



# BRIT- TICKS

## HOMELAND HIGHLIGHTS

**Get ticking some of the best British adventures our outdoors has on offer.**

**W**hy board a plane when our islands are brimming with world-class walking and climbing destinations? From spectacular sea-stacks to wild bothy nights, **Sarah Stirling** takes us on a tour of 20 of the most iconic adventures we can have at home.

📍 Johnny Dawes walking the iconic Devil's Slide (HS 4a) on Lundy.





# REMOTE ISLAND CLIMBING

Boarding a boat at the start of a climbing trip – there's something magical about that

## MID GRADES

Climbers who travel to **Lundy** on the HMS Oldenburgh return with tales of an otherworldly atmosphere, indescribable natural architecture and some of Britain's best routes just a 12-minute boat ride from the southwest mainland. They tell tales of playing Jenga in the pub, where phones are banned, and of warden's activities on rest days. This is essentially a three-mile long lump of granite with a peaceful grassy plateau on top. The sides of the island are a climber's playground with many classics across the grades. Seal Slab (Diff) is smothered in holds and as good an introduction to sea cliffs as you'll find. The rock is hugely varied, with fantasy features like the Devil's Slide and the leaning wall of Flying Buttress. Contrary to what you may have heard, camping can often be booked relatively last-minute.

## HIGH GRADES

Climbing on the uninhabited isle of **Pabbay** begins with a six-hour ferry journey from Oban to the Outer-Hebridean isle of Barra. Here you typically stay the night and continue to Pabbay courtesy of Donald McLeod's fishing boat the next morning. He is a typically friendly Outer Hebridean, with a gold necklace and a fantastic tan for a Scotsman. Take all your food, drink and climbing gear with you, including a 100m ab rope, and set up camp above the stunning sandy beach on the east of the island. Here you will be willingly marooned until Donald comes to fetch you. The routes are Gogarth-esque with lots of scoops and jugs on bullet-hard granite. The climbing here is typically steep — you won't get the most out of a trip here unless you can climb E1. The classic Prophecy of Drowning is a must-do E2.







📍 Gaz Fry on Jurassic Shift at Battleship Back Cliff.

## WINTER SPORT CLIMBING ESCAPES

Looking for tops-off climbing in January? Portland has its own micro-climate and Malham is a sun-trap

### MID GRADES

Dangling from southern Britain like a raindrop, the tied isle of **Portland** is almost perfectly designed for sport climbing, and a quirky vibe adds to its British charm. Testament to the beauty of its rock, large chunks of Portland are missing – they gleam from illustrious old buildings in places like London and Manhattan. The island is essentially a four-mile-long block of pearly white limestone, partly carved by 19th Century convict-quarrymen. Today the echoing quarries give a lost-world vibe. Aside from the quarries, the island is almost entirely wrapped in cliff faces, so there are myriad recipes. Classics over sunset? Blacknor is the place. Winter sun? Head to an east-facing crag like The Cuttings. Hard and remote? Southern crags like Wallsend offer high-quality, quiet routes in return for a bit more of a walk-in. With around 1,500 routes on featured white cliffs and crags, from 2 to 8b, there really is something for everyone. What's more, tucked below the British mainland and surrounded by balmy seas, you often get t-shirt weather at Christmas.

### HIGH GRADES

Gazing up at **Malham Cove** from the 'Catwalk', you could almost believe that God is a sport climber. The limestone walls of this beautiful and imposing natural amphitheatre are draped in British sport climbing history, past and present. By the 80s, short-shorts pioneer Ron Fawcett was putting up test pieces like New Dawn (7c). The controversial John Dunne pushed the limit at the end of the decade with routes like the iconic Predator (8b). And Steve McClure brought the crag into the 21st Century with world-class routes like Rainshadow (9a) and, two years ago, Britain's hardest sport route, Rainman (9b). The best sport routes here are 7a and upwards so strong fingers and clean footwork are a prerequisite. The cirque also happens to be a south-facing sun trap: a bright, dry winter day here can provide perfect conditions.

