

Rocks from the dawn of time...

Getting here:

The Geopark is just over an hour's drive from Inverness, along a choice of spectacular routes.

There are flights, trains and buses to Inverness and local buses to Ullapool, Scourie, Kinlochbervie and Durness.

For more travel details visit www.nwhgeopark.com or contact traveline scotland at 0871 200 2233 www.travelinescotland.com

Contact us:

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Local information:

www.coigach.com www.kinlochbervie.info
www.assynt.info www.durness.org
www.scourie.co.uk www.visitsutherland.org



Our unique geology

The North West Highlands Geopark contains a striking array of different rock types; these are the building blocks of the Geopark's landscape but they are also the building blocks of Scotland. Starting at 3 billion years old, our Lewisian Gneiss is the oldest rock in Europe.

The Geopark also contains the earliest evidence of life to be found anywhere in Europe. These simple-celled algal life forms (stromatolites) occur in Torridonian Sandstone rock strata dated at 1.2 billion years old.

Quartzites and pipe rocks represent an ancient white sandy beach and intertidal zone respectively; look out for 500 million year old worm burrows!

Durness limestone produces some of the most spectacular cave systems in Britain and good agricultural land.

Igneous rocks produced by magma occur in discrete areas across the Geopark and have been key to understanding continental collisions. Magma at Ledmore baked the surrounding limestone, producing a brilliant white and green marble.

Moine rocks began as sea bed sediments and over the past billion years were metamorphosed into schist. A continental collision half a billion years ago forced up these sediments into the Caledonian mountain chain, which stretched across what are now North America and Norway!



