

Central Highlands & Islands

Scotland's central Highlands and islands form an area of exceptional beauty, brimful of contrasts and rich in alluring challenges. In the far west, the rugged Isle of Arran has something for everyone, from spectacular ridges and peaks (notably Goatfell, the island's highest) to a peaceful, scenic and very accessible northern coastline. Scotland's first national park, Loch Lomond & the Trossachs, embraces a wonderful array of glens, lochs and mountains, including Ben Lomond, the southernmost Munro, and the Cobbler, which offers a test of nerves and skill almost second to none. Around Loch Tay, mighty Ben Lawers, one of Scotland's 10 highest summits, is a naturalist's delight and a superb mountain in its own right, while nearby Schiehallion, reputedly right in the centre of Scotland and a distinctive landmark peak, has interesting and varied historical associations. To press the contrasts even further, the rolling grassy uplands of the Ochil hills in the east afford magnificent views in all directions, from Edinburgh in the east to the Isle of Arran in the west. The southern section of the West Highland Way, the most famous and most popular of Scotland's long-distance paths, quickly escapes from suburban Glasgow to thread its way through gently undulating countryside, then beside Loch Lomond and towards the wilds of Rannoch Moor in Lochaber.

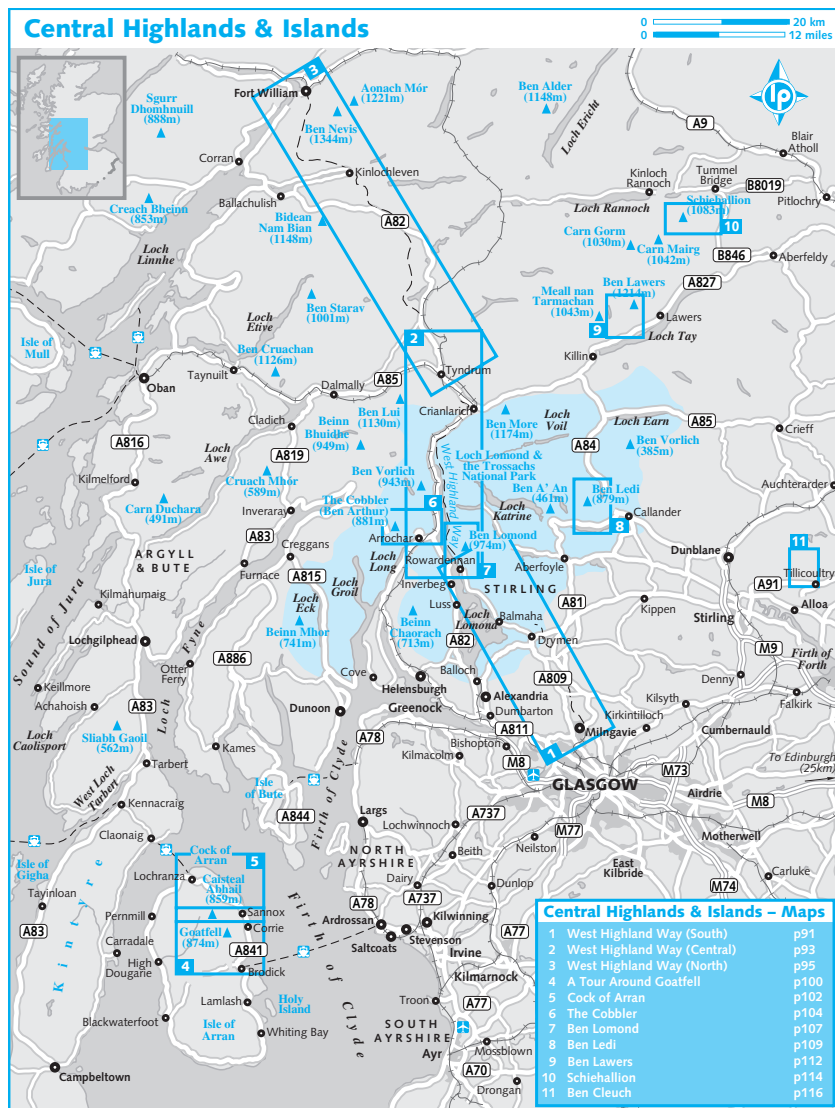
This superb slice of Scotland is compact and easy to reach from Glasgow or Edinburgh. We have divided it into five manageable sections: the West Highland Way, Isle of Arran, Loch Lomond & the Trossachs National Park, Around Loch Tay and the Ochil hills.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Sharing the day's experiences over a beer with fellow **West Highland Way** (p89) walkers
- Weaving through jumbled boulders on the ascent of Arran's **Goatfell** (p100)
- Scrambling to the top of the fearsome boulders on the summit of the **Cobbler** (p103)
- Summiting **Ben Lomond** (p105) for an eagle's-eye view of the divide between the Highlands and lowlands
- Finding that Ben Ledi's lush **Stank Glen** (p110) does not live up to its name
- Exercising your photographic skills with **Schiehallion's** (p112) summit mantle of rose quartz
- Striding along the broad, grassy ridges of the Ochil hills towards **Ben Cleuch** (p115)

■ www.visitscottishheartlands.com

■ www.perthshire.co.uk



ENVIRONMENT

Convulsions of the earth's crust shaped Scotland's topography eons ago, and nowhere more impressively than along the Highland Boundary Fault. It arcs across central Scotland in an unwavering line southwest, from Stonehaven, on the east coast to Helensburgh on the shore of Gare

Loch. Geologists call it a fault line, a weakness in the earth's crust. About 600 million years ago the tough ancient schists of the Highlands collided with the younger, softer sandstones of the lowlands; the fault is the collision zone. From Conic Hill (p92) on the West Highland Way there's a clear view of this line arcing across the landscape.

INFORMATION

Maps & Books

The OS Travel – Road 1:250,000 map No 3 *Southern Scotland* covers the area neatly.

The Southern Highlands by KM Andrew is a rich source of information about geology, geography and routes long and short.

WEST HIGHLAND WAY

Duration	7 days
Distance	95 miles (153km)
Difficulty	moderate
Start	Milngavie (p90)
Finish	Fort William (p121)
Transport	train, bus

Summary Scotland's most popular long-distance path, passing through some of the country's finest landscapes, from suburban Glasgow to the foot of the highest mountain in Britain.

From the outskirts of Glasgow, Scotland's biggest city, the West Highland Way leads through fertile, populous lowland countryside to the shores of Loch Lomond, on the threshold of the Highlands. From there it carries you north through glens, beside fast-flowing streams and past wild moorland where magnificent mountains are never out of sight. The very names have an alluring ring: Rannoch Moor, Glen Coe, Devil's Staircase. Not only is the Way a rich sensory experience, it's also steeped in history. The route follows long stretches of drove roads, along which cattle were once taken to market, the flat beds of old railway lines, roads along which horse-drawn coaches once jolted, and the 18th-century military road built to subdue rebellious Highlanders. This is the most popular long-distance path in Scotland (and Britain for that matter); something like 15,000 walkers go the full distance each year, so you'll rarely be short of like-minded company from around the world.

The walk begins in the south, at Milngavie, easing you into it with the two least strenuous days, before you hit the harder going north of Rowardennan. Spreading it over seven days means only one long day (between Tyndrum and King's House) and a majority of comfortable days; don't overlook the fact that it's not only horizontal

distance that matters – the Way involves a total of 3543m (11,624ft) of ascent.

Of course, you can take much longer, by doing shorter days or by taking time out to knock off some of the nearby Munros – Ben Lomond and Ben Nevis being the obvious candidates.

If your time is limited and you just want to walk a day or two of the West Highland Way, we recommend a couple of day walks in the box on p90.

The Way is clearly waymarked with the official thistle-and-hexagon logo, and there is a shelf-full of guidebooks and maps to enlighten and entertain you along the way.

By the time you reach Fort William you might even be supremely fit and ready to continue along the Great Glen Way to Inverness (see the boxed text on p96).

PLANNING

Maps & Books

Four OS Landranger 1:50,000 maps – No 64 *Glasgow*, No 56 *Loch Lomond & Inveraray*, No 50 *Glen Orchy & Loch Etive* and No 41 *Ben Nevis* – cover the Way, although it's much easier to use a purpose-designed, all-in-one route map. The excellent Harvey 1:40,000 Route map *West Highland Way* and the superbly designed Rucksack Readers guide *The West Highland Way* are more than adequate, and include lots of practical information for walkers.

The official guide, *West Highland Way* by Bob Aitken and Roger Smith, comes with a Harvey Route map in a plastic wallet.

Information Sources

The Official West Highland Way Pocket Companion, a free booklet listing accommodation and facilities on the West Highland Way, is available from the **West Highland Way office** (☎ 0845 345 4978; www.west-highland-way.co.uk; Balloch) at the national park headquarters. The *Pocket Companion* should be available as a download on the website.

Accommodation

Along the northern part of the walk, accommodation is widely spaced so your days may be longer or shorter than you'd prefer. Happily, there are numerous B&Bs and hotels along the rest of the route; some B&B hosts, particularly those not right on the route, will meet you and drive you back to

the trail next morning for a small charge. If you're on a tight budget, there are also SYHA hostels, bunkhouses and formal and informal camp sites. If you do use the 'wild camping' sites (listed on the website but not in the *Pocket Companion*), it's absolutely essential that you follow the guidelines set out on p21. During the peak period, from May to August, you must book all accommodation in advance. The accommodation places listed in our route description represent a selection from a fairly crowded field.

Guided Walks & Baggage Services

Rather than doing all the organising, you can take advantage of the services offered by a few small companies that will organise all your accommodation and carry your luggage between overnight stops. Some outfits go a step further and will provide you with sheafs of information about the Way and the places through which you pass.

Easyways (☎ 01324 714132; www.easyways.com) has years of experience in organising accommodation and baggage transfer. **Transcotland** (☎ 01887 820848; www.transcotland.com) also has a good track record and will provide reams of directions and background information for the traveller.

NEAREST TOWNS

See Fort William (p121).

Milngavie

☎ 0141 / pop 14,000

Milngavie (pronounced 'mullguy') is a bustling outer suburb of Glasgow so there's no shortage of shops, restaurants and accom-

modation. The nearest information centre is the **Glasgow TIC** (☎ 204 4400; www.seeglasgow.com; 11 George Sq).

The **Iron Chief** (☎ 956 4597; 5 Mugdock Rd), 100m from the start of the walk, stocks much of the stuff you're likely to have forgotten.

SLEEPING & EATING

Bankell Farm Camping & Caravan Site (☎ 956 1733; www.bankellfarm.co.uk; Strathblane Rd; unpowered sites for 2 £8) is a small, sheltered site 1 mile or so northeast of town, off the A81; you can leave your car here while you're doing the walk (£2 per day).

Best Foot Forward (☎ 956 3046; BFFMorag@aol.com; 1 Dougalston Gardens South; s/d £35/56) is only a few minutes from the start of the Way; all rooms are en suite.

Laurel Bank B&B (☎ 584 9400; adam.96@ntlworld.com; 96 Strathblane Rd; s/d £35/25), in a large Edwardian home, is only five minutes' walk from the train station.

Toscana Bistro (☎ 956 4020; 44 Station Rd; mains £10-13; ☺ dinner Thu-Sat), a cosy establishment in the heart of things, offers a good-value, extensive, Italian-themed menu.

Primo Restaurant (☎ 955 1200; 14 Stewart St; lunch mains £4-7, dinner mains £8-15; ☺ lunch & dinner; ☑) is all contemporary style and genuine Italian cuisine; start the day with an espresso fix and one of its energy-giving cakes.

For last-minute supplies, there's a Tesco supermarket next to the train station.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Milngavie is 7 miles north of Glasgow. At exit 17 from the M8, follow the A82 then the A81. A **Strathclyde Passenger Transport**

(SPT; ☎ 0845 601 5929; www.spt.co.uk) suburban train service from Glasgow Central terminates at Milngavie (£3, 25 minutes, every 30 minutes).

GETTING TO/FROM THE WALK

The official start of the West Highland Way is a granite obelisk (unveiled in 1992) beside the bridge over the Allander Water on Douglas St, Milngavie, but for most people the journey begins at Milngavie train station. Buses stop here and there's a car park near the station, just off Station Rd. To reach the obelisk from the station, go through the underpass and up a flight of steps to the pedestrianised centre of Milngavie. Bear left at the underpass exit to join Douglas St, passing through a shopping precinct before reaching the Allander Water and the official start point.

If you plan to walk just a section of the Way, Crianlarich, Tyndrum and Bridge of Orchy are well served by trains; contact **First ScotRail** (☎ 0845 755 0033; www.firstscotrail.com) for details. **Scottish Citylink** (☎ 0870 550 5050; www.citylink.co.uk) buses on the Glasgow-Fort William route stop at Crianlarich, Tyndrum and Bridge of Orchy.

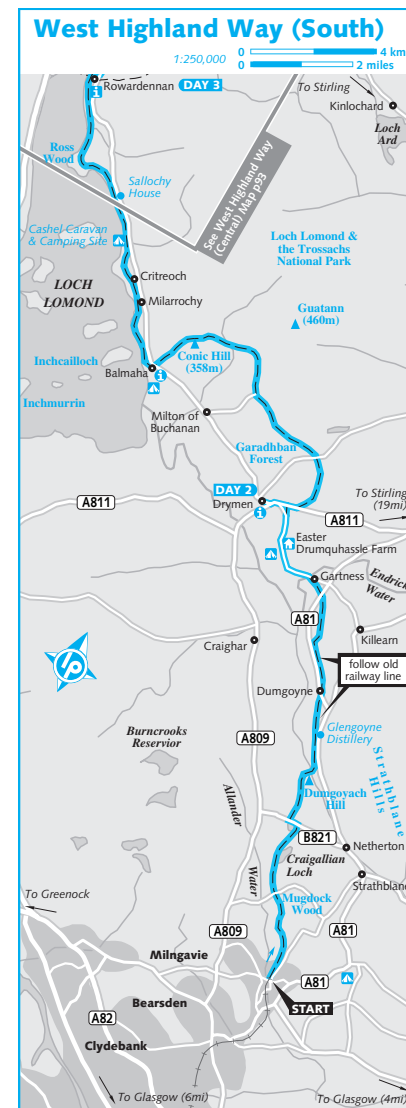
THE WALK

Day 1: Milngavie to Drymen

4½–5½ hours, 12 miles (19km)

From the obelisk on Douglas St, a small sign on a nearby building indicates a turn upstream. Cross the river and continue beside Allander Water, to **Mugdock Wood**. At the end of the wood, paths and a track take you past some holiday homes to the B821. Turn left and follow the road for about 300m to a stile giving onto a path to the right. As you skirt Dumgoyach Hill watch out for Bronze Age standing stones to your right just before the hill. Well past Dumgoyach Bridge you pass **Glengoyne Distillery** (☺ Apr-Oct); 800m further on you reach the Beech Tree Inn at Dumgoyne, a pub that serves food all day. In the village of Killearn, 1.5 miles to the right, there's accommodation, shops, pubs and a post office.

