

Central Highlands & Islands

Scotland's central Highlands and islands together make a superb area of exceptional natural beauty, brimful of contrasts and rich in alluring challenges. In the far west, floating dramatically in the sheltered waters of the outer Firth of Clyde, the rugged Isle of Arran has something for everyone. There are spectacular, rock-encrusted ridges and peaks, crowned by Goatfell, the island's highest. The peaceful, scenic and very accessible northern coastline offers surprisingly remote, fairly undemanding walking.

Scotland's first national park, Loch Lomond & the Trossachs, embraces a wonderful array of glens, lochs and mountains, extending southwards from the Breadalbane district to the southern end of Loch Lomond, and eastwards from the Arrochar Alps to Loch Earn and Callander. Foremost among the high places are two renowned peaks: Ben Lomond, the southernmost of the country's 284 Munros, affords magnificent views far and wide; while the iconic Cobbler, a fantastical cluster of huge granite tors in the Arrochar Alps, offers a test of nerves and skills almost second to none.

This superb slice of Scotland is compact and easy to reach from Glasgow, Scotland's largest and most vibrant city. There are good public transport services to and around Arran, and to Arrochar. We have divided this chapter into two manageable sections: Loch Lomond & the Trossachs National Park and the Isle of Arran. These are followed by some notes about other walks on Arran and the magnificent wilderness of the remote Isle of Jura on p357.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Summitting **Ben Lomond** (p349) for an eagle's-eye view of the divide between the Highlands and lowlands
- Scrambling to the top of the fearsome boulders on the summit of the **Cobbler** (p350)
- Weaving through jumbled boulders on the ascent of Arran's **Goatfell** (p357)

WALKING IN SCOTLAND

Scotland's northerly location, and its more-mountainous and less-populated terrain, have crucial implications for walkers. Quite simply, things are different here from the rest of Britain. Many of the areas you visit are remote by British standards, and the weather is likely to be more severe, making walks in the Scottish mountains potentially more serious than those south of the border.

When planning your walking trip in Scotland you need to take into account the shorter walking season – this is discussed in more detail on p24. Similarly, it is a good idea to be familiar with the Scottish Outdoor Access Code (see boxed text, p351). Rights of way are discussed in the boxed text on p32.

The West Highland Way (p418) passes between the loch and Ben Lomond, and many Way walkers take a day off to climb the mountain.

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.

On the open moorland you may see the ptarmigan, a chicken-sized bird that blends beautifully with its surroundings; its plumage, speckled-grey in summer, turns white in winter.

The lower slopes of the Ben are partly covered with conifer plantations, but above this, the ground, owned by the National Trust for Scotland (NTS), is open. At least one enclosure – a large fenced area within which native trees are thriving, safe from grazing sheep and deer – has been established. The trust also repairs and maintains the main footpaths in its territory and there are few places where you have to negotiate boggy ground.

PLANNING

Like all Scottish mountains, Ben Lomond can create its own weather, so be prepared for cooler and windier conditions as you ascend.

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, either the Ordnance Survey (OS) Landranger 1:50,000 map No 56 *Loch Lomond & Inveraray* or OS Explorer 1:25,000 map No 364 *Loch Lomond North* is preferable.

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

**NEAREST TOWN
Rowardennan**

Rowardennan is no more than a large white building, housing toilets and an unstaffed display about the national park.

Beyond Balmaha (6 miles south of the Rowardennan) there are no villages, but there's still a reasonable choice of accommodation. However, the nearest shops, tourist office and ATM, as well as a wider range of B&Bs and hotels, are in Drymen (p421).

SLEEPING & EATING

Cashel Camping and Caravan Site (☎ 01360-870234; www.forestholidays.co.uk; sites for 2 £14) is right on the loch shore, midway between Balmaha and Rowardennan. It has a small café and a shop and is usually busy. A special back-packer rate (£5 for 2) is available if you arrive on foot.

