Introduction

The Farne Islands consist of between 15 and 28 islands, depending upon the state of the tide. They are made of whin sill, an igneous rock, and are wedge shaped with cliffs at the south west running down into the sea at the north east.

The islands are famous for the huge numbers of breeding birds nesting during April to July, and also for their large colony of Grey seals. Also famous for St. Cuthbert, who lived on Inner Farne as a hermit between 676 and 684AD, and for Grace Darling, the daughter of the lighthouse keeper who with her father took part in a brave rescue during a shipwreck on Longstone.

Beautiful scenery, cliffs, sea stacks, fast tidal streams and overfalls, Bamburgh castle and a surfeit of birds and seals combine to make this a superb trip with something for everyone.

Description

Inner Farne lies about 2 km off the mainland, and is really made up of three rocky islands, Inner Farne, Knoxes Reef and the Wideopens all surrounding a sheltered water called the Kettle. Tides can run quite strongly between and around these islands. They are made of whin sill and have high cliffs at the south west running down into the sea at the north east. The cliffs are towers, stacks and little narrow gullies.

Inner Farne is famous for St Cuthbert who lived as a hermit on the island from 676 till 684 and returned to die in 687. The lighthouse dates from 1809 and was preceded by Prior Castell’s tower, built in 1370, which had a warning beacon lit on it's roof in bad weather. The small chapel dates from the same time. The island is famous for it's Arctic and Common terns nesting here from May to the end of July. Notorious for dive bombing visitors. Nesting on the rock cliffs are shags, fulmars, guillemots, razorbills
and kittiwakes. In the meadows on the island are puffins and eider ducks.

Megstone is a low lying island about 1.5 km north west of Inner Farne. It is almost two islands riven down the centre by a very narrow inlet. It is well worth a visit as usually many seals are found here avoiding the incessant trip boats who rarely visit this island.

1.5 km across Staple Sound lie Staple and Brownsman Islands. The south east corner of Staple has some fine Stacks and cliffs and the whole shoreline is craggy and rocky. Landing is only allowed at one place and is extremely difficult especially with trip boats arriving all the time in spring and summer. Kittiwakes, guillemots, razorbills, shags and fulmars nest on the cliffs while eiders and puffins nest on the top. There is a nature trail laid out around the island and wardens try to keep the tourists under control. Both Staple and Brownstone have the ruined towers of ancient lighthouses.

The low craggy Wamses and Harcar group of islands between Brownstone and Longstone are great areas to wander and play in the fast tidal streams flowing between them.

Low lying rocky Longstone, topped with it’s distinctive lighthouse always makes a good spot for lunch and stretching the legs. The island is famous for Grace Darling who in September 1838 assisted her father to row from the lighthouse to Little Harcar to rescue 15 men when the S. S. Forfarshire was wrecked in a northerly storm. Full details can be found at the museum in Bamburgh.

Knivestone the outermost island is very low lying and often the sea conditions can be quite interesting, a great place for 5 star training but also on a calm day a lovely spot to watch seals.

Finally the Callers and Crumstone, low rocky skerries 1 km east of Staple Island.

**Access**
There are four main launch sites for trips out to the Farnes, depending upon weather or tidal constraints.

- **Nacker Hole at Beadnell (235290);** Go through Beadnell village and park just before the road turns right to the car park. A sheltered beach with a short carry. Best high to mid dropping tide.

- **St Aidans beach, Seahouses (200326);** across the tide, short carry through dunes.

- **Old Coast Guard station (297342);** across the tide, longer carry through dunes.

- **Harkness Rocks, Bamburgh (178356);** best on a rising tide, easy access from the road.

All the Islands are owned and run by the National Trust. Landing is prohibited during the breeding season except for on Longstone, Staple island and Inner Farne. If you are planning to take a large party to land on the Farnes you should notify the National Trust Warden Tel. 01665 720651.

