

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:

DofE Scotland
Rosebery House
9 Haymarket Terrace
Edinburgh
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T: 0131 343 0920

E: scotland.assessors@dofe.org

Area advisor

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

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Isle of Skye Expedition Area

Introduction

Although one island Skye is home to a lot of varying terrain across three main areas: Trotternish to the North East, Duirinish to the North West and Minginish to the South, featuring the towering peaks of the Cuillin Ridge.

Groups who wish to do their expeditions on Skye must be prepared to embrace a challenging expedition, which will be undoubtedly unforgettable.

Area boundaries

The Isle of Skye Expedition Area takes in the whole of the Isle of Skye, as well as the islands of Raasay and Scalpay.

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



Choosing Your Route

Access Issues

The path between **Elgol and Camasunary Bothy** (between NG 519 138 and NG 517 185) is generally unsuitable for DofE teams. In places, it is a very narrow path over a steep drop, where an otherwise trivial slip or stumble could result in serious consequences, especially for those hampered by heavy packs. There was a fatal incident involving a walker on this route in 2018. We recommend team consider alternative routes.

The path between **Coruisk and Camasunary Bothy** by the coast includes a section of scrambling known as 'The Bad Step'. This requires scrambling along steep, exposed slabs. This path is unsuitable for most DofE teams.

The path between **Glen Brittle and Coruisk** involves very complex route finding, a difficult stream crossing and awkward scrambling, unless the tide is out. This route is not recommended for most DofE teams.

In **Glen Sligachan** the crossing of the Allt na Measarrch is often more challenging than expected as this stream can rise significantly. Teams should make alternative bad weather plans that take account of this. For more advice see the [River Crossings](#) section.

In bad weather the streams crossing the path along the north edge of **Loch Sligachan** can present a significant hazard and prevent progress. Teams should make alternative bad weather plans that take account of this. For more advice see the [River Crossings](#) section.

Teams should not use the road to get between **Glenbrittle Campsite** (NG 412 204) and the **Fairy Pools carpark** (NG 425 261).

The **Trotternish Ridge** is easy walking and within the capabilities of a fit and navigationally competent Gold group despite being high level. However, it is exposed to bad weather, so teams must have alternative bad weather plans. The eastern side of the ridge is more suitable for this than the west, due to being more sheltered from prevailing winds, and having more alternative routes.

Damaged Bridges

There is no bridge over the **Abhaim Cama Fhionnairigh** downstream of Loch na Creitheach to get between Camasunary Bothy and Sgurr na Stir and Sgurr Hain.

Vehicle access

The carpark for the Fairy Pools (NG 425 261) is an incredibly popular tourist destination, with parking often overflowing the carpark onto the side of the road and sometimes making the road impassable, even outside of peak tourism periods. Leaders should not rely on being able to meet teams here.

Cuillin Ridge

For mountaineers the biggest draw to Skye is the Cuillin Ridge. The Cuillin Ridge is a steep and rocky ridge that is the most alpine-style ridge in the UK. Climbing this ridge is a challenge for experienced mountaineers, and therefore entirely inappropriate for most DofE teams to attempt. Rare teams who believe they have the skills and equipment to attempt mountains on the ridge in an 'unaccompanied and self-sufficient' fashion will be mountaineering, and therefore undertaking a different mode of travel to a foot expedition, requiring different skills and equipment. Any groups considering this must consult with their regional office about their plans.

Teams planning daywalks on the Cuillin ridge should plan to do this as a separate exercise, either before or after their main expedition.

