

Bringing a class to The Great Trossachs Forest

The aim of this resource is to help you plan a trip to The Great Trossachs Forest (TGTF). It has been developed for Forestry Commission Scotland by Rowanbank Environmental Education.

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Why organise a visit?

The Great Trossachs Forest is an inspiring place to bring learners. It lies at the heart of the Loch Lomond and The Trossachs National Park, and is one of Scotland's most outstanding scenic areas. When in The Great Trossachs Forest you could well believe you are in a very remote part of the Highlands, yet it is only a short drive away from the Central Belt. TGTF project covers an area of 16,650 hectares (roughly the same as the area of Glasgow) and will one day be largest area of native woodland in the UK, and it is one of the biggest woodland restoration schemes in Europe.

The Curriculum for Excellence encourages learning outdoors. Taking learning outside the classroom can be enjoyable, creative, challenging and adventurous and helps children and young people learn by experience and grow as confident and responsible citizens who value the spectacular landscapes, natural heritage and culture of Scotland (LTS guidance document, 'Curriculum for Excellence through Outdoor Learning.'). Visiting The Great Trossachs Forest will give relevance and context to what pupils have been learning in the classroom, deepening their understanding. Outdoor learning also gives opportunities for linking learning across curriculum areas.

There are lots of sources of support to help you plan and deliver a fantastic learning experience for your class at The Great Trossachs Forest, Resources have been developed which support:

Geography - study the glaciated landscapes of the Trossachs first hand and see real life examples of land use conflicts and the impact of tourism. There are opportunities to undertake river fieldwork and explore an early settlement site at Glen Finglas. The Highland Boundary Fault passes close by, to the South-East of TGTF. Ranger-led activities can also be organised free of charge.

Art - experience the landscapes that have inspired artists for hundreds of years, paint from real life at Brenachoile point at Loch Katrine, or visit the site at Glen Finglas where John Everett Millais painted the famous portrait of John Ruskin.

English - visit the literary trail along the north shore of Loch Katrine from the Trossachs Pier and learn about Sir Walter Scott and other literary figures inspired by this area.

Biology - see the Highland cows out at work helping maintain biodiversity around Loch Katrine, Inversnaid and Glen Finglas. View new native woodland planting and learn about ecosystem restoration at a landscape scale. Ranger-led activities can also be arranged free of charge to learn first hand about the conservation work going on within The Great Trossachs Forest.

The map shows recommended places to visit within The Great Trossachs Forest, accessible walks suitable for school groups, where the nearest toilets and coach parking are and other useful information to help you plan your visit.

Practical information on each area

For help and more information with organising your visit please contact Sue Morris, TGTF Development Officer, Email suemorris@scottishforestalliance.org.uk or phone 01877 376340/ 07775 034851.

Visiting Loch Katrine

Loch Katrine is a fantastic place to bring a class to - the stunning scenery was shaped by glaciers thousands of years ago and the loch itself has supplied Glasgow's tap water since the mid 19th century. Artists and writers have found inspiration here for centuries, and tourists still flock here to admire the loch and take a cruise on the steamship Sir Walter Scott.

- There is plenty of parking available at the Trossachs Pier. Parking is currently free for coaches, and for cars charged at £1/hour, £3 for 4 hours and £5 for the day.
- Toilets, a cafe, ice cream, bicycle hire, boat trips and other services are available at the Trossachs Pier site.
- The road along the north shore of Loch Katrine is an all ability access path (there is vehicular access but for residents only).
- The Primrose Hill trail is a good quality footpath up to a view point. The start of the trail is 2 miles from the Trossachs Pier car park, just after an information panel titled 'Nature knows best'. The trail is 2.7 miles long and is graded as 'strenuous'.
- The road from the Trossachs Pier to Brenachoile point has many information panels about the history and importance of the area and its artistic and literary connections.
- By prior arrangement you can drive a minibus from Trossachs Pier along the road to Edra or Brenachoile Point. Permission for this must be given beforehand or you will not be able to pass through the barrier at the pier. Please contact Sue Morris (see above) for vehicle access along the north shore road, or to arrange to visit the ranger at Edra

Visiting Glen Finglas

Woodland Trust Scotland manage Glen Finglas estate, once a royal hunting forest for Scottish kings and nobles. It is considered one of the largest collections of ancient trees in Scotland, and now a younger forest is also growing up, the result of new planting to restore this landscape to its finer glory.

- Little Drum Wood is an easy half an hour loop through ancient woodland, with the option to follow a path down to the edge of Loch Venachar - a fantastic place to watch wildlife if you're quiet.
- There are a variety of short walks available from the Glen Finglas (Lendrick Hill) car park. The early farming township of Drippan is an easy 20 minute walk from this car park and is clearly visible from the path.
- If you want to visit the site where Millais painted John Ruskin (in the Inspiring Landscapes resource), use the Dam Road car park. Walk up the road to the disabled car park and then take the signposted path down to the river and the viewing platform.
- Toilets are available for use at the WTS office at Lendrick Steading, by prior agreement.
- Woodland Trust Scotland leaflets on Glen Finglas are available at all three car parks (Little Drum, Glen Finglas / Lendrick Hill and Dam Road)
- For more information including maps of the walks see

<http://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/en/our-woods/glen-finglas/Pages/walks.aspx?wood=4878>

For support planning your trip or to book a designated coach space at the Glen Finglas / Lendrick Hill car park please contact the Sue Morris (suemorris@scottishforestalliance.org.uk) or phone 01877 376340/ 07775 034851.