There is NO camping allowed on any of the islands.

i. **Longstone.** There is no charge for landing on Longstone, land immediately below the lighthouse on the south west side (stony beach) or up the narrow gut just to the north east of the lighthouse. The Lighthouse and piers are owned by Trinity House.

ii. **Staple Island.** There is a charge for landing on Staple Island (National Trust members exempted), collected on landing, but the landing is very difficult due to the steep cliffs and rocks, and also the constant stream of trip boats especially during the spring/summer.

iii. **Inner Farne.** There is also a charge for landing on Inner Farne (National Trust members exempted), collected IF YOU LEAVE the tide line to visit the visitor centre, loos and wander the island. Always wear a hat as the diving/mobbing terns are
lethal. Also helps with projectile vomit if you get to close to cormorants and general bird droppings!

The landing on Inner Farne lies on the north east side of the island, land on the flat rocks just to the north of the little pier, NOT on the tempting beach just to the south as this is the main breeding area for the tern colony. In bad weather if you have to land on the south beach, Please only land BELOW the high water level. There is NO charge if you stay on the rocks, only if you walk up onto the island. Obviously there is no charge anywhere if you are a National Trust member.

Occasionally you get an overly zealous warden telling you that you cannot land on Inner Farne. We DO have an agreement for landing as described negotiated due to grandfather rights.

Links

National Trust access Info and Prices ;
http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/scripts/nthandbook.dll?
ACTION=PROPERTY&PROPERTYID=180
Organised Boat trips ; http://www.farne-islands.com/

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Tidal Info

① Basically you are crossing the tide which runs south - flood, north - ebb.
② Overall the tidal streams run 2kn springs in Inner sound and 4kn springs in Staple sounds, but flows can be up to 6 kn in the narrow channels and around the islands.
③ Tidal streams at the Farnes - north west stream (ebb) starts +01:30 Tynemouth, south east stream (flood) starts -4:30 Tynemouth.

Possible Dangers

① 5.5 miles from the mainland and a shallow sea can result in a short choppy confused sea which can arise very quickly.
② Launching and landing on the mainland can be through big confused surf.
③ The direct crossing from the "old coastguard station" across the Inner sound to Inner Farne can be very choppy with haystacking waves of 3+ metres. If tides allow I always launch from the Harkness rocks beside the small lighthouse just north
of Bamburgh and cross to either Megstone or Inner Farne, as this misses the worst of Inner sound.

- Similarly the south east side of Staple sound produces overfalls especially with wind over tide. If in doubt stay north west.
- Knivestone to seaward of Longstone can be very interesting in all but calm conditions - 5 star sea training? Having said all of that we have had many evening paddles drifting amongst the islands on a glassy sea eating strawberries whilst watching the seals playing around us, and also tremendous fun playing on the flows around the islands. Just as with all sea kayaking, be aware :-)

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**Natural History**

15-28 separate islands, depending upon the state of the tide.

53,000 pairs of breeding birds of 17 different species nesting from mid-April to end July. Typical species are :- Eiders, Guillemots, Razorbills, Puffins, Shags, Cormorants, Arctic Terns, Kittiwakes.

160 species of migrant birds in the spring and autumn.

There are no restrictions, apart from landing as discussed above, but common sense should prevail re disturbance of birds.

Many friendly seals, mainly Greys but some Common, also enjoy kayakers company around the islands, especially Knoxes reef, Megstone and Longstone. Be aware that pups are born early Sept to mid Oct.

**Common Dolphins**

**Porpoises**

**Basking sharks, Orcas, Minki Whales if you are lucky!**
Beadnell to Boulmer

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Other Trips:- St Abbs Head to Pease Bay..... Berwick to Eyemouth..... River Tweed..... Circumnavigation of Holy Island..... The Farne Islands..... Boulmer to Amble..... Coquet Island.....


Introduction

This is a lovely trip with something for everyone, long sandy beaches, rocky headlands, reefs and islands, a castle, and tiny fishing harbours and villages.

There is little tidal flow along this section of the coast.

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Description
Distance 10km from Beadnell to Craster and a further 8km Craster to Boulmer.

Launching from Nackers Hole turn south past Beadnell Point, home of the ruins of Ebba's chapel built in the 13 century. (Now little more than mounds in the ground.)

Rounding the point you come across Beadnell's tiny harbour dominated by two 18th century lime kilns.

