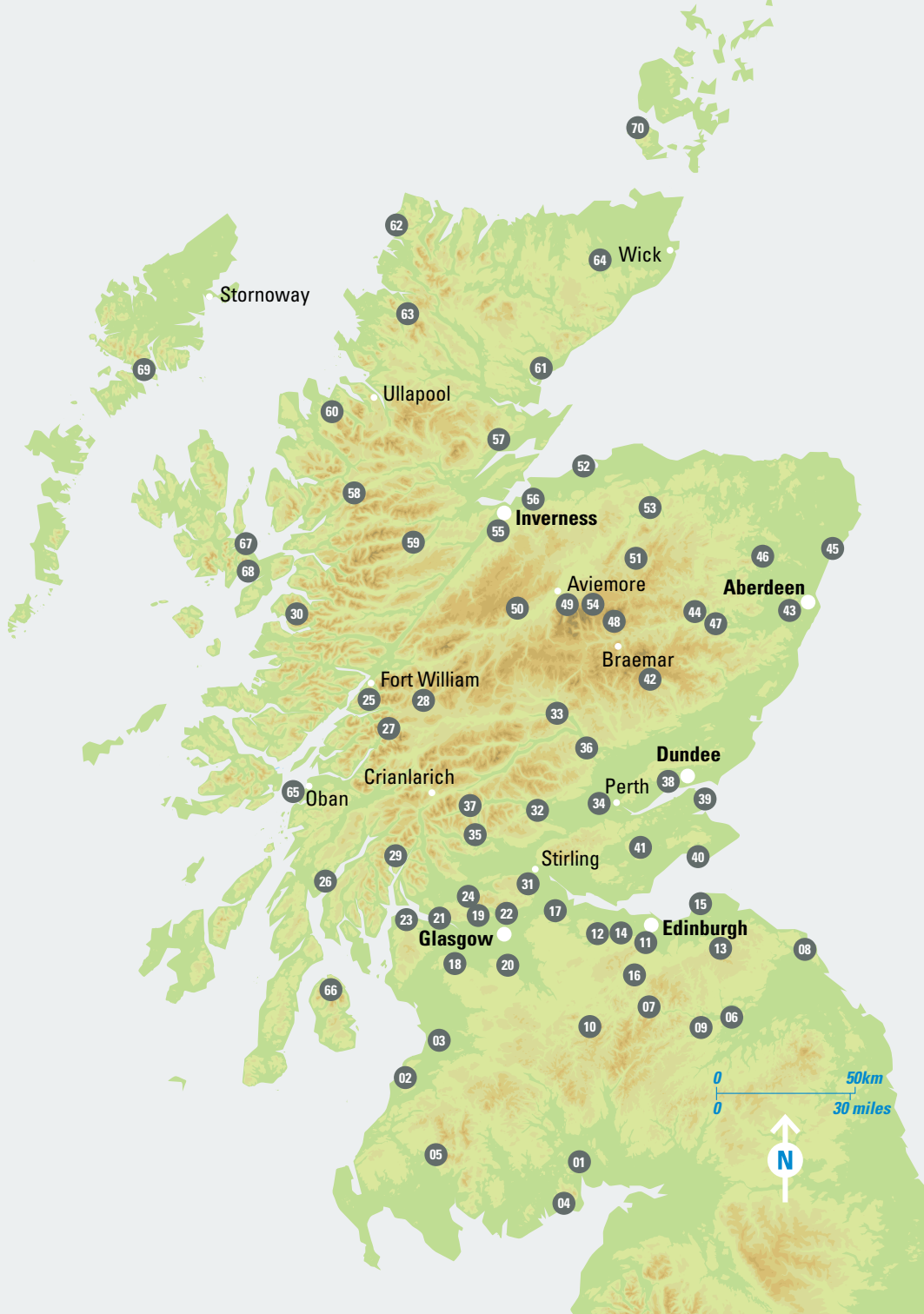


SCOTTISH TRAIL RUNNING

Susie Allison

2ND EDITION

70 GREAT RUNS  **START**



Scottish Trail Running

2nd Edition



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Gwynedd

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Maps – Bute Cartographic

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Introduction

*"And we run because we like it
Through the broad bright land."*

C. H. Sorley

This book is about running for fun in beautiful places. Each route has been selected for its inspirational scenery and runnable terrain. The range of routes is deliberately diverse – these runs follow rivers and coastlines, go up hills and through glens, cross barren Highlands and weave between Lowland trees. The selected routes come highly recommended by local runners and include many of Scotland's most enjoyable and runnable paths. But this is not a definitive collection. These runs are intended as a springboard for further personal exploration of Scotland's trails.



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Why Trail Running?

Moving fast and light through the great outdoors is what trail running is all about. Trail runners leave roads and traffic behind in search of the quieter and wilder, sometimes hidden, paths and tracks that criss-cross the country. Leafy woodland, lazily meandering riverbanks, dramatic sea cliffs, remote mountain passes: Scotland has all of these and all are fantastic places to run.

Trails are everywhere

The beauty of trail running is that it combines the speed and ease of running on roads with the fresh air and wide open spaces beloved by hill runners. Trails enable runners to move quickly over ground that would otherwise be too rough or boggy for a speedy passage. Trails enable runners to explore all over Scotland; from the inner reaches of dense suburban woodland to remote Highland glens.

Trails are for everyone

Trail running is a simple activity which is accessible to everyone willing to give it a go. Great off-road running trails are found anywhere and everywhere; in cities and towns as well as in the countryside. Anyone can take up trail running. Many trails are easily tackled by the most novice of runners and just as many trails will delight experienced runners seeking new challenges. Trail running is an activity that fits and grows with the experience and skill of the individual runner.

Definition of a Scottish running trail

A trail is simply a path or a track. This book exists because the paths and tracks found on the ground and marked on maps of Scotland are drawn from the whole spectrum of runnability. Runners exploring Scotland's trails are often thwarted by mud and bog, tussocks, deep heather or boulder fields. While these exploratory missions can be a great adventure, most of the time all a runner really wants to do is find and follow a clear, runnable trail in a beautiful place. This book is intended for that runner. The routes are based on a working definition of a Scottish running trail as a continuously visible route on the ground which is not a tarmac road and has no deep mud or bog, tussocks or boulder fields.

Guidebook scope and purpose

This guidebook sets out to describe enjoyable trail runs all over Scotland, including the islands. The routes selected for each chapter showcase the variety of trail running experiences that can be found in each of Scotland's diverse regions. Many of the routes are easily accessible trails close

Why Trail Running?



Track to Sandwood Bay (Route 62)
Photo: Donald Naylor

to towns, cities and popular holiday destinations. These runs range from short, straightforward circuits to longer, half-day outings. The remaining routes strike out into more remote terrain taking runners into the heart of Scotland's wildest and most spectacular landscapes. The selection process has inevitably required compromise as many enjoyable routes would have to be excluded in order to strictly adhere to the definition of a running trail given above. A few routes require some road running and at the other end of the spectrum a few of the most challenging circuits have short, unrunnable sections. Running on rougher trails does require skill and experience. The routes in this book have been selected to cover a wide range of running terrain so that runners can develop their ability in whichever direction they want: to run further; climb higher; tackle trickier ground; navigate more complex terrain. Developing these skills opens up a whole new world of opportunities for exploring the rich and varied Scottish landscape.

Disclaimer

Every effort has been made to ensure that the information supplied is accurate. However, mistakes happen and trails are subject to change. The author welcomes updates/corrections.

As with any activity, trail runners must accept responsibility for their own actions, stay within their own limits and avoid harming other people or property. The author, publisher and distributor of this book do not recognise any liability for any injury or damage to person or property arising from the use of this guide.

