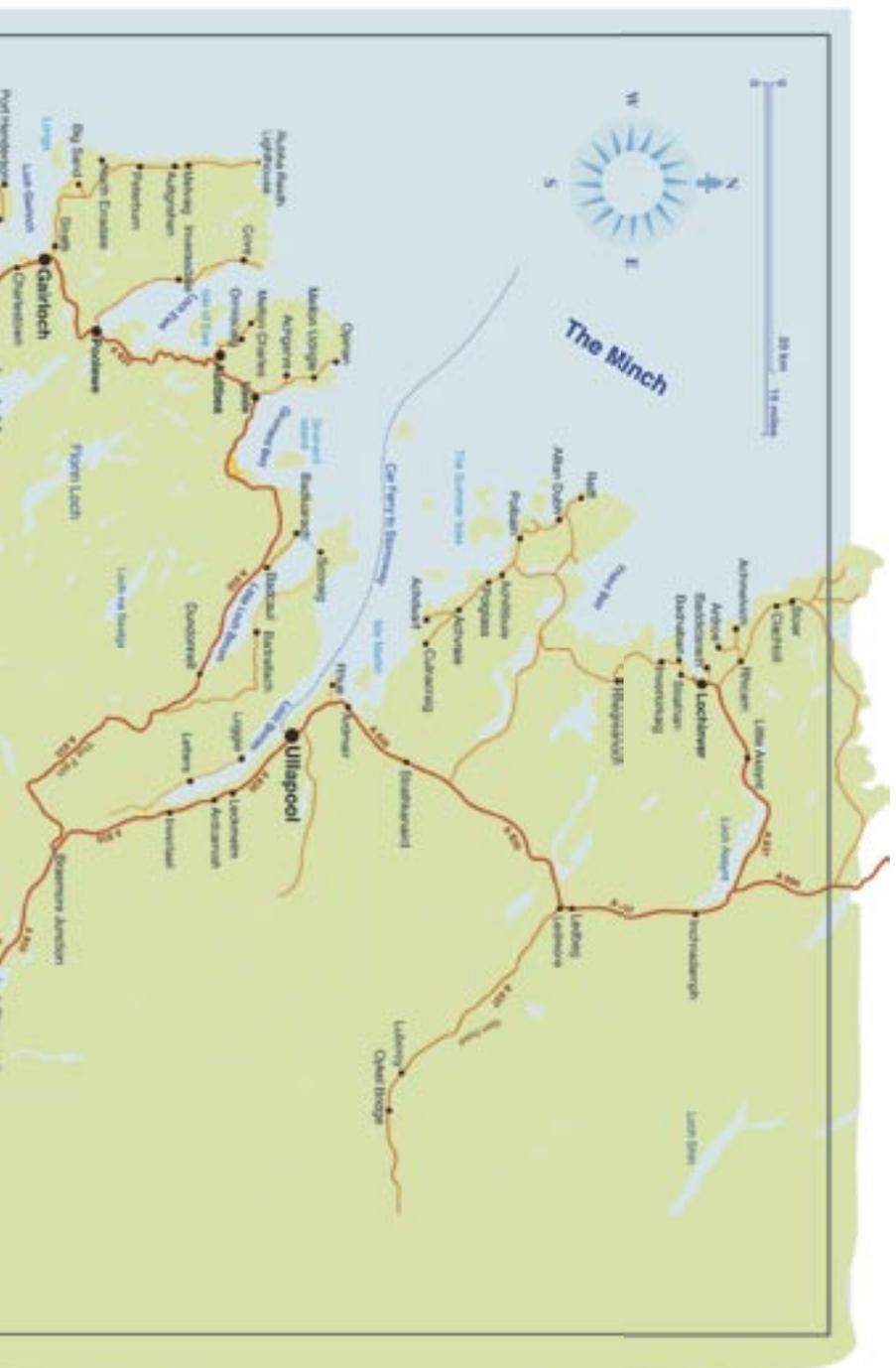
Spectacular cliff top walk to Rhubha Reidh Lighthouse from Melvaig (approx. 4 miles)



Gairloch



# Map of the Wester Ross area



## Interesting Diversions

Rubha Reidh lighthouse and wildlife visitor centre 13 miles (30 min) from Gairloch. When you head out west along the lochside from Gairloch the road passes Big Sand beach before turning inland for a few miles then back again to the breathtaking scenery of the open sea. From the cliffs, Skye and the Western Isles fill the complete horizon. The road continues through the scattered settlement of Melvaig, then up a short steep hill to further incredible views along the rugged coastline, all the way to the end of the peninsula at the lighthouse.