Follow the old railway track to Gartness, from where you're on a road most of the way to the edge of Drymen. A mile beyond Gartness is **Easter Drumquhassle Farm** (☎ 01360 660893; juliamac@aol.com; unpowered site for 2 £10, wigwam for 2 £14, B&B s/d £33/50, dinner £16),



ROUTE HIGHLIGHTS

If you'd like to sample the West Highland Way without attempting the whole thing, the best section (in our opinion) is between Kings House Hotel and Glen Nevis. It is possible to go the full distance, a hefty 19 miles (30.5km), in a single day, though you'll need to allow about nine hours. Paths are good all the way.

Start at the Altnafeadh car park on the A82, 3 miles west of Kings House Hotel. **Scottish Citylink** (☎ 0870 550 5050; www.citylink.co.uk) buses from Glasgow and Fort William pass the car park, and the driver will stop if you ask when you board the bus. At the end of the day you can either stay at Glen Nevis (p124) or catch a bus to Fort William (p121).

Another highlight of the route is the walk along the wooded shores of Loch Lomond, past several spectacular waterfalls; the 7-mile (11km) section from Inversnaid to Inverarnan makes an easy day walk. A **passenger ferry** (☎ 01877 386223) from Inveruglas on the western side of the loch will take you across the water to the start of the section. Both Inveruglas and Inverarnan are request stops on the Scottish Citylink Glasgow-Fort William bus service.

from where Loch Lomond makes its first appearance.

Pass a quarry and continue along the road; just past a sharp left bend, the Way leaves the road and follows a path to the right. If you're going to Drymen, continue along the road and cross the A81 to enter the village.

DRYMEN

☎ 01360 / pop 681

The **TIC** (☎ 0870 720 0611; www.visitscottishheartlands.com; Library, The Green; ☽ May-Sep) has a relatively short season; at other times the library staff can help with basic information about accommodation.

It's Great Outdoors (☎ 661148; 1 Stirling Rd; ☽ daily) stocks gear canisters, maps, guides and outdoor gear.

Drymen Camping (☎ 660893; juliamac@aol.com; Easter Drumquhassie Farm; unpowered sites for 2 £20), on the Gartness road, is a small grassy camping ground, only 1 mile from the village.

Green Shadows (☎ 660289; greenshadows@hotmail.com; Buchanan Castle; s/d £28/50) wins the author's award for equal-best B&B in this book. Well away from the main road, with a peaceful outlook, it's beautifully decorated with a keen awareness of harmonious colours. Thoughtful extras include tea or coffee in the guest lounge. A pick-up service is available.

The **Clachan Inn** (☎ 660824; s/d £30/54, mains £8-17; ☽ lunch & dinner), Scotland's oldest inn, has been welcoming guests since 1734. The dining room is compact and complete with traditional low ceiling and knobly walls. The mostly standard dishes are enlivened with spicy sauces, and vegetarians aren't neglected. Rooms are on the small side and pleasantly fitted out.

Drymen Pottery Coffee Shop & Restaurant (☎ 660458; mains £5-9; ☽ lunch & dinner) special-

ises in lunches in the conservatory or outdoors; evening meals are available in the adjacent bar upstairs.

For self-catering supplies, there's a Spar supermarket and the smaller Village Shop.

Day 2: Drymen to Rowardennan

5–6½ hours, 14 miles (22.5km)

From near the A811 just outside Drymen, a forest track gradually climbs to Garadhban Forest (there is wild camping here with no facilities). Just over an hour from Drymen, a side path runs left to the village of Milton of Buchanan; it's also the alternative route when Conic Hill is closed during the lambing season (late April to early May). There are a couple of B&Bs in the village but no pubs or shops.

The Way climbs then contours north of the summit of **Conic Hill** (358m), but it's worth the short detour for the wonderful panorama over Loch Lomond. This viewpoint also has a special, even unique, significance. From the summit you can make out the unmistakable line of the Highland Boundary Fault, separating the lowlands from the Highlands, so from here on you really are in the Highlands.

Descend to Balmaha, a small village usually thronged with people messing about in boats. As well as the **National Park Centre** (☎ 01389 722100; ☽ Easter-Oct) there's also a small shop and the **Oak Tree Inn** (☎ 870357; www.oak-tree-inn.co.uk; dm/s/d £25/50/70, mains £7-14), which

has comfortable rooms and a four-bed, en suite bunkroom. You can dine in style in the restaurant, or informally in the bar.

Continue along the shore of **Loch Lomond**, passing a marker commemorating the Way's 1980 opening, to Milarrochy (one hour from Balmaha). From Critreoch, about 800m further on, the path dives into a dark forest and emerges to follow the road for about 1 mile. Just after you join the road is the popular **Cashel Caravan and Camping Site** (☎ 870234; www.forestholidays.co.uk; sites for 2 £14). A mile beyond Sallochy House, the Way climbs through **Ross Wood**, its magnificent oaks making it one of Scotland's finest natural woodlands, to Rowardennan (p106).

Day 3: Rowardennan to Inverarnan

6–7½ hours, 14 miles (22.5km)

From Rowardennan follow the unsealed road that parallels the loch shore. Just past private Ptarmigan Lodge an alternative path branches left and follows the shoreline, but it's rough and not recommended. Stick to the much easier official route along a track higher up the hillside. From both routes you can reach **Rowchoish Bothy**, a simple stone shelter; it's free and always open.

Not far beyond the bothy the forestry track gives way to a path, which dives down to the loch for a stretch of difficult walking to Cailness. From here the going improves to Inversnaid, shortly before which the path crosses Snaid Burn just above the impressive Inversnaid Falls. The huge **Inversnaid Hotel** (☎ 01877 386223) could be a good place to stop for refreshments before you tackle the next and toughest section of all.

For a couple of miles north from Inversnaid, the path twists and turns around large boulders and tree roots, a good test of balance and agility. A mile or so into this, the Way passes close to **Rob Roy's cave** (see the boxed text, opposite), although there's little to see. Further on, **Doone Bothy** provides basic accommodation. Almost 1 mile beyond the bothy, at Ardeleish, there's a landing stage used by the ferry across to **Ardlui Hotel** (☎ 01301 704243; www.ardlui.co.uk; unpowered sites for 2 £10, s/d £45/60).

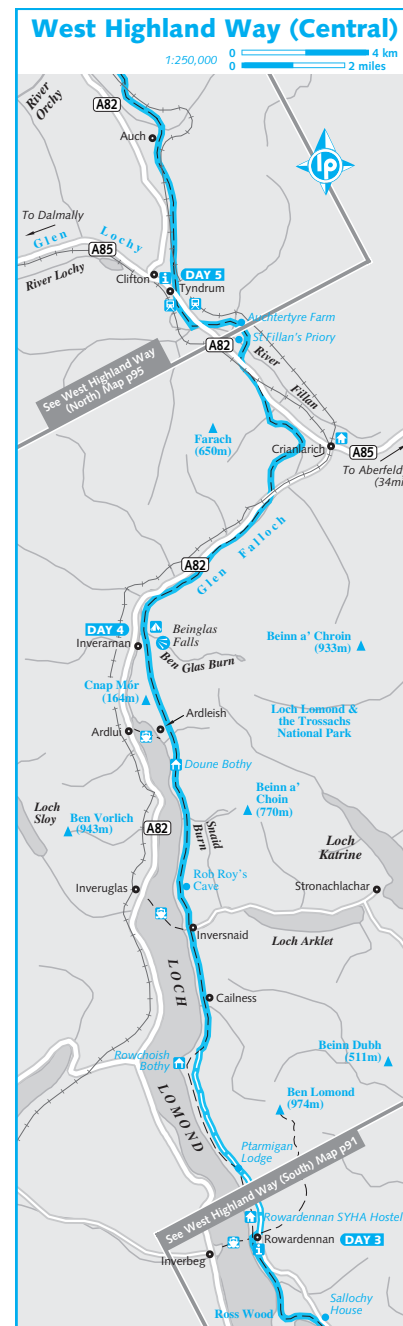
From Ardeleish, you leave the loch and climb to a col below Cnap Mór, where there are good views on a clear day, north towards the Highlands and south over Loch Lomond. The path descends into Glen

ROB ROY

Robert MacGregor (1671–1734) was given the nickname Roy from the Gaelic *ruadh*, meaning 'red', thanks to his shock of red hair. The MacGregor clan was notorious for violent lawlessness and rebellion so, unsurprisingly, Robert became a cattle trader, making occasional raids to the lowlands to rustle cattle. He owned much of the land around Inversnaid and had effectively become head of the clan soon after he turned 30.

He went bankrupt in 1711 when his head drover absconded with his annual profits, and he was subsequently betrayed and outlawed by the Duke of Montrose, a former ally. His home was burnt and his family evicted, and he took to the hills to begin a campaign of revenge against the duke. Tales of his generosity to the poor and daring escapes from the clutches of the law earned him a reputation as a Scottish Robin Hood; legends and romantic stories have since ensured him a place among the characters of popular Scottish history. The Hollywood film *Rob Roy* (largely shot in Glen Nevis) added a contemporary layer to the legend.

A natural rock cell in a crag about 1.5 miles north of Ptarmigan Lodge is given the distinction of being Rob Roy's prison, where he is said to have kept kidnap victims. The cave where he is supposed to have hidden from the duke's men is north of Inversnaid. Both sites can be visited from the West Highland Way, but there is little of real interest to see, and tales of his use of them can be attributed more to mythology than hard fact.



Faloch; a footbridge over Ben Glas Burn heralds your arrival at Inverarnan. Just upstream is the spectacular **Beinglas Falls**, a cascade of 300m (1000ft), which is very impressive after heavy rain.

INVERARNAN

Beinglas Farm Campsite (☎ 01301 704281; www.beinglascampsite.co.uk; unpowered sites for 2 £10, wigwam for 2 £25, B&B d £60, mains £6-10), just north of Ben Glas Burn, is exceptionally well set up, complete with its own bar, restaurant and off-licence shop selling groceries, drinks and camping supplies.

Across the river, in the village, there's a choice between the Stagger Inn and the much older Drover's Inn, both doing a good line in traditional Scottish dishes, the latter with the possible added attraction of live music.

Day 4: Inverarnan to Tyndrum

4½–5½ hours, 13 miles (21km)

From Inverarnan the route follows the attractive River Falloch most of the way to Crianlarich. About 4 miles along, it leaves the river and soon joins an old military road. This track climbs out of Glen Falloch then, at a stile into the forest, a path leads down to the right towards Crianlarich, the approximate halfway mark of the Way. There's no need to go to Crianlarich, though there are B&Bs, **Crianlarich SYHA Hostel** (☎ 0870 155 3255; www.syha.org.uk; dm £16), the Rod & Reel's bar and restaurant, and a small shop with an ATM.

The Way climbs to the left from the stile, offering good views east to Ben More, and continues through the trees for about

2 miles. Next, it crosses under the railway line, goes over the road and crosses a wooden bridge over the River Fillan, where there is a wild camp site (no facilities) on the west bank. Pass the remains of **St Filian's Priory**, turn left and go on to **Strathfillan Wigwams** (☎ 01838 400251; www.sac.ac.uk/wigwams; wigwam for 2 £25) at Auchtertyre Farm. The route crosses the A82 once more and, in less than an hour, you make it to Tyndrum.

TYNDRUM

☎ 01838

This village, originally a lead-mining settlement and now a popular staging point between Glasgow and Fort William, is strung out along the A82.

The **TIC** (☎ 08707 200626; www.visitscottishheartlands.com; ☒ Easter-Oct) is opposite the Inverveiy Hotel. The **Green Welly Stop** (☎ 400271; www.thegreenwellystop.co.uk; ☒ daily) includes an outdoor gear store (that sells maps), an off-licence and a cafeteria-style **restaurant** (mains to £8), which is liable to be flooded by bus parties, and offering generous servings of standard dishes. The weather forecast is prominently displayed at the store.

By the way (☎ 400333; www.tyndrumbytheway.com; sites for 2 £5, cabin beds £8-10, dm £15) provides excellent facilities, including a campers' kitchen.

Strathfillan House B&B (☎ 400228; www.tyndrum.com; s/d £24/48) does a special deal for walkers, including pick-up and drop-off.

Inverveiy Hotel (☎ 400219; www.inverveiyhotel.co.uk; s/d £28/48, bar meals £6-8) has comfortable rooms and a large bar.

Brodie's (☒ daily) mini-market is an off-licence sell hot takeaway snacks and camping gear.

RANNOCH MOOR

Barren, bleak, desolate and inhospitable are epithets often flung at the 50 sq miles of wild Rannoch Moor, Britain's largest moor. The West Highland Way merely skirts its western fringes but you can still gain an impression of its atmosphere – unwelcoming in bad weather, wonderfully wild and open on good days.

The moor is a triangular plateau of blanket bog framed by mountains. It sits on an ancient bed and owes its present form to the last glacial period, when ice gathered here. Since then, high rainfall and the poorly drained ground have combined to create a dense mosaic of bog and lochans. Indeed, the moor holds so much water that it has been said it's possible to swim from one side to the other during summer and to skate across it in winter!

On a calm day, with the blue sky reflected in the lochans, and curlews, golden plovers and snipes darting among the tussocks, the sense of open space is inspiring. In poor weather, the low cloud, fierce wind and rain ensure that it lives up to its reputation.

