

# Scotland

## Long-Distance Paths

What Scotland lacks in its number of long-distance paths (LDPs), it certainly makes up for in their sheer quality and variety. The two paths described in detail in this chapter – the Southern Upland Way and the West Highland Way – are second-to-none for challenging walking, supremely beautiful scenery and fascinating historical associations. Both are well waymarked and signposted, and have an adequate range of accommodation. They follow historic tracks and paths, old railway formations, forest tracks, river-side paths and minor roads.

The Southern Upland Way, threading across the uplands and glens of Dumfries & Galloway and the Borders regions, links Portpatrick on the west coast with Cockburnspath on the eastern shores. It takes you through small villages and towns, across wide-open, rolling moorland, through forests and woodlands and past some beautiful rivers and lochs.

The very popular West Highland Way follows a fairly direct route between Milngavie, on the outskirts of Glasgow, Scotland's largest city, and the town of Fort William, 96 miles to the north. Along the way you travel from the agricultural lowlands of central Scotland into the rugged mountains and deep glens of the Highlands. The Way passes some famous landmarks, including Loch Lomond, wild and lonely Rannoch Moor, Glen Coe and Ben Nevis.

Among other long-distance routes, the Great Glen Way, between Fort William and Inverness, the capital of the Highlands, offers the opportunity to undertake a real Scottish odyssey, continuing on from the West Highland Way. St Cuthbert's Way dangles an even more exciting temptation for long-distance enthusiasts, linking England's mighty Pennine Way and the Southern Upland Way. All you need is time!

### HIGHLIGHTS

- Trekking right across the country from the west to the east coast along the challenging **Southern Upland Way** (p408)
- Following in the footsteps of drovers, soldiers and other wayfarers along the magnificently scenic **West Highland Way** (p418)

## THE SOUTHERN UPLAND WAY

<b>Duration</b>	9 days
<b>Distance</b>	209.5 miles (338km)
<b>Difficulty</b>	moderate–demanding
<b>Start</b>	Portpatrick (p410)
<b>Finish</b>	Cockburnspath (p410)
<b>Transport</b>	bus, train

**Summary** An extremely challenging, very long route from one side of the country to the other, through remote country in the west and more settled areas in the east, passing many fascinating historical sites.

The Southern Upland Way (SUW), Britain's first official coast-to-coast LDP, traverses one of the broadest parts of Scotland, through Dumfries & Galloway and the Borders. The route goes across the grain of the countryside, roller-coasting over hills and moorland and through conifer plantations. It also passes through deciduous woodland and agricultural land, mainly on its eastern half.

The going underfoot ranges from sealed roads to muddy forest paths. There are some long stretches (over 2 miles) on sealed (although not busy) road, which some walkers feel should have no place on official routes. There's some comfort in the fact that they do link some very fine paths across the hills and through woodlands.

## PLANNING

The majority of people walk from southwest to northeast. It could be said this means the prevailing wind is at your back, but when the Way was originally walked for this book, the persistent north wind was coming either from the side or head-on. There is much to be said, however, for finishing in the east, amid more open, settled countryside, where shorter days are possible, than in the west with some unavoidably big daily distances.

Accommodation is sparse in some areas, so you have to anticipate some long days. Camping or staying in bothies gives more flexibility but all the necessary gear weighs heavily, especially on days of 20 miles or more. These factors, combined with the route's length and remoteness, make it a far more serious proposition than the West Highland Way and most, if not all, national trails in England and Wales. Nevertheless,

the rewards are considerable: a real sense of moving across the country; becoming attuned to gradual changes in the landscape; meeting fellow walkers; and the satisfaction of finally seeing the North Sea on the penultimate day. It's essential to be fit before you start, and preferably to have some long-distance walking experience. It also helps to get into the right mind frame; taking each day as it comes but still keeping the objective firmly fixed – whatever the weather, track condition or distance to be covered.

The route is waymarked with a thistle-hexagon logo and signposts, but you should still carry maps and a compass in case visibility deteriorates on the exposed stretches. Distances between waymarks vary widely, from line-of-sight across moorland to miles apart along minor roads. Sections of the route are changed (often for the better) from time to time, so waymarks should always be trusted over the mapped route.

Many hosts along the Way provide a vehicle back-up service, picking you up from an agreed spot and returning you the next day to continue the walk. Some do this gratis, while others may charge, so check first.

The full walk may take as few as nine or 10 days, or as many as 14 (some people spread the journey over a number of years, doing a bit at a time), depending on your walking speed and number of rest days. The amount of ascent is also a significant factor when planning an itinerary, especially in the central section between Sanquhar and Beattock. Allow some flexibility in your plans, as bad weather, likely at any time, may dictate a change of plans, especially in the more remote and exposed western section.

The following is the nine-day itinerary we suggest:

Day	From	To	Miles/km
1	Portpatrick	New Luce	22.5/36.5
2	New Luce	Bargrennan	17.5/28
3	Bargrennan	St John's Town of Dalry	22/34
4	St John's Town of Dalry	Sanquhar	25/40
5	Sanquhar	Beattock	28/45
6	Beattock	St Mary's Loch	21/34
7	St Mary's Loch	Melrose	30/48.5
8	Melrose	Longformacus	25/40
9	Longformacus	Cockburnspath	18.5/30

## Alternatives

The Way crosses some main roads, along which there are bus services, and a railway line with a convenient train station. These enable you to reach the SUW from many major centres and to walk shorter sections of the trail using public transport for access. A brief note on transport connections is included in each day's walk description. Two suggestions for shorter walks are given in the Route Highlight boxed texts on p411 and p415.

## When to Walk

You can expect a wide range of weather conditions during a complete crossing. Thick mist and strong winds – and warm sunshine – are likely any time between April and September, the best, if not the only, time for the SUW.

Snowfalls on higher ground are not unknown during winter when short daylight hours make it impossible to complete the day's walk before dark.

## Maps & Books

*The Southern Upland Way Official Guide* by Roger Smith is invaluable, with tons of background information and pointers to the many short walks near the Way. It comes packaged with separate maps extracted from seven Ordnance Survey (OS) Landranger 1:50,000 maps covering the full length of the Way. The cost of the pack is less than half that of buying the maps individually. *Scotland's Coast to Coast Trail – the Southern Upland Way* by Alan Castle also includes full OS maps of the route.

## Information Sources

Start planning your trip with the free *Southern Upland Way* brochure (with an annually updated accommodation list). It is available from the **Dumfries & Galloway ranger service** (☎ 01387-260184; Dumfries) and the **Scottish Borders ranger service** (☎ 01835-830281; Jedburgh). They can also provide leaflets on the wildlife, trees and shrubs, geology, history, archaeology and place names of the

## LAWS & CLEUCHS

As you pore over the maps at home, the names of the hills, rivers and other landscape features of the country you are going to walk through can help give a clearer picture of what it will look like, and can also reveal something of the local history. While Gaelic place names are commonplace in the Highlands and islands to the north, in the Southern Uplands they're largely confined to the southwest, even though Gaelic is now little spoken in these parts. In the Borders, however, the names are mainly from Lallans (Lowland Scots), a distinct language still in use, with origins in the languages of settlers from the east, rather than in the Celtic-Gaelic spoken in the west.

Starting at the beginning of the Way, Portpatrick's origin is obvious, given the Irish connection, although it was originally called Portree, from the Gaelic *port righ*, meaning 'harbour of the king'. The name Killantringan, the location of the fine lighthouse, includes the Anglicised version of the common Gaelic prefix *cill*, meaning 'church' – in this case of St Ringan or Ninian. Balmurrie, the farm near New Luce, has another widespread Gaelic element – *bal*, meaning 'farm' or 'small township', in this case of the Murray family.

Laggairn, the site of two prehistoric cairns beyond Balmurrie, means 'hollow of the cairns' (*lag* meaning 'hollow'). Further on you climb over Craig Airie Fell – a hybrid of Gaelic and Norse. Craig is derived from *creag*, which is Gaelic for 'cliff' or 'crag'; *airidh* is Gaelic for 'shieling' (a temporary dwelling); and fell, once a Norse term, is used in a few places to mean 'mountain'. Dalry is from the Gaelic *dail righ*, or 'meadow of the king'. Benbrack, a hill between Dalry and Sanquhar, is the 'speckled breac (hill)', while Fingland comes from the Gaelic *fiann gleann*, meaning 'white glen'.

In the east, the Lammermuir Hills feature prominently in the latter stages; the name comes from the Old English for lamb.

Among the most common names for geographical features is *cleuch*, which comes directly from the Lowland Scots for ravine; the similar sounding *heugh* is a cliff. The name *law* pops up all over the Borders and is the equivalent of a Gaelic *beinn* (mountain or hill), often isolated and conical in shape. A *knowe* is also a high sort of place (a small hillock), while a *dod* is a bare, round hill.

*Scottish Hill and Mountain Names* by Peter Drummond, the Scottish place-names guru, should answer almost any query you can come up with.

area, and booklets describing short circular walks based on the eastern and western sections of the Way. When you've completed the Way, send your details to one of the ranger services to obtain a free completion certificate.

Make sure you check the Way's invaluable official website at [www.dumgal.gov.uk/southernuplandway](http://www.dumgal.gov.uk/southernuplandway). The commercial site [www.southernuplandway.com](http://www.southernuplandway.com) is helpful for accommodation and other services.

For public transport information contact **Traveline** (☎ 0870 608 2608; [www.traveline-scotland.co.uk](http://www.traveline-scotland.co.uk)). Accommodation bookings are most conveniently made through **VisitScotland** (☎ 0845 225 5121; [www.visitscotland.com](http://www.visitscotland.com)).

For tourist offices along the route, see the walk description.

### Baggage Services

**Make Tracks** (☎ 0131-229 6844; [www.maketracks.net](http://www.maketracks.net); 26 Forbes Rd, Edinburgh) can save you a great deal of hassle by organising almost everything – accommodation, luggage transfer, a pick-up and drop-off service, maps and printed notes.

### NEAREST TOWNS

#### Portpatrick

pop 585

The peaceful harbour in Portpatrick village was once the port for ferries from Ireland. These days it looks after anglers, sailors and walkers preparing to set out on the Way. Stranraer, 8 miles northeast of Portpatrick, is a large town with plenty of accommodation. Contact the **tourist office** (☎ 01776-702595; Harbour St; ☒ daily Jun-Aug, Mon-Sat Sep-May) for full details.

### SLEEPING & EATING

**Galloway Point Holiday Park** (☎ 01776-810561; [www.gallowaypointholidaypark.co.uk](http://www.gallowaypointholidaypark.co.uk); sites from £10) is less than 1 mile from town.

**Carlton Guest House** (☎ 01776-810253; 21 South Cres; s/d £30/52), on the seafront, is recommended among the village's several B&Bs.

