

Fairview, Rockcliffe – A Full Activity Guide

Welcome to Fairview, we hope you are going to have a fabulous time staying in our cottage.

We hope you enjoy the cottage and the area as much as we have in the past twenty five years.

Please find below a comprehensive list of activities that Rockcliffe and the surrounding area has to offer:

MOUNTAIN BIKING

Fairview is five miles from the renowned world class 7 stanes mountain bike centre which can be accessed via the A710, the road to Dalbeattie. (DG5 4QU is the nearest postcode). Ten minutes by car (small car parking charges need to be paid) or twenty minutes by bike through the forest immediately behind Fairview.

The centre is famous for its black graded granite slabs but caters for ALL standards of cyclists who can have hours of fun on miles and miles of trails. Please see the Tourist Information brochure or the maps can be downloaded from the Forestry Commission website for free.

The 7 stanes are seven mountain biking centres spanning the south of Scotland, from the heart of the Scottish borders to Dumfries and Galloway. They are known as the 7 stanes because each venue features a "stane" (translated as "stone") created by artist Gordon Young somewhere along the forest trails. The six other 7 stanes can be found at:

- Glentool
- Kirroughtree
- Mabie
- Forest of Ae
- Glentress and Innerleithen
- Newcastleton

They are well worth a visit with Mabie being particularly close.

There are rides on forest tracks in the forests around Fairview (turn left after leaving the drive and cycle along the road to the Forest Gate. However we would

ask you to respect other users – particularly walkers and dogs and stay off the footpaths (rather keeping to the wider gravel/stone tracks.

ROAD CYCLING

Dumfries and Galloway is full of well maintained, quiet and scenic roads perfect for a day's touring or a quick spin to stretch the legs with plenty of Strava segments!

15 mile ride-take the road up to the A710 and turn left. Turn left and follow the road to Dalbeattie. Turn right into the town, go down the High Street and turn right, climbing the hill past the school until you reach a T junction with the B793. Turn right and follow this road all the way to Caulkerbush. Turn right at the T junction and rejoin the A710. Follow the road through Sandyhills to Colvend and a left turn back to Rockcliffe.

10 mile ride- follow the above directions but when on the B793 after one mile take the right turn to Sandyhills. At the T junction in Sandyhills turn right and follow the A710 back to Colvend and turn left back to Rockcliffe.

40 mile ride to Kirkcudbright- take the A710 to Dalbeattie and turn left on the A711 at the T junction. After half a mile at the traffic lights turn left having crossed the bridge and follow the A711 into Kirkcudbright. After a wander around the interesting ancient port and market town take the B727 the Old Military Road through Gelston, stopping off at Castle Douglas to explore, and past Tescos and turn right then to Haugh of Urr. Turn right down the B794 to Dalbeattie and then follow the A710 to Colvend and Rockcliffe.

Mountain Bike hire is available from Gorsebank on the A710 one mile from Dalbeattie as you travel along the A710 from Rockcliffe just a short ride from the 7stanes.

WALKING

Fairview is located in a walkers' paradise, in a conservation area amidst National Trust of Scotland land. As such you are spoilt for choice as to the number, variety and beauty of walks in the area.

MUST DO WALKS FROM FAIRVIEW (all very good dog walks)

MOTE OF MARK (3/4 mile – short steep section with some rocks) Turn left out of the drive and then after 200 metres through a kissing gate and into a meadow. Follow the path crossing the stream (you can use the bridge!) and then follow the grass track up the field to the right to another gate. Turn immediately left and climb steeply up the Mote where truly spectacular views abound. Return from whence you came or wend your way back to Fairview through the National Trust of Scotland lands that surround this beautiful place.

NATIONAL TRUST WANDER (1 mile) As for the MOTE OF MARK walk to the bridge and across the stream but follow the gravel car track to the left. Walk along this past an old jetty (worth a detour) and continue along the sea front past a granite house and then before a second house follow a gravel walking track up to the right (signposted by a white arrow carved into a stone). Follow this track up and left and then turn right, just after a power pole, up a narrower grass track. Follow this up the and over the hill (ignoring any tracks which cross) until it leads down to the main gate entrance to the forest. Turn right along another small gravel track (past a wooden carving of a woodpecker) across some fields. At the end of the track (gate), turn left and follow the track (track up the MOTE OF MARK leads off on the right) through another gate to a field with a grass track leading down the stream and hence back to Fairview. (The walk can be shortened by turning right at the main cross track (white arrow in wooden post) and walking along the narrow path (can be wet and muddy) below the Mote of Mark.

