



Scotland's First European Geopark

North West Highlands
GEOPARK



Photography courtesy of Inver Lodge Hotels Scottish Natural Heritage, The Highland Council, British Geological Survey, Sutherland Partnership, Mackay Country Archive and lain Sarjeant. Design by Pelican Design Consultants [www.pelican-design.com]



www.european-geoparks.org
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Geopark Contact Details

North West Highlands Geopark
Culag Building, Lochinver, Sutherland IV27 4LE
Scotland
www.durness.org
www.assynt.info
www.coigach.com
www.kinlochbervie.org
www.scourie.co.uk

Or consult the local websites:

Assynt Visitor Centre in the village of Lochinver
Kinlochbervie Tourist Information at
NWSAIS Office at Kinlochbervie Pier
in the village of Durness
Durness Tourist Information Office

For local accommodation information call into the Tourist Information Offices in the area:

National Contact Centre 0845 2255121
www.visitscotland.com

Visit Scotland:

The Geopark offers a wide range of accommodation options to suit any budget - camping, hostels, B&B, a variety of self-catering and a range of hotels. For information about accommodation and the local area:

Accommodation & Local Information

What is a Geopark ?

A Geopark is a place where you will experience the incredible legacy left by an extraordinary geological past. Our mountains and coasts, our flora and fauna, our communities and culture - all owe a great deal to the difference which this geology makes.



Our Geopark is one of 25 partners in the European Geopark Network. Globally there are 37 Geoparks - all endorsed by UNESCO.

Like ours they are all driven by local communities seeking to celebrate their geological heritage and achieve sustainable development. The North West Highlands Geopark has beautiful scenery, strong communities and world-class geology. We hope that you enjoy all that our Geopark has to offer.

North West Highlands Geopark is Scotland's first.

"Chan fheim an neach a sheabhairheas an toradh am blàth a mhilleach."
"He who inherits the fruit must not destroy its blossom."



The Geopark is located in the far north of the Scottish mainland. It starts at The Summer Isles in Wester Ross and continues northwards through west Sutherland to the north coast. The Geopark extends to the east of Dumess, beyond Loch Eriboll, and onto The Moine. The eastern boundary of the Geopark largely follows the Moine Thrust zone, a famous and important geological structure.

Where is the Geopark ?



The Geopark is just over an hour's drive from Inverness, along a choice of spectacular routes. There are numerous flights, trains and buses to Inverness. For details about these and routes into the Geopark please see our website.

Getting There

Things To Do & See

Walking, climbing, archaeology, angling, sport, rambling, music, sight-seeing, birdwatching, watersports, wildlife, history, genealogy, quiet and contemplation - and of course - geology. See the Geopark website and information about things to do and see included in the websites listed under 'Accommodation'. Also useful for ideas are:

www.mackaycountry.com
for history and sightseeing

www.kinlochbervie.org
for highlights in and around Kinlochbervie

www.knockan-crag.co.uk
for geological car trails, schools packs and Knockan Crag National Nature Reserve

www.smoocave.org
for history and geology of Smoo cave

www.scourie.co.uk
for activities and accommodation in Scourie district

The Ranger Service for guided walks & children's activities:

NW Sutherland Ranger:
Donald.Mitchell@highland.gov.uk
Tel: 44 (0) 1971 511756

Assynt Ranger:
Andy.Summers@highland.gov.uk
Tel: 44 (0) 1571 844654

Wester Ross Ranger:
Meryl.Carr@highland.gov.uk
Tel: 44 (0) 1854 633350

walking.visitscotland.com
for local walks - leaflets about local walks are available in local Tourist Information Centres and from most accommodation providers.

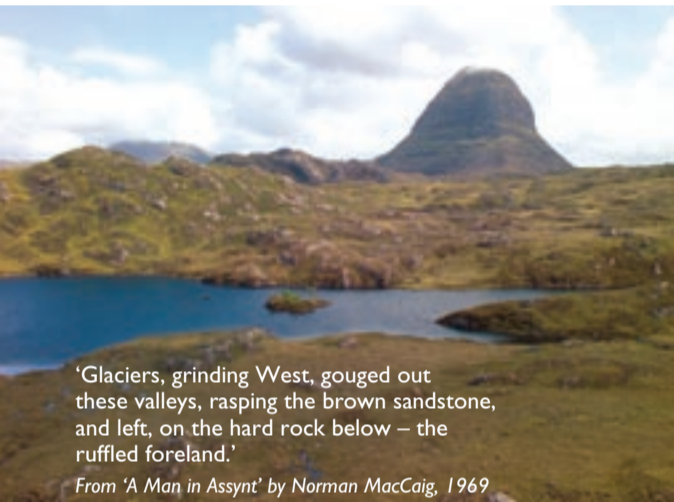


North West Highlands GEOPARK

At 3,000 million years old, the rocks at the seashore are even older than the hills - and what hills they are! Where else can you experience a skyline that compares to the ridges of Foinaven and Arkle or classic hills like Suilven or Stac Pollaidh?

