

Useful information from the Expedition Network

Welcome!

Green forms and requests for assessment should be submitted to the Scottish Network Co-ordinator, who can also assist with enquiries regarding landowners, routes, and campsites:

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Area advisor

The local area advisor is based in the area and can assist with enquiries regarding routes and campsites.

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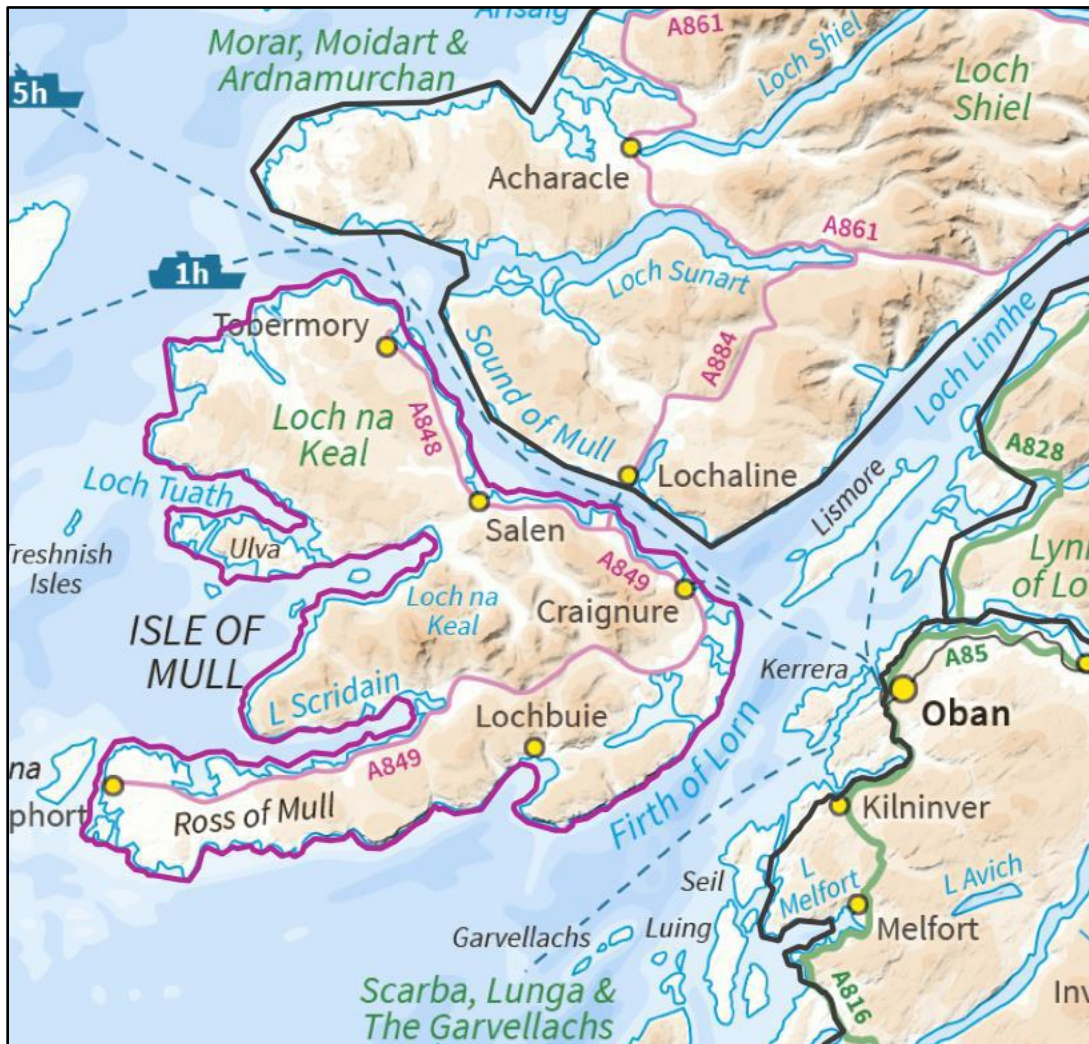
Introduction

Suitable for hiking, cycling and intrepid paddling, Mull is an excellent venue for your DofE expedition. Easily accessible from Oban, the main traffic you'll meet is highland cows.

