WALKING ON ARRAN
About the Author

Paddy Dillon is a prolific walker and guidebook writer, with over 90 guidebooks to his name and contributions to 40 other titles. He has written for several outdoor magazines and other publications, and has appeared on radio and television.

Paddy uses a tablet computer to write as he walks. His descriptions are therefore precise, having been written at the very point at which the reader uses them.

Paddy is an indefatigable long-distance walker who has walked all of Britain’s National Trails and several European trails. He has also walked in Nepal, Tibet, Korea, Africa and the Rocky Mountains of Canada and the US. Paddy is a member of the Outdoor Writers and Photographers Guild and is President of the Backpackers Club.

Other Cicerone guides by the author

Glyndwr’s Way
Mountain Walking in Mallorca
The Cleveland Way and the Yorkshire Wolds Way
The GR5 Trail
The GR20 Corsica
the Great Glen Way
The Irish Coast to Coast Walk
The Mountains of Ireland
The National Trails
The North York Moors
The Pennine Way
The Reivers Way
The South West Coast Path
The Teesdale Way (Martin Collins; updated by Paddy Dillon)
The Wales Coast Path
Trekking in Greenland
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Walking on la Palma
Walking on Lanzarote and Fuerteventura
Walking on Madeira
Walking on Malta
Walking on Tenerife

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by Paddy Dillon

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Updates to this Guide

While every effort is made by our authors to ensure the accuracy of guidebooks as they go to print, changes can occur during the lifetime of an edition. Any updates that we know of for this guide will be on the Cicerone website (www.cicerone.co.uk/825/updates), so please check before planning your trip. We also advise that you check information about such things as transport, accommodation and shops locally. Even rights of way can be altered over time. We are always grateful for information about any discrepancies between a guidebook and the facts on the ground, sent by email to updates@cicerone.co.uk or by post to Cicerone, Juniper House, Murley Moss, Oxenholme Road, Kendal LA9 7RL.

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Front cover: Looking from Beinn a’ Chliabhain towards A’Chir, Caisteal Abhail and Cir Mhòr
The Isle of Arran rises proudly from the Firth of Clyde between Ayrshire and Kintyre. Its mountainous form dominates the open waters of the Clyde and its jagged peaks are a tempting challenge for walkers. We know that people first came to the island some 5500 years ago, although some periods of its history are only dimly recorded. Over the past hundred years or so, tourism has become an important industry here. Arran has much to offer the visitor and is often described as ‘Scotland in miniature’. Roads are few, but opportunities to explore the island on foot are many and varied.

This guidebook offers a selection of 44 walks, along with a brief overview of the Arran Coastal Way. As many of the walks are inter-linked, there are opportunities to create longer treks traversing the length and breadth of the island.

**INTRODUCTION**

**By air**
Two airports are handy for Arran. Glasgow International Airport, [www.glasgowairport.com](http://www.glasgowairport.com), is served from around a hundred locations by over a dozen airlines, including budget and national carriers. Several British and European airports, as well as a few in the United States and Canada, serve Glasgow. Prestwick International Airport, [www.glasgowprestwick.com](http://www.glasgowprestwick.com), handles flights from around a dozen southern European airports, almost exclusively operated by Ryanair, [www.ryanair.com](http://www.ryanair.com).

**By rail**
Long-distance Virgin Trains start from London Euston, travelling via Birmingham to reach Glasgow Central; or from Kings Cross, travelling via York to reach Glasgow Central, [www.virgintrains.co.uk](http://www.virgintrains.co.uk). Transpennine Express trains, [www.tpexpress.co.uk](http://www.tpexpress.co.uk), operate from Manchester Airport to Glasgow Central. Caledonian Sleeper services allow passengers to travel overnight from London Euston to Glasgow Central, [www.sleeper.scot](http://www.sleeper.scot). Once at Glasgow Central, simply change to ScotRail, [www.scotrail.co.uk](http://www.scotrail.co.uk), to reach Ardrossan Harbour for the ferry to Arran. ‘Rail & Sail’ tickets are available through ScotRail, covering both the train and ferry journey.

