

STRAVANNAN – ROUTE 3

Route: From the old trig point follow the West Island Way down the west side of the hill being careful to turn SE after 0.7 km. Follow the signs down the valley to the A844 then walk 0.35 km to the next West Island Way sign on your right.

Start point coordinates: 55.78775, -5.05865

Distance: 2.8 km

Terrain: This whole route is good, made path throughout its length. Mostly, this is a gentle downhill walk with spectacular views over to Arran. In heavy rain, the lower section can have two areas that become wet, about 300m down from Upper Stravannan.

As you travel

As you stand at the top of the hill, looking west, you can see the beginning of a seaway that reaches as far as Inverary, in upper Loch Fyne. Early travellers used these sea routes as the simplest way of moving around. Celtic saints arriving in Scotland all came by these seaways.

Looking towards Arran on a clear day you have a good view of the sleeping warrior. The profile of a helmeted knight, lying on his back with his arms resting across his stomach, can be seen in the hills to the north of Goat Fell. What lies under the mountain?

As you turn down the valley, passing extensive plantings of new willow, alder, and oak woodland you travel through one of the prettiest parts of the pilgrimage. Turning due south, you have more mature oak woods to the east. The ancient Celts, in the druid religion, placed a lot of emphasis on the oak tree – regarding it as sacred. Their holy meeting places were *Drunemeton*: sacred oak wood.

As you walk alongside the oak woodland you join the little burn that runs down the valley, bringing water from the high moorland and eventually, running into Stravannan bay. In spring and early summer, this valley is idyllic and full of birdsong. Songs of travellers from far shores.

Think as you go

We are easily distracted, turning readily aside from our journey to consider wayside attractions. Whether these are potential stories of sleeping giants or attractions of mysticism in the worship of nature. What attracts you?

In this walk, you will travel from high moor, in places bleak and harsh, down hillsides with magnificent, distracting views until, eventually, you come to a picturesque valley surrounded by nature. Paul wrote to people in Galatia in northern Turkey, as we now know it. He warned against distraction and the wrong teachings that were beginning to affect this group of early Christians. There was a move to introduce old rules and practices, one's which had been superseded by Jesus and his resurrection. Did you know that Galatia at that time had a large population of Celts with their own Celtic language? To whom Paul was writing is uncertain, but the people would have known of Celtic practices as well as Jewish ones, at the time.

Galatians 5:24-25 (CSBBible)

24 Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

25 If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit.