How to Use This Book

This book is for reading in the armchair at home or for storing in the car glove box. It has been designed so that the turn-by-turn route description and map can be photocopied onto a single A4 page and taken on the run. Each route is laid out in the same format.

Quick reference

This section lists the length of the route in kilometres and miles as well as the cumulative ascent (height gain) in metres and feet. Distances are given to the nearest 0.5km for routes under 10km and to the nearest 1km for routes over 10km. Ascent is given to the nearest 25m (100ft/50ft for lower routes). A mixture of computer, GPS and paper mapping has been used to calculate distance and ascent. Although every effort has been made to supply accurate information it is inevitable that there will be inconsistencies with readers' own plots and GPS tracks. Ascent calculations are liable to vary much more than distance. Relevant maps are listed along with the start (and end) point(s) of the route with grid references and postcodes. The grid reference gives the precise location of the start of the route. The postcode is approximate and is provided to help sat-nav users reach the right general area. Rural postcodes cover a much larger area than urban postcodes. The most misleading postcodes have been omitted. Each route is rated to indicate the level of navigation required, the roughness of the terrain underfoot and the likelihood of getting wet feet.

Rating system

Three aspects of the route are rated to set appropriate expectations. The rating is based on the section of the route which requires the highest level of navigation, has the roughest terrain and the highest probability of wet feet.

Navigation ●●● These routes are relatively easy to follow, usually with full or partial waymarking or sign posts.

Navigation ●●● Some care is needed to stay on the described route as there are multiple junctions without waymarkers or signs. Some routes are graded 2 if they are technically easy to navigate but in a remote area where the consequences of getting lost could be serious. Map and compass are advisable.

Navigation ●●● These routes cross remote regions where the consequences of getting lost are serious. A map, compass and the ability to use both are required in addition to the route description. The route may not always follow obvious land features. The path may not always be easily visible on the ground and may depend on the season and weather conditions.

How to Use This Book



Terrain ●●● Smooth paths or tracks which are easy to run. There may be a few short rougher sections.

Terrain ●●● Fairly easy to run but stones, tree roots or uneven path sections merit care at times.

Terrain ●●● These routes are almost entirely runnable providing sufficient attention is paid to foot placement. They may be rocky, boggy or generally uneven. A couple of routes have sections where walking is unavoidable.

Wet feet ●●● On a dry day wet feet are unlikely. There may be occasional and avoidable muddy puddles or patches of shallow mud.

Wet feet ●●● Damp feet are likely, particularly in autumn and winter. During drier spells puddles and muddy patches can often be avoided. In normal conditions streams can be crossed by jumping or on stepping stones.

Wet feet ●●● Wet feet are inevitable due to un-jumpable stream or river crossings and/or boggy areas.

Route description

The route description is divided into two parts: a scene setting preamble followed by functional, turn-by-turn instructions. The numbering in the functional part of the description matches the numbers on the route maps. Some runs follow waymarked or signed trails. Obviously these are subject to change. The description and map are intended to be sufficient to follow the route even if the waymarkers or signs have been removed.

Route map

The route maps are based on Ordnance Survey mapping with the scale varied in order to fit the whole route onto one page spread. They are intended to be complementary to, not substitutes for, Ordnance Survey or other published maps.

Trip planning

The closest public transport stops are named and included on the maps to help journey planning using websites or telephone helplines such as www.travelinescotland.com 0871 200 22 33 (24 hours). Brief driving directions, parking information and closest electric vehicle charging points (at the time of writing) are given. Cars should be booked onto ferries in advance to guarantee passage but foot passengers can just turn up on the day, usually half an hour before sailing. Conveniently located or personally recommended accommodation, pubs and cafés are mentioned. Inclusion of particular businesses is no guarantee of their suitability or that there is not somewhere better nearby. Tourism is rural Scotland's biggest industry so there are plenty of alternatives waiting to be found. Bear in mind that opening hours are often shorter in rural areas than in towns, and many tourism businesses only operate during the summer months, usually April to September. Phone ahead to check availability if reliant upon finding an evening meal or overnight accommodation. Useful websites for trip planning are listed in the resources section at the back of the book.

Other routes, activities and events

Every runner is different so this section aims to help those looking for longer, shorter or just plain different routes as well as runners staying in the area for more than one day. It is expected that readers will be interested in other outdoor activities so these are mentioned where appropriate. The Events section is a non-comprehensive list of trail races held on the route or in the local area. Some hill races, adventure races and road races are included too. Comprehensive events listings can be found at www.scottishrunningguide.com and www.scottishhillracing.co.uk

Getting Started

Running is one of the simplest and most satisfying activities in the world: just head out the door and put one foot in front of the other. There are just a few things it may help to think about first.

Why run?

People run for all sorts of reasons. Sometimes running is merely a means to an end: becoming physically fit; losing weight; maintaining mental health. This book focuses on the act of running itself. Running for fun. Running for the sheer joy of moving quickly through the Scottish landscape. Enjoying the runs in this book may have inadvertent side effects including stronger muscles, a healthier heart and lungs, weight loss and a greater sense of wellbeing.

First steps

All of the routes in this book are just as well walked as jogged or run, so there is no fitness barrier to getting started. Just get out there and give them a go. Start off by only running the downhill sections. Even the world's best hill runners walk steep uphill sections. As with any activity it is sensible to start small and gradually increase the effort required. Check the suitability of a route by looking at the distance and ascent (height gain) given in the route description.

Steady progress

Increase activity levels gradually to give both muscles and brain time to adapt to the demands of moving on trails. Running on uneven trails engages a wider range of muscles than running on smooth roads or pavement. On slippery or rocky trails the brain needs to work quickly to pick the most secure foot placements. There is an abundance of information on running-specific training and technique available from medical professionals and running coaches as well as from books and magazines.

Footwear

Well-fitting shoes suitable for the terrain are essential for enjoyable and injury-free running. The two fundamentals of choosing the right footwear are comfort and grip. Comfort depends on the way the shoe fits, stabilises, supports and cushions the runner's foot. The right shoe is a very individual decision. Shoe manufacturers use differently shaped lasts and have different ideas about the ideal amount of stability, support and cushioning. Specialist running shops can advise on these differences and suggest appropriate footwear. Road shoes usually have the most

stability, support and cushioning. On uneven terrain this can make it more difficult to place feet accurately. Fell shoes have comparatively little cushioning. They can be an uncomfortable choice on anything harder than earth or grass paths, particularly during longer runs. Trail shoes are often a good compromise. Grip depends upon the sole of the shoe. Road trainers have a smooth sole which will give adequate grip in dry conditions for well-constructed paths and tracks.

Trail shoes have a rugged sole and are the best choice for most of the routes in this book.



The rugged sole gives better grip, particularly on wet days, and makes each step much more secure. Fell shoes have an exaggerated knobbly sole which helps runners stay secure on steep wet grass.

Clothing

There is plenty of technical clothing and advice available from specialist running shops. Synthetic materials are recommended as cotton takes a long time to dry and can rub badly when wet. Multiple thin layers are more flexible for regulating temperature than one thick layer. Zip neck tops are good for the same reason. Ankle socks are better at preventing stones and dirt entering shoes than low cut trainer liners. Well-fitting underwear is essential for both men and women: for women this means a high impact level sports bra. The Scottish weather is notoriously fickle so lightweight, breathable waterproofs are an important element of the runner's wardrobe. Hats and gloves will be needed in colder weather. Runners need to wear enough to stay warm. It can be tempting to wear less clothing on the assumption that running will help keep the body warm. In wet, cold conditions thinly clad runners are prone to developing hypothermia, particularly when they get tired. This is a serious medical condition which occurs when a person's core body temperature drops abnormally low. Look out for stumbles, mumbles and fumbles – key signs of the onset of hypothermia – and make sure these are treated immediately by putting on more clothes and heading for home.

Getting Started



A pair of runners can carry just enough for a relatively comfortable overnight camp

What to carry?