**GETTING TO ARRAN**

Getting to Arran is easier than you might think. The island is close to Glasgow, which is a very important transport hub with busy road and rail services and nearby international airports. Onward connections from Glasgow to Arran are swift and frequent. See Appendix B for a list of useful transport contacts.
By bus

By car
Driving from Glasgow, the following roads could be used to reach Ardrossan: the coastal A78 via Largs; the A737 via Beith; or the A736 via Irvine. Drivers from Northern Ireland who arrive at Stranraer simply follow the A77 and A78 main coastal road. Drivers from England should leave the M6 and follow the A75 and A76 for a scenic approach to Ardrossan through the Southern Uplands. Drivers coming from Western Scotland can avoid travelling through Glasgow by following the A83 road onto Kintyre, then use the summer ferry service from Claonaig to Lochranza.

By ferry
Caledonian MacBrayne, tel 0800 0665000, www.calmac.co.uk, operate between five and nine sailings per day between Ardrossan Harbour and Brodick throughout the summer, with a reduced service in winter. The typical crossing time is 55 minutes.

**Getting around the Island**
All public transport services on the Arran, including bus services and ferries, with some mainland connections, are contained in a single timetable booklet specially produced.
for use on the island. This can be obtained on the ferry, at the ferry terminals, or from the Brodick tourist information centre. Take note of the variations in services between schooldays and school holidays, as well as Saturdays and Sundays.

It is worth mentioning that this entire book was researched and updated exclusively using local bus services. There is no need to take a vehicle onto Arran, as almost every place that could be reached by car is also served by buses. Walking clubs from the mainland are regular weekend users of the buses. Appendix B includes a list of contacts that may be useful in planning journeys around the island.

By Stagecoach bus
Starting from the ferry terminal at Brodick, Stagecoach West Scotland buses, www.stagecoachbus.com, run around the island from early in the morning until late at night. Typically, buses start soon after 6am and run until 9pm, with some services running almost to 11.30pm on Fridays. There are slight seasonal variations, and Sunday services are less frequent than weekdays.

Several buses run between Brodick, Lamlash and Whiting Bay, which are the three largest villages on Arran. Buses also run back and forth along the B880 String road, between Brodick and Blackwaterfoot. A service running round the northern half of the island is complimented by another service running round the southern half of the island. Together, these buses cover a complete circuit around the coastal A841 road, linking all the villages.

Arran Day Rider tickets offer a day’s unlimited travel around the island, while Arran Megarider tickets offer a week’s unlimited travel. In the summer months, an open-top bus runs between Brodick and Whiting Bay, while a veteran coach service runs between Brodick and Brodick Castle. The only road without a bus service is the Ross, between Lamlash and Sliddery, although many years ago there were Post Bus services along it.

By car
While cars can be brought onto the Arran by ferry, it is an extra expense when the road use is so limited. So if you want to be ‘green’ it’s easy enough to leave your car behind. Bus services on the island are perfectly adequate and reach the starting points of all the walking routes in this guidebook, with the exception of the Ross road and the short road into Glen Rosa.

Anyone taking a car to the island should bear in mind that roads are often narrow and winding. There are lots of walkers and cyclists about and sheep and deer frequently wander across the roads. A leaflet is available that encourages everyone to ‘Share Arran’s Roads Safely’.

By ferry
The only ‘internal’ ferry service is the one that serves Holy Isle from Lamlash. This ferry is subject to tides and the weather, and it is always best to check the schedule in advance (tel 01770 700463 or mobile 07970 771960).

Traveline Scotland
Up-to-date information about all kinds of public transport can be obtained from Traveline Scotland, tel 0871 2002233, www.travelinescotland.com. Services between Glasgow, Ayrshire and Arran can also be checked with Strathclyde Passenger Transport (SPT) www.spt.co.uk.