Rowardennan SYHA Hostel (☎ 0870 004 1148; www.syha.org.uk; dm £14), in the former Rowardennan Lodge, is very convenient but it's also very popular, so it pays to book ahead.

Rowardennan Hotel (☎ 01360-870273; www.rowardennanhotel.co.uk; s/d £60/110; 🍷 lunch & dinner) does reasonably priced bar meals in the lively Rob Roy bar.

In Balmaha you'll find the **Oak Tree Inn** (☎ 01360-870357; 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.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

The only public transport to Rowardennan is a small ferry, operated by the Rowardennan Hotel, which plies the loch to and from Inverbeg on the western shore during summer. Take the **Scottish Citylink** (☎ 0870 550

5050) bus service to Inverbeg from Glasgow (one hour, five daily) or Fort William (2¼ hours, five daily), then catch the **passenger ferry** (☎ 01360-870273) to Rowardennan. The ferry departs at 10.30am, 2.30pm and 6pm, and returns at 10am, 2pm and 5.30pm.

By road, from Drymen (20 miles from Glasgow) follow the B837 northwest for 4 miles to Balmaha then continue on the loch-side minor road to Rowardennan.

**THE WALK
Rowardennan to Ptarmigan**

1½–2 hours, 2.5 miles (4km)

The walk starts and finishes at the large Rowardennan car park, at the end of the road from Balmaha. 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. Soon swing right through a gate in front of the youth hostel, then turn left, following the route of the West Highland Way with the thistle-and-hexagon logo.

Pass Ardess Lodge National Trust for Scotland Ranger Centre and Ben Lomond Cottage on the right, cross a burn and turn right onto a path through the trees. It climbs beside the burn for a short distance

then veers left up the bracken-covered mountainside. As you climb steadily across the slope you're treated to views of the loch and the mountains on its western side and, further on, Ptarmigan summit comes into view. Higher up, above some small cliffs, 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. The fine views include virtually the full length of the loch and its cluster of islands, and the Arrochar mountains to the west.

Ptarmigan to Ben Lomond

1 hour, 1 mile (1.5km)

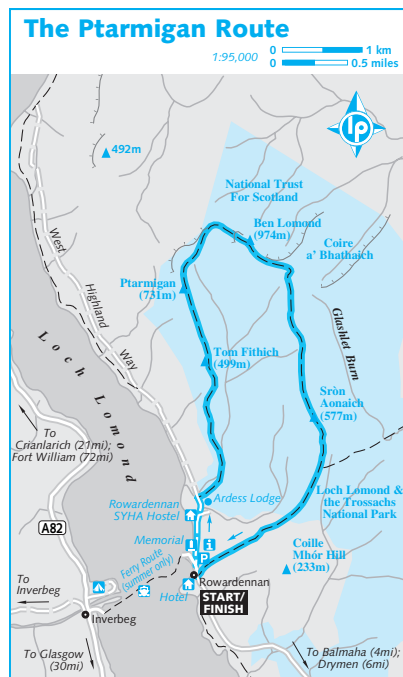
The path leads on along the bumpy ridge, through a chain of grassy, rocky knobs to a narrow gap where stepping stones keep you out of the mud. The final, steep climb begins through the formidable crags, but natural rock steps and the well-maintained path make it quite easy. From a grassy shelf there's one more straightforward, rocky climb to the trig point on the summit of **Ben Lomond** (974m). The all-round view extends from Ben Nevis on the northern horizon, to the Isle of Arran in the southwest, the Firth of Clyde, the Arrochar Alps (notably the awl-like profile of the Cobbler) just across the loch, and the Campsie Fells and Glasgow to the south.

MUNROS & MUNRO BAGGING

In 1891 Sir Hugh Munro, a member of the recently founded Scottish Mountaineering Club (SMC), published a list of more than 500 Scottish summits over 3000ft – the height at which they became 'real' mountains. (The metric equivalent, 914m, somehow loses its mystique in translation.) Sir Hugh differentiated between 283 'mountains in their own right' (those with a significant drop on all sides or with summits well clear of the next peak) and their satellites, now known as 'tops'.