Day 5: Tyndrum to Kings House Hotel

6½–8 hours, 19 miles (30.5km)

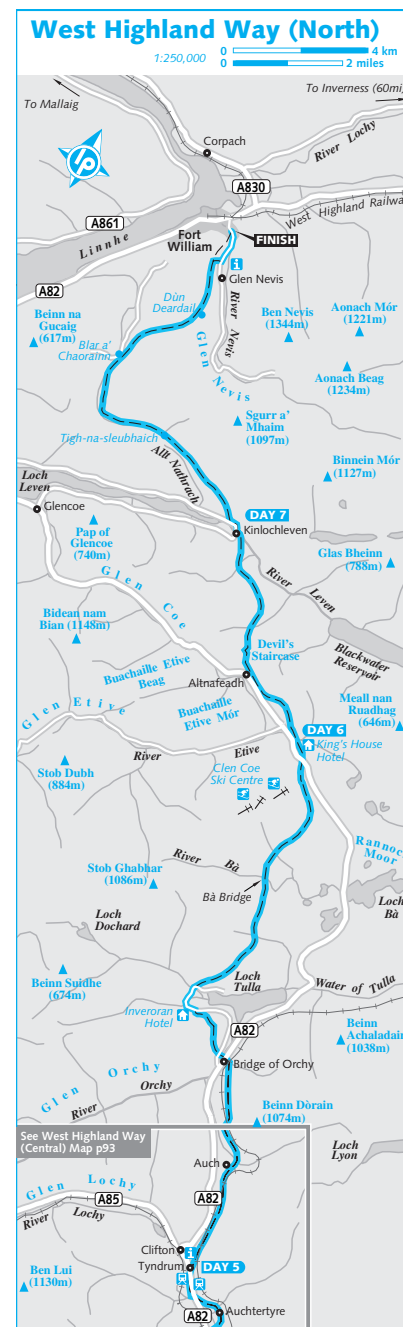
From Tyndrum the route soon rejoins the old military road and crosses the railway line, affording easy walking with lovely views. Three miles from Tyndrum, you cross a burn at the foot of Beinn Dòrain (1074m), the 'hill' that dominates this section of the path.

The path climbs gradually to pass the entrance to Glen Orchy, crossing the railway again, heralding the beginning of the really mountainous scenery. The Bridge of Orchy settlement is dominated by the **Bridge of Orchy Hotel** (☎ 01838 400208; www.scottish-selection.co.uk; dm £15, s/d £55/90), where you can live it up in the hotel or stay in the bunkhouse. The latter doesn't have a kitchen but the bar serves good food. The **West Highland Way Sleeper** (☎ 01838 400548; www.westhighlandway sleeper.co.uk; dm £15), in the old station building, does have a kitchen, and en suite dorms. There is a free camp site (no facilities) just over the bridge on the right.

Cross the old bridge (built in 1750) and climb through the trees onto moorland, from where there are superb views across to Rannoch Moor. The path here has been upgraded and is now very good. It winds down to the secluded **Inveroran Hotel** (☎ 01838 400220; www.inveroran.com; s/d £38/70). There's another free camp site (no facilities) beside a stone bridge 400m west of the hotel.

The Way follows the road, which soon becomes a track, climbing gently past some plantations and out onto **Rannoch Moor** (see the boxed text, opposite). There's no shelter for about 7 miles, and Bà Bridge, about 3 miles beyond the plantations, is the only real marker point. It can be very wild and windy up here, and there's a real sense of isolation. A cairn marks the summit at 445m and from here there's a wonderful view down into Glen Coe.

As the path descends from the moor to join the road again, you can see the chairlift of the Glen Coe Ski Centre to the left. There's a café and skiing museum at the base station, about 500m off the West Highland Way. **Kings House Hotel** (☎ 01855 851259; www.kingy.com; s/d £35/60, bar meals £8-12) is just over 1 mile ahead across the A82. Dating from the 17th century, the building was used as barracks for George III's troops, hence the name. If you can't get a bed here



you could catch a bus to Glencoe, 11 miles west (p133), where there's a wider selection of accommodation.

Day 6: Kings House Hotel to Kinlochleven

3–4 hours, 9 miles (14.5km)

From Kings House Hotel the route follows the old military road and then goes alongside the A82 to a parking area at Alt-nafeadh. This is a wonderful vantage point from which to appreciate the mountainous scenery of Glen Coe. The conical peak to your left is Buachaille Etive Mór (p134).

From here the Way turns right, leaving the road to begin a steep, zigzagging climb up **Devil's Staircase**. The cairn at the top is at 548m and marks the highest point of the Way. The views are stunning, especially on a clear day, and you may be able to see Ben Nevis. The path now winds gradually down towards Kinlochleven, hidden below in the glen. As you descend you join the Blackwater Reservoir access track, and meet the pipes that carried water from there down to the town's hydroelectric power station. It's not a particularly pretty sight but was essential for the now-defunct aluminium smelter, the original reason for the town's existence.

KINLOCHLEVEN

☎ 01855 / pop 897

Kinlochleven eases you back into 'civilisation' before the sensory onslaught of Fort William. The **Aluminium Story Visitor Centre** (☎ 831663; Linnhe Rd; admission free; ☒ Mon-Fri) is worth a look to make sense of the incon-

gruously massive buildings dominating the village.

Blackwater Hostel & Campsite (☎ 831253; www.blackwaterhostel.co.uk; Lab Rd; unpowered sites for 2 £10, dm £12) has well-maintained, pine-panelled dorms with en suite, and grassy tent pitches.

Tailrace Inn (☎ 831777; www.tailraceinn.co.uk; Riverside Rd; s/d £40/70, bar meals £8-14) has tastefully furnished rooms and features live music some evenings.

Macdonald Hotel and Lochside Campsite (☎ 831539; www.macdonaldhotel.co.uk; Fort William Rd; unpowered sites for 2 £10, cabin s/d £20/24, B&B s/d £55/80) is at the northern end of the village. The camping ground is small and well grassed; the cabins have four bunk beds. Campers' breakfast (£4 to £7) is served in the bar.

Ice Factor (☎ 831100; www.ice-factor.co.uk; Leven Rd; mains to £8; ☒ to 6pm, later Tue, Wed & Thu), in part of the former smelter, houses the world's largest indoor ice-climbing wall plus a 'normal' climbing wall so you can watch people performing amazing vertical feats while you hoe into a large pizza.

Both the Co-op supermarket and the village store are open daily.

Day 7: Kinlochleven to Fort William

5½–7 hours, 14 miles (22.5km)

From Kinlochleven follow the road north out of town and turn off opposite the school. The path climbs through woodland to the old military road out in the open, from where you can see the way ahead for the next couple of miles. Climb gradually to the crest, just beyond which are the ruins of several old farm buildings at **Tigh-na-sleubhaich**. From here the Way continues gently downhill and into conifer plantations 2 miles further on. You emerge at Blar a' Chaorainn, which is nothing more than a bench and an information board.

The Way leads on and up, through more plantations; occasional breaks in the trees provide fine views of Ben Nevis. After a few miles, a sign points to nearby **Dùn Deardail**, an Iron Age fort with walls that have been partly vitrified (turned to glass) by fire.

A little further on, cross another stile and follow the forest track down towards Glen Nevis. Across the valley the huge bulk of Ben Nevis fills the view. A side track leads down to the village of Glen Nevis (p124), which can make a good base for an ascent of 'the Ben' (p123).

Continue along the path if you're heading for Fort William, passing a small graveyard just before you meet the road running through Glen Nevis. Turn left here and, soon after, there's a large visitor centre on the right. Continue along the roadside down into Fort William. The end of the West Highland Way, like many other long-distance paths, is a bit of an anticlimax: just a sign by the busy, rather anonymous road junction on the edge of town, but you can look forward to an end-of-walk celebration in one of the town's several restaurants and bars (p122).

ISLE OF ARRAN

Arran's popular alternative name, 'Scotland in miniature', isn't just a slick advertising gimmick. The steeply angled hills, the long, deep glens and the wild, remote feel of the northern half of the island certainly bring to mind many parts of the Highlands. The southern half's rolling moorlands and scattered farms resemble parts of the Borders or Dumfries & Galloway in microcosm. To emphasise the likeness, Arran has its own Great Glen in the long, straight valley separating the two halves of the island. Goatfell (874m), the highest peak, lords it over Brodick, the island's capital on the mid-east coast.

All this is packed into a chunk of land little more than 20 miles (32km) from north to south. Arran is only an hour-long ferry ride across the Firth of Clyde from Ardrossan, itself a stone's throw from Glasgow. Unsurprisingly therefore, the island swarms with visitors from Easter to October, including many walkers, for whom Goatfell tops their must-do list. For something completely different, the north coast offers just as much wildness, plus scenery equally as fine, but a little less up and down. A short walk (p103) offers a taster of the wealth of walks Arran has to offer.

ENVIRONMENT

Arran's geology is amazingly varied – you will find all kinds of rock types and evidence of different geological processes, which have taken place over countless millennia. In fact, a trip to Arran is virtually compulsory for geology students from all

over the world; one of the most famous features is Hutton's Unconformity, named after its discoverer Dr James Hutton. An unconformity is the occurrence, side by side, of rocks from different geological eras at a discordant or unexpected angle. On the north coast, about 1 mile northeast of Newton Point, Hutton identified such an area, where ancient metamorphic rock (schist, altered from its original form) was overlain by less ancient sandstone.

The granitic northern peaks and ridges and the deep glens were sculpted by glaciers during the last Ice Age. This granite mass is almost surrounded by much older schist, slate and some river sediment. Sedimentary rock, limestone and sandstone monopolise the north coast. The southern half of the island has a more mixed array: granite (most prominently on Holy Island in Lamhlay Bay), extensive outcrops of ancient lava and shale, and widespread sedimentary rocks.

A small brochure, *Isle of Arran Trails: Geology*, available from the TIC, should demystify the complexities of Arran's geology.

PLANNING

Wild camping is not permitted anywhere on Arran without the landowner's permission.

When to Walk/Stalking

Generally walkers are free to roam throughout Arran. However, deer control measures (stalking) are carried out from mid-August to mid-October in the north of the island. Call the **Hillphones** (☎ 01770 302363) service for daily updates on where stalking is to take place and which paths should be used or avoided. Access to National Trust for Scotland properties (Glen Rosa, Goatfell and Brodick Country Park) is unrestricted at all times.

Maps

Arran is covered by OS Landranger 1:50,000 map No 69 *Isle of Arran* and OS Explorer 1:25,000 map No 361 *Isle of Arran*. Harvey's Arran map shows the whole island at 1:40,000 and the northern half at 1:25,000.

Books

25 Walks Ayrshire & Arran by Alan Forbes includes 10 varied walks on the island; the maps are superior to those in Paddy Dillon's *Walking in the Isle of Arran*, which

A SCOTTISH ODYSSEY

Combine the West Highland Way with the Great Glen Way, Scotland's second-most-popular long-distance walk, throw in Britain's highest mountain, a magnificent glen and an internationally famous loch, along with some magnificent scenery, a slice of history and a touch of mystery, and you have a Scottish odyssey.

The Great Glen Way (p168) links Fort William, via the Great Glen, with Inverness on the shores of the Moray Firth, a 73-mile walk. With the West Highland Way, it offers a unique, 168-mile-long opportunity to walk through some of Scotland's finest scenery.

THE CROOKED STRAIGHT AND THE ROUGH PLACES PLAIN

This title, borrowed from Handel's *Messiah*, neatly sums up the work of the National Trust for Scotland and the Arran Access Trust on the island. It's all too easy to take for granted the well-built paths and various bits of outdoor furniture that make walking on Arran easier than many other places (though they haven't yet worked out how to make all walks downhill).

Seriously though, the Trust, a major landowner on the island, has done a huge amount of work to repair worn paths on its Brodick Castle estate, and to build bridges and install signs. The Access Trust's remit covers the whole island and it has completed major projects near Lochranza and Brodick in particular. Contact the **National Trust Ranger Centre** (☎ 01770 302462; Brodick Castle) for more information.

describes 41 day walks. *The Islands* by Nick Williams describes five adventurous Arran outings. *Arran Behind the Scenes* by Gillian Bussell delves into the island's colourful history.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

For all public transport timetables contact **Traveline** (☎ 0870 608 2608; www.travelinescotland.com).

Stagecoach Western (☎ 01292 613500) bus service X15 links Glasgow to Ardrossan (£3, 1¼ hours, twice daily), the ferry terminal on the Ayrshire coast.

First ScotRail (☎ 0845 755 0033; www.firstscotrail.com) operates trains from Glasgow to Ardrossan Harbour (£6, 55 minutes, four services Monday to Saturday, three Sunday).

Caledonian MacBrayne (☎ 0870 565 0000; www.calmac.co.uk) runs the car ferry between Ardrossan and Brodick (passenger/car £5/37, 55 minutes, four services Monday to Saturday, three Sunday). It also does a seasonal service between Claonaig (on the Mull of Kintyre, between Lochgilphead and Campbeltown) and Lochranza (passenger/car £5/21, 30 minutes, at least seven daily March to October).

Ardrossan is about 40 miles southwest of Glasgow via the M8, and A78 roads.

ACCESS TOWN

Brodick

☎ 01770 / pop 621

This surprisingly large town is the best base for island walking, being the ferry port and the hub of the island's bus services.

The well-organised **TIC** (☎ 303774; www.ayrshire-arran.com; The Pier; ☎ daily Easter-Oct, Mon-Sat Oct-Easter) offers an array of leaflets, accommodation lists, maps and guidebooks. All bus timetables are detailed in the free *Area*

Transport Guide. The local weather forecast is displayed daily.

Arran Active (☎ 302416; www.arranactive.co.uk; Cladach Visitor Centre; ☎ daily), next to Arran Brewery and opposite the walkers' entrance to Brodick Castle, is the one place where you can purchase the full range of fuel for camping stoves, and much else besides.

SLEEPING & EATING

For accommodation bookings, go to www.ayrshire-arran.com.

Glen Rosa Farm Campsite (☎ 302380; unpowered sites for 2 £4), on the Glen Rosa road about 2.5 miles northwest of Brodick Pier, is just a grassy field on the banks of Glen Rosa Burn with a basic toilet block and running water. Check in at the first cottage on the western side of the Glen Rosa road.

Lochranza SYHA Hostel (☎ 0870 004 1140; www.syha.org.uk; Lochranza; dm £14) is the nearest hostel, in a small peaceful village. It's not ideal for Goatfell but the island's bus service enables you to get around fairly easily. The nearest shops of any size are in Brodick.

Orwin B&B (☎ 302307; Shore Rd; s/d £25/50) has four comfortable rooms, including a single with lovely views across the golf course; your hostess is very helpful and obliging.

Hotel Ormidale (☎ 302100; Knowe Rd; mains £8-12; ☎ lunch Sat & Sun, dinner daily) hosts the local Mountain Rescue Team so the atmosphere is entirely compatible for sampling its varied dishes featuring local produce, washed down by draught Arran ales.

Oscars of Arran (☎ 302427; breakfast £5, mains £6-10, ☎ breakfast, lunch & dinner) sits beside Glen Cloy Burn just off the main road, scarcely a mile northwest of Brodick. It's a small but well-lit place, with nice outside tables, where you can sink your teeth into a whole range of snacks, or order more substantial,

hunger-satisfying dishes. It also stocks a fair selection of health foods.

Fill your trolley at one of the two Co-op supermarkets along Shore Rd but save bread purchases for **Wooleys Bakery** (Shore Rd). **Arran Brewery** (☎ 302061; www.arranbrewery.com; Cladach; ☎ daily) is very conveniently located beside the end of the Goatfell walk; tours and tastings tempt you to linger.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

For Brodick transport details, see opposite.

