



Canisp and Suilven from Lochinver, North-west Highlands

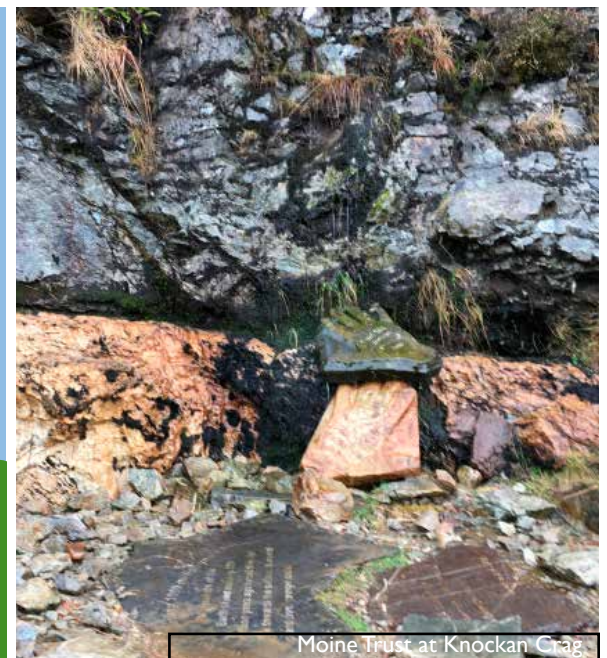
North-West Highlands & Isle of Skye Geological Hiking Tour

Geology in spectacular scenery

It is the geology that gives rise to the dramatic landscapes we experience in the north-west Highlands and on the Isle of Skye today. Here we can move between the seemingly impenetrable mass of high hills, witness the drama of mountains climbing steeply out of long deep sea lochs and contemplate solitary peaks rising unexpectedly from the gently undulating knock and lochan landscape, a rocky surface peppered with tiny lochans (lakes). The scenery is some of the finest in Scotland with the north-west Highlands designated a UNESCO Global Geopark.

Highlights

- Spectacular Torridon Sandstone mountains rising out of the Lewisian Gneiss knock and lochan landscape;
- Hike at Knockan Crag to the exposed Moine Thrust and great views to the mountains in the west;
- Hike on the Bealach na Ba with spectacular views to Skye and the mainland;
- Boat trip to and hike along Loch Coruisk in the heart of the Cuillin Mountains, Skye;
- Dinosaur footprints on a beach on Skye;
- Trotternish peninsula with its huge landslip and hike to the Old Man of Storr, Skye



Moine Thrust at Knockan Crag

1. Inverness - Lochinver
2. Achmelvich beach, Clachtoll and Stoer
3. Handa Island and Bone Caves
4. Coigach peninsula
5. Lochinver - Torridon
6. Applecross peninsula
7. Torridon - Isle of Skye
8. Loch Coruisk
9. Trotternish peninsula
10. Isle of Skye - Inverness



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Loch Coruisk surrounded by the Cuillin, Skye

Introduction

The geological make up of the Northwest Highlands ranges from some of the oldest, most altered rocks in Britain - 3000 million years old Lewisian Gneiss - to the eroded roots of the Skye volcano, a mere 60 million years old.

The North West Highlands UNESCO Global Geopark boast spectacular mountain and coastal scenery and large areas of exposed bedrock. It has been the birthplace of major geological ideas that have been applied throughout the world.

The Isle of Skye is noted for the widespread volcanism that occurred during the Palaeogene Period, and which has played an important role in the development of the rugged scenery. The Cuillin mountains are the remnants of a volcano that was active 60 million years ago.

North-west Highlands

The wild and wonderful landscape of the north-west Highlands encompasses some of the finest mountains and coastal landscapes in Britain. Over time, this part of Scotland has gone through mountain-building, been submerged beneath shallow tropical seas, has collided with continents, and been massively eroded by ice, before the first people took up residence there around 2500 years ago. Today it is the most sparsely populated corner of Europe.

Approaching from the east, high peat-clad moorland is encountered, with clusters of rugged peaks. All are built of altered metamorphic rocks, Moine Schists. Descending from the watershed towards the west coast, more isolated, tiered and buttressed mountain command attention. They are composed of Torridon Sandstone and some have caps of white Cambrian Quartzite. They overlook hummocky and very rocky terrain composed of Lewisian Gneiss, which stretches to the coast.

The Moine Thrust along which continents collided runs from north to south through the park. This is an incredibly important geological feature which helped 19th century geologists explain how mountains form right across the world.

Isle of Skye

The Isle of Skye is the largest and most northerly of the islands of the Inner Hebrides. The geology of Skye is very different from the north-west Highlands. The island has been volcanic when the Atlantic opened. The Cuillin mountains are the remnants of a solidified

volcanic lava reservoir some 60 million years old. Just south of this there are deposits of limestone.

The north of the island is composed mainly of lava flows, horizontal flows which have been built up to a depth of around 2000 feet and since eroded. In the north east the underlying sedimentary rock has collapsed under the weight of the basalt, tipping sideways to form landslips which are still moving. This feature is evident on the Trotternish Peninsula.

There are exposures of sedimentary beds in several places around the coasts where the lava is eroded by the sea. A couple of these beds have dinosaur footprints in the sediments. They were left by dinosaurs that walked across the sand here some 165 million years ago.



The Storr and the Old Man, Trotternish peninsula, Isle of Skye



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