# SEA STACK ADVENTURES

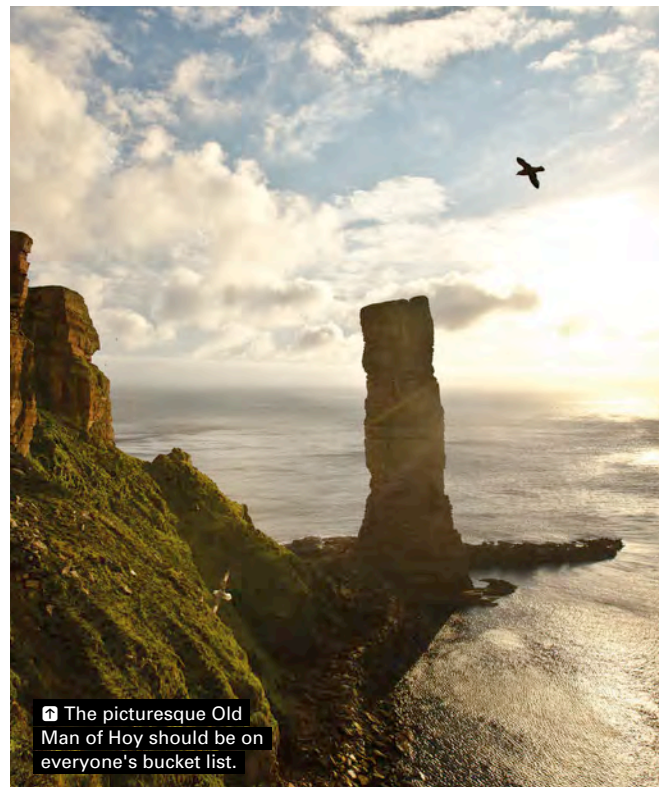
It is only in descriptions of sea stack climbs that you will ever read the words: 'remove clothes and abseil 200 feet directly into the sea'

### MID GRADES

British stack-bagging, a niche hobby for true adventurers who thrive on cold sea swims, complex Tyroleans, bird poo negotiations and tide timetables, has attracted just two high-profile pioneers so far. The brilliant poet-musician-climber-doctor, Tom Patey, stacked up press and BBC TV coverage with the daring ascents he spear-headed in the 60s. 21 years later, Mick Fowler became the second to really push the boat out on sea stacks, raiding around the north coast from his trusty inflatable RIB, The Deflowerer. There remain countless virgin phalluses to go at. Tip: out of the 300-ish sea stacks in Britain, 100-odd are in the Shetland Isles. Two sea stacks have stood the test of time to become real classics. The first of these is the **Old Man of Stoer**. The Original Route up is a brilliant four-pitch, VS, ledge-and-crack adventure (or HS if you sneak round the back at low-tide).

### HIGH GRADES

Orkney, a shattered egg shell of islets, is home to a surprising concentration of two things – prehistoric sites (more here than anywhere in the UK) and sea stacks – there are 10, including the famous **Old Man of Hoy**. Bus driver, Albert, meets the ferry at Moaness pier, wearing his Sherlock Holmes-style cap. After decades of transporting climbers, including Tom Patey and Chris Bonington, he can instantly tell if a climber will tick the Old Man. Base yourself at luxurious Burnside Bothy, where there's a flushing loo and a tap. The three-star East Face Route (E1 5b) is the most popular route up. The other two sea stacks most worth a look are North Gaulton Castle (goes at HVS) and Yesnaby Castle (three excellent routes, E1 to E3). A car was helicoptered onto the summit of the former for an advert, proving its stability! And the latter, Yesnaby Castle, is a picturesque, grass-topped tooth.



📍 The picturesque Old Man of Hoy should be on everyone's bucket list.



# SEA CLIFF CLIMBING

Nowhere is as good as the UK for sea-cliff climbing. Fact

## MID GRADES

Perfect granite that rivals anything in America or the Alps, just on a smaller scale, which means more routes and more beaches, scrumpy and cream teas. **Bosigran** is the proudest of all Cornish cliffs. Stay within the weathered granite walls of the Climbers' Club Hut, the Count House, ten minutes from Bosigran. There are many low-grade classics on the solid, well-protected walls, including Doorpost (HS 4b) and Little Brown Jug (VS 5a) and it's almost all unaffected by the tides. Afterwards, head back in time for a well-earned pint and Newlyn crab sandwich at the cosy, 13th Century Tinner's Arms in Zennor, where there's no phone signal. Chair Ladder and Sennen are the other two famous Cornish crags, and there are plenty more, including the picturesque Land's End, if you fancy abseiling off the end of Britain, and who doesn't? Especially considering the current political climate.