A TOUR AROUND GOATFELL

Duration	6–7 hours
Distance	11 miles (18km)
Difficulty	moderate–demanding
Start & Finish	Brodick (opposite)
Transport	bus, ferry
Summary	Take the connoisseur's route to Arran's highest peak, through superbly scenic Glen Rosa and along steep, rock-encrusted ridges to spectacular wrap-around views from the summit.

You can't really visit Arran and not climb Goatfell; it beckons from Ardross and it's ever-present once you reach Brodick. Most walkers tramp up the eastern routes, from Cladach or from Brodick Castle. However, there's a less crowded and more satisfying approach from the west, via beautiful Glen Rosa, North Goatfell and along Stacach Ridge. The descent is through the steep, rocky eastern face to moorland and forest paths.

The National Trust for Scotland (NTS) has done a superb job of repairing and building paths; the descent is completely mud-free. The cliffs on both sides of the west ridge and Stacach Ridge are precipitous so extra care is needed.

This route can be done in either direction but we recommend clockwise. The overall ascent is more gentle, with some steep bits, and the summit comes in the latter part of the route. There are signposts where paths leave the road but not on Goatfell itself. The route includes at least 800m of ascent and some minor scrambling.

It can turn very cold, wet and windy on Goatfell very quickly, at any time of the year, and the mountain creates its own

weather – Brodick can be basking in hot sunshine while Goatfell is mist-bound.

PLANNING Guided Walks

The **NTS countryside rangers** (☎ 01770-302462; Brodick Country Park), located about 2 miles (3km) north of Brodick, organise a program of walks from May to October, ranging from afternoon wildlife strolls through low-level forests to days out on Goatfell.

GETTING TO/FROM THE WALK

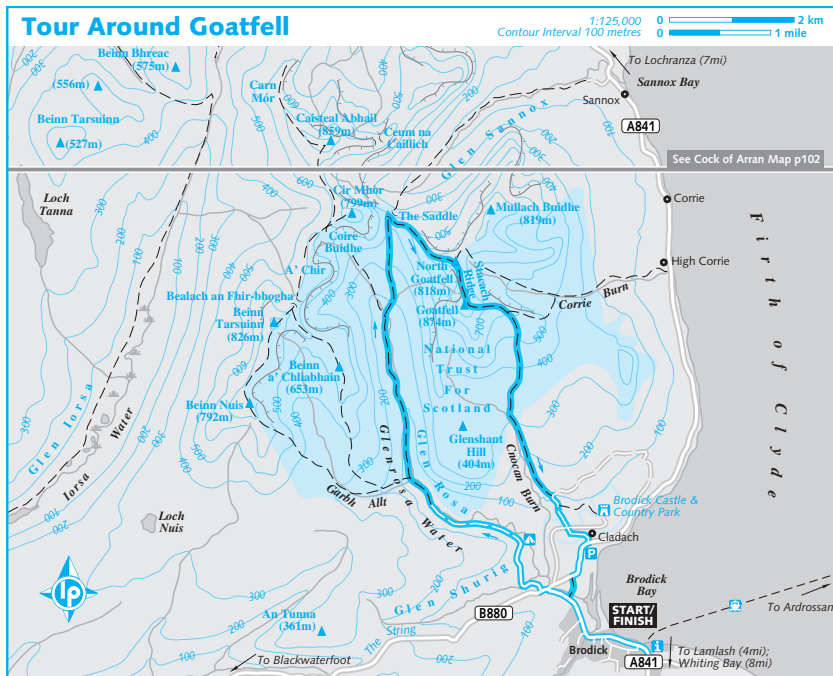
Stagecoach Western (☎ 302000) bus 324 stops at Cladach, near the end of the walk (£1.50, 10 minutes, three daily). There is a car park nearby.

THE WALK

From Brodick TIC, walk mainly north beside the main road (A841) for about 1.5 miles (along a path for all but the last 200m) to a major junction. Turn left along the B880 towards Blackwaterfoot. After about 100m, turn right down the narrow 'Glen Rosa Cart Track' to the Glen Rosa Farm Campsite (opposite) – above which there's a small car park and the bitumen ends. Continue along a clear vehicle track into **Glen Rosa**. There are superb views of the precipitous peaks on the western side of the glen, culminating in Cir Mhòr (799m) at its head.

The track becomes a path at the crossing of Garbh Allt, the boundary of the NTS property. Aiming unerringly for the Saddle, the low point between Cir Mhòr and the massive, rock-encrusted bulk of Goatfell, the path climbs gently then quite steeply. From the **Saddle** (2½ to three hours from the start) there's a fine view among the granite boulders down Glen Sannox to the sea. Cir Mhòr's alarmingly steep crags rise immediately to the left. To the north are the castellated ridge of Caisteal Abhail (859m), Arran's second-highest peak, and the notorious cleft, Ceum na Caillich (Witch's Step). To the right the features of the next section of the walk are clearly visible: the bouldery west ridge, leading steeply up to North Goatfell; and Stacach Ridge, which is crowned by four small, rocky peaks.

From the Saddle, the path leads up the ridge towards North Goatfell. There are some narrow, exposed sections and a few near-vertical 'steps' where you'll need to



use your hands. More tricky, though, are the patches of loose granite gravel. About an hour from the Saddle the route nears the summit of **North Goatfell** (818m). The final section is a scramble but if this is too intimidating, pass below the top, keeping it on your left, then return to the ridge. Turn back to gain the summit from the east, over large slabs and boulders.

From North Goatfell you can keep to the crest of the ridge, scrambling over the rocky knobs. Alternatively, drop down to the less exposed eastern side of the ridge and follow paths below the knobs. The final section involves hopping giant boulders to the summit of **Goatfell** (874m), 45 minutes from North Goatfell. Here there's a trig point and direction plate, from which you can identify features in the panoramic view – sometimes including Ben Lomond and the coast of Northern Ireland. All Arran is spread out below, with the conical Holy Island rearing up from the sea in Lamlass Bay.

From the summit a path winds down the steep eastern face, then straightens out as the ridge takes shape. At a shallow saddle the

path changes direction and leads southeast then south across moorland, down Cnocan Burn glen and into scattered woodland. At a junction in a conifer plantation, continue straight ahead then turn right at a T-junction. Descend through conifers, cross a road and go on to Cladach and Arran Brewery; the main road is a little further on.

The last leg starts along a footpath on the western side of the main road. Where the path ends, cross the road to a signposted path beside, and then briefly across Brodick golf course, leading back to the main road beside Arran Heritage Museum. Follow the roadside path into town (2½ hours from Goatfell summit).

If you'd like to have a look around **Brodick Castle and Country Park**, turn left 30m after the T-junction in the conifer plantation mentioned above. Follow Cemetery Trail past the eponymous site (the resting place of the 11th and 12th Dukes of Hamilton and a wife), over bridges and into the castle grounds. The ranger service office is in the first building on the right; continue straight on to the NTS shop and tearoom.

COCK OF ARRAN

Duration	3½–4 hours
Distance	8 miles (13km)
Difficulty	easy–moderate
Start	North Sannox
Finish	Lochranza (right)
Nearest Town	Sannox (right)
Transport	bus, ferry
Summary	Easy walking spiced with rock-hopping interludes along Arran's wild and beautiful north coast, with superb horizontal views across the Firth of Clyde.

If there's cloud on the hills, don't despair, head for the north coast and a wonderfully scenic walk between North Sannox and Lochranza. Steep hillsides sweep down to the rocky shore, and there are some impressive cliffs, shingle beaches and scattered pockets of birch woodland, as well as plenty of geological interest and the ever-restless sea. The Cock of Arran, a prominent block of sandstone, isn't named after a rooster but probably comes from the Lowland Scots word meaning 'cap' or 'headwear'. Views across the Sound of Bute to the mainland, the Isle of Bute and part of the Kintyre peninsula can be excellent. There's also a good chance of seeing common seals.

Ideally, set out soon after high tide (a tide-times booklet is available from the Brodick TIC), for though the rise and fall isn't unusually great, there's one section best done near low tide.

Alternatives If time is short, you can do an out-and-back walk from North Sannox to Millstone Point; allow 2½ to three hours for the 5-mile (8km) outing.

Alternatively, add 1 mile or so by starting at Sannox. Alight from the bus opposite the start of the Glen Sannox path. Follow a path nearby, indicated by an Arran Coastal Way waymarker, to large stepping stones across Sannox Burn. Continue along the path parallel to the coast, past a beacon and through woodland to a small burn. It may be possible to ford it to reach the start of the main walk at North Sannox; otherwise, follow a path upstream to the road bridge, then the minor road down to North Sannox.

You can also leave the main walk at Laggan cottage and follow a path west and uphill

from the north side of a small wind pump; there's neither a signpost nor a waymarker. The path, which could be partly hidden under bracken in summer, climbs over the ridge rising from the coast and up the hillside, to a high point (261m) on the moorland ridge, then descends across to a minor road at Narachan. Follow this to a junction and turn left to reach the main road through Lochranza and the bus stop. The distance is 9 miles (12.9km); allow about four hours.

NEAREST TOWNS

Sannox

☎ 01770

Sannox, 7 miles from Brodick and Lochranza, is just a handful of homes beside the main road, and is a peaceful alternative to the comparative bustle of Brodick. It's way too small to have a shop so come with all the snacks you'll need.

Gowanlea Guest House (☎ 810253; www.arran.net/sannox/gowanlea; s/d £28/50, dinner £10-12), a traditional-style large home in a scenic setting, offers plenty of home comforts and represents excellent value.

Sannox Bay Hotel (☎ 810225; www.sannoxbayhotel.com; s/d £35/60, mains £8-12; ☎ lunch & dinner) looks straight across the bay. The restaurant menu extends only to standard mains, though more traditional Scottish fare, using local produce, is offered in the bar.

Corrie Golf Club Tearoom (☎ 810223; mains to £5; ☎ lunch & dinner), on the north side of the bridge over Sannox Burn, is a real find. Snacks and lights meals use local and Fairtrade produce whenever possible and you're welcome to bring your own wine or beer.

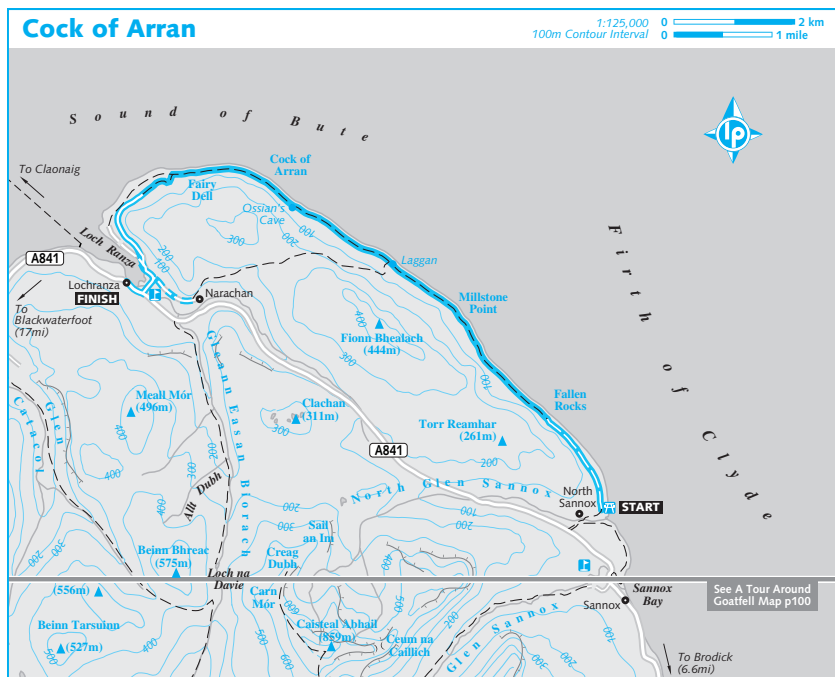
Sannox is on the **Stagecoach Western** (☎ 302000) route 324 from Brodick (£2, 25 minutes, at least three daily). Alight at the stop opposite the signposted start of the Glen Sannox path or ask the driver to drop you further on at the turn-off to Sannox.

Lochranza

☎ 01770

This scattered village on the shores of Loch Ranza, sheltered by hills to the west, looks out towards the low-lying Mull of Kintyre. Bring all your supplies – sadly, there aren't any shops in the village.

Lochranza SYHA Hostel (☎ 0870 004 1140; www.syha.org.uk; Lochranza; dm £14) occupies an impressive mansion overlooking Loch Ranza.



Castlekirk B&B (☎ 830202; www.castlekirrkarran.co.uk; s/d £25/50) is worth the journey to stay in a century-old former Free Church; the bedrooms occupy the space under the soaring pitched roof.

Lochranza Hotel (☎ 830223; www.lochranza.co.uk; s/d £50/84, mains £9-12) is a dignified two-storey place overlooking the loch, with comfortable, spacious rooms. The restaurant offers standard dishes and daily specials.

See p98 for details of the ferry service from Claonaig. The **Stagecoach Western** (☎ 302000) service 324 passes through Lochranza from Brodick (£2.50, 40 minutes) and Sannox (£2, 20 minutes) at least three times daily.

GETTING TO/FROM THE WALK

The walk starts at a picnic area (with toilets) at the end of a minor road, which branches from the A841 about 800m northwest of Sannox.

The walk ends in Lochranza village. There's a car park by the shore at the southeastern corner of Loch Ranza; the turn-off from the main road is signposted 'Public Footpath'.

THE WALK

The forest track leading north from the picnic area gives fine views across the Firth of Clyde to the multitude of hills draped right across the horizon, a theme sustained for the whole walk. After nearly 2 miles the track gives way to a footpath along the shore. At the far end of a shingle beach thread your way through Fallen Rocks, a jumble of massive conglomerate boulders (studied with pebbles and resembling Christmas pudding) reclining at the foot of a steep, bracken-covered hillside. The path, mainly grassy and occasionally boggy, keeps close to the high-tide mark to **Millstone Point** (1½ hours from North Sannox), where white-painted Laggan cottage comes into view.

