

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
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Area advisor

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

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Choosing Your Route

Access Issues

Groups using the south shore of Loch Etive should note that some of the burns (streams/ becks) are prone to flash floods and such crossings may require Supervisors to be present at certain times. (see [River Crossings](#) section for further advice).

The short section of the A82(T) – frequently used from just above the bridge at the entrance to Beinglass Farm when heading north towards the Glen Falloch track (NN 319 190) requires great caution. Some supervision may be necessary.

The OS marked line of pylons between Strath of Orchy near Dalmally, south and east towards the head of Loch Lomond/Glen Falloch is not a path and not recommended as a route.

Glen Orchy-Catnish Bridge (NN 232 306) It should be noted this footbridge is permanently locked and access is not normally permitted.

Old military roads - however attractive it may seem it is not practical to follow any apparent OMR adjacent to either the A82(T) or the A85(T).

Military Restricted Areas

NR 880 900 Lochgilphead MOD training area & rifle range environs
NS 260 920 Garelohead Firing Ranges & MOD Training Camp (Strone House) environs
NS 245 885 Clyde Submarine Base (HMS Neptune) environs
NS 250 905 Garelohead MOD Training Camp (Greenfields) environs
NS 210 875 MOD Base (Coulport) and environs
NS 238 946 MOD Base (Finnart) and environs
NS 250 960 MOD Base (Glenmallon) and environs

Using ferries

For some routes in this area using short ferries may help make practical routes, especially if cycling. 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 out to Islay 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.

Bonus Paths

MOD Firing Range at Auchencarroch (NS 418 811) is no longer used as such and no restrictions are in force.

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, use of the West Highland Way for the whole of a practice or qualifying venture is considered inappropriate. However, the route may be used in short sections as a link between other paths.**

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

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**.

Water-based expeditions on Loch Lomond can find more details on campsites in the document ‘Loch Lomond Campsites’ on the **Expedition Area web page**.

West Lomond and Trossachs new camping By-laws

On 1st March 2017 new byelaws governing camping in areas around East and West Loch Lomond and the North edge of Loch Long will come into force. These byelaws create ‘Camping Management Zones’, restricting camping

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within the area covered every year between 1st March – 30th September (the majority of the DofE expedition season).

A general map of the zones can be found on the [National Park website](#). Camping outside the narrow areas covered by the byelaws remains covered by the usual Scottish laws.

For teams planning to camp within one of the Camping Management Zones, the National Park recommends that groups apply through the '[Group camping permit exemption](#)' process. This will have several advantages over the online permit system for the public:

- It will be free
- Groups will be able to apply for camping on sites outside the publicly permitted sites
- Groups will be able to apply to camp with larger groups than public permits are available for

Such applications will need to be submitted at least four weeks before the expedition. For DofE teams there is a shortened version of the application form (either an editable word version or a PDF version) which can be submitted along with green forms and route maps for the teams concerned. Submission details are in the form.

Bothies

Bothies are basic shelters in the hills. Many are open to the public for use and managed by the [Mountain Bothies Association](#) (MBA). If teams plan to use a bothy for lunch or shelter they should be aware of the [MBA's bothy code](#).

DofE teams are generally advised not to camp within close proximity to a bothy without permission from the owner because of problems that come with the pressure of numbers. This often leads to issues with pollution from human waste, so risk assessment would suggest these sites are not appropriate as a campsite. You can find more information about use of bothies, via the DofE '[Use of Bothies information sheet](#)'.

Other modes of travel

Horse riding

Endowed with large areas of open, wild, often remote countryside and large areas of Forestry lands, there is good potential for the development of all types of equestrian expeditions. However, it is essential that riders hold relevant qualification, are competent with, and use horses accustomed to journeying. Riding is considered 'high risk' therefore, once again, Operating Authority approval would be appropriate.

Leasing is worthy of consideration and permits may be required for some areas.

Water-based

The Expedition area offers a unique combination of interesting, beautiful, varied and relatively safe, yet challenging, opportunity for a broad spectrum of water activities in expedition format with adequate shelter in the event of adverse weather. All waters are, in general, sheltered but may be subject to sudden squalls and must be considered as 'sea state' - often within a short period of time and usually short lived. Excellent information can also be obtained from RYA, BCU/SCA, Marine & Coastguard Agency publications.

