

Living and working in the Western Isles



Welcome to some of
the most beautiful
scenery in the world





Hosta Beach, North Uist
Photography: Sandle Maciver

Space for you to grow

The Western Isles, also known as the Outer Hebrides, is a chain of islands which lie 55km off the west coast of Scotland, stretching 160 miles from the Butt of Lewis in the north to Vatersay in the south. The main islands are Lewis, Harris, North/South Uist and Barra. These are inter-connected by a system of roads, causeways, ferries and planes which enable you to travel the length and breadth of the islands, discovering beautiful coastlines, coves, beaches and sea-lochs. Many of the roads are narrow; some are single track which have bends and chicanes. This can leave some vulnerable in poor weather.

These islands provide some of the most beautiful scenery in the world, each island holding its own unique features ranging from wild rocky peaks, moorlands and machairs to long stretches of golden sandy beaches. Some of the tranquil un-spoilt beaches of the Western Isles are world-famous and rival beaches in the world's hotter climates. Luskentyre beach, situated on the spectacular west coast of South Harris, has been voted Britain's best beach and has also been said to be one of the top ten beaches in the world.





Lewis and Harris, has been ranked fifth best island in the world by Tripadvisor



Maraig Loch Seaforth, Isle of Harris
Photography: Sandle Meadver

Room for you to breathe

The temperate climate and position of the Western Isles gives home to an unusual selection of plants, wildlife and rare birds. The islands provide a unique opportunity to watch the wildlife. Otters, seals, insects and butterflies, rabbits, deer, whales, dolphins, porpoises, jellyfish, crabs, and much more, can be seen throughout the isles. The unspoilt natural beauty of the islands provides a great backdrop for the many species of wildlife that can be observed.

The Western Isles has a population of around 27,000 people and the islands are accessed from mainland Scotland by ferries and planes, both services can be affected in

the winter. Sea transport is crucial to the islands, and a variety of ferry services serve the Western Isles. Air services offer direct links to a number of mainland locations.

Barra Airport (Scottish Gaelic: Port-adhair Bharraigh) (also known as Barra Eoligarry Airport) is a short-runway airport situated in the wide shallow bay of Traigh Mhòr at the north tip of the island of Barra. The airport is unique, being the only one in the world where scheduled flights use a beach as the runway. Barra Airport opened in 1936 and in 2011 was named the world's most spectacular place to land.



A scenic landscape featuring a stone tower on a small island in the middle of a bay. The tower is made of grey stone with some orange-brown patches. In the background, there are green mountains under a cloudy sky. A small town is visible on the right side of the bay. The foreground shows dark, rocky terrain with some orange lichen.

The Western Isles have been
inhabited for over 6000 years

Come and make some history

The Western Isles have been inhabited for over 6000 years. The Vikings invaded in the 9th century and today still many place names remaining are of Norse origin. Gaelic and English are both spoken and school children have the option of being taught in Gaelic Medium classes in their local schools.

People in the Western Isles are very proud of their history and culture, which contains much hardship and human cost, during which time the islanders fought with great determination to carve out their future.

Many of these historic sites have been preserved, such as the famous Callanish Stones and the Garenin Blackhouse Village.

On a Sunday, particularly in Lewis and Harris, virtually all commercial activity ceases and a large proportion of the population attends church. This makes the character of the islands very different from the hustle and bustle of most mainland areas on a Sunday.

Inspired, whatever the weather!

The Western Isles has a maritime climate dominated by 'North Atlantic Drift' or 'Gulf Stream'; climatically the dominant features are wind and rain. In contrast to the winters, when the days are quite short, in the summer the actual daylight hours are extremely long, with lots of daylight and barely two hours of darkness at midsummer due to the northerly latitude of the Islands.



A life like no other,
in a place like no other

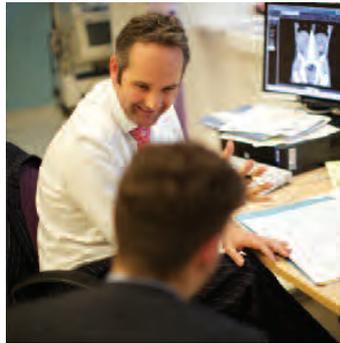


Making it all work for you

Many people move to the Western Isles for the quality of life and the ability to regain a better work-life balance. As well as being well known for the safety of its communities, the pace of life is slower, with much less traffic to navigate to get to work and go about daily life.

The picturesque town of Stornoway is the hub of the Western Isles; it is home to a variety of sporting, media and social establishments and is where the majority of shops and local headquarters are located.

Modern technology offers workers the opportunity, across many different sectors throughout the islands, for home working. Video/teleconferencing is often used to link inter-island and mainland partners, reducing the need to travel.