Visiting Inversnaid and Loch Arklet

The spectacular oak woodland and open moorland of Inversnaid RSPB reserve lie on the Eastern shores of Loch Lomond. The rare Black Grouse breed here, along with other important bird species, and the West Highland Way long distance walking route passes through the reserve.

- One way to arrive at Inversnaid and get your pupils' attention straight away is to take the Cruise Loch Lomond ferry from Tarbet, which runs regularly from April to October.
- Loch Arklet and Inversnaid are accessible by vehicle only via the B829, 11-15 miles of narrow and winding road from Aberfoyle. It is recommended that only minibuses are used rather than coaches.
- You can park at the side of the road just before the T junction by Loch Arklet There is a new footpath being built running across from here to the car park at Inversnaid nature reserve, 3.5 miles in total with fantastic views of Loch Arklet, Loch Lomond and nearby hills. Its a good walk to study glaciated landscapes and to learn about land management for biodiversity conservation and other benefits.
- With sufficient members of staff the class could be picked up in the minibus at the other end of the walk at Inversnaid nature reserve. The Inversnaid car park is up a short steep track just before the primary school, signposted the Garrison Upland Trail. Drive up past the farm house on the right until you reach the RSPB car park.
- You can also drive right down to Inversnaid Hotel on the shores of Loch Lomond and walk along a short length of the West Highland Way.
- There is a nature trail that is sign posted from the West Highland Way, which takes you up through beautiful Oak woods and gives fine views across Loch Lomond.
- See <http://www.rspb.org.uk/reserves/guide/i/inversnaid/> for more information.

Health and Safety

Risks should always be balanced by the benefits of taking part in an outdoor learning experience. Although the thought of risk assessing a visit to TGTF might appear daunting, it needn't be. There are lots of sources of support to make it as easy as possible for you to lead a safe and stimulating visit.

A Risk Assessment needs to cover how you are travelling to TGTF as well as all the activities you will be doing with the class whilst you're there. A specimen Risk Assessment for outdoor learning has been provided as part of this resource to help you develop your own. Please use it as guidance; it should not be used in replacement of your own Risk Assessment. There is also a section of the Learning and Teaching Scotland website covering Health and Safety in relation to outdoor learning:

www.ltscotland.org.uk/learningteachingandassessment/approaches/outdoorlearning/healthandsafety/index.asp

If you organise for a Ranger to deliver educational activities with your group, they will undertake a Risk Assessment for all the activities they deliver. A copy of these can be requested.

What to bring

You don't need the latest Gortex jacket or fancy hiking boots to enjoy a visit to The Great Trossachs Forest. The priority is that everyone stays warm and dry. The weather can be very changeable and it is important to ensure that all pupils are properly prepared for the potential of poor weather, even if it looks sunny when you set off from school.

All pupils should bring:

- Appropriate footwear, which means boots or shoes with grip soles and ankle support
- Protective clothing for wet, windy and cold conditions or hot and sunny conditions
- Packed lunch if required
- Enough water and liquids for the visit

Additionally you might want to bring the following along:

- First aid kit
- Midge repellent
- Sun cream
- Anti bacterial wipes or gel
- Tick remover or sharp tweezers
- Mobile phone
- Camera
- Bags for disposing of litter
- Clipboards and worksheets if required

Sources of more information and inspiration on taking learning outdoors:

Look at the Outdoor Learning section on the LTS website for the Curriculum for Excellence guidance document, advice on Health and Safety and support materials.

www.ltsotland.org.uk/learningteachingandassessment/approaches/outdoorlearning/index.asp

The Woodland Trust Outdoor Learning Pack has lots of great ideas on activities for primary school-aged children in woodlands

www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/en/about-us/projects/bowl/Documents/learning-pack.pdf

Forestry Commission Scotland's Tree Trunk gives information on a wide range of relevant educational resources www.forestry.gov.uk/forestry/hcou-4x2jup

To see how a trip to Loch Lomond and The Trossachs National Park links to the four capacities of the Curriculum for Excellence look at:

www.lochlomond-trossachs.org/images/stories/learning/PDF/NP%20Generic%20A%20Curriculum%20for%20Excellence.pdf

For more information on the sites you're visiting:

Information on all sites within the Great Trossachs Forest can be found in the Scottish Forest Alliance website www.scottishforestalliance.org.uk/our-sites

For cruising Loch Katrine aboard the Sir Walter Scott steamship visit www.lochkatrine.com

The Woodland Trust Glen Finglas website has lots of information about the woodland, its history and management.

www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/en/our-woods/pages/wood-details.aspx?wood=4878

For Inversnaid nature reserve look at the RSPB website

www.rspb.org.uk/reserves/guide/i/inversnaid/index.aspx

And for getting to Inversnaid by Cruise Loch Lomond ferry visit www.cruiselochlomond.co.uk