

# OUTDOORS

## WALKING

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The extensive network of footpaths created at Craigengillan offers wonderful opportunities for walkers of all ages and fitness. The paths pass through natural habitats rich in wildlife and archaeological interest to spectacular places including Dalcairn Falls and the famous Ness Glen.

The Craigengillan path network connects with Dalmellington's Doon Valley Museum and the paths around the village of Straiton.

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DOON VALLEY MUSEUM TO THE MUCK WATER BRIDGE  
APPROX ?? MILES

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Starting at the Museum (se link), where parking is available, follow the path uphill through the trees and cross the A713 to re-join the path on the other side of the road. The section between here and the Craigengillan Gate Lodge (photo) was created in 2012 and is called the Jubilee Path. It passes between established native hardwood trees and the two Jubilee Woods planted by Patna and St Xaviers Primary Schools.

The path continues on the other side of the Craigengillan approach, following the banks of the Muck Water, one of the most important salmon spawning tributaries of the River Doon. In high summer, the grassland beneath the young oaks, rowan and silver birch is full

of wild flowers and you will pass the Scout Garden and two willow sculptures created by sculptor Geoff Forest in partnership with pupils of Doon Academy.

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THE BRIDGE OVER THE RIVER DOON TO DALCAIRNIE FALLS.  
APPROX ?? MILES

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From the bridges over the River Doon (see pics of stone bridge and Anton's Bridge) the route follows the quiet single track road to Dalcairn Farm, passing Bogton Loch on the left and the Scheduled Monument of Dalnean Hill, with its mediaeval network of field enclosures and farmstead on the right,

Just before the farmhouse and steading, go through the marked gate on your left, through the meadow and across the wooden footbridge. Pass the pond on your left and follow the path to a second wooden footbridge over the burn.

Entering the wooded Dalcairn Glen, carpeted with bluebells in the spring, you will arrive at the amazing waterfall (picture) below the 18th century stone bridge.

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DALCAIRNIE FALLS TO AUCHENROY HILL  
APPROX ?? MILES

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From the bridge above the Falls, follow the track past the old sheep pens. Beyond the silver gate ahead, take the fork in the track to the right. Go through the gate in the deer fence (please be very careful to close all gates behind you, even if they are open when you pass through them) into the Shalloch Diamond Wood, planted in 2012. The young oaks and other hardwoods are growing well and will bring great biodiversity benefits in the years to come, as well as providing shelter for sheep and labs and a positive addition to the landscape.

Passing through another deer gate on the partner side of the young wood, the track continues to the gate at Auld craigoch. From here, a footpath continues to the summit of Auchenroy Hill through a 230 acre native woodland planted in 2006.

From the cairn, there are amazing views into the wild hills of the Galloway Forest and across the sea to Ailsa Craig and the Isle of Arran.

The return journey to the bridge over the River Doon follows the path over the hill, via Glenhead Wood.

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#### DALCAIRNIE FALLS TO NESS GLEN APPROX ?? MILES

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From the bridge by the falls, follow the track uphill and just past the sheep pens, turn left and through the gate. Follow the track through a second gate, to the ancient ruins of Berbeth, which stand among magnificent old beech trees, the glade completed with hundreds of daffodils in early spring (pic of daffodils and lambs). The Stevenson family lived here for generations and their hospitality and generosity were legend.

Beyond Berbeth, the track passes the Ladies' Loch on the right and then, through mature woodland, over the Craigengillan approach and onward to the old stone bridge over the River Doon, built by French prisoners of war (picture).

After crossing the bridge, turn right and follow the path to a ford over the Parkelly Burn. Go through the gate and follow the riverside tack (river on your right) past a magnificent old lime tree to the wooden bridge at the bottom of Ness Glen.

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#### Ness Glen to Loch Doon APPROX ?? MILES

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Ness Glen is a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).

From the left bank of the River Doon, ascend the few steps next

to the suspension bridge, that lead to the upper path through fine old timber which offers views down to the gorge below and the hills above. Continue for approx X miles to the Loch Doon Dam, where there is an excellent small cafe (The RoundHouse) and the opportunity to watch the ospreys in their nest on the far shore.

For the return journey, follow the path back to the base of the dam (about 100 yards) and turn right. From here, the path follows the very edge of the river, the steep banks covered with an incredible diversity of mosses and ferns (picture of Heart Stone).

In Victorian times, people travelled from far and wide to walk the path through Ness Glen, described in contemporary guide books as 'one of the finest examples in Britain of a true rock gorge' and, even more poetically, by the cartographer of the first edition of the Ordnance Survey in 1856:

'A bold round rocky hill, coated with deep brown moss, stands at the east entrance of the glen; immediately north of this the wood and precipice begin, consisting at first of a series of black shelving rocks, partially concealed by thick foliage. The cliff increases in height and rugged grandeur till, about midway, it reaches its greatest altitude in a long semicircular sweep. Steep as the wall of a house, it rises from the margin of the Doon to a height

of nearly 300 feet. Thick old ivy is trellised all over the face of the impending steep; green lichens clinging to the rocks, uprooted trees hanging down into the abyss; upright firs and overhanging rocks are the other features of this tremendous wall. A belt of shady silver firs, which surmounts its jagged pinnacle, presents a fine contrast to the prevailing leaden colours of the stone. Beyond this, the towering peaks and steep crags are repeated again and again, gradually softening away to a sloping wooded knoll. On the west side, a winding walk has been carried up the bottom of the glen and another over the summit, terminating at the same point.

There is a greater slop on this side, and the wild craggy features with which it abounds are much concealed by an old woven wood. A number of streamlets trickle through the fissures of the rock... and through these fissures are afforded the only glimpses to be had of the cliffs. The river side of the low walk is edged with a row of trees, many of the branches of which have been forced by the application of pressure during their early growth, to droop over the water. On the other side trails of ivy and shrubs of the evergreen class and rose-bushes have been trained up the rocks for some distance, and thus, by softening the ruggedness of that portion of the glen immediately under the eye

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of the visitor – affording him a means of contrast with the terrors overhead, whose sublime character might suffer from a close inspection – has been effected the only introduction of art which could in any way have heightened the effect of this imposing scenery.’

The Glen was such an attraction it had its own curator, who guided parties through the forge and explained its interesting flora and fauna. It was said that the birds would come to settle on his hand, such was his affinity with nature.