Less than 1 mile beyond the cottage, the local scene changes, with birch-oak woodland on the lower slopes. In summer, tall bracken hides the remains of stone cottages and the coal pits and salt pans that were excavated here to support local fishing in the 18th century. Ignore paths climbing into the trees and stick to the rocky shore, where you might find scraps of blackish coal. Further

SHORT WALK

Heights of North Sannox

Forest and moorland paths lead from North Sannox to fantastic views of Arran's rugged peaks. Colour-coded, waymarked routes from the North Sannox car park (shown on the information board there) provide walks with scenic and archaeological highlights. To reach the high point (224m), follow the yellow route and return down the blue route. The red and green markers lead to a shieling (rough cottage) and a prehistoric burial cairn. Allow about 1½ hours for the 2.8-mile (4.5km) walk.

on, Ossian's Cave, although marked on the map, is invisible from the shore. The pinkish-red sandstone cliffs then start to close in. Around the **Cock of Arran** flat, red slabs of sandstone line the shore. Change down into rock-hopping gear to get through a confusion of conglomerate boulders; soon you're back on grass. Then, between the two cottages at **Fairy Dell**, follow a path from the corner of a dyke, up through trees and bracken to moorland. The path drops down to a gravel road between two cottages; there's a signpost here back to Fairy Dell. Continue down to the minor road along Loch Ranza's northeast shore. A short distance along, turn right to reach the main road in Lochranza village, opposite a church and near the bus stop (two hours from Laggan).

LOCH LOMOND & THE TROSSACHS NATIONAL PARK

Established in 2002, 720-sq-mile (1865-sq-km) Loch Lomond & the Trossachs was Scotland's first national park, gathering together the northern section of the Argyll Forest Park (the first forest park to be declared in Britain, in 1935), including the Arrochar Alps and its *pièce de résistance*, the Cobbler. To this, add the 'hills' south of Crianlarich, notably Ben More and Stob Binnein; the ranges east of Strathyre, including Ben Vorlich and Stuc a' Chroin; the Trossachs; Queen Elizabeth Forest Park; and almost all of Loch Lomond. The park is more than mountains – it's rich in glens and lochs, there are numerous villages and a few small towns, and Scotland's most popular and best-known long-distance path, the West Highland Way, strides across a long strip of the park.

PLANNING Maps

Harvey's spiral-bound *Loch Lomond & the Trossachs National Park* atlas has waterproof map pages (at 1:40,000) and lots of background information and contacts.

Information Sources

The Loch Lomond & the Trossachs National Park's **Gateway Centre** (☎ 0845 345 4978; www.lochlomond-trossachs.org; Loch Lomond Shores, Balloch) is an excellent first port of call for information about the park, including accommodation. There's also the **Balmaha National Park Centre** (☎ 01389 722100; ☹ Easter-Oct), more in the heart of things.

THE COBBLER

Duration	5 hours
Distance	8 miles (13km)
Difficulty	moderate-demanding
Start/Finish	Forestry Commission car park on the A83, 0.5 miles west of Arrochar
Nearest Town	Arrochar (p104)
Transport	bus, train
Summary	Climb one of Scotland's most famous and unforgettable peaks; don't forget to pack your head for heights for the final scramble.

Ben Arthur (881m), is more commonly and fondly referred to as the Cobbler. With its distinctive three-pronged rooster crown, it stands majestically apart from its rounded neighbours. While not the highest of the six Arrochar peaks (which include four Munros), the Cobbler is without a doubt the favourite among both hillwalkers and climbers. It dominates the southernmost section of the Arrochar Alps, bounded by Glen Loin, the head of Loch Long and Glen

WARNING

The final ascent of the central peak is potentially dangerous, especially when the rock is damp. Take the greatest care if you decide to squeeze through to the narrow ledge and scramble to the top – it's a long way down from the edge of the ledge.

Croe (along the A83) in the south, Loch Lomond in the east and Glen Kinglas in the west. The popular story of the mountain's name tells of how a cobbler was hunched over (forming the north and centre peaks) listening to his wife, Jean (the south peak). Very much part of the development of Scottish rock climbing, especially among young, working-class Glaswegians, the Cobbler Club (1866) was Scotland's first climbing group. The last Ice Age littered the mountain with moraine, leaving behind the prominent Narnain Boulders below the Cobbler's peaks.

The well-used path gains 850m and ends with a steep and rocky section from the corrie at the peaks' base and then what is – for some – a short and exhilarating scramble. The south peak's steep sides, seen from the corrie, are a popular haunt for climbers. The north peak is easily reached along its northern face. The centre peak's final ascent is dramatic and, depending on your experience and the conditions on the day, potentially dangerous. You must squeeze

through a body-sized hole (known as the 'needle') in a huge, box-shaped rock to reach the top via a narrow shelf (potentially lethal if it is damp) above a steep drop. People hang out around the centre peak gathering their nerve or watching the brave and nerveless (or foolhardy) few 'threading the needle'.

PLANNING Maps

The OS Landranger 1:50,000 map No 56 *Loch Lomond & Inveraray* covers the area; a better bet is the Harvey Superwalker 1:25,000 map *Arrochar Alps*.

Information Sources

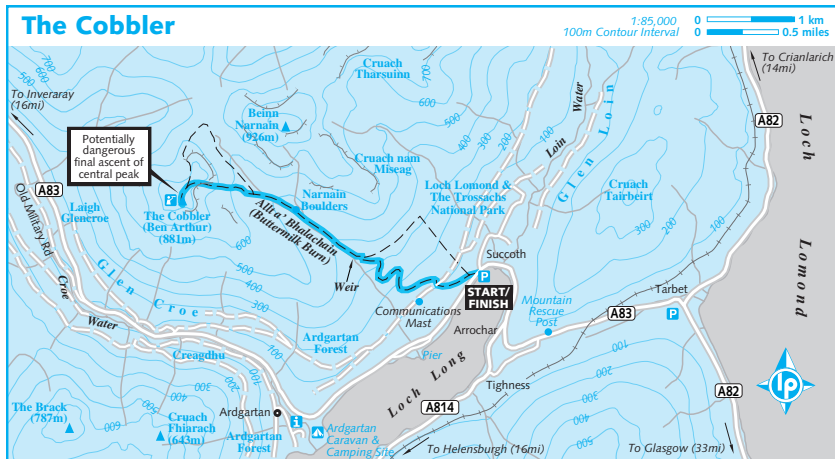
The **Ardgartan visitor centre** (☎ 01301 702432; www.visitscottishheartlands.com; Ardgartan; ☒ Easter-Oct), 2 miles west of Arrochar, is a good source of maps and information about local walks; staff can also help with accommodation bookings.

NEAREST TOWN Arrochar

☎ 01301 / pop 650

A rather scattered village along the shores of Loch Long, Arrochar suffers somewhat from the passing of heavy vehicles, but has an unbeatable view across Loch Long to the Cobbler.

There's an ATM in the service station, otherwise the nearest is in Inveraray, 22 miles to the west.

**SLEEPING & EATING**

Ardgartan Caravan & Camping Site (☎ 702293; www.forestholidays.co.uk; A83; sites for 2 £15), run by the Forestry Commission, is 2 miles west of Arrochar, right beside Loch Long.

Inveraray SYHA Hostel (☎ 0870 004 1125; www.syha.org.uk; Dalmally Rd, Inveraray; dm/d £14/28), 22 miles west of Arrochar in a historic town, is the nearest hostel. It has doubles and small dorms.

Ferry Cottage (☎ 702428; www.ferrycottage.com; Ardmay; s/d £35/56, dinner £12), a superbly restored old ferryman's cottage, is 1 mile south of the village. Expect a warm welcome and good home cooking; all rooms have views of Loch Long.

Greenbank Licensed Restaurant (☎ 702305; Main St; mains £7-14; ☒ lunch & dinner) is a small, friendly place, offering standard fare, including vegetarian dishes, and a special Taste of Scotland menu; you certainly won't leave here feeling underfed. It's wise to book a table during the busy season.

The **village shop** (Main St) stocks a reasonable range of supplies; if you've forgotten your map, try the post-office shop.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Scottish Citylink (☎ 0870 550 5050; www.citylink.co.uk) Glasgow–Campbeltown buses stop at Arrochar (£7, 1¼ hours, three daily).

First ScotRail (☎ 0845 755 0033; www.firstscotrail.com) trains on the West Highland line from Glasgow to Fort William stop at Arrochar & Tarbet station (£11, 1½ hours, three daily), 20 minutes' walk from Arrochar. Overnight sleeper trains between London Euston and Fort William also call here.

By car from Glasgow, take the M8 (Greenock) towards Loch Lomond and then the highly scenic A82; continue on the A83 to Arrochar.

GETTING TO/FROM THE WALK

The walk starts from a pay-and-display (£1) car park on the A83 west of Arrochar. It's a good five-minute walk from the village to the car park, around the head of Loch Long.

THE WALK

From the car park, cross the A83 and pass through the timber vehicle barrier signed 'Access to Ben Narnain and Cobbler'. Follow the well-made path as it zigzags its

way uphill to a forestry road; first turn left towards a communications mast then right in front of it. The zigzags continue up through the conifer plantation to a forest track and Allt a' Bhalachain (Buttermilk Burn). A fine vista of the Cobbler's famous three peaks welcomes you to the halfway mark. Follow the clear path upstream, crossing numerous tributaries, to the distinctive **Narnain Boulders**. Over the next half-mile or so the well-made path steers clear of a morass and climbs to the rocky corrie below the three peaks. Scramble up to the saddle between the central and north peaks, marked with a cairn. For a less arduous, though slightly longer route, follow the path up the valley for another 1 mile to the watershed, where it divides. Take the southern branch, climbing steeply up the north ridge on well-built zigzags, to reach the saddle between the central and north peaks.

The central and highest peak lies to the left, while the more easily accessed **north peak** is to the right. The superlative view takes in Loch Long, Gareloch, the Firth of Clyde, the Isles of Bute and Arran, Ben Lomond and dozens of other peaks to the east. Return the same way to the car park.

BEN LOMOND

Duration	4½–5 hours
Distance	7 miles (11km)
Difficulty	moderate
Start/Finish	Rowardennan (p106)
Transport	ferry

Summary A circuit over one of the most popular 'hills' in central Scotland, via the quiet Ptar-migan Route; the views of 'the bonnie, bonnie banks of Loch Lomond' are magnificent.

There's no freshwater loch in Scotland larger than Loch Lomond, which is 22 miles long and up to 4.5 miles wide. Standing guard over the loch is Ben Lomond (974m), the most southerly Munro. It's thought that the name Lomond comes from an old Lowland Scots word *llumon*, or the Gaelic *laom*, meaning a 'beacon' or 'light'. Loch Lomond is a very popular venue for water sports and on fine weekends the droning of powerboats and jet skis is all too audible, even on the summit.

Ben Lomond is the most popular of all Scotland's mountains – more than 30,000 people climb it each year. Most follow the 'tourist route' up and down, which starts at Rowardennan car park. It's a straight-forward climb on a well-used and maintained path; allow about five hours for the 7-mile (11km) walk. The scenic Ptarmigan Route, described here, is less crowded and follows a narrower, clearly defined path up the western flank of Ben Lomond, directly overlooking the loch, to a curving ridge leading to the summit. You can then descend via the popular main-ridge route, making a satisfying circuit.

There are no easy alternative routes. Ben Lomond slopes very steeply down to the loch and tracks through the forest on the eastern side aren't particularly attractive. The West Highland Way (p89) passes between the loch and the Ben, and many Way walkers take a day off to do the climb.

PLANNING Maps & Books

Harvey's 1:25,000 map *Glasgow Popular Hills* includes Ben Lomond but isn't much help for identifying surrounding features. For this purpose, use either the OS Landranger 1:50,000 map No 56 *Loch Lomond & Inveraray* or the OS Explorer 1:25,000 map No 364 *Loch Lomond North*.

Loch Lomond, Trossachs, Stirling & Clackmannan by John Brooks covers a wide variety of walks and is recommended.

LOCH LOMOND

Loch Lomond is the largest body of fresh water in Britain, covering 27 sq miles. It is also an area of great beauty, and is besieged by visitors during summer.

The loch is believed to have been gouged by a glacier flowing from the ice sheet that covered Rannoch Moor during the last Ice Age. At its deepest, just south of Inversnaid, the water depth is 190m. The loch straddles the boundary between the lowlands and the Highlands, and two distinct environments can be seen along its shores. Botanical studies have found that 25% of all known British flowering plants and ferns can be found along the eastern shore.

The southern part of the loch is bordered by relatively flat, arable land, and is wide, shallow and dotted with 38 islands, some of which contain early Christian sites. This part of the loch freezes over during severe winters, and islanders have managed to access the mainland by foot on several occasions over the last 50 years.

The northern end of the loch is deeper, generally less than 1 mile wide, and is enclosed by steep hillsides. It is unknown for this part of the loch to freeze. The slopes at the loch shore are covered by Scotland's largest remnant of oak forest, mixed with newer conifer plantations. These are being felled, to be replaced by native broad-leaved species to help regenerate the native forest.

Guided Walks

Ben Lomond National Trust for Scotland rangers (☎ 870224) lead guided walks on Ben Lomond during summer.

NEAREST TOWN

Rowardennan offers a smattering of accommodation and dining, though Drymen (p92), about 10 miles southeast, has the nearest shops of any size and a good selection of pubs and places to stay.

Rowardennan

☎ 01360

At the end of the sealed road in Rowardennan is a large white building housing toilets and an unstaffed display about the park.

SLEEPING & EATING

Cashel Caravan and Camping Site (☎ 870234; www.forestholidays.co.uk; sites for 2 £14), right on the loch shore about midway between Balmaha and Rowardennan, has a small café and a shop, and is usually busy. A special backpacker rate (£5 for two) is available if you arrive on foot.

Rowardennan SYHA Hostel (☎ 0870 004 1148; www.syha.org.uk; dm £14), in a former lodge, has a superb outlook. Being very convenient, it's also very popular, so it pays to book ahead.

Rowardennan Hotel (☎ 870273; www.rowardennanhotel.co.uk; s/d £60/110; 🍷 lunch & dinner) does reasonably priced bar meals in the lively Rob Roy Bar.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

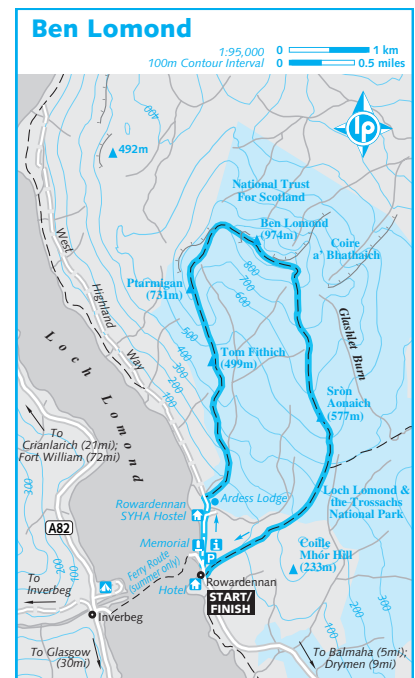
The only public transport to Rowardennan is the small summer-only ferry (operated by the Rowardennan Hotel) that plies the loch to and from Inverbeg, on the western shore. Use the regular **Scottish Citylink** (☎ 0870 550 5050; www.citylink.co.uk) bus service to Inverbeg from Glasgow (£6, one hour, five daily) or Fort William (£12, 2¼ hours, five daily), then catch the passenger ferry (£5) to Rowardennan. The ferry departs at 10.30am, 2.30pm and 6pm, and returns at 10am, 2pm and 5.30pm.