Redpoint 9 miles (25 min) from Gairloch.

The minor road along the south shore of Loch Gairloch starts through a lush, wooded area with glimpses of the loch and surrounding hills. At Badachro there is a beautiful sheltered anchorage filled with small boats. The road reaches the open sea again, with a sandy beach at Opinan, and continues to the road end at the Redpoint car park. Paths take you either to the old fishing station or to a secluded sandy beach.



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Looking from Badachro towards Gairloch. Gairloch Heritage Museum (opposite page)

### Local facts

Gairloch Heritage Museum is housed in converted farm buildings and is operated by a group of local people. The aim of the museum is to explain and interpret the local culture & Gaelic language. The museum has won several awards over the last few years.

## Place Names

- **Achtercairn** (ach-ter-kairn) **Field of the cairn** [*Gaelic*]
- **Melvaig** (mel-vaig) **Bay of the bent grass** [*Norse*]
- **Erradale** (er-a-dale) **Gravel-beach Dale** [*Norse*]
- **Rubha Reidh** (roo-ray) **Smooth Point** [*Gaelic*]



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Achtercairn, Gairloch, Ross-shire, IV21 2BP

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# Loch Ewe

The road rises steeply from Gairloch over to Poolewe, across a moorland plateau and close to Loch Tollaidh, before dropping again to sea level at Poolewe itself.

## Place Names

- **Poolewe** (pool-yoo)  
**Pool of the River Ewe**  
[Gaelic]
- **Cove** (cove) **Place of the Cave** [Gaelic]
- **Inverewe** (inver-yoo)  
**Mouth of the River Ewe** [Gaelic]
- **Aultbea** (awlt-bay)  
**Birch Burn** [Gaelic]
- **Mellon Charles**  
(melon-charls) **Little Hill of Charles** [Gaelic]



Looking down to Tollie Farm

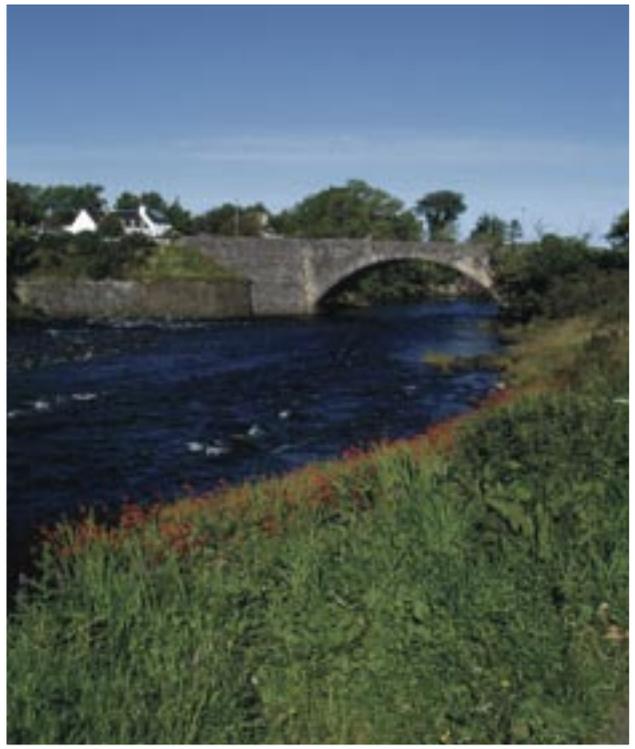
## Walks

OS Landranger Series Sheet 19. Here are just a few of the many interesting walks in the area. Most are on good paths or tracks.

