

Some of the finest cliff scenery awaits you from the giant's Causeway to Dunseverick Harbour, with layers of dark basalt interspersed with red layers of iron-rich laterite, but beware of reflected waves and downpunching close to the shore in strong offshore winds. The amazing regular basalt columns of the giant's Causeway and cliffs, the Chimney's standing above the Amphitheatre and the long tain of Lacada Point in Port-na-Spannagh are highlights. The latter claimed the Spanish Armada treasures ship Ghiona in a storm in 1588 with few survivors from the hundreds of souls on board. Belfast's Continue past colunns-clad headlands and bays to the Horse Erbar ruled the waves. A short paddle past the Rock, where Ireland's Neptune Manannan Mac Lir and his hidden wood of hornkalliw, a regular haunt for buzzards, takes you to a section of fine cliffs and caves finishing in Ballycastle Harbour.

A magnificent cave opens past the east side of the islands and a little further on is the amazing chasm known as the Giant's Cut. At the chalk headland of Kibnane with its ruined castle and abandoned fishery it is possible to kayak through a tunnel in the headland at certain states of the tide. Beware of the reef and swirl around Carrickmannon Rock, where Ireland's Neptune Manannan Mac Lir and his horse Erbar ruled the waves. A short paddle past the hidden wood of hornkalliw, a regular haunt for buzzards, takes you to a section of fine cliffs and caves finishing in Ballycastle Harbour.

Major geological faulting created the tilted rock stacks on the approach to **Ballyltoy Harbour**. This picturesque haven with its lime kilns was once a lively place where burnt lime was exported and fishing boats were busy. Note the extraordinary structure of Bendoo House on a corner above the harbour, where Cornish artist Newton Penrose (died 1978) laboured single-handed for forty years to create an eccentric home.

Beyond the harbour there is a sand bank that breaks in seaward side of Sheep Island. A partial reef between the island and the former chalk quarry of Larrbane is best passed through the gap close to the sea stack. A spectacular staircase cave can be found midway along the limestone shore leading to the tiny archipelago of Carrick-a-Rede and its famous rope bridge. Today, tourists can be thrilled or scared crossing the bridge, once used by salmon fishermen whose cottages remains tucked under the eastern cliff. Breeding razorbill, guillemot, Kittiwake and fulmar are noisy as you pass their colonies and, given enough water, kayak under the bridge.

Whitepark Bay, with surf and tide rips, is dominated by the island's 7,000 years of human history is peppered with invasions, massacres and emigrations. Today's resident remains such as the bones of the now extinct great auk. Stone Age settlement where excavations revealed food gyphaea ("Devil's toenails", an ancient bivalve shell. Exposed beds of soft flss clay contain fossils, such as the

The **White Rocks** eroded limestone cliffs feature the Giant's Head, The Wishing Arch and a variety of stacks, caves and wave-cut platforms. In springtime, these cliffs are home to Black Guillemot colonies and salt-tolerant wild flowers. Ahead are the romantic ruins of Dunluce Castle. Its 700 year history and the views alone make it well worth a visit – landing is possible in the narrow channel just east of the spectacular cave that penetrates the sea stack on which the castle is perched. The salt and pepper effect of white limestone or chalk and black basalt is a regular feature of the coastline from here to Rathlin, a geological mix unique in Ireland. Binbane Cave, one of the longest on the coast, with its entrance facing north east, is worth exploring.

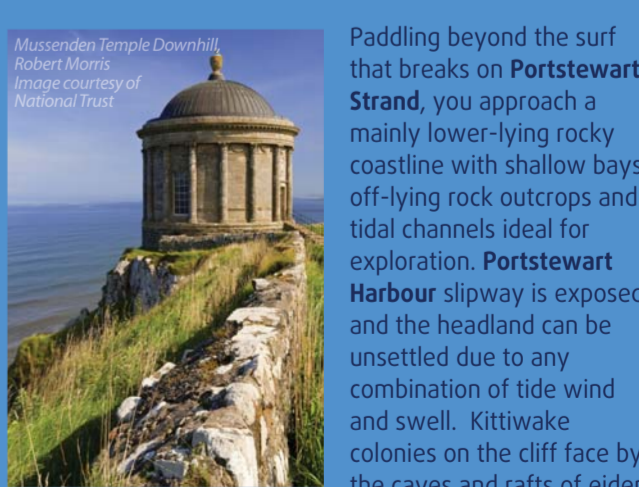


White Rocks

The sand dunes and grasslands are part of the Magilligan Special Area of Conservation, full of colourful butterflies, orchids and other flora in summer. Waves frequently break on the Tuns Bank offshore, reputed burial place of Manannán mac Lir, a mystical sea god whom we'll encounter again further east.