KIPPFORD (2 miles) Turn left out of the drive and follow the road which becomes a gravel track to the forest gate and the intersection of many tracks. Follow the beautiful Jubilee Path (signposted on the left) through the forest and down the hill into the renowned sailing centre of Kippford home of the Solway Yacht club. (Yacht tuition and boat hire can be obtained). After admiring the boats and views, buying an ice cream, or calling at the Anchor Inn for a swift half, head back home. Instead of taking the path back up the hill whence you came, follow the road that runs down the river Urr towards Rockcliffe and after half a mile turn left and follow a track up a hill through the forest. You will eventually return to Rockcliffe after an exhilarating stroll through beautiful National Trust of Scotland land.

KIPPFORD MERSE VIA ROUGH ISLAND (2 miles). This walk involves crossing tidal mud and sand flats so please pay due attention to the tides – don't try to push it. Tide times can be found at www.tidetimes.org.uk and searching for Hestan Islet. Please don't do this walk between May and July when the island is closed to protect nesting birds. From Rockcliffe beach walk out to Rough Island (wellingtons recommended) taking care to stay on firm ground. Explore Rough Island and then return via the Causeway which makes land fall at the west end of Kippford Merse.

Walk towards Kippford but turn up and follow track on the right (as for the return for the walk to Kippford).

SANDYHILLS (five miles or ten miles return). As featured on the TV programme "Walks with Your Dog" this is a truly spectacular coastal walk. Take a right turn out of Fairview and walk along the beach front and take a right turn just before the Tea Room along the private road called The Merse. The route is well sign-posted from this point stopping off at **CASTLE POINT**. (You can return to Fairview at this point for a 3 mile return walk). The rest of your walk will take you along breath-taking cliff paths, a secret cove (Boggle Hole), and sandy beaches. A memorable walk not to be missed. Buses can be taken from Sandyhills back to Rockcliffe.

THE MUCKLE WALK (2 miles) This will take you to the highest point in the immediate area with spectacular views over Kippford, the coastline, the Urr Estuary and the surrounding hills. This is well-signposted by taking a left turn out of Fairview and walking up to the Forest Gate (as described in the walk to Kippford). From the Forest Gate follow the signs through the forest to the top of the world! Please don't forget your camera. An excellent return route - although a little steeper is to walk along the road towards Rockcliffe. Follow the path all the way down which rejoins the Jubilee path.

ROCKCLIFFE ROUND (About 6 miles - OS Map recommended to navigate round the tracks in Dalbeattie Forest) A walk with a little bit of everything. Turn left when coming out of the drive and walk down the road and gravel car track to the forest gate. Take the track signposted A710 which walks through the forests bringing you out on the road between Rockcliffe and Dalbeattie. Cross the road and walk down the minor road opposite to where it ends (Auchensheen on the OS map). A footpath (not shown on OS 1:50000) is then signposted round a garden which is followed to join the main forest track. If you want to cut the walk short turn right and walk along the track past Borean Loch and continue until it reaches Colvend and a return to Rockcliffe (or a handy car left outside the Parish Hall!) To complete a better circuit turn right and then take a track leading up to the hill to the right and then turn right again on a track which goes under Ironhash Hill. Continue on forest tracks round Smithland Hill to the junction of A710 just west of the turnoff Portling. Turn left and follow A710 to the Portling turnoff and then follow the road down to Port'O'Warren. From here join the Coast Path which is followed past Castle Point back to Rockcliffe.

BALCARY CLIFFS (4 miles) This walk does involve a short car drive to take you to Balcary Bay via the A710 and the A711 to Auchencairn. Turn left at Auchencairn and take the road to the parking area at Balcary Bay Hotel. The path

is well signposted from here taking you along a spectacular coastal path for a spot of birdwatching or if you are lucky porpoise and dolphin watching. You will eventually drop down to Rascarrel Bay and bear right up a track past Loch Mackie and a farm back to your car.