**Harbour House Hotel** (☎ 01776-810456; [www.harbourhouse.co.uk](http://www.harbourhouse.co.uk); 53 Main St; s/d £35/60, bar meals £7-10; ☒ lunch & dinner) offers the opportunity, with luck, to sit outside and enjoy a meal of suitably generous proportions for the miles ahead, washed down with a pint of real ale. The hotel also has several attractive rooms, some with superb harbour views.

There is a small shop, which has a good range of the sorts of things you will need during the first day.

### GETTING THERE & AWAY

**Stagecoach Western** (☎ 01292-613500) operates bus service X77 from Glasgow to Ayr (1¼ hours, half-hourly), connecting with its service to Stranraer (two hours, six services Monday to Saturday). From there, another of the company's routes links Stranraer to Portpatrick (20 minutes, six services Monday to Saturday).

**First ScotRail** (☎ 0845 755 0033) runs trains from Glasgow to Stranraer (two hours, five trains Monday to Saturday, two Sunday).

By car, from Glasgow follow the M77 and A77 to Stranraer and on to Portpatrick.

### Cockburnspath

Cockburnspath is a tiny village just inland from the coast, with minimal facilities for walkers – you have been warned.

### SLEEPING & EATING

**Chesterfield Caravan & Camping Site** (☎ 01386-830459; [www.chesterfieldcaravanpark.co.uk](http://www.chesterfieldcaravanpark.co.uk); The Neuk; sites for 2 £8) is a very well appointed site a couple of miles from town.

There are a couple of B&Bs on nearby farms: **Mrs Hood** (☎ 01368-830620; The Cornbarn, Cove Farm; d £40), who opens her B&B on weekends only; and **Mrs Russell** (☎ 01369-830465; [townhead@ecosse.net](mailto:townhead@ecosse.net); Townhead Farm; d £40).

Unfortunately the nearest pub is at Grantshouse, a few miles south along the A1. At least the small shop in Cockburnspath is licensed.

### GETTING THERE & AWAY

**Perryman's Buses** (☎ 01289-380719) service 253 between Edinburgh (1¼ hours, at least three daily) and Berwick-upon-Tweed (45 minutes, at least three daily), on the main east-coast railway line, stops here.

The village, just off the A1 between Edinburgh and Berwick-upon-Tweed, is 35 miles from Edinburgh and 20 miles from Berwick.

### THE WALK

#### Day 1: Portpatrick to New Luce

8½–9 hours, 22.5 miles (36.5km), 370m ascent  
*A delightful stretch of about 2 miles along the coast from Portpatrick to Killantringan*

*lighthouse at Black Head makes a fine start to the Way. The rest of the stage is mainly along minor roads through farmland, with good views.*

The Way starts at the foot of a flight of stairs at the northwestern end of the harbour. From here it heads northwest above impressive cliffs (take care, especially in poor visibility) and round scenic coves. The route ahead isn't always obvious but trust the thistle waymarkers to show the way from the shore back up to the cliff top. The lighthouse comes dramatically into view and the SUW joins the minor road leading inland from it.

Minor roads and farm tracks lead to a high point with fine views on a clear day. From here, more minor roads, farm tracks and short, sometimes muddy, paths take you down past the outskirts of Stranraer to **Castle Kennedy**. The village has a small **shop** and the **Plantings Inn** (☎ 01581-400633; camp sites for 2 £5, s/d £35/60, mains to £17) where you can choose a comfortable room or camp in the grounds and eat at the hotel.

From Castle Kennedy a sealed drive takes you through the pleasant, wooded grounds of the ruined castle to a minor road. You soon leave this to follow farm tracks to another minor road, then right round the edge of a cleared conifer plantation. The route descends to a footbridge over a railway line, from where it's down to a suspension bridge over the Water of Luce. New Luce is off the Way, 1 mile north along a nearby road. If you feel like putting a few more miles behind you before stopping at

New Luce, continue across open moorland, past deserted Kilhern and down to a minor road about 1 mile east of New Luce.

### NEW LUCE

Here you'll find the fine old **Kenmuir Arms Hotel** (☎ 01581-600218; 31 Main St; s/d £35/56) and its adjacent camping ground (sites for 2 £5, break-fast £5). There's a small shop in the village.

A limited bus service run by **Irvine Coaches** (☎ 01581-300345) links New Luce with Stranraer (30 minutes, one service Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday).

### Day 2: New Luce to Bargrennan

6¼–7¼ hours, 17.5 miles (28km), 340m ascent

*The Way now starts to feel remote as you traverse almost-empty upland farming country, pine plantations and moorland. It's an easier day than those to come.*

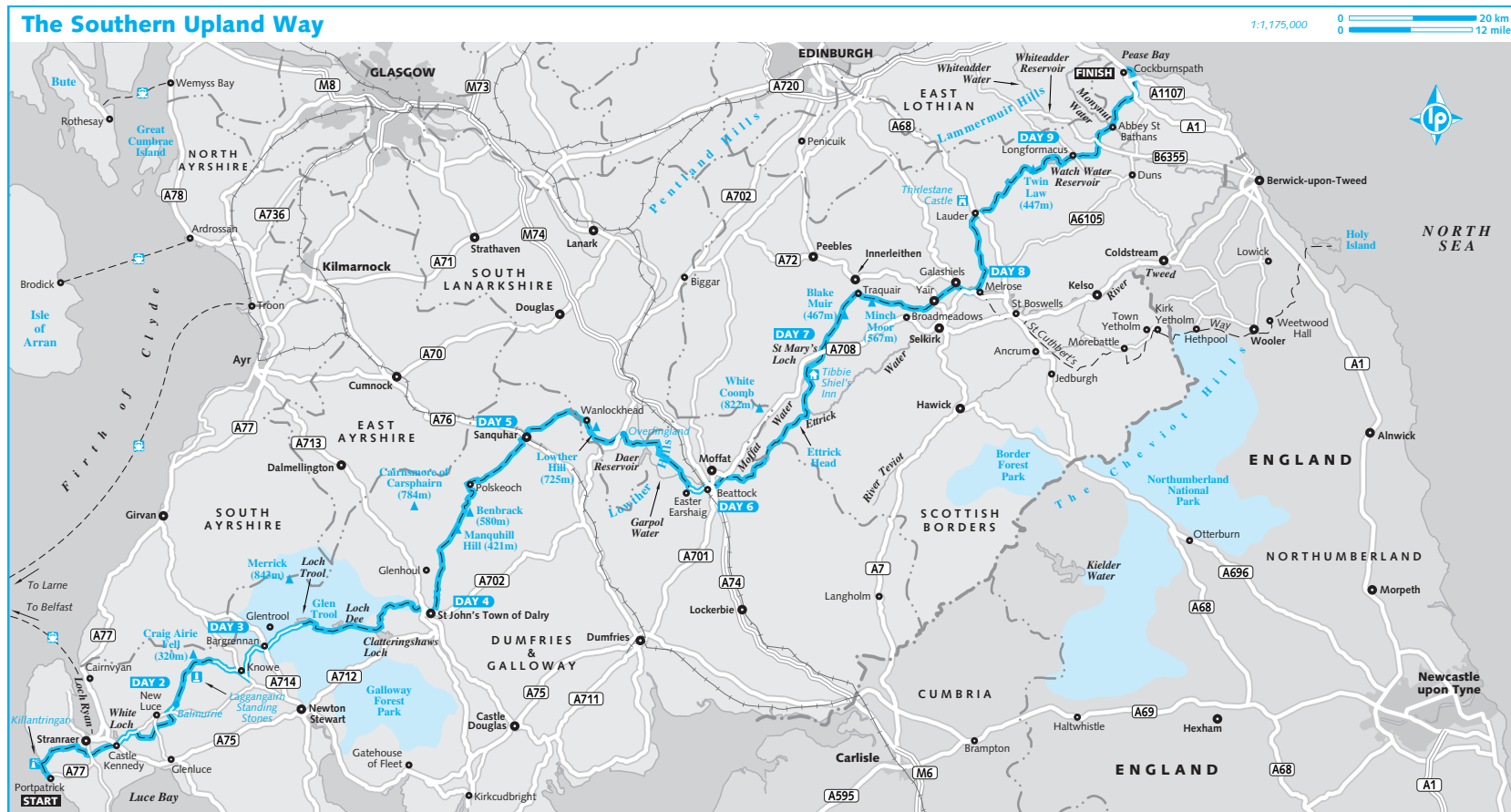
Follow very quiet roads to Balmurrie farm, from where the route rises across rough moorland; not far to the east, Artfield Fell has been taken over by a wind farm with around 15 big turbines. The Way then follows a wide, heathery ride (a path specially made for riding on horseback) through a conifer plantation. A short stretch of forest road leads to an open area with a timber, beehive-shaped **bothy**, which has only sleeping platforms; there is fresh water nearby. Beside the Way are the 4000-year-old **Laggangairn standing stones**, with information about their history. Beyond a large cairn the Way follows a different route from that on the official map as it climbs over **Craig Airie Fell** (320m) for an excellent 360-degree

### SOUTHERN UPLAND WAY – ROUTE HIGHLIGHT

In the western half of the SUW the most sustained section of the route across open moorland, with relatively short stretches through pine plantations, is between St John's Town of Dalry (called Dalry) and Beattock, close to Moffat (Days 4 and 5). The Way crosses several relatively high points, including Benbrack (580m), Glengaber Hill (515m) and the highest point on the entire SUW, Lowther Hill (725m). Wanlockhead, an old mining village, has a museum and extensive remains of old lead mines.

On this section of the Way you won't spend too much time walking along sealed roads, with most of the distance along forest and hill tracks. The only drawback is the distance between places to stay. It's 27 miles (43.5km) from Dalry to Sanquhar, although there is Polskeoch Bothy en route. The second section can be split into a short stroll of 8 miles (13km) to Wanlockhead, then a 20-mile (32km) day to Beattock.

Dalry is well served by buses from Ayr and Dumfries, Sanquhar is on the Carlisle-Glasgow railway line and you can reach Edinburgh by bus from Moffat, a short step from Beattock. Accommodation options are covered in the main walk description.



view. The Way then descends past Derry Farm and follows minor roads past Knowe and Glenruther Lodge, over Glenvernoch Fell and down to Bargrennan.

#### BARGRENNAN & GLENTROOL

Bargrennan and the nearby small village of Glentrool, just west of Loch Trool, offer limited facilities but no shortage of warm hospitality.

**Glentrool Holiday Park** (☎ 01671-840280; www.glentroolholidaypark.co.uk; Bargrennan; sites for 2 £10), about 800m north along the road, has a small shop.

Historic **House O'Hill Hotel** (☎ 01671-840243; www.houseohill.co.uk; Bargrennan; s/d £35/60, mains to £9; 🍷 lunch & dinner) serves hearty bar meals.

**Lorien** (☎ 01671-840315; moral.lorien61@btinternet.com; 61 Glentrool; s/d £22/44), the only B&B in Glentrool, 1 mile north of the Way, is highly recommended.

