



Are you travelling the trail with children?

If so, look out for the special **Kids' Kite Quest** for children, which makes sure the whole family will get the most out of a visit here.

If you have any questions or want to know more, there are some useful contact details on the back of this leaflet. Have a wonderful time.

Welcome to the Galloway Kite Trail

This guide gives details of many places to eat, shop and stay while you are here. All of them offer good service, and many have opportunities for you to find out more about red kites.

The trail offers a suggested route designed to give you the best chance of seeing red kites. Along the way, you'll also discover a rich diversity of other wildlife, historical attractions, and of course the best of the beautiful countryside here.



Red kite by Andrew Parkinson (rspb-images.com)



The Galloway Kite Trail

Red kite adventure in the heart of Galloway



Between 2001 and 2005, 104 red kites were released into Galloway from other sites in the UK and Germany. These birds are now well established in Galloway and have nested here, in the wild, since 2003. They are carefully monitored by RSPB Scotland and the Dumfries & Galloway Raptor Study Group.

With the spread of more enlightened attitudes, and the huge growth of public interest in wildlife, things turned around for red kites in the UK. In 1989, the RSPB and government agencies, working in partnership with landowners, raptor workers and farmers, launched an exciting reintroduction programme.

The kite's return

In the