

Useful information from the Expedition Network

Welcome!

Green forms and requests for assessment should be submitted to the Scottish Network Co-ordinator, who can also assist with enquiries regarding landowners, routes, and campsites:

DofE Scotland
Rosebery House
9 Haymarket Terrace
Edinburgh
EH12 5EZ

T: 0131 343 0920

E: scotland.assessors@dofe.org

Area advisor

The local area advisor is based in the area and can assist with enquiries regarding routes and campsites.

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Introduction

Welcome to the Isle of Arran Expedition Area. Arran can be considered as 'Scotland in Miniature', with the mountains to the North and boggy moors to the South.

The northern half of the island is the spectacular area of glens, peaks and ridges for which Arran is famed. In this area, care should be exercised by expedition members as some of the ridges are narrow and exposed, with paths often in proximity to extremely steep ground or near vertical cliffs. In general, traversing the high tops should be avoided for DofE expeditions, while they can remain a spectacular backdrop to journey through them.

The varying terrain makes an excellent venue for all levels of expedition on foot, bike or by boat.

Area boundaries

The whole of the Isle of Arran is designated as 'wild country' for the purpose of those intending to visit.

The DofE website includes a downloadable [GPX of the area boundaries](#).



Choosing Your Route

Access Issues

The areas of lowland in Arran are very limited in extent, and generally, those less than 150 m in height constitute arable farmland. This should only be traversed by recognised paths and tracks. It is also worth bearing in mind that detail which may look like paths and tracks can in fact be badly overgrown rides and fire breaks.

Unless there has been a reasonable spell of dry weather, the glens will be very wet underfoot, although there is currently a path improvement programme underway which is seeking to improve conditions in some of the glens.

Bennan Head (NR 994 203) can be dangerous if groups try to go around it at the wrong point in the tide. Teams should check the tide times in advance and plan their route accordingly.

Going via Glen Sannox and Glen Rosa to get between Brodick and North Sannox requires teams to cross the Saddle, which involves scrambling up or down a relatively narrow chimney. For many DofE teams this will be very challenging, especially with expedition packs. Supervisors should understand the challenges of the Saddle before taking teams through here. Many teams may find this easier going north to south, scrambling upwards, rather than down.

Significant bogs - The two areas highlighted on the map are mapped as marsh land. There have been reports of DofE teams sinking to knee and thigh depth in these bogs, often delaying expeditions by 3-4 hours, even when following paths. This should be taken into account when route-planning, and if they are to be crossed extra time must be allowed for walking.



Ferries

Visiting Holy Island as part of an expedition

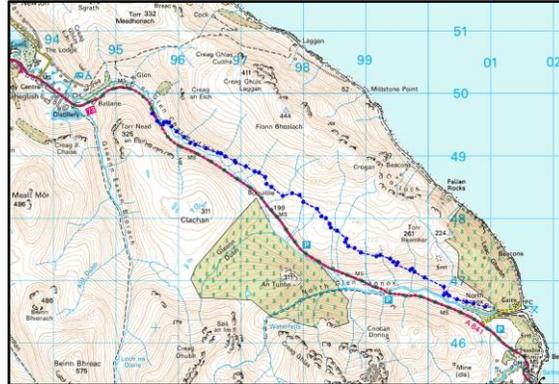
Some teams may be keen to visit Holy Island as part of their expedition, which involves taking a ferry. The first of the 20 conditions of Expeditions is "All expeditions must be by the participants' own physical effort, without motorised or outside assistance." Therefore, approval would never be given for using a long ferry, such as from the mainland to Arran during the expedition. Approval may be given for the use of small short ferries with few facilities to hop between neighbouring islands to facilitate sensible routes and aims. In these cases teams must not use time waiting for the ferry or on the ferry as part of their hours of planned activity, so they must expect a longer day. Teams wanting to travel to Holy Island must plan to take all their equipment with them and would usually be expected to move campsite that day, as for most teams circumnavigation of the island would not meet the minimum requirements for planned activity that day. Another option would be for teams to visit the island unencumbered by expedition equipment before or after the main expedition, possibly as part of an acclimatisation day.