Then cross the wide sweep of Beadnell Bay with its long sandy beach backed by sand dunes. Rounding the snook with its shallow reef you find the sheltered sandy beach edged with rounded boulders of dolerite of Football Hole.

Again out round the reefs of Pern and Lobster Carrs you go past tilted limestone slabs to Newton Haven with it's tiny village of Low Newton. This beach is very sheltered and the pub in Newton square sells good beer and sandwiches, and if you fancy a short walk, 500m, the bird hide overlooking Newton Pools is worth a visit.

Leaving Newton you pass the islands of Emblestone and Out Carr, which often have a good seal population.

Now the castle of Dunstanburgh sitting on the winstone basalt rock of Castle Point draws you past the sandy beach of Embleton Bay.

Dunstanburgh castle was built in 1313 by the Earl of Lancaster who was executed for treason in 1322. Largely destroyed by gunfire during the War's of the Roses it was abandoned in 1464. The area just off Castle Point and it's attendant reef, Thorns Carr, can produce haystacking waves in a swell.

2 km down the low rocky coast is the little village of Craster with it's
small harbour protected by 2 small reefs lying just offshore, Little Carr and Muckle Carr.
Built in 1906 by the Craster family, the village quarried and exported stone for the kerbstones of London. Also when it was built 20 fishing boats were catching 2,000 herrings a day to be salted and smoked in the village.
Now the smokehouse produce the famous "Craster Kippers" and smoked salmon which are exported world wide.
The Jolly Fisherman, overlooking the harbour is famous for it's crab sandwiches.

A short distance south of Craster is Cullernose Point with a short south facing dolerite crag, it's columns full of Kittiwakes in the spring, with the cliffs just beyond the home of Fulmars. This area is regularly visited by porpoises.
Swine Den, the small bay just south of the Point is floored with whinstone boulders and south of this is arched and folded limestone backed by sandstone cliffs.

Beyond Cullernose Point the little cottage called the Bathing House, built by the Grey family in the Victorian era, comes into view on the cliff top. Immediately beyond this a narrow channel cuts through the low sandstone rocks into the little beach called Rumbling Kern, only accessible at high Water. Look out for the swimming pool cut into the rocks below the cottage.
Just south of Rumbling Kern see if you can find the small cave which cuts into the rock before opening to the sky where it's roof has collapsed. With a swell it becomes a lovely blow hole.

The coastline continues with low sandstone cliffs interspersed with sandy beaches and shallow reefs extending well out to sea.
Howick Haven is first, with just beyond the remains of a large ships boiler stranded on the rocks.
Beyond this is a small beach backed by a wooded valley with Howick burn running through it, beneath a small footbridge and into the sea. If you feel like stretching your legs there is a woodland walk up this lovely valley which after 2.5km brings you to Howick Hall and it's attendant gardens. The house was built in 1782 by the Grey family and the gardens are lovely with many species of plants collected from China.
From the sea the sides of the valley are carpeted in daffodils in the spring.
On the hill to the south overlooking the bay is the site of one of the oldest prehistoric houses ever found in Britain, over 10,000 years old. A reconstruction of the house can be seen at Millfield Village.

Sugar Sands and Howdiemont Sands are next, famous for a club BBQ and the funeral pyre of a venerable double kayak that sent up so much black smoke it attracted the attention of the rescue helicopter from RAF Boulmer. Finally round the reef of Longhoughton Steel to finish at the fishing village of Boulmer, with it’s Haven almost totally surrounded by a ring of rocks with just a narrow gap marked by the poles of the leading marks. A welcome shelter in any sort of swell.

A lifeboat was stationed here between 1825 and 1968 and their list of rescues along this wild coast is long.

**Access**

There are six main launch sites for trips along this stretch of the coast.

- **Nacker Hole at Beadnell (235290);** Go through Beadnell village and park just before the road turns right to the car park. A sheltered beach with a short carry. Best used above mid tide as it is very rocky below mid tide!
- **Beadnell Beach car park (232286);** A short carry from the car park. There can be surf here in a south-westerly swell.
- **Low Newton (241245);** Drop the kayaks off by the turning point by the beach and then park in the car park at the top of the hill. Short carry and a sheltered beach.
- **Craster harbour (258190);** Drop the kayaks off by the harbour and then park in the car park. You can be charged for launching from the harbour.
- **Howdiemont Sands (263157);** turn towards the sea in Longhoughton village through Low Stead farm and turn left after the gate and park where a track goes down onto the beach.
- **Boulmer Beach (264140);** A very sheltered bay. It can be a long carry at low water.