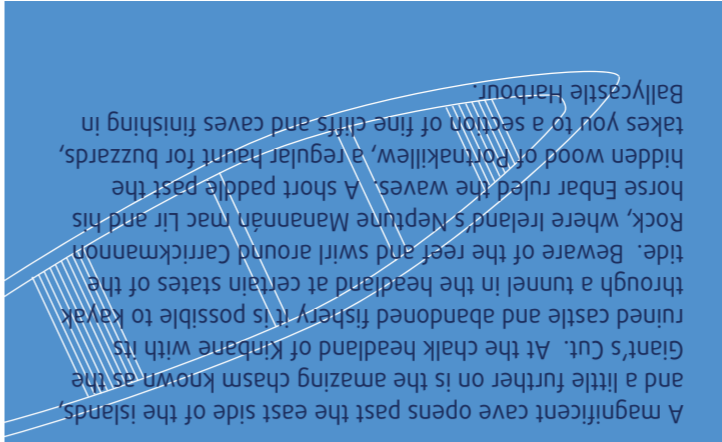
Inland, the basalt escarpment of Binevenagh curves gradually seawards and the distinctive domed shape of Mussenden Temple, a local landmark, can be seen from some distance. Passing under the high cliffs at **Downhill**, cut by the Black Glen, you get a brief glimpse into the former estate of Frederick Hervey, the Earl of Bristol and Bishop of Derry, known as the Earl Bishop, who had the Temple and other buildings erected in the late 1700s, all now part of a National Trust property. The railway line passes through two tunnels either side of the Black Glen and the sea cave close to Castlerock is worth inspection.

Past the small resort of **Castlerock**, twin piers guide the waters of the River Bann seawards. At the Barmouth there can be large standing waves with the ocean swell meeting the outflow of the Lower River Bann following heavy rain and on an ebbing tide. The boundary between the brown freshwater and the sea can attract porpoise, feeding seabirds such as Kittiwake, and other gulls.



Paddling beyond the surf that breaks on **Portstewart Strand**, you approach a mainly lower-lying rocky coastline with shallow bays, off-lying rock outcrops and tidal channels ideal for exploration. **Portstewart Harbour** slipway is exposed and the headland can be unsettled due to any combination of tide wind and swell. Kittiwake colonies on the cliff face by the caves and rafts of eider amongst the wave cut platforms add to the experience.

**Portrush**, the end of this section, is one of Northern Ireland's premier holiday resorts, and there are ample diversions and facilities available if you choose to go ashore. Canoe access is from the small beach in the south east corner of the harbour. Contact should be made with the Harbour Master in advance of access and to confirm parking arrangements.



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Rock stacks, small bays and banks of seaweed washed up typically the coast to White Park Bay. From the eighteenth century to the 130s, this was a busy shore, the white smoke of kelp burners marking small kilns where the dried seaweed was melted down to produce kelp, rich in useful salts.



Kibnane Castle Kibnane Head

### Dunseverick to Ballycastle (7NM)

Ballycastle has a busy marina and harbour with a regular ferry service to Rathlin Island. Canoeists should stay clear of the ferry slip and marina entrance and use the public slip closest to the marina only after contacting the Harbour Master. The huge profile of Fair Head (190 metres, just over 600 feet) with its massive boulder field below dominates this eastern corner. Layers of sandstone below the dark dolerite (a hard basalt belove by rock climbers) glow warm in the evening sun, and the carboniferous rocks in this area are riddled with the adits of old coal and iron ore mines. The level site of the workings at Carrickmore feature falcons may be heard nearby.

