

The Special Qualities of the Knoydart National Scenic Area

- One of the remotest places on mainland Britain
- One of Scotland's last great wild areas
- Some of the grandest coastal and mountain scenery on the west coast
- The majesty and extent of the mountains experienced from sea level
- Loch Hourn and Loch Nevis, dramatic but contrasting sea lochs
- Views across to the Inner Hebrides
- An exemplar of a previously glaciated landscape

Special Quality	Further information
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>One of the remotest places on mainland Britain</i> 	
<p data-bbox="293 857 730 949"><i>'There is no part of our dominions so remote.'</i> Pennant (1772) on Loch Hourn</p> <p data-bbox="189 983 730 1249">This is a remote, inaccessible, far distant place: a place on the horizon, almost beyond reach. The Knoydart peninsula is the last major area on the mainland not to be connected to the road network: roads reach only to the periphery, with entry to the deep interior only possible by ferry or a long walk-in.</p> <p data-bbox="189 1283 730 1572">Human activity and influence, confined to the coastal strip, feels small and insignificant and vast areas remain uninhabited. However, traces of former settlement do indicate a long history of the comings and goings of people in this harsh environment.</p> <p data-bbox="189 1606 730 2007">The three main settlements exist as small pockets of habitation, nestling within a wider natural landscape of mountain and sea. Arnisdale and Kinloch Hourn are found at the end of long, winding single track roads, and Inverie, reached by ferry, has an island feel. Isolated houses scattered along the coast represent the only other signs of human occupation in this otherwise uninhabited landscape.</p>	<p data-bbox="758 857 1378 967">Traditionally in Gaelic the area of Moidart, Arisaig, Morar and Knoydart was known as the Rough Bounds or <i>Garbh-Chrìochan</i>. Hence Knoydart lies at the northern end of the Rough Bounds.</p> <p data-bbox="758 1001 1401 1191">There is no road access to the Knoydart Peninsula itself: Inverie is only accessible by a 16 mile hike on foot or by passenger ferry from Mallaig. Barrisdale on the north side of Knoydart is either a long walk from Kinloch Hourn or a ferry from Arnisdale. The Old Forge pub at Inverie markets itself as the remotest pub in Britain. There are also isolated houses around the coast, accessible by footpath or boat</p> <p data-bbox="758 1225 1394 1415">Knoydart is frequently viewed from a distance, such as the view from the Glen Garry viewpoint, from Mallaig, or Arnisdale; from Armadale on Skye; or from the Small Isles. Sgurr na Ciche is a distinctive, inaccessible, pointed mountain visible in the distance from many locations; and the distant, looming mass of Beinn Sgritheall dominates the view from Sleat.</p> <p data-bbox="758 1449 1358 1532">Although particularly remote nowadays, this was not so much the case in the past when sea travel was the main form of transport in the west Highlands.</p>