## HIGH GRADES

Few words light up the eyes of dedicated trad climbers like **'Pembroke'** does. Abseiling into voids with your ears full of crashing waves and your eyes full of Britain's most stunning coastal scenery – the climbing here is full-on in all senses of the word. It's like sport climbing for trad climbers, with steep walls and plenty of plug-and-go gear. There are loads of classic crags within walking distance. The southern section of South Pembroke, from Range East to Lydstep, is home to the big ticks. Mother Carey's Kitchen ('Mother Scarys'), is one of Pembroke's finest crags, with grand routes on stunning rock formations. There are countless classics here, including Rock Idol (E1 5a) and Brazen Butress (E2 5b), mostly in the higher grades. Set yourself up at the idyllic Trefalen Farm campsite, next to Broadhaven beach, and soak up the social scene at St Govan's Inn.


 Climbing above high tide on the superb Minotaur (E5 6a) at Huntsman's Leap, Pembrokeshire.

PHOTO: MIKE HUTTON.





Heather Osborne  
high up on East Buttress  
(Diff), Beinn Eighe.

# MOUNTAIN TRAD

Alpinesque mini-adventures often within walking distance of the comforts of a traditional British pub

## MID GRADES

**Tryfan** is packed with miniaturised Alpine character – it's said to be impossible to climb this iconic shark fin without using your hands. Almost all the 100-odd routes up it are HVS or below, and at every grade there is a two- or three-star adventure that ranks amongst the best for its level in the UK. The buttresses and gullies teem with some of Britain's best scrambling and easier climbing adventures, like the brilliant, eight-pitch Grooved Arete, HVD. The best side for trad climbers is the East Face, which also benefits from sunshine and glorious views down the Ogwen Valley. You can feel the climbing lore seeping in through your rock shoes on an 'atmospheric' day. WP Haskett-Smith, the 'father of rock climbing', called Tryfan 'the most remarkable rock mountain in Wales'.

## HIGH GRADES

**Esk Buttress** in the Lakes is the embodiment of a British trad micro-adventure and it's set in one of England's most beautiful hidden valleys – Eskdale. It's a two-hour mission to get to, across the 'Great Moss', a huge, photogenic marshy plateau between peaks, but that just adds to the remote appeal. This is undoubtedly one of the most impressive and finest crags in the Lakes. The lines are grand, the rhyolite is solid and you're far from the madding crowds of Langdale or Borrowdale. Routes start at VD but two-thirds of the routes here are E-grades. Three-star classics include the two-pitch Humdrum (E3 5c), the four pitches of The Cumbrian (E5 6b) and the three-pitch First and Last Always (E7 6b). Bring your sunnies: the Lakes is the place to head for south-facing mountain trad – it's surprisingly hard to find in Scotland and Wales.



# MOUNTAIN BOTHIES

The British version of the alpine hut, where a spade is called a toilet and yarns by the fire are compulsory

## ACCESSIBLE

Southern bothies? Most of us connect bothies with Scotland, but there are good handfuls of them in the Lakes, North England and North Wales just begging to be linked up, too. It's a six-mile walk into **Greg's Hut**, for example, which is close to the highest point in the North Pennines and often used as a stopover by Pennine Way walkers. It boasts two rooms, views of mountain and moorland from windows of old telephone-box glass with jaunty yellow frames, a wood-burning stove made by a local blacksmith, some old school chairs, Himalayan flags for bunting, a sleeping platform and a stream running by. A breath of simple fresh air. As one brave man wrote in the visitors' book: 'Dropped my wife at work and sneaked here. Hope she doesn't call the office, but worth any amount of grief just to come again.'

## REMOTE

Scotland's northernmost bothy, **Kearvaig**, is often considered the best, and not just because of its situation, which is mesmerisingly beautiful and lonely – a white cottage sat above a sandy bay on the tip of Cape Wrath, surrounded by turquoise sea. Wild weekends can be taken quietly here, with walks to the northwestern tip of the Scottish mainland, puffin-watching and long days to take it all in. The bothy itself is spacious and characterful, with several rooms and lots of light. It's a wild, idyllic place to sip whisky by a warm fire and play cards. Getting here is part of the adventure. The easiest way is from Durness via the 'Cape Wrath Ferry' (capewrathferry.wordpress.com) – a merry band of three who can loosely be relied to take people across and back every day between May and September for £6.50 adult return.



PHOTO: NADIR KHAN

This is skiing in Scotland? Yes, it really is! Blair Aitken on the west flank of Aonach Mòr.

