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The snowy hills of Glen Lochy

The summer of 2020 saw unprecedented numbers of people heading into Scotland's countryside following the lifting of the Pandemic lockdown restrictions. Unfortunately, the sheer pressure of numbers caused problems – not enough parking places or toilets, traffic-jams at popular spots, over-crowding on paths and land managers struggling to cope with the impact of so many visitors.

But it doesn't need to be this way! Scotland has a lot of empty land and a relatively small population. There's room for everyone, as long as we don't all try to go to the same places! You may find hidden gems closer to your home than you think.

We've put together some ideas to help you find peace, quiet and relaxation. Don't sit in a traffic-jam or erode the same paths as everyone else. Dare to be different!

Different Thinking

When planning where to go, think beyond the ‘honeypot’ areas like Loch Lomond and the popular mountains. They will be busy, especially when the weather is good. Think instead of the ‘forgotten’ areas, such as Dumfries and Galloway or Ayrshire. Do your research, plan and be prepared to be flexible. If the first place you go to is overcrowded, be prepared to look at alternative locations in the area that you can try instead of just adding to the problem. Think of climbing Corbetts, Donalds or Grahams rather than Munros. Go out early in the morning or in the evening; go out on the days of cloud and mist. Avoid weekends and school holiday periods if you can. Consider different ways to get to where you want to go and even book an overnight stay so you can make full use of public transport.

There are more ideas from The Great Outdoors, '11 Ways to get the mountains to yourself' and VisitScotland has good information about areas and places to visit which are off the beaten track.

Whatever you choose to do always follow the Scottish Outdoor Access Code.

Places to visit

Here are some ideas for quieter routes.

The *Scotland Off The Beaten Track* website has a number of less frequented routes throughout Scotland and is independent of any business or area.

The South West of Scotland has some stunning landscape as is usually much quieter than the central belt. A good place to plan routes is the South West Scotland Hill Walking Routes Page.

Heritage Paths

ScotWays’ Heritage Paths describes and maps all types of traditional routes across Scotland, from herring roads to coffin roads.

Scottish Hill Tracks first published in 1947 and still going strong, has got details of 344 routes across the hill of Scotland.

Community Paths Groups

Many local communities have worked together to create and promote their own local path network. Here's a few to get you started!

Lumphanan Paths group received funding from ScotWays and have produced a great website and walks leaflets.

Walk Melrose

Visit Moffat

Walks Around St Andrews – prepared by St Andrews & NE Fife Ramblers, 10 walks around St Andrews.

Cupar Walks – prepared by St Andrews & NE Fife Ramblers, 14 walks around Cupar designed to help you explore Fife's farming heritage.

Glasgow's Clyde Bridges – produced by the Institution of Civil Engineers, a stravaig along the banks of the Clyde looking at the history of the bridges across the River Clyde.

Forgotten Hills

ScotWays has produced maps to highlight the heritage paths across the beautiful, but not so much visited, Lammermuir Hills and the Campsie Fells

Other Route Suggestions

Have a look at these websites and look for the routes you haven't heard of before?

WalkScotland

WalkHighland

Pilgrim Routes

Scotland's Great Trails

Ramblers Scotland

Scottish Paths Map

Slow Ways

National Trust for Scotland

Forest and Land Scotland

Fife Coast and Countryside Trust

Perth and Kinross Countryside Trust

East Lothian on the move

Out and About Midlothian

Bikepacking Scotland

Local Authorities also have information about walks and places to visit on their websites. Check out your local authority's website and search out the local hidden gems.

There are some ideas here:

Argyll and Bute Council

Moray Council

Clackmannanshire Council

Walk Scottish Borders

Highland Council Countryside Rangers

Midlothian Council

South Ayrshire Council

Core Path Plans

Each local authority and national park authority are required to create and publish a plan of core paths in their area. Here's the Dumfries and Galloway Core Paths one. You should be able to find the one for your local authority or national park authority on their website. Some are interactive and some not. You can get an overview of all the core paths in Scotland on the NatureScot website.

National Parks

If you want to visit the National Parks, they have guidance about where to go, and more importantly, where not to go. They also have the latest information online, including live updates on car parks and toilet facilities.

Cairngorm National Park

Loch Lomond National Park

A different way to get there

> "We are at capacity for cars, not people,"
>
> *Spokesman for Loch Lomond and The Trossachs National Park*

Cars are so useful, but they do take up a lot of space, so consider if you really need to take yours for your trip. If you can find a way of getting to your destination without using a private vehicle, then why not leave the car behind and help reduce pollution, congestion and driver frustration?



Leaving Bo'ness with the now demolished Longannet Chimney in the distance.

For travel planning on all forms of public transport, see Traveline Scotland

For Trains visit ScotRail

For Coaches visit Citylink or

Why not get there by bike on the National Cycle Network?

Contact your regional and city bus service operators or look at their websites for information on their services.

Consider a different activity

Ever thought about giving canoeing or horse riding a try instead of pounding along paths? Then it may be a good time to consider doing that activity that you have always wanted to try.

Horse riding

Canoeing and Kayaking

Mountain Biking

Cycling

Climbing