In 1901 Reverend AE Robertson was the first to climb them all, initiating the pastime that has become known as Munro bagging. This has grown to a national passion – there are books, CD-ROMs, charts and maps about Munros. More than 3550 people have completed the full round and the number is growing rapidly. The first person to complete a continuous round was writer Hamish Brown in 1974. Since then at least one continuous round has been completed in winter and the time for the fastest round is lowered regularly. Munro's original list has been revised by the SMC and in late 2006 it totalled 284. List or no list, the great majority of Munros offer outstanding walks with superb views. Of the several websites devoted to the Munros (and other lists) the SMC's is as illuminating as any (www.smc.org.uk).

Once you've bagged the Munros there are other collections of summits to tackle, such as the 219 Corbetts – Scottish mountains over 2500ft (700m) with a drop of at least 500ft (150m) on all sides – and the Donalds, lowland mountains over 2000ft (610m). The extraordinary feat of a complete round of all 728 summits, totalling 351,000m of ascent, was made in 1998.



Ben Lomond to Rowardennan

2 hours, 3.5 miles (5.5km)

The wide path starts to descend immediately, 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 Srón Aonaich (577m) and the path resumes zigzagging through open moorland. Cross a footbridge and continue into the conifer forest along an open clearing. The path steepens and becomes rockier and more eroded, down through mixed woodland. Eventually it emerges near the Rowardennan car park.

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.

THE COBBLER

Duration 5–5¼ hours
Distance 8 miles (12.8km)
Difficulty moderate–demanding
Start/Finish Forestry Commission
 Cobbler car park
Nearest Town Arrochar (opposite)
Transport bus, train

Summary Ascend one of Scotland's most famous and unforgettable peaks; don't forget to pack your head for heights for the final scramble.

Ben Arthur, fondly known as the Cobbler (881m), with its distinctive three-pronged rooster crown, 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 walkers and climbers. It dominates the southernmost section of the Arrochar Alps, bounded by Glen Loin, the head of Loch Long and Glen Croe (along the A83) in the south, Loch Lomond in the east and Glen Kinglas in the west. The last Ice Age littered the mountain with moraine and left behind the prominent Narnain Boulders below the Cobbler's peaks.

The popular story of the mountain's name identifies a hunched cobbler (the north and centre peaks) listening to his wife Jean (the south peak). The mountain is inextricably linked to the birth of Scottish rock climbing, especially among young, working-class Glaswegians, and the Cobbler Club, founded in 1866, was Scotland's first climbing group.

The path gains 850m in height and ends with a steep, rocky section from the corrie at the peak's base. Above that is a short, exhilarating scramble. Seen from the corrie, the south peak's steep sides are a popular climber's haunt. 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 damp). People wander about the centre peak, summoning courage or just 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. Better coverage is provided by 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 the village of Arrochar, is a good source of maps and information about local walks. Staff can also help with accommodation bookings.

NEAREST TOWN Arrochar

pop 650

A rather scattered village along the shores of Loch Long, Arrochar suffers somewhat from

heavy vehicle traffic, but has an unbeatable view across the loch to the Cobbler. There's an ATM in the service station; otherwise the nearest is in Inveraray, 22 miles west.

SLEEPING & EATING

Ardgartan Caravan & Camping Site (☎ 01301-702293; www.forestholidays.co.uk; A83; £15) 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 (☎ 01301-702428; 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.

SCOTTISH OUTDOOR ACCESS CODE

Scotland has enjoyed a long tradition of mutual tolerance between landowners and walkers about access to the hills and moors, provided walkers observed what was known as the Country Code, as well as local restrictions during lambing, deer-stalking and grouse-shooting seasons. During the 1990s the number of people going out into the mountains soared, however, and demand for access to lowland walking areas grew.

In 1996 the Access Forum brought together representatives from among land managers, recreation groups and public agencies. It came up with a Concordat on Access, which, essentially, endorsed responsible freedom of access, subject to reasonable constraints for management and conservation. However, it was felt that the agreement merited legal status, and the issue was high on the agenda of the new Scottish Parliament after 1999.