It should be noted that the inshore waters from the Sound of Jura to the N end of the Sound of Luing, while generally sheltered, are subject to strong tides with eddies and overfalls. Similar conditions exist at the mouth of Loch Etive and, in general, ventures should keep clear of the Falls of Lora. Sections of the Rivers Awe & Orchy - between Grades 1 to 3 - are sometimes part of Gold expeditions. There are relatively few artificial navigation marks in some of these areas. Elsewhere, with one or two exceptions, tidal streams are weak and tidal rise does not exceed 3.4m springs and 2.9m neaps.

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Some areas within the Firth are under control of either the Clyde Port Authority or the Queen's Harbourmaster (Naval Dockyard Port area) and, at some times, may be subject to temporary restrictions.

The area also offers an excellent opportunity for sports diving in sea and inland waters, both of which are rich in expedition subject matter. Such expeditions would only be considered for Gold participants over 18 years of age with the specific approval of an Operating Authority.

It should be noted that a good portion of appropriate routes - particularly at Gold level - go into fairly remote areas and all groups should be practically capable of tackling most conditions without external assistance; some parts of inland and sea lochs are considered 'remote' from conventional external assistance and groups using such areas are expected to make specific arrangements for 'self rescue' and any access routes in conjunction with us. Sturdy, well-maintained craft are necessary in addition to good preparation and a fair degree of both physical and mental fitness.

Cycling expeditions

This area provides a unique opportunity for cycle ventures at all levels. There are large tracts using minor roads, forest or other off-road tracks covering something in the region of 200 miles and, if required, this can be easily extended by travelling into Lochaber & District Expedition Area. It should be noted, however, that a good portion of these routes - particularly at Gold level - go into fairly remote areas and all groups must be capable of tackling mechanical problems without external assistance. It must be emphasised that main roads within the panel area are quite hazardous and therefore not appropriate for DofE expeditions. Sturdy well-maintained bikes are necessary in addition to good preparation and a fair degree of both physical and mental fitness.

Cross country cycling requires careful attention towards land access and in addition to the advice contained in DofE publications, the Scottish Sports Council publish a useful guide to Off-Road conduct.

Travel and transport to the area

Ferry operators: Clyde Estuary

- [Caledonian MacBrayne](#) (CALMAC) 01475 650100 Gourock-Dunoon; Tarbert (Loch Fyne)-Portavadie (seasonal)
- [Western Ferries](#) (01369) 704452 Gourock (McInroy's Point/Cloch)-Dunoon (Hunter's Quay)

Ferry operators: Loch Lomond

- Arden-Inchmurrin 01389 850245
- Inveruglas-Inversnaid 01877 386223
- Inverbeg-Rowardennan 01360 870273
- Balmaha-Inchcailloch 01360 870214
- Ardlui-Ardleish 01301 704244 (On E shore - by signal N of Doune)

On both inland and estuary waters there are other local operators who, although not running conventional 'ferries', may be able to provide additional services by arrangement.

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 a very wide range of expedition topics/studies:

- a great variety of natural, 'man-made' and secular features
- an area of, sometimes vivid, 'living landscapes'
- a varied geology associated with the Highland Boundary Fault, glacial action and volcanic activity
- deep, (remote), long fjord-like sea and inland lochs
- broad climatic variation (temperate, humid Atlantic to Continental and Arctic)
- the warming influence of the Gulf Stream
- a myriad of inshore aquatic marine wildlife and organisms

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

The coast of the Expedition Area is complex, with the west coast in particular being heavily indented and containing numerous sea inlets, peninsulas and sub-peninsulas. The topography is in general heavily mountainous and sparsely populated, with numerous lochs.

History

The name Argyll is of ancient origin and corresponds to most of the part of the ancient kingdom of *Dál Riata*. Argyll was also a medieval bishopric with its cathedral at Lismore, as well as an early modern earldom and dukedom, the Dukedom of Argyll.

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)
- Lyme 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

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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

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 teams that cover the expedition area are Arrochar MRT, Oban MRT and Lomond 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

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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 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 Lomond and Argyll Expedition Area does not directly endorse any of the sites listed.

<https://www.wildaboutargyll.co.uk/downloadable-guides/> Some guides of the area which might support a group's aim

<https://scotland-info.co.uk/argyll.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/