Area boundaries

The Expedition Area takes in the whole of the Isle of Mull, plus the neighbouring islands of Ulva and Gometra and the tidal island of Erraid.

The DofE website includes a downloadable [GPX of the area boundaries](#).



Choosing Your Route

Access Issues

There are no known access issues in the expedition area. If you do come across anything, please do get in touch.

Using ferries

The first of the 20 conditions of Expeditions is “All expeditions must be by the participants’ own physical effort, without motorised or outside assistance.” Therefore, approval would never be given for using a long ferry, such as from the mainland out to Mull during the expedition. **Approval may be given for the use of small short ferries with few facilities to hop between neighbouring islands to facilitate sensible routes and aims**, such as to access Ulva. In these cases teams must not use time waiting for the ferry or on the ferry as part of their hours of planned activity, so they must expect a longer day.

Scottish Hill Tracks

Scotways, the Scottish rights of way and access society, publishes **Scottish Hill Tracks**, a book listing rights of way across Scotland’s uplands. This is an excellent resource for ideas for routes as some paths are not shown connecting on a map where historic routes exist. Scotways are also interested to hear about any issues with paths and routes.

Core paths

Under the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003 every local authority and National Park authority (access authority) in Scotland was required to draw up a plan for a system of core paths that gives the public reasonable access throughout their area. Some of these paths do not yet appear on OS maps and may help DofE teams link up routes. All core paths can be seen on the **Scottish Natural Heritage website**, with links to details from each council.

Camping

Wild camping

Scottish access rights (see the **Outdoor Access Code section** for further information) extend to wild camping for small groups (at DofE we consider this to be individual expedition teams). Although not strictly necessary, the DofE recommends that, as a courtesy and to maintain existing good relations, expedition teams inform relevant land owners of their intentions. It is reasonable for owners to react by saying why a particular site might be unsuitable and to suggest alternatives.

If multiple teams from the same DofE centre intend to camp at the same location, this falls outside the definition of ‘wild camping’ permitted under access rights. **Therefore, centres planning to camp with multiple teams in the same location should always seek permission from the landowner.**

Teams should consult the advice on camping in the Expedition Guide (page 101). There is also lots of useful information and resources about wild camping available via **Mountaineering Scotland** and **The Outdoor Access Code**.

Bothies

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Bothies are basic shelters in the hills. Many are open to the public for use and managed by the [Mountain Bothies Association](#) (MBA). If teams plan to use a bothy for lunch or shelter they should be aware of the [MBA's bothy code](#).

DofE teams are generally advised not to camp within close proximity to a bothy without permission from the owner because of problems that come with the pressure of numbers. This often leads to issues with pollution from human waste, so risk assessment would suggest these sites are not appropriate as a campsite. You can find more information about use of bothies, via the DofE ['Use of Bothies information sheet'](#).

Travel and transport to the area

Ferries

There are three main points of access to Mull, all via ferry.

Oban – Craignure (CalMac) – this service runs multiple times a day Mon-Sun, but if you are taking a vehicle across, it is advisable to book in advance.

Lochaline – Fishnish – this service runs multiple times a day Mon-Sun. Booking is not available on this ferry.

Kilchoan – Tobermory – this service runs 3-4 times a day Mon-Sat. There is no service on Sundays. Booking is not available on this ferry.

More information on ferries can be found on the [CalMac website](#).

For more information about travelling on Mull, [click here](#).

Road works

Road closures and works in the area can have a serious impact on the ability of team's and leaders to get to and from expeditions, and for supervisors and assessors getting around due to the lack of quick alternative routes. Information about current or planned noticed road works in Scotland is available at [the Scottish Road Works Register](#).

