

Introduction

The Small Isles consist of Rum, Eigg, Muck and Canna and you can spend three or four days exploring them (and many do);

This set of destinations is only for Muck & Rum and we have included Scavaig, although beautiful, doesn't merit it's own single entry. Hopefully we can improve on that in the years to come.

Loch Scavaig

There is an enclosed bay at the head of this Loch which is unsurpassed for its beauty as it is buried deep inside the Cuillins which swoop down on all sides into the sea. There is also a "sound" backdrop provided by the waterfall tumbling down on the NW side. There is nothing here but the view and most people just drop in for the night and a walk round the headland to Loch Coruisk and then set off for somewhere else.

If you are an experienced mountaineer/hill walker you may want to stay a while and explore the Cuillins on foot, but note we used the word "experienced"; as a country afternoon walker you will get away with a gentle clamber round to Coruisk but even then it can be boggy and is strewn with granite boulders to turn your ankle; for the rest of us, best viewed from the bottom.

Loch Scresort (Rum)

This is a very popular anchorage; it is easy to get in and out, there's plenty of room and there are some services ashore. There is also the attraction of Kinloch Castle (more of which later). The island is owned by Scottish Natural Heritage and some of it has been designated as an SSI. These days there are no restrictions on rambling on the island but you are expected to treat it with respect. There are guided walks available, you can hire bicycles or just do one of their nature trails. The Castle is open with guided tours during the summer.

Muck

The smallest of the Small Isles, Muck has the best agricultural land and less hilly than the others, (Rum of course is more mountainous than "hilly") There are two anchorages here, one tricky one on the Northern side (Gallanach Bay) and one on the South, Port Mòr. There are some facilities at Port Mòr but no shops; apart from the farm most of the accommodation is given over to holiday lets and they have to bring all their domestic supplies with them.

Approach

The first thing to note is that the Admiralty and Imray charts are **of insufficient scale**

to make an entry to any of these bays with any degree of confidence with the exception of Loch Scresort on Rum; most people who come here have on board a copy of the Clyde Cruising Club's Ardnamurchan point to Cape Wrath notes which give excellent chartlets or have the Antares charts on their chart plotter (or both!!) There three or four charts covering bits and pieces of these islands - I have tried to make a composite but they are different scales and projections and it came out a bit weird!

Another thing to note is that the tidal streams through the Sound of Rum and the Sound of Eigg can be quite strong, you will encounter back eddies and overfalls at various states of the tide and weather. Note that about 4 hours before HW Dover it's all over the place; but then again, that is not unusual in these parts and you will get used to the dearth of detailed information.

Approach to Scavaig is, initially, free of dangers; coming from the West or SW you can pass either side of Soay and, of course, coming from the East you need to watch out for Eilean na h-Airde and its associated shoals off the bottom of the Strathaird Promontory. From a distance the cleft peak of Sgurr na Stri (see the photo in our gallery) is a very good land mark just to the east of the Loch Scavaig anchorage and when you are closer in you'll be able to pick out Eilean Reamhar and the water streaming out of Coruisk over the wide pavement of rock there.

The anchorage will still be out of sight behind Eilean Glas (but, if you are lucky, you will see the masts of yachts already at anchor there. Pass about half a cable east of Eilean Glas putting you in the deep channel between it and the partially submerged, and unmarked, Sgeir Docha. There is an anchorage in behind Eilean Reamhar if it looks as though the popular anchorage inside Eilean Glas is full.

Continue North West by North to pass half a cable east of Sgeir Doigich before altering a touch to port to make good the entrance of Loch na Cuilce (the main anchorage). There is a large rock slap in the middle of the entrance which is submerged at HW; you can pass either side of it but you really need to tip toe in on your echo sounder. After that just find a spot to drop your pick.

It is reported that there are rings on the shore to which you can attach a stern line continental style but a) we couldn't find one and b) you need an extremely long warp to reach the shore. There is also a little bay just to the east of the popular anchorage (not where Coruisk empties, the next one) which we have been told, provides an alternative anchorage. Be aware that some quite strong and unexpected down draughts occur in these anchorages so extra cable, anchors or shore warps are recommended. There are two short videos of the approach to Loch Scavaig available at:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CZARXEJ3AfY>

and

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z9BdpgF3AxM>

Loch Scresort (Rum) is not difficult to get into, you just have to be careful of the shoal sticking out from the South shore as you enter the loch but it is well marked with a NCM and should cause you no problems. As you can see from our photo gallery, this is a very popular destination for yachties; there were eighteen yachts at anchor by the beginning of the first watch when we were there and, throughout the evening the sound of 2 HP outboard motors was noticeable and, for one who rows his dinghy, a tad irritable!! For a bilge keeled yacht we found plenty of water about a cable off the old jetty (marked as "Ramp" on the AC) but deep keeled yachts had to anchor a bit further out. The Antares chart of the North shore shows deeper water on that shore of the loch but you would need an outboard to avoid a long row to the old quay from there as there was no sign of a well beaten path along the shore to the village on that side of the loch.

Gallanach Bay (Muck)

This is a totally different kettle of fish to either of the other anchorages we have just described (and we haven't a video or approach photos simply because, single handed, we were far too busy with the nav to take any!) The CCC chartlet and Antares chart were put to good use but the lead in bearing (and photograph) given by the CCC was of primary importance. You have to be careful identifying the wall that is the mark to keep in line with the barn roof as, further out, the Eastern end of Beinn Airean is far more obvious, similar and incorrect!!

Using the Seaclear plotter which meshed seamlessly with the Antares chart was of great help in the initial approach but once established on the lead in line further reference to the chart was unnecessary (but continuous!)

The entry to **Port Mòr** is not difficult being well marked with lit navigation marks; just be careful if you are coming round from the North of the island to stay a good 3 or 4 cables off shore until you can see the Ro-ro pier between Dubh Sgeir and Bogha Ruadh (marked with lit perches) before turning in. Then anchor in the bay well clear of the pier. We are told that there is now a pontoon here at Port Mor with "limited depth"; one would have to swing the lead and do the sums if berthing here.

Berthing

This has been dealt with above

Facilities

Loch Scavaig There are no facilities here and the bothy is firmly locked.

Loch Scresort Strangely enough all services apart from shore power and Gas/Gaz are available; there are even showers in a shower block shared with the campsite. There is a village hall with an adjoining Post Office and shop. The village hall has a cafe; and is the centre of social life and the shop with unusual continental opening hours (it closes for the afternoon and is open during the dog watches), has an off sales licence and acts as the bar in the early evening until the cafe; opens for the evening and becomes the local bar.

The shop which is described in the CCC notes as having "limited stock" is anything but and carries quite a lot of what can only be described as "gourmet" items. Kinloch castle is open for formal tours which start, once a day, at either 1330 or 1400 depending on the day of the week and you should check which, to avoid disappointment, if that

is your main reason for coming here.

We landed here after 1400, walked round to visit the castle and found it closed and then walked further round to the shop only to find that it, too, was closed until 1700 and returned on board to sally forth later in the day! Unfortunately we only had the one night here and missed the castle altogether.

Gallanach Bay has no services and one has to go round to Port M^o to find showers and water as well as a small hotel for a meal ashore (better book)

What To Do

You will have to fend for yourself at Scavaig but you are likely to find some impromptu entertainment in the community hall at both Port M^o and Loch Scresort.

History