For short routes there is little need to carry anything at all. For longer routes, particularly those in remote areas, food, water and additional clothing are the basic extras. It is most comfortable to carry these in a lightweight rucksack or bum bag designed specifically for runners and sold in specialist running or outdoor shops. It is important to stay well-fed and hydrated. While out on routes lasting several hours runners should aim to eat a small amount regularly. What to eat is a matter of personal preference. Muesli bars, sandwiches, jelly babies, hula hoops and energy gels are just some of the foods popular with experienced runners. Drink when thirsty. The amount of fluid needed varies between individual runners and also depends on the conditions. Water, squash or energy drink can be carried in either a bottle or a bladder and hose. A mobile phone is recommended for safety reasons although coverage is limited in many parts of Scotland. Map, compass and the ability to use both are essential for some of the routes. A basic first aid kit containing at least a crepe bandage, wound dressing and a few sticking plasters is recommended as are a lightweight survival bag and whistle. Head torches prove their worth more often than anticipated.

Use common sense when packing for a run.

Running with a week's supply of muesli bars, three litres of water and five spare tops will not be much fun. On the other hand, omitting waterproofs and a warm layer could lead to a wet, cold and exhausting epic. Fast and light ... and well-prepared.

Suggested kit list

	WEAR (CONDITIONS DEPENDENT)	CARRY (CONDITIONS DEPENDENT)
SHORT RUNS	SHOES	(ROUTE DESCRIPTION)
	SOCKS	(MAP AND COMPASS)
	SHORTS OR LEGGINGS	(MOBILE PHONE)
	SUPPORTIVE UNDERWEAR	(MONEY)
	SHORT OR LONG-SLEEVED TOP	(FOOD)
	(CAP)	(WATER)
	(WARM LAYER)	
	(WIND OR WATERPROOF TOP)	
	(HAT AND GLOVES)	
	(SUNSCREEN)	
LONGER RUNS	AS ABOVE	LIGHTWEIGHT RUCKSACK OR BUMBAG
		ROUTE DESCRIPTION
		MAP AND COMPASS
		MOBILE PHONE
		MONEY
		FOOD
		WATER
		WARM LAYER(S)
		WATERPROOF TOP AND BOTTOMS
		HAT AND GLOVES
		FIRST AID KIT
		WHISTLE
		SURVIVAL BAG
		HEAD TORCH
		(SUNSCREEN)
OVERNIGHT CAMPING RUNS	AS ABOVE	LIGHTWEIGHT RUCKSACK (25L IS GOOD)
		ROUTE DESCRIPTION
		MAP AND COMPASS
		MOBILE PHONE
		MONEY
		FOOD
		WATER
		WARM LAYER(S) INCLUDING FULL LENGTH LEGGINGS
		WATERPROOF TOP AND BOTTOMS
		HAT AND GLOVES
		FIRST AID KIT
		WHISTLE
		SURVIVAL BAG
		HEAD TORCH
		(SUNSCREEN)
		TENT OR BIVVY
		STOVE, PAN, FUEL AND LIGHTER/MATCHES
		GROUND INSULATION E.G. CLOSED CELL MAT
		SLEEPING BAG
		(TOTAL WEIGHT 4 – 7KG)

Getting Started

Wee beasts

Scotland's biting insects are legendary. Covering up bare skin with long sleeves and full length leggings is the best way to avoid being bitten. Even with these precautions ticks are liable to sneak a way in regardless. Some ticks in Scotland carry Lyme's Disease. Always do a full body check as soon as possible after running in potentially tick infested areas. In practice this means most of the Scottish countryside and particularly upland areas grazed by deer or sheep. The NHS recommended removal method is to grab the tick as close to the skin as possible using tweezers then extract by pulling straight up gently. See a GP immediately if a target-shaped rash or flu-like symptoms develop.



A map is essential for more remote routes

Skills Development

Trail running technique

There is a real joy and satisfaction to running fast over uneven ground. This is a skill that can be learnt through conscious thought and experience. Running on trails requires concentration and can be mentally tiring. It is important to adapt speed to the terrain and stay within personal limits. Looking ahead and reading the ground to choose the best foot placement is the key to moving swiftly. There may be uneven ground, tree roots, muddy puddles, soft boggy areas, patches of gravel or larger rocks. The skill lies in picking the clear area among the gravel, varying stride length to fit between tree roots, pushing off firm earth instead of soft bog and landing a footstep precisely on top of a rock instead of slipping awkwardly off its side.

Navigation

The routes in this book range from city centre parks to remote wilderness areas in the Scottish Highlands. They cover the whole spectrum from runs where going off route is no problem at all to those where getting lost could be very serious.

Confident navigation is essential for progressing to the more remote routes included in this guide. Each route is rated to indicate the level of navigation required. Confident navigation comes through practice and the rating system is intended to help development of the required skills.

The route descriptions should be read and used in conjunction with maps. Basic map reading starts by relating the hills, valleys and features such as lochs or buildings seen on the ground to the contour lines and features marked on the map. It helps to orientate maps to the direction of travel so that their features line up with those on the ground. While moving, it helps to keep a mental tick list of features shown on the map which must be passed in order to reach the next key point on the route. Get into the habit of memorising the tick list and consulting the map only at key points. It helps enormously to know where one is all the time rather than spend time figuring out the location from scratch at every stop.

The level of navigation required often changes dramatically with weather conditions. A straightforward trot over moorland to a trig point may require counting paces and following a compass bearing when the cloud rolls in.

Navigators must constantly challenge their own assumptions. Look for features that disprove an identified location. It is all too easy to make features fit with the map and inadvertently 'confirm' an incorrect location. Estimate the width and height of a feature as well as the distance to it

Skills Development

before consulting the map. Map measurements should corroborate the estimations. If not, ring the alarm bells.

Developing an awareness of distance and timing is very useful. Try identifying features at varying distances, say 100m, 500m and 1km, and timing how long it takes to run to each of them. Try timing the same distances on rougher terrain.

No times are given for the routes as running time varies so much from person to person. Keep a record of how long each route takes and work out a personalised version of Naismith's Rule. This rule of thumb is used by hillwalkers to calculate the length of time a route will take based on its distance and total ascent. Standard Naismith's Rule allows one hour for every 5km plus one minute for each 10m of height gained. For runners a good starting point is to assume one hour for every 10km plus one minute for each 10m height gain. Rougher terrain will increase the time taken, often very significantly.

Almost all of the routes in this book use paths and tracks that are clear and easy to follow independent of the weather conditions. Some follow fainter paths and need a higher level of navigation. Path recognition is key to finding the way on less distinct routes. Developing an eye for traces of previous footsteps is crucial. Look out for clues such as slightly polished rocks, aligned patches of bare earth, broken, stunted or different types of vegetation. Paths often disappear into boggy or stony areas and reappear on the far side. Humans tend to follow fence lines and head to obvious features. In summertime even usually clear paths may become overgrown, often by bracken, and tricky to identify or run.

Basic navigational techniques such as orientating (also known as setting) the map, pacing, timing, and following a compass bearing can be taught through courses or by studying books. A theoretical knowledge of navigation is not enough. Good navigation only comes through practice. Even excellent navigators need a few hours to get their eye back in after a period of absence from the hills. Orienteering is an excellent way of learning and improving navigation skills.