Lewisian Gneiss



Torridonian Sandstone



Pipe Rock





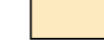





Limestone

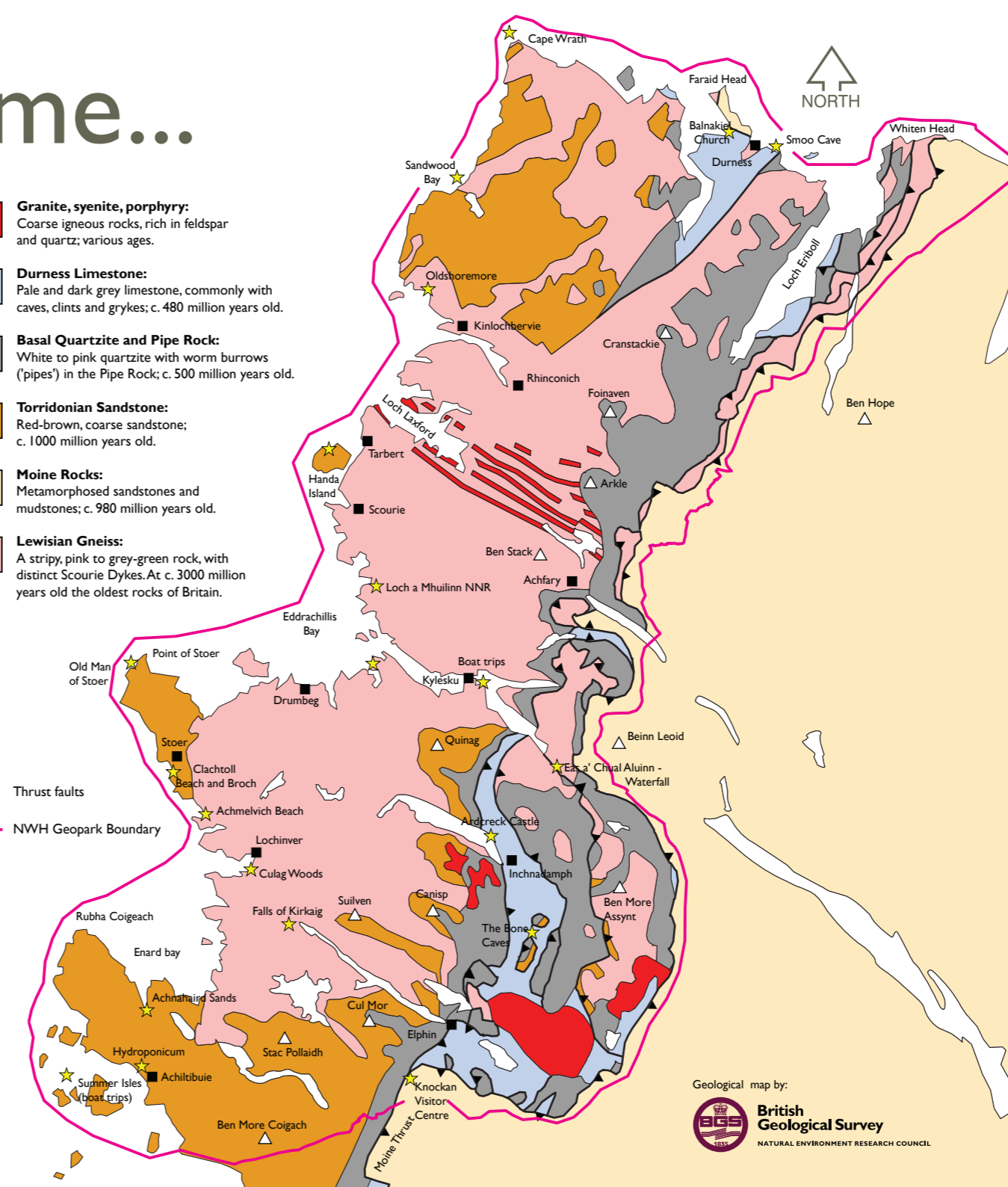


Rock Puzzle, Knockan Crag

Visit 'Knockan Crag' to find out more, see inner map for location.

-  **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.
-  **Torridonian 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 of Britain.

-  Thrust faults
-  NWH Geopark Boundary



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

A Guide to the North West Highlands UNESCO Global Geopark





What is a Geopark?

Geoparks are community organisations set up by people in areas with unique landscapes that have international geological significance and rich cultural heritage.

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) set up a new programme in 2015 to recognise the achievements of these communities and significance of their landscapes. There are over 100 Geoparks around the world designated as UNESCO Global Geoparks and the number is growing each year.

The North West Highlands Geopark was set up in 2004 and is run by members of each of the seven community councils within its boundaries. Funded by small grants from the Scottish Government and other sponsors, it exists to promote the region, boost the local economy and look after the landscape.



In our UNESCO Global Geopark...

Earth Science Exhibition

Come to the Rock Stop to find out more about Geoparks, how the landscape of the North West Highlands was forged and what makes the area so special.

You can get hands on with our Augmented Reality Sandbox, discover in 3D how water and ice can shape mountains. Find out how the white sandy beaches of the North West Highlands are formed and discover the fascinating microscopic world of beach sand!

See far right for further details about the Rock Stop and inner map for location.



Knockan Crag

The jewel in the crown of the North West Highlands Geopark – one of our finest 'geo-sites'. Find out how mountains are made and why this corner of Scotland is so special for Geologists all over the world! A family friendly (unmanned) visitor centre managed by Scottish Natural Heritage as a National Nature Reserve. See inner map for location.



Geotours and Ranger Walks

Throughout the year the North West Highlands Geopark, Highland Council Countryside Rangers and Scottish Natural Heritage run guided walks and talks. Ask at the Rock Stop or check our website for forthcoming events.



The Rock Stop Cafe, Craft Shop and Earth Science Exhibition

The Rock Stop is the North West Highlands Geopark's visitor centre and central hub. Join us for some great coffee, locally sourced light meals and cake and browse our craftshop to see a selection of work from local artisans. Enjoy our free WiFi, and have a look around our Earth Science exhibition

We act as a tourist information centre, collecting local information such as walking route leaflets, events info, local heritage information and outdoor activity providers.

We are hiker, cyclist and motorcyclist friendly!

Directions:

The Rock Stop is located in Unapool, on the A894, 1 mile north of the Drumbeg turnoff, and 1 mile south of the Kylesku bridge. Keep an eye out for the purple signs on the building!

Opening hours:

To keep up to date with our opening hours visit:
www.nwhgeopark.com/plan-your-visit/rockstop
f /therockstop

The Geopark's communities...

For a full list of activities, services and accommodation in each community, see 'local information', on the back cover of this leaflet.

Durness & Cape Wrath

An ancient stronghold of the clan Mackay. Sandy beaches, shops, 24hr fuel, puffins, an old church, craft village, a good walking network (guide book available in the shops) and mini-bus trips (summer only) to the furthest North-Westerly tip of the mainland UK. Visit Smoo Cave, an enormous limestone cavern where you can take a short boat trip into a cave system, or search for the rare Scottish primrose and sea-birds at Faraid Head.