- Slattadale from car park/viewpoint above Tollie Farm
- Tollie Bay from car park/viewpoint
- Fionn Loch from Poolewe, via Kernsary
- Loch Kernsary from Poolewe, start at SronDubh and return by Riverside
- Loch an Draing & Camas Mor from Midtown (parking difficult)
- Leacon Donna from Mellon Charles road end (parking not easy)

► Poolewe is a small, but attractive village at the head of the sheltered sea loch of Loch Ewe. It used to be a bustling little port with connections to the Outer Isles, however it is famous nowadays for being only a mile down the road from the world famous Inverewe Gardens. Founded by Osgood Mackenzie in 1862, on a barren peninsula overlooking the village of Poolewe, these are recognised as one of the finest gardens in Europe, with a plant collection of international importance. With over 130,000 visitors from all over the world each year, Inverewe has become a mecca for garden lovers who marvel at the rich diversity of plants which thrive in this remote corner of the Highlands. Favoured with the milder climate created by the Gulf Stream Inverewe Garden, now in the care of the National Trust for Scotland, is well named as the 'Oasis of the North' On the western side of the loch, the coast road to Cove offers a highly scenic trip, with excellent panoramas of almost all the hills to the North West of Ross-shire and indeed all the way up to Sutherland.

Loch Ewe was also one of the main convoy assembly lochs during WW11, and a string of disused fortifications along much of the lochside testifies to the



**River Ewe at Poolewe**

substantial activity that went on here in those days.

Carrying on towards Aultbea along the main road, the road gains height over Loch Ewe, showing the full extent of the loch, with Isle Ewe at its centre. The large pier on your left at the lochside is a NATO refuelling base, incidentally. Eventually, the road takes you to Aultbea, with shops, hotel, and garage facilities accessible by turning off the main road and along for nearly a mile. To the right, as you come into Aultbea, are signs pointing to the

Loch Ewe Distillery – the only business of its kind in the entire area.

With views back across Loch Ewe to the Torridon Mountains, the minor road along the east shore of Loch Ewe is also well worth a visit for the many charming townships along the way. Staying with the “unique” theme, you will come to the “Perfumerie” – producing a range of high quality perfumes and soaps. At the road end you can walk to the cliffs and watch the marine life of Loch Ewe & the Minch. ■



# You can stop wondering what to do today.

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	1 Nov to 31 Dec	10-3	MTWTFSS

VISITOR CENTRE	1 Apr to 31 Oct*	10-4	MTWTFSS
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RESTAURANT	1 Apr to 31 Oct*	11-4	MTWTFSS
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\* Opening times are extended at peak times of the year. For further information please visit [www.nts.org.uk](http://www.nts.org.uk) or contact property. The garden may be closed for health and safety reasons in unfavourable weather conditions such as high winds and snow.



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Remains of 2nd World War fortifications

## Interesting Diversions

**Cove 9 miles (15 min) from Poolewe.**

The minor road to the end of the peninsula runs along the west shore of Loch Ewe and offers excellent panoramas of almost all the hills to the north west of Ross-shire & Sutherland. Scattered crofting communities stretch along almost the full length of the land beside the sea. At the road end there is some rough parking around the remains of 2nd World War fortifications. Firemore beach is reached by this road.

**Mellon Charles 4 miles (10 min) from Aultbea.** The minor road along the east shore of Loch Ewe is also well worth a visit for the views of the hills of south & west Ross-shire and the charming townships along the way. At the road end you can walk to the cliffs beside more old fortifications.



The view from Inverewe Garden across Loch Ewe

## Services

- B&B, self catering accomodation, guest houses & hotels throughout the area

### Poolewe

- Shop & PO
- Garage (no petrol)
- Telephone & toilets
- Hotels/bars/restaurants
- cafes
- Caravan & campsite
- Indoor swimming pool
- Children's playground