**King's Buses** (☎ 01671-830284) operates route 359 between Bargrennan and Newton Stewart (25 minutes, four services Monday to Saturday) and Girvan (50 minutes, four services Monday to Saturday) on the coast.

#### Day 3: Bargrennan to St John's Town of Dalry

9–9½ hours, 22 miles (34km), 500m ascent  
You now encounter the Galloway Hills, the first significant range of hills along the Way, although the route keeps to lower ground, only reaching an altitude of about 310m.

*Most of the time you're in Galloway Forest Park; the going underfoot varies widely.*

This stage starts along mossy, partly overgrown paths through conifers. After crossing a minor road it passes through pleasant woodland and follows the Water of Trool. It then traverses above Loch Trool, with some good views to Merrick (843m), the highest peak in the Galloway Hills, and drops down to cross Glenhead Burn. Follow the burn briefly then diverge from the mapped route and head southeast to meet a forest road about 1 mile west of Loch Dee. **White Laggan Bothy** is 350m off the route to the south.

Past Loch Dee Angling Club's small hut, the Way crosses the River Dee then traverses a conifer plantation, much of it clear-felled,

and meets the road to Mid Garray, which you follow west for a short distance.

The Way leaves the road on a good path, heading north through wide clearings between plantations, and then rising across moorland before descending to Clenrie Farm. Further on, well down Garroch Glen, the Way cuts east across Waterside Hill and follows the Water of Ken to a suspension bridge leading to St John's Town of Dalry.

#### ST JOHN'S TOWN OF DALRY

This large village usually shortens its name to Dalry. There is one small shop.

**Mrs Findlay's B&B** (☎ 01644-430420; fjam441@aol.com; Main St; s/d £25/50) offers a warm welcome and comfortable bed.

**Clachan Inn** (☎ 01644-430241; www.thedachaninn.com; Main St; s/d £30/60, mains to £18) is the place to go for a spot of luxury and a good meal.

**MacCwan's** (☎ 01387-256533) operates a bus service to Castle Douglas (45 minutes, three services Monday to Saturday), where another route connects to Dumfries (35 minutes, six services Monday to Saturday). The same company also serves Dalmellington (1½ hours, two services Monday to Saturday), where a **Stagecoach Western** (☎ 01292-613500) service continues to Ayr (50 minutes, at least 12 daily) on the coast, with good onward connections.

#### Day 4: St John's Town of Dalry to Sanquhar

10–10¾ hours, 25 miles (40km), 900m ascent

*This is a long, challenging day through empty country with some stiff climbs, including up to Benbrack (580m).*

From Dalry, the route crosses rough grazing land, past Ardoch Farm, to Butterhole Bridge. Friendly **Kendoo SYHA Hostel** (☎ 01644-460680; www.syha.org.uk; dm £12) is about 1.5 miles further west, off the SUW, at Glenhoul (the warden may be able to help with transport from the Way). The route continues across rough grazing ground to Stroanpatrick, then climbs a wide ride through plantations, skirting the summit of Manquhill Hill (421m). Continue up to **Benbrack** (580m) for excellent panoramic views then descend over a couple of lesser tops into a plantation. Walk past Allan's Cairn and down a forest road, passing the rather spartan **Polskeoch Bothy** to the scattering of buildings at Polskeoch.

About 2 miles along a minor road, the Way sets off across the ridge to the north along rough tracks. Sanquhar comes into view from the top but there's a long descent into the River Nith valley (Nithsdale) before you reach the bridge over the river and the path into Sanquhar (pronounced 'sanker').

#### SANQUHAR

**Castle View Caravan Park** (☎ 01659-50291; ireneriddall@aol.com; Townfoot; sites for 2 £5) is beside the Way.

**Mrs McDowall** (☎ 01659-50751; marymcdowell@aol.com; Town Head; s/d £25/44) offers weary walkers a warm welcome.

**Blackaddie House Hotel** (☎ 01659-50270; www.blackaddiehotel.co.uk; Blackaddie Rd; s/d £40/70, mains to

£20) could tempt you for a bit of well-earned pampering.

**First ScotRail** (☎ 0845 755 0033) operates trains to Glasgow (1¼ hours, six services Monday to Saturday, two Sunday). **Stagecoach Western** (☎ 01292-613500) bus 246 goes to Dumfries (50 minutes, at least five daily).

#### Day 5: Sanquhar to Beattock

10½–11½ hours, 28 miles (45km), 1550m ascent

*This stage includes three highlights: the halfway point of the Way, the highest point on the Way – Lowther Hill (725m) – and the highest village in Scotland, Wanlockhead (467m). Many walkers do manage to complete this section in a day – probably the hardest day you'll ever put in on a British LDP.*

From Sanquhar there's a short climb straight away, then two more bumps to cross, with Cogshead, a ruined farmhouse, set between them in a steep-sided valley. A sharp descent on a good track leads into **Wanlockhead**, the highest village in Scotland. It is an old lead-mining village with plenty of industrial archaeology, and a striking contrast to the bare, lonely moorland. Here you'll find a couple of B&Bs and **Wanlockhead Inn** (☎ 01659-74535; ☎ lunch Sat & Sun, dinner Wed-Sun). The **Museum of Lead Mining** (☎ 01659-74387; www.leadminingmuseum.co.uk; admission £6; ☎ Apr-Oct) and its tearoom are worth a visit.

From here the Way climbs to **Lowther Hill**, crossing and recrossing the sealed road to the surreal golf-ball domes (containing radar equipment) in an enclosure on the summit. Here, on a good day atop the highest point on the SUW, you can see the Pentland Hills (near Edinburgh) to the north. The Way continues over the high ground, steeply up to Cold Moss, then drops down to the A702 at Overfingland, a large farm in a wide valley.

Just beyond the A702, in **Watermeetings Forest**, you reach the halfway point of the SUW. Cross the wall holding back Daer reservoir (drinking water for Glasgow's southern suburbs) then tackle the long climb over Sweetshaw Brae, Hods Hill and Beld Knowe (507m), overlooking the reservoir. This is inevitably followed by an equally long descent down broad rides through the plantation to Cloffin Burn. **Brattleburn Bothy** is out of sight, about 400m west of the Way. The SUW continues generally downhill, still in

#### THE SOUTHERN UPLAND WAY – ROUTE HIGHLIGHT

The eastern half of the SUW passes through the uplands between Beattock and Melrose, and more settled, agricultural country between there and the coast. The best of the hill country – good views, minimal pine plantations and roads, and plenty of open moorland – is between St Mary's Loch and Melrose. The loch itself, fringed by woodland and overlooked by high hills, is particularly scenic. Between Traquair and Yair, on the River Tweed, the SUW crosses several tops over 500m with fine, wide views.

The walk can be split into two fairly easy days, staying overnight at Traquair or nearby Innerleithen (12 miles/20km) on one night and then Melrose (18 miles/28km) the next; some details are given in the main walk description.

Moffat, close to Beattock, and Melrose are well served by public transport.

dense conifers, across a large clearing and Garpol Water, eventually reaching a minor road at Easter Earshaig. Follow this down to Beattock.

#### BEATTOCK & MOFFAT

**Craigielands Country Park** (☎ 01683-300591; www.craigielandsleisure.co.uk; Beattock; sites for 2 £12), about 1 mile south of the Way, has its own restaurant; there's a shop nearby.

**Barnhill Springs Country Guest House** (☎ 01683-220580; Beattock; s/d £35/60), in a historic building, is right beside the Way.

Moffat, just over 1 mile away, has more accommodation and restaurants but the A701 is very busy, so try for a place that provides vehicle back-up. The **tourist office** (☎ 01683-220620; www.visitmoffat.co.uk; Churchgate; ☎ Mon-Sat Apr-Oct) is near the town entrance from the A74(M).

The **Moffat Camping and Caravanning Club Site** (☎ 01683-220436; www.campingandcaravanningclub.co.uk; Hammerland's Farm; sites for 2 £12) has flat, grassy pitches close to the town centre.

**Berriedale House B&B** (☎ 01683-220427; Beech grove; s/d £25/44), in a large 19th-century villa has huge, comfortable bedrooms in a quiet location.

**Bombay Cuisine** (☎ 01683-220900; Main St; mains to £11; ☎ lunch & dinner) specialises in unique Laziz Khama cuisine from Samarkand (Uzbekistan), in which each dish has its own sauce. The helpful waiter will explain these absolutely delicious dishes.

The **Co-op supermarket** is next to the well-signposted Moffat Woollen Mill, off the A701, near the tourist office.

**MacCwan's** (☎ 01387-256533) bus 100 links Edinburgh and Moffat (two hours, three services Monday to Saturday, one Sun). **Stagecoach Western** (☎ 01292-613500) runs a

service between Glasgow and Moffat (1½ hours, three services Monday to Saturday, two Sunday).

#### Day 6: Beattock to St Mary's Loch

9–9½ hours, 21 miles (33.5km), 1200m ascent

*Another tough day, crossing the watershed between streams flowing into the Irish and North Seas at Ettrick Head.*

From Beattock go under the A74(M) motorway, across the River Annan, up and over a small hill, then beside Moffat Water. The Way then winds up through a plantation on a forest road and on to a path up a deep valley. This leads to the **gorge** carved by Selcloth Burn; the path traverses this dramatic cleft then climbs to **Ettrick Head** (520m), the boundary between Dumfries & Galloway and the Borders. Beyond here you soon meet a forest road that leads down to **Over Phawhope Bothy** and a minor road beside Ettrick Water. Follow this for 6 miles down the valley, its natural beauty somewhat compromised by blankets of conifers.

Turn off at **Scableuch** along a signposted footpath, which climbs up a narrow glen then crosses Pikestone Rig and continues down to **Riskinhope Hope**, a once-solid stone house now a bramble-covered ruin. The route then turns round Earl's Hill and picks up a forest track for the descent to St Mary's Loch.

#### ST MARY'S LOCH

Historic **Tibbie Shiel's Inn** (☎ 01750-42231; www.tibbieshielsinn.com; s/d £35/60, mains to £10), at the loch, was the scene of the Way's opening in 1984, and offers relatively luxurious accommodation and excellent bar meals. There's also a **camp site** (sites for 2 £6) nearby, run by the inn.

Nearby **Glen Cafe** (☎ 01750-42241; mains to £15; ☺ breakfast & lunch daily, dinner Sat) is also a great place to relax and unwind over a drink.

**Houston's Minibuses** (☎ 01576-203874) operates a summer-only service between Lockerbie and Selkirk via Moffat (30 minutes, two services Saturday July and August) and St Mary's Loch.