Expedition aim ideas

Scottish Wild land areas

The Scottish Government has [defined 42 Wild Land Areas around Scotland](#). The discussions around defining these areas and the implications of this may be of interest for teams considering aims around land use, flora and fauna and wilderness.

Physical and Human Geography

Mull has a coastline of 480 kilometres, and its climate is moderated by the Gulf Stream. The island has a mountainous core; the highest peak on the island is Ben More, which reaches 966 metres, the only island Munro outside Skye. Various peninsulas, which are predominantly moorland, radiate from the centre.

Numerous islands lie off the west coast of Mull, including Erraid, Inch Kenneth, Iona, Gometra, and Ulva. Smaller uninhabited islands include Eorsa, Little Colonsay, the Treshnish Isles, and Staffa.

The island has 261 different bird species, including the white-tailed eagle, which was reintroduced to the nearby island of Rùm and migrated to Mull, where it now has a stronghold. Basking sharks, minke whales, porpoises, and dolphins are among the sea life nearby.

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The island is home to a population of otters that live in coastal habitat, hunting during the day. The Mull Otter Group was established for the conservation needs of otters on the Isle of Mull.

History

Mull and its islands have been continually inhabited since shortly after the last Ice Age. C. 6500 – 3500 BC. Mesolithic hunter-gatherers lived in caves such as Livingston's cave on Ulva and later, Neolithic farmers lived here leaving behind burial cairns and stone axes.

Bronze age 'Beaker' people lived on Mull, their burial cairns, cists, standing stones, stone circles, and corded beaker pottery and knife blades record their existence. Iron Age people built forts, brochs, duns, and crannogs, numerous defensive settlements on these islands. The early Christian period began in the 5th Century, with 563 noted for the arrival from Ireland of St Columba. Around this time, Mull and its surrounding coast and islands were invaded by the Irish, who created the Kingdom of Dál Riata.

Viking times started in 795 when Iona was first sacked, with raids continuing for several centuries, destroying Dál Riata and replacing it with the Norse Kingdom of the Isles, which also comprised of the Western Isles and Skye. Vikings eventually became settlers in the isles. The Middle Ages saw the construction of castles such as Moy and Duart, and chapels such as Pennygown. During the 17th to 19th centuries, clan chiefs and other lairds built 'big' houses, whilst the majority of islanders lived in tiny black houses in small townships, occupying shielings in the summer months.

In 1788 Tobermory was built by the British Fisheries Society, as a planned settlement. Over the centuries Mull's population increased to 10,638 in 1831 but first the Potato Famine and then the Clearances rapidly reduced this number. By the 20th Century much of the population had emigrated and there were more sheep on Mull than people.

Today Mull and its neighbouring islands have a population of nearly 3000. Farming, fishing and forestry used to be the economic mainstays of the island, but increasingly today, tourism is responsible for much of the island economy. Fish farming is also very important for both fin-fish and shellfish.

Mull on Film

As you likely know, Tobermory is famously the home of children's TV show Balamory. However, it has also appeared on the big screen, with parts of Entrapment, Highlander: End Game and Harry Potter all filmed on Mull. The Secret of Kells, although primarily set in Ireland, talks about the Abbey on Iona, where the Book of Kells was started.

Mull is also home to white-tailed eagles Skye and Frisa. These birds were made famous by Springwatch and their Twitter account @skyeandfrisa has over 5000 followers.

Hazards

Ticks

Ticks are small, blood sucking creatures found across the uplands of Scotland, especially in areas with lots of deer and sheep. Some ticks carry Lyme disease, which is treatable but can be tricky to diagnose. Teams should be made aware of the risks of Lyme disease and how to reduce the risk of being bitten. All teams should carry a tick remover and check themselves daily.