Using ferries

For some routes in this area using short ferries may be of interest. 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 Malaig – Armadale ferry 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.** 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

Serviced sites

[Kinloch Campsite](#) (NG 252 471) Dunvengan 01470 508009

[Glenbrittle Campsite](#) (NG 411 206) Glenbrittle 01478 640404

[Portree Campsite](#) (NG 490 450) Toravaig, Portree 01478 611849

[Sligachan Campsite](#) (NG 485 301) Sligachan 01478 650204

[Staffin Campsite](#) (NG 495 667) Staffin 01470 562213

[Uig Bay Campsite](#) (NG 381 636) Uig 01470 542714

[Loch Greshornish Camping and Caravanning Club Site](#) (NG 343 523) Borve, nr Flashader

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

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

From the west coast of Scotland there are three routes onto Skye:

- by bridge from Kyle of Lochalsh
- by ferry from Glenelg <https://skyeferry.co.uk/>
- by ferry from Mallaig <https://www.calmac.co.uk/article/2121/Skye>

The roads around Skye and the Highlands of Scotland do get busy during the summer, we recommend you always use designated parking areas and do not park on the verge, in passing places or in front of gates.

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

The Isle of Skye is the largest of the Inner Hebrides and second-largest of Scotland's islands. A 50-mile-long patchwork of velvet moors, jagged mountains, sparkling lochs and towering sea cliffs, Skye has a population of just 10 000 people. The island is far from simple: it comprises a series of peninsulas radiating out in an irregular pattern from its mountainous core.

The Isle of Skye is also a great destination for Wildlife watching with the White Tailed Sea Eagle at the top of bird watchers lists. Otters, seals, whales, dolphins and red deer are just some of the other impressive creatures that can be spotted.

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Extending some twenty miles north from Portree is the Trotternish peninsula, where the bizarre landscape is the result of volcanic activity overlying soft sandstone bedrock. The coast is marked by sheer cliffs and there are pinnacles and pillars strewn along its length. Other features on the peninsula include, just six miles north of Portree, a distinctive column of rock named The Old Man of Storr.

History

The Isle of Skye (an t-Eilean Sgiathanach in Gaelic) takes its name from the old Norse sky-a, meaning 'cloud island', a Viking reference to the often-mist-enshrouded Cuillin Hills.

The Island has a rich History covering many topics, such as: Dinosaur Fossils, Clan Warfare, Highland Clearances and the infamous 'Bonnie Prince Charlie' and the Jacobite Rebellion.

Around the island you can see many Brochs, Pictish round towers built around 2000 years ago. Some are now a heap of stones while others are fairly well preserved. Although we can never really know why they were built, it has been suggested that they could be for defence from raiders, each broch is within sight of at least one other and most have a view to the sea, others consider they could be just the equivalent of 'The Big House'.

In more recent history, Skye's Dunvegan Castle is the oldest inhabited castle in Scotland and always by the same family, the chiefs of the Clan MacLeod.

On an island in the river at Skeabost are the ruins on the old church of St Columba's. This was the cathedral church of the Bishops of the Isles before that honour was transferred to the island of Iona.

All over Skye there are the ruins of abandoned houses. Some on higher ground were probably sheilings where the women and children stayed in the summers with the cattle. Others were simply the result of what we would now call upgrading. But there are whole villages of ruined houses. Some were left voluntarily because they had become inconvenient - too far from transport or schools. Others were forcibly cleared by the landlord or factor to make way for the more profitable sheep. The villagers were moved to the shore where they were expected to go fishing, or squeezed into another township, or put on ships to North America or Australia. The best known of these deserted villages are Suishnish and Boreraig in Strath.

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)
- 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,

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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

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

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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 Skye 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

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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
- Mountain area forecasts for North West 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 North-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 Skye Expedition Area does not directly endorse any of the sites listed.

<https://www.isleofskye.com/skye-guide/travel-tips/driving-tips> Some tips for driving on Skye's single track roads for the uninitiated.

<https://www.isleofskye.com/> A useful tourist site.

<https://www.undiscoveredscotland.co.uk/skye/skye/index.html> Another interesting tourist site.

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

<http://skyeguides.co.uk/information/the-cuillin-traverse/> Some details on the committing nature of the Cullin Ridge.

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/