### Ballycastle to Waterfoot (16NM)

Tens of thousands of seabirds – chiefly guillemot, razorbill, puffin, kittiwake and fulmar – come and go from their breeding colonies on the western and northern cliffs from May to August, and Atlantic grey seals haul out on isolated rocks. There are some spectacular sea caves along the north side. The eastern shore is more low-lying and very rocky, beginning at the cave and castle where Scottish king-to-be Robert the Bruce was said to have found sanctuary in 1307 and been inspired by a determined web-spinning spider. Heading for Rue Point, enjoy the fantastic rock columns at Doon Point, elder duck and seals station at Ushet Port. Paddling back to the harbour, you will find more seals hauled out at Mill Bay. Keep a respectful distance – they need to rest, dry out and digest their latest fishy feast.

Heading west from the harbour under the white cliffs takes you past numerous narrow caves and chalk pillars. At Cooragh Bay, an old pier and ramp mark the landing site for building materials used in the construction of the West Seabird Centre.

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Rathlin is a challenging excursion, even for experienced paddlers. Crossing the sound from any departure point is best timed as close as possible to slack water. Two notorious tide races and overfalls are Slough-na-More on the SNM route from Ballycastle to **Church Bay** harbour, and the McDonnell Race off the East Lighthouse. There are other turbulent areas at all major headlands, notably along the north side. Nevertheless, a circuit of the island best done clockwise to take advantage of the island's complex tides, is memorable trip. Porpoise, dolphin and whales are increasingly being sighted around Rathlin.



Puffins

### Rathlin Island (20NM)



Puffins

The most powerful tides on the Causeway Coast are to be found in the vicinity of Torr Head and Fair Head where large overfalls can be expected and conditions are particularly dangerous in conditions of wind against tide. A more detailed synopsis of tidal information for the North Coast Canoe Trail is available at www.canoeing.com

The Causeway Coast is a blend of rocky shores and headlands interspersed with golden sandy beaches. The tides offshore flood east and the rate increases as it is forced between Ireland and Scotland with Rathlin Island at the entrance to the Irish Sea. There are a number of currents and counter currents experienced closer inshore. Overfalls and tide races are found at all the headlands with eddies often running between these. Care should be taken when wind is in opposition to tide given that this coast is exposed to the Atlantic swell. When planning a trip reference should be made to the Irish Coast Pilot, Irish Cruising Club Sailing Directions for the East and North Coasts of Ireland, Admiralty Tidal Stream Atlas NP218 and relevant Admiralty Charts.

## Tidal Information

Glens of Antrim. The Causeway Coast is a blend of rocky shores and headlands interspersed with golden sandy beaches. The tides offshore flood east and the rate increases as it is forced between Ireland and Scotland with Rathlin Island at the entrance to the Irish Sea. There are a number of currents and counter currents experienced closer inshore. Overfalls and tide races are found at all the headlands with eddies often running between these. Care should be taken when wind is in opposition to tide given that this coast is exposed to the Atlantic swell. When planning a trip reference should be made to the Irish Coast Pilot, Irish Cruising Club Sailing Directions for the East and North Coasts of Ireland, Admiralty Tidal Stream Atlas NP218 and relevant Admiralty Charts.

The impressive dolerite escarpment of Fair Head is bisected by the legendary Grey Man's Path capped by a lintel of columnar basalt. Take care negotiating the fierce tide races around Fair Head and Torr Head – this journey is only suitable for suitably experienced and prepared canoeists. Between these two promontories is the wooded and geologically varied Murlough Bay, with its remote cottage (pige) set by another old fishing site. The harbour and slip at Torr offer welcome shelter and the opportunity to rest having rounded the spectacular headlands.

Cliffs give way to steep sheep-grazed slopes from Torr Head south to **Cushendun**. The narrow channel between Torr and the Mull of Kintyre opposite is worth watching for porpoise and minke whale. The only surviving salmon bag nets are fished in summer at Torr Head and Cushendun. The latter's distinctive architecture was the creation of Welshman Clough Williams Ellis and most of the village is owned by the National Trust.



