



Boreraig and Suisnish

The ruined coastal villages of Suisnish and Boreraig are a reminder of the Clearances; the walk to visit them gives an easy though long circuit with fine views.



Terrain

Mostly clear paths, tracks and minor roads; boggy in places.

Public transport

Bus 50B and Post Bus from Portree and Broadford. Get off at ruined church of Cill Chriosd.

Start time

Cill Chriosd ruined church, B8083.

Walk Statistics

- Distance: 16.5km / 10.25 miles
- Time (summer conditions): 5 - 6 hours
- Ascent: 350m
- Start Grid Ref: NG616207

Walk Description

Stage 1

Park opposite the ruined church of Cill Chriosd four kilometres out of Broadford on the road to Elgol. The ruin dates from the sixteenth century when this was the heart of one of Skye's most fertile and populous districts; following the declining population and the forced evictions of the Clearances the church fell into ruins and was superseded in 1840 by a new church at Broadford.



Walk along the road towards Broadford until a track goes off to the right. Turn up this track which leads to the ruins of an old Marble processing factory. Keep to the left of these ruins following a rough track uphill.

When the track reaches an excellently maintained footpath, turn right along it. This is the Marble Line, the route of a railway line that ran between Broadford and a series of Marble quarries which closed in 1912; they had been worked for at least a century and in 1907 a railway was built to transport the marble to Broadford, but the company soon folded. Skye Marble was highly prized, being used in Iona Abbey and Hamilton Palace.

Stage 2

Further on there are views down into a second gorge carved by the Allt na Dunaiche. After a kilometre and a half the path crosses the stream, and three hundred metres further on crosses a second stream before beginning the climb up Coire Uaigneich on the newly repaired path.

The route turns sharp right as it reaches the grassy bowl of Fionna-choire - ignore other paths heading straight on (if you reach a huge boulder, you've missed the turning).



The route is slightly indistinct for a while, zigzagging up the steep slopes to the right once the edge of the cliffs is passed. Higher up is a wide scree slope where traces of a zig-zag path ease the ascent.

Stage 3

Pass to the right of some sheepfolds and continue down to the shore as the path becomes indistinct amongst old green fields and ruined houses. This is Boreraig, as fertile, sheltered and beautiful a spot as any village on Skye, but it was brutally cleared by Lord Macdonald in 1853, all residents being evicted and their homes burned to make way for the more profitable sheep. On a fine sunny day it is easy to imagine the children playing amongst the fields.



Stage 4

From Boreraig the route follows a coastal path; first cross the stream by a stone slab bridge just above the shore. After crossing an elevated greensward the path passes to the left of the last building in Boreraig, keeping right on the shoreline where the cliffs press close. Most of the way it is a beautifully graded path as it was originally the main route to Boreraig, but in places the path has been destroyed by the decaying cliffs and you have to weave between the rocks; there are several fine waterfalls cascading down from the black slabby cliffs. Look out for seals and otters on the shoreline section, before the path ascends to a higher level and continues to Suisnish.

Stage 5

On reaching a fence, follow the path round the fence to the right. Shortly after turning a

corner in the fence, go through the gate on the left and descend to the barn below. Go through another gate to the right of the barn where a good landrover track begins. Follow this track to another ruined house; you are now in Suisnish.

Stage 6

There are lots more ruined houses on the hillsides above and below - Suisnish being cleared at the same time as Boreraig. The geologist Archibald Geikie was visiting the area at the time of the clearance, and his recollection is worth quoting here:

'A strange wailing sound reached my ears... I could see a long and motley procession winding along the road that led north from Suisnish... There were old men and women, too feeble to walk, who were placed in carts; the younger members of the community on foot were carrying their bundles of clothes... while the children, with looks of alarm, walked alongside.... A cry of grief went up to heaven, the long plaintive wail, like a funeral coronach, was resumed.. the sound re-echoed through the wide valley of Strath in one prolonged note of desolation.'

Stage 7

The landrover track soon turns northwards for three kilometres until reaching the pebble beach at Camas Malag, the sublime views of the southern end of the Cuillin, Bla Bheinn and the Broadford Red Hills improving with every step.

Stage 8

Camas Malag is the terminus of a minor road, which is followed uphill away from the coast, passing the present day Torrin Marble Quarry, before reaching a junction with the Broadford/Elgol road. Turn right and follow the minor road, with care as it can be busy with cars in the summer months. It leads past pleasant native woodland and reedy Loch Cill Chriosd (a haunt of Whooper Swans) to return to the start point.