After several years of wide-ranging consultation and, at times, acrimonious debate, the Scottish Parliament passed the pioneering Land Reform (Scotland) Act in 2003 and the following year approved the Scottish Outdoor Access Code. These conferred statutory access rights on many outdoor activities, including walking and wild camping, and on farmers and landowners. These rights don't apply to any kind of motorised activity or to hunting, shooting or fishing.

Access rights can be exercised along paths and tracks and across open ground over most of Scotland, from urban parks and paths to hills and forests, from farmland and field margins to beaches, lochs and rivers. The rights don't apply to buildings or their immediate surroundings, houses or their gardens, or most land in which crops are growing.

When you're in the outdoors the key points are as follows:

- Take personal responsibility for your own actions and act safely
- Respect people's privacy and peace of mind
- Help land managers and others to work safely and effectively
- Care for your environment and take litter home
- Keep your dog under proper control

Scottish Natural Heritage administers the Access Code; it has set up a helpful website (www.outdooraccess-scotland.com), which goes into the code in detail; click on the 'Scottish Outdoor Access Code' link. Leaflets outlining the Code are widely available.

Greenbank Licensed Restaurant (☎ 01301-702305; 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 have 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 (1½ hours, three daily).

First ScotRail (☎ 0845 755 0033) trains on the West Highland line from Glasgow Queen St to Fort William stop at Arrochar & Tarbet station (1½ hours, three daily), 20 minutes' walk from Arrochar. The overnight sleeper service between London Euston and Fort William also calls here; see p363 for details.

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

GETTING TO/FROM THE WALK

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

THE WALK Cobbler Car Park to Narnain Boulders

1½–1¾ hours, 2.5 miles (4km)

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 uphill to a forestry road. 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 point of the ascent. Follow the clear path upstream, crossing numerous tributaries, to the distinctive **Narnain Boulders**.

Narnain Boulders to Summit Peaks

1–1¼ hours, 1.5 miles (2.4km)

Over the next few hundred metres 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 glen for another mile to the watershed, where it divides. Take the southern path, 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.

Summit Peaks to Cobbler Car Park

2½–2¾ hours, 4 miles (6.4km)

Simply retrace your steps back to the car park.

ISLE OF ARRAN

Arran is often called 'Scotland in miniature'; the steep mountains and long, deep glens in the north of the island are reminiscent of the Highlands, while the rolling moorland and the scattered farms of the south resemble parts of the Borders or Dumfries & Galloway. There's even a long, straight valley dividing the north from the south, a minor version of the mainland's Great Glen. Goatfell (874m), the highest peak, overlooks Brodick, the island's capital on the mid-east coast.

The island, in the Firth of Clyde, is only an hour's ferry ride from the mainland and is easily accessible from Glasgow and its hinterland. Consequently, it's very popular with visitors from Easter to October, including many walkers, for whom Goatfell is the main attraction. This section describes a circular route up Goatfell and the More Walks section (p357) outlines an easy-going outing along the scenic north coast and a challenging traverse of the island's northern spine.

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 NTS properties (Glen Rosa, Goatfell and Brodick Country Park) is unrestricted at all times.

Maps

Arran is covered by two OS maps – Landranger 1:50,000 No 69 *Isle of Arran* and Explorer 1:25,000 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. It has lots of practical and background information and is highly recommended.

Books

Alan Forbes' *25 Walks Ayrshire & Arran* includes 10 varied walks on the island. The maps are better than those in Paddy Dillon's *Walking in the Isle of Arran*, which describes 41 day walks. *The Islands* by Nick Williams describes five adventurous Arran outings. *Arran Behind the Scenes* by Gilean Bussell delves into the island's colourful history.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

All public transport timetable details can be obtained from **Traveline** (☎ 0870 608 2608; www.travelinescotland.co.uk).