Bonus Paths

Isle of Arran Expedition Area

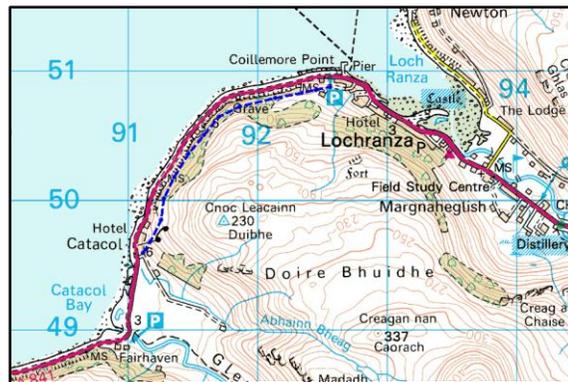
South of the island has long sweeping sandy beaches which can be walked at low tide. Clauchlands point in the east and Drumadoon in the west can also be incorporated into a route. Account should be taken of the more substantial rivers which flow into the sea at the south of the island which may require a detour to the road to cross.

There is a new forestry track from the road just south of High Corrie through to Merkland which is only on newer maps.



North Glen Sannox and Glen Chalmdale new path – there is a new path north of the road in these glens, roughly following the route shown.

Lochranza to Catacol (the postman's path) - There is an off-road route between Catacol and Lochranza, even when it's shown on maps it is often not clear, and it is not on some older maps. The approximate route is highlighted below.



Way-marked and long-distance paths

The DofE Expedition Guide says “long distance footpaths should not be used, particularly by Silver and Gold teams, except in small sections to link up other paths.” (page 10, also see page 39). The quality of way-marked and long distance paths in Scotland varies considerably – some are concepts that don't exist on the ground (for example the Skye and Cape Wrath trails) while others are clearly signposted heavily used routes (for example, the West Highland Way).

In some areas there are no alternatives to some way-marked paths. Teams may use these, but should not plan an expedition with more than half a day continuously on the same route. Heavily used way-marked paths provide little navigational challenge, undermine the sense of isolation, and potentially have negative environmental impacts, and therefore should be avoided by DofE teams as much as possible. **In this area walking, cycling and riding Silver and Gold teams should avoid the use of the Arran Coastal Way.**

Scottish Hill Tracks

Scotways, the Scottish rights of way and access society, publishes **Scottish Hill Tracks**, a book listing rights of way across Scotland's uplands. This is an excellent resource for ideas for routes as some paths are not shown connecting on a map where historic routes exist. Scotways are also interested to hear about any issues with paths and routes.

Core paths

Under the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003 every local authority and National Park authority (access authority) in Scotland was required to draw up a plan for a system of core paths that gives the public reasonable access throughout their area. Some of these paths do not yet appear on OS maps and may help DofE teams link up routes. All core paths can be seen on the **Scottish Natural Heritage website**, with links to details from each council.

Camping

Serviced sites:

Glen Rosa Campsite, Brodick (NS 000 376)

Lochranza Campsite, Lochranza (NR 942 500)

Seal Shore Camping, Kildonan (NS 031 207)

Bridgend Campsite, between Blackwaterfoot and Balmichael (NR 920 304) -

Wild camping

Scottish access rights (see the **Outdoor Access Code section** for further information) extend to wild camping for small groups (at DofE we consider this to be individual expedition teams). Although not strictly necessary, the DofE recommends that, as a courtesy and to maintain existing good relations, expedition teams inform relevant land owners of their intentions. It is reasonable for owners to react by saying why a particular site might be unsuitable and to suggest alternatives.

If multiple teams from the same DofE centre intend to camp at the same location, this falls outside the definition of 'wild camping' permitted under access rights. **Therefore, centres planning to camp with multiple teams in the same location should always seek permission from the landowner.**

Teams should consult the advice on camping in the Expedition Guide (page 101). There is also lots of useful information and resources about wild camping available via **Mountaineering Scotland** and **The Outdoor Access Code**.

Supervisors are reminded that birds may be nesting on some lochs and every effort should be made to avoid disturbance. If a camp site is proposed next to a loch, it is recommended to camp about 50m away from the shoreline.

Other modes of travel

Groups wishing to complete a river-based, mountain bike or horseback expedition are welcome, however it should be noted that there are extra constraints for these types of expedition. We would advise everyone looking to use the area for mountain bike or horseback expeditions to contact us so we can advise you of the options available.

Information about paddling the Spey river is available on [the Canoe Scotland website](#).