### Aultbea

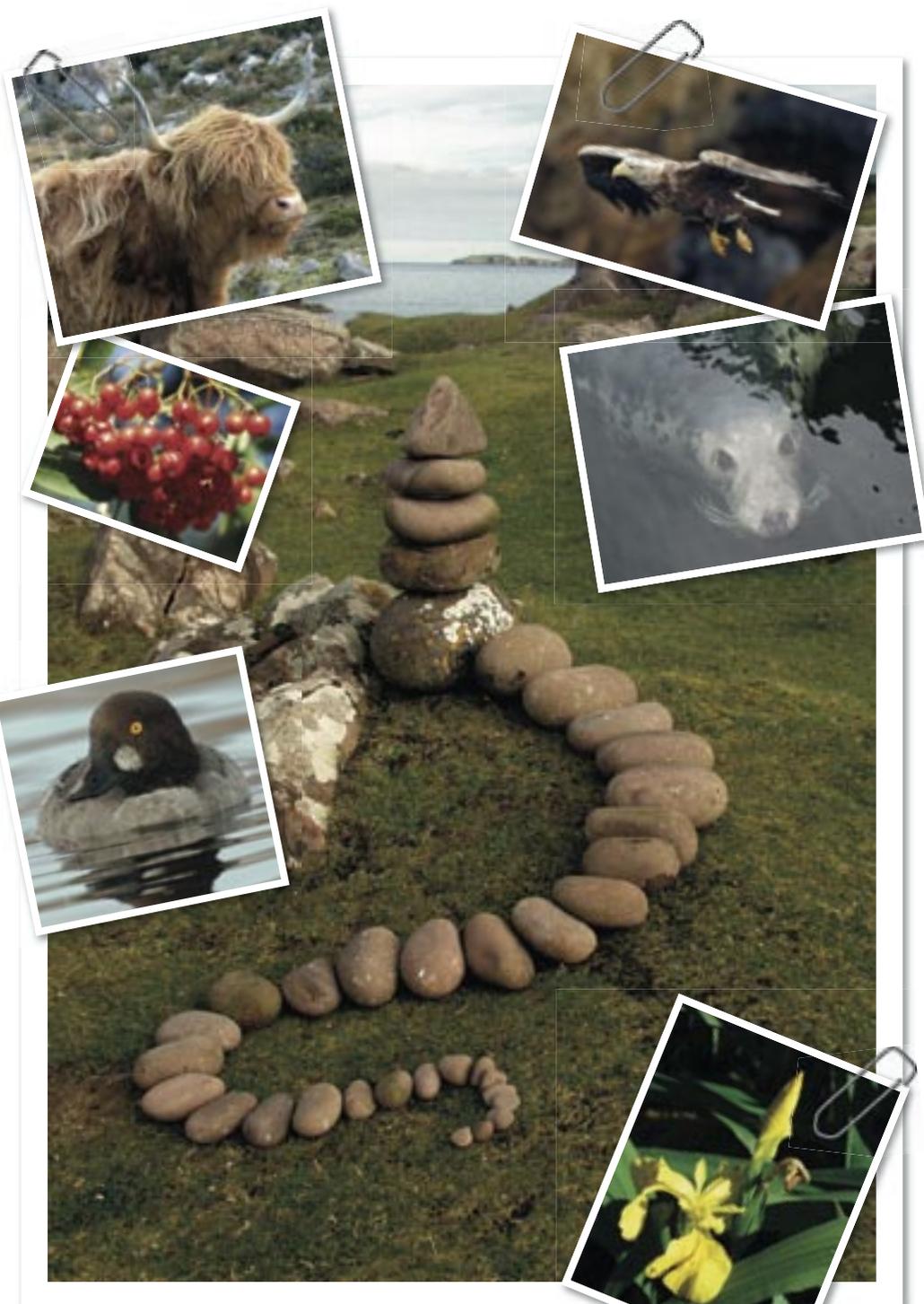
- Shops & PO
- Hotels/bars/restaurants
- cafes
- Garage (no petrol)
- Telephone & toilets

### Mellon Charles

- Perfumerie, cafe & gift shop

## Places of interest

- Firemore Beach (on the road to Cove) safe, sheltered sandy beach
- Old gun emplacements (Cove road end) look out for the information board
- Cave (2 miles south of Cove) used as a place of worship
- Inverewe Garden (NTS) extensive, sheltered garden, with restaurant & shop





# Laide

There now follows just over thirty miles of winding and (occasionally quite steep) road to Braemore Junction, which takes you into the more northerly part of Wester Ross towards Ullapool, our largest population centre. A couple of miles north of Aultbea, just before you reach the community of Laide, you will reach Laide Wood. This is used by many people

in the local community as well as visitors, who come here to enjoy the vast array of wildlife and spectacular views. Natural features, which make walking along the woodland tracks here such a pleasurable experience, include deep water courses, two lochans and a cascading waterfall which feeds Loch na Creige, the lochan by its Eastern Boundary. ■

## Interesting Diversions

**Opinan & Mellon Udrigle 4 miles (10 min) from Laide.**  
The minor road from Laide follows the coast for a mile then heads inland to Achgarve, and passes Loch na Beiste (Loch of the Beast) to Mellon Udrigle beach. The road continues another mile to the coast at Opinan.

