



The cliffs of Gogarth Bay are popular with rock climbers | Andy Biggs

# The Stacks



**No. 8 | Grade C | 12km | OS Sheet 114 | Tidal Port Liverpool**

**Start** ▲ Porth Dafarch (233 800)

**Finish** ● Soldiers' Point, Holyhead (236 837)

**HW/LW** High and low water at Porth Dafarch occur around 1 hour 20 minutes before Liverpool. High and low water at Holyhead are around 48 minutes before Liverpool.

**Tidal times** At Penrhyn Mawr the NW going stream (flood) starts around 3 hours 30 minutes after HW Liverpool, the SE going stream (ebb) starts around 1 hour 15 minutes before HW Liverpool. At South Stack the NNE going stream (flood) starts around 4 hours 50 minutes after HW Liverpool, the SSW going stream (ebb) starts around 1 hour 10 minutes before HW Liverpool. At North Stack the NE going stream (flood) starts around 5 hours after HW Liverpool, the SW going stream (ebb) starts 2 hours before HW Liverpool.

**Tidal rates** This area has a reputation for fast tidal streams, which can exceed 6 knots on spring tides.

**Coastguard** Holyhead, Tel. 01407 762051, VHF Weather 0235 UT.

**INTRODUCTION** Having negotiated the jagged headland and associated overfalls of Penrhyn Mawr you will be committed for the rest of this awe-inspiring journey around South and North Stack.

**DESCRIPTION** The narrow rocky bay at Porth Dafarch makes an ideal place to launch soon after the flood stream begins and you will arrive at Penrhyn Mawr in plenty of time to watch the overfalls build. Porth Ruffydd has a small pebbly beach. It is possible to land here and walk the short distance to the headland, if you feel the need to check the mood of the sea before reaching the waves and whirlpools of Penrhyn Mawr. As you emerge from the overfalls South Stack and the lighthouse appear but are still over 2km away. The route to South Stack from here is a matter of choice. The quick way is to stay offshore. Follow the tidal stream flowing north-west, then north, giving swift passage through more overfalls at South Stack. The slower, more interesting route is to stay close inshore. Abraham's Bosom is the rocky bay to the north of Penrhyn Mawr. It is possible to land on a pebbly beach here and escape to the coast road above the cliffs. But to carry a kayak up the steps is very difficult. South Stack, or Ynys Lawd, is a small island separated less than 3m from the mainland. This is the most westerly point of Holy Island. South Stack and the cliffs nearby are important seabird colonies and should be given a wide berth during the breeding season (May to August). With South Stack behind you, Gogarth Bay opens up ahead. The cliffs

here are popular with climbers. There are further caves and gullies on toward North Stack that are perfect for the inquisitive paddler but be aware of dangerous waves created by car ferries from Holyhead Harbour. The overfalls that develop at North Stack during the middle of the SW going ebb are just as spectacular as those at Penrhyn Mawr on the flood. The crux of this trip is to arrive at North Stack before the tide turns here. The final landing is little more than 1km beyond Ynys Wellt. Waves breaking on the reef here often catch out paddlers and the pebbly beach at Soldiers' Point is steep and landing can be awkward. The track leading to the breakwater is privately owned, but frequently used without objection, however there is a public car park a short walk away at the Holyhead Breakwater Country Park.

**TIDE & WEATHER** A large eddy forms during both flood and ebb within Abraham's Bosom. Although the races at North and South Stack are not far, the strength of the tide is not felt within Gogarth Bay. Anything more than a gentle breeze from the south, west or north has a significant effect on the tidal races. Wind against tide can produce huge breaking seas that are, for mortals, better observed from land.



Excerpt abridged and adapted from *Welsh Sea Kayaking* by Andy Biggs & Jim Krawiecki ISBN 0954706188, published by Pesda Press, Caernarfon. For details of this and other books, as well as downloads of further mini-guides and route cards in this series, visit: [WWW.PESDAPRESS.COM](http://WWW.PESDAPRESS.COM)

Trip Name & Number	
Page Number	VHF Weather
Date	Weather Forecast
Coastguard Contact	

TIDAL INFORMATION

Tidal Port		Mean Sp Range			Local Port		
		Mean Np Range					
Tidal Port Tide Times (UT)	Height in Metres	Tidal Range in Metres	HW/LW	+1 Hr for BST?	Local Port HW/LW Time Difference	Local Port HW/LW	Sp or Np Tides

TIDAL STREAM TIMES

Location	Direction of Tidal Stream	Tidal Stream Time Diff.	Tidal Port HW (BST?)	Tidal Stream Start Time	Tidal Rate	Est. Max Speed
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ROUTE PLAN

Location	Notes	ETA	ETD
Start			
1st			
2nd			
3rd			
4th			
5th			
Finish			