

THE MACHARS : THE YELLOW ROUTE

25 MILES. This route through the northern Machars visits Kirkcowan, Bladnoch and Wigtown where a range of local services can be found. The following route description begins at Wigtown, Scotland's Book Town, but any of these locations would be a convenient starting point.

From Wigtown the route follows the course of the River Bladnoch as it meanders through a lush pastoral landscape of rounded glacial drumlins (hillocks). At Kirkcowan the route turns south and before long you reach a distinctive and remote landscape of open moors, lochs and streams. These habitats are very important for wildlife. A range of wildfowl and dragonflies breed on the lochs, rare plants such as bog rosemary and cranberry reward the botanist, whilst the flowering of the heather provides an autumn spectacle. The contrast with the Bladnoch valley and the fact that it is flat cannot fail to impress! To the south, Mochrum Fell dominates the vista. The return to Wigtown takes you across central Machars and through Bladnoch. The following places of interest can be found along the route.

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.

Wigtown Martyr's Monument. This hilltop obelisk is dedicated to 17th century Covenanters who died for their beliefs. Their gravestones are in the churchyard and a stone shaft on the shore marks the spot where two women were drowned at the stake in 1685.

Torhousekie Stone Circle. Situated in the fertile Bladnoch valley, this impressive monument that was built by our ancestors some 4,000 years ago as a special significance, was not created in isolation. It was part of a managed landscape of farms, fields and woodlands. More standing stones and cairns have survived in the area and are visible from the road.

Kirkcowan Old Church. The east gable of the old church, which was abandoned around 1830, survives.

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.



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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.