### Day 7: St Mary's Loch to Melrose

12–13 hours, 30 miles (48.5km), 1120m ascent  
*Plenty of variety – lochs, hills and open moorland to Traquair, then forest, heather moor, a relatively suburban interlude around Galashiels and a river-side walk into Melrose. This ultra-long day could be split into two, with an overnight stop at Traquair, 12 miles (20km) from St Mary's Loch. Around 800m of the climbing comes between Traquair and Melrose.*

From the inn, pass in front of the Sailing Club building and follow a path then a vehicle track beside the loch; further on, cross Yarrow Water to the A708. The Way crosses the road and returns to open country. Good paths and tracks climb over a spur to Douglas Burn then it's up again, across heathery Blake Muir and down to the hamlet of **Traquair** in the Tweed valley, at the junction of the B709 and B7062.

Accommodation in the village includes **Traquair Mill Bunkhouse** (☎ 01896-830515; dm £13) and the **School House** (☎ 01896-830506; http://old-schoolhouse.ndo.co.uk; s/d £30/56).

There's more accommodation in Innerleithen, about 1 mile north along the B709. **First Edinburgh** (☎ 08708 727271) bus service 62 links Innerleithen with Edinburgh. **Munro's of Jedburgh** (☎ 01835-862253) operates an afternoon-only service between Traquair and Peebles (15 minutes, daily service Monday to Friday), where you can pick up the Edinburgh bus.

Turning your back on Traquair, follow a lane climbing steadily into a plantation. **Minch Moor** (567m) rises on the right and the short detour is well worth the effort for the panoramic view, including the distinctive Eildon Hills near Melrose. The SUW continues along a wide ride through the plantation and rises to **Brown Knowe** (523m), which also provides good views. The next tops are skirted on the right and left. The turn-off to **Broadmeadows SYHA Hostel** (☎ 01750-725506; www.syha.org.uk; dm £13), Scotland's first youth

hostel, is signposted; it is 1 mile or so to the south. If you're considering staying here, note that the nearest shops are in Selkirk, 5 miles away.

The route continues up to a summit distinguished by three massive cairns known as the **Three Brethren**. Then it's down to Yair and a bridge over the River Tweed.

You then climb over a fairly broad ridge and go down across fields, crossing numerous stiles, to woodland on the outskirts of Galashiels. The Way follows a rather devious route through parklands and along suburban streets, skirting Gala Hill. Cross the busy A7 and follow river-side paths and the sealed bed of the old Waverley railway to Melrose.

### MELROSE

pop 1656

Attractive Melrose is dominated by a beautiful 12th-century Cistercian abbey. The **tourist office** (☎ 0870 608 0404; www.visitscottishborders.com; Abbey House, Abbey St; ☺ Apr-Oct) is opposite the abbey.

**Gibson Park Caravan Club Site** (☎ 01896-822969; www.caravanclub.co.uk; High St; sites for 2 £18), close to the town centre, has a few tent sites and excellent facilities.

**Melrose SYHA Hostel** (☎ 0870 004 1141; www.syha.org.uk; Priorwood; dm £14; ♿) occupies a fine Georgian mansion overlooking Melrose Abbey.

**Braidwood B&B** (☎ 01896-822488; www.braidwoodmelrose.co.uk; Buccleuch St; s/d £35/56) offers high-standard facilities and a friendly welcome to this 19th-century townhouse.

**Marmion's Restaurant** (☎ 01896-822245; Buccleuch St; mains to £17; ☺ lunch & dinner Mon-Sat) might seem expensive, but the substantial dishes do represent good value.

There are **Co-op** and **Spar** supermarkets and a few pubs in High St.

**First Edinburgh** (☎ 08708 727271) runs bus route 62 between Edinburgh and Melrose (2¼ hours, eight services Monday to Saturday, six Sunday).

### Day 8: Melrose to Longformacus

9½–10 hours, 25 miles (40km), 900m ascent

*The first part of today's walk is through mainly agricultural land, along minor roads and farm tracks, and across fields, which can be very muddy in parts. Essentially the route traverses a long ridge between Allan Water*

*and Leader Water, tributaries of the River Tweed. From Lauder there's a very different stretch, across extensive grouse moors in the Lammernuir Hills and down to the hamlet of Longformacus.*

From Melrose cross the River Tweed, this time by a 19th-century chain suspension bridge for pedestrians and 'light carriages' only. The Way goes back up beside the river then heads north, steadily gaining height. There are fine views on a good day from the highest point around flat-topped **Kedsle Hill**. The route passes through several fields occupied by grazing cows – they're very inquisitive but not aggressive. The steep descent into Lauder skirts the local golf course.

Lauder has three hotels and a couple of nearby B&Bs, of which **Thirlestane Farm** (☎ 01578-722216; s/d £40/60), about 1.5 miles east of the Way beside the A697, is particularly recommended. **Thirlestane Castle Caravan & Camp Site** (☎ 01578-718884; thirlestanepark@btconnect.com; sites for 2 £6) is superbly sited near splendid Thirlestane Castle. In Lauder's main street you'll find an excellent baker, a small supermarket, and the **Flat Cat Coffee Shop**, which is just as well since Lauder is the last place where you can stock up on chocolate and other walking staples before Cockburnspath, at the end of the Way. **Munro's of Jedburgh** (☎ 01835-862253) buses can take you from Lauder to Edinburgh (1¼ hours, 12 services Monday to Saturday, five Sunday).

From Lauder the Way weaves through the grounds of **Thirlestane Castle** (open to visitors). Cross the A697 and follow a lane up through the curiously named Wanton Walls Farm and steeply up to a small plantation. The Way then wanders up and down across open grassland then crosses Blythe Water on a substantial bridge. Continue on to Braidshawrig, part of the Burncastle Estate grouse moor. It's essential to keep to the track (and there's no incentive to stray onto the tussocky moor), especially during the grouse shooting season, which always starts on 12 August. The track climbs across the vast, empty moors, dotted with shooting butts and old tin sheds providing shelter for stock, to the ridge crest. It then turns right to the high point of **Twin Law** (447m), topped with two giant cylindrical cairns, each with a sheltered seat facing southeast. From here the Tweed valley is spread out

before you and the sea is in sight at last. The descent towards Watch Water Reservoir is easy – a good track leads to Scarlaw and a sealed road. If the weather is fine you should find a small **tearoom** (☺ Easter-Sep) here. Continue down to Longformacus (pronounced 'longformaycus').

**Whinmore B&B** (☎ 01361-890669; junren26@tiscali.co.uk; s/d £35/60, 3-course dinner £15) also offers evening meals.

### Day 9: Longformacus to Cockburnspath

7–8 hours, 18.5 miles (30km), 450m ascent  
*Paths and tracks through farmland and woodland lead to a fine cliff-top walk, but you have to leave the coast to officially finish in the village of Cockburnspath.*

After about 1 mile along a minor road east of Longformacus, the Way branches off to climb over moorland, past some small plantations and down to the B6355 road. From here the route follows steep-sided Whiteadder valley through mixed woodland to the hamlet of **Abbey St Bathen**. Cross Whiteadder Water just below where it joins Monynut Water. The Way follows the Whiteadder for a while then turns north; the **Riverside Restaurant** (☎ 01361-840312; ☺ Tue-Sun) is just across the river. Follow paths and lanes, crossing some fields in the process. From a minor road at Blackburn you can catch a last glimpse back to the hills. Then it's down to the busy A1; cross with care. Follow an old road between the A1 and the railway to a pleasant green track into Penmanshiel Wood. It seems cruel at this stage but the route climbs through the wood, fortunately to a very rewarding **view** of the North Sea and the Firth of Forth. A flight of steps takes you down to the A1107, beyond which is Pease Dean Wildlife Reserve, the site of a native woodland regeneration project.

Skirt the serried ranks of vans in Pease Bay Holiday Home Park and walk up the road above the bay. The final cliff-top walk, mirroring the start at Portpatrick, is blessed with impressive coastal scenery, along to colourful Cove Harbour, tucked below. Turn inland, under the A1 and the railway line, to the mercat (market) cross at **Cockburnspath** (pronounced 'coburns-path' or just 'co-path'), the official end of the Way. It takes a while for realisation to sink in that you really have walked from Portpatrick. Congratulations!

## THE WEST HIGHLAND WAY

<b>Duration</b>	7 days
<b>Distance</b>	95 miles (153km)
<b>Difficulty</b>	moderate
<b>Start</b>	Milngavie (p420)
<b>Finish</b>	Fort William (p362)
<b>Nearest Town</b>	Glasgow (opposite)
<b>Transport</b>	bus, train

**Summary** Britain's most popular LDP passes through some of Scotland's finest landscapes, from suburban Glasgow to the foot of Ben Nevis, Britain's highest mountain.

The West Highland Way extends from the outskirts of Scotland's largest city to the base of its highest mountain. The full route is walked by around 15,000 people every year, and many thousands more complete sections of the route; officially, it is the most popular path in Britain.

The walk starts from Milngavie (pronounced 'mullguy'), 7 miles north of Glasgow's city centre, in the lowlands, but the greater part of this walk is among the mountains, lochs and fast-flowing rivers of the Highlands. It runs along the length of Loch Lomond and, in the far north, crosses wild Rannoch Moor and passes through spectacular Glen Nevis to reach Fort William. By the time you finish you will have climbed a total of 3543m (11,624ft), the equivalent of two-and-a-half ascents of Ben Nevis! The route is well signposted and uses a combination of ancient ways, old drove roads (along which cattle were once herded), an old military road (built by troops to help control the Jacobites in the 18th century) and disused railway lines. It's marked with signposts and the thistle-hexagon logo.

## PLANNING

The walk is fairly easy going as far as Rowardennan. After that, particularly north of Bridge of Orchy, it's quite strenuous and remote, and the location of accommodation means you will either have some very long days or rather short days. For these reasons, most people start in the south, at Milngavie, and take six or seven days to reach Fort William. You need to be properly equipped with good boots, maps, a compass, food and drink. The weather can turn bad all too quickly, which it's quite likely to do. The

area has a high rainfall, and winds in the narrow mountain glens, and on the more exposed areas, can reach gale force.

Although the route is fully waymarked, you should carry a map and compass and know how to use them.

For a seven-day walk, as described here, the most convenient places to start and end each day are as follows:

Day	From	To	Miles/km
1	Milngavie	Drymen	12/19.5
2	Drymen	Rowardennan	14/22.5
3	Rowardennan	Inverarnan	14/22.5
4	Inverarnan	Tyndrum	13/21
5	Tyndrum	Kings House Hotel	19/30.5
6	Kings House Hotel	Kinlochleven	9/14.5
7	Kinlochleven	Fort William	14/22.5

## Alternatives

If your time is limited and you just want to walk a day or two of the West Highland Way, we offer some suggestions for the best day walks along the route in the boxed text on p420.

To do the walk in six days, spend the third night in Crianlarich, the fourth night in Bridge of Orchy and reach Kinlochleven on the fifth night, possibly stopping for lunch at Kings House Hotel.

Many people add a day for an ascent of Ben Nevis (p360), and perhaps another for Ben Lomond (p347).