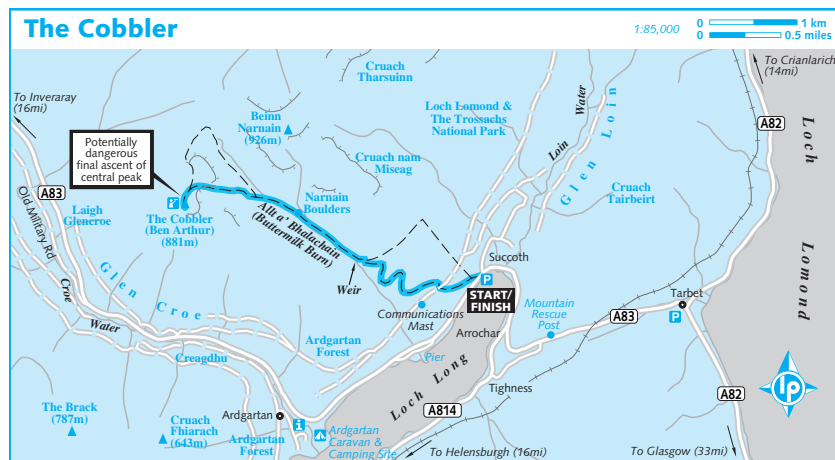
Stagecoach Western (☎ 01292-613500) bus service X15 links Glasgow to Ardrrossan (1½ hour, twice daily), the ferry terminal on the Ayrshire coast.

A GEOLOGIST'S PARADISE

The Isle of Arran's geology is amazingly varied. Here you'll find all kinds of rock types and evidence of many different geological and landscape-forming processes, which have taken place over countless millennia. In fact, a trip to Arran is virtually compulsory for geology students.

The northern rocky peaks, ridges and deep glens consist of granite, sculpted by glaciers during the last Ice Age. There are several other smaller and more-scattered outcrops of granite in the southern half of the island, including Holy Island, opposite Lamlash. In the north the granite mass is almost totally surrounded by much older schist and slate, and some river sediment. Sedimentary rocks – limestone and sandstone – monopolise the north coast.

To demystify the complexities of Arran's geology, two readable publications are available locally: the first is the *Isle of Arran Trails: Geology* brochure and the second is the more-detailed *Arran & the Clyde Islands: A Landscape Fashioned by Geology*.



First ScotRail (☎ 0845 755 0033; www.firstscotrail.com) operates trains from Glasgow Central to Ardrossan Harbour (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 (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 (30 minutes, at least seven daily March to October).

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

A GOATFELL CIRCUIT

Duration	6–7½ hours
Distance	11.25 miles (18km)
Difficulty	moderate–demanding
Start/Finish	Brodick (opposite)
Transport	bus, ferry

Summary The connoisseur's route to Arran's highest peak, through scenic Glen Rosa and along steep, rock-encrusted ridges to spectacular views from the summit.

There are several routes to the summit of Goatfell. The most popular are from the east – from Brodick, Cladach or Brodick Castle. A quieter and more pleasing approach is from the west, through Glen Rosa to the Saddle and then up the steep, narrow west ridge to North Goatfell and along Stacach Ridge to the summit. The return to Brodick is via the steep, rocky eastern face to moorland and the grounds of Brodick Castle.

NATIONAL TRUST FOR SCOTLAND ON ARRAN

The **National Trust for Scotland** (NTS; www.nts.org.uk) has been a big landowner on Arran since 1958, when the Brodick estate was placed in its care after centuries of the Hamilton family's stewardship. Today the 109-sq-mile estate takes in the Goatfell massif, Glen Rosa and its western slopes, and Brodick Castle and its grounds. These last two are the nucleus of **Brodick Country Park** (🗓 Apr–Oct), which has a network of waymarked paths, fine formal gardens, a visitor centre, NTS shop, tearoom and, of course, the castle.

Elsewhere, the NTS is encouraging the regeneration of native woodland with enclosures (fenced areas to keep out red deer), where oaks, rowans and other species are making a comeback.