There is no problem with access for this trip, apart from possibly being asked for a charge if you try to launch or land in Craster harbour. (Paddling in to look is not a problem.)
Tidal Info

- Basically little tide to worry about. North west tidal stream (ebb) starts +01:30 Tynemouth, south east stream (flood) starts -4:30 Tynemouth.

Possible Dangers

- This is an easy paddle with many potential landing places, however having a shallow sea can result in a short choppy confused sea which can arise very quickly.
- In a westerly swell launching and landing on some of the beaches can be through confused surf. This is normally when there is low pressure over the North Sea.

Natural History

- Typical bird species are: Eiders, Guillemots, Razorbills, Shags, Cormorants, Fulmars, Kittiwakes.
- Grey seals, especially around the islands off Newton.
- Common dolphins and porpoises especially off Cullernose Point.

Introduction

Holy Island is a small island lying between Banburgh and Berwick-upon-Tweed, that is linked to the mainland by a tidal causeway, accessible only for about half of each tide. When the tide is rising it comes in very quickly as many motorists have discovered to their cost, so check the tidal crossing information boards at the start of the causeway before crossing. CROSSING TIMES LINK - Holy Island causeway crossing times

The island is low lying with long sandy beaches and low rocky headlands. A small village is located at the southern end (population about 200) along with the harbour, monastery and castle. The early Christian monastery was established by St. Aidan in 635 AD and later home of St Cuthbert, as well as the Lindisfarne Gospels. The
visitor centre is well worth a visit. The castle built in 1540 AD, to protect the harbour, is one of the islands dominant features and is built on an outcrop of whin sill overlooking the harbour and facing the sea.

Holy Island is very heavily visited, especially during the summer, (and although you will be going during high tide when most visitors have left), it has resulted in some access restrictions. Please read the following section on access prior to visiting.

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Access

Traffic Restrictions

Traffic restrictions prohibit all vehicles from access to Holy Island harbour, effectively closing this harbour, which is the only viable launching site for circumnavigating the island.

The access agreement states:-

BCU members may drive to the front at Holy Island harbour to unload and load kayaks and equipment. Prior to launching the cars must be parked in one of the two council car parks An Access Permit has been issued in the name of John Rae, (tel 01289 381218) which is applicable for any BCU member who wishes to unload and load
kayaks and equipment at the harbour. If questioned: - The agreement has been made with Councilor McGregor. This permit does not need to be displayed on the unloading cars, but will be held by John Rae, and produced for verification as required. The Permit Number is 220.

**Lindisfarne National Nature Reserve – Bylaws**

A further agreement is in place with English Nature who manages the Lindisfarne National Nature Reserve. The area of this Reserve covers the entire coastline around Holy Island, from Cheswick Black Rocks (5 kms / 3 miles south of Berwick) to Budle Point. It includes most of Holy Island, all of Holy Island Bay and Budle Bay.

The purpose of the reserve is to protect nesting birds during the breeding season (April to August). The sensitive areas are the north side of Budle Bay, Ross Links, the Wide Opens and Guile Point.

During the winter the reserve is heavily used by migrating and over wintering flocks of waders and wildfowl with the most sensitive area being Fenham Flats.

Holy Island itself is not a significant bird reserve, as visitors walk all over it throughout the year.

The bylaw prohibits the: -
Launching of a boat (canoe/kayak) into any part of the reserve
Carrying a boat across any part of the foreshore
Camping / Bivouacking within the reserve.
There is no camping allowed on Holy Island.

