

THE MACHARS : THE ORANGE ROUTE

22 MILES. This route explores the central eastern Machars, taking in Kirkinner, Garlieston, Sorbie, Whauphill, Bladnoch and Wigtown where a full range of local services can be found. The following route description begins in Wigtown, Scotland's Book Town, but any of these locations would be a convenient starting point.

The route heads south through Bladnoch towards Kirkinner, deviating via the Second World War airfield. The vast expanse of Wigtown Bay lies to the east. The route continues in a south easterly direction towards Garlieston, before returning via Sorbie and Whauphill. This section of the route runs parallel to the course of the old branch railway from Newton Stewart which transformed communications in the Machars from the 1870s. On the descent to Bladnoch the River Bladnoch can be seen meandering through the valley below.

Wigtown is a Royal Burgh granted by David II in 1341. Its planned medieval origins are clearly seen in the layout of the long strip properties known as burgage plots running off a central broad market place, now used as a public garden and a bowling green. Wigtown has recently become Scotland's Book Town and is host to a wide variety of booksellers and publishers. The site of the medieval castle lies towards the bay. The present harbour, a short cycle from the town, was opened in 1817. The fields around it are now being returned to wetland for the benefit of the large number of birds that visit Wigtown Bay Local Nature Reserve.

Bladnoch Distillery Visitor Centre. This distillery, with a cast store of maturing whisky, is the most southerly in Scotland and dates from 1817. The facilities include a gift shop, guided tours, fishing and whisky tasting. For opening times ring 01988 402605. A riverside walk starts from Bladnoch Distillery and follows the old lade, which supplied the distillery with water, for about 2km. The adjoining woodland is rich in wildlife including wood anemones and wood warblers.

Kilsture Forest. Kilsture is an attractive mixed woodland owned by the Forestry Commission. Two way-marked trails are open to cyclists, as well as walkers and horse-riders. The facility is ideal for children and families, offering 3.5 miles of safe, traffic free cycling. A map of the site is shown in the car park which is well signed on the B7004. Bluebells make an impressive spring display in Kilsture, while Roe Deer can often be seen throughout the year.

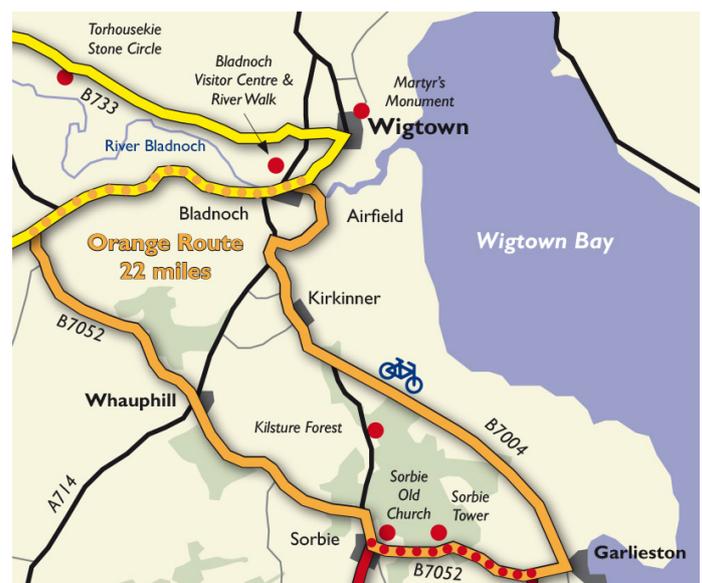
Garlieston. Lord Garlies designed the regimented street pattern of Garlieston in 1760. Ship building developed here during the 19th century and rope and sailcloth were manufactured in the village mill. The pier was built around 1816 when local produce was exported all over the world and goods such as tea and lace were brought into the Machars through the harbour.

This century, Garlieston was the testing area for the floating Mulberry Harbour. The abandoned parts of the equipment can be seen in Rigg Bay and is now popular with the local cormorant population, which can be seen both nesting and roosting on the remains. Harbours of this type were manufactured in Loch Ryan and used to mount the Allied Armies landing in Normandy during the Second World War.

Galloway House Gardens, Garlestone. Woodland and walled garden with a number of walks leading down to the shore and sandy bay. A path leads to Craggleton Castle.

Sorbie Tower. A 16th century L-plan tower house consolidated by the Clan Hannay Society. There is also a motte marking the site of an earlier timber castle, and various earthworks.

Sorbie Old Church. The roofless ruins of the 18th century parish church stands in the old graveyard at the east of the village. The Mausoleum of the Earls of Galloway is in the graveyard.



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ON SHARED USE PATHS • Please be courteous and be prepared to slow down or stop if necessary • Give way to pedestrians, horse-riders and wheelchair users, leaving them plenty of room • Carry a bell and use it - not all pedestrians can see you • Always follow the Highway Code • Be seen - most accidents to cyclists happen at junctions • Fit lights, wear a helmet and light and reflective clothing • Respect land management activities such as farming and forestry and take litter home • Be self-sufficient - in remote areas carry food, repair kit, map and waterproofs.

Bikes on Buses – the 500/X75 carries bikes along the A75 www.dumgal.gov.uk/timetables