Footpath maintenance and repair is another big commitment, especially around Goatfell, where staff, in cooperation with the Arran Access Trust, wage a constant battle against the elements and the impact of thousands of walkers' feet.

The NTS has done a superb job of repairing and building paths and the descent is completely mud-free. There are steep cliffs on both sides of the west ridge and Stacach Ridge, where extra care is needed. It can turn cold, wet and windy very quickly, so make sure you are well prepared, and don't forget a map and compass.

PLANNING

This route can be walked in either direction, but we recommend clockwise as the overall ascent is more gentle, although it still has some steep bits. 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.

Alternatives

Of the alternative approaches to Goatfell, Corrie Burn is preferable to Glen Sannox, which is a boggy glen with a hair-raising climb to the Saddle at its head. Corrie is a spread-out village on the east coast, 5.5 miles north of Brodick and well served by local buses. At the southern end of the village, a 'Public Footpath to Goatfell' sign points along a narrow road. After a few hundred metres leave the road at a sharp bend, just before the settlement of High Corrie, and follow a vehicle track then a path up Corrie Burn's glen to a saddle below North Goatfell. It's a steep climb most of the way and the ground can be wet in places.

Guided Walks

The NTS countryside rangers at **Brodick Country Park** (☎ 01770-302462), about 2 miles

north of Brodick, organise a program of walks (May to October), which range from afternoon wildlife strolls through to low-level forests to days out on Goatfell.

NEAREST TOWN

Brodick

pop 621

Brodick is the ideal walking base in Arran. The mainland ferry docks here and the town is the hub of the island's excellent bus services.

Brodick tourist office (☎ 01770-303774; www.ayrshire-arran.com; The Pier; 🗓 daily Easter–Oct, Mon–Sat Oct–Easter) offers an array of leaflets, maps and guidebooks. Staff can help with accommodation reservations. All bus timetables are detailed in the free *Area Transport Guide*. The local weather forecast is displayed daily.

Arran Active (☎ 01770-302416; www.arranactive.co.uk; Cladach Tourist Office; 🗓 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 (☎ 01770-302380; sites for 2 £4), on the Glen Rosa road, is about 2.5 miles northwest of Brodick Pier. It 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 near the northwestern tip of the island, 14 miles from Brodick. It's not ideal for Goatfell but the island's bus service makes it fairly easy to get around. The nearest shops are in Brodick.

Orwin B&B (☎ 01770-302307; 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 Ormisdale (☎ 01770-302100; Knowe Rd; mains £8–12; 🗓 lunch Sat & Sun, dinner daily) hosts the local Mountain Rescue Team, so the atmosphere is very compatible. The varied menu features local produce, which you can

wash down with draught ales brewed on the island. Save some space for Arran Dark, a wonderfully fruity after-dinner ale.

Oscars of Arran (☎ 01770-302427; Sannox Rd; breakfast £5, mains £6–10; 🗓 breakfast, lunch & dinner) sits beside Glen Cloy Burn just off the main road and only about 1 mile northwest of Brodick. It's a small, well-lit place with outside tables, where you can enjoy a range of snacks or more substantial, hunger-satisfying dishes. It also stocks a fair selection of health foods.

For self-catering and picnic lunches, there are two **Co-op** supermarkets on Shore Rd, open daily, but save bread purchases for **Wooleys Bakery** (Shore Rd). The **Arran Brewery** (☎ 01770-302061; www.arranbrewery.com; Cladach; 🗓 daily) is very conveniently located beside the Goatfell path. Tours and tastings are available – a good way to finish the walk.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

For Brodick transport details, see p353.

GETTING TO/FROM THE WALK

Stagecoach Western (☎ 01770-302000) bus service No 324 stops at Cladach near the end of the walk (10 minutes, three daily).