Measuring distance and height

Grid squares are always 1km

OS Landranger 1:50,000 2cm = 1km, 10m contour interval

OS Explorer 1:25,000 4cm = 1km, 10m contour interval

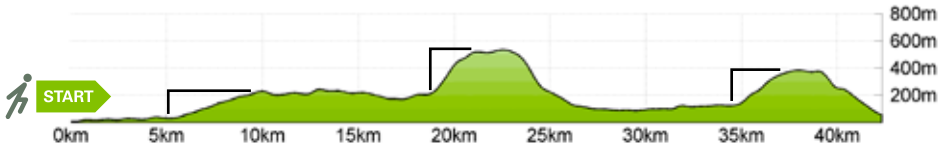
Harvey Superwalker 1:25,000 4cm = 1km, 15m contour interval

Conversion to imperial units

10km is approximately 6 miles

10m is approximately 33ft

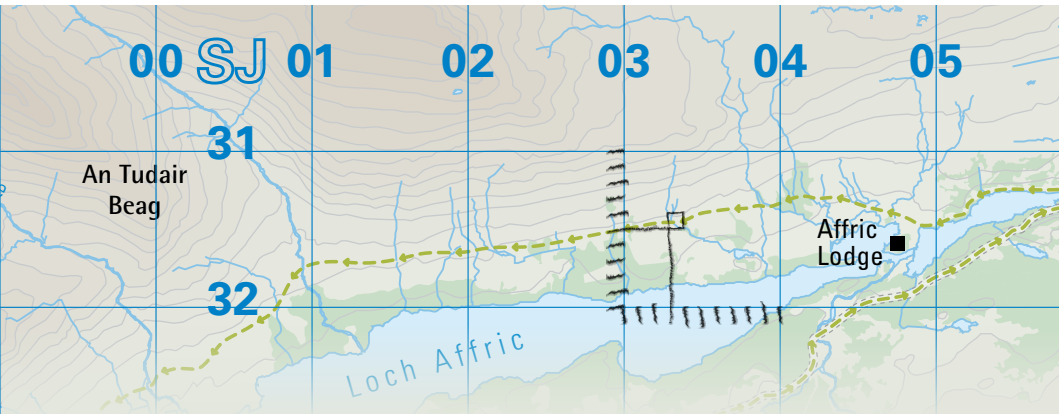
Naismith's rule



For runners a good starting point is to assume one hour for every 10km plus one minute for each 10m height gain.

EXAMPLE:

approx. 40km run = 4 hours
 three climbs total 750m = +75 mins
 total estimate = 5 hours 15 mins



Six figure grid references

On an OS map each 1km square has a four figure reference (look for the blue grid numbers). Divide each square into ten units. Count along then up the square to find your location to within 100m².

EXAMPLE:

the stream crossing is in grid square SJ 03 32;
 dividing that square into tenths the crossing is three tenths along and five tenths up
 so the grid reference is SJ 033 325

Outdoor Access

The Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003 gives the general public the right of responsible access to most Scottish land and inland waters including all the trails described in this book. This right only exists if access is undertaken in accordance with the guidelines of the Scottish Outdoor Access Code. The Code is based on three commonsense principles: take responsibility for your own actions; respect the interests of other people; care for the environment.

Stalking and grouse shooting

Some of the routes cross land used for stalking and grouse shooting and specific guidance is given where appropriate. The stag stalking season starts on 1st July and ends on 20th October. September and October are the most active months. As stalking does not normally take place on Sundays this is a good day to head out into the hills during this period. Hind culling continues until 15th February but generally has less affect on access. The grouse shooting season starts on 12th August and ends on 10th December. Runners and other land users must take reasonable steps to find out whether stalking and shooting are taking place and avoid disturbance. The web service Heading for the Scottish Hills accessed via the Outdoor Access Scotland website provides information for some estates. Many estates do not participate in these schemes. In these cases contact the estate office for up-to-date information and obey signs displayed at access points.

Dogs

Keeping dogs under proper control is integral to responsible access. 'Proper control' is defined in the Access Code and Scottish Natural Heritage publishes detailed guidance for dog owners. The basic requirement is to keep dogs on a short lead or under close control when near livestock or crossing ground bird nesting areas during the breeding season (April to July). Many of the trail runs in this book go through unfenced grazing or the breeding areas of ground nesting birds.

Conservation

Adopt a minimum impact approach and leave these trails as it would be good to find them. This may mean carrying out other people's litter. Mesh rucksack side-pockets are particularly handy for this. Running damages soft ground as anyone who has competed in a cross-country, hill race or mountain marathon will be well aware. In recent years a great deal of path construction work has taken place which is helping prevent further erosion by shoes and mountain bike tyres.

Without this generous expenditure of many people's time and money many of the trails in this book would be too rough or boggy to run. Support path construction efforts by paying for parking on individual estates and by donating time or money to local footpath trusts or national organisations such as the National Trust for Scotland, the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers and the John Muir Trust.





Lammermuirs (Route 13)

Enjoy

Have fun! More than anything else, this book is intended to help runners get out and explore Scotland's amazingly varied trails. There are many hours of trail running contained within these pages. Some routes are easy, others are tough. Sometimes the Scottish weather will co-operate and sometimes it will hurl horizontal hail. Sunny day trail runs make the world feel a better place but a hard run through foul weather is paradoxically even more satisfying. Going running is always the right decision; there is no such thing as a bad run.

Dumfries, Galloway and Ayrshire

Quiet South West Scotland boasts a beautiful coastline, idyllic woodland and rugged hills in the Range of the Awful Hand. To the east lie high moors and rounded summits while venturing north into Ayrshire finds trails through rolling fields, beside rivers and along scenic clifftops.





Bluebells, Mabie Forest

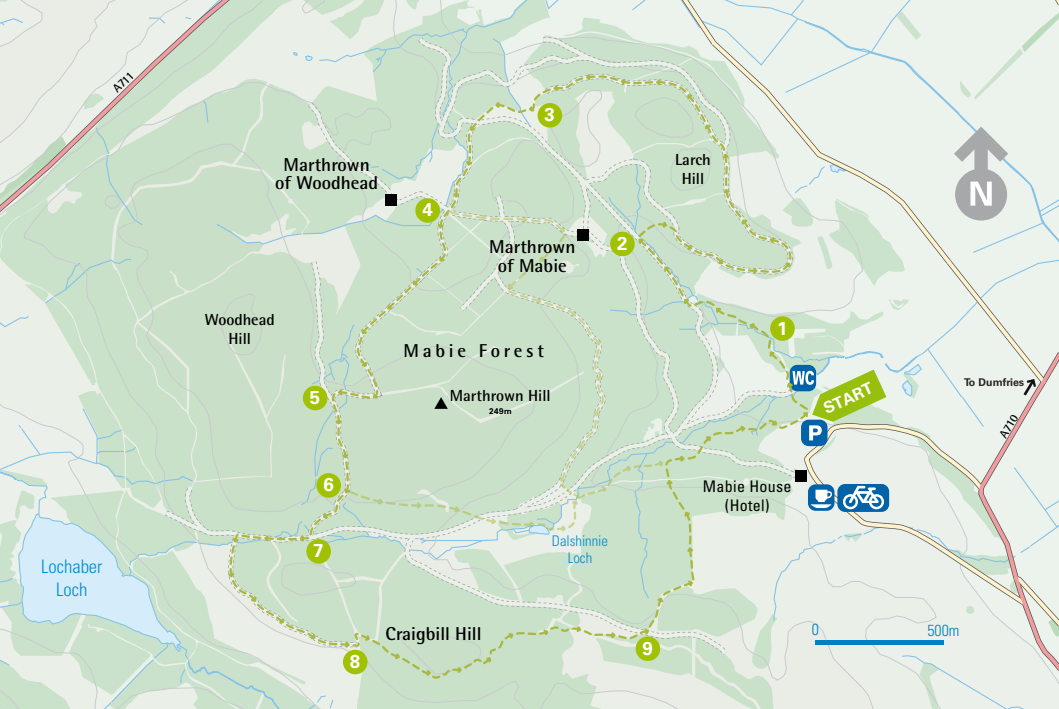



1 Mabie Forest

Distance	9.5km (6 miles)	Ascent	250m (800ft)
Map	OS Landranger 84, OS Explorer 313		
Navigation ●●●	Yellow, Orange and Brown waymarked trails		
Terrain ●●●	Smooth gravel tracks and earth paths, short rocky descent on Craigbill Hill		
Wet Feet ●●●	Occasional puddles		
Start/Finish	Mabie Forest DG2 8HB NX 949 709		

Easy to follow waymarked woodland trails

Mabie Forest is one of the 7stanes: seven mountain biking centres scattered across the south of Scotland. All of the 7stanes are perfect for trail running as well as mountain biking. This route at Mabie wanders through beautiful deciduous woodland with views out over the Nith valley and towards the isolated hill of Criffel. Route finding is simple as this run links three fully waymarked routes through the forest. The run can easily be shortened by completing the Yellow trail instead of continuing on to the Orange Link. At Mabie Forest the waymarked bike and pedestrian routes are cunningly separated except for one or two short sections on forest roads. So there is practically no danger of being run over by the bikers hooning round berms and exploding over jumps elsewhere in the forest.