In places like this it's not just the eagles or the peregrines that soar. This is the most sparsely populated corner of Europe. Set yourself free in a place with space to spare. Landscapes so ancient our minds cannot begin to grasp the enormity of time wrapped up in these rocks. Quiet glens, windswept summits, aquamarine waves on gilded sands.

Walk away your worries. Stay far from that maddening crowd. Luxuriate in the long light of a spring evening, when night never quite falls. Feel the sting of sea spray from wild winter waves and then take shelter by a fire with a good book and a good dram. Space for you in any season.



'Glaciers, grinding West, gouged out these valleys, rasping the brown sandstone, and left, on the hard rock below - the ruffled foreland.'

From 'A Man in Assynt' by Norman MacCaig, 1969



Achiltibuie - Experience the Space. See Achnahaird Sands, cruise round The Summer Isles and visit The Hydroponicum. Accommodation, shops, Post Office and The Piping School.

Stac Pollaidh - The Geopark's Little Mountain. Great views and a good quality path right to the eastern col.

Visitor Centre at Knockan Crag National Nature Reserve - Visit Knockan and Discover the Planet. The story of Scotland's turbulent past as it journeyed from "pole to pole" - interactive displays, cartoons, panels and trails.

Suilven - Our Classic Inselberg. This 'Island Mountain' is our most distinctive. A long walk in but worth the effort!

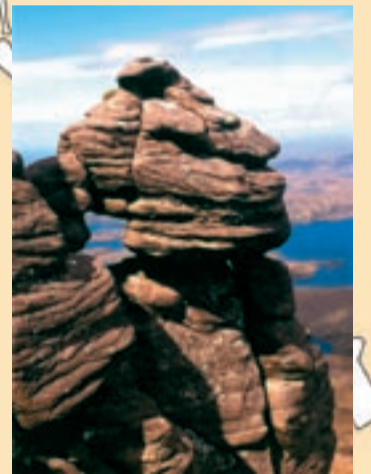
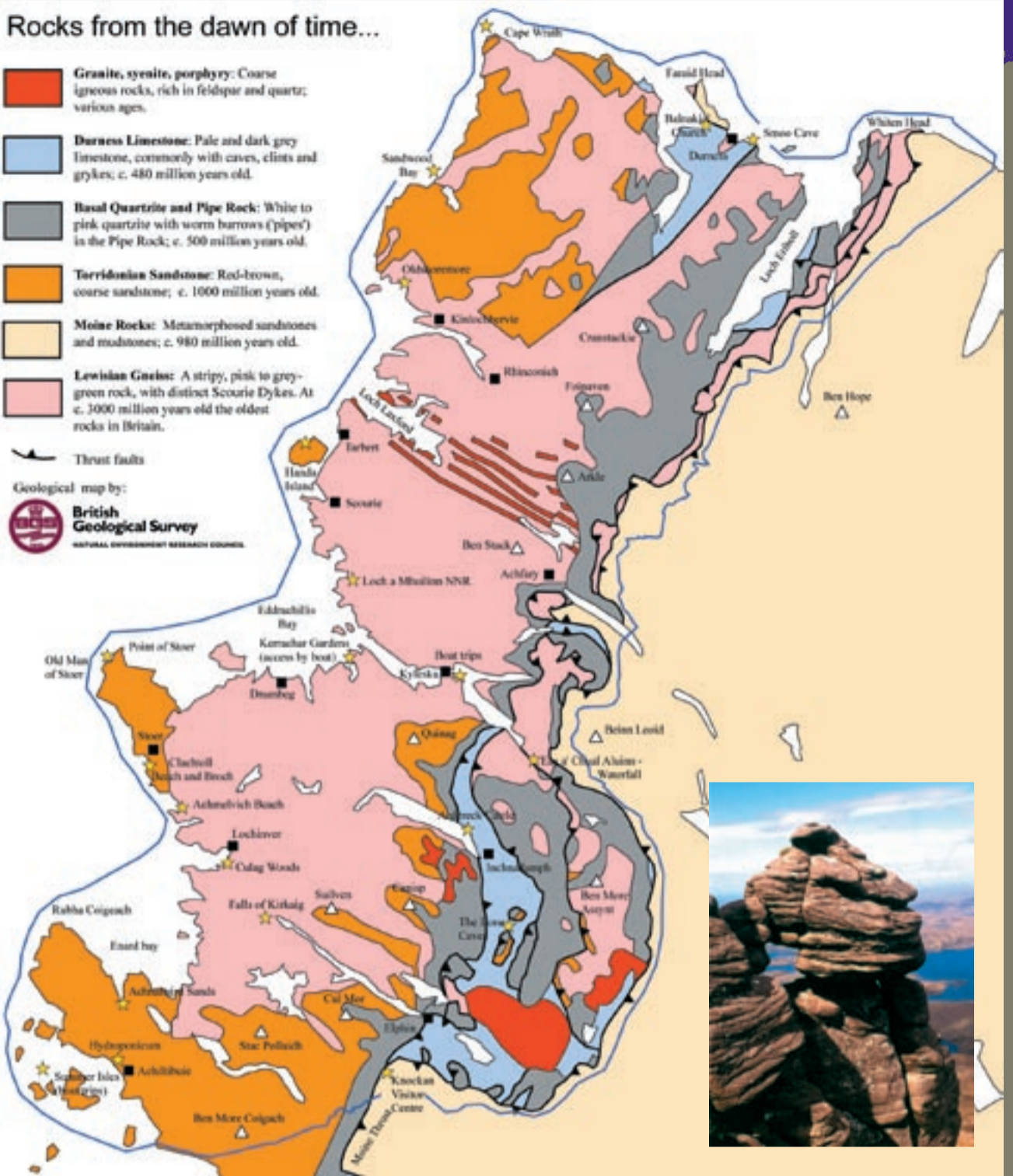
The Bone Caves - A Time Capsule for 47,000 Years. Limestone caves where remains of polar bears, reindeer, wolves, brown bear and ancient ancestors have been found.

