The Old Man of Stoer and the point

Route Summary

Summary:A visit to the Old Man of Stoer, a spectacular sea-stack. The walking is rough but the coastal scenery impressive; the return is over a low hill with fantastic views in clear weather. This is the best walk in Assynt for whale and dolphin spotting.Terrain:Rough and wet walking along the coast, pathless at times. Return over the hill probably gives easier going. Care is needed by the cliff edges.

Route Overview

Category: Walking

Rating: Unrated

Surface: Rough

Date Published: 19th April 2011

Difficulty: Hard

Length: 7.100 km / 4.44 mi

Last Modified: 27th April 2017

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Description

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A visit to the Old Man of Stoer, a spectacular sea-stack. The walking is rough but the coastal scenery impressive; the return is over a low hill with fantastic views in clear weather. This is the best walk in Assynt for whale and dolphin spotting.

Terrain:

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Time: 2.5 - 3.5 hours

Gaelic pronunciation and meaning: Tap to listen

Route description

Stage 1

There is car parking on the right with interpretative boards shortly before the minor road to Stoer lighthouse makes the

final climb to the lighthouse itself. A track climbs off to the right here; ignore this and instead start up the grassy path marked with a footpath sign 'Old Man of Stoer - 3km'. The path is wide but faint and fairly wet as it slopes uphill keeping parallel to the coast. There are soon great views back to the lighthouse.

Stage 2

The path becomes drier as it fades to a sheep-track. Continue along the coast above the cliffs. After about a kilometre a deep grassy gully cuts across the route; it is necessary to detour to the right a little before finding a place to cross this before continuing as before. Another kilometre further on the projecting rock of Cirean Geardail is seen over to the left. The coast dog-legs to the right here, and there is a wonderful view ahead along the highest section of the cliffs, with the Old Man of Stoer at its far end. Follow the coast uphill to the right and then above the high cliffs.

Stage 3

The coast and the path then descend fairly steeply to reach the grassy area immediately above the Old Man. This amazing sea stack is 70 metres high and was first climbed by Dr Tom Patey - abseil loops can usually be seen draped around the summit. Perhaps even more challenging is reaching the base of the stack through the surging sea.

Stage 4

Keeping on terra firma, continue further along the coast to reach the Point of Stoer itself. This necessitates stepping over a fence to reach the furthest point, with wonderful views up the Sutherland coastline. From here you can return the same way, but with only a little more effort (and probably easier going) you can head back over the summit of Sithean Mor (the Big Fairy Hill). To do this, head directly up the featureless broad slopes.

Stage 5

The summit is marked by a cairn with a trig point and is a fantastic viewpoint. There is huge sweep of the Sutherland coast backed by Foinaven, whilst further right are the bizarre mountains of Assynt - Quinag, Canisp, Suilven, Cul Mor, Cul Beag and Stac Pollaidh. On a clear day you can even make out An Teallach beyond, with Greenstone point and the Trotternish peninsula of Skye leading round to the wide sea and the Isle of Lewis.

Stage 6

From here there is a faint path keeping to the high ground and aiming for the hillocks to the right of the hill with the mast. The path keeps slightly to the left to avoid boggy ground and if followed gives surprisingly good going. Bypass the next lowly cairned summit to the left (keeping on the path) which again avoids a bog; a little further on the track which leads to the radio mast should be reached. Turn right along this and follow it past the remains of a World War Two radar station before it descends back to the start.

Waypoints

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Altitude in meters