HILL WALKING

If hill walking is your passion you will not be disappointed staying at Fairview.

Perhaps the best local climb is **Screel**. The ascent of 343m begins in a car park just off the A711 one mile after the village of Palnackie to the west of Dalbeattie. (OS Ref NX800547) A well-marked path leads you to the top and stunning views of the Urr Estuary. Situated to the west of Screel is **Ben Gairn** (391m). This is best climbed from just before Mains of Collin off the A711 just before Auchencairn. (OS Ref NX791523). The path is signed until you reach open ground; then just head for the top. The highest mountain in the immediate area is **Criffel** at 569m. This mountain dominates the skyline as you drive along the Solway coast on the A710 two miles before you reach New Abbey. Use the car park at the end of the road to Ardwall (OS Ref NX970635). The path is well-marked but long, straight and can be boggy. The least exciting climb of the three, but the views from the top are worth all these hardships. Look out for Criffel Ale, available from the Anchor Inn, brewed in nearby Castle Douglas.

Other mountains to climb a little further afield include **Merrick**, at 875m the highest in southern Scotland. Start your climb from Loch Trool (NX414803) giving yourself five hours to complete. Also **Cairnmore of Fleet** is well worth a climb from the visitor centre 6 miles north of Gatehouse of Fleet (NX554637).

Other interesting walks and climbs can be found here:

www.walkingworld.com/Walks/Scotland/South%20Scotland/Dumfries%20and%20Galloway.aspx

SAILING, BOATING AND KAYAKING

Rockcliffe beach is a superb beach to launch small motor powered boats, kayaks and canoes. The sea tends to be calm and unusually warm due to the Gulf Stream. As a result the interesting and varied coastline offers hours and hours of exploring opportunities. Please be aware though that only a maximum of four hours on the sea is possible due to the tides. (Two hours either side of high tide). Tide times can be found at www.tidetimes.org.uk and searching for Hestan Islet. Places to visit on

the sea include Rough Island (not between May and July please), Hestan Island, Red Haven, Horse Isles Bay, White Port, Balcary Point and cliffs and Boggle Hole a secret cove on the coast near Port O Warren one mile east of Castle Point. It is also possible to navigate the River Urr as far as the bridge at Dalbeattie. Quite hard to believe but the writer has managed this twice!

Kippford is the home of the Solway Yacht Club which offers the opportunity to sail all types of boats but chiefly sailing dinghies. An annual gala is held every year in August and regular races are held. Mooring is available but not boat hire. Further details can be found by contacting the club on 01556 620312.

BIRD WATCHING

DUMFRIES & GALLOWAY is renowned for the birdwatching opportunities provided along the shores of the inner Solway Firth – and rightly so. The Solway is one of the most important estuaries in Britain holding up to 40,000 wildfowl and 83,000 waders during the winter period. Few birdwatchers take the time to explore inland parts of Dumfries and Galloway or visit at a different time of year, yet the region offers such a range of habitats that there is good birdwatching in every season.

Local to Fairview: Waders and ducks can be found in the Urr estuary, although the ducks often congregate on the other side of Urr. Local places to watch with a telescope or binoculars are the jetty (see NATIONAL TRUST WANDER walk) or the end of the “bus shelter” in Kippford. At high tide some of the waders are pushed towards the beach including the ever-present Oyster Catcher, Curlews, Ringed Plovers and Lapwings.

Many forest birds abound in the environs of Fairview depending on the season including Greater Spotted Woodpeckers, Nuthatches, Tits (Coal, Blue, Great) as well as numerous Chaffinches, Goldfinches and Dunnocks.