The Access Agreement states:

- There are no restrictions on launching from Holy Island harbour or paddling around (circumnavigating) Holy Island, however the warden Andrew Craggs (tel 01289 381470) would appreciate a call to inform him that your group is in the reserve.
- There are no restrictions on landing on Holy Island.
- Anyone wishing to launch, land or paddle in any other part of the reserve needs to obtain permission in advance from the warden, Andrew Craggs (tel 01289 381470). This permission will normally be given, but this procedure enables them to inform you of any particular areas that need avoiding, and to suggest alternative sites if appropriate. Obtaining permission to launch from the causeway should never be a problem.
- Anyone wishing to camp / bivouac within the reserve needs to be obtain permission in advance from the warden, Andrew Craggs (tel 01289 381470). This permission will only be given if you also have permission from the landowner. Camping is prohibited on Holy Island itself.

Tidal Info

Circumnavigation

The circumnavigation of Holy Island is a very special trip but remember that the extensive flats and marshes either side of the causeway drain very quickly, so a spring tide and accurate prediction is necessary to avoid a long walk carrying your kayak.
- High Water at Holy Island and the Refuge hut on the causeway is H/W Tynemouth minus 43 minutes.
- The crux of the circumnavigation is at the Refuge, 12km into the trip.
- Be here at high water unless you fancy a long portage.
- Launch from Holy Island harbour approx. 2.5 hours (excluding stops) before high water Refuge.
- Travel anticlockwise, against the tide but stay close inshore and use the back eddies.
- Go past Emmanuel Head and Coves Bay (seals), a further 5 km / 3 miles takes you to the major channel in the sand bar.
- Be here 0.5 hour before high water Refuge. You may have to come in through breaking surf here.
- Ride the flow to the Refuge and back to Holy Island harbour.

**Natural History**

Lindisfarne National Nature Reserve As stated earlier this reserve includes most of Holy Island, all of Holy Island Bay and Budle Bay. An area where land and water meet the tidal salt marshes, mudflats and sand dunes create an environment that is home to many wild plants and a supply of food that attracts many resident and migrant birds. Wildfowl and waders wintering here are Brent geese, Pink-footed geese, Graylag geese, Wigeon, Grey plovers and Bar-tailed godwits, but the list of species sighted within the reserve runs into the hundreds.

Seals off Emmanuel Head and lying up on Sand eel Beds

**Introduction**

This again is a lovely trip with something for everyone, long sandy beaches, rocky headlands, and lovely tiny fishing harbours and villages.

There is little tidal flow along this section of the coast, until you reach
Amble and Coquet Island.

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Description
Distance 11km from Boulmer Haven to Amble, can be extended to include a trip around Coquet Island, an additional 5km.

Boulmer has a long tradition of rum smuggling which is I am sure undeserved! Also a lifeboat was stationed here between 1825 and 1968 with a long list of rescues.

Launching from Boulmer Haven head out through the narrow entrance in the rocks and turn south past Marmouth Scars and round Seaton Point and past the sandy beach of Seaton Bay.

Rounding Marden Rocks the picturesque village of Alnmouth comes into sight. During the 17th/18th Centuries Alnmouth was an important port mainly for the export of grain. Previously the River Aln reached the sea further south but on Christmas Eve 1806 a heavy storm sealed that opening in the dunes and blasted another opening beside the town, in the process making the harbour much less viable and isolating the small chapel with it's Saxon cross that can be seen on the dune immediately across the river from the town. Also as some the defeated Spanish ships from the Amada sailed up this coast thy paused to take potshots at Alnmouth church's steeple, perhaps it was their target practice day! They missed the steeple but managed to demolish a barn some distance inland.

The long sandy beach of Alnmouth Bay stretches before you with Amble and Coquet Island still 7km in the future. As you approach the fishing town of Amble the castle of Warkworth appears just inland of you.

Just to the north of the breakwater at Amble is a fine surfing beach. Take care as you round the breakwater into Amble harbour to avoid the numerous fishing lines, and the potentially annoyed people fishing from the south arm of the breakwater.

On a falling tide the flow out of the harbour can be fierce, also a sand bar across the entrance can kick up surfable waves with a swell. NOT a good place for a capsize! Keep to the north as you paddle into the harbour to avoid any fishing boats entering or leaving the harbour.
Land either at the sandy beach of Little shore on the south just inside the breakwater or paddle 1km into the harbour past the new marina to the slipway beside the yacht club on the south side of the river. There can be strong flows out of the harbour particularly on the ebb Spring tide and when the river Coquet is in spate.