Fair Head

### Safety

Canoeing is an adventure sport and as such should be treated with respect. If you are new to the sport, it is advisable to contact a Canoe Association of Northern Ireland (CANI) approved provider or club where expert coaching and local knowledge can be provided. Details can be found at www.canl.org.uk

- When taking part in canoeing consider the following safety advice:
- Attending a recognised training course to develop skills and to acquire safety and environmental knowledge is very important for safe paddling on the coast.
  - It is recommended that canoeists consult the relevant Maps, Charts and Pilot and obtain up to date information on weather and tides before planning a trip on the sea.
  - CANI recommends that paddlers leave details of their journey with the Coastguard and with a responsible adult based on the shore.
  - Carry adequate basic safety equipment - spare clothes, extrafood, warm drink, form of shelter, First Aid kit, means of communication (VHF Radio, mobile phone), flares, torch and whistle.
  - Wear appropriate buoyancy in the form of a personal lifejacket or buoyancy aid. Canoe buoyancy should be sufficient to keep the canoe afloat if you capsize.
  - It is not recommended to canoe alone - three boats is the minimum required for most rescues.
  - Be aware of other water users such as sailing boats, ferries and commercial shipping. Canoeists should make allowance for the limitations and needs of larger craft that are less maneuverable and may be restricted to deep water channels.
  - Many parts of the North Coast Sea Kayak Trail experience extremely powerful tidal currents and should only be tackled by appropriately experienced canoeists.
  - At busy harbours, canoeists should inform the Harbour Master of their approach.

### Winds and Weather

The Shipping Forecast, Inshore Waters Forecast and Coastal Forecast can all be obtained from the BBC website news.bbc.co.uk/weather BBC radio 4 broadcast a shipping forecast four times daily – 0048hrs, 0520hrs, 1201hrs, 1754hrs. Sea area ‘Irish Sea’

### Non-emergency contacts

Police non-emergency (Northern Ireland) 0845 600 8000
Belfast Coastguard non-emergency +44 (0)28 9146 3933

### Emergencies

In the event of an emergency - **Dial 999 or 112** to contact Coastguard, police and ambulance. Use **VHF Radio Channel 16** to contact Coastguard

### Harbour contact details

Portstewart Harbour +44(0)28 7034 7234
Portrush Harbour +44(0)28 7082 2307
Portballintrae Harbour +44(0)28 7034 7234
Ballycastle +44(0)28 2076 8225/ +44(0)78 0350 5084 VHF Ch80
Rathlin +44(0)28 2076 8225/ +44(0)78 0350 5084 VHF Ch80

### Maps, charts and pilot

**Maps required**
OSNI Discoverer Map Series 1:50,000 Sheet 4 Coleraine
OSNI Discoverer Map Series 1:50,000 Sheet 5 Ballycastle
**Other useful maps**
OSNI Causeway Coast & Rathlin Island Activity Map 1:25,000
OSNI Glens of Antrim Activity Map 1:25,000
**Admiralty Charts required**
No: 2798 Lough Foyle to Sanda Island including Rathlin Island
No: 2199 North Channel - Northern Part
**Other useful Charts** - No: 2499 Lough Foyle
**Publications required** - UKHO Irish Coast Pilot NP40, NP218 Tidal Stream Atlas North Coast of Ireland and West Coast of Scotland
Irish Cruising Club: Sailing Directions East and North Coasts of Ireland



Giant's Causeway

**canoe TRAILS**

Experience adventure, beauty and nature on Northern Ireland's

# North Coast Sea Kayak Trail

This 70 nautical mile route around Ireland's north-east corner offers varieties of rugged scenery and wildlife that are unique. There is something for all kayaking abilities.Go for it!



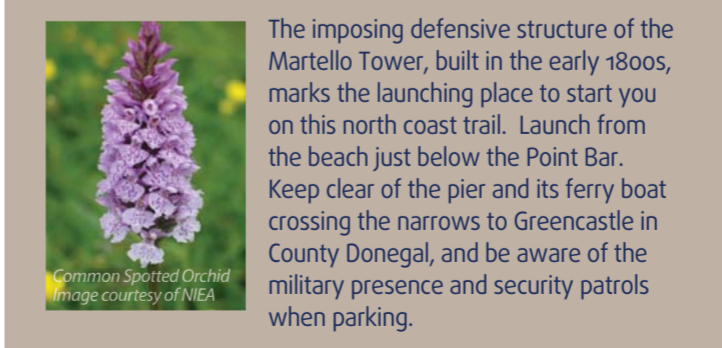
By Carrick-a-Rede

The North Coast Sea Kayak Trail can be followed in either direction, but travelling with the flood tide, this guide takes you west to east, from Magilligan Point in County Londonderry to Torr Head in County Antrim, then south to Waterfoot at the mouth of Glenariff, Queen of the Glens of Antrim. You can choose to paddle any one of the six sections, each offering something different. For the experienced sea kayaker there are tide races, overfalls, exciting Atlantic swells, hidden reefs to keep you alert, and a challenging but rewarding circuit of Rathlin Island. You will also find plenty of more moderate paddling to enable enjoyment of the varieties of scenery, wildlife and local history.

