

Berneray



Your Holiday Begins Here!



YOUR NATURE HOLIDAY BEGINS HERE...

Just two miles by three in size, Berneray (*Beàrnaigh*) boasts many natural attractions. The beautiful west beach (*tràigh iar*) is a three mile swathe of clean white shell sand facing the open Atlantic.

Behind the dunes that line the landward fringes of the west beach



lies the Berneray *machair*, covered in summer with orchids, corn marigolds, poppies, buttercups, red clover, field gentians and a multitude of other colourful species. Generations of

sympathetic crofting practice have ensured that this habitat has been preserved. This is a Site of Special Scientific Interest and also a Special Protection Area of international importance for birds. Dunlin, ringed plover and terns all nest here.

You may well also hear the rasping call of the corncrake, which migrates every winter to Africa and, by one of nature's miracles, returns to exactly the same spot each summer.



The seal colony in Bays Loch (*Loch a Bhàigh*) on the east side of the island is an ideal place to observe a large group of common and grey seals at close quarters. At the best vantage point you will find a small car park with an information point.



A map of the waymarked route is available on the Berneray Community

Website and can also be obtained at The Nurses' Cottage Visitor Information Centre.

YOUR ACTIVITY HOLIDAY BEGINS HERE...

Berneray has plenty to offer all lovers of the great outdoors.

CYCLING

Many cyclists start from Barra (*Barraigh*) or South Uist (*Uibhist a Deas*) and work their way northwards, so they benefit from the prevailing southerly wind. Berneray is ideally placed for a stop-over if you're intending to leave the Uists on the Sound of Harris Ferry.

WINDSURFING

Berneray's beaches are among the best anywhere for windsurfing. Stunning views and a consistent breeze... can it get any better?

KAYAKING

Every summer Berneray welcomes groups of canoeists and kayakers, exploring the sheltered waters around the islands of the Minch.

With its harbour facilities, Berneray is a popular stop-off point. If you stay at the hostel, you can leave your boat virtually at the hostel door! Berneray is also an important staging point for participants in the Hebridean Challenge.

BOAT TRIPS

See the seals at close quarters or explore neighbouring islands, such as Pabbay (*Pabaigh*), Boreray (*Boraraigh*), Ensay (*Easaigh*) or Killegray (*Ceileagraigh*). Boat trips are available throughout the summer, weather permitting, either in a private motor launch or the *Sealladh*, a lovingly restored Grimsay-built sailing boat from the 1950s, owned by Berneray Boat Club. Ask at the shop or The Nurses' Cottage for more information.



FISHING

Berneray's freshwater loch, Loch Bhrusta is stocked with brown trout. On a fine day it's an idyllic place to fish. Permits are available from Ardmaree Stores. Please note that all fishing is on a 'catch and release' basis only.

YOUR GAELIC ADVENTURE BEGINS HERE...

Explore Berneray's rich and colourful Gaelic history. The island lies at the core of the Gaelic heartland, and centuries of history resonate around every hill, stream, lochan and cottage on the island.

The majority of the island's population are native speakers of Scots Gaelic, a language with Irish and Norse influences, these finding a reflection in many local place names. Indeed the name Berneray itself is thought to derive from the Norse for 'Bear Island'.

The oldest surviving building on the island is the MacLeod's Gunnery, birthplace and home of a well-known 17th century knight, Sir Norman MacLeod. Nearby you will find a cluster of old 'blackhouses' – small cottages near the sea with thick walls and thatched roofs. A number of these have recently been restored and are now inhabited once again. Also in the vicinity is the ruin of an old church designed in the 19th century by renowned civil engineer Thomas Telford.

At the southern end of the island is to be found a monument to one of Berneray's most notable historical sons – Giant MacAskill (*Aonghas Mor MacAsgaill*).

DANCE THE NIGHT AWAY!

Today Berneray's proud Gaelic culture finds its most accessible expression in the regular ceillidhs and dances which take place in the Community Hall, especially during the summer months. Music and dance runs in the blood here, and many *Beàrnaich* are proficient musicians or singers within the Gaelic tradition. Berneray Week, each July, is a good time to enjoy the best local performers.