Visitors arriving at the ferry terminal at Brodick are confronted by a sign offering only two directions: North and South. The A841 is the main road around the island and it links practically all the villages on the island. In a clockwise order these include: Brodick, Lamlash, Whiting Bay, Kildonan, Kilmory, Sliddery, Blackwaterfoot, Machrie, Pirnmill, Catacol, Lochranza, Sannox, Corrie and so back to Brodick.

Two roads run across the island: The String, or the B880, runs from Brodick to Blackwaterfoot via Shiskine, with a minor road spur to Machrie. The Ross is a minor road from Lamlash to Sliddery. All the roads around the island are equipped with distinctive red sandstone milestones. The road system is so simple that it is virtually impossible to get lost, and there are comprehensive bus services along most of them.

If it’s your first visit, you might consider taking buses all the way round the island, taking note of where the villages are located, what they offer and where the access points are for most of the walking routes in this guidebook.

Distinctive sandstone milestones stand alongside all the roads around the island

Throughout the summer, the last surviving Clyde paddle steamer, the Waverley, www.waverleyexcursions.co.uk, offers tours around the Clyde and its islands, including a circuit around the coast of Arran. Walkers
who plan to complete the Arran Coastal Way might enjoy a cruise around the island to have a look before they set off. (Cicerone publishes a guidebook to The Ayrshire and Arran Coastal Paths.)

A GEOLOGY CLASSROOM

The Isle of Arran is one of the most varied geological areas in the British Isles. Someone once noted that while some people write to The Times when they hear the first cuckoo of spring, others write to the Arran Banner newspaper when they hear the chipping of the first geologist of spring! The island is like a huge geological classroom and groups of students will often be seen out peering at the rocks.

James Hutton, the redoubtable scientist from Edinburgh, visited Arran in August 1787. He was the first person to identify an ‘unconformity’ – where rocks of widely differing ages rest together at different angles. In fact, an unconformity on the coast north of Lochranza is known to this day as Hutton’s Unconformity (see Walk 35).

Hutton expounded his Theory of the Earth in which mountains were continually being uplifted and eroded, although few took the great man seriously. Geologists of Hutton’s day were divided into the Vulcanists and Neptunists according to whether they believed rocks were formed by volcanic action or by deposition as sediments. Hutton’s theory embraced both concepts and today he is widely regarded as the Father of Geology.

The study of the Isle of Arran’s geology is very much a specialist subject, but there are a few notes worth bearing in mind. The oldest rocks occur on the northern half of the island. Cambrian strata, originally marine muds and sands, have been altered by tremendous heat and pressure into slates and sparkling schists, often streaked with veins of white quartz. In a semi-circle around this base rock are Devonian strata, composed originally of desert sand dunes, being revealed in an arc from Sannox to Dougarie.

A more disjointed arc of Carboniferous strata stretches from Lochranza to Sannox and from Corrie to The String road. These include limestones, sandstones and workable coal measures, all formed in shallow seas or on a swampy delta. Permian strata again indicate desert conditions with sand dunes, and these sandstones take up much of the central and southern parts of the island. Triassic strata stretch across the southernmost part of the island, from Blackwaterfoot to Kildonan, and are composed of muds and sands laid down in a lake or delta system.

Masses of molten rock were intruded into this basic layered rock succession under great heat and pressure, which had the effect of pushing existing layers into a dome, baking the surrounding strata and altering its
WALK 1
Goatfell and Brodick

Start/Finish  
Ferry terminal, Brodick (NS 022 359)

Distance  
16.5km (10½ miles)

Total ascent  
850m (2790ft)

Time  
5hrs

Terrain  
Roads, forest tracks, rugged moorland and mountain paths. The upper parts are steep and stony.

Refreshments  
Plenty of choice in Brodick. Pub and restaurant at Cladach.