Travel and transport to the area

There are regular daily sailings to Arran from Ardrossan to Brodick, and during the summer months from Cloanaig on Kintyre to Lochranza. A timetable of the sailings and booking information can be obtained from: Caledonian MacBrayne Tel: 0800 066 5000 www.calmac.co.uk/

Road works

Road closures and works in the area can have a serious impact on the ability of team's and leaders to get to and from expeditions, and for supervisors and assessors getting around due to the lack of quick alternative routes. Information about current or planned noticed road works in Scotland is available at [the Scottish Road Works Register](#).

Expedition aim ideas

There is almost an infinite number of possible projects here but some of the most productive will be those comparing different habitats, e.g. farmland with seashore, moorland, towns and parkland, or different types of the same habitat i.e. coniferous with native woodland, rock shores with sandy shores etc. It is also possible to compare the different wildlife found in these habitats, e.g. you find buzzards on the farmland but not over the sea.

Beaches

There are a number of beaches which can be used for comparative studies. Most of these are easily accessible from the road and could be as part of cycling, walking or water borne explorations. Comparisons of the physical characteristics of Arran's beaches and their resident wildlife can be revealing.

Scottish Wild land areas

The Scottish Government has [defined 42 Wild Land Areas around Scotland](#). The discussions around defining these areas and the implications of this may be of interest for teams considering aims around land use, flora and fauna and wilderness.

Physical and Human Geography

Arran's varied geology affects our river systems. Generally speaking, rivers in the North of the island flow over acidic rocks and so have a low pH and are lacking in wildlife. This contrasts with rivers in the South of the island which flow over sandstones and limestones, thus having a richer fauna. The variety of insect life found in a river can also be used to assess the degree of pollution in a river.

Studies can be made using very simple, light and compact equipment, e.g. a hand net, shallow dish and some litmus paper. Backup materials such as geology maps are freely available on Arran and the Clyde River Purification Board produces an annual report which gives the annual pH readings for the main Arran rivers.

Similar comparative studies of some of the lochs can also be fruitful.

History

As soon as man arrived on Arran, he began to leave evidence of his various activities. These date from the various stone circles to modern dwellings and factories. Many of the historic and prehistoric sites are in remote areas and consequently are still well preserved. There is also a reasonable amount of background information available in various books.

Isle of Arran Expedition Area

A variety of sites can be visited and comparisons made. Study topics can include construction techniques and materials, functions and site selection. A list of the more interesting sites is given below:

- Drumadoon Fort NR886293
- Dun Fion Fort NS046338
- Corriecravie Dun Fort NR922232
- Sannox Fort NS017461
- Bennan Head Fort NR977208
- North Sannox Fort NS001474
- Glenashdale Fort NS031252
- GleannEasbuig Fort NR953358
- Cnoc Ballygowan NR921291
- Machrie Moor Stone and Hut Circles NR910324
- Stronach wood cup and ring marked rocks NS003364
- Carn Ban Cairn NR991262
- Auchagallon Cairn NR893346
- Giants Graves Cairns NS043246
- Tormore Cairn NR904311
- Kings Cross Cairn NS056283
- Bennan Head NR993207
- High Corrie NS023423
- Kings Cave NR884309
- North Sannox NS007467
- Kilpatrick Cashel NR906262
- Lagantuine NR999485
- Gargadale NR958262
- Cock Farm NR967512
- Clachaig NR963238
- Balmichael Estate NR922309

Place names

The Gaelic language, once a distinctive characteristic of the Highlands and Islands, has survived, although it is not in common use. The descriptive and imaginative nature of the Gaelic language is an important key to understanding the significance of both place names and the names of landscape features. Many books about the region give lists of the more common place-name elements and it is well worth using these elements in your preparatory study of the maps of your chosen area. It will throw a useful light on both history and natural features. You will also come across some Norse names.

Visitor pressure in mountain areas

Whilst the main island offers welcome opportunities for wilderness experience, there are some mountain areas on Arran, where visitor pressure is giving rise to some concern. This may become apparent in serious footpath erosion, disturbance of wildlife and a loss in the full enjoyment of the mountain environment. Little data currently exists about numbers using popular mountain routes and landowners and organisations such as The National Trust for Scotland welcome reliable data. On Arran the National Trust for Scotland is keen to establish how visitors use the Goatfell Site of Special Scientific Interest and National Scenic Area.