RSPB Mersehead Reserve – The local “piece de resistance” for bird-watching. A very large RSPB reserve located on a A710 just a few miles from Rockcliffe. Follow the A710 towards Dumfries. Pass through Caulkerbush, go over the bridge and then turn right (follow signs to Mersehead). Continue along the road and park opposite the visitor centre (at the obvious car park). There is a fee for parking for non RSPB members which is paid at the visitor centre. (Disabled parking is located beyond the farm – ask at the visitor centre for details.). There are two hides with many wildfowl sightings including tufted ducks, little grebes, shovellers, shell-ducks, pintails, gadwall etc. During the winter the reserve is most famous for the large

flocks of Barnacle Geese which overwinter here, feeding in the fields (often larger flocks than to be found at Caerlaverock!). Further details can be found at <http://www.rspb.org.uk>

Loch Ken/Dee Marshes – Another RSPB reserve set in grassy marshland with birch, alder and blackthorn scrub beside Loch Ken reservoir in the Dee valley. Waterfowl and wading birds can be seen from the hide. Parking at Mains of Duchrae found by driving north from Castle Douglas along the A713, turning right onto the B795 and turning right just having crossed the River Ken to follow a minor road which follows the west side of Loch Ken to the car park near the Mains of Duchrae. Follow the track, slightly half a mile to the hides. Birds to look out for include water fowl (teal, tufted ducks etc.), large quantity of small birds – the flocks of great tits are particularly apparent, redstart (in season). Also keep your eyes out for Red Kite.

Castle Loch – The largest freshwater loch in Dumfriesshire situated in the south eastern part of Lochmaben. It is renowned world wide for the roosting Pink-footed Geese. Other important visitors are Greylag Geese and Goosanders. There are footpaths, information boards, leaflets, a ranger service and one hide at the southeast end of the loch, accessed from Lochmaben Castle (not suitable for wheelchairs). Contact D&G Council Ranger Service 01387 260184

Wigtown Bay – This area of coastal wetland is located on the eastern side of the Machars, about four miles south of Newton Stewart. It is the largest Local Nature Reserve in Britain. It serves as a bird sanctuary and has a Ranger service. Contact 01988-402401 or 01988 402673 for the Ranger.

<http://www.dgcommunity.net/wblnr>

Caerlaverock Wetland Centre – This is a Wildfowl and Wetland Trust reserve (fee applies for non-members) situated nine miles south east of Dumfries this 1400 acres site has ducks geese and swans galore visible from the various hides. Look on the Internet for further details.

GOLFING

Home to more than 30 fantastic golf courses, Dumfries & Galloway is a region that ticks every box for golfers of all standards. Fairview has six golf courses within 15 miles from the Championship standard Southernness links to the nine-hole par 3 Craigieknowes course at Kippford. The Colvend 18 hole course only three miles away prides itself on being the friendliest course around and has stunning views.

Please look on the Internet and see the brochures in the house for contact details and prices.

PLACES TO EAT

Our favourite place to eat out is the **ANCHOR INN** in Kippford simply because it is very dog and children friendly (although dogs only allowed in the bar area) and the food is good. Kippford can be reached by either walking on the Jubilee Footpath (turn left out of the house) for just over a mile or by car (four miles). Standard pub food is served all day until 8.30 with a good selection of hand pulled beers, lagers and wine. Recommended dishes are the Combo for Two, the Steak & Ale Pie and the Rob Roy ice cream. The Criffel hand pulled beer is very drinkable. You cannot book at table though.

The other pub in Kippford is the **MARINER HOTEL**. A similar menu and prices to the Anchor with a beer garden. No need to book.

Treats And Eats Café in Colvend is open from Easter to September from 10.30 to 7pm and is a coffee shop and restaurant not serving alcohol. Serving light lunches, homemade cakes and trays bakes this is well worth a visit.

The Clonyard Hotel is located on the A711 on the way to Dalbeattie. Good bar and restaurant food (also a favourite with locals). See their website for more details.

The **Balcary Bay Hotel** in Auchencairn (DG7 1QZ) is a three star gourmet restaurant with a cocktail bar catering for the more refined diner. This serves food of a much higher standard than the local pubs (with a wine list of over 100 wines) with prices to reflect that. Please book a table between 6.45 and 7.45 by ringing 01556 640217. A beautiful house in a beautiful location by the sea.