Some walkers step off the Caledonian MacBrayne ferry at Brodick and head straight for Goatfell, hoping to climb to the summit and return in time to leave the island. It’s a grand day out for those who have the energy to complete the ascent between ferries, and this route description is just for them. Others may enjoy Goatfell by a variety of routes and tackle the ascent with less urgency.

The route follows the roadside promenade through Brodick, switching to the Fisherman’s Walk along the shore to Cladach, then climbs in earnest. The route is a combination of roads, tracks and a well-constructed mountain path. It is quite likely that many other walkers will be met on the way there and back, as this is the most popular way up and down Goatfell. The initial coastal walk could be omitted by catching a bus from the ferry terminal to Cladach, returning later, remembering to check up-to-date timetables.

Leaving the ferry terminal and bus station, turning right to follow a promenade path beside the main coastal road through Brodick. On a clear day, Goatfell will already be in view. If food or drink is needed, there is a large Co-op supermarket, as well as other shops, pubs and cafes along the way. The promenade runs beside a pleasant green above a rocky shore, reaching a putting green and smaller Co-op store. Turn right to pass a car park and play park, picking up a coastal path signposted as the Fisherman’s Walk.

The path crosses a footbridge over a river then soon crosses a longer footbridge over the broader Glenrosa Water. Turn right to return towards the coast and walk beside a golf course. Later, walk along a sandy, pebbly beach beside Brodick, coming ashore to cross yet another footbridge to reach a car park and bus stop at Cladach.
CLADACH

Cladach was once the main settlement on Brodick Bay, but it was gradually depopulated as Brodick developed. When Cladach was a larger huddle of buildings near Brodick Castle, it featured the Old Inn, the Village Inn, a woollen mill and a few houses. When the grounds surrounding Brodick Castle were redeveloped in 1853, the woollen mill moved to Millhouse and the tenants were re-housed at Douglas Place and Alma Terrace. A new school was built in 1854. Tourists had already started visiting the Isle of Arran, frequenting the Old Inn at Cladach, where goat’s milk was a speciality. Tourism continued to develop and the new village of Brodick became equipped with a new and larger pier, a large hotel, shops and other businesses. Cladach has been redeveloped, retaining the appearance of a small village, with the Arran Brewery being a major attraction, along with The Wineport bar/bistro, Arran Active outdoor shop, gift shops, pottery and sawmill. There is also pedestrian access to Brodick Castle.

DUCHESS COURT

Duchess Court is a small retail development about 350m/yds from Cladach, in the direction of Brodick. It is based on Brodick Castle’s original Home Farm and now features the Isle of Arran Cheese Shop, perfumed products at Arran Aromatics, Creelers seafood restaurant and the Smokehouse Shop.

Walk between the buildings at Cladach, passing the Arran Brewery, following a clear track gradually uphill as signposted ‘Goatfell’. The well-wooded slopes are rich in rhododendrons and the track crosses a tarmac driveway that serves nearby Brodick Castle. Follow the track up into Forestry Commission property, passing a large sign confirming that this is the way to ‘Goatfell’. As the track climbs, there are waymarked paths leading to left and right, but always stay on the clearest track. At a higher level, keep left up a clear path as marked ‘Goatfell’.

The path rises through an area where rhododendron scrub has been cut back, then climbs a slope of bracken and heather, bearing scattered stands of birch, where the forest is more distant. Small streams are crossed that flow into the nearby Cnocan Burn. The path remains quite clear as it climbs and the surroundings become more rugged. Cross a footbridge across a water channel cut across the hillside, quickly reaching a gate in a tall deer fence. Beyond the gate, the mountain is owned and managed by the National Trust for Scotland.