In the lower section of the car park a large board displays a map of the waymarked trails through Mabie Forest. This run starts on the Yellow Trail, joins the Orange Link then finishes on the Brown Trail.  **START** Head downhill from the information board following the combined trails waymarker on a gravel path that zigzags down to cross a stream. Continue across a grassy area past a shed containing an old sawmill and into woodland to reach a T-junction just after a pond.

- 1** Turn left and head uphill along the stream for 400m then cross a bridge and go up steps onto a track which continues upstream to another crossing point.
- 2** Recross the stream, climb uphill and turn right onto a forest road. Follow this around the hill for around 2km to a flight of short steps leading down to a line of tall beech trees.
- 3** Turn right down the steps and follow the path under the trees to join a forest road. Continue downhill for another 400m to the crossroad.
- 4** Continue straight ahead onto the Orange Link waymarked trail. After about 600m the forest road ends and the waymarked route forks left onto a grassy path. Follow this path to a T-junction with a forest road.
- 5** Turn left onto the road and follow it past a pond to a junction of forest roads.
- 6** Continue downhill, now following Brown Trail waymarkers, to reach a T-junction.
- 7** Turn right onto a gravel forest road for a couple of hundred metres then left to follow a grassy forest road to its end.
- 8** Continue onto a path which zigzags up and then contours around Craigbill Hill. On the far side of the hill a rougher path drops down through oak trees and crosses a mountain bike trail to reach a forest road.
- 9** Cross the forest road and continue on a path



through the woods, along the side of a field, across another mountain bike trail and a forest road. Finally head right, joining the Yellow and Blue Trails for the final 500m to the car park.

Trip Planning

Up-to-date trail information including closures for forestry operations can be found on the Forestry Commission website. 🚚 Mabie Forest, A710 🚗 Follow the A710 Solway Coast road south-west from Dumfries for five miles. Turn right at the Forestry Commission sign for Mabie Forest (not Mabie Farm Park). 🅇 There is a charge for parking. The car park is a loop with walking/running routes leaving from the lower half and biking routes from the upper. 🏠 Brooms Road, Dumfries (4.6 miles). 🚽 Toilets are downhill from the car park. ☕ 🚲 The bike hire shop uphill from the car park opposite the Ranger Office doubles as a café and offers tea, cake and excellent bacon butties. 🏠 Mabie House Hotel at the trail head welcomes mountain bikers and other muddy outdoors types. There are wooden camping huts in its grounds and conventional hotel rooms indoors. In the middle of the forest is Marthrown of Mabie where the bunkhouse is the least exciting accommodation option. Try the Yurt, Tipi or Iron Age Roundhouse instead.

Other Routes

Mabie Forest's waymarked walking trails are up to 7km (4.5 miles). Longer routes can be constructed by linking the trails and following non-waymarked forest roads.

Drumlanrig is a private estate just off the A76 at Thornhill, seventeen miles north of Dumfries. Its woodland paths are perfect for trail running and accessible all year round. An admission charge is levied during the summer (1st April to 31st August) and on winter weekends. Drumlanrig has bike hire, a café, toilets and showers.

7stanes mountain biking

The 7stanes trails attract hundreds of thousands of people each year from all over the world. The 7stanes are also an art project. Look for hidden stone sculptures of a ghost, talking head, well-travelled heart and meteorite inscribed in Klingon. The 7stanes trails run through Glentroot, Kirroughtree, Dalbeattie, Mabie, Ae, Newcastleton, Glentress & Innerleithen Forests.



Mabie Forest waymarker

Events

Dumfries Harriers organise a popular 10km trail race through Mabie Forest in June. Running and biking events are held on the Drumlanrig Estate.

Other Activities

Mabie Forest has a range of purpose built mountain bike trails. Bikes and helmets can be hired at the café.




2 Culzean Castle & Country Park

Distance	10km (6 miles)	Ascent	150m (500ft)
Map	OS Landranger 76, OS Explorer 326		
Navigation ●●●	Link paths and tracks around the park's perimeter		
Terrain ●●●	Earth and gravel paths, tracks and tarmac road, short section on shingle beach		
Wet Feet ●●●	Muddy tracks near the Cat Gates and by the caravan site		
Start/Finish	Culzean Country Park Visitor Centre KA19 8JX NS 237 104		

Varied running around a grand country estate

The Kennedy family intended to make an unforgettable impression when they hired architect Robert Adam to design their country home on the Ayrshire coast. They succeeded. The final leg of this run showcases the castle as Adam surely intended it to be seen: a striking array of turrets grandly mounted upon the clifftop. Impressive though it is, the highlight of this run is not the castle. Even the best of architects cannot compete with the view out to Ailsa Craig. This run links scenic coastline with woodland paths, tracks and quiet roads through farmland. Scattered throughout the park are quirky human additions including an otter sculpture and the rather forlorn Cat Gates.



 **START** Leave the Visitor Centre courtyard by the corner opposite the car park. Cross the road and follow a path past buildings and into woodland to reach the castle gates. **1** Turn towards the castle, passing through the gateway, then almost immediately turn left down steps onto a woodland path. Turn off to the right at the first opportunity and head towards the sea through a hole in the wall to the left of the castle. Cross the grass diagonally left to join a woodland path. Join a tarmac road briefly then continue onto a path signed to the Swan Pond for a short distance to the first junction. **2** Turn towards the sea and follow the coastal path until it curves inland to end at the Swan Pond. **3** Turn right across a footbridge then take the first right towards Carrick Beach. Do not go down the steps to the beach but continue along the coastal path to a junction. **4** Leave the coast and follow a wide path downhill through trees, then turn left along a track which returns to the Swan Pond. Continue for 200m past the car park to a path on the right beside a small stream. **5** Follow the stream to a T-junction then turn right and follow the track round to the left and through the Cat Gates. Continue for another 600m until the track crosses a disused railway. **6** Turn left down steps and follow the disused railway through fields.

Culzean Castle & Country Park



After about 1.5km the railway track goes under a road bridge. 7 Turn right up steps, cross the bridge and continue uphill to reach the tarmac entrance road to the country park. Turn right onto this, as if leaving the estate. 8 Just after passing the gatehouse turn left onto a path and cross Glenside Burn. Do not enter the caravan site. Instead go uphill past the site entrance then turn left onto a track. Keep left where the track forks then straight on at a crossroads to join a tarmac road, and head towards the coast to reach Goats Green car park. 9 Follow the shore past Segganwell Cottages, then climb uphill past the Gas House and follow the tarmac road back to the Visitor Centre.

