



# Monach Islands

**No. 29 | Grade C | 36km | 8 Hours | OS Sheet 18 & 22 | Tidal Port Ullapool**

**Start**  Hogha Gearraidh (Hougharry) Sheet 18 (705 707)

**Finish**  Hogha Gearraidh (Hougharry) Sheet 18 (705 707)

**HW/LW** HW/LW at the Monachs is about 1 hour before Ullapool.

**Tidal times** At Aird an Runair: The N going stream starts 6 hrs before HW Ullapool. The S going stream starts 25 mins after HW Ullapool. In the Sound of Monach: The N going stream starts 4 hrs 30 mins before HW Ullapool. The S going stream starts 1 hr 55 mins after HW Ullapool.

**Tidal rates** Off Aird an Runair the average spring rate is about 2 knots. In the Sound of Monach the average spring rate is about 2 knots. Between and around the Monach Islands where the water is shallower the average spring rate could be as much as 3 knots. An eddy runs south toward the islands when the N stream is running and vice versa.

**Coastguard** Stornoway, tel:01851 702013, VHF Weather 0910 UT

**INTRODUCTION** The Monachs, a National Nature Reserve, are a group of low-lying islands that used to be inhabited by as many as 140 people in 1891. They are separated by 7km of water from North Uist.

**DESCRIPTION** Hougharry sits on the northern edge of the RSPB Balranald Nature Reserve. The reserve is home to one of Europe's most endangered bird species, the corncrake, which benefits from the traditional crofting agricultural practices that are encouraged by the RSPB. The nature reserve is a beautiful mix of sandy beaches, flower-rich machair, sand dunes, marshes, shallow fresh water lochs and a rocky foreshore. During the summer months the visitor centre at Balranald is open during the day.

Once you have left Hougharry and rounded Aird an Runair, the crossing to the Monachs starts. The first place you will come to is Stockay, a favoured place for seals. The Monachs have the largest breeding colony of grey seals in the United Kingdom producing one quarter of all the UK seal pups. If you arrive at the islands when there are seal pups try to keep disturbance to a minimum.

Fulmars that would usually nest on cliffs can be found here nesting on the ground. Watch out for their oily spray if you get too close, the smell is extremely offensive.

Monach translates as 'monk', after the monks who maintained a light on Shillay to warn mariners of the group of islands. Perhaps more relevant today is the traditional name of Heisker, meaning bright skerry.

**TIDE & WEATHER** Leave Hougharry 3 hours after HW Ullapool, the south-going stream will have been running for 2½ hours now past Aird an Runair so you should be helped along nicely by the flow of water. It will take you 2 hours or less to reach Ceann Ear after which you can explore and relax for 4 hours at least until heading back north around the start of the north-going stream in the Sound of Monach which will be 4 hours and 30 minutes before HW Ullapool.

You will be looking for an idyllic day to do this trip, no threatening changes expected during the day. Look for a day with very little swell and a cloudless blue sky, with a light wind to stop you getting too hot.

**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION** Starting at Hougharry is recommended because it is sheltered and it is the closest beach to the public road. There is no right of vehicular access to the shore further south.



Excerpt abridged and adapted from *Scottish Sea Kayaking* by Doug Cooper & George Reid ISBN 0954706129, 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
Location	Direction of Tidal Stream	Tidal Stream Time Diff.	Tidal Port HW (BST?)	Tidal Stream Start Time	Tidal Rate	Est. Max Speed
Location	Direction of Tidal Stream	Tidal Stream Time Diff.	Tidal Port HW (BST?)	Tidal Stream Start Time	Tidal Rate	Est. Max Speed

ROUTE PLAN

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