THE WALK

With your back to the toilet block, walk towards Loch Lomond, where there's a view of the distinctive rounded knob of Ptarmigan, a couple of miles due north. Turn right (north) along the loch-side path, soon passing a granite war-memorial sculpture. The path becomes a gravel road; in a few minutes swing right through a gate in front of the youth hostel, then turn left, following the West Highland Way with its thistle-and-hexagon waymarker.

Pass Ardes Lodge National Trust for Scotland Ranger Centre and Ben Lomond Cottage on the right, cross a burn and immediately turn right along an unmarked path up through the trees. It climbs beside the burn for a short distance to a small cascade, then veers left up the bracken-covered hillside. As you climb steadily across the slope, you're treated to views of the loch and the hills on its western side and, further on, Ptarmigan summit comes into view. Higher up, above some rock outcrops, go through a kissing gate. The path gains more height on an open spur then zigzags steeply up a grassy bluff to the ridge and on to the summit of **Ptarmigan** (731m), near a small lochan (1½ to two hours from Rowardennan). The fine views include virtually the full length of the loch and its cluster of islands, and the Arrochar hills to the west.

The path continues on, along the bumpy ridge and through a chain of grassy rocky knobs, to a narrow gap where stepping stones keep you out of the mud. The final steep climb starts through formidable crags, but natural rock steps and the well-maintained path make it comparatively easy. From a grassy shelf there's one



more straightforward rocky climb to the trig point on the summit of **Ben Lomond** (974m), less than one hour from Ptarmigan summit. The all-round view includes Ben Nevis on the northern horizon, the Isles of Arran and Jura in the southwest, the Firth of Clyde, the Arrochar hills immediately across the loch (notably the awl-like profile of the Cobbler) and the Campsie Fells and Glasgow to the south.

The wide, well-trodden path starts to descend immediately, going past the spectacular, north-facing cliffs on the left. Soon it swings round to the right and makes a series of wide zigzags down the steep slope to the long ridge stretching ahead, which it follows south. Eventually the grade steepens over Sron Aonaich (577m) and the path resumes zigzagging through open moorland. Cross a footbridge and continue into the pine forest, along an open clearing. The path steepens, becoming rockier and more eroded as you go down through mixed woodland. Eventually it emerges at the toilet block at Rowardennan, two hours from the top.

MUNROS & MUNRO BAGGING

It all began in 1891 when Sir Hugh Munro, a member of the Scottish Mountaineering Club (SMC), published a list of more than 500 Scottish summits over 3000ft, the height at which he believed they became proper mountains. Never mind modern metrication, this figure is still quoted, especially because the equivalent, 914m, lacks the imperial measurement's neatness. Sir Hugh identified 283 'mountains in their own right' (those with a significant drop on all sides or widely separated from other peaks), though his original list has been revised over the years and the total stands at 284.

Reverend AE Robertson climbed the lot in 1901, initiating the sport of Munro bagging, which has become something of a national pastime. More than 3550 people have completed the full round and are therefore entitled to join the Munro Society. Records have been set and unique achievements have been recorded, such as continuous rounds (no breaks at all) in summer and in winter, and self-propelled rounds using bikes between climbs and canoes to reach the islands.

List or no list, the great majority of Munros are outstanding walks with superb views; 33 of them are featured in this book. Of the several guides on the subject, two stand out. The SMC's *The Munros* by Rab Anderson and Donald Bennet is a weighty tome of absolutely reliable and exhaustive information, and is best for whiling away winter evenings planning next summer's campaign. Cameron McNeish's *The Munro Almanac* slips into your map pocket easily, is written by one of the most respected walkers in Scotland and has all the basic information you'll need. The **Munro Society** (www.themunrosociety.com), founded in 2002, is another useful source of information. It's open to all who have completed the full 'round' of 284 summits.

Once you've bagged the Munros, there are other collections of summits to tackle, such as the 219 Corbetts – Scottish 'hills' over 2500ft (700m) with a drop of at least 500ft (150m) on all sides. The guide for these is *The Corbetts & Other Scottish Hills* by Rob Milne and Hamish Brown. And how about the 224 Grahams, hills between 2000ft and 2499ft? Andrew Dempster has compiled the inevitable guide *The Grahams: A Guide to Scotland's 2,000ft Peaks*. With even just a selection of all these behind you, you'll have a fair idea of why Scotland is such a wonderful walking destination.

BEN LEDI

Duration	4 hours
Distance	7.4 miles (12km)
Difficulty	moderate–demanding
Start/Finish	Ben Ledi car park
Nearest Town	Callander (opposite)
Transport	bus

Summary A circular walk through lush woodland, along enchanting Stank Glen, past rushing cascades and across a spectacular ridge to sweeping summit views.

The Trossachs is a wild region ringed by several lochs: Loch Ard and Lake of Menteith in the south, the north end of Loch Katrine to the west, Loch Doine and Loch Voil hem in the north and Loch Lubnaig rounds out the east. To the west of Loch Lubnaig, the Trossachs' highest mountain, Ben Ledi (879m), makes a formidable backdrop to Callander and Loch Venachar, and is deserving of its name 'God's Hill'; an account from 1791

links it to an annual summer-solstice celebration. A less dramatic definition, 'hill of the gentle slope', perhaps refers to the broad grassy ridge running north from the summit down to Lochan nan Corp – the wee loch of the dead bodies! Local legend suggests that the lochan is named for an ill-fated funeral party, which fell through the ice as it crossed the apparently frozen surface.

While fairly straightforward in good conditions, Ben Ledi should be taken very seriously if the weather turns nasty. This circular walk includes around 740m of ascent and a steep descent. Only initially waymarked, the path is generally easy to follow.

PLANNING Maps & Books

Use OS Landranger 1:50,000 map No 57 *Stirling & the Trossachs*. The pocket-sized Hallowell guide *Walks in the Trossachs* by Mike Williams describes 40 walks in the area from mountain climbs to riverside rambles.

Information Sources

Much of the Trossachs is within Queen Elizabeth Forest Park; the **David Marshall Lodge Visitor Centre** (☎ 01877 382258; car park £1; ☹ Mar-Dec), 800m north of Aberfoyle on the A821, has information about walks in the park. Callander (below) also has a well-stocked TIC.

NEAREST TOWN Callander

☎ 01877 / pop 3000

Long popular with day trippers from Stirling and Glasgow, Callander sits on the eastern edge of the Trossachs and serves as an amenable base for walks in the area.

Rob Roy and the Trossachs Visitor Centre (☎ 0870 720 0628; www.robroyvisitorcentre.com; Ancaster Sq) has loads of information; you can listen to the story of the renowned 17th-century outlaw Rob Roy (see p92) and watch a film about the area.

If you've forgotten your walking socks, head for **It's Great Outdoors** (☎ 339743; Main St).

SLEEPING & EATING

Keltie Bridge Caravan Park (☎ 330606; unpowered/powered sites for 2 £11/12) is east of town on the A84 but within walking distance.

Trossachs Backpackers (☎ 331200; www.scottish-hostel.co.uk; Invertrossachs Rd; dm/tw £16/42) is about 1 mile from town. The dorms are spacious and breakfast is included in the tariff.

Linley Guest House (☎ 330087; www.linleyguesthouse.co.uk; 139 Main St; s/d £30/48), in an old, stone-built terrace, has comfortable rooms and serves up a good breakfast.

Jaan Restaurant (☎ 339111; 25 Main St; mains £8-13; ☹ lunch & dinner) has smart blue-and-white décor and offers a wide range of curry-style dishes, from mild kormas to searing vindaloos.

Callander Meadows (☎ 330181; 24 Main St; dinner mains £13-15; ☹ lunch & dinner), in a well-preserved Victorian building, has a small dining room. The set two-course dinner (£15) is good value in a superior restaurant.

For supplies, there's a **Tesco supermarket** (Main St).

GETTING THERE & AWAY

First (☎ 08708 727271; www.firstgroup.com) operates a bus service between Stirling and Callander (£4, 45 minutes, at least 10 services Monday to Saturday).

By car from Glasgow (on the M80) or Edinburgh (M9), head to Stirling and then Callander (A84).

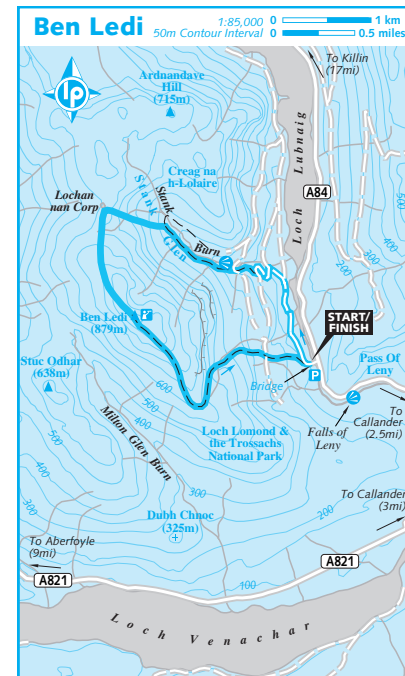
GETTING TO/FROM THE WALK

From Callander it is 3 miles to the start of the walk, close to the A84, at the Forestry Commission's Ben Ledi car park, signed to Strathyre Forest Cabins. The car park, along a track immediately to the left across the bridge, is small and often full; if so, there's more parking on the A84, north of the turn-off. You can easily walk this distance (which passes the Falls of Leny) along the cycle route connecting Callander and Killin.

The **First Edinburgh** (☎ 0131 663 9233; www.firstedinburgh.co.uk) Stirling–Killin bus service passes the trailhead; ask to be dropped near the bridge.

THE WALK

From the car park, walk past the bridge and continue straight on (north) along the sealed road, marked with green posts, parallel to the Garbh Uisge river, for just over



SHORT TROSSACHS WALK

Diminutive **Ben A'an** (461m), in the heart of the Trossachs, epitomises all that's so attractive about the area – woodlands, deep glens and rocky peaks. Originally called Am Binnein (small pointed peak), its name was changed by the 19th-century Romantic poet Sir Walter Scott in his poem *Lady of the Lake*. Though it's really only a prominent knob in the jumble of humps and bumps between Glen Finglas Reservoir, Loch Achray and Loch Katrine, it affords surprisingly good views, including nearby Ben Ledi (east) and Ben Venue (west). The 3.7-mile (6km) walk involves about 360m ascent; allow 1¾ to two hours. Consult either OS Landranger 1:50,000 map No 57 or the Harvey Superwalker 1:25,000 map *Glasgow's Popular Hills*.

To reach the Forestry Commission car park opposite the start of the walk, follow the A84 west from Callander (p109) and turn left along the A821 at Kilmahog; the car park is on the south side of the road, close to the western end of Loch Achray.

The all-too-clear path climbs steeply at first through forest, emerging after a while at a small clearing, where you can glimpse a sliver of Loch Katrine. About 100m further along, the serious climb starts on well-made steps, up a gully, crossing and recrossing a small burn, to a saddle. From here, beaten paths lead to the knobby summit. Retrace your steps to the start.

800m. Turn left onto a forestry road that makes a curving ascent to a fork. Head left here through a broad-leaved forest. After five minutes, abandon the forestry road at a sharp curve and turn right (west) onto a footpath through a magical birch wood that ascends alongside the rushing **Stank Burn**. About 200m further on, spruce (a conifer species) dominates the forest, and the route reaches and crosses another forestry road to continue its northwest course through the forest. Five minutes later, a natural balcony overlooks a leaping cascade. The path for Ben Ledi is waymarked with green or brown posts with a red band.

Reaching another forestry road, turn right for 30m and then head left again onto a narrow road that ascends west. After a tough, steep stretch, the path leads into breathtaking **Stank Glen**. Stank Burn's source, at the end of the valley, tumbles down in a series of spectacular falls. Ignore a road going up to the left and continue west along the valley floor, studded with stumps. After crossing another road, follow a footpath that approaches the burn's winding course and ford it. A white post indicates the end of the modern waymarking. From here the waymarking is irregular and clearly antiquated. The footpath heads to the valley's left side through a boggy, heather-lined section. Reaching a wire fence, cross it by a stile and continue along its right side to a gate. The real back-breaking work, a 800m-stretch to reach the ridge crest, now begins. Once on the crest, iron

fence posts run along the ridge marking old boundary estates. A five-minute detour right (north) leads to Lochan nan Corp.

To reach the **Ben Ledi** summit, follow the posts about 1 mile south. The sweeping views, especially south and east towards Stirling's Castle and Wallace Monument and the upper reaches of the Firth of Forth, are just reward after the long uphill pull.

To descend, follow the posts southeast along a heavily eroded trail for almost 1.5 miles, where the trail swings sharply left (northeast). Descend towards the forest below Ben Ledi's abrupt east face; the steep path can be icy in cold weather. From the foot of this steep section, the path is much better. Use the stile to cross a wire fence, ford a stream and follow the path down its bank through a recently felled area into the forest. Follow this path (marker posts with blue bands) down for 1 mile, crossing a forestry road, to emerge at the bridge near the car park.

AROUND LOCH TAY

A Munro bagger's delight, the area bounded by Loch Tay in the south, Lochs Rannoch and Tummel to the north, the River Tummel to the east and Loch Lyon in the west is packed with incredible scenery and has a fascinating history. Glen Lyon, one of Scotland's best glens, bisects the area east-west and separates the two largest massifs in the southern Highlands: Carn Maig to the north and the 7.5-mile-long ridge of

the Ben Lawers group, with seven summits exceeding 900m, to the south. The Tarmachans range, topped by Meall nan Tarmachan (1043m), lies to the west of the Lawers group, separated by the Lochan na Lairige pass. Just two of the dozens of possible walks in this marvellous area are described in this section – ascents of Ben Lawers (1214m) and Schiehallion (1083m), an outlier of the Carn Maig range. These two walks should be enough to send you straight back to the map and start planning the next visit.

PLANNING Maps & Books

The OS Landranger 1:50,000 map No 51 *Loch Tay & Glen Dochart* covers both Ben Lawers and Schiehallion. Harvey's 1:25,000 map *Ben Lawers: From Loch Tay and Loch Rannoch* includes both peaks, the important massifs and a visitor guide. Felicity Martin's useful *Walks: North Perthshire* succinctly covers 26 walks on Loch Tay's eastern end.