Ancient castles, the Giant's Causeway and a dramatic rope bridge are just a few of the tourist attractions. There is a good range of access points, from tiny and forgotten fishing piers to beaches of sand and cobbles and several lively harbours.

Wildlife treats include clamouring seabird colonies, inquisitive seals and the chance of sighting porpoise, dolphin and perhaps a whale (cetaceans). Landing places and their facilities are marked on the map and this information is not repeated in the text. Paddlers can extend their journey by continuing on the adjoining Foyle Canoe Trail or East Coast Canoe Trail.

### Magilligan to Portrush (12NM)



Common Spotted Orchid

Image courtesy of NIEA

Between **Magilligan** and **Benone** there is a military firing range extending almost 3 nautical miles out to sea. When planning your journey it is essential to contact Belfast Coastguard for details of when firing is scheduled and plan to paddle outside of these times. If the firing range is in use, red flags (daytime) or red lights (night) are visible on hoisted flagstaffs on the beach. There are no buoys marking the range out to sea.



**Tidal Constants**  
 Local HW times in relation to HW Belfast:  
 Moville +3hr 50mins  
 Londonderry -2hr 53 mins  
 Coleraine -4hr 03 mins  
 Portrush -4hr 33 mins  
 Ballycastle -3hr 20 mins  
 Red Bay +0hr 06 mins

- Key to Symbols**
- Slipway Access
  - Shore Access
  - Sailing Club Access
  - Parking
  - Caravan & Camp Site
  - Rough Camping
  - Bothy
  - Hostel/Youth Hostel
  - Suitable Picnic Site
  - Shop
  - Toilets
  - Fresh water
  - Telephone
  - Shower
  - Public house
  - Cafe/restaurant
  - Historical Building
  - Tourist Information
  - Hospital
  - Nesting/Wintering Birds
  - Seals
  - Overfalls - Tidal Rapids and waves, dangerous to the inexperienced canoeist
  - Surf beach - dependent on conditions
  - Tidal Eddies
  - Caves
  - Towns or Residential areas
  - Beaches
  - Access points
  - Ferry Routes



**Wind Strength and Corresponding Sea Conditions**

| Beaufort Scale Force | Wind Speed Knots | Wind Speed MPH | Description   | Sea State   |
|----------------------|------------------|----------------|---------------|---|
| 0                    | 0                | 0              | Calm          | Sea like a mirror.  |
| 1                    | 1-3              | 1-3            | Light Air     | Ripples but without foam crests.  |
| 2                    | 4-6              | 4-7            | Light Breeze  | Small wavelets, crests do not break.  |
| 3                    | 7-10             | 8-12           | Gentle Wind   | Large wavelets, occasional white horses, crests begin to break. Noticeable work heading to shore unless it's an onshore wind.   |
| 4                    | 11-16            | 13-18          | Moderate Wind | Small waves, frequent white horses, becoming bouncy. Inexperienced should consider heading to shore unless it's an onshore wind.  |
| 5                    | 17-21            | 19-24          | Fresh Wind    | Moderate waves, many white horses, some foam and spray. Hard work paddling into wind or across wind.  |
| 6                    | 22-27            | 25-31          | Strong Wind   | Big seas with large waves. White foam crests and spray. Rescues difficult to execute, warnings issued to small craft.   |
| 7                    | 28-33            | 32-38          | Near Gale     | Big seas with large waves, white foam blown in streaks along the direction of wind. Kayak handling difficult even for experienced paddlers. Communication very difficult. |
| 8                    | 34-40            | 39-46          | Gale          | High waves, crests begin to break into spindrift. Very dangerous conditions; communication almost impossible, rescues impractical, each man for himself.                  |

- Limit for inexperienced paddlers
- Limit for experienced paddlers
- Limit for advanced paddlers



