

Take responsibility for your own actions

Weather systems can change rapidly and can be severe, even in summer. Plan ahead and be properly equipped.

Gale force winds are experienced for 20% of the year. Low temperatures and cloud can prevail for days, even in the warmest months. Ensure that you have appropriate wind- and waterproof clothing and stout footwear for slippery vegetated slopes. If travelling outwith Village Bay carry, and be able to use, a map, compass and whistle, and please leave a route card with the Ranger. If you have arranged to remain on the islands overnight you should have adequate provisions for several days in case you are stranded owing to weather conditions.

St Kilda has high cliffs and slippery slopes and is remote from rescue services and medical care. Be self-reliant and take care.

After rain or heavy mists, grassy slopes can be very slippery – be aware of your surroundings. Waterproof trousers can greatly accelerate a fall! Wind gusting at cliff tops and skua attacks can catch you unawares. There is no mobile phone reception on the islands and the coastguard helicopter is based remotely. Know your own abilities and seek guidance from people who know the landscape.

Life on the edge

- St Kilda is one of only 24 global locations awarded World Heritage Status for both natural and cultural heritage
- The world's largest colony of northern gannets nest here
- St Kilda has one of Europe's most significant seabird colonies, and Britain's largest colony of northern fulmar
- It is the most complete and intact cultural landscape of its type in Europe
- Conachair is the highest sea cliff in Britain at 1400 feet (430m)
- Gale force winds can be experienced over 70 days a year
- Rainfall, although only twice that of Edinburgh, is spread throughout the year – wet summers!
- Wild Soay sheep are the focus of one of the world's longest-running mammal research programmes
- Over 1400 stone-built cleits (food and fuel stores) are scattered throughout the islands
- Two island endemics survive – the St Kilda mouse and wren – both larger than their mainland relations

Further information

Further information can be obtained by checking our websites:

www.kilda.org.uk

www.nts.org.uk

www.hiort.org.uk (Gaelic site)

www.nts-seabirds.org.uk

Contact

NTS Western Isles Manager
Balnain House
40 Huntly Street
Inverness, IV3 5HR
Tel: 0844 493 2237
email: information@nts.org.uk

NTS St Kilda Ranger's Office
The Factor's House
St Kilda, HS7 5LA
Tel: 01870 604628
(Apr – Sept only)

Please contact the Inverness office in the first instance, as phone and postal communications are difficult from St Kilda.



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the National Trust
for Scotland

a place for everyone

St Kilda

A guide to access
Enjoy Scotland's outdoors - responsibly!



www.nts.org.uk

Respect the interests of other people

People live and work on St Kilda; please respect their privacy and workplace.

The Ministry of Defence (MOD) lease a small area on Hirta from the NTS. Today this area is managed by QinetiQ. The main accommodation area is at the top of the jetty with two outlying stations on the hilltops behind. This lease arrangement has been in place since 1957 and today the overall management of the island benefits from this partnership approach. The MOD facility helps ensure regular supplies and communications as well as vital services. All MOD facilities, including the recreational facilities, are accessible to authorised personnel only. Please respect this arrangement and follow guidance/notices on the ground. NTS staff and volunteers live and work in most of the other buildings. You are welcome to visit the church and the museum, which are always open.

Consider how your actions may affect other visitors' enjoyment.

Most visitors make the long journey to St Kilda to experience unrivalled natural and cultural heritage. Please discuss your plans with NTS staff before you travel if you are considering undertaking any activity which may impact on other visitors' enjoyment, e.g. large group activities, noisy or visually intrusive activities.

With respect to the international significance of St Kilda, camping is limited to a specific area on Hirta – pre-booking is essential. Open fires are not permitted, although gas stoves and portable barbecues, if set on a protective stand, can be used in some areas – please ask staff for advice.



Leave all animals (including pets) and/or plant materials at home.

St Kilda's isolated, fragile ecosystem is extremely vulnerable to the introduction of new species. For example, if rats were introduced, they could wipe out the bird colonies and outcompete the local mice. All cargo is checked for signs of rodents before it is landed on the island and only small open tenders are allowed to come alongside the jetty. Cats and dogs could disturb the wild sheep and birds and bring new parasites – please leave them on the boat or at home. St Kilda remains to this day largely unaffected by such introductions, vigilance is required to keep it this way.

Enjoy wildlife from a safe distance – close contact or feeding can disturb natural behaviour and put animals at risk.

All animals and birds on St Kilda are wild although some, such as the sheep, may appear tame. Feeding any animal at any time is inappropriate as it could change natural behaviour and cause illness. Bird colonies should not be accessed during nesting, which generally runs from March until late September, as disturbance is unavoidable and illegal (Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981). However, the breeding period of individual species varies and may also change from year to year, so please contact the Ranger and check www.kilda.org.uk for up-to-date information on the current status of breeding sites throughout the islands for your own and the birds' protection. Although cliff colonies are easy to spot, there are many ground-nesting species that are not, e.g. snipe and skua. Be careful where you walk and move quickly away from any bird that is accidentally disturbed.

Make sure walls and buildings are left as they are – they can be easily damaged by climbing or by just moving a stone.

Much of the cultural heritage of St Kilda is protected (Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979) as it is of international importance. All buildings, features and artefacts should be left as they are – disturbance or removal is illegal.

'... the future observer of St Kilda will be haunted the rest of his life by the place, and tantalised by the impossibility of describing it, to those who have not seen it.'

James Fisher 1947

Everyone has the right to be on most land and inland water providing they act responsibly. Your access rights and responsibilities are explained fully in the Scottish Outdoor Access Code.

Whether you're in the outdoors or managing the outdoors, the key things are to:

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



Find out more by visiting www.outdooraccess-scotland.com or phoning your local Scottish Natural Heritage office.

Care for the environment

Take all litter and food scraps away from St Kilda with you.

Litter includes cigarette butts, chewing gum, apple cores and fruit skins, as well as cans, bottles, wrappers, etc. All such items should be taken back to the boat and disposed of later at an appropriate facility on land. Throwing litter overboard can impact on the marine environment and may eventually wash ashore. Collecting and arranging the removal of large amounts of waste from the island is difficult and costly. By taking your litter away with you, we can spend more money on conservation and not waste disposal.

Leave everything as you find it.

Taking anything (flowers, stones or even wool) can have an impact. Everything on St Kilda serves a purpose – even things that may seem insignificant. Sheep horn and bones are a rich supply of calcium for mice and other sheep, wool can be used as nesting material, and stones may be providing shelter or even be undiscovered cultural artefacts. If every visitor took just one small thing the whole would be greatly diminished.