



### Bonar Bridge

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## Introduction

Bonar Bridge does have a bridge... a very important road bridge across the tidal Kyle of Sutherland, and it is a meeting of routes, but not much more, just a village.

### 025 Loch Shin

LENGTH **28km**

OS **16**

GRADE -



**Introduction** It's good to say something nice about every piece of water, but Loch Shin tries the patience! It is a very long loch, with almost no redeeming features, as the scenery is undulating with commercial forestry, much of it cleared and re-planted, with high deer fences. It is known to paddlers due to being part of one of the cross-Scotland routes. The loch is much used for fishing from small boats, and is also very midge-ridden.

**Access** The A838 runs down most of the north-east side of the loch. At the southern end, a dam blocks direct exit to the village of Lairg. Take out before the dam on the left (north) side on to one of the short tracks used by anglers to reach the loch (573075).

**Campsites & accommodation** Wild sites on the loch. Formal site at Lairg.

**Description** There are few features or settlements. A start may be had on Loch a Ghriama, north of Loch Shin, and connected, crossed by a bridge at the neck (390252). The A838 runs down the north-east side. Lairg is a pleasant village, only 11km from Bonar Bridge, with usual facilities.

A B-road down the west side of the River Shin (grade 1-3), leads to the grade 4 Falls of Shin (Visitor centre and café - 576991), well worth visiting in autumn to see the many salmon coming up to spawn, and jumping the falls.



## Lower River Oykel and Kyle of Sutherland 026

**Introduction** This trip gives a fairly fast river experience in a flat-bottomed and agricultural valley, becoming an easy tidal paddle for those not used to large estuaries. Mountain scenery gives way to the Kyle, which is pretty and wooded.

**Access** From the A837 at Oykel Bridge, (386009) a minor road bridge 9km downstream (460013), and at Bonar Bridge on to the A9 (just upstream of bridge - 608922).

**Campsites & accommodation** At Lairg and Dornoch. The spectacular Youth Hostel at Carbisdale Castle overlooks the Kyle.

**Description** The Oykel provides 9km of paddling, to add on to a trip down the Kyle of Sutherland. It is a flattish river of grade 1-2, in a flat-bottomed valley, but with mountains to the north and south. It can also be the eastern end of a cross-Scotland route. The start is just below Oykel Bridge, where the river flows under the main A837 major east-west route. The high Falls of Oykel (grade 4-5) are just upstream. On the east side of the bridge is a track alongside the river, downstream, for launching. Downstream 9km is a first public road bridge, and the Oykel becomes tidal here, and usually known as the Kyle, offering a further 19km down to Bonar Bridge. The Cassley, a beautiful white water river, joins from the left 1.5km further on. Access and egress can be had after another 2.5km where the road is alongside. The Shin joins from the left at 12km, and then the main railway line to the north crosses the narrows at 13.5km. The Kyle has a widening out then a final narrow stretch before Bonar Bridge. The Dornoch Firth then commences, until the open sea.

LENGTH **28km**

OS **16/20/21**

GRADE **1-2**



## Dornoch Firth 027

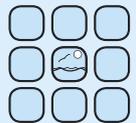
**Distances** 48km from Bonar Bridge to Dornoch and return.

**Introduction** A long, narrow firth with strong tides at the narrow parts, and large sandbanks. It is possible to reach Dornoch around Dornoch Point in settled weather. Dornoch is renowned for good weather in summer, and has extensive beaches and sand dunes.

LENGTH **48km**

OS **21**

GRADE **-**



**Access** From the A9, both sides of the firth. The north side is easier due to railway line on south side. East of Bonar Bridge (6190), and from Newton Point (711877).

**Campsites & accommodation** At Lairg and Dornoch.

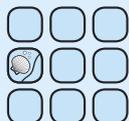
**Description** It is 4km down from Bonar Bridge to Wester and Easter Fearn Points on the south bank, separated from a high point with Dun Creich fort on the north side by only 200m of water. 6 more km to a turn to the south at Ardmore Point, and 4km further on to the Dornoch Firth Bridge. The old ferry terminals are on points just before the bridge. It is 6km on to the open sea at Dornoch Point, with Tain to the south, and the town of Dornoch 2km along the coast to the north.

## 028 Loch Fleet

LENGTH **8km**

OS **21**

GRADE **-**



**Distances** 8km round trip.

**Introduction** This sheltered estuary lies to the north of Dornoch, and is a delightful, quiet wildlife habitat.

**Access** The A9 runs across The Mound, a causeway at the landward end of the estuary. Minor roads run out on both sides of the stretch of water, offering easier parking, at Skelbo Castle to the south (794954), and Littleferry Pier (805956) to the north.

**Campsites & accommodation** At Dornoch and Embo, just to the south.

**Description** The loch is only 4km long from The Mound, a causeway which the A9 road to the north crosses, to its mouth at Littleferry, the old ferry crossing in former times. The loch virtually dries out at low tide, but would be of interest to birdwatchers. From Loch Fleet to the north is the east coast of Sutherland, and the east Caithness coast, with rocky cliffs, no large inlets, and very little shelter.

**Other important points** To the south of this area lies the Cromarty Firth, large, and partially industrial (it is used as a storage place for disused or de-commissioned oil rigs), the Moray Firth, used by large ships, and the Beaully Firth, very dry at low tide.