Some useful resources about ticks:

- Lyme Disease Action has useful downloadable [leaflets about ticks and Lyme disease](#).
- [Stop the tick](#) has lots of infographics (some are a bit graphic, but informative)

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• Lime Disease UK has posters and leaflets as part of their [Wake up to Lyme campaign](#), as well as detailed information about the disease

Midges

The biting midge is particularly prolific in parts of Scotland and worst in late Spring through to early Autumn. The detrimental effect midges can have on an expedition is disproportionate to their tiny size and should not be underestimated, especially with teams unused to them. During this summer period teams should carry midge nets, insect repellent and clothes to provide full coverage (including gloves and long-sleeved tops). First aid kits should include antihistamines to reduce discomfort. Teams should also be aware of how to reduce their impact including:

- choice of campsite (in direct sunlight and breezy, ideally in both morning and evening)
- choice of clothing (pale, bright, and smooth rather than dark, wooly, or fleecy)
- campcraft (menu planning, positioning of tents, keeping tent doors closed)

Snakes

There are Adders (the UK's only venomous snake) in the area. They are not aggressive or commonly seen, but they will bite if stood on, sat on or picked up. Because of this teams who are wild camping should always wear shoes (which the snakes cannot bite through) and not walk around barefoot, in socks or in sandals such as flip-flops. If anyone has the unusual misfortune to be bitten, then medical assistance must be sought urgently.

Drinking water

Watercourses across Scotland can contain a variety of waterborne infections. Therefore, when wild camping it should not be assumed that streams and rivers are clean sources of drinking water, especially due to the high density of livestock and deer across large areas. Leaders should refer to the DofE Expedition Guide advice on taking water from streams (pg 122). Other good sources of information about health and hygiene outdoors (including issues around drinking water) are the NHS advice about [avoiding bugs and germs outdoors](#), and the Mountaineering Scotland advice on [health and hygiene](#).

River crossings

Rivers and streams throughout the area rise quickly after rain or during snow melt, and careful consideration should be given to any route which involves river crossings. Even small streams can quickly become completely impassable and larger rivers can become very dangerous even if the rain has not been falling in the immediate vicinity of the planned crossing.

All teams should understand what to do in case of streams rising – stream levels will fall as fast as they rise and often waiting overnight is all that is needed. In case of snow melt, peak levels are often late afternoon/evening, and the lowest levels in the morning. Teams planning river crossings must have an alternative plan in the event of continued wet weather.

Hours of daylight

All visitors, especially those from the south, need to be aware of the shortness of daylight hours in the expedition shoulder season: March has 11 hours of daylight and the October half term a little over 9 hours.

Emergencies and Incidents

Mountain rescue

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In Scotland, responsibility for the provision of rescue facilities rests with the Police Force - who will call out/co-ordinate mountain rescue as appropriate. Teams must be clear that if they need to call for help they must ask for the police, and then ask for mountain rescue. Teams may not be connected to the nearest police control room to their location, so should be clear on the general area they are in, and their exact location. [Mountaineering Scotland](#) has advice about the process of calling for help, and the information that should be supplied.

Teams must be trained to supply the control room with a six-figure grid-reference for their location, including the two-letter prefix code e.g. NX 345 678 not 345 678. 'GR' is not the correct prefix for any location; it is a commonly used shorthand for 'grid refence'. There is information about six figure grid references [the Ordnance Survey website](#). Correct provision of a full six figure grid-reference is essential as the police computer system will not be able to interpret a grid reference without this two-letter prefix. The two letter prefix locates your grid reference within a 100km square; a mistake here may lead to significant delays in support from Mountain Rescue. DofE Scotland strongly recommend that all DofE route cards are prepared including two letter prefixes to avoid delays or uncertainty in emergency situations.

The team that covers the expedition area is Oban MRT.

Remember that in case of an incident both the team's Licenced Organisation and the [Scottish Expedition Network Coordinator](#) should be notified using the DofE Incident Report Form (available through the resources zone in eDofE).

Mobile Signal

It should be noted that in many parts of the area telephone boxes are rare and the mobile phone network reception is limited/non-existent away from centres of population and cannot be relied upon for getting assistance. Therefore, teams must know how to deal with an emergency in a location without mobile phone signal.

Teams should be encouraged to [sign up for the 999 text service](#) in advance of their expedition to give them the best chance of contacting emergency services in an emergency.