## Services

### Laide

- Shop & PO
- Petrol station
- Caravan & camping park
- Small jetty

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## Places of interest

- Old church & Burial Ground, Laide very early Christian site
- Caves, Laide one was used as a place of worship until the end of the last century
- Mellon Udrigle Beach safe, sheltered, sandy beach with car park (photo on page 25)
- Slaggan Beach secluded, sandy beach at end of rough track
- Gruinard Beach safe, sheltered, sandy beach with car park



## Gruinard Bay

### Walks

OS Landranger Series Sheet 19. Here are just a few of the many interesting walks in the area. Most are on good paths or tracks.

- Slaggan from track end (just past Achgarve)
- Inverianvie River from car park at Gruinard Beach
- Gruinard River and Loch na Sealga from Gruinard Bridge

Moving on, the first item of interest after the village of Laide is probably Gruinard Island, which lies in the centre of the large bay on your left. This gained a certain level of local infamy when experiments using Anthrax spores were carried out there prior to WW11, presumably on the basis that there were so few people living up here, well, if it went wrong then it wasn't a major problem! Imagine trying this on the Isle of Wight!

Gruinard Bay itself has a fantastic beach – large, gently sloping, and where the sea recedes well out into the bay at low tide. This is a particularly relaxing spot for a beach walk or picnic. ■

### Place Names

- **Laide** (lay-d) **Broad slope** [*Gaelic*]. Laide of Udrigil in the old days
- **Mellon Udrigle** (melon-oodrigil) **Little Hill of Udrigle** [*Gaelic*]
- **Gruinard** (grin-yard) **Shallow Firth** [*Norse*]

# Little Loch Broom

After Gruinard Bay, the road passes close by Gruinard House before climbing inland again. The carpark and viewpoint at the top of the hill gives excellent views out over Little Loch Broom to the Scoraig Peninsula, and then further North towards Achiltibuie and the surrounding hills. The road then falls down to the Lochside past Ardesie falls to Dundonnell, then winds its way up the gorge to the Destitution Road over the wild "Fain" and past the Fannich mountains, before dropping once more to Braemore Junction.

You can still see large remnants of the old

'Destitution Road', which originally gained its name from the fact that it was built during a period of hunger and hardship in the area during the 1800's. These roads were a method of providing employment and support to the region during troubled times, and simultaneously created links between communities that still survive today in the form of our modern road system.

Just before you reach Braemore Junction, look out for the car park on your left, for Corrieshalloch Gorge. It is well worth a stop to take a walk down and across the 200ft deep gorge, with its fragile looking footbridge. ■

## Services

### Dundonnell

- Craft shop & gallery
- Shop & PO
- Petrol station
- Hotel
- Campsite
- Hostel
- Bed & breakfast
- Cafe & craft shop
- Mountain guiding & climbing instruction
- Creag Ard boat charters - fishing & diving

### Badrallach

- Campsite
- Bed & breakfast



Looking over Little Loch Broom towards the Summer Isles

## Interesting Diversions

**Badluarach 3 miles (5 min) from Badcaul.**

As the road begins to drop down to Little Loch Broom from the carpark and viewpoint, you can turn left at Badcaul along the minor road to the road end at Badluarach.

**Badrallach 7 miles (15 min) from Dundonnell.**

As you leave Dundonnell and head up to the Fain, a minor road turns left and crosses an old bridge to Dundonnell House. It then takes a sharp right hand turn up through a plantation and under the cliffs. At the highest point a path leads over to Loch Broom. The road continues down again almost to Little Loch Broom at Badrallach where a footpath leads to the end of the peninsula at Scoraig.



The Fain

## Walks

OS Landranger Series Sheet 19. Here are just a few of the many interesting walks in the area. Most are on good paths or tracks.