## When to Walk

The Way can be walked at any time of year, although you would need to take account of the short daylight hours, the probability of snow or snowfalls over higher ground, and reduced accommodation during winter. May is the most popular month, before the midges become really active, while September and early October can be particularly beautiful. The Conic Hill section may be closed for lambing during late April and early May, and the section between the Bridge of Orchy and Fort William is often used for the annual Scottish motorcycle trials around the same time. Diversions are set up, but contact the **ranger service** (☎ 01389-722199) for further information. The Way itself is unaffected by deer stalking, but detours from the track should generally be avoided between August and October.

## Maps & Books

The Way is covered by OS Landranger 1:50,000 maps No 64 *Glasgow, 56 Loch Lomond & Inveraray*, 50 *Glen Orchy & Loch Etive* and 41 *Ben Nevis*, although most people prefer the convenience of a purpose-designed all-in-one route map. The excellent Harvey 1:40,000 Route map *West Highland Way* and the cheap and cheerful Footprint map *West Highland Way* include lots of additional practical information.

The official guide *West Highland Way* by Bob Aitken and Roger Smith comes with the Harvey Route map in a plastic wallet. Also recommended is *West Highland Way* by Charlie Loram, with thorough text and very detailed line maps.

## Accommodation

Accommodation should not be too difficult to find, although it's quite limited between Bridge of Orchy and Kinlochleven. During the peak season, from May to August, you must book all accommodation in advance.

There are three SYHA hostels on or near the walk, at Rowardennan, Crianlarich and Glen Nevis, and bunkhouses at Tyndrum, Bridge of Orchy, Kinlochleven and Fort William. Rather more basic are the bothies at Rowchoish and Doune, both on Day 3; they are free and always open.

Camping is permitted on the West Highland Way only in designated areas. There are camping grounds at all but one of the overnight stops (King's House Hotel) in our itinerary and several in between. Some offer wigwams – a halfway house between a tent and a bothy. There are also several free, one-night-only backpacker sites without facilities (no fires allowed).

Most B&Bs provide packed lunches if you ask on arrival. Some B&Bs, particularly those not directly on the route, will send someone to meet you and drive you back next morning for a small charge.

## Information Sources

*The Official West Highland Way Pocket Companion*, a free booklet listing accommodation and facilities along the Way, is available from the **West Highland Way office** (☎ 0845 345 4978; www.west-highland-way.co.uk; Balloch) at the Loch Lomond & the Trossachs National Park headquarters. The website contains all the basic information you should need

to get started, and the *Pocket Companion* should be available as a download.

## Baggage Services

Rather than doing all the organising, why not take advantage of the services offered by companies that will arrange all your accommodation and carry your luggage between overnight stops. All you'll have to do is walk! 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; Haypark Business Centre, Marchmont Ave, Polmont, Falkirk) has years of experience organising accommodation and baggage transfer.

**Transcotland** (☎ 01887-820848; www.transcotland.com; 5 Dunkeld Rd, Aberfeldy) also has a good track record and will provide detailed directions and plenty of background information.

**Sherpa Van** (☎ 0871 520 0124; www.sherpavan.com) also offers baggage transfer.

## NEAREST TOWNS

### Glasgow

pop 629,600

It would be hard to avoid at least passing through Glasgow en route to the start of the Way. The **tourist office** (☎ 0141-204 4400; www.seeglasgow.com; 11 George Sq) is very helpful; it stocks maps, books and *The Official West Highland Way Companion*.

Both **Nevisport** (☎ 0141-332 4814; www.nevisport.com; 261 Sauchiehall St; ☹ daily), in Glasgow's west, tongue-twisting, shopping street, and **Tiso's** (☎ 0141-248 4877; glasgow@tiso.co.uk; 129 Buchanan St; ☹ daily), in a rather upmarket pedestrianised street, stock the full range of equipment.

## SLEEPING & EATING

**VisitScotland** (☎ 0845 225 5121; www.visitscotland.com) can handle bookings, though all bookings made through it cost an extra £3.

**Craigdenmuir Park** (☎ 0141-779 4159; www.craigdenmuir.co.uk; Stepps; sites for 2 £12) is the closest camping ground to the city, about 4 miles north; it also has chalets and static caravans.

**Glasgow SYHA Hostel** (☎ 0870 004 1119; www.syha.org.uk; 8 Park Tce; dm £16) offers quality accommodation in a historic building; all rooms are en suite.

**Old School House** (☎ 0141-332 7600; oschoolh@hotmail.com; 194 Renfrew St; s/d £40/60) is a small

detached villa, stylishly decorated and excellent value for money.

For self-catering supplies, the **Tesco Metro** (36-38 Argyle St; ☎ daily) is the most centrally located shop.

**Bothy** (☎ 0141-334 4040; 11 Ruthven Lane; lunch/dinner mains £8/12; ☎ lunch & dinner) is light years removed from any bothy you visited out in the hills. The menu features traditional fare, with a uniquely Scottish flavour.

#### GETTING THERE & AWAY

**National Express** (☎ 0870 580 5850; www.national-express.com) runs coaches between London Victoria and Glasgow's Buchanan St bus station (8¾ hours, three daily).

**Virgin Trains** (☎ 08457 222333; www.virgintrains.co.uk) link London Euston and Glasgow Central (5¾ hours, at least 15 daily).

**Scottish Citylink** (☎ 0870 550 5050; www.citylink.co.uk) bus service 900 links Edinburgh and Glasgow (1½ hours, every 15 minutes).

**First ScotRail** (☎ 0845 755 0033; www.firstscotrail.co.uk) trains shuttle back and forth between Glasgow Queen St and Edinburgh Waverley (50 minutes, half-hourly).

#### Milngavie

pop 14,000

Milngavie is a bustling outer suburb of Glasgow, so there's no shortage of shops and restaurants and a fair range of accommodation. The nearest tourist office is in central Glasgow.

The **Iron Chief** (☎ 0141-956 4597; 5 Muggdock Rd), 100m from the start, stocks much of the stuff you might have forgotten.

#### SLEEPING & EATING

**Bankell Farm Camping & Caravan Site** (☎ 0141-956 1733; www.bankellfarm.co.uk; Strathblane Rd; sites for 2 £8) is a small, sheltered site 1 mile or so north-east of Milngavie, off the A81. You can leave your car here while you're doing the walk for £2 a day.

**Best Foot Forward B&B** (☎ 0141-956 3046; BFF Morag@aol.com; 1 Dougalston Gardens South; s/d £35/56) is only a few minutes from the start of the West Highland Way.

**Laurel Bank B&B** (☎ 0141-584 9400; adam.96@ntlworld.com; 96 Strathblane Rd; s/d £35/50), in a large Edwardian home, is only five minutes from the train station.

For supplies, there's a **Tesco supermarket** next to the train station.

**Toscana Bistro** (☎ 0141-956 4020; 44 Station Rd; mains £10-13; ☎ dinner Thu-Sat), a cosy place in the heart of things, offers good value from its extensive Italian menu.

**Primo Restaurant** (☎ 0141-955 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 Primo's energy-giving cakes.

#### GETTING THERE & AWAY

A **Strathclyde Passenger Transport** (SPT; ☎ 0141-332 6811; www.spt.co.uk) suburban train service from Glasgow Central terminates at Milngavie (25 minutes, half-hourly).

Milngavie is 7 miles north of Glasgow. By car, take the M8 and, at exit 17, follow the A82 then the A81. There is a car park close to the train station, off Station Rd.

#### THE WEST HIGHLAND WAY – ROUTE HIGHLIGHTS

If you want to sample the West Highland Way rather than tackling the full distance, the best stretch (in our opinion) is between Altnafeadh, not far from Kings House Hotel, and Glen Nevis. It is quite possible to complete these two sections in a single day, although the total distance for the day adds up to a fairly lengthy 19 miles (30.5km). Paths are good all the way and you'll only be carrying a day pack. Allow about nine hours for the walk.

Start at the Altnafeadh car park on the A82, 3 miles northwest of Kings House Hotel. **Citylink** (☎ 0870 550 5050) buses from Glasgow and Fort William both pass here 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 or take advantage of the Highland Country Buses service to Fort William (see p363).

Another highlight of the route is walking along the wooded shores of Loch Lomond, passing several spectacular waterfalls. The section from Inversnaid to Inverarnan covers 7 miles (11km) and can be easily completed as a day walk. A passenger **ferry** (☎ 01877-386223) from Inveruglas, on the western side of the loch, will take you across the water to Inversnaid. Both Inveruglas and Inverarnan are request stops on the Citylink Glasgow-Fort William bus service.

#### THE WALK

##### Day 1: Milngavie to Drymen

4½–5½ hours, 12 miles (19.5km)

*The first day provides easy walking through rolling countryside and farmland. For about 3 miles the path runs along a disused railway track, which can be muddy if it's wet, then there's a couple of miles along a quiet road. The Beech Tree Inn at Dumgoyne is the only convenient food stop; otherwise you'll need to bring lunch with you.*

The official start of the West Highland Way is a granite obelisk beside the bridge over the Allander Water on Douglas St, but for most people the journey begins at Milngavie train station. 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 exit of the underpass to join Douglas St, passing through a shopping precinct to reach the official starting point.

From the obelisk a small sign on a nearby building indicates a turn upstream; cross Allander Water and follow the stream through the trees to join good paths through **Muggdock Wood**. From the end of the wood, a succession of paths and a track take you past a collection of holiday homes to the B821. Turn left along the road and follow it for about 300m to a stile giving onto a path to the right. As you skirt Dumgoyach Hill look out for Bronze Age standing stones to your right just before the hill. Beyond Dumgoyach Bridge the route joins a disused railway track. After about 800m you pass the path to **Glenogyne 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 Killlearn, 1.5 miles off the route to the right, there's accommodation, shops and pubs.

Continue along the old railway track to Gartness, from where you follow a road most of the way to the edge of Drymen. One mile beyond Gartness is **Drymen Camping** (☎ 01360-660893; juliamac@aol.com; Easter Drumquhassle Farm; sites for 2 £10, wigwam for 2 £14, B&B s/d £33/50, dinner £16), 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 A811 to enter the village.

#### DRYMEN

pop 681

The **tourist office** (☎ 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** (☎ 01360-661148; 1 Stirling Rd; ☎ daily) stocks gas canisters, maps, guides and outdoor gear.

**Green Shadows** (☎ 01360-660289; greenschadows@hotmail.com; Buchanan Castle; s/d £28/50) is an outstanding B&B. Well away from the main road, it's beautifully decorated. Breakfast is fantastic, and a pick-up service is also available.

The **Clachan Inn** (☎ 01360-660824; s/d £30/54, mains £8-12; ☎ lunch & dinner) is reputedly Scotland's oldest inn. The mostly standard dishes on the menu are enlivened with spicy sauces, and vegetarians do quite well. The rather small rooms are pleasantly furnished.

For supplies, there's a **Spar** supermarket and the smaller **village shop**.