Barend Holiday Village is also worth a visit. This has a public bar serving bar food similar to the Anchor and Mariner in pleasant surroundings at Sandyhills. (Turn right at the

Luigis's Restaurant in Dalbeattie is the local Italian and is open from 5-11pm. Please book on 01556 611025.

Takeaways in Dalbeattie include **The Chip Shop** (4 Mill Street) serving fish and chips and pizza, **Best Pizza and Kebab House** (15A High Street 01556 612167) and **Seimo Seito** an Indian (42 High Street 01556 612100)

BEACHES

THE BEACH 50 YARDS AWAY! Usually a very safe a beautiful place to visit with good sand. The Rockcliffe bay is in is an ideal spot to make sandcastles, explore rockpools and play ball games, (and when the tide is high) paddle and swim. There are toilets just off the beach and often an ice-cream van with a small café at the other end of the beach. The water is relatively shallow (shelving only very gently) and warm (being on the Gulf Stream). To make best use of the beach though please be aware of the high and low tide times which can be found on www.tidetimes.org.uk The sea can be classed as being 'in' for about five hours a day and is just less than an hour later every day.

When the tide is out a good place to visit is Rough Island the land you can see on the right hand side as you look out to sea. Beware of the mud when you reach the island. The island is 20 acres in size BUT IS CLOSED FROM MAY TO JULY due to nesting birds. PLEASE OBSERVE THIS RULE.

OTHER BEACHES

SANDYHILLS this is the largest and probably the best beach in the area. £2 gets you in the car park and access to a mile stretch of fantastic sand and safe bathing. The beach also has toilets and a shop. It is also the start of a fantastic walk back to Rockcliffe along the coastal path as featured on Walks With My Dog. This walk passes as beautiful hidden cove locally known as **Boggle Hole** once home to smugglers. Also the beach on the eastern side of **Castlehill Point** is worth a visit.

HORSE ISLES and WHITEPORT are on the west side of the bay from Rockcliffe and, unless you arrive by boat, involve a car ride and a little walk. Well worth the effort as you will probably encounter deserted beaches and fine sand. Access via the A711 at Palnackie taking a left turn to Almorness House and park just before you get to the house. Follow the path through the House and track south through the wood for two miles to reach first Horse Isles and then the White Port – with the much better sand. Then linger in the solitude!

Good beaches further afield include **ROSS BAY** and **BRIGHOUSE BAY**. Take the A711 to Kirkcudbright then take the B727 south from which both beaches can be accessed. Further west from Kirkcudbright is Gatehouse of Fleet where good beaches can be found in Fleet Bay particularly at **Sandgreen**.

VISITOR ATTRACTIONS

Leaflets are available in the house for all the following visitor attractions giving details of location and entry prices.

Cream of Galloway – A must if you and the kids love ice cream. Not only do you get award winning ice cream but an adventure playground, Go Karts, a mini play zone, a 3D maze and garden and nature trails – probably the best visitor attraction in the area.

Gem Rock – The leading independent museum of its kind in the UK. It is regarded as one of the finest private collections of gemstones, crystals, minerals, rocks and fossils in GB. One not to be missed.

Mabie Farm Park – An award winning farm park with so much more than animals. A days fun is awaiting here!

Chocolate Factory – A unique and interactive experience for children that is truly unforgettable. Whilst you relax children make delicious chocolate creations to take home. Indoor and outdoor play areas and a maze and aerial run too.

Annandale Distillery – One for the adults! Tours of the Distillery re opened after a £10.5m restoration project. Closed in 1918 reopened in 2014. If you have never visited a distillery before visit this one! But please no driving.

The Galloway Kite Trail – Explore the trails to see soaring red kites and wonder at the amazing sights at the feeding station. A truly spectacular day awaits around Loch Ken. Nature at its very best. The feeding station is quite expensive but does offer a once in a lifetime opportunity to see these magnificent birds at very close quarters – don't forget your camera!

Galloway Activity Centre – Activities to choose from include, sailing, lazerquest, climb/zip line, windsurfing, archery, paddle sport, leap of faith. This award winning centre is quite unique and worth a visit.

Other places to visit include **Threave Gardens and Castle** owned by the National Trust of Scotland near Castle Douglas and **Caerlaverock Castle**, near Dumfries.