Inchnadamph National Nature Reserve. Walk the Traligill Glen. The name means 'Valley of the Trolls' in Norse and the limestone means rare flowers like mountain avens and globe flower.

Rocks from the dawn of time...

-  **Granite, syenite, porphyry:** Coarse igneous rocks, rich in feldspar and quartz; various ages.
-  **Durness Limestone:** Pale and dark grey limestone, commonly with caves, clints and grykes; c. 480 million years old.
-  **Basal Quartzite and Pipe Rock:** White to pink quartzite with worm burrows ('pipes') in the Pipe Rock; c. 500 million years old.
-  **Terrigenous Sandstone:** Red-brown, coarse sandstone; c. 1000 million years old.
-  **Moine Rocks:** Metamorphosed sandstones and mudstones; c. 980 million years old.
-  **Lewisian Gneiss:** A stripy, pink to grey-green rock, with distinct Scourie Dykes. At c. 3000 million years old the oldest rocks in Britain.

Thrust faults
Geological map by:
 **British Geological Survey**
NATURAL ENVIRONMENT RESEARCH COUNCIL



A Moving Story - Landscapes like these mark the memory and that is due to the difference that geology makes. Over billions of years the continents have drifted around the earth. 500 million years ago Scotland was separated from England and Wales by the ancient Iapetus Ocean. For most of the last billion years, Scotland was joined to America and Greenland. They only became separate a mere 60 million years ago when the North Atlantic began to form. Over billions of years' the rocks that now make up the North West Highlands have seen many climates - hot deserts, tropical humidity and several Ice Ages. About 430 million years ago two ancient continents collided creating the British Isles as we know it today - give or take the impact of a few million years of Ice Age. This was the great crunch which created many of the distinctive Scottish mountains. During this time huge sheets of rock were pushed up to 100km to the west, creating the Moine Thrust. This feature confused Victorian geologists who expected to find younger rocks on top of older ones. Instead they found the opposite.

This story can be read in the landscape around you. In the Geopark there is information and interpretation to help you recognise this geological legacy which can be seen in the mountains, from the roadsides, down at the beach, out fishing, in the townships and - at all times - under your feet.

Lochinver. Stroll round the Harbour, walk in Culag Woods, buy gifts and attend a village ceilidh or dance. Accommodation, shops, Bank, Post Office and Assynt Visitor Centre with displays and information.

Kylesku. Boat trips and accommodation. The famous Glencoul Thrust is here and the UK's highest waterfall - Eas an Chual Aluinn.

Scourie. Shop, Post Office, accommodation, crafts, a very fine beach, traditional architecture and the famous Scourie Dykes - igneous intrusions of some renown.

Handa Island Bird Sanctuary - Puffins and Clifftop Walks. For the best of the birds visit in the nesting season but don't forget the history, the ghosts and the views either!

Kinlochbervie - Fishing Port. Shops, crafts, Post Office and accommodation. Find Tourist Information at the office at the Harbour.

Sandwood Bay - Isolated Sands and Machair Meadows. A daytrip since it is a 4 hour walk there and back. Rare plants like mountain avens on the machair. Dogs must be kept under strict control.

Durness - An Ancient Mackay Stronghold. Shops, Post Office, accommodation and Tourist Information Office. Balnakeil Craft Village and

the rare Scottish primrose in the summer.

Cape Wrath - A Turning Point. Minibus trips (summer only) - ferry from Keoldale Pier. The cliffs at Cape Wrath are the highest vertical cliffs in mainland Britain.

Smoo Cave - A Limestone Cavern. One of the largest cave entrances in Britain - Stone Age middens and stalactites. Explore on your own or ask the guide.