Hazards

Ticks

Ticks are small, blood sucking creatures found across the uplands of Scotland, especially in areas with lots of deer and sheep. Some ticks carry Lyme disease, which is treatable but can be tricky to diagnose. Teams should be made aware of the risks of Lyme disease and how to reduce the risk of being bitten. All teams should carry a tick remover and check themselves daily.

Some useful resources about ticks:

- Lyme Disease Action has useful downloadable [leaflets about ticks and Lyme disease](#).
- [Stop the tick](#) has lots of infographics (some are a bit graphic, but informative)

- Lime Disease UK has posters and leaflets as part of their [Wake up to Lyme campaign](#), as well as detailed information about the disease

Midges

The biting midge is particularly prolific in parts of Scotland and worst in late Spring through to early Autumn. The detrimental effect midges can have on an expedition is disproportionate to their tiny size and should not be underestimated, especially with teams unused to them. During this summer period teams should carry midge nets, insect repellent and clothes to provide full coverage (including gloves and long-sleeved tops). First aid kits should include antihistamines to reduce discomfort. Teams should also be aware of how to reduce their impact including:

- choice of campsite (in direct sunlight and breezy, ideally in both morning and evening)
- choice of clothing (pale, bright, and smooth rather than dark, wooly, or fleecy)
- campcraft (menu planning, positioning of tents, keeping tent doors closed)

Snakes

There are Adders (the UK's only venomous snake) in the area. They are not aggressive or commonly seen, but they will bite if stood on, sat on or picked up. Because of this teams who are wild camping should always wear shoes (which the snakes cannot bite through) and not walk around barefoot, in socks or in sandals such as flip-flops. If anyone has the unusual misfortune to be bitten, then medical assistance must be sought urgently.

Drinking water

Watercourses across Scotland can contain a variety of waterborne infections. Therefore, when wild camping it should not be assumed that streams and rivers are clean sources of drinking water, especially due to the high density of livestock and deer across large areas. Leaders should refer to the DofE Expedition Guide advice on taking water from streams (pg 122). Other good sources of information about health and hygiene outdoors (including issues around drinking water) are the NHS advice about [avoiding bugs and germs outdoors](#), and the Mountaineering Scotland advice on [health and hygiene](#).

River crossings

Rivers and streams throughout the area rise quickly after rain or during snow melt, and careful consideration should be given to any route which involves river crossings. Even small streams can quickly become completely impassable and larger rivers can become very dangerous even if the rain has not been falling in the immediate vicinity of the planned crossing.

All teams should understand what to do in case of streams rising – stream levels will fall as fast as they rise and often waiting overnight is all that is needed. In case of snow melt, peak levels are often late afternoon/evening, and the lowest levels in the morning. Teams planning river crossings must have an alternative plan in the event of continued wet weather.

Hours of daylight

All visitors, especially those from the south, need to be aware of the shortness of daylight hours in the expedition shoulder season: March has 11 hours of daylight and the October half term a little over 9 hours.

Emergencies and Incidents

Mountain rescue

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In Scotland, responsibility for the provision of rescue facilities rests with the Police Force - who will call out/co-ordinate mountain rescue as appropriate. Teams must be clear that if they need to call for help they must ask for the police, and then ask for mountain rescue. Teams may not be connected to the nearest police control room to their location, so should be clear on the general area they are in, and their exact location. [Mountaineering Scotland](#) has advice about the process of calling for help, and the information that should be supplied.

Teams must be trained to supply the control room with a six-figure grid-reference for their location, including the two-letter prefix code e.g. NX 345 678 not 345 678. 'GR' is not the correct prefix for any location; it is a commonly used shorthand for 'grid refence'. There is information about six figure grid references [the Ordnance Survey website](#). Correct provision of a full six figure grid-reference is essential as the police computer system will not be able to interpret a grid reference without this two-letter prefix. The two letter prefix locates your grid reference within a 100km square; a mistake here may lead to significant delays in support from Mountain Rescue. DofE Scotland strongly recommend that all DofE route cards are prepared including two letter prefixes to avoid delays or uncertainty in emergency situations.

The team that covers the expedition area is Arran MRT.

Remember that in case of an incident both the team's Licenced Organisation and the [Scottish Expedition Network Coordinator](#) should be notified using the DofE Incident Report Form (available through the resources zone in eDofE).