The path continues uphill at a gentler gradient for a while, and it was restored after suffering years of erosion. There are sections with pitched stone and gravel surfaces, with drains removing excess water, although in some places the path crosses bare granite bedrock. The surrounding moorland is mostly wet, grassy, heathery and boulder-strewn. The gradient gradually increases in Coire
Walking on Arran

The path climbs up onto the shoulder of Meall Breac. There is a level stance before the path swings more to the left and aims directly towards Goatfell. This is the toughest part of the ascent, as the path weaves steeply between boulders and granite outcrops.

The summit of Goatfell is reached quite suddenly and is composed of a bare table of granite bearing a few large boulders. There is a trig point at 874m (2867ft), with a view indicator provided by the Rotary Club of Kilwinning. This is the highest peak on Arran.

If a careful check has been made of progress so far, then walkers should be able to gauge whether they are able to catch their intended bus or ferry. The descent needs to be taken carefully at first, but it should take less time than the ascent. It is simply a matter of retracing steps back to Cladach, to catch a bus, or continue all the way to the ferry terminal in Brodick.

Views are extensive and stretch far into mainland Scotland as well as embracing the Highlands, islands and Northern Ireland.

BRODICK

Brodick's main features and facilities can be spotted on the way back to the ferry terminal. In order of appearance they include: Brodick Pharmacy, Co-op store, a putting green, Shanghai Chinese take-away, Red Door gift shop, Bank of Scotland (with ATM), Inspirations of Arran gift shop and Wooleys of Arran bakery.

Several more businesses look across the main road towards the sea, including: Fiddlers Music Bar and Bistro, Invercloy Guest House, Hair and Beauty, Arran Estate Agents, The Byre at Brodick, Chocolate Shop, Hunters guest house, Arran-Asia Trading Company, Book and Card Centre, Royal Bank of Scotland (with ATM), Brodick Health Centre, Dunvegan Guest House and the Shorehouse Apartments. Next comes the Arran Active outdoor shop, a crazy golf course, Taste of Arran, Buntys furniture store and Little Rock Café. The former McLaran Hotel is due for redevelopment, then comes a large Co-op supermarket.

The Douglas is a hotel incorporating a bar and bistro, while buildings in the grounds feature an optician, Arran Team, Arran Banner newspaper and a domestic service centre. The Roman Catholic church is tucked away behind. Finally, in a group at the ferry terminal, are the bus station, a filling station, gift shops and the Brodick iCentre, tel 01770 303774.

There are several ways to reach the start of this walk. If driving a car, then use a car park close to the castle. Most buses run along the main road, so alight and follow the access road up to the castle. In summer, a few buses run up the access road to the castle car park. Anyone who wishes to walk from Brodick could follow Walk 1 to Cladach, then climb a flight of stone steps signposted WALK 2

Brodick Castle and Country Park

Start/Finish Brodick Castle access road (NS 019 379)
Distance 5km (3 miles)
Total ascent 180m (590ft)
Time 1hr 30mins
Terrain Clear, waymarked woodland paths and forest tracks.
Refreshments Café inside Brodick Castle, as well as a bar/restaurant at Cladach.

The red sandstone towers and turrets of Brodick Castle are easily distinguished, poking above forests on the lower slopes of Goatfell. Castles have been built and rebuilt on this site for centuries, but the present one dates only from the 19th century and was the seat of the Dukes of Hamilton. Brodick Castle is the centrepiece of the National Trust for Scotland’s holdings on Arran. It houses silverware and porcelain, paintings and sketches, with rooms full of fine furniture. Wrapped around Brodick Castle is a colourful woodland garden threaded by a variety of paths, lavishly planted with exotic trees and rhododendrons. A separate walled garden has a more regimented layout and features more flowers than trees.

The grounds around Brodick Castle were designated as a Country Park in 1980 and are managed by the National Trust for Scotland and North Ayrshire Council. There is a complex network of waymarked trails to explore, and this walk combines some of them into a circuit on the forested slopes above the castle. Free maps showing the full extent of the trails can be obtained in advance at the tourist information centre in Brodick, or on arrival at Brodick Castle. There are also map-boards around the Country Park.