- Shenevall and Achneigie from the car park at Corrie Hallie
- Lochivroan from the Loch a' Bhraoin track end (on the Fain)
- Allt na h-Airbhe from the highest point on the road to Badrallach

## Places of interest

- **Scoraig** isolated community at end of a peninsula
- **Ardessie Falls** series of waterfalls near Dundonnell
- **Corrieshalloch Gorge & Falls of Measach (NTS)**  
The river Droma descends dramatically over the Falls of Measach into the impressive gorge. 1.25 km / 0.75 miles long and 60m / 200 ft deep. This was formed by glacial melted waters excavating a channel through rock already weakened by vertical fracture. The gorge sides supports mosses, ferns, and liverworts. Access is from car park on the A832 Gairloch road near Braemore Junction.

## Place Names

- **Badluarach** (bad-loo-rach) **The Clump of the Rushes** [*Gaelic*]
- **Dundonnell** (dun-dawn-el) **Donald's Fort** [*Gaelic*]
- **Badrallach** (bad-rawl-ach) **Oak Clump** [*Gaelic*]



# Ullapool



**Ullapool with Beinn Ghobhlach in the background**

Turning left towards Ullapool from Braemore Junction, the wide sweeping road takes you down a steep hill, at the bottom of which, you pass Braemore Square, a grand looking house designed by John Fowler, who was responsible for one of the wonders of the Victorian World – the Forth Railway Bridge.

Along now past Lael Forest, which has several stopping places on the right hand side of the road giving access to some excellent forest walks. Just past this, the road opens up, with views all the way up Loch Broom towards Ullapool, now a collection of whitewashed buildings only

about ten miles away.

Ullapool is a busy fishing town, with a ferry terminal where you can take a four hour ferry trip across the Minch to Stornoway (on the Isle of Lewis), or a much shorter trip to see the bird and sea life by the Summer Isles. By the standards of the area, the town also has plenty shops, an excellent museum, hotels, accommodation and petrol.

Ullapool also has several cultural events happening each year, such as the Guitar Festival, Book Festival, and "The best little Fest in the West" - the annual "Loopallu" Music festival, which takes place at the end of September. ■

## Services

### Ullapool

- Tourist Information Centre
- B&B, self catering accomodation, guest houses & hotels throughout the area
- Campsites
- Restaurants, bars, bistros & takeaways
- Wide range of shops
- Supermarket
- Outdoor and camping supplies
- Post office & Bureau de Change
- Banks & ATMs
- Garage services (inc rental)
- Fuel (inc Gas)
- Internet Access
- Leisure centre (inc swimming pool & fitness centre)
- 9 hole golf course
- Football & shinty (field & all weather surfaces)
- Sailing club and yachting berths
- Mountain guiding
- Library
- Museum
- Boat trips
- Performing arts centre
- An talla solais visual arts centre
- Year round music & bespoke festivals



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## Places of interest

- **Inverlael**  
Situated 16 km / 10 miles from Ullapool on the A835, this forest garden boasts a fine collection of mature and rare tree specimens. There is a network of paths allowing easy access.
- **Ullapool Museum**  
Situated on West Argyll Street, this multi award winning museum and visitor centre is housed in a Thomas Telford church of 1829. The museum tells the story of Loch Broom – the land and sea – its people from the ice age to the present day using a blend of traditional and modern multimedia displays with commentary in six European languages.



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### LOCHBROOM LEISURE CENTRE

Lochbroom Leisure has over 32,000 visitors every year. The multi-purpose games hall, fully equipped fitness suite and 25 metre swimming pool is right in the centre of Ullapool and the swimming pool has been described as the best in the Highlands.

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## Places of interest

- **Knockan Crag**

This is a very important site for understanding how the landscape of northern Britain was formed. The Moine Thrust Plane shows an unusual situation where older Moine rocks have come to lie over much younger Durness limestone because of the folding and over thrusting of rock layers. There is an unmanned visitor centre, open all hours and throughout the year with information and interactive displays on the landscape and geology of the area. There are two circular trails for different abilities, a car park and toilets.

- **Inverpolly**

### Nature Reserve

This landscape is dominated by the sandstone peaks of Cul Mor, Cul Beag and Stac Pollaidh. Habitats include seashore and marine islands, scree and barren mountain tops, streams, numerous lochs. Bogs, and a scattering of birch, hazel and rowan trees. They support a variety of wildlife including the most northerly colony of wood ants. Golden plover, wheatear, ring ouzel, greenshank and curlew all breed on the damp moorland and ptarmigan on the tops. There is a good path from Loch Lurgainn up and around the summit of Stac Pollaidh that can be reached from the official car park on the roadside.