Outdoor access code

The Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003 has been implemented through the Scottish Outdoor Access Code. This provides access rights for the purposes of recreation or education across most of the land and inland water in Scotland. This includes mountains, moorland, woods and forests, grassland, margins of arable crop fields, paths and tracks, rivers and lochs, and the coast. These access rights are balanced with responsibilities towards the environment and the interests of those who make a living from the land.

Three key principles of access:

- Take responsibility for your own actions
- Respect the interests of other people
- Care for the environment.

For further information (including a downloadable e-book) visit www.outdooraccess-scotland.com

Any access issues should be reported to the [Scottish Expedition Network Coordinator](#) who will investigate.

Landuse

The [Countryside Calendar](#) gives a month by month snapshot of typical activities and happenings in the farming and wildlife year in Scotland, any may be helpful in planning expeditions and thinking about appropriate aims.

Landowners

To identify the borders of estates see www.whoownsscotland.org.uk . There is a subscription option which gives access to see contact details.

Lambing

Sheep and lambing season is usually between around 10th April until around 25th May and lambing ewes must not be disturbed. If an apparently 'lost' lamb is seen - do not touch or intervene, as the mother will not be far away. At all other times it is advised that teams should pass through sheep quietly and if possible at a distance in an effort not to disturb and stress them.

Traps

Teams may observe traps on the high moorland. These should not be touched or disturbed as they have been set by the game keepers to catch predators to the ground nesting birds, typically the Hooded Crow.

Scottish game seasons

During the deer stalking season teams should utilise the [Heading for the Scottish Hills website](#) in addition to contacting landowners to find out where and when shooting will be taking place. Teams should stay on recognised footpaths whilst in these areas for safety reasons.

Game	Season Opens	Season Closes
Salmon/Sea Trout	Jan/Feb	October (dates vary)
Trout	15th March	6th October
Roe Deer (bucks)	1st April	20th October
Red & Sika Deer (stags)	1st July	20th October
Fallow Deer (bucks)	1st August	30th April
Grouse & Ptarmigan	12th August	10th December
Snipe	12th August	30th January
Black Grouse	20th August	10th December
Wild Fowl	1st September	30th January
Partridge	1st September	31st January
Capercaillie & Woodcock	1st October	30th January
Pheasant	1st October	31st January
Roe Deer (does)	21st October	31st March
Red, Sika, & Fallow Deer (hinds)	21st October	15th February

Weather forecasts

[The Met Office](#) provides:

- Forecasts with summaries for the region and 7 day detailed forecasts for the chosen town/village.
- Surface pressure charts

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- Mountain area forecasts for Southwest Highlands. This includes a forecast for the region, with forecasts for individual summits available. These summit forecasts are for the summit height of the mountain, which should be considered when teams interpret them.

[The Mountain Weather Information Service \(MWIS\)](#) provides 72 hour forecasts for 5 Scottish regions. These forecasts are for the summits of the mountains which must be considered when interpreting them for DofE use. They provide some interpretation which can assist participant understanding. The forecast that covers the area is West Highlands.

Outdoor conditions forecasts are available on [BBC Radio Scotland](#) (FM: 92.8-94.7, MW: 810) at 18:25 Monday – Friday, and on Saturday and Sunday at 07:00 and 19:00.

Useful Links

Listed below are some links you may find useful. Please note that the Isle of Mull Expedition Area does not directly endorse any of the sites listed.

<https://www.visitscotland.com/destinations-maps/isle-mull/> A useful destination guide

<https://scotland-info.co.uk/mull.htm> A tourist information site with lots of useful advice.

DofE resources

The current DofE expedition kit list can be downloaded from:

www.dofeshopping.org/expedition-kit

A range of expedition downloads, such as the Green Form and spare expedition safety cards, can be downloaded from: www.dofe.org/leaders/resources-and-downloads/expedition-downloads/

Further information of the Expedition section can be found at: www.dofe.org/doing-your-dofe/activities-sections/expedition/