Mobile Signal

It should be noted that in many parts of the area telephone boxes are rare and the mobile phone network reception is limited/non-existent away from centres of population and cannot be relied upon for getting assistance. Therefore, teams must know how to deal with an emergency in a location without mobile phone signal.

Teams should be encouraged to [sign up for the 999 text service](#) in advance of their expedition to give them the best chance of contacting emergency services in an emergency.

Outdoor access code

The Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003 has been implemented through the Scottish Outdoor Access Code. This provides access rights for the purposes of recreation or education across most of the land and inland water in Scotland. This includes mountains, moorland, woods and forests, grassland, margins of arable crop fields, paths and tracks, rivers and lochs, and the coast. These access rights are balanced with responsibilities towards the environment and the interests of those who make a living from the land.

Three key principles of access:

- Take responsibility for your own actions
- Respect the interests of other people
- Care for the environment.

For further information (including a downloadable e-book) visit www.outdooraccess-scotland.com

Any access issues should be reported to the [Scottish Expedition Network Coordinator](#) who will investigate.

Landuse

The [Countryside Calendar](#) gives a month by month snapshot of typical activities and happenings in the farming and wildlife year in Scotland, any may be helpful in planning expeditions and thinking about appropriate aims.

Landowners

To identify the borders of estates see www.whoownsscotland.org.uk . There is a subscription option which gives access to see contact details.

Lambing

Sheep and lambing season is usually between around 10th April until around 25th May and lambing ewes must not be disturbed. If an apparently 'lost' lamb is seen - do not touch or intervene, as the mother will not be far away. At all other times it is advised that teams should pass through sheep quietly and if possible at a distance in an effort not to disturb and stress them.

Traps

Teams may observe traps on the high moorland. These should not be touched or disturbed as they have been set by the game keepers to catch predators to the ground nesting birds, typically the Hooded Crow.

Scottish game seasons

During the deer stalking season teams should utilise the [Heading for the Scottish Hills website](#) in addition to contacting landowners to find out where and when shooting will be taking place. Teams should stay on recognised footpaths whilst in these areas for safety reasons.

Game	Season Opens	Season Closes
Salmon/Sea Trout	Jan/Feb	October (dates vary)
Trout	15th March	6th October
Roe Deer (bucks)	1st April	20th October
Red & Sika Deer (stags)	1st July	20th October
Fallow Deer (bucks)	1st August	30th April
Grouse & Ptarmigan	12th August	10th December
Snipe	12th August	30th January
Black Grouse	20th August	10th December
Wild Fowl	1st September	30th January
Partridge	1st September	31st January
Capercaillie & Woodcock	1st October	30th January
Pheasant	1st October	31st January
Roe Deer (does)	21st October	31st March
Red, Sika, & Fallow Deer (hinds)	21st October	15th February

Weather forecasts

[The Met Office](#) provides:

- Forecasts with summaries for the region and 7 day detailed forecasts for the chosen town/village.
- Surface pressure charts
- Mountain area forecasts for North Grampian and South Grampian and Southeast Highlands. This includes a forecast for the region, with forecasts for individual summits available. These summit forecasts are for the summit height of the mountain, which should be considered when teams interpret them.

[The Mountain Weather Information Service \(MWIS\)](#) provides 72 hour forecasts for 5 Scottish regions. These forecasts are for the summits of the mountains which must be considered when interpreting them for DofE use. They provide some interpretation which can assist participant understanding. The forecast that covers the area is the West Highlands.

Outdoor conditions forecasts are available on [BBC Radio Scotland](#) (FM: 92.8-94.7, MW: 810) at 18:25 Monday – Friday, and on Saturday and Sunday at 07:00 and 19:00.

Useful Links

Listed below are some links you may find useful. Please note that the Isle of Arran Expedition Area does not directly endorse any of the sites listed.

<https://www.visitarran.com/> This is the official web site for the Cairngorm area.

<https://scotland-info.co.uk/arran.htm> A tourist information site with lots of useful advice.

DofE resources

The current DofE expedition kit list can be downloaded from:

www.dofeshopping.org/expedition-kit

A range of expedition downloads, such as the Green Form and spare expedition safety cards, can be downloaded from: www.dofe.org/leaders/resources-and-downloads/expedition-downloads/

Further information of the Expedition section can be found at: www.dofe.org/doing-your-dofe/activities-sections/expedition/