Trip Planning

Culzean Castle and Country Park is owned by the National Trust for Scotland. Seasonal entry charges apply. 🚗 Culzean, Glenside Farm, A719 (near 8) 🚗 Culzean Country Park is fourteen miles south of Ayr. Turn off the A77 at either Maybole or Turnberry onto the A719 then follow signs to Culzean Castle and Country Park. Within the Park follow signs to the Visitor Centre. There are other car parks within the park as well as outside at Goats Green 9 (242 110). 🏠 Robert Burns Birthplace Museum, Ayr (10 miles). 🗺️ 📱 📺 Visitor Centre.

Other Routes

A short run of less than 4km starts at the Visitor Centre and follows the described route to the Swan Pond 3. Circle the pond and return to the Visitor Centre. There are many other possible variations. The Cliff Walk is an essential ingredient of any run at Culzean.

The Cliff Walk is part of The Ayrshire Coastal Path, a long distance route developed by the Rotary Club of Ayr. The definitive guide book is the [Ayrshire Coastal Path](#) by Dr Jimmy Begg. The route links existing paths with beaches and varies from road running to rough, unrunnable ground.

Events

The Family Fun Run held at Culzean each April is said to be one of the most scenic 10k races in Scotland.



Ayrshire coast

The letter 'yogh'

Culzean is pronounced 'Kul-ane' rather than 'Kul-zean'. The baffling un-pronounced 'z' is the Old Scots letter 'yogh', a letter which has disappeared from the modern alphabet. It was written like the Arabic numeral 3 and so easily confused with a copperplate tailed z. Use of yogh was already dying out by the time the printing press was invented so early type setters simply replaced it by the similar looking z. Although more than five centuries have passed since the invention of printing this replacement still causes confusion. Current convention pronounces the placename and surname Dalziel as 'dee-ell'. In contrast, MacKenzie, once spoken as 'mackingie' is now universally pronounced with a 'z'. Menzies is arbitrarily pronounced 'ming-is' or 'men-zees'.



3 Auchincruive Estate & the River Ayr Way

Distance	11km (7 miles)	Ascent	150m (500ft)
Map	OS Landranger 70, OS Explorer 326		
Navigation ●●●	Follow the riverbank and a partially waymarked off-river link		
Terrain ●●●	Earth and tarmac paths with a short section on pavement and road		
Wet Feet ●●●	Mostly avoidable puddles and shallow mud		
Start/Finish	Auchincruive Estate Oswald Bridge car park KA6 5AE NS 387 233		

Riverbank and woodland path circuit

Three miles from the sea the River Ayr contorts itself into an impressive meander. This natural loop makes it possible to run almost the whole of this circuit on riverside paths. A short off-river track through the village of Annbank completes the circle. In future, the river will doubtless take the same straight course to create a large oxbow lake. Geography in action. The riverside paths are scenic, straightforward to follow and easy to run. They are shared with anglers whose small shelters are dotted along the riverbank. A highlight is the short section of path just above water level which runs along a level platform cut into the cliff-face.



START Follow the blue waymarked riverside path upstream for 1.5km passing through a doorway in a stone wall to nearly reach a small fishing shelter. **1** Turn away from the river on the waymarked path, heading uphill beside a stream to reach a T-junction with a track. **2** Turn right and head uphill. At the end of the track continue straight on into Annbank. **3** Cross the main road, turn left then immediately right down the gravel of School Brae. At the end of the road continue straight on between fields to a crossroads. **4** Turn right onto a tarmac path and follow it through woodland, keeping left where necessary to avoid entering housing. The path ends at a T-junction where the River Ayr Way (RAW) is signposted to the right. **5** Follow the RAW waymarker out of the woodland through a gate, then cross grass by a tarmac path to go between houses onto Whitehall Crescent. Head left along the pavement to reach the main road. **6** Turn left onto the main road, then immediately left again, following RAW waymarkers down Mill Road. Follow the road round to the left at the bottom of the hill past a small fishing pond. Continue along the road to reach a small gravel car park on the right just before the road ends at a house. **7** Turn right into the car park and follow the path out at the back and onto the riverbank. Head downriver for over 2km to reach Tarholm. **8** Cross the river by the road bridge then

Auchincruive Estate & the River Ayr Way



go through a kissing gate to join a path on the opposite bank. The path climbs to a viewpoint then forks right to drop back down to the river. After leaving the river again the path reaches a waymarked fork. 9 Take the right branch to stay close to the river, following the waymarked green trail in reverse. After a short rougher section along the river bank climb up steps to Oswald's Bridge, cross the river and turn right to return to the car park.

Trip Planning

A short section of the path between Annbank and Tarholm is just above water level. On the rare occasions when the river is in spate it may be impossible to complete the route. 🚌 Scottish Agricultural College, Auchincruive 🚗 Auchincruive is just over three miles east of Ayr on the B743 Ayr to Mauchline road. Turn off at the sign to the Scottish Agricultural College (SAC) and Woodland Walks. Continue past the main SAC entrance, just before crossing the river turn left through gates to Oswald Hall and head up the drive to a large car park. These gates are open between 8am and 6pm. Outwith these times the car park can be accessed from the main SAC entrance. 🏠 Burns Statue Square, Ayr (4.8 miles) 📶 Ayr (Arthur Street, Blackburn Drive or the Pavilion/Low Green) 📶 Ayr 🐑 Sheep graze next to the river between Annbank and Tarholm.





Ayrshire farmland

Other Routes

The source to sea route of the River Ayr is mirrored by a 66km (44 miles) waymarked footpath. One way sections can be tackled from Ayr by taking local buses out to the start point. A map and route guide are advisable as the waymarking is unclear in places. Parts of the River Ayr Way follow roads and tracks away from the river.

Events

The River Ayr Way Challenge is held in September and forms part of the Scottish Ultra Marathon Series. The Challenge is open to both runners and walkers.



Above Castlehill Point
Photo: Katie Hawkins

4 Rockcliffe Coastal Path

Distance	16km (10 miles)	Ascent	275m (900ft)
Map	OS Landranger 84, OS Explorer 313		
Navigation ●●	Unsigned junctions through Dalbeattie Forest then return by waymarked coastal path		
Terrain ●●	Earth and grass paths, forest tracks and short stretches on tarmac road		
Wet Feet ●●	Some muddy sections in the forest		
Start/Finish	Sandyhills DG5 4PT NX 890 552		

Woodland trails complete a scenic 'Riviera' circuit

This run is sublime on a sunny spring day with yellow gorse in bloom, lambs gambolling in green fields and deep blue sea sparkling below. The clifftop path between Rockcliffe and Sandyhills is easy running terrain at any time of year thanks to the summer holidaymakers who walk this beautiful stretch of coastline. Outside the main holiday season the area is quiet and it is not unusual to run the whole route with only sheep and seabirds for company. Forest tracks and quiet country lanes connect the two ends of the coastal path. The inland half of the run has its own, more subtle, highlights including Barean Loch and picturesque views across rolling farmland and woods.



START

Cross the river and head uphill for 900m along the A710 towards Colvend to reach the first turn on the right. The road has a grassy verge but no pavement. **1** Turn right through gate posts onto a private road towards Newbarns. Where this turns right towards the house continue straight ahead through a gate into woodland. Follow the sometimes muddy track through trees to a T-junction. **2** Turn left onto a gravel forest road shared with bikes for a few hundred metres to a junction just before the road crosses a culvert. Turn right for around 700m then follow the main path round to the left. This briefly joins the red mountain bike trail (watch and listen for fast approaching bikes) then emerges onto a gravel track. **3** Turn right and follow the track past Barean Loch. Continue for 500m past the loch to a brown-topped waymarker about 20m before the track rises slightly to a junction. **4** Turn left at the waymarker onto a grassy path. Follow this through a kissing gate and along the side of a field towards Auchensheen. Avoid the houses by going through a signposted kissing gate about 10m to their right. Cross a small grassy field and go through another kissing gate onto a lane which leads to the A710. **5**



Cross the A710, heading slightly left to join a track on the far side. Follow the track into forestry continuing straight ahead at several junctions until the track ends at a gate onto the Rockcliffe-Kippford Jubilee Path. **6** Go through the gate and turn left towards Rockcliffe. After passing Baron's Craig Hotel follow the public road down to the sea and along the front until it curves back inland. **7** Follow coastal path waymarkers along a lane then onto a shore path. This crosses shingle then climbs up to the clifftops where it becomes a smooth earth path. In a few places the path is narrow and hemmed in by prickly gorse bushes. **8** Turn left along the road at Port o' Warren then take the first right, signed to Sandyhills. Instead of descending to the houses go up a set of steps and over a stile to continue on the coastal path. Keep to the right when descending Torrs Hill, cross a footbridge and follow the shore to Sandyhills beach.