Information Sources

For information about other walks, walker-friendly accommodation and events in the area go to the Walking Wild link at the **Perthshire** (www.perthshire.co.uk) website.

GETTING AROUND

Unfortunately this is not an area where you can readily use public transport, with services being limited to inconvenient post-buses and occasional school-day runs.

BEN LAWERS

Duration	5 hours
Distance	8.2 miles (13km)
Difficulty	moderate–demanding
Start/Finish	Ben Lawers Mountain Visitor Centre
Nearest Town	Killin (right)
Transport	private
Summary	A direct ascent along well-made paths to one of Scotland's highest 10 mountains, a veritable alpine flower garden.

Reigning mightily over Loch Tay's north shore, handsome Ben Lawers (1214m) is Perthshire's highest Munro and the central feature of a national nature reserve protecting an extraordinary array of Arctic al-

pine plants that thrive in the high ground's unusually rich soil. The best time to do this walk, especially if you're a keen botanist, is between June and August. The NTS cares for 3374 hectares of its southern slopes, and 1348 hectares of the Tarmachans to the west. Following a well-used path, the walk climbs 940m to reach the rocky summit, a remnant of an attempt by 30 men in 1878 to elevate Ben Lawers height by 5m to reach Scotland's elite 4000ft club.

PLANNING Information Sources

The NTS maintains the **Ben Lawers Mountain Visitor Centre** (☎ 01567 820397; ☹ May-Sep), up on the mountainside, with displays on geology and fauna and a shop. The *Ben Lawers Nature Trail* booklet describes the flora and fauna. The ranger service based here runs guided walks during July and August. The car park has a pay-and-display system (£2).

NEAREST TOWN Killin

☎ 01567 / pop 700

Killin is strung out along the main A827, on either side of the River Dochart.

The **TIC** (☎ 0870 720 0627; www.visitscottishheartlands.com; ☹ Easter-Oct) is in the Breadalbane Folklore Centre, an old water mill overlooking the Falls of Dochart; it sells maps and books and can help with accommodation arrangements.

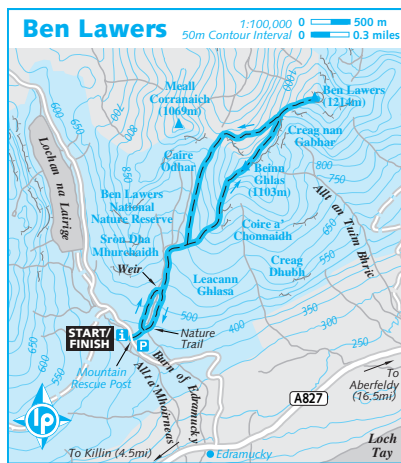
Killin Outdoor Centre (☎ 820652; Main St) stocks a reasonable range of gear.

SLEEPING & EATING

Cruchan Farm Caravan & Camping Park (☎ 820302; www.cruchanfarm.co.uk; North Loch Tay Side by Killin; unpowered/power sites for 2 £10/12) is a spacious, sheltered site, close to the Ben Lawers turn-off. The on-site **licensed coffee shop and restaurant** (☎ 820700; ☹ lunch & dinner) offers home baking and light meals; the menu features old favourites and more imaginative dishes.

Killin Youth Hostel (☎ 0870 004 1131; www.syha.org.uk; Aberfeldy Rd; dm £13), in a Victorian mansion at the northern end of the village, has up-to-date facilities and can offer advice on local walks.

Drumfinn Guest House (☎ 820900; www.drumfinn.co.uk; Manse Rd; s/d £35/29) is a friendly place with light, airy rooms in an early Victorian building that served as a bank for more



A few minutes later, ignore the Nature Trail's right turn and ascend parallel to the burn's true left bank for about 800m. Leave the protected zone by another double stile and steeply ascend Beinn Ghlas' shoulder. Reaching a couple of large rocks, ignore a northbound footpath and continue zig-zagging uphill. The rest of the 1.5-mile ascent is a straightforward succession of three false summits. The last and steepest section alternates between erosion-sculpted rock and a meticulously crafted cobbled trail. A cairn marks the summit of **Beinn Ghlas** (1103m), with a great view of Ben Lawers ahead.

Descend northeast along the ridge crest for 20 minutes to the base of Ben Lawers. The initial segment of the 800m ascent is made easier by the cobbled sections reminiscent of ancient Roman highways. Beyond a small plateau the ascent continues along an eroded path up to the rocky summit of **Ben Lawers** (1214m).

Return the same way, or take one or both of two decent detours. Instead of continuing along the ridge crest and climbing Beinn Ghlas again, take a track from the base of Ben Lawers that heads southwest, gently descending along the contour of Beinn Ghlas' north face. After about 1 mile, old iron fence posts appear and soon you see Loch Tay and the visitor centre. In just over 1 mile the alternative rejoins the main trail. Another good option is to finish along the eastern segment of the Nature Trail, near the start of the route. At the 'To Car Park' sign, turn left and you will soon reach the double stile.

SCHIEHALLION

Duration	4 hours
Distance	7.6 miles (12km)
Difficulty	moderate
Start/Finish	Braes of Foss car park
Nearest Town	Aberfeldy (opposite)
Transport	private
Summary	Ascend the famous landmark in Scotland's centre, the 'hill' that also sired the contour lines on topographical maps.

Famed for its symmetrical conic appearance, especially when viewed from Loch Rannoch's north shore, Schiehallion (1083m), 'the fairy hill of the Caledonians', is an isolated whale of a mountain. Designated a Site

than a century. Look forward to being entertained by the frog musicians.

Falls of Dochart Inn (☎ 820270; Falls of Dochart; mains £10-15; ☎ dinner) overlooks the falls and has a small, enticing dining room where you can sample excellent Scottish-inspired dishes.

For supplies, there's a Co-op supermarket, a greengrocer and the Bake Shop for pies and snacks, all along Main St.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

By car from Edinburgh/Glasgow, take the A84 road via Stirling and Callander. If you're coming by car from Arrochar, take the A82 to Crianlarich then the A85.

GETTING TO/FROM THE WALK

Ben Lawers Mountain Visitor Centre is located 6.5 miles east of Killin. At Edramucky on the A827, turn up the road signposted to Ben Lawers Mountain Visitor Centre; it's 1.5 miles to the car park. The NTS operates a pay-and-display system (£2).

THE WALK

From the Ben Lawers Mountain Visitor Centre take the Nature Trail that heads northeast. Clearly visible in the distance is the footpath that ascends the open hillside of Beinn Ghlas. After the boardwalk protecting the bog, cross an elevated, double-staired stile (and fence, which keeps the hungry sheep and deer out of the lush protected area), fork left (north-east) and ascend along a burn. At the next rise fork right and cross the burn.

BIRTH OF CONTOUR MAPS

Contour lines, the bread and butter of map-crafting, were indirectly born due to Schiehallion's famous symmetry and a 1774 attempt to calculate the earth's mass. Applying Isaac Newton's theory of the universal gravitational constant, Astronomer Royal Nevil Maskelyne set up observatories on the north and south sides of the mountain 'to measure by how much plumb lines would be pulled out of the vertical and towards the mountain by gravitational force due to its mass'. At the time this was known as the attraction of mountains. (Nowadays the attraction of mountains isn't measured by gravitational pull but by eroded paths!) Apparently the project took a huge effort over two years, moving a 10ft telescope around the mountain in order to take highly accurate sightings of stars. The apparent and true differences in latitude were then compared. While analysing the results, mathematician Charles Hutton began to connect similar heights on the mountain with lines, pioneering the concept of contours.

Maskelyne built several cairns during his experiments; if you continue west from the end of the path at the summit, you'll soon come to a horseshoe-shaped cairn, probably on the site of one of the Astronomer Royal's cairns.

of Special Scientific Interest, it's a distinctive landmark from many viewpoints; even the great chronicler Ptolemy, in the 2nd century AD, listed it in his landmark work *Geography*. Look for the limestone pavements and ptarmigans, and the yellow saxifrage and wild thyme scenting the hillsides.

The John Muir Trust (p31) owns and manages the summit, path and eastern slopes and has re-routed the path to the summit ridge, providing a narrow but firm walking surface. This has allowed vegetation to grow along the former route, which was heavily eroded with deep, wet, peaty troughs. The all-encompassing views are especially fine in summer when the setting sun makes the Highlands glow in the west.

PLANNING

Information Sources

The **John Muir Trust** (www.jmt.org) website has details of the path restoration work. There's also an on-site information board and toilets near the car park.

At the **Queen's View Centre** (☎ 01796 473123; Tay Forest Park; car park £1; ☎ Mar-Nov), at the east end of Loch Tummel, 7 miles from Pitlochry on the B8019, the eponymous view is of Schiehallion.

NEAREST TOWN

Aberfeldy

☎ 01887 / pop 1897

Quiet, riverside Aberfeldy is immortalised in Robert Burns' 1787 poem *The Birks O' Aberfeldy*, a paean to the nearby Falls of Moness and birch wood (birk).

The **TIC** (☎ 820276; aberfeldytic@visitscotland.com; The Square; ☎ daily Apr-Oct, Mon-Sat Nov-Mar) sells guidebooks and maps.

Munros (☎ 820008; 1 Bridgend) stocks a fair range of outdoor equipment.

SLEEPING & EATING

The **Bunkhouse** (☎ 820265; www.thebunkhouse.co.uk; Glassie Farm; dm £12) is 1.3 miles off the B846 (towards Schiehallion) and has great views from its hillside site; facilities are excellent.

Balnearn House (☎ 820431; www.balnearnhouse.com; Grieff Rd; s/d £40/64) welcomes walkers to this late-Victorian home in a lovely garden setting.

Kiwis (☎ 829229; The Square; lunch mains £6, dinner mains £11-13; ☎ lunch daily, dinner Thu-Mon) is a refreshing alternative to pub food; it uses fresh local ingredients wherever possible, with antipodean flair.

Black Watch Inn (☎ 820699; Bank St; mains £6-12; ☎ lunch & dinner) offers good basic fare enlivened by the occasional gesture towards Thai cuisine.

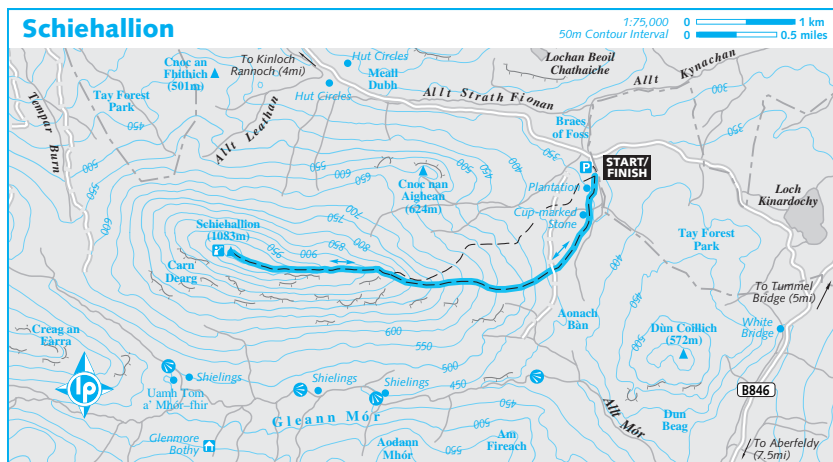
For supplies, there's a **Co-op** (The Square) supermarket.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

By car, take the A9 out of Stirling and Perth, connecting to the A822 (then A826) or the A827 to Aberfeldy.

GETTING TO/FROM THE WALK

To reach the start of the walk, take the B846 and turn down Braes of Foss Rd between Coshieville and Tummel Bridge. Continue 2 miles on Braes of Foss Rd and turn left



into the well-marked Braes of Foss car park, which has metered parking.

THE WALK

The new path, established in 2003, was not marked on most maps at the time of research, so follow our description rather than the maps.

Leave the car park by the marked gate and follow the path climbing gently south between a small conifer plantation on the right (west) and a much larger expanse of commercial forest on the left (east). The narrow path is perfectly clear ahead, curving right past the wood to climb southwest past a prehistoric, cup-marked rock close to the path on the right (not easy to spot – look for small hollows, the purpose of which is uncertain). Continue towards a rough hill track and cross it near a former sheep pen. From here the path begins to climb more steeply southwest, up onto Schiehallion's east ridge, swinging gradually to the right (west). Once on the crest, it is about 1.5 miles west to the summit. The trail disappears in places on the rocky ridge but cairns guide the way. You'll notice an abundance of rose and white quartz veining the rocks. The upper part of the ridge can be awkward as the rock strata dip away at an angle to the line of ascent. There's no real danger of a dramatic plunge, though it would be all too easy to twist an ankle here. The final rise to the **Schiehallion** summit is on bare, gently sloping rock. On sunny days

the top is transformed into a high-level outdoor bistro, and you may have to wait a few minutes for the party ahead of you to finish taking photos at the cairn atop this popular hill.

Enjoy the 360-degree views from the numerous stone-built windbreaks. Return by the same route.

THE OCHIL HILLS

The Ochils are a precious pocket of wilderness immediately north of the Forth Valley, extending northeast for about 12 miles (20km) from the fringes of the historic town of Stirling, itself around 20 miles east of Loch Lomond & the Trossachs National Park. The precipitous southern ramparts of the broad, grassy, undulating massif rise most impressively from the broad valley. The hills are composed mainly of basalt, exposed in deep clefts on its southern slopes, sheltering a rich array of mosses and lichens, trees and shrubs. The unusual name (pronounced 'owe-kills') isn't, for a change, of Gaelic origin, but comes from Brittonic, an older language, and means 'high'.

The string of towns along the southern fringe is collectively known as the Hillfoots. In earlier times it was at the heart of thriving industries based on silver mining and woollen mills, now most evident in the variety of architectural styles among houses large and small.

PLANNING Maps & Books

The OS Landranger 1:50,000 map No 58 *Perth & Alloa* provides a useful overall impression of the area.

The pocket-sized guide *Stirling & District Walks* by Alistair Lawson describes 24 mostly easy outings. More wide-ranging is Patrick Baker's *Walking in the Ochils, Campsie Fells and Lomond Hills*, covering 33 jaunts.

Information Sources

The **Mill Trail Visitor Centre** (☎ 08707 200605; www.visitscottishheartlands.org; West Stirling St, Alva; ☒ daily Easter-Oct, Mon-Sat Nov-Easter) sells maps and books, including several on the local architectural heritage of woollen mills, mining and railways. It can also help with accommodation bookings. There's also an exhibition featuring wool, tartan and tweed making and a small café offering standard snacks and drinks.

