

West Westray Coast

8.8km (5.5m) linear cliff top trail, maritime heath, ending Noup Head lighthouse



One of the finest and wildest cliff walks in Orkney with wonderful scenery and seabird colonies.



Primula Scotica

The trail skirts around Skea Hill then Fitty Hill, where the rare Scottish primrose grows, on an exciting cliff top trail that gets more dramatic the further north you go. It has tremendous views of headlands, caves, natural arches and geos and wild Atlantic rollers thunder against the vertical cliffs adding to the thrill.

From North Hill onwards tens of thousands of sea birds take up their nesting positions on the ledges from May to July. There are spectacular viewing points, but take very great care on the cliff edge. This seabird city with its noise and smell make an impressive experience. The most common birds are guillemots, kittiwakes and fulmars, together with black guillemots, razorbills and puffins, and the smaller wheatear and rock pipit. Gannets have begun to breed on the cliffs and you are likely to see other species too, from raven to snow bunting.



Gannet

From near the lighthouse look down to the skerries where, at low tide, you may see dozens of seals hauled out on the rocks. Most will be grey seals which prefer such isolated loafing sites. The large male can measure 2m and weigh in at 230kg.

Noup Head Lighthouse



Noup Head Lighthouse (built 1898) was the first in Scotland to use mercury floatation in the revolving carriage. The tower is 24m high and the light now flashes every 30 seconds. The light was automated in 1964 when a new lens was installed and, in 2001, solar power replaced gas, with the use of 36 solar panels.