Kinlochbervie

Stroll around Scotland's most North-Westerly fishing port or enjoy a walk along Oldshoremore beach – a haven for wildflowers. A walk to Sandwood bay is a longer stretch of the legs but well worth the effort for the sense of wide-open seas and seclusion. Kinlochbervie has shops, pony trekking, sea-kayaking and a fuel station (not 24hr).



Scourie

Pick up a copy of the 'Paths around Scourie' leaflet to find some great walking routes or visit Handa Island, see some fascinating seabird colonies and explore the remains of an abandoned township dating to the 1800s. Seek out some Bronze Age remains behind Scourie village. There are shops and 24hr fuel in Scourie village.



Kylesku & Glencoul

Eas an Chual Aluinn, the UK's highest waterfall, trail and mountain walks as well as the Rock Stop Visitor Centre.

Assynt & Lochinver

Lochinver is the main township in Assynt and here you will find shops and services including fuel (not 24hr). The harbour is busy and on the edge of town you can explore the meandering paths of Culag woods.



Visit stunning sandy beaches at Achmelvich and Clachtoll and see ripple marks in the sandstone and evidence of a meteorite impact at Stoer. An Iron Age broch stands ruined at Clachtoll and walks around Glen Leraig lead to 18th century archaeology.



South of Lochinver you can walk along to Inverkirkaig falls or adventure up Assynt's iconic hill, Suilven.

The Summer Isles & Coigach

Experience the tranquility of the Summer Isles from the Coigach shore or by boat. Tanera Mor, the largest of the Summer Isles, has its own post office and prints its own special stamps. There are crafts, fuel (not 24hr), shops and services in Coigach; Achiltibuie is the biggest settlement.



Rock climbing is very popular for experienced climbers along at Reiff and Stac Pollaich is popular with hill walkers; both are made from Torridonian Sandstone which weathers into incredible towers, pinnacles and ledges. Achnahaird has a lovely white sandy beach and there are Bronze Age hut circles to hunt for on the moors.



- R** Rock Route
- Pebble Route
- ★ Highlight
- ▲ Viewpoint
- NWH Geopark Boundary

Driving Routes

There are many popular driving routes in the North West Highlands Geopark. The 'Rock Route' is a Scottish Natural Heritage route with landscape interpretation whilst 'Pebble Routes' will take you off the main roads to explore the sights and communities of the region. The 'North Coast 500' also snakes the length of the Geopark.

Rock Route:
www.snh.gov.uk/docs/A917769.pdf

Pebble Routes:
www.nwhgeopark.com/pebbles

North Coast 500:
www.northcoast500.com



Eriboll, Tongue & Melness

Loch Eriboll is over 100m deep in places and has been used by the Navy as anchorage for over a century. Visit the limekilns on a peculiar spit of land called Ard Neackie or walk up to an incredibly well preserved prehistoric wheel house.

If you're heading east, Tongue and Melness have shops and fuel (not 24hr). The landscape is dominated by Castle Bharraich, whose origins are steeped in mystery.

The Geopark's eastern boundary, the Moine Thrust butts up against the Flow Country, one of the most important wetlands in Europe.

Inchnadamp & Elphin

The limestone around Inchnadamp and Elphin creates a green landscape and some spectacular cave systems. The Bone Caves have produced some of the oldest animal remains in Scotland and the River Caves in Glen Traigill are popular with experienced cavers.

Visit the Peach and Horne monument on the shores of Loch Assynt, a tribute to the Victorian geologists who mapped the region during the 19th century. Ardreck castle sits upon a spit of land in the Loch and has been constructed using many different rock types – see how many you can spot!



Fishing and Boat Trips

The crystal clear waters in our region produce excellent angling opportunities. Permits are usually available or guided excursions can be arranged by local providers (see www.nwhgeopark.com for more information). Explore the coast and loch systems by boat (summer only) around the Summer Isles, Lochinver, Glen Coull, Handa, Kinlochbervie and Cape Wrath.

Accessible paths

There are several wheelchair and buggy friendly paths in the North West Highlands Geopark. Little Assynt trail includes accessible fishing and Loch a'Mhullinn woods is partially tarmac. The path up to the Rock Room at Knockan Crag is also possible for wheel-chair users.

Access & Good Fieldwork Codes

We encourage all visitors, including researchers, to be good stewards of our landscape and geological heritage by following the Scottish Outdoor Access, Geological Coring and and Fossil codes: www.tinyurl.com/je3br2n



KNOW THE CODE BEFORE YOU GO
SCOTTISH OUTDOOR ACCESS CODE outdooraccess-scotland.com