Above the yacht club the river can be followed up to and beyond a weir (which is covered at half tide) to the village of Warkworth with its lovely castle built in 1140.

Access

There are four main launch sites for trips along this stretch of the coast.

- **Boulmer Beach (264140);** A very sheltered bay. It can be a long carry at low water.
- **Alnmouth Beach car park (251108);** A short carry from the car park. There can be surf here in a south-westerly swell.
- **Amble Little Shore (271048);** A sheltered beach.
- **Amble Yacht Club (262049);** Land by the slipway, can be muddy at low tide

Tidal Info

- Basically little tide to worry about, apart from around Amble and Coquet Island. North west tidal stream (ebb) starts +01:20 Tynemouth, south east stream (flood) starts -4:40 Tynemouth.

Possible Dangers

- This is an easy paddle with many potential landing places, however having a shallow sea can result in a short choppy confused sea which can arise very quickly.
- In a swell launching and landing on some of the beaches can be through surf. This is normally when there is low pressure over the North Sea.
- Tides can be strong in the vicinity of Amble harbour and you should be aware of wind over tide conditions between the harbour and Coquet Island.
Shallow water by Pan Bush (Marked with a red buoy) just north of Amble harbour and shoals just south can cause a confused sea to some distance out from the shore, especially with a swell and wind.

On an ebb tide and with a swell the sand bar across Amble harbour entrance can create a confused sea. Sea kayaks have been looped here!

Natural History

Typical bird species are :- Eiders, Puffins, Guillemots, Razorbills, Shags, Cormorants, Fulmars, Kittiwakes.

Grey seals, especially around the Coquet Island.

Common dolphins and porpoises.

Introduction

Coquet Island lies about 2km offshore due east of Amble harbour.

Small and rocky, topped with the lighthouse it has a varied history starting with St Cuthbert who occupied a Benedictine cell on the island until 684, St Henry of Coquet dwelt here in the 11thC and in 1645 the Scots defeated a garrison of 200 men to capture it!

Now owned by the RSPB the island is a nature reserve and bird sanctuary, and no landing is allowed except in an emergency.

This trip is well worth while in the spring just to see the birds nesting on the island. Please take care not to disturb them.

Description
Distance 9km from Amble yacht club and back, similar from Bondi Carrs. The trip can be extended along the coast or incorporated into the Boulmer to Amble trip.

Launch either from the slipway beside the yacht club on the south side of the river or from the sandy beach of Little shore just inside the breakwater on the south.

Keep to the north as you paddle out of the harbour to avoid any fishing boats entering or leaving the harbour.

There can be strong flows out of the harbour particularly on the ebb Spring tide and when the river Coquet is in spate, and on a falling tide the flow out of the harbour can be fierce, also a sand bar across the entrance can kick up a confused sea with surfable waves especially with a swell. NOT a good place for a capsize!

Paddle out of the harbour and across to the island and circumnavigate the island exploring the North Steel and South Steel rocky reefs before passing the little sandy beach lying beneath the lighthouse. Check the wind vane on top of the lighthouse as usually something is nesting on top of it. I can never decide whether the nest rotates with the wind direction.

Cross back to the mainland south of the harbour and rock hop your way back to your launch site.

Access

There are three main launch sites for trips around Coquet Island.

- Amble Little Shore (271048); A sheltered beach.
- Amble Yacht Club (262049); Just as you drive out of Amble towards Warkworth on the A1068 turn right at the signpost for the Marina and go left into the carpark. Launch by the slipway, can be muddy at low tide.
- The beach just south of Bondi Carrs (283016); Sandy beach with parking, can be a bit of a carry at low water.

Tidal Info
North west tidal stream (ebb) starts +01:20 Tynemouth, south east stream (flood) starts -4:40 Tynemouth.

Possible Dangers

- Tides can be strong in the vicinity of Amble harbour and you should be aware of wind over tide conditions between Coquet Island and the mainland.
- Shallow water by Pan Bush (Marked with a red buoy) just north of Amble harbour and shoals just south can cause a confused sea to some distance out from the shore, especially with a swell and wind.
- On an ebb tide and with a swell the sand bar across Amble harbour entrance can create a confused sea.