## SCOTTISH SKIING

During moments of magic when weather, conditions and stars align, the best place in the world to be is Scotland on skis

### EASIER LEVEL

Why are increasing numbers of folk getting hooked on Scottish skiing? I researched the British backcountry scene for *Summit* a couple of winters ago, and concluded: "Treat them mean and keep them keen!" When it's good it's euphoric. But it's not good very often. Learn to ski before you come north and negotiate the four types of British snow: white (rare), grey (slippery), brown (heather) and black (rocks). Keep all your ski gear ready to go, watch the weather and head where it's good, quickly, in the weather window before it rains or melts. For ski touring, Ben Lawers is exceptional. It has everything for novices up and a variety of heights and aspects. There's easy access from a high carpark and it starts mellow, gaining gradient as you ascend, so you can find your feet and make decisions early before committing to anything.

### HIGHER LEVEL

Once you've found your ski feet then head further north. Ben Nevis is famous for winter climbing, but the gullies also offer some of Britain's most snow-sure – and challenging – off-piste ski descents. Experienced ski mountaineers, check out Coire na Ciste (named on the 1:25,000 OS map), an impressive amphitheatre with several classic grade I and II gullies. The Ben's most sought-after prize, however, is north-east-facing Tower Gully, which is steep, narrow and intimidating at the top. One of the longest-lasting big lines in the country, it can often hold skiable snow well into the spring and sometimes even summer. And on the other (west) side of the mountain there are more mellow options, but these are closer to sea level, so the snow cover isn't as reliable.



PHOTO: GEOGRAPH / IAN S.

The Cumbrian bothy Greg's on the Pennine Way near Cross Fell.

SCRAMBLES  
RIDGE

Britain is brilliant for scrambling: our smaller mountains cut quickly to airy arêtes, rocky ridges and gaping gullies

## EASIER

The cracking, Grade I, stickleback ridge of **Crib Goch** is the most exciting way up Wales' highest peak. Linked with a descent down spiny Y Lliwedd, it becomes a fantastic, airy circuit around the crest of Snowdon's eastern cwm – the famous Snowdon Horseshoe. Add to that the low technical difficulty, high exposure and incredible sweeping descents on either side offering some of the best views in the Snowdon massif and you've got a recipe for one of the best scrambling days out in the country. The route begins with an exhilarating clamber up blocky slabs that bottleneck up to the crest of the ridge. Continue along the second section of the ridge, Crib y Ddysgl, to Snowdon's summit – hold your nose past the busy cafe! – and start your descent, perhaps adding a dip in the lakes on route back to Pen y Pass. Get up early to beat the crows.

## HARDER

2km, 3,000m of ascent, 11 Munros, over 30 summits and at least VDiff climbing makes the **Cuillin Ridge** the UK's most challenging mountaineering journey. Make sure you're there pre-midge season and base yourself in the fantastic Glen Brittle beach campsite and cafe, where you'll be glad to find a dedicated team of warden-baristas. Doing the ridge north to south involves the least technical climbing but, nonetheless, this is scrambling at its most thrilling: remote, sustained and with huge exposure. Plan carefully to avoid hunger, dehydration, exhaustion and route-finding problems. Consider your hands – the Cuillin gabbro is sharp – and your feet – bring Compeed. Descend to the Glen Brittle campsite and hitchhike back to your car, left at the famous climber's haven, the Sligachan Hotel, where you've earned a glass of local ale made from the fresh running waters of the Cuillins.



1 On top of the Inaccessible Pinnacle on the Cuillin Ridge with BMC ambassador Mary-Ann Ochota.



# TUPILAK JACKET.

Born from necessity and tested by time, the Tupilak Jacket is built with GORE-TEX Pro for those moments when nothing else matters.



MADE WITH

Guided  
by  
necessity





📍 The spectacular High Force, England's biggest waterfall on the Pennine Way.

PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK.

## LONG-DISTANCE TRAILS

In little more than half a century, Britain has developed a remarkable long-distance trail network

### EASIER

'Wanted: A Long Green Trail.' This was how Tom Stephenson, who went on to found the Rambler's Association, introduced the idea of a British long-distance trail, like those in America. The year was 1935 and campaigners were lobbying hard for access to Britain's green spaces, much of which had been privatised by the Enclosure Acts. It was a long road. Our first National Park opened in 1951 and the **Pennine Way**, our first long-distance trail, opened in 1965. Pay homage to those activists on the 268-mile journey from Derbyshire to the Scottish Borders. It gives an excellent taster of the variety of Britain's landscapes and there are some unbeatable sights including High Force, England's biggest waterfall; Cross Fell, the route's highest hill (893m); Britain's highest pub, Tan Hill; and High Cup Nick – a geological wonder of a U-shaped valley.