## Walks

OS Landranger Series Sheet Nos 15 / 19. Here are just a few of the many interesting walks in the area.

- **Ullapool Hill walks:** A range of routes of up to 2 miles length and 250mtrs in height. Fine views over Ullapool and surrounding mountains.
- **Ullapool to Rhue:** Half day walk, starting from Morefield River Bridge, walking along Loch Broom for much of the way ... ends at Rhue Light House.
- **Stac Pollaidh:** One of Scotland's most distinctive small hills at 440mtrs. Drive 10 miles North of Ullapool, turn left towards Achiltibuie, car park about 5 miles further on.
- **Highland Geopark & Inchnadamph bone caves:** Geology based visitor centre & pre-historic bone caves. Approx: 40 minutes North of Ullapool.
- **Lael Forest walks:** Signposted forestry walks in coniferous woodland located 10 miles south of Ullapool. 2 Car parks.



Looking north towards Coigach

Leaving Ullapool behind, the only way to go from here is north along the A835 towards Achiltibuie and Ledmore Junction. Uniquely for UK waters, it used to be the case that many Eastern Bloc factory ships dropped anchor here for several weeks at a time, leading to a situation where signs in Russian could be seen in several shops, and where the fellow standing next to you at the bar was quite likely to have been a citizen of the USSR. ■



# Achiltibuie

All along the road towards Ledmore, there are spectacular views of the surrounding mountains, including Stac Pollaidh, Cul Mor, and Cul Beag.

Heading north on the road from Ullapool, the sights of the mountains are even more dramatic than the way in to the village – and only a few miles or so up the road towards Ledmore, you come to Knockan Crag.

This is a world famous site for geology (The science and understanding of modern day geology was actually started here), and there is a superb interactive visitor centre here, which explains - in terms that are understandable to everybody – all about plate tectonics and movements of land masses around the planet.

After about 8 miles, the turn off to Achiltibuie

appears, and this takes you on a dramatic 15 miles worth of single track road through a mix of mountain and moorland. Take it slowly, enjoy the views.

After passing Stac Pollaidh, with its craggy summit seeming to be only a stone's throw away from the road (but actually 2000 ft up), the landscape evens out quite a bit, and is obviously nearing the coast. Arriving at

## Interesting Diversions

### Achiltibuie & the Summer Isles

Achiltibuie along with the view of the Summer Isles can be reached via the Inverpolly Nature Reserve Road. Achiltibuie is a typical coastal settlement where fishing and crafting have been it's root and branch for 300 years. The revamped Hydroponicum provides a interesting range of plants and growing media for the plant enthusiast. The Summer Isles can be viewed from the mainland and explored by boat from either Badentarbat Pier or Ullapool. One of the best views can be made at Altandhu by taking the round route of the peninsula. Viewers are offered a landscape of rugged seas cliffs dotted with roosting or nesting sea birds, sea worn crevices, caves and rock arches. In the more sheltered waters basking seals favour sandy beaches and rock shelves.

### Sandwood Bay 60 miles (1 hour 40 mins) from Ullapool

The 6.5km / 4 miles footpath is only accessible by foot and leaves the public road at Blairmore. Sandwood Bay boasts some of the most magnificent beach and cliff scenery in Europe. Experience peatland, sand dunes and machair (surrounding the loch) and look out for uncommon plants such as Royal fern and mountain avens.

## Place Names

- **Ardmair** (ard-mare) **Finger promontory** [*Gaelic*]
- **Inverlael** (inver-law-al) **Low hollow at river mouth** [*Gaelic / Norse*]
- **Polbain** (poll-bayn) **The fair hollow** [*Gaelic*]
- **Coigach** (coy-ach or coyk-ach) **Place of fifths** [*Gaelic*] division of land into fifths was an old Gaelic practice.



**Looking South towards An Teallach**

► Achiltibuie, there are views out over the sea towards the Torridon Mountains, away to the South of the region.

Achiltibuie itself offers accommodation, stores, and a major visitor attraction in the shape of the “Hydroponicum”.

What’s that? Have you always thought that you need soil to grow plants? No, you don’t, and the Hydroponicum explains how.