<p>The sea was for long the main highway in western Scotland and this still holds true for Knoydart today. It is a landscape suited to travel by boat or foot and is not influenced by the needs of the motor car.</p>	
<p align="center">• <i>One of Scotland's last great wild areas</i></p>	
<p>Knoydart is often seen as one of the last, great wild areas of Scotland. It is a majestic, mountainous peninsula between two dramatic sea lochs, and large tracts are isolated, inaccessible and exposed to the elements. There is extensive terrain of rough, rugged, harsh, bare rock, cliff and scree.</p> <p>The landscape is clothed with a natural vegetation of open moorland, and in many places native woodland clings to the lower and steeper slopes.</p> <p>The combination of wildness, naturalness and remoteness is a major draw to those seeking an experience of wilderness.</p>	<p>Extensive areas are unpopulated and are of harsh terrain, and the land cover has a high degree of naturalness. It should be noted, though, that the human population from many areas was cleared in the 1850s, with much of the settlement infrastructure destroyed to make way for sheep farming. The remains of cleared settlements are scattered around the coast and within the inland glens.</p> <p>Ancient oakwoods occur on the lower slopes of Beinn Sgritheall, and remnant Caledonian pinewoods are present around Barrisdale. Birchwoods are extensive along the north shore of inner Loch Hourn, and scattered elsewhere on steep coastal slopes and glen sides. Commercial forestry plantations occur in the Inverie area and at the north west end of Loch Hourn. The Inverie woodlands are being restructured into native woodland by the Knoydart Forest Trust.</p> <p>Much of the eastern half the Knoydart NSA is an SNH Wild Land Search Area.</p>
<p align="center">• <i>Some of the grandest coastal and mountain scenery on the west coast</i></p>	
<p>Containing high, rocky mountains over 1000m tall, dramatic cliffs, narrow, steep-sided and winding glens, fast-flowing rivers, tumbling burns and tongues of the sea bringing the coast far inland, the area epitomises the West Highland mountain landscape.</p>	<p>The area contains many fine craggy mountains, peaks, ridges and corries that arise from rocky moorland. The fjord-like sea lochs of Loch Nevis and Loch Hourn extend far inland and isolate the Knoydart peninsula.</p> <p>There are eight Munros within the NSA, the highest being the narrow, pointed ridge of Sgurr na Ciche (1040m) and the more massive Ladhar Bheinn (1019m). The mountain ridges are separated by deep, flat-bottomed glens.</p> <p>The coastline consists of rocky shores and promontories, with isolated bays, beaches and small isles.</p>
<p align="center">• <i>The majesty and extent of the mountains experienced from sea level</i></p>	
<p>Whether viewed from the small settlements, from a boat, or from the flat-bottomed glens, the full majesty of the mountains can be experienced from sea level. There are no foothills or obscuring views to conceal the true height of the summits.</p>	<p>Unlike many areas of the Highlands, the full scale height of the mountain landscape can be experienced from sea level: from hard-up against the fjord-like loch sides at Kinloch Hourn; from Eilean Chioninich across the remote Barrisdale Bay to Ladhar Bheinn; from the old fishing huts on the remote shores of Corran; or from the ferry to Inverie looking up Loch Nevis.</p>

<p>Additionally, a boat trip along the length the sea lochs, or the long walks needed to reach the area, emphasises the scale and extent of this mountain fastness.</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;">• Loch Hourn and Loch Nevis, dramatic but contrasting sea lochs</p>	
<p>Inner Loch Hourn, remote, narrow and enclosed by steep-sided hills, is perhaps the most fjord-like of any sea loch in Scotland. With its often sombre and gloomy atmosphere, and the wind funnelling down its length, it perhaps deserves a name given to it, 'Loch of Hell', particularly in winter when the low sun finds it hard to enter.</p> <p>The loch has a remarkably similar morphology to Loch Nevis, both taking the sea far inland and both curving through narrows to a wider outer loch. However, in contrast, Loch Nevis is more open and spacious, perhaps explaining why it has been called 'Loch of Heaven.'</p> <p>Hence the Knoydart peninsula has been described as 'between heaven and hell.'</p>	<p>Both offer dramatic, fjord-like sea loch landscapes, with rocky shores, dramatic, steep slopes with mountains above, and occasional bays and beaches.</p> <p>It has been said the name Loch Hourn derives from <i>Loch lutharn</i>, Loch of Hell (but although the Celtic Hell was a cold dark place, this derivation is disputed). The loch is the more enclosed of the two, especially the inner loch, with a much steeper coastline and higher hills above both shores. Some parts do not receive direct sunlight for five months in winter, which creates a sombre, austere feeling.</p> <p>It has been said that the name Loch Nevis derives from <i>Loch Néimh</i>, Loch of Heaven (although this is also disputed). This loch is the more expansive in aspect, with open bays on south facing shores. The hills on the south shore are gentler and less high, allowing greater winter sun.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">• Views across to the Inner Hebrides</p>	
<p>From many parts of the NSA there are grand views across the Sound of Sleat to Skye and its Cuillins, to Rum and its Cuillins, and to the distinctive profile of the Island of Eigg.</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;">• An exemplar of a previously glaciated landscape</p>	
<p>The rugged landscape vividly illustrates many features of glaciation, from narrow mountain ridges, corries and hanging valleys, to steep-sided U-shaped glens and sea lochs.</p>	<p>The underlying geology consists of hard, metamorphic rocks resistant to erosion, mainly Moinian mica-schist and quartz-feldspar granulite, with Lewisian gneiss on northwest Loch Hourn.</p> <p>This results in the ancient, glacial features remaining prominent: over-deepened sea lochs and U-shaped valleys, hanging valleys, corries, arêtes and moraines. Post-glacial raised beaches are also present.</p>

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