The Wild in Me

Quinag
Assynt

Sandwood
Sutherland

johnmuirtrust.org/thewildinme
Quinag
Assynt

A walker’s playground in the wild heart of Assynt

Assynt is a hill walker’s paradise, with Quinag one of the most popular mountains. It’s easy to see why. With three summits - Sail Garbh, Sail Ghorm and Spidean Coinich - striking ridges and sweeping views, it’s a special place to be.

Up high, it’s possible to glimpse golden eagle, ptarmigan and ring ouzel, while on the shoreline sightings of seals and dolphins are common. Bridging the two are otters that hunt along burns, often following them from the shore to the bealach high above.

Conservation at Quinag
The John Muir Trust maintains the mountain path up Quinag, enabling access to the summits and their stunning views over the peaks and lochs of Sutherland. Our skilled path team helps prevent landscape damage and erosion without being intrusive. We also monitor habitats for wildlife. Quinag is part of the Coigach and Assynt Living Landscape project, which aims to reconnect woodlands and other fragmented habitats to allow missing species to return.

Find out more at johnmuirtrust.org/quinag

“I’d recommend Quinag to anyone looking to climb their first mountain. It’s an easy walk in, with at least one peak just a steady trek, so you can be up and down in three hours or so. Choose from one peak or make a whole day of it and climb the full set, with its mix of drops, bowls and ridges. You can’t ask for much more from a mountain.

There’s also a cracking loch at the bottom if you fancy a swim after your climb. And if you follow the burn out rather than the path there are a couple of glorious waterfalls to enjoy. Perhaps best of all, there are three amazing lumps on Sail Garbh that look like something out of the Hobbit.

Of course, if you’re a wanderer, there are fascinating erratics all around the northeast side, including a rock the size of a large shed dumped on top of three stones with a stream running under it. It’s a great place to see ptarmigan, grouse, deer, eagles and buzzards.

Much more than a mountain, Quinag is a walker’s playground with at least a couple of dozen cracking routes in one self-contained range. Photographers will love it too.”

Dave McBain
Hill walker and local accommodation provider
End your hike at nearby Loch Assynt and see the dramatic ruins of Ardvreck Castle.

Climb one of the mountain’s three summits for incredible views across Assynt.

Watch for upland birds like ring ouzel (top) and animals such as otters (left).
Sandwood Bay
Sutherland

A bewitching place full of awe-inspiring coastal beauty

The name Sandwood comes from the Norse ‘Sandvatn’ meaning sandy loch, and refers to the land around the famous bay that draws visitors to this striking part of Sutherland year-round.

It’s a wild place. Just south of Cape Wrath, Sandwood often feels the full force of the Atlantic weather systems that roll in. The colour of the landscape changes almost daily, while the lack of light pollution means that night skies can be spectacular - particularly when the Northern Lights appear.

The land includes blanket bog, hills, lochs, dunes, weathered sea cliffs and machair - a flower-rich habitat found only in certain parts of Britain and Ireland.

The machair holds more than 220 species of wildflower and is a riot of colour in summer. It is also home to eight species of bumblebee including the rare great yellow which is now confined to this very specific habitat.

Other wildlife at Sandwood includes otters, mountain hare, golden eagles and sea eagles. From the shore, common and grey seals are often spotted, while lucky visitors can sometimes catch a glimpse of orca and bottlenose dolphin.

Find out more at johnmuirtrust.org/sandwoodbay

Conservation at Sandwood

The wider Sandwood estate lies within a Special Area of Conservation (SAC). The designation is for its dune grassland, shifting dunes and machair. It’s also a national Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).

The John Muir Trust maintains the path to the bay, which is under constant erosion from the weather and the footfall of visitors. We also monitor the spectacular wildlife in the area - including thousands of nesting seabirds and the rare great yellow bumblebee - and carry out beach cleaning with volunteers.
In summer, admire the beautiful flowers in the machair, including eight kinds of orchid.

Explore the turquoise waters by kayak and get a different view of Am Buachaille, the iconic sea stack.

You might spot seabirds like puffins, fulmars and sea eagles (above).

Walk the golden sands from end to end, and watch for seals, dolphins and orcas off the coast.
More inspiration

**Venture North**
Tourist information for Caithness and Sutherland, including events, accommodation and more
venturenorth.com

**Discover Assynt**
What to see and do in Assynt, including wildlife, historical sights, walks and attractions
discoverassynt.co.uk

**North Coast 500**
The ultimate road trip around the north coast of Scotland
northcoast500.com

**North West Highlands Snorkel Trail**
Nine spots for underwater adventure
scottishwildlifetrust.org.uk/snorkeltrail

**North West Highlands Geopark**
Discover the mountains and geology of the North West Highlands
nwhgeopark.com

**WalkHighlands**
Walking routes, tips, maps, accommodation and more
walkhighlands.com

**VisitScotland**
Endless inspiration for your trip from Scotland's national tourist board
visitscotland.com

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Tours and experiences from our travel partners

**Wilderness Scotland**

**North Highland Coast**
Each day you'll set out to hike the peaceful mountains, beaches and islands of Sutherland. Walking through wild and spectacular scenery with your Wilderness Scotland guide. Their exceptional knowledge of the nature, culture and history of the area will bring the landscape to life, immersing you in your surrounding and giving you memories to last a lifetime.
wildernessscotland.com
HF Holidays

Cape Wrath Classic Guided Trail
This route takes a selection of the best bits of this fantastic wilderness, walking from Cape Wrath to end in the fishing village of Lochinver. Enjoy a genuine wilderness experience coupled with warm highland hospitality and a chance to see a fantastic range of wildlife. Visit Cape Wrath and Sandwood Bay, ascend the spectacular pyramid of Ben Stack, visit the bird reserve on Handa Island and walk beneath the majestic Suilven.
hfholidays.com

WalkHighlands
To plan your own trip to discover the wild places of Scotland’s stunning northwest, visit the WalkHighlands website which features a huge choice of great places to stay as well as all the best walks to do.
walkhighlands.com

Absolute Escapes
Absolute Escapes are specialists in self-guided walking holidays in Scotland and proud members of the John Muir Trust. Our packages include carefully selected accommodation, guidebooks/maps, information pack, and our emergency contact details. Discover the spectacular North West Highlands with our centre-based walking holiday.
absolutescapes.com
About the John Muir Trust

The John Muir Trust is a conservation charity dedicated to protecting and enhancing wild places. We own and care for some of the finest wild landscapes in the UK, including Quinag and Sandwood Bay, working to restore natural habitats and native species to help nature flourish. We campaign to keep wild places free from inappropriate development and open for all to enjoy, and help people of all ages and backgrounds connect with, enjoy and care for them.

Promoting and protecting wild places

In acting to promote and protect wildness, we encourage sustainable land use that will allow future generations the opportunity to experience and benefit from the wild. It is important that communities can thrive in and around our wildest locations, and that’s why we advocate slow tourism, where attention is focused on encouraging visitors to contribute to the preservation of a destination.


The wild in me
Helen Mort

The wild in me is wind undoing heather’s purple tapestry

The wild in me is the zig-zag after image of a lightning tree

It’s the city dawn I carry to the Highlands in my memory

The first touch of the rain-lashed morning sea

All signpost north an engine rattle motorway poetry

It’s a child climbing towards a cairn she can’t see

The wild in me is sand dunes and their notebook secrecy