##### Day 2: Drymen to Rowardennan

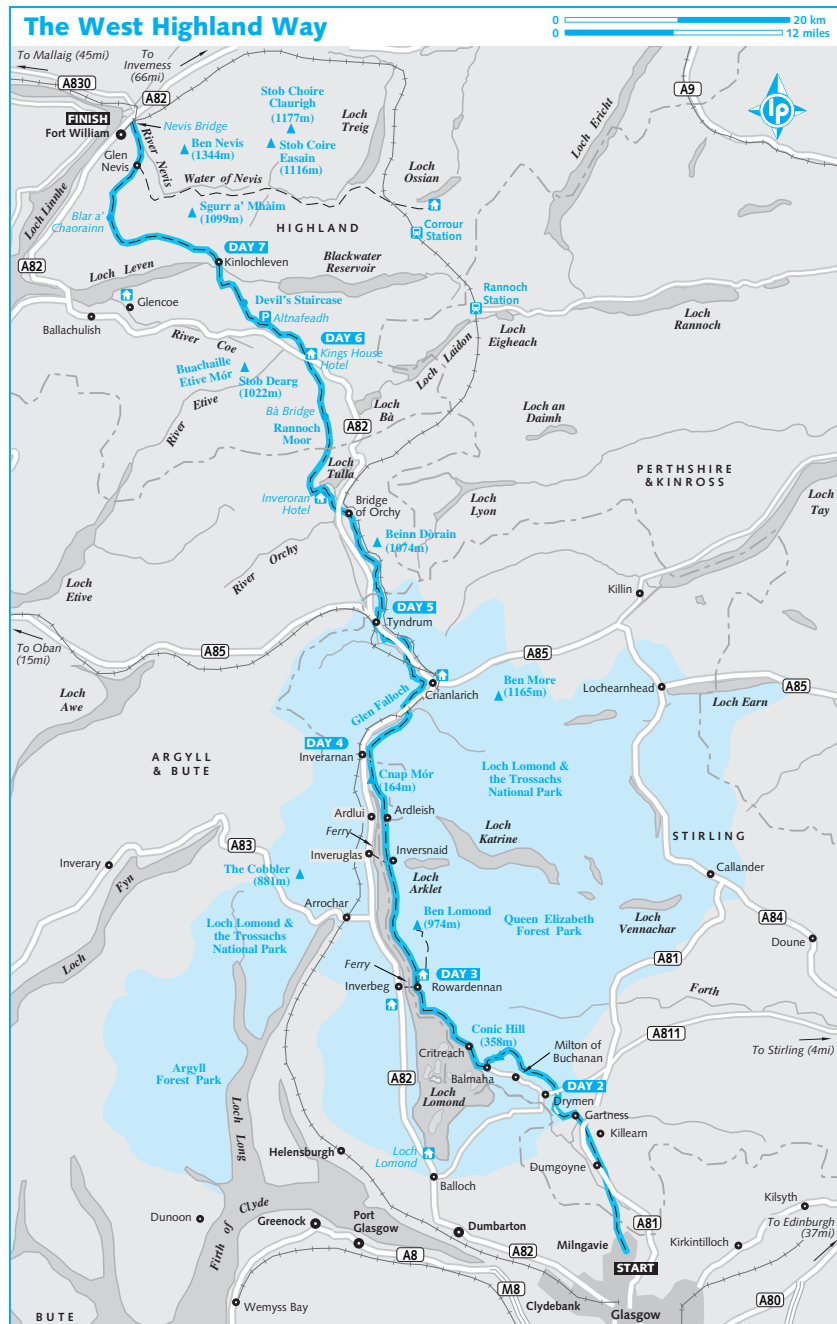
5–6½ hours, 14 miles (22.5km)

*Walking on the second day is still easy going, apart from the climb up Conic Hill (358m), and is mostly along undulating paths and the banks of Loch Lomond. The only place for food supplies is Balmaha, around three hours from Drymen.*

From where it meets the A811 just outside Drymen, the Way follows the road east for a short distance then veers left to pick up a forest track. It gradually climbs through the dense woods to Garadhban Forest (there is a wild camp site here with no facilities). Near the end of the trees, just over an hour from Drymen, a path to the left leads to the road into Milton of Buchanan, where there are a couple of B&Bs but no shop or pub. This path provides the alternative route when Conic Hill is closed during the lambing season (see When to Walk, p409).

For most of the year the Way continues through the trees, over a stile and onto open moorland. The wide path contours north of the summit of **Conic Hill** (358m), but it's worth the short detour to the top for the wonderful panorama over Loch Lomond. Conic Hill is a boundary point and a landmark for walkers; from here on, you're in the Highlands.





The path dips through a conifer wood to **Balmaha** and the loch itself, near the **National Park Centre** (☎ 01389-722100; ☽ Easter-Oct). The **Oak Tree Inn** (☎ 01360-870357; www.oak-tree-inn.co.uk; dm/s/d £25/50/70, mains £7-14) offers good hotel rooms and more-simple bunkhouse accommodation; bar meals are available. There's a **shop** in the village.

Continue beside the loch shore, passing a marker commemorating the opening of the West Highland Way in 1980. In less than an hour you reach **Milarrochy** and **Milarrochy Bay Camping & Caravanning Club Site** (☎ 0870 243 3331; www.campingandcaravanningclub.co.uk; sites for 2 £12), which has a kitchen, drying room and small shop on site. From Critreoch, about 800m further on, the Way dives into a dark forest and emerges to follow the road for about 1 mile. Just after you join the road you'll find the popular **Cashel Caravan & Camping Site** (☎ 01360-870234; www.forestholidays.co.uk; sites for 2 £14). One mile beyond Salloch House, the Way climbs through **Ross Wood**, its magnificent oaks making it one of Scotland's finest natural woodlands, then returns to the loch side and leads on to Rowardennan (p348). The path to Ben Lomond starts nearby (p347).

### Day 3: Rowardennan to Inverarnan

6–7½ hours, 14 miles (22.5km)

*Today's walk begins with 4 miles of Forestry Commission track, followed by a 6-mile section down by the loch. The only place for food along the way is the large Inversnaid Hotel, 7 miles beyond Rowardennan.*

From Rowardennan follow the unsurfaced road that runs parallel to the loch. Just past Ptarmigan Lodge an alternative path branches left and follows the shoreline, but it's rough and not recommended. The official route provides much easier walking and follows the track higher up the hillside. Ongoing large-scale timber extraction in the area may require path diversions, which will be clearly indicated. The hillsides will be replanted with native broadleaf trees.

From both routes you can reach **Rowchoish Bothy**, a simple stone shelter. About 400m beyond the bothy, the forestry track becomes a path that 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 section, the toughest of all. From March to October the hotel runs a twice-daily ferry service between Inversnaid and Inveruglas, where you could connect with bus services along the A82.

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. One mile or so into this, the Way passes close to **Rob Roy's cave**, although there's little to see (see the boxed text, p242). Further on is simple **Doone Bothy** and, almost 1 mile beyond the bothy, at Ardleish, there's a landing stage used by the ferry crossing to **Ardlui Hotel** (☎ 01301-704243; www.ardlui.co.uk; Ardlui; camps sites for 2 £10, s/d £45/60).

From Ardleish you leave the loch and climb to a col on the hill of **Cnap Mór**, where there are good views on a clear day, both north towards the Highlands and south over Loch Lomond. The path descends into Glen Falloch; a footbridge over Ben Glas Burn heralds your arrival at Inverarnan. Just upstream is the spectacular **Beinglas Falls**, a 300m-long cascade that makes a very impressive sight after heavy rain.

### INVERARNAN

**Beinglas Farm Campsite** (☎ 01301-704281; www.beinglascampsite.co.uk; 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 an 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)

*This day is much easier than yesterday and passes through open country beside a river. Unfortunately, you're also close to the busy road and railway line. Unless you make a detour down to Crianlarich (20 minutes each way), there's nowhere to buy food until Tyndrum.*

**ROB ROY**

Robert Macgregor (1671–1734) was given the nickname Roy as the English version of the Gaelic word *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. When his home was burnt and his family evicted, 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 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, where he is said to have kept kidnap victims, is known as Rob Roy's Prison. 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 Way but there's nothing much to see, and tales of Rob's use of them can be attributed more to romantic notions than to hard fact.

From Inverarnan the route follows the attractive River Falloch most of the way to Crianlarich. In a short time the valley begins to open out and the river becomes more placid. After about 3.5 miles the path crosses the river and continues along the west bank. About 800m further on it leaves the river and climbs through a small tunnel under the railway line and then crosses under the A82 to join an old military road.

The road climbs out of Glen Falloch towards the trees ahead. At the stile into the forest there's a path leading down to the right towards Crianlarich; this is the approximate halfway point of the West Highland Way.

There's no need to go down to Crianlarich, but the village does have a railway station, a small shop (with an ATM) and accommodation, including **Crianlarich SYHA Hostel** (☎ 0870 155 3255; www.syha.org.uk; dm £16). The **Rod & Reel** pub has a restaurant and is also a great place for a drink.

The Way climbs to the left from the stile, offering good views across to Ben More, then continues through the trees for about 2 miles. Next, it crosses under the railway line and goes over the road. It then crosses the River Fillan via a wooden bridge. Beside the bridge there is a wild camp site (no facilities) on the west bank. Pass the remains of **St Fillan's Priory**, turn left and go on to **Strathfillan Wigwams** (☎ 01838-400251; www

.sac.ac.uk/wigwams; wigwams for 2 £25) at Auchtertyre Farm. The route crosses the A82 once more and, in less than an hour, reaches Tyndrum.

**TYNDRUM**

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 **tourist office** (☎ 08707 200626; www.visit.scotishheartlands.com; ☹ Easter-Oct) is opposite the **Invervevy Hotel**. The **Green Welly Stop** (☎ 01838-400271; www.thegreenwellystop.co.uk; ☹ daily) includes an outdoor gear shop (that sells maps), an off-licence and the brisk, cafeteria-style **Green Welly Restaurant** (mains to £8), which is liable to be flooded by bus parties. It offers generous servings of standard dishes. The weather forecast is prominently displayed at the store.

**By the way** (☎ 01838-400333; www.tyndrumbytheway.com; sites for 2 £5, cabins £8-10, dm £15) provides excellent facilities, including a campers' kitchen.

**Strathfillan House B&B** (☎ 01838-400228; www.tyndrum.com; s/d £24/48) does a special deal for walkers, including pick-up and drop-off.

**Invervevy Hotel** (☎ 01838-400219; www.invervevyhotel.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 selling hot takeaway snacks and camping gear.

