

The Special Qualities of the Jura National Scenic Area

- The distinctive Paps of Jura
- Human settlement on the margins of a vast moorland terrain
- A continually varying coast
- Large tracts of wild land
- The raised beaches of the west coast
- An island of deer
- An island close yet remote
- The inaccessible Loch Tarbert

Special Quality	Further Information
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The distinctive Paps of Jura</i> 	
<p>The Paps of Jura tower over the whole landscape. Their steep, rounded cones rise out of the surrounding moorland, and their summits of silvery rock and scree provide unparalleled views to the Inner Hebrides, the Mull of Kintyre and beyond.</p> <p>Their distinctive profiles also make them readily identifiable landmarks, visible from much of the west coast, from the inland mountains and from as far afield as the north coast of Ireland.</p>	<p>The three Paps of Jura are composed of quartzite and are distinctive in shape, texture and colour. They are Beinn an Oir (785m), Beinn Shiantaidh (757m) and Beinn a Chaolais (733m). There are also several intermediate height hills in the NSA: Scrinadle (506m), Corra Bheinn (569), Beinn Bhreac (439), Glas Bheinn (561), Dubh Bheinn (530m). Although less prominent than the three Paps, these hills can dominate the view from certain angles, particularly on the east side of the NSA. However, when the NSA is viewed from afar, it is the Paps that stand out.</p> <p>The Paps can be seen from the County Antrim coast in Ireland, from the Isle of Man, from many islands, peninsulas and mountains on the west coast of Scotland, including The Cobbler and Ben Lomond. Some of the best views are from Islay's northeast coast.</p> <p>They are the subject of William McTaggart's 1902 painting <i>The Paps of Jura</i>, now in Kelvingrove Art Gallery, Glasgow.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Human settlement on the margins of a vast moorland terrain</i> 	
<p>The moorland that covers most of Jura is akin to a '<i>quartzite desert, albeit very beautiful and very wet</i>' Newton (1988). The moors tend to be gently sloping and featureless, enlivened by occasional lochs and rushing burns.</p> <p>This wild, trackless interior is relieved by the inhabited, green coastal strip of the south and east, with human settlement on the margins of the vast terrain of uninhabited moorland.</p>	<p>Except for small strips on the east coast, Jura is underlain by Dalradian quartzite, an extremely hard and resistant rock, which results in infertile, acid soils and vegetation dominated by wet heath and bog.</p> <p>The island's population is around 200, centred on the east coast along a single track road. Within this area is the township of Keils, famous for having retained traditional strip fields and cruck-buildings, as well as the Isle of Jura distillery.</p>

• ***A continually varying coast***

Much of the appeal of the NSA lies in the variety of coastal scenery. There is the east coast of bays, beaches and headlands, in places settled and cultivated, and in the north with steep slopes descending straight into the sea. There is the short south coast with forestry plantations, Jura House, its associated garden, and the Singing Sands. There is the uninhabited and inaccessible west coast with its spectacular raised beaches and caves, and the remote Loch Tarbert in the north.

The east coast with its parallel ridges is the most populated area and contains:

- The bay and headland topography of the southeast corner between Poll a Cheo and Rubha na Traillie.
- The linear coastal settlement of Craighouse, with sandy and shingle beaches.
- The Small Isles, individual parallel rocky isles marking the entrance to Small Isles bay and Loch na Mile.
- The long J-shaped rocky headland at Lowlandman's Bay, with its isolated lighthouse cottages.
- Small curved bays and settlements between long coasts of steep slopes, such as at Tarbert and Lagg, with pockets of deciduous woodland, grassy fields and small beaches and jetties.

The south coast is gentle, with woodlands, the walled garden of Jura House, the 'singing sands' and offshore islands.

The west coast is dominated by raised beaches, cliffs, natural arches and caves and is uninhabited.

The north coast of the NSA is the uninhabited Loch Tarbert.