Retracing your drive to the Ullapool road, you eventually arrive back at the main A835 road. Turning

left, northwards towards Lochinver, there is a drive of constant scenery changes with high remote hills on all sides, and only an occasional house or croft to remind you that you are only just in touch with civilisation. Enjoy! ■

# Wildlife



Look out for otters

## The Scots Pine

The Scots Pine can be found in various locations throughout the world. Loch Maree is one of the few areas in Scotland where small pockets of the pure genetic strain can be found. This particular variety is

believed to date back 8000 years to the end of the last Ice Age.

## The White -tailed eagle

The White-tailed eagle or Sea Eagle has recently been re-introduced into the area from northern Norway after an absence of many years.

## Plants to look out for

- Heather (Ling)
- Cross-leaved Heath
- Bell Heather
- Spotted Orchid
- Sundew
- Butterwort
- Blaeberry
- Bearberry
- Cowberry
- Crowberry
- Cloudberry
- Bog Myrtle
- Bog Asphodel
- Alpine Ladies Mantle

## Marine life

The Minch (between the Outer Isles & Mainland) has the most diverse and numerous range of cetaceans to be found anywhere around mainland Britain.

The North Atlantic Drift (a continuation of the Gulf Stream) warms the sea and provides good breeding conditions for marine life. ■

## Birds to look out for

- Ring ousel
- Red-throated diver
- Black-throated diver
- Great northern diver
- Guillemot
- Black guillemot
- Razorbill
- Puffin
- Merganser
- Goosander
- Ptarmigan
- Red grouse
- Black grouse
- Crossbill
- Hoody crow
- Raven
- Golden eagle
- White-tailed eagle
- Buzzard
- Merlin
- Kestrel
- Peregrine falcon
- Sparrowhawk
- Spotted woodpecker

## Mammals to look out for

- Minke whale
- Killer whale (Orca)
- Harbour porpoise
- Common dolphin
- Common seal
- Grey seal
- Otter
- Mountain hare
- Wild cat
- Pine marten
- Red deer
- Roe deer

# Historical extracts

## Wester Ross

The name Ross, derived from Rois (meaning a headland) was probably first applied to promontories of land on the east coast and then came to be extended across the whole region to the west.

Although still Ross-shire, this region became known as Ross & Cromarty in 1698 when George MacKenzie, who owned lands throughout the area, succeeded in having his own lands recognised as a separate county of Cromarty.

## Iron smelting

At the beginning of the 17th century some lowland lairds were encouraged by the crown to gain control of the Western Highlands and Islands. In particular,

### *Caves at Laide*

**One of the caves at Laide was used as a church until the turn of the last century. Old Duncan Matheson who died recently aged 93 was the last baby to be baptised there when his family were driven off Priest Island due to extreme hardship, and landed at Coast, where they lived in their upturned boat until they built a house.**



**Rubha Reidh lighthouse**

Sir George Hay tried unsuccessfully to control Lewis, but concentrated his efforts in the Loch Maree area around 1607. It is possible that Hay came across ancient, primitive iron works at Loch Maree and decided to develop the iron smelting industry when he saw the potential of the local bog iron deposits and extensive woodlands. As local bog iron deposits were used up, imported ores from the south were transported by boat. As a result the iron works at Letterewe were relocated at Poolewe where the iron ore was landed. The works ceased around 1668, probably as the local timber was used up. Despite the extensive spread of the works, very little trace of these activities can now be seen.

## Lighthouse

Rubha Reidh lighthouse was built by David A. Stevenson, a cousin of Robert Louis Stevenson and opened in 1912. Until the road was completed in 1962, access to the lighthouse was by sea.

## Railway

A railway from Achnasheen to Aultbea, via Loch Maree and Poolewe was proposed in the late 1880's, but came to nothing. A copy of the bill in parliament supporting the railway can be seen in Gairloch Museum.

## Coastal settlements

Many lairds created coastal settlements for their tenants, who were dispossessed from the straths & glens. So villages such as Strathcarron were populated by people who were encouraged to live off fishing instead of farming.

## Canonball

A canonball found near Flowerdale House (Gairloch), is thought to have been fired from a man-of-war in 1746 in its pursuit of Prince Charles Edward, who was on the run after the battle of Culloden. ■



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