### HARDER

The **Cape Wrath Trail** is renowned as Britain's greatest backpacking challenge. It begins in Fort William, ends at the northernmost point of mainland Britain, Cape Wrath, and not only is it unmarked, there is no official line, much of it is pathless, you'll be days between food stock-ups, showers and toilets and there are several unbridged river crossings. The journey is roughly 250 miles and takes most people at least two weeks. Needless to say this is a route for the experienced. It passes through some of Scotland's most remote and dramatic landscapes: Knoydart, Torridon, Fisherfield, Assynt, the isolated peaks of Sutherland and the beaches of the far northwest. It is also the ultimate bothy-bagging trip, passing some brilliant ones including the electric-enabled Corryhully in Glenfinnan, remote Maol-bhuidhe, dramatic Glendhu and beachside Kearvaig.

## BOULDERING

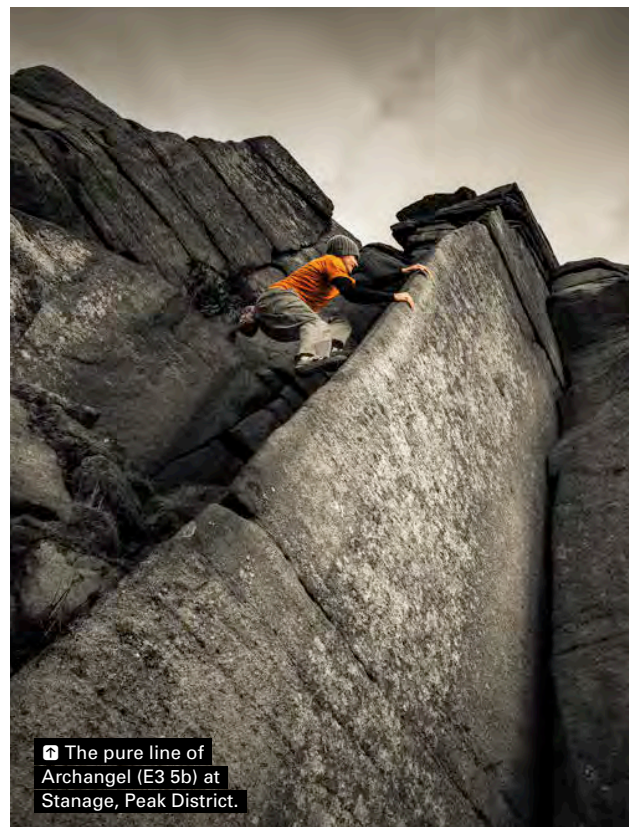
From wonderful wave-washed weirdness to heart-fluttering highballs, Britain is littered with blocs that are begging for it

### EASIER GRADES

In recent years **St Bees**, a maze of otherworldly, rusty blocs sat on a rock shelf on the farflung western coast of Lakeland, has become one of the UK's must-visit bouldering spots. However, its remote location means it never gets overcrowded. The hunks of intensely orange, durable sandstone look like potter's experiments: in places the blocks are smooth and in others intricately featured with honeycombs and elegant flakes. Park at the farm, leaving £2 in the honesty box by the back door. The serene peninsula gets the sun from midday till sunset and all but the highest tides cause few problems. Apiary Wall is the original bouldering sector and one of the best. Great problems, flat landings, a beautiful setting: this a bouldering paradise. The sector is strewn with plenty of classic lower-grade problems. Try the three-star Apiary Arete, V1.

### HARDER GRADES

"Yeah, but what's s/he ever done on grit?" A marmite of the climbing world, some call Peak Gritstone 'God's own rock' and others call it, 'Very short routes requiring an upsetting amount of commitment'. These routes are insanely grippy, often unprotected and require surgical precision on slopers. Alex Honnold sampled it before he was famous and commented: "On the gritstone there is a very strict no bolting rule, which means half the routes end up being solos or very dangerous leads. It's all very arbitrary and kind of silly but it does make for a very rich climbing experience." Hard classics are aplenty in a variety of venues, with the internationally famous Voyager bloc (8B+ from the sit) standing nonchalantly close to the path at Burbage North, while the old-school Careless Torque (8A) towers over wanderers on the huge cube of grit below the four-mile edge of Stanage. If you're into highballs, earn your Stanage badge of honour on the classic 'multi-pitch: Crescent Arete (5m, 5+), Breadline (6c), and finish off with Archangel (22m, E3 5b) – one of the purest arete lines on grit. 🏴󠁧󠁢󠁥󠁮󠁧󠁿



📍 The pure line of Archangel (E3 5b) at Stanage, Peak District.

PHOTO: NADIR KHAN.