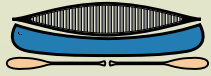


Galloway Forest Park

The Grand Tour Canoe Route



Think of it as a big Canadian canoe route with all the tough portages, but where the lakes have shrunk!



3 Follow the gravel forestry road up to Loch Finlas, avoiding leftwards alternatives. At the first sight of water, follow a path rightwards down to a good loading-up point

2 Head for a tiny bay, a little way up the river entering at this point, aiming to get as close as you can to the lefthand side of the bridge

4 Land just right of the pumphouse, or if the wind is making things difficult, in the bay to its left. Carry across to Derclach Loch

5 Head for the closest point to the track on your left, and portage up to the road. Don't continue paddling to the nearest point to the road; you will regret it!

6 On the right you will see a little stream with a small path alongside reached via a flimsy bridge. Portage next to the stream for 100m then load up and follow it down to the loch

7 From here it is an easy trolley back along the road to your car. It gets much wilder if you decide to continue on to Macaterick, and you will have to carry your canoe as Nature intended



8 The Slochy Portage starts at the southern tip of Riecawr. At Loch Slochy, head left, then follow the stream southwards until you can head off left down a firebreak, which eventually intersects with the stream running into Loch Macaterick. A straightforward and clear portage, but don't expect to keep your feet dry



9 The Loch Gower to Loch Fannie portage is a tough alternative if there are windfalls in the firebreak. Some knowledge of the ways of the forest is needed for successful passage

10 The easiest portage route follows the wall to cut off the corner. If it's nice weather why not take your time and follow the stream; find some nice campsites; swim in the pools

1 Park next to the bridge south of the castle. If it's calm, do Loch Doon (the biggest loch) first; if it's windy, think about doing the route clockwise; things might have quietened down when you come to do this loch later

To Loch Doon 5.5 km

- Forest road
- x metres = Elevations
- Main portage distances



km



Galloway: The Grand Tour Canoe Route

Character

The overall length of this route is around 30km (18.5 miles) and takes in seven lochs (or more if you do the Loch Gower-Loch Fannie Portage). The terrain varies from tarmac roads and manicured grassy areas to totally wild places that see few humans from one year to the next. This blend of the wild and the tamed makes for a very interesting trip. With miles-long portages, this route is not for the faint-hearted, but is just the thing for building up experience in a relatively non-committing situation where you are never more than about three hours walk from your car. The route is forested for a considerable part of its length, which affords some shelter. This fact, together with most of the lochs being small, makes this route worth considering if significant winds are forecast and routes on bigger lochs are not advisable. Time: how long to allow for the trip depends on the weather and how much exploring you want to do. Don't rush. A minimum of three days will probably be needed unless you are hell-bent on breaking records. Avoid the midges by doing the route in Spring (before mid-May) or Autumn (October onwards).

Risk

Canoeing carries a significant risk. It is your responsibility to make sure you have the appropriate level of experience, the correct equipment, and know what action to take in case of emergencies. Publicising this route in no way implies that it is safe or "risk assessed".

Variations

There are two ways of getting from Loch Riecawr to Loch Macaterick:

(1) The Slochy Portage. An interesting mix of stream, river bank and loch. Recommended.

(2) The Loch Gower-Loch Fannie Portage. A much more difficult journey through the forest. In 2014, the firebreak was choked with windthrown trees. The two extra lochs are very attractive though.

If you don't feel up to the full trip, there is a much easier version in which the majority of the portages can be achieved using a trolley. You may be able to exit from Derclach Loch through the waterworks, rather than over the hill as documented here, and from Loch Riecawr the forest road can be followed all the way back to your car.

Security

As with any beauty spot, car thieves operate in this area. Follow the usual rules: leave no valuables; if possible have all the empty interior of your car on show.

Camping

The local custom seems to be to mark your campsite with a mound of bottles, cans and any other items that you think the park authorities will enjoy picking up, the sure sign of greenhorn campers. Unfortunately it is very difficult to learn from the pros, because you can never find where they have camped (hint). If you have spare carrying capacity, please consider carrying out some other people's litter. Finding wild campsites is an interesting and valuable skill. We don't want to publicise specific camping places, but leave you the excitement of finding your own. This also serves to spread the load of wear and tear on the land, rather than concentrating people at a small number of named places.

Fires

To many people, the campfire is at the very core of the outdoor experience. Being a largely forested area, extreme care must be taken here, and fires not contemplated at all in dry weather.

Gear

Many of the portages are over rough, wet ground. We strongly recommend hiking boots that give a good grip and aren't going to cause blisters (which form more easily when your feet are constantly wet and the ground slopes every which way). A comfortable portage sack is an asset. Because the streams are narrow and winding in places, passage is often easier for a shorter (12ft) canoe than for a longer (16ft) one.

Drinking Water

People have drunk the water untreated here without ill effects, but it is recommended that you boil or filter water before use.

WWW.MOOSEHEADCANOES.CO.UK

WWW.SCOTTISHCANOEROUTES.INFO

The Outside World

Mobile signal is patchy at best. There is some signal on Loch Macaterick.