• ***Large tracts of wild land***

Away from the coastal settlements of the south and east, there is little obvious sign of human impact. The moorland interior is clothed with natural vegetation of wet heath and peat, and is largely pathless.

Whether alone on the moors, the Paps towering overhead, or wandering the uninhabited coasts of the west, or suddenly encountering a herd of deer, the sense of 'nature in charge' is overwhelming. This combination of remoteness and naturalness imbues much of the NSA with a great sense of wildness.

Situated adjacent to the Atlantic Ocean, the climate of Jura is cloudy and windy with high levels of precipitation, contributing to a 'wild and wet' feel when distant from habitation.

Accessing the remote west coast, or an ascent of the Paps, provides walkers with a challenge of rough terrain, bog, river, moor and rock. A coastal walk along the west coast takes several days, and it is likely that no-one will be encountered. Much of the area is one of SNH's Search Areas for Wild Land.

The presence of occasional shielings and Mesolithic sites indicates that human populations once occupied now uninhabited parts of the west coast.

• ***The raised beaches of the west coast***

The raised beaches of the west coast are amongst the finest in Scotland, with their quartzite boulders sometimes as much as 40 metres above sea level.

There is also an impressive array of other features, relics from a higher sea

Isostatic uplift has resulted in raised beaches throughout western Scotland, with Jura having some of the best associated geomorphological features.

level, including ancient caves and sea cliffs.	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An island of deer 	
<p>Herds of red deer are often visible and comprise a key component of the landscape. Their population significantly outnumbers that of humans and the history of deer management goes back over a 1,000 years. It is possible that the island itself gets its name from the Old Norse for deer – <i>hjörtr</i>.</p>	<p>The deer population of about 5,500 compares with the human population of about 200.</p> <p>The island is divided into several large estates, each supporting large herds of red deer. The deer appear at home in their natural habitat, well camouflaged amongst the moorland grasses. Herds are seen in many locations on the island, from the beaches and grassland pastures, right across the moorland to the lower slopes of the Paps.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An island close yet remote 	
<p>Although Jura is close to the mainland and has a central location within Argyll, surrounded as it is by Kintyre, Knapdale, Islay, Scarba, Colonsay and Mull, the island feels remote and inaccessible.</p> <p>It has often been described as being ‘<i>at the edge</i>’, being a long journey from the mainland; and within the island itself, away from the settlement of Craighouse, many houses and crofts exhibit a feeling of remoteness, seclusion and isolation. This is reinforced by the island’s vast uninhabited interior.</p> <p>It is a place to find solitude, to be well away from the hectic life of the mainland – what George Orwell described as ‘<i>a very ungettable place.</i>’</p>	<p>Much of the northwest end of Jura is only 6km from the mainland, but the main ferry access is from the south via Islay (although there is now a summer only passenger ferry direct from Tayvallich to Craighouse).</p> <p>George Orwell, or Eric Blair as he was known to islanders, needed to find what he called ‘very ungettable place’ so he could write his novel <i>1984</i> in peace. He stayed at Barnhill (north of the NSA).</p> <p>Although Jura is currently remote in terms of access, this would not have been the case in the past when sea travel was the main means of transport because it is central within the west coast of Argyll. Its importance is shown by the early medieval high cross at Keils, while the former centre of the Lordship of the Isles is at Finlaggan, just across the sound of Islay.</p>
<p><i>Location-specific quality</i></p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The inaccessible Loch Tarbert 	
<p>Loch Tarbert is a sea loch with a complex, rock-bound shoreline that cuts across the centre of Jura. Surrounded by moorland, its shores are largely inaccessible, except by boat or long walks across boggy terrain. It is a lonely and remote place.</p>	<p>Loch Tarbert has an indented coastline with extensive areas of rock outcrop. It varies greatly in width, with some extreme narrows and at its eastern end pools and mud flats. It contains jagged strata, skerries, small rocky isles, and raised beaches. It is surrounded by rough, uninhabited moorland, and although a sea loch, the open sea is invisible from its inner reaches.</p>

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