Natural History

Typical bird species are :- Eiders, Puffins, Guillemots, Razorbills, Shags, Cormorants, Roseate Terns.

Grey seals, especially around the Island.

Common dolphins and porpoises.

Introduction

St Abbs Head is a rugged headland jutting out into the main tidal stream along the coast. Consisting of igneous cliffs rising 80m out of the sea, folded and split with sea stacks, islets and caves lining an indented coastline. The cliffs are famous for the huge numbers of breeding birds nesting during April to July. The tiny harbour of St Abbs, nestling with it’s village and busy with the bustle of dive boats is a must to visit.

Beautiful scenery, cliffs, sea stacks, caves, and a surfeit of birds combine to make this a lovely trip with something for everyone. A trip to be dawdled over in calm conditions when you can get close to the cliffs and into the caves.
The trip can either be a there and back from Eyemouth or Coldingham, best straddling high water, or as a linear trip finishing at Pease Bay.
Distance 8.5km Eyemouth to Pettico Wick, 21km Eyemouth to Pease Bay.

Launching from Eyemouth and turning north under Eyemouth fortifications and through the reefs past Hairy Ness, don't miss the deep geo on the north side of the headland. Follow the coastline around the wide bay past alternating small beaches and low rocky reefs to Coldingham bay (surf, surfers and lifeguards)

Paddle around through the islets to St Abbs harbour with its three tiny basins. (Beware here of dive and lobster boats.)

Cross Starney bay to White Haugh with its nesting Kittiwakes and explore the tiny cave in its north face. Just room to turn around and two windows to look out of.

Wind your way through the islets to Horsecastle Bay with the cliffs rising higher all the time.

You can see caves, pinnacles, islets and birds as you dawdle beneath the sheer cliffs and the lighthouse.

You round the headland through the pinnacles of West Hurker and approach the little stony beach of Pettico Wick.

The rugged coast draws you on to the west, the rock twisted and contorted by unimaginable pressures.

There are tiny beaches, some sand, some stone which irregularly punctuate the low rocks protruding into the sea from the base of the cliffs. Small waterfalls tumble from the tops of the cliffs, now not so sheer but extending up to 100m above you.

Look out for the remains of the 16th century castle clinging to the crags of Fast Castle Head (easily missed but it is in a fascinating location) and the occasional cave accessible towards high water.

Now Pease Bay comes into view beyond Siccar Point, with the white stump of Bass rock in the far distance.
Paddle past Siccar Point and round Greenheugh Point to finish at Pease Bay. (Possible surf)

Access

There are three main launch sites for trips around St Abbs Head, depending upon weather or tidal constraints.

- Eyemouth beach, from beside the Leisure Centre (943645) or from the seaward end of the harbour; A sheltered beach with a short carry.
- Coldingham Bay (915665); A longish carry from the car park, can be surf with a north west swell.
- Pease Bay (796707); access via the caravan site, can be surf with a north west swell (it is one of the best surf beaches in this area).

The headland and adjacent waters are a Nature Reserve run by the National Trust for Scotland. There is no problem with access for this trip, apart from possibly being asked for a charge if you try to launch or land in St Abbs harbour. (Paddling in to look is not a problem.) During the breeding season common sense should prevail regarding the disturbance of nesting birds.

Tidal Info

- Basically little tide to worry about but the tide does run strongly off St Abbs Head, up to 6kn, however it is slight in close to the cliffs and either side of the head.
- Tidal streams past St Abbs Head - north west stream (ebb) starts +02:25 Tynemouth, south east stream (flood) starts -4:00 Tynemouth. or using Leith - north west stream (ebb) starts +02:40 Leith, south east stream (flood) starts -3:45 Leith.

Possible Dangers
This is an exposed paddle often with no easy landing place, and a shallow sea can result in a short choppy confused sea which can arise very quickly, especially with waves reflected from the cliffs.

In a westerly swell launching and landing can be through confused surf. This is normally when there is low pressure over the North Sea.

In a strong westerly wind there can be severe downdrafts from rifts in the cliffs.