Trip Planning

Sandyhills, A710 Sandyhills is nineteen miles south of Dumfries on the A710 Solway Coast road. A charge is made during the summer months (April to October) for the Sandyhills beach car park at the start of the route. There is a free car park at Rockcliffe. Castle Douglas (12.6 miles). Sandyhills' toilets, shop and campsite are open during the summer (April to October). There are also toilets on the sea front at Rockcliffe. Sampling the local Cream o' Galloway ice cream is essential. These ice-cream makers have a visitor centre, kids play area and organise lots of family friendly events at their farm near Gatehouse of Fleet. Sheep and cattle graze along the coastal path and near Auchensheen.

Other Routes

Extend the route to 20km (12.5 miles) by continuing straight ahead at **4** through mature beech woodland then along pavement into Kippford. Climb uphill on the signed Jubilee Path to rejoin the described route at Rockcliffe.

Waymarked walking trails through Dalbeattie Forest start at the Town Wood car park (837 599). The woodland near the car park is attractive with short winding waymarked trails.



Rough Island can be reached at
low tide by a causeway
Photo: Dougal Ranford



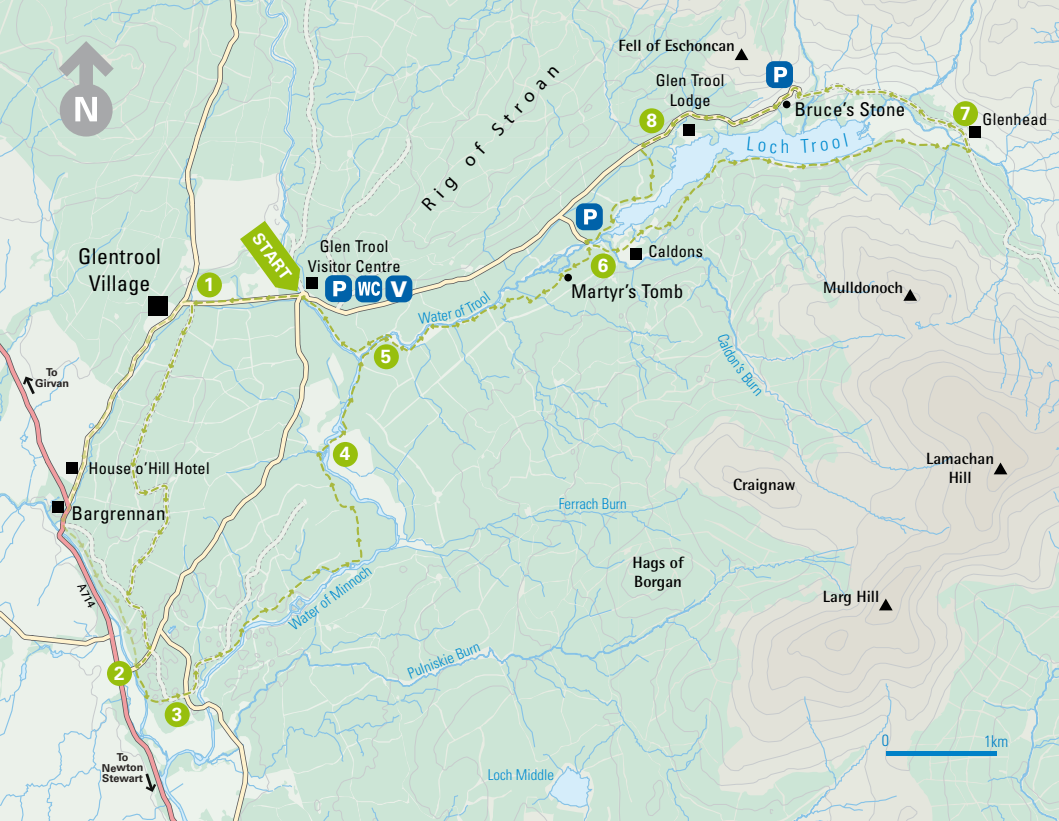
Loch Trool

5 Glen Trool

Distance	26km (16 miles)	Ascent	300m (1000ft)
Map	OS Landranger 77, OS Explorer 319		
Navigation ●●●	First junctions unsigned then follow Southern Upland Way & Loch Trool Trail waymarkers		
Terrain ●●●	Earth and gravel paths, dirt and tarmac roads		
Wet Feet ●●●	Occasional puddles and slippery earth paths		
Start/Finish	Glentrool Visitor Centre DG8 6SZ NX 372 786		

Extended circuit of Galloway's most scenic glen

An inscribed boulder overlooking Loch Trool commemorates an early skirmish between Robert the Bruce and the English. Shortly after returning from exile the Bruce and his supporters were pursued into Glen Trool. As they fled along the steep southern side of the loch their enemies were lured into a trap. Bruce's infantry doubled back above the path and trundled boulders down on top of their pursuers. Today the only creatures scrambling up the hill are Galloway's wild goats. Look out for these multi-coloured beasts as the path crosses steep slopes above the loch. This is the trickiest section of the route where nimble feet are needed to negotiate the uneven path and exposed tree roots. Elsewhere, smooth trails wind through pretty deciduous woodland along the banks of the River Cree, Water of Minnoch and Water of Trool.



Leave the Visitor Centre by crossing the river and taking a path through the trees parallel with the road. The path returns to the road where it crosses a forest track. **1** Turn left onto this track and follow it up and around the hill for 2km to a T-junction. Turn right and head downhill for another kilometre to a second T-junction. Turn left for 500m, then right onto the public road to reach a humpback bridge. **2** Just before the bridge turn left onto a riverside path. The route now follows the waymarked Southern Upland Way (SUW) to the far end of Loch Trol. After curving away from the stream the path joins a forest road which ends at a T-junction with a public road. **3** Turn left, then immediately right onto a gravel forest road. After 400m turn right onto a footpath which follows the river for 3km to a road bridge. **4** Cross the river then keep left, crossing stiles to return to the river and continue along its bank for just over 1km to a footbridge signed for the Visitor Centre. **5** Do not cross, but continue straight ahead on the riverside path. After 1km the path curves away from the river and passes the Martyr's Tomb to reach the road at Caldons. **6** Turn right onto the tarmac road then follow SUW and green Loch Trol Trail waymarkers left through the old campsite (closed at time of writing). Shortly after leaving the campsite branch right and climb uphill. The path traverses the steep, wooded hillside



for 3km then drops down to the Glenhead Burn (at the time of writing in 2017 the footbridge here had been washed away). Turn right and follow the bank upstream for 200m to a track. **7** Cross the bridge and follow the track left past Glenhead to join a dirt road which climbs steeply up to the Bruce Memorial and the end of the public road. Follow the road downhill for 1.5km to reach the gates of Glen Trool Lodge. **8** Continue on the road for another few hundred metres then turn left onto the green waymarked forest trail. This path drops down through the woods and emerges at Caldons car park. Cross the river to **6** then retrace the outward route back to the footbridge at **5**. Cross the river then turn left to follow the blue and yellow waymarked trails back to the Visitor Centre.