The **Friends of the Ochils** (www.sites.ecosse.net/ochils/index.html) group works hard to maintain awareness of the great importance of the Ochil hills as a relatively wild area in central Scotland, and strives to protect them from intrusive, inappropriate developments, especially wind farms.

BEN CLEUCH

Duration	5¼–5½ hours
Distance	6.8 miles (11km)
Difficulty	moderate
Start/Finish	Mill Glen car park, Tillicoultry (right)
Transport	bus

Summary A magnificent circuit over the glorious rolling uplands of the Ochil hills, crowned by Ben Cleuch, with amazingly varied views.

Of the several possible walks in the Ochils, one that takes in the highest point, Ben Cleuch (721m), is a pretty obvious choice. It's no mere dash up and back; the comparatively long approach gives you time to become imbued with the spirit of these fine rolling hills, and to savour the superb panoramic views. There's more to the Ochils than uplands, as this walk also reveals. Mill Burn is one of the several streams biting deeply into the southern flanks of the range,

tumbling through a secretive, steep-sided glen. Ben Cleuch, by the way, takes its name from the Scots word meaning gully.

Be prepared for steep ups and downs during the walk, involving 680m of ascent. Paths are generally clear enough and fences can be useful navigation handrails, but shouldn't be relied on. In poor visibility you would need finely honed navigation skills to stay on course.

PLANNING Maps

The best map is the Harvey Superwalker 1:25,000 map *Ochil Hills*. Alternatively, consult OS Explorer 1:25,000 map No 366 *Stirling & Ochil Hills West*.

NEAREST TOWN Tillicoultry

☎ 01259 / pop 5400

A former mill town at the foot of the hills, Tillicoultry is rather dour and depressing but is saved by the hills themselves and three local bright spots. The nearest TIC is in Alva (see left).

SLEEPING & EATING

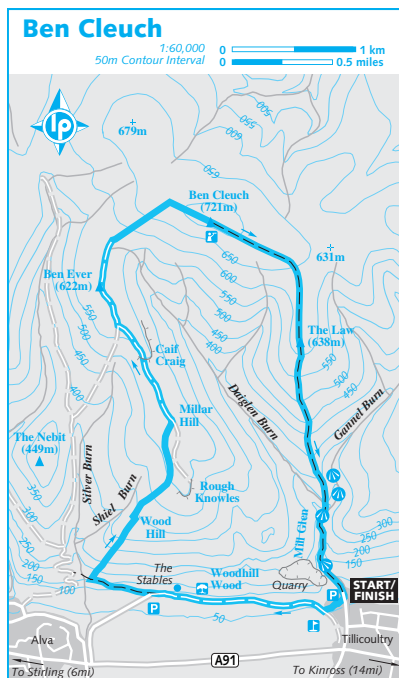
Wyvis B&B (☎ 751513; www.wyvisbandscotland.com; 70 Stirling St; s/d £36/62), in a superbly modernised mill-worker's cottage, has surprisingly large, and beautifully decorated, rooms. Your hostess is charming and very helpful. Breakfast is superb.

Westbourne House B&B (☎ 750314; www.westbournehouse.co.uk; 10 Dollar Rd; s/d £36/56) is a one-time mill-owner's mansion, crammed with the owners' memorabilia from worldwide wanderings. The rooms are on the small side and the breakfast is excellent.

The **Bridge Inn** (☎ 750252; www.mclay.com/bridge-inn-tillicoultry.html; 1 High St; mains £8-15; ☒ lunch & dinner) passes muster as a traditional-style pub with plenty of framed vintage ads on the walls. It can be busy on Fridays, but the tables aren't too close to each other for comfort.

The **Harviestoun Restaurant** (☎ 752522; Dollar Rd; mains £8-18; ☒ lunch & dinner) occupies a restored steading (barn). Don't be put off by the fact that it attracts suited types during the week, as the menu ventures away from standard pub fare to some Thai dishes.

For on-the-walk supplies, there's a **Co-op supermarket** (High St).



GETTING THERE & AWAY

Tillicoultry is on the routes of the **First** (☎ 08708 727271) 62 and 63 services from Stirling to Alloa (£3, 40 minutes, every 20 minutes Monday to Saturday, hourly on Sunday).

By car, Tillicoultry is on the A91 between Stirling and Kinross, accessible from the M9 near Stirling and the M90 at Kinross.

GETTING TO/FROM THE WALK

From the main road in Tillicoultry, walk or drive up Mill St, at the western edge of town, signposted 'Mill Glen'. There's a small car park at the end of the street; if this is full, you can park near the designated parking area about 150m downhill, still in Mill St.

THE WALK

From the top car park, walk down Mill St for about 150m and turn right along the signposted 'Public Path' to Alva. Cross a stream and continue along Scotland Pl to a T-junction. Turn right and soon left along a vehicle track signed to Alva. The track

traverses the steep hillside above Tillicoultry golf course and leads into woodland, soon passing an imposing building known as the Stables (see the boxed text, below). A little further on (30 minutes from the start) you come to an information board featuring the Clackmannanshire Countryside Path Network; it tells you that you're on the red-marked Hillfoots Link. A few metres along, turn right to follow a vehicle track into the Woodland Trust's Woodhill Wood. Pass a track junction on the right and then, just short of a footbridge across Silver Burn, veer right up a steep path through bracken. It swings generally northeast and uphill in open woodland and soon bursts into the open and becomes clearer. The path rises unflinchingly across the flank of a spur, ever higher above Shiel Burn. When you reach a stone wall, follow it up east to a north-south vehicle track about 150m short of Rough Knowles, a line of crags. Follow the track generally north, with occasional minor flirtations northeast, up past a curious hollow on the right and onto the spur at Millar Hill. Continue to a fence line intersection and go through a gate (1½ hours from the information board). Follow the vehicle track (generally paralleled by a fence) past Calf Craig and on to a track intersection. Continue northwest up to the flat summit of **Ben Ever** (622m), 30 minutes from the gate. The wonderful view takes in the serpentine meanderings of the River Forth, as well as Ben Lomond, the Trossachs and Ben Ledi.

Drop down northeast to a saddle, cross a stile and start the stiff ascent northeast, with the fence on your left, up to the survey pillar on the summit of **Ben Cleuch** (721m),

THE STABLES

This handsome building was completed at the beginning of the 19th century for the owners of the surrounding Alva Estate. It housed 17 horses and incorporated coach houses and housing for grooms, a coachman, butler and gamekeeper. Though Alva House was demolished more than 50 years ago, the stables survived and have been beautifully restored. After an interlude as Farriers Hotel, the building is now a private residence.

40 minutes from Ben Ever. An excellent direction plate helps to identify Arran on the southwestern horizon, North Berwick Law far to the east and, on especially clear days, Ben Nevis to the north.

Set out downhill (southeast) with the fence. At a junction turn right (south) and follow it over the Law (638m). Then comes a steep descent on a rough path that becomes – or seems to become – nearly vertical on the nose of the spur, towards the confluence of Gannel Burn to the east and Daiglen Burn to the west. Near the end, scramble down small crags to a footbridge across Gannel Burn. Go up to the right briefly then turn right again and go down to cross the Mill Glen Burn on another footbridge. The narrow path sneaks through **Mill Glen** well above the burn. Ignore a junction on the right and continue down; go through gates, past a quarry and on down to the car park from where the walk started (two hours from Ben Cleuch).

MORE WALKS

ISLE OF ARRAN Glen Rosa to Lochranza

The extremely rugged ridge on the western side of Glen Rosa, and its extension from Cir Mhòr via Caisteal Abhail towards the north coast, offers as fine a ridge walk as you'll find anywhere in Scotland. Although it looks impossible from below, there are miraculous ways around those crags and peaks, which only experienced rock climbers can traverse. The views all along are tremendous, especially to the west. The 11-mile (18km) walk includes 1360m of climbing, much of which is precipitous and rocky; allow at least seven hours. The recommended map is Harvey's 1:40,000 *Arran*, which includes coverage of this walk at 1:25,000. See p102 for transport details from Lochranza.

ISLE OF JURA Paps of Jura

Jura is a magnificently lonely island, the wildness of its uplands only matched on the Isle of Rum and on Harris in the Western Isles. Fewer than 200 people live here, mostly in the southern corner; the rest of the island is uninhabited and unspoiled.

In Craighouse you'll find the excellent **Jura Hotel** (☎ 01496 820243). To reach Jura catch the **CalMac** (☎ 08705 650000; www.calmac.co.uk) ferry from Kennacraig to Port Askaig on the Isle of Islay then the small **Argyll & Bute Council** (☎ 01631 562125) boat to Feolin. From there a bus goes to Craighouse and north to Inverlussa (twice daily, Monday to Saturday).

The OS Landranger 1:50,000 map No 61 is the one to have. The Scottish Mountaineering Club's *The Islands of Scotland including Skye* by DJ Fabian, GE Little and DN Williams covers the mountains with a short section on path walks. Much of the island is managed for deer stalking, so the best time for a visit is early May to early July. For more information about Jura, visit www.isle-of-islay.com.

The three conical Paps of Jura – Beinn a' Chaolais (734m), Beinn an Oir (784m) and Beinn Shiantaich (755m) – dominate the island. A circuit of their summits provides a fairly energetic and outstandingly scenic day; the distance is 11.6 miles (18.5km), with about 1500m of ascent. Allow eight hours – the going is generally rough. A convenient place to start is by the bridge over the Corran River, about 3 miles (5km) north of Craighouse.

ISLE OF ISLAY

Although separated from Jura by the narrow Sound of Islay, this island is remarkably different. Together, Jura and Islay can provide an extremely varied two-island walking holiday.

Larger and more settled, although much less rugged, Islay (pronounced 'i-lay') has opportunities for plenty of easy and medium walks, plus some more demanding ones. The west coast has fine beaches, especially Machir and Lossit Bays, and there are numerous historic and prehistoric sites to visit, notably Finlaggan, the ancient seat of the Lords of the Isles. The highest peak, Beinn Bheigeir (491m), can be climbed from near the hamlet of Ardtalla. In the far south is the Oa, a bumpy area with some fine sea cliffs; a short walk leads to the American Monument. One longer walk on the east coast follows an old track to the deserted settlement of Proaig, then crosses the mountains above the Sound of Jura to Storakaig and a minor road to Ballygrant.

For further information contact the **Bowmore TIC** (☎ 08707 200617; info@islay.visitscotland.com); the local website www.isle-of-islay.com is another useful resource. A locally produced walks booklet describes a dozen varied walks. OS Landranger 1:50,000 map No 60 is the one to take. For details of ferry services see the Isle of Jura section on p117; the ferry also calls at Port Ellen.

ISLE OF BUTE

West Island Way

This 'long-distance' path – the first on a Scottish island – encompasses some of the best walking the Isle of Bute has to offer. As well as a changing landscape, including coast, moors, farmland and forest, the Way showcases the island's natural attractions, geography, geology and history. It is 30 miles (50km) long, the walking is easy and it can be split into two comfortable days. The Way is signposted and navigation is straightforward, using a brochure with map available locally. For more information contact the **Rothesay TIC** (☎ 08707 200619); check the **Isle of Bute Discovery Centre** (www.visitbute.com) website for more local background.

KINTYRE PENINSULA

Kintyre Way

At the time of research, this was Scotland's newest long-distance path. Opened in 2006, the **Kintyre Way** (www.kintyreway.com) winds its way for 88 miles (143km) through the long, slender Kintyre peninsula, which reaches out to the Atlantic Ocean immediately west of the Isle of Arran. The fully waymarked way follows paths, tracks and various minor roads through low hills and forests and beside beaches, from the large village of Tarbert to Southend on the peninsula's south coast. Accommodation is available throughout the five to seven days of the walk. The website is the only point of contact and includes a good description of the route, with accompanying maps, an accommodation list and up-to-date news about the Way.

AROUND LOCH TAY & BEYOND

Rob Roy Way

This imaginative long-distance route links Drymen and Pitlochry via Aberfoyle, Callander, Lochearnhead, Killin, Loch Tay

and Aberfeldy. The 79-mile (126km) Way follows forest and moorland tracks, paths and some minor roads, through some of the finest mountain and glen scenery in central Scotland. It can be crammed into five days or taken at a more leisurely pace across seven or eight. Accommodation is readily available; Drymen and Pitlochry are well served by public transport. The superb guide, *The Rob Roy Way*, by Jacquetta Megarry, who was closely involved in developing the Way, includes a map and detailed description of the route.

Cateran Trail

This is a scenic, circular walk of 64 miles (103km) based around the town of Blairgowrie, at the foot of the southernmost Cairngorms, and reaching into the hills as far north as Spittal of Glenshee. The route commemorates the caterans, the fighting men of Highland clans (who specialised in cattle stealing), and irregular soldiers and marauders who were active during the 15th and 16th centuries generally. The mostly low-level, waymarked route passes through countryside that has been farmed for centuries, woodlands and moorland, along tracks, paths and forest or minor roads. It can easily be completed in five days, making use of accommodation in the villages and small towns along the way. *The Cateran Trail* by Jacquetta Megarry, in handy spiral-bound format, is a beautifully illustrated guide with all the information you'll need for the walk, including a drop-down route map. Contact **Blairgowrie TIC** (☎ 01250 872960; blairgowrietit@visitscotland.com) for more information about the trail.

FIFE

Fife Coastal Path

Although Fife isn't a major walking area, it does have a scenic and varied coastline, much of it accessible along long-established paths. **Fife Coastal Path** (FCP; www.fifecoastalpath.co.uk) incorporates these paths in a fully waymarked route linking North Queensferry on the Firth of Forth (across the water from Edinburgh) in the south with Tay Bridge on the Firth of Tay in the north, a distance of 81 miles (135km).

Fife's coastal landscape bears the imprints of its industrial and maritime heritage, and one or two stretches of the FCP are better

seen from the window of a bus. However, the pluses easily outweigh the minuses – the constantly changing vistas across the Firth of Forth and along the subtly indented coast, and the fascinating fishing villages of Elie, Pittenweem and Crail on the east coast. Bird life is plentiful, common seals bask on rocks and the route passes through many fine woodlands.

With the most walker-friendly section in the northeast, North Queensferry is the

place to start, saving the best until last; allow at least five days to go the full distance. The FCP website has plenty of useful information, detailed maps and contacts for the five TICs that can help with accommodation bookings. *Along the Fife Coastal Path* by Hamish Brown, both a local and one of Scotland's best-known walkers, will be an excellent companion. OS Landranger 1:50,000 map Nos 59, 65 and 66 cover the walk.

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