

Splendid isolation

It's a long way to the idyllic Hebridean beach of Huisinis, but blessed are those who get there, finds **Donald Walker**

There are parts of Scotland where the beauty of the landscape is defined by its remoteness. Some fall in love with the distant location, and the precious time and space it offers, while others consider the journey to get there to be so arduous that they don't even set off.

Getting to the idyllic Hebridean beach of Huisinis on the Isle of Harris is certainly an adventure. Upon disembarking at the port of Tarbert, the turn off to Huisinis takes the lucky ones on a dramatic 13-mile drive across North Harris that passes the towering chimney of a disused whaling station, an incredible all-weather tennis court cut out of the rock, an eagle observatory, and then right through the grounds of a castle where salmon fishermen have only to walk a few yards to cast a fly on an inviting pool, while stags roam the land, and grouse and snipe take flight from the moor. And if the gods are on your side, there might be the sighting of an otter or a glimpse of distant St Kilda out in the Atlantic.

If you have not heard of Huisinis or seen its beautiful west coast beach, its splendour might not be a well-kept secret for much longer. VisitScotland's latest brochure features this North Harris gem on its front cover along with the words: 'The beach at Huisinis, Harris, Outer Hebrides. Out of this world.' Truly, it is indeed that. And blessed are those who find it.

If you have never seen the beaches on Harris, you will barely believe that this is Scotland, with white sands and aquamarine water. Scarista, Luskentyre and Horgabost on the ever-more fashionable South Harris tend to get the most publicity. The good people of the North Harris Trust are encouraging visitors to explore more of the island, and Huisinis is certainly helping to put this destination on more and more people's maps.

Glorig Croft House at Bedersaig sits just up the hill from the beach, a superb four-bedroom holiday home for families, couples or individuals who want to get away from it all, far from the beaten track. Traditional furnishings and features such as a

peat fire are combined with modern expectations such as a flatscreen TV with Sky (we turned it on just once in a week), a conservatory soaks up the sun, a stream runs through the garden complete with a bridge which kept the kids occupied for hours on end, and the views are a dream – in fact, try to imagine being woken in the small hours by a full harvest moon shimmering on the sea, and bathing the bedroom in light.

And it is the stunning views which provided an unexpected surprise during our visit. Determined to set eyes on St Kilda, we climbed the hill at the rear of Glorig on a typically cloudless day. Within ten minutes, having reached a modest elevation,

a glance to the west brought the main island of Hirta into view with the naked eye, and then the considerable effort to persuade two small boys to press on to the top of the hill was richly rewarded with a clear view of the entire archipelago for dad and a packet of Skittles each for the boys. Imagine our surprise, upon returning to the house, to find that closer inspection of the horizon from the kitchen window would have identified the soaring cliffs of Hirta. Ach well, we had all needed the exercise. And Skittles had never tasted better.

Remarkably, our Easter break saw barely a spot of rain fall, and trips out and about included games on hidden beaches with the kids

Clockwise from main: the beach at Huisinis; the aquamarine water of the Atlantic startles visitors; Glorig Croft House at Bedersaig



running around in swimwear, and a tennis match on the aforementioned court where dad's false expectation that the holiday weather might be wild saw him improvise his wardrobe with a rugby shirt, swimming trunks and ski socks as his 'whites', topped off with a liberal application of sun block. This was late March, and each day

the newspapers reported sleet and freezing winds back home on the east coast of Scotland. Welcome to the microclimate of the Western Isles.

As a regular visitor to the Outer Hebrides, friends often ask if there is enough to do there. The answer is that there are usually not enough hours in the day. After a week at



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Bedersaig, we found that we had barely done half of what we had planned. In some respects, you make your own entertainment, and if it rains there are games and books galore, but the possibilities that range between sheer relaxation at Glorig and an action-packed activity holiday in the wild – anyone for gorge scrambling or sea kayaking? – are plentiful. Our decision to return next year could not have been easier to make.

Glorig Croft House at Bedersaig on the Isle of Harris is available all year at rates from £600 per week. For full details, tel: 07715 311919, visit www.harris-holiday.co.uk or email info@harris-holiday.co.uk