Trip Planning

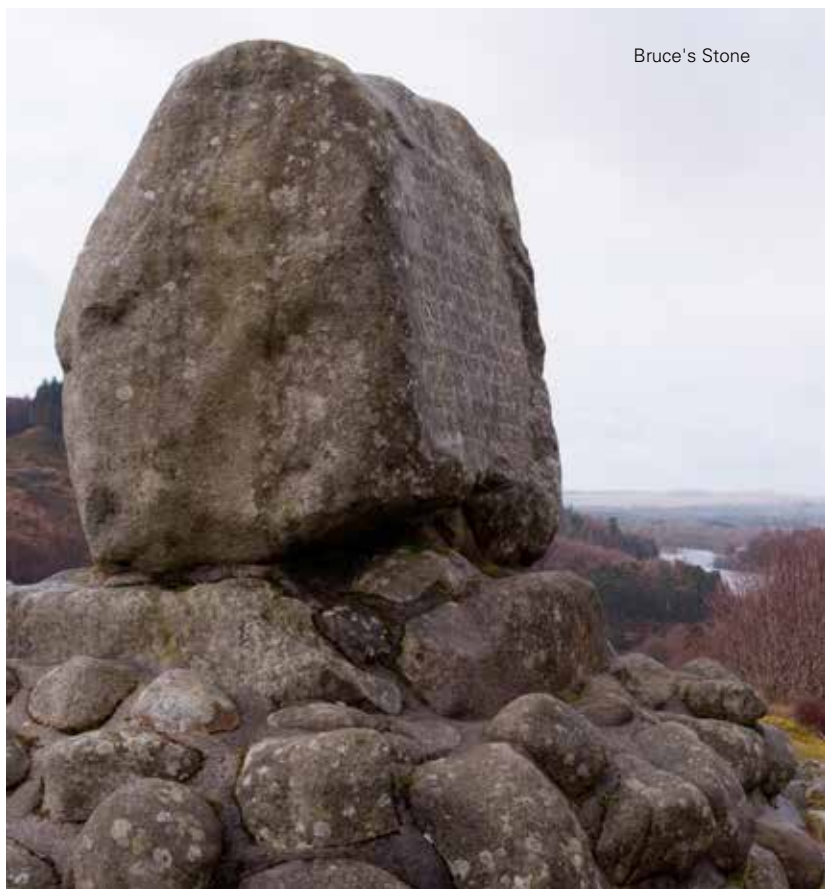
Up-to-date trail information including closures for forestry operations can be found on the Forestry Commission website. Glentrool Village Road End or Bargrennan, both on the A714. There is no public transport to the Visitor Centre. Join the run by following SUW signs from the A714 bridge over the River Cree (349 764) and returning by the road past Glentrool Village. Galloway Forest Park and Glentrool are signposted off the A714 at Bargrennan, eight miles north of Newton Stewart. Turn first right after passing houses following a sign for Glentrool Visitor Centre. Newton Stewart Library (10.9 miles). House o' Hill is a small and welcoming hotel, bar and restaurant just off the A714 on the way to Glentrool.

Other Routes

This route is easily divided into two worthwhile shorter routes. The waymarked 9km (5 miles) green trail around Loch Trool starts at the car park near Caldons (397 791). Start at the Visitor Centre or Bargrennan for a flatter 11km (7 miles) circuit following woodland paths beside the River Cree, Water of Trool and Water of Minnoch.

Events

Girvan Athletic Club organise a popular Galloway hill race up the Merrick from the Bruce's Stone car park at the end of Glen Trool.



Bruce's Stone

"If the stars should appear one night in a thousand years, how would men believe and adore" – Emerson

Galloway Forest became the UK's first Dark Sky Park in 2009. Light pollution is minimal as the 75,000 hectares of forest far outstrips the land area covered by buildings. Light readings taken in the park average around 22 on a scale of 0 to 25 where 25 is total darkness. In contrast, Glasgow city centre scores a mere 8. About 7000 stars can be seen with the naked eye. Our own Milky Way galaxy appears as a raggedy, star-spangled banner arching overhead. The Earth has made just one rotation around the centre of our galaxy since the dinosaurs became extinct 250 million years ago.

Distance (km)	Ascent (m)	Route No.	Route Name	Page
3.5	50	18	Neilston Pad	99
4	50	19	Mugdock Country Park	103
4.5	100	11	Braid Hills	69
4.5	100	43	Countesswells	207
5	50	49	Loch an Eilein	233
5.5	125	31	North Third & Sauchie Crags	155
6	50	44	Loch Kinord	211
6	100	12	Dechmont Law	73
7	50	55	Aldourie & Loch Ness	259
7.5	150	38	Camperdown Park & Templeton Woods	185
7.5	250	25	Cow Hill	129
8	100	20	Chatelherault Country Park	107
8	200	26	Ardcastle	133
8.5	75	45	Forvie	215
8.5	100	61	Big Burn & Dunrobin Castle	285
9	25	39	Tentsmuir	189
9	150	32	Laggan Hill & Lady Mary's Walk	159
9	250	33	Glen Tilt	163
9	400	6	The Eildon Hills	47
9.5	250	1	Mabie Forest	25
9.5	300	34	Kinnoull Hill & Deuchny Wood	167
10	100	40	Fife Coastal Path	193
10	100	50	The Wildcat Trail, Newtonmore	237
10	150	2	Culzean Castle & Country Park	29
10	175	35	Bochastle & Falls of Leny	171
10	200	22	Antonine's Wall & the Forth & Clyde Canal	115
10	250	65	Kerrera	303
10	325	21	Doughnot Hill	111
10	350	51	Carn Diamh, Glenlivet	241
10	375	56	Beinn Bhuidhe	263
11	150	3	Auchincruive Estate & the River Ayr Way	33
11	350	13	Lammer Law	77
11	450	46	Bennachie	219
12	50	52	Culbin	245
12	100	23	Greenock Cut	119

Distance (km)	Ascent (m)	Route No.	Route Name	Page
12	125	7	River Tweed Circuit	51
12	275	66	The Cock of Arran	307
13	100	14	Union Canal & River Almond	81
13	250	8	Berwickshire Coastal Path	55
13	350	41	The Lomond Hills	197
13	475	57	Fyrish	267
14	50	15	Aberlady Bay & Gullane Sands	85
14	50	28	Loch Ossian	141
14	500	27	The Two Lairigs	137
15	250	62	Sandwood Bay	289
15	500	9	The Three Brethren & the Minchmoor Road	59
15	500	58	The Coulin Pass & Coire Lair	271
16	275	4	Rockcliffe Coastal Path	37
16	400	47	Glen Tanar	223
16	550	67	Dun Caan, Raasay	311
16	675	16	The Western Pentlands	89
17	200	17	Falkirk Community Woodlands	93
17	250	59	Loch Affric	275
17	325	68	Borerraig & Suisnish, Skye	315
18	275	53	Speyside Way Circuit	249
19	350	36	Loch Ordie	175
19	625	10	Lamington Hills	63
19	675	69	Reinigeadal, Harris	319
21	625	70	The Old Man of Hoy	323
22	350	48	Linn of Quoich & the Fairy Glen	227
22	750	29	Ardgoil Peninsula	145
22	900	63	Inchnadamp	293
25	400	24	West Highland Way & the Waterworks Road	123
25	600	37	Glen Kendrum & Glen Ogle	179
25	900	42	The Capel Mounth	201
26	125	64	Loch More	297
26	300	5	Glen Trool	41
43	1000	60	Poolewe to Corrie Hallie	279
48	1300	54	Lairig Ghru & Lairig an Laoigh	253
60	2400	30	Knoydart	149

SCOTTISH TRAIL RUNNING

70 routes for the off-road runner: these tried and tested paths and tracks cover the whole of Scotland, including the islands.

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