

# COAST CHARACTER

Working in her campervan, hand weaver Eloise Sentito is drawn to the Isle of Lewis for inspiration for her snoods, shawls, rugs and blankets

WORDS *Carol Anne Strange* PHOTOGRAPH *Roger Chartres*

**O**n the cliff above my favourite beach on the Isle of Lewis west coast, the landscape is rugged, wild and ancient. Near-constant gales harshly brush scattered megaliths, Norse mills and Iron Age brochs [small, round, hollow walled buildings peculiar to Scotland]. When the sun does appear, the sands are so white and the waters so clean that the colours resemble the Caribbean.

This is where I first landed after leaving an unaffordable life on a rented Dartmoor smallholding. Three years on, after travelling and weaving on a shoestring budget, around some of the most beautiful land and seascapes, I'm back. This place has inspired many a day's sea-gazing, many an exhilarating swim, and many a weaving session.

I'm lucky that my van-dwelling life accommodates my weaving business.

When I left Dartmoor, I drove north and west, fuelled by romantic notions. I knew the Hebridean coast was kitted up for people travelling in vans, with the few-and-far-between shops a source of gas bottles, laundry, and wifi. And then the Atlantic just hooked me in. I'm a Piscean, and I love water, so surely it was bound to happen.

On my travels, the coast has always welcomed me. It is where we relax, linger, and smile, and is where I have met many dear friends. Where tide meets shore, there is inspiration, too, for my seascape rugs, handwoven in Hebridean and Shetland tweed weft with a linen warp.

The nomadic lifestyle hasn't been easy but my travels have brought riches beyond measure – art, awe and deep reverence for the land and sea. I'm feeling a transition though, to find

a modest, musical, close-knit but open and diverse community with immediate access to land, water, and peace and quiet. Stornoway, a busy port town with an arts centre, extensive woodlands, Celtic kindness, and lively crofting and ceilidh traditions, offers me all of that. Perhaps it will become home. For now, I'm continuing to weave, dazzled and enchanted by the sea and shore's colour, movement and mood, feeling inspired by this sublime coast.'

*For more information on Eloise's weaving see [theseisles.co](http://theseisles.co)*

