



↑ Fethaland David Gifford



↑ Loch of Houlland Euan Myles



↑ Da Lang Ayre David Gifford



↑ Rare oyster plant David Gifford

Useful information

Getting around Shetland

For general travel information, including bus timetables and car and bike hire, visit shetland.org/getting-around

Ferry booking office

+44 (0)1595 745804

Visitor information point

Tangwick Haa Museum, Eshaness | +44 (0)1806 503389

Geopark Shetland

Discover geosites across Shetland | shetland.org/geopark

Public toilets

Hillswick | Ollaberry | Collafirth Pier

Eshaness (seasonal)

Post offices

Hillswick | Ollaberry | Eshaness | North Roe

Shops

Hillswick | Ollaberry

Fuel

Hillswick | Ollaberry

EV charging points

chargeplacescotland.org

Health centre

Hillswick | +44 (0)1806 503277

Police 101



shetland.org/northmavine

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Northmavine

The wilds of the north



Shetland
Islands of Opportunity

Welcome to Northmavine

Northmavine draws people from near and far to discover its outstanding coastline, superb walking country, rich variety of wildlife, geology and plants, and its fascinating array of historical and archaeological remains.

The coastline throughout Northmavine is remarkable, with magnificent cliffs, extraordinary rock formations, beautiful, deserted beaches and tranquil sheltered voes. Inland, this hilly landscape, peppered with trout-filled lochs, provides excellent walking, angling (with permit) and unrivalled views.

Northmavine has an abundance of spectacular walks, appealing to everyone from long-distance hikers to casual strollers. Witnessing the mighty force of the North Atlantic lashing against the dramatic coastline is an unforgettable experience.

This is an enterprising community which manages several initiatives, including the design and creation of the Polycrub – a storm-proof growing space which is sold worldwide.

Exploring the area

Almost an island in its own right, only the narrow isthmus at **Mavis Grind** joins it to the rest of the mainland of Shetland. It has often been said that here you can stand on the shore of the North Sea and throw a stone into the Atlantic Ocean on the other side – though you would need a strong arm!

From Mavis Grind you enter a vast and magical landscape dominated by Shetland's highest summit, **Ronas Hill** (450 metres). To the east lies **Sullom Voe**, Shetland's largest sea inlet, and to the west is **St Magnus Bay** and the Atlantic Ocean, which has battered the land into a scene of breathtaking beauty.



↑ Mavis Grind David Gifford

Things to see and do

Birds and wildlife

The wildness and range of different habitats in Northmavine make it a perfect place for watching wildlife, so don't forget your binoculars. The coast at **Eshaness**, the **Ness of Hillswick**, **Fethaland** and the banks (cliffs) around Ronas Hill are home to thousands of seabirds, with many important breeding colonies including numerous colonies of Arctic Tern.

There are many vantage points from which to watch grey and common seals basking in the sun or playing in the sea. The isle of **Uyea** is a significant pupping ground for grey seals. The quiet and watchful might spy an otter working its way along the shoreline, particularly on Hillswick Ness or between **Ollaberry** and **Sullom**. Looking out to sea you might even catch sight of whales, dolphins or porpoises.

Inland, the vast expanse of moor, peat and lochs attract many different birds. The fierce Great Skua and Arctic Skua are widespread in Eshaness and on Ronas Hill. A keen eye could glimpse the quick flash of a Merlin hunting its prey, while the mournful call of a Golden Plover is a common sound in summer.

Flora

Wild flowers are abundant throughout the summer, especially in the meadows around Ollaberry, **North Roe** and the Ness of Hillswick. There are several rare species, such as the oyster plant, at **Urafirth**. Many unusual alpine and Arctic-alpine plants grow on Ronas Hill, while cliffs and crevices support some of the last remaining native trees and shrubs, which covered these windswept isles thousands of years ago before man introduced grazing animals.

↓ Otter spotting David Gifford





↑ Tangwick Haa Museum
VisitScotland / Paul Tomkins



↑ Arctic Tern David Gifford

History and culture

Many fine examples of times past can be seen in Northmavine. Easily accessible is the shore front at **Hillswick** where the man-made beach was used for drying fish. Here, The Booth, a former Hanseatic trading post, has stayed in business for more than 300 years. The large wooden building behind, now the St Magnus Bay Hotel, was originally manufactured as a kit in Norway. It was displayed at Glasgow's Great Exhibition in 1899 and rebuilt in its current location in 1900 to serve the tourists brought via cruise ship from Edinburgh.

Further afield on **Stenness** Beach stand the ruins of fishing lodges, reminding us of the "far haaf" open sea fishing, which flourished in the 18th and 19th centuries. Men would set out to sea for days on end in open rowing boats called sixareens, not returning until they were laden with fish.

Fethaland was once Shetland's busiest haaf fishing station. Sixty sixareens were based here and the ruins of 20 lodges still stand, retaining the atmosphere of the time. Close by, a circular mound is believed to be the remains of a 4,000-year-old homestead.

The fishing industry lives on at **Collafirth** pier, built in 1988 on the site of an old Norwegian whaling station and now home to one of Britain's largest fishing boats. Smaller inshore boats work from **Hamnavoe** and Hillswick as well.

For a flavour of what life was like in Northmavine, head west and pay a visit to the **Tangwick Haa** in Eshaness. This museum and visitor information point (open April to September) is a former laird's house which showcases exhibits, artefacts and photographs from the area. There is also a shop showcasing local crafts and a lovely walled garden with picnic tables.

Walking

Most of the beauty spots in Northmavine are accessible by car and you'll be able to take in most of the sights by road over the course of a day. However, if you have more time, we recommend taking a couple of days and traversing the picturesque coast and landscape by foot.

The spectacular Atlantic coastline from the **Ness of Hillswick** north to Uyea has no comparison elsewhere in Shetland. Here the unrelenting power of the ocean has carved an astounding display of cliffs, stacks, geos, blowholes, natural arches and caves.

Eshaness Lighthouse is a superb place from which to savour the cliff scenery. From here an easy walk leads you to two particularly impressive features. Please remember to take care when walking along this coastline.

The **Hols o Scraada** (Old Scratch, or the Devil) were formed when the roof caved in at the end of a deep and narrow sea cave stretching more than one hundred yards in from the coast. Further on stands the **Grind o da Navir** (Gate of the Borer) – a huge, vertical-sided gateway in the cliffs. Here the sea has ripped a huge chunk of rock out of the cliff face and hurled it inland. Nearby lies the **Loch of Houlland**, where the ruin of a broch provides an excellent example of Iron Age architecture.

The more adventurous will ascend Shetland's highest summit, **Ronas Hill**, to discover the mountainous terrain at its peak, where a fine example of a chambered cairn awaits them. From here, on a clear day, the view is unsurpassed, taking in all of Shetland from Fair Isle to Muckle Flugga.

Plenty of time should be reserved to explore the huge red cliffs west of Ronas Hill, Shetland's largest beach at **Lang Ayre** and the many lochs in the area. Up here it is wise to be well equipped with map and compass as mists can appear suddenly to restrict visibility. Be warned – the climate here can be every bit as extreme as the Cairngorm plateau.

Other impressive walks can be enjoyed around the Ness of Hillswick, between Hillswick and **Braewick**, around Fethaland, out to Uyea, along **Ronas Voe** past **Heylor**, at **Nibon** and **Mangaster** and **Gluss Isle** and **Bardister**, near Ollaberry. All offer a wide range of wildlife, rock features and archaeological remains, as well as beautiful scenery.

For a range of walks in this area visit the Walk pages on shetland.org.