

Beauty is in the mountains not set in stone. By Molly, 14



Beauty of the wild

Deep blue and orange
An unmatched fusion of colour
Beauty of the wild

Untouched land

Barely touched landscape
Unharmed by greedy human hands
No single owner

By Spike, 14

Evoke a Sense of Place



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Pebble Route 1



A short drive or cycle from the main road will bring you through a series of small crofting townships to Britain's most North-Westerly fishing port, Kinlochbervie.

The landscape around Kinlochbervie has been shaped by generations of families reaching far back into prehistory. The earliest settlers arrived during the Bronze Age and have left us a tantalising glimpse into their lives; a burnt mound overlooking **Loch Innis na Bà Buidhe**.

The place names are also an enigmatic reminder of rich cultural beginnings, with many, such as **Oldshoremore** (the big path or pass), being of Norse origin later updated to Gaelic and then English.

Many of the homes you pass are filled with fishing and crofting families. Crofting, a form of subsistence farming has been a way of life here for centuries. The harbour at **Kinlochbervie** was built in 1961 and became the centre of the white fishing boom in the 1980s.

The coastal grasslands (machair) are an oasis of fertile land and supported crops such as oats and potatoes. Crofters also graze their

animals here, helping to recycle nutrients and encourage the growth of rare wild flowers. Herring and shellfish originally supplemented the crofting produce but crofters have always been inventive people and today the output of local crofts across the North West Highlands extends from pubs to pony trekking.

What is the North West Highlands Geopark?

Geoparks are set up and managed by a local community and there are more than 100 Geoparks worldwide. Every community is different and so every Geopark is different but we all share a common aim which is to tell the story of our landscape and make it accessible to visitors. This in turn helps to bring resources into sensitive rural areas, creating jobs and supporting small businesses.

Our Geopark is a social enterprise, set up by the representatives from the six community councils within its boundaries. It exists to encourage adventures for everyone which helps people connect with the land and feel responsible for maintaining its beauty, wildlife and resources.

Explore Deep Time



Sea Roads

The landscape you can see is built upon the oldest rock in Britain. The three billion year old Lewisian Gneiss has been buried deep below the surface, stretched, squeezed, heated and cooled to form colourful swirling patterns. You can see a slice through the grey, black and pink rocks of the Lewisian at the Rock Route stop 11, south of Rhiconich (NC233486) or by walking along Oldshoremore Beach.

The water, Loch Inchar was originally named **Engis-fjord** by long forgotten Norsemen who

were likely passing through enroute to Ireland, exploring and raiding as they went. The Loch is reminiscent of a Scandinavian Fjord and was formed by the exact same process. Glaciers carved out this deep scar providing a **gateway to the sea**. Until the 1830's, the sea was the only route into Kinlochbervie.

Imagine the sound of the drums as a Viking ship steadily rows in to Loch Inchar to rest for the night on a long journey all those years ago.

Stories from a Working Landscape

You may have heard of the **Highland Clearances**. In the 18th and 19th centuries landlords realised that small farms were 'uneconomic' and so tenant farmers were removed and replaced with large sheep farms. Ruins from this period are plentiful.

If you look to the right of **Loch Inchar**, you can see stone walls (dykes) and fences marking out crofting lots, these are all working smallholdings. Each has access to loch fishing, an area of cultivable land and the use of common grazing land in the hills behind.

To the left, a small croft is still completely 'off the grid' and children cross the loch by boat as part of their school commute!

The floating lines you can see on the water are a mussel farm. Shellfish are an important part of crofting and mussels are now recognized as one of the most efficient and environmentally friendly forms of producing food protein in the world.

Sands of Time

The beaches of the **North West Highlands** are world renowned for their peaceful beauty. Each grain of sand tells a story of ancient marine life and the erosion of primeval landscapes.

The rock outcrop in the middle of the beach is made of 1.2 billion year old sandstone. You can see small pebbles embedded in it, deposited by ancient rivers flowing through the landscape long ago.

A 16th century Spanish ship wreck was discovered off the coast of Kinlochbervie, a small cemetery past Oldshoremore beach marks the graves of the souls lost at sea. Another ship carrying flint as ballast was wrecked near-by, it is responsible for the occasional flint sherds washed up on the shore here – a puzzle for the local geography teacher because the nearest source of flint is 90 miles away on the North East coast!

Shores of Discovery

Oldshoremore beach is easily accessible from the carpark but a long coastal walk is also possible here, stretching through **Polin beach** and up to **Sandwood bay**, the most remote beach in Britain.

These beaches are also incredibly clean, a testament to the local community who look after them so well.

Encourage Stewardship



Photography: Pat Cooper