**Day 5: Tyndrum to Kings House Hotel**

6½–8 hours, 19 miles (30.5km)

*You need to make an early start for this, the longest day of the walk. Mainly on good surfaces, the walk is not difficult but it does cross Rannoch Moor, the wildest section of the West Highland Way. The only places for food are the Bridge of Orchy Hotel and, an hour beyond, the Inveroran Hotel.*

From Tyndrum the Way soon rejoins the old military road, affording easy walking with lovely views. Three miles from Tyndrum you cross a burn at the foot of Beinn Dòrain (1074m), the mountain that dominates this section of the path. The path climbs gradually to pass the entrance to Glen Orchy, crossing the railway again en route; here the really mountainous scenery begins.

The settlement of Bridge of Orchy is dominated by the **Bridge of Orchy Hotel** (☎ 01838-400208; www.scottish-selection.co.uk; dm/s/d £15/55/90), 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.westhighlandwaysleeper.co.uk; dm £15), in the old station building, does have a kitchen, and en suite rooms. 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 to moorland, from where there are superb views across to Rannoch Moor. The Way follows a good path down to the secluded **Inveroran Hotel** (☎ 01838-400220; www.inveroran.com; s/d £38/70). There's another camp site (no facilities) beside a stone bridge 400m west of the hotel.

The Way follows a road, which soon becomes a track, climbing gently past some plantations and out onto **Rannoch Moor**. 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 chair lift of the Glen Coe Ski Centre to the left. There's a **café** and skiing museum at the base station, about 500m off the Way. Kings House Hotel is just over 1 mile ahead, across the A82.

**KINGS HOUSE HOTEL**

Dating from the 17th century, the **Kings House Hotel** (☎ 01855-851259; www.kingy.com; s/d £35/60, bar meals £8-12) was used after the Battle of Culloden as a barracks for the troops of George III's troops, hence the name.

The hotel is popular with climbers busy on the peaks in Glen Coe, and if you can't get a bed you could consider taking a bus to Glencoe (p370), 11 miles away. However, during summer any bus could well be full, and you'd be dependent on the first morning bus from Fort William to bring you back.

**Day 6: Kings House Hotel to Kinlochleven**

3–4 hours, 9 miles (14.5km)

*The superb mountain scenery continues. This day is not long, but includes the 330m climb up the Devil's Staircase and a long, knee-cracking descent to Kinlochleven. There's nowhere to buy food en route and no shelter.*

From Kings House Hotel the route follows the old military road, then goes beside the A82 to a car park at Altnafeadh. This is a wonderful vantage point from which to appreciate the mountainous scenery of Glen Coe. The conical mountain to your left is Buachaille Etive Mór (p370) and the ascent of the peak starts here at Altnafeadh.

From here the Way turns right and leaves the road to begin a steep, zigzagging climb up the **Devil's Staircase**. The cairn at the top is at 548m and marks the highest point of the whole walk. The views are stunning, especially on a clear day, and you should be able to see Ben Nevis to the north.

The path 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 carry water down to the town's hydroelectric power station. They may not be pretty but they were essential for the now-defunct aluminium smelter, the original reason for the town's existence. Follow the somewhat tortuous route, across the pipes then along minor roads into Kinlochleven.

**KINLOCHLEVEN**

This town eases you back into 'civilisation' before the sensory onslaught of Fort William. There isn't an ATM but the super-market can oblige with cash-back on UK

bankers' cards. The **Aluminium Story Visitor Centre** (☎ 01855-831663; Linnhe Rd; admission free; ☞ Mon-Fri) is worth a look to make sense of the incongruously massive buildings dominating the village.

**Blackwater Hostel & Campsite** (☎ 01855-831253; www.blackwaterhostel.co.uk; Lab Rd; sites for 2 £10, dm £12) has well-maintained, pine-panelled dorms with en suite facilities, and grassed tent pitches.

**Tairace Inn** (☎ 01855-831777; www.tairaceinn.co.uk; Riverside Rd; s/d £40/70, bar meals £8-14) has tastefully furnished rooms and features live music some evenings.

**Macdonald Hotel & Lochside Campsite** (☎ 01855-831539; www.macdonaldhotel.co.uk; Fort William Rd; sites for 2 £10, cabin s/d £20/24, B&B s/d £55/80) is at the northern end of the village. The camp site is small and well-grassed; the cabins have four bunk beds. Campers' breakfasts (£4 to £7) are served in the bar.

**Ice Factor** (☎ 01855-831100; 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 enjoy a big 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)

*The final day is one of the hardest, through varied terrain and with spectacular views that include Ben Nevis. There's little shelter, and nowhere to buy food until Glen Nevis, near the end of the Way.*

From Kinlochleven follow the road north out of town and turn off to the right, opposite the school. The path climbs through woodland to the old military road, out in the open; here you can see far up the wide glen ahead. Climb gradually to the highest point (335m), which comes shortly before you reach the ruins of several old farm buildings at **Tigh-na-sleubhaich**. From here the route continues gently downhill and into conifer plantations 2 miles further on. After 1 mile you emerge at Blar a' Chaoirainn, which is nothing more than a bench and an information panel.

The Way leads on and up, through more plantations; occasional breaks in the trees reveal fine views of Ben Nevis ahead. After

a few miles, a sign directs you 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 a stile and follow the forest track down towards Glen Nevis. Across the valley the huge bulk of Ben Nevis fills your view. A side track leads down to the village of Glen Nevis (p363), which could make a good base for an ascent of 'the Ben' (see p360).

Continue along the path towards Fort William, passing a small graveyard just before you meet the road that runs through Glen Nevis. Turn left here and soon there's a large tourist office (with toilets) on the right. Continue along the roadside down into Fort William (p362). The end of the West Highland Way, like many other British LDPs, is a bit of an anticlimax; just a sign by the busy but 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.

## MORE LONG-DISTANCE WALKS

If you are a long-distance enthusiast you may be interested in some of Scotland's other LDPs, especially if the West Highland Way sounds too busy and the Southern Upland Way too long and serious.

### THE GREAT GLEN WAY

The Great Glen, the wide, deep trench that almost severs the Highlands from the rest of Scotland, cries out for an LDP. The Great Glen Way (GGW) takes full advantage of this with a magnificently scenic route from Fort William, below Ben Nevis, to Inverness, on the Moray Firth. In between are superb Loch Lochy, Loch Oich, Loch Ness and several fine hills. It follows long stretches of the historic Caledonian Canal's towpath, an old railway formation and quiet roads and tracks.

The GGW is 73 miles (117km) long; spread this over four or five days and you'll have a reasonably comfortable walk. The relatively small amount of climbing involved is mainly at the northeastern end. There is no shortage of accommodation;

the GGW passes through Gairloch, Laggan, Fort Augustus, Invermoriston and Drumnadrochit. **VisitScotland** (☎ 0845 225 5121; www.visitscotland.com) is the best contact for accommodation bookings.

For up-to-date information about the Way, check the official **Great Glen Way website** (www.greatglenway.com), which includes details of accommodation and services. The Rucksack Readers guide *The Great Glen Way* by Jacquetta Megarry includes background information in a handy format. OS Landranger 1:50,000 maps No 26 *Inverness & Loch Ness*, 34 *Fort Augustus* and 41 *Ben Nevis* cover the route.

Fort William and Inverness are well served by bus and train services from Edinburgh, Glasgow and major English cities, and there are regular bus services through the Great Glen between the two towns.

Fort William is at the northern end of the West Highland Way (p418), so there's the opportunity for a really long walk of 168 miles (270km), linking Glasgow and Inverness.

### THE SPEYSIDE WAY

The River Spey is Scotland's second-longest river and one of its most scenic. The Speyside Way has one end at Aviemore, overlooked by the Cairngorms, and the other at Buckie, on the North Sea coast. The Way closely follows the river for many miles and makes use of footpaths, old railway formations, forest roads and quiet rural roads. It passes through Boat of Garten, Nethy Bridge, Grantown-on-Spey, Cromdale, Aberlour, Craigellachie, Fochabers and Spey Bay. A spur route, from Bridge of Avon to Tomintoul (the highest village in the Highlands) provides an attractive walk in its own right. The Way is well signposted and way-marked with thistle-hexagon logos.

The Speyside Way can be followed in either direction, depending on whether you prefer to walk down the river or to travel from the sea to the mountains. The Way is 65 miles (105km) long; the Tomintoul Spur is 14.3 miles (23km) one way. It is possible to do the whole lot in five days, but six or seven allows time for visiting distilleries and the famous Strathspey Steam Railway.

The **Speyside Way Ranger Service** (☎ 01340-881266; www.speysideway.org) publishes a free annual accommodation brochure and a

public transport guide. Harvey's 1:40,000 map *Speyside Way*, the official map of the route, shows facilities and some features of interest. For coverage of the surrounding countryside you'll need OS Landranger 1:50,000 maps No 28 *Elgin & Dufftown* and 36 *Grantown & Aviemore*, which also show the route of the Way.

### THE FIFE COASTAL PATH

Although Fife isn't a major walking area, it does have a scenic and varied coastline, much of it accessible via long-established paths. The Fife Coastal Path (FCP) incorporates these paths in a waymarked route linking North Queensferry, on the Firth of Forth 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 a few less-than-lovely stretches of the FCP are better seen from the window of a bus, train or car. However, the constantly changing vistas across the Firth of Forth and along the subtly indented coast are the highlights of the FCP. The traditional fishing villages of Elie, Pittenweem and Crail are fascinating, bird life is plentiful along the rocky shores, common seals bask on the rocks in several places 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's website at www.fifecoastalpath.co.uk has plenty of useful information, detailed maps and contacts for the five tourist offices 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 and invaluable companion. OS Landranger 1:50,000 maps No 59 *St Andrews*, 65 *Falkirk & Linlithgow* and 66 *Edinburgh* cover the area concerned. There are good public transport connections to and from the start, finish and intermediate towns.

### ST CUTHBERT'S WAY

St Cuthbert's Way links Melrose and Lindisfarne (in Northumberland, England) on a route of great variety and interest, passing through places associated with the

life and ministry of the 7th-century Celtic saint. It crosses the Eildon Hills and the Cheviot Hills in Northumberland National Park, follows sections of the beautiful Rivers Tweed and Teviot, and traverses fertile farmland. It follows footpaths, tracks and quiet country roads. At low tide you can cross to Lindisfarne by the causeway or by the Pilgrim's Route across the sands. The route is well waymarked, most prominently with the Way's own Celtic cross logo.

By starting at Melrose you'll follow Cuthbert's lifetime journey and finish with the inspirational experience of crossing the sands to Lindisfarne. The distance of 62.5 miles (101km) includes 1200m of ascent; you will probably need to allow five or six days to fit in with safe crossing times to Lindisfarne. The route links with the Penine Way (p261) at Kirk Yetholm and the

Southern Upland Way at Melrose (p408), thus making possible a grand long-distance walk from Edale in Derbyshire to either Portpatrick or Cockburnspath.

The relevant OS Landranger 1:50,000 maps are No 73 *Peebles, Galashiels & Selkirk*, 74 *Kelso & Coldstream* and 75 *Berwick-upon-Tweed*, while there's also the Harvey 1:40,000 map *St Cuthbert's Way*. The official guide, *St Cuthbert's Way* by Roger Smith and Ron Shaw, comprises a detailed guidebook and the Harvey map.