THE WALK

Brodick to the Saddle

2½–3 hours, 5.5 miles (9km)

From Brodick, walk generally 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. About 100m along this road turn right down a narrow road, the 'Glen Rosa Cart Track'. Follow this to the Glen Rosa Farm Campsite (left), above which the sealed section ends, and 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, to the **Saddle**. From here, among the granite boulders, there's a fine view down Glen Sannox to the sea. Cir Mhòr's alarmingly steep crags rise immediately to the left,

with the castellated ridge of Caisteal Abhail (859m), Arran's second-highest peak, and the notorious cleft of Ceum na Caillich (Witch's Step) to the north. To the right the features of the next stage are clearly visible: bouldery West Ridge, leading steeply up to North Goatfell; and Stacach Ridge, crowned by four small, rocky peaks.

The Saddle to Goatfell

1½–2 hours, 1.25 miles (2km)

From the Saddle, paths lead 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. After about an hour

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, and return to the ridge. Turn back to gain the summit of **Goatfell** (874m) from the east.

From North Goatfell you can keep to the crest of the ridge, scrambling over the rocky knobs. Alternatively, drop down to the eastern side of the ridge and follow the less exposed paths below the knobs.

The final section involves hopping over piles of giant boulders to the summit of Goatfell, about 45 minutes from its satellite. The summit is topped by a trig point and a large topographical direction plate, from which you can identify the features in the panoramic view. On a good day, Skiddaw in the Lake District, Ben Lomond and even the coast of Northern Ireland can be seen. The whole of Arran is spread out below, with the conical mass of Holy Island rearing up from the sea in Lamlash Bay.

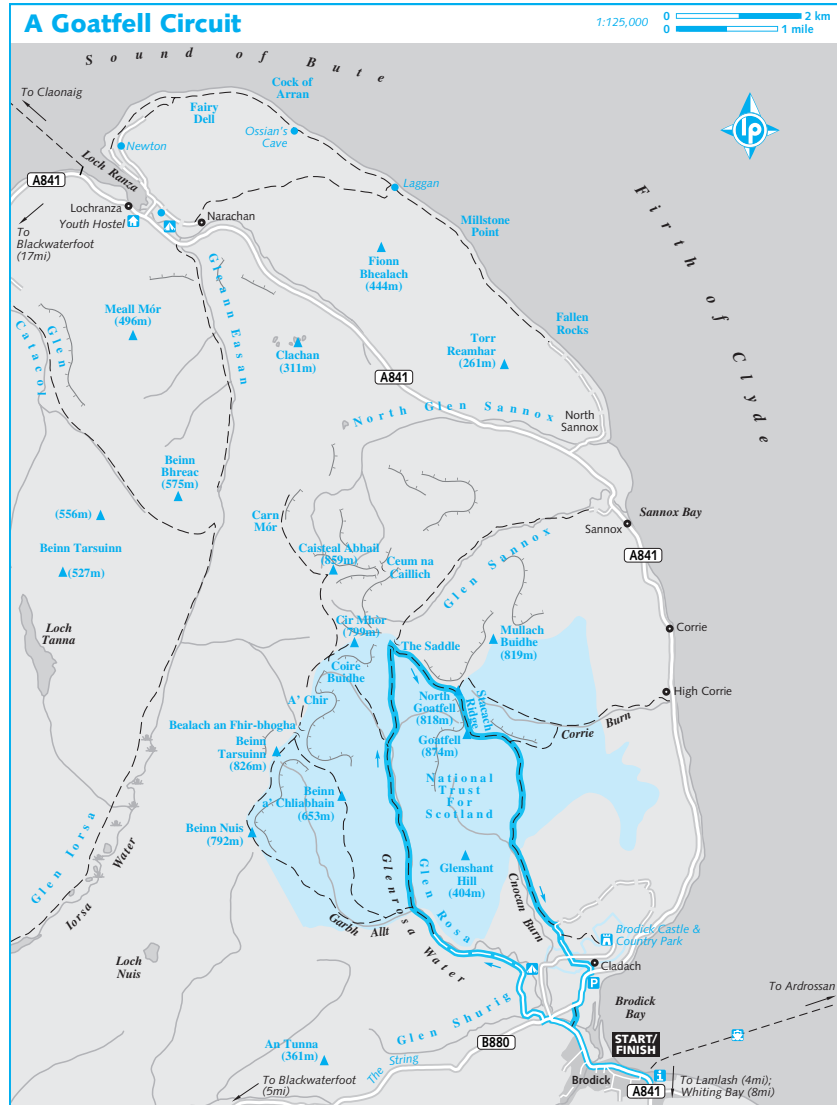
Goatfell to Brodick

2–2½ hours, 4.5 miles (7km)