**Earning a Welcome**

- Please be friendly and polite to local residents and other water users.
- Drive with care and consideration and park sensibly.
- Change clothing discreetly, preferably out of public view.
- Gain permission before going on to private property.
- Minimise your impact on the natural environment and use recognised access points. There are also many unofficial access points along the coastline, which may be used with the owner's consent.
- Be sensitive to wildlife and other users regarding the level of noise you create.
- Observe wildlife from a distance and be aware of sensitive locations such as nesting birds, wintering flock concentrations, seal haul-outs, cetaceans and basking sharks.
- CAAN supports the principles of Leave No Trace and encourages others to do the same when taking part in outdoor recreation. For more information please visit [www.leavenotraceireland.org](http://www.leavenotraceireland.org).
- Keep the numbers in your party consistent with safety, the nature of the water conditions and the impact on your surroundings.
- Wild camping should be carried out discreetly, in small parties, and for overnight stays only.

**Accommodation**  
 A range of self catering, B&B and hotels are available along the trail. For a full list of accommodation providers please visit [www.canoeni.com](http://www.canoeni.com) or [www.discovernorthernireland.com](http://www.discovernorthernireland.com)

**Canoe Hire and Canoe Tours**  
 For up-to-date canoe hire and guiding please visit [www.canoeni.com](http://www.canoeni.com)

**Camping**  
 For details of official campsites and rough camping opportunities please visit [www.canoeni.com](http://www.canoeni.com)

**Further Information**  
[www.causewaycoastandglens.com](http://www.causewaycoastandglens.com)

**Tourist Information Centres:**

|                  |                    |  |
|------------------|--------------------|--|
| Limavady         | +44(0)28 7776 0650 | <a href="http://www.limavady.gov.uk">www.limavady.gov.uk</a>           |
| Coleraine        | +44(0)28 7034 4723 | <a href="http://www.northcoastni.com">www.northcoastni.com</a>         |
| Portrush         | +44(0)28 7082 3333 | <a href="http://www.northcoastni.com">www.northcoastni.com</a>         |
| Giant's Causeway | +44(0)28 2073 1855 | <a href="http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk">www.nationaltrust.org.uk</a> |
| Ballycastle      | +44(0)28 2076 2024 | <a href="http://www.moyle-council.org">www.moyle-council.org</a>       |
| Cushendall       | +44(0)28 2177 1180 | <a href="http://www.moyle-council.org">www.moyle-council.org</a>       |

**Trail updates:** Any changes to the canoe trail that may occur will be updated on [www.canoeni.com](http://www.canoeni.com). Please email any feedback to [info@canoeni.com](mailto:info@canoeni.com)

**Other Resources**

|   |  |
|---|--|
| Canoe Trails                            | <a href="http://www.canoeni.com">www.canoeni.com</a>                               |
| Canoe Association of Northern Ireland   | <a href="http://www.canl.org.uk">www.canl.org.uk</a>                               |
| Outdoor NI                              | <a href="http://www.outdoorni.com">www.outdoorni.com</a>                           |
| Countryside Access & Activities Network | <a href="http://www.countryside-recreation.com">www.countryside-recreation.com</a> |

**Provision for people with disabilities**  
 All sites with slips cater for disability access with varying degrees depending on the water level. It is recommended to check before starting a journey. This guide is available on request in alternative formats.

**Disclaimer**  
 Every effort has been taken to ensure accuracy in the compilation of this publication. CAAN and its partner organisations cannot, however, accept responsibility for errors or omissions but, where such are brought to our attention, future publications will be amended accordingly. Canoeing may by its nature be hazardous and involve risk; training is essential for safe participation. It is recommended to take out personal accident insurance. Users must undertake and act on their own risk assessments prior to use of any access site or waterway and review and update during use. The guide must be used in conjunction with an Ordnance Survey 1:50,000 map and an accurate navigation chart. Neither the publishers, funders, contributors, landowners, site managers, riparian owners nor agents of the aforementioned can be held responsible for any loss, injury or inconvenience sustained by any person or persons as a result of information, guidance or advice given in or omitted from this guide.

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 Design [www.thinkstudio.co.uk](http://www.thinkstudio.co.uk)

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This guide is designed to be used in conjunction with relevant OSNI 1:50,000 maps and UKHO Admiralty Charts.