Health & Social Care

There are three main hospitals situated on the main islands, Western Isles Hospital (Ospadal nan Eilean Siar) in Stornoway, the Uist & Barra Hospital (Ospadal Uibhist agus Bharraigh) in Benbecula which is located in the centre between North and South Uist, and St Brendan's Hospital in Barra. There are a number of GP and Dental Practices across the Western Isles. Community nursing services operate out of general practice premises and at community offices in key locations.

Community Care Services are available across the Western Isles for people with a range of needs. The service provides high quality support to individuals, their families and carers. The Comhairle provides support at home, in residential care and in resource centres. There are also a number of local organisations that provide support and services to the community such as lunch clubs, support for carers, Dementia Services and advocacy.

Register with a doctor

Remember you should register yourself/family with a doctor at your local practice as soon as possible. The Medical Practice will advise you on specific documentation required to register.

Moving home

Looking for the right property can be somewhat of a challenge. If you are moving from the mainland, it is important you are well informed about the area prior to your move. There is a good selection of Estate Agents and Solicitors available locally to help you with the process, whether you are buying, selling or wanting to rent property.

Schools and Education

After a £70 million investment by the local government, children across the Western Isles are now being taught in some of the most modern schools in Scotland.

Lewis Castle College campus is part of the University of the Highlands and Islands. There is a wide range of professional development courses and further education courses available for study. This gives students more

reasons to stay in the islands (rather than leaving to study in the cities of mainland Scotland), contribute to the local economy or even build their own business. There is a University of Stirling campus based at the hospital in Stornoway. Students can undertake a range of health studies leading to qualifications in nursing and health and social care.

Arts, culture & heritage

The Western Isles is home to a good range of restaurants, take-aways and pubs, accommodating all tastes and budgets. Live music is on offer in a variety of pubs and clubs, mainly at the weekend.

No matter where you live in the Outer Hebrides, you will find a wealth of authentic experiences to engage with - the rich culture, the outstanding natural heritage, food, music, art and craft culture - all ways of enjoying the living Gaelic culture.

There is a selection of museums and art centres situated across the islands. Among them is the award winning Taigh Chearsabhagh in North Uist and An Lanntair Centre in the heart of Stornoway. These are multi-purpose venues, hosting exhibitions and workshops, live music, theatre and cinemas.

Many communities hold an annual Agricultural Show, a great showcase for the crofting community and fun for all the family, with craft stalls, displays and demonstrations, highland dancing and music.

Music

The Hebridean Celtic Festival is a four day award winning festival which takes place annually in July and brings together a variety of traditional and contemporary music. This event attracts visitors from around the globe to the Castle Green in the centre of Stornoway.

Smaller musical events are also held where adults and children are given the opportunity throughout the Isles to learn to play musical instruments. The local children's Gaelic Mod is held annually, usually at the beginning of June.

Sports facilities

The Outer Hebrides offers a superb range of outdoor activities including surfing, kite surfing, hill walking and mountaineering and cycling. Horse riding is an increasingly popular sport with many inland trails and long beaches providing the perfect setting. The Hebridean Equestrian Centre is only a 10 minute drive from Stornoway on the Isle of Lewis. It caters for both children and adults from the age of 4 upwards and no experience is necessary to take part. There is a smaller community riding school based in Benbecula.

Comhairle nan Eilean Siar's Sport and Health Section delivers and supports a wide range of services across the Western Isles. Outdoor activities and multi-sports are particularly popular in the Western Isles. The main sports centre in the Western Isles is located in Stornoway. The Ionad Spors Leodhais (Lewis Sports Centre) has a full range of sports facilities both indoor and outdoor, which provides an excellent facility for school children and the general public.

A range of smaller, local community facilities is also provided throughout the Isles and a whole host of sporting activities is pursued through clubs and organised events held throughout the year; covering sports such as rugby, football, shinty, fishing, riding, canoeing, golf, athletics and 10 pin bowling. A minimum of four half marathons are run every year, plus various cycling events and a range of charity focused events.

Shopping

The town of Stornoway is the main town in which most of the shops are located and is the only place in the Outer Hebrides where you will find a mix of small high street shops, and local independent shops, of which many sell locally produced goods, such as traditional Harris Tweed and jewellery. The local fishing fleet provides fresh fish and shellfish to local fish shops and restaurants.

Useful links and numbers

Local council (CnES)

www.cne-siar.gov.uk/contact.asp

NHS Western Isles

www.wihb.scot.nhs.uk

Traveline Scotland

www.travelinescotland.com

Caledonian Macbraynes Ferry Timetables

www.calmac.co.uk/timetables

Flybe

www.flybe.com

Visit Scotland

www.visitscotland.com/destinations-maps/outer-hebrides

St Kilda

Benbecula

Barra

Lewis

Harris

North
Uist

South
Uist



Innovatively investing
in Europe's Northern
Periphery for a sustainable
and prosperous future