From the summit a path winds down the steep eastern face of the peak, then straightens out as the ridge takes shape. In 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 on then turn right at a T-junction. Go down through conifers, cross a sealed road and go on to Cladach and Arran Brewery; the main road is a little further on.

The route into Brodick 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. It leads back to the main road beside Arran Heritage Museum. Follow the roadside path into town.

To reach **Brodick Castle and Country Park** (see the boxed text, p354), 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.



MORE WALKS

ISLE OF ARRAN Cock of Arran

For a change of scene, or if the cloud is too low for a hill walk, the north coast provides fine walking between North Sannox and Lochranza along an almost-level 8-mile (13km) route. There are impressive cliffs, isolated cottages, remains of early coal mining and salt harvesting, and the Cock of Arran itself – a prominent block of sandstone, not named after a rooster but probably from the Lowland Scots word meaning 'cap' or 'headwear'. The views across the Sound of Bute to the mainland, the Isle of Bute and part of the Kintyre peninsula are excellent. There's also a good chance of seeing common seals and a wide variety of birds. The rise and fall of the tide isn't great, so high tide shouldn't complicate things. You will need about four hours, though the boulder-hopping sections and some potentially wet patches could easily increase the time.

The walk starts at a picnic area (with toilets) at the end of a minor road that branches off the A841 about 600m north-west of Sannox. In Lochranza, park by the road at the northwest corner of the Lochranza golf course, or at the end of this road beside Loch Ranza. To return to your car at North Sannox, catch a bus (consult the *Area Transport Guide*, available from the Brodick tourist office, p355) to the North Sannox turn, from where it's about 300m to the picnic area. The walk is described in detail in *Lonely Planet's Walking in Scotland*; carry one of the maps listed on p353.

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 Britain. Although it looks impossible from below, there are miraculous ways around those crags and peaks that only experienced rock climbers can traverse. The views all along are tremendous, especially westwards. 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. Consult Paddy Dillon's *Walking in the Isle of Arran* for more information.

ISLE 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 (see p430). Fewer than 200 people now live here, mainly in Craighouse in the southern corner. The rest of the island is uninhabited and unspoiled.

To reach Jura you catch the **Calmac** (☎ 0870 650000; www.calmac.co.uk) ferry from Kennacraig on the Kintyre peninsula to Port Askaig on the Isle of Islay, then the small **Argyll & Bute Council** (☎ 01631-562125) boat to Feolin. From there a local bus regularly goes to Craighouse and north to Inverlussa (twice daily Monday to Saturday).

The OS Landranger 1:50,000 map No 61 *Jura & Colonsay* is the one to have. The SMC'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 would be from early May to early

July. For more information about Jura, visit www.isle-of-islay.com.

The Paps of Jura

A trio of conical peaks – Beinn a' Chaolais (734m), Beinn an Oir (784m) and Beinn Shiantaich (755m) – dominate the island and are visible from afar. 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 at least eight hours for the walk – the going is generally rough, the mountains are very steep-sided and paths are generally less well beaten than on mainland mountains.

The West Coast

If you're a coast-walking enthusiast, Jura has enough to justify several return trips. Along the west coast, all 40 miles of it, you'll find raised beaches, caves, rocky headlands and natural arches. To explore the full length would take a couple of weeks of rugged, self-contained walking, as isolated as any in Britain. Feolin makes a convenient starting point; the track to Glenbatrick from the east-coast road (4 miles north of Craighouse) is another possible starting point.