For accommodation bookings contact **VisitScotland Borders** (☎ 0870 608 0404; [www.visitscottishborders.com](http://www.visitscottishborders.com)) and **Berwick-upon-Tweed tourist office** (☎ 01289-330733). Vital information about safe crossing times to Lindisfarne is available from **Wooler tourist office** (☎ 01668-282123) and is displayed there at all times.

# More Walks in Scotland

The variety of walking areas in Scotland is immense. The remote island groups of Orkney and Shetland (the Northern Isles) are as far north as you can go in Britain, and offer the finest coast walking anywhere in the country. 'Rocky landscape' takes on a new meaning in the far northwest. Here, vast areas of crags, slabs and cliffs are interspersed with lochs, waterfalls and distinctively shaped peaks. In the long chain of islands to the west you'll find myriad peaks and enough superb coastal walks to fill a lifetime of exploring. The Southwest and Borders is all about big rolling ridges, rounded summits and walks with varied historical themes. A brief outline of the best of these makes up this chapter. For more ideas, chase up Lonely Planet's *Walking in Scotland*.

## HIGHLIGHTS

- Saying hello to Orkney's famous sea stack, the **Old Man of Hoy** (p430)
- Walking along the pristine beach at **Sandwood Bay** (p430) en route to the towering cliffs at Cape Wrath
- Revelling in the wild, rugged mountainscapes of Harris from the summit of the Western Isles' highest peak, **Clisham** (p431)
- Imagining yourself following Richard Hannay, hero of *The 39 Steps*, along the **John Buchan Way** (p431)

## THE NORTHERN ISLES

Although they're lumped together for convenience, the Northern Isles – the island groups of Orkney and Shetland – are quite distinctive. Orkney, separated from the mainland's north coast by the turbulent waters of the narrow Pentland Firth, is very green, with lush fields cropped by sheep and cattle. Across 60 miles of Atlantic Ocean, Shetland is less fertile and more rugged and remote. The islands do share an attraction for walkers – some of Britain's finest coastal walking. Add a profusion of archaeological sites, countless sea birds and endless hours of summer daylight and you have two inspirational walking destinations.

In **Orkney** the largest island of Hoy is popular for the cliff-top walk to Europe's tallest sea stack, the 137m-high **Old Man of Hoy**. On the rugged west coast of Orkney Mainland, miles of good walking take you past rugged cliffs, deep narrow inlets and rocky islets. The smaller isle of Westray has a waymarked coastal walk, where puffin sightings are almost guaranteed. **VisitOrkney** (☎ 01856-875056; www.visitorkney.com) will get you started with accommodation lists and transport contacts. Ordnance Survey (OS) 1:50,000 Landranger maps No 5 *Orkney – Northern Isles*, 6 *Orkney – Mainland* and 7 *Orkney – Southern Isles* cover the islands. All the walks mentioned are described in full in Lonely Planet's *Walking in Scotland*, while pocket-sized *Walks – Orkney* by Felicity Martin succinctly describes 40 outings, from short strolls to day walks.

The **Shetland** island of Unst is the most northerly part of Britain, and a walk through its **Hermaness National Nature Reserve** is a must, to see the sea birds and Muckle Flugga lighthouse. For the finest coastal walking anywhere, head northwest from the capital, Lerwick, to the **Muckle Roe peninsula**; and to **Eshaness** for spectacularly colourful and rugged coastal scenery and amazingly easy walking. **VisitShetland** (☎ 08701 999440; www.visitshetland.com) is the best contact for planning a visit. The relevant OS 1:50,000 Landranger maps are No 1 *Shetland – Yell, Unst & Fetlar* and 3 *Shetland – Northern Mainland*.

**NorthLink Ferries** (☎ 0845 600 0449; www.northlinkferries.co.uk) operates most of the services to the islands, from Scrabster on the north coast and from Aberdeen.

## FAR NORTHWEST

Scotland's most sparsely populated quarter, northwest Sutherland, between Ullapool and the north coast, contains a good share of the wildest and most rugged mountains and glens in the country.

Several peaks offer an immense variety of walks, magnificent views and a keen sense of remoteness. The most northerly Munro, **Ben Hope** (927m), overlooks the north coast between Durness and Tongue. Its neighbour, shapely **Ben Loyal** (764m), graces the view south from the village of Tongue. Mighty **Ben More Assynt** (998m) and its satellite **Conival** (988m) provide a long, exhilarating day in limestone country. The star-shaped **Quinag** (808m), above Loch Assynt, comprises three separate summits. The massive tower **Suilven** (731m) is the icon of the northwest. Also worth mentioning are **Canisp** (847m), **Cul Mor** (849m) and serrated, easily accessible **Stac Pollaidh** (612m).

There are few, if any, finer stretches of coast than that between Oldshoremore and Cape Wrath, including incomparable **Sandwood Bay**. Start from the cape (via ferry and minibus from near Durness) or walk in to the bay from the road at Blairmore, near Kinlochbervie.

Probably the highest waterfall in Britain, **Eas a' Chual Aluinn**, with a drop of 200m to Loch Beag at the head of Loch Glencoul, is the centrepiece of another first-class walk. The usual approach is from the A894 between Skiag Bridge and Kylesku.

The definitive guide to the region is the Scottish Mountaineering Club's (SMC) *The Northwest Highlands* by DJ Bennett and T Strang. The area is covered by OS Landranger 1:50,000 maps No 9 *Cape Wrath*, 10 *Strathnaver*, 15 *Loch Assynt* and 16 *Lairg & Loch Shin*. Contact the **Assynt Visitor Centre** (☎ 01571-844330; www.assynt.co.uk; Lochinver) or the **Durness tourist office** (☎ 01971-511259; www.visithighlands.com) for more information.

## THE HEBRIDES

Several of these islands off the west coast provide a wealth of first-class walking, spiced by the experience of being on an island. Here is a selection of what's on offer. For all the walks noted, the best single reference is the SMC's *The Islands of Scotland Including Skye*.

Separated from Morvern in Lochaber by a narrow strait, **Mull** is dominated by Ben More (966m), the only island Munro outside Skye, where magnetic rock plays havoc with compasses. East of Ben More, other groups of hills with long ridge walks worth exploring include those centred around Beinn Talaidh (761m) and Dun da Ghaoithe (766m). The south coast is very fine indeed, especially the cliffs and arches southwest of the village of Carsaig.

The main ferry service goes from Oban to Tobermory, the island's principal town. A small ferry crosses the Sound of Mull between Lochaline and Fishnish. Both are operated by **Caledonian MacBrayne** (CalMac; ☎ 0870 565 0000; www.calmac.co.uk). The **tourist office** (☎ 0870 720 0625; www.visitscottishheartlands.com; Tobermory; ☎ Apr-Oct) is centrally located at the Pier.

These walks are covered by the OS Landranger 1:50,000 maps No 48 *Iona & West Mull* and 49 *Oban & East Mull*.

The **Isle of Rum**, west of the fishing port of Mallaig, is owned by Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH), and its 30-or-so employees are the island's sole inhabitants. The traverse of its Cuillins, less formidable than Skye's mountains of the same name, is an absolutely first-class walk; even the names of the summits are tempting – Hallival (723m), Askival (812m), Trailival (702m) and Ainsival (781m).

The wild and rugged northwest coast is another possibility, and no trip to Rum is complete without an inspection of Kinloch Castle, built by an eccentric former island owner. A CalMac ferry links the island with Mallaig three times weekly. Accommodation is hostel-style in the castle, or in a tent at Kinloch. The Rum midges are ferocious, so a spring visit is recommended.

The OS Landranger 1:50,000 map No 39 *Rum, Eigg, Muck & Canna* and the SMC's *The Islands of Scotland including Skye* are essential. For up-to-date information about accommodation and facilities, contact **SNH** (☎ 01687-462026; www.snh.org.uk).

The **Western Isles**, stretching 130 miles (209km) from the Butt of Lewis in the north to Barra in the south, are a world apart from the rest of Scotland – peaceful, relaxed and a stronghold of Gaelic culture. Of the islands in the group, Harris is the most mountainous, with a cluster of rugged hills topped by

Clisham (An Cliseam; 799m). On South Uist there are magnificent Atlantic-coast beaches and the impressive twin peaks of Hecla (606m) and Beinn Mhòr (620m), offering challenges greater than many much higher mainland hills. Tiny Barra has a splendid clutch of hills topping 300m and some fine beaches, one of which is the local airport.

CalMac ferries depart the mainland from Ullapool to Stornoway (Lewis), from Uig on the Isle of Skye to Tarbert (South Harris), and from Oban to Lochboisdale (South Uist) and Castlebay (Barra). The main tourist offices are in **Stornoway** (☎ 01851-703088; info@visithebrides.com; 26 Cromwell St) and **Tarbert** (☎ 0845 225 5121; www.visithebrides.com) on Harris. Of six relevant OS Landranger 1:50,000 maps, those most useful are No 14 *Tarbert & Loch Seaforth*, 22 *Benbecula & South Uist* and 31 *Barra & South Uist*.

## THE SOUTHWEST & BORDERS

In the far southwest and close to the Southern Upland Way (p408) are the Galloway Hills, of which **Merrick** (843m) is the highest, offering a fine day out and magnificent views. Further east are **Hart Fell** (808m) and **White Coomb** (822m), as well as the beautiful waterfall, **Grey Mare's Tail**.

There's much more to walking in the Borders than tackling mountains, however. The 13.5-mile (22km) **John Buchan Way**, an essentially low-level walk, links Peebles and Broughton. The 65-mile (105km) **Borders Abbeys Way** connects four towns, each with a superb 12th-century abbey. For yet more variety, there's a wonderful 15-mile (24km) **coast path** between St Abb's Head and Berwick-upon-Tweed.

A booklet, *Walking Guide to the Scottish Borders*, outlines the wide range of walks available; two booklets – *Short Walks on the Eastern Section of The Southern Upland Way* and *Southern Upland Way Western Section Short Walks* – describe in some detail short circular walks based on the eastern and western sections of the Southern Upland Way. Several OS Landranger 1:50,000 maps cover the area. The SMC guide *Southern Uplands* by Ken Andrew is a mine of information. For more information contact the **Dumfries tourist office** (☎ 01387-253862; www.visitdumfriesandgalloway.co.uk) and the **Borders Information Service** (☎ 0870 608 0404; www.visitscottishborders.com).

© Lonely Planet Publications. To make it easier for you to use, access to this chapter is not digitally restricted. In return, we think it's fair to ask you to use it for personal, non-commercial purposes only. In other words, please don't upload this chapter to a peer-to-peer site, mass email it to everyone you know, or resell it. See the terms and conditions on our site for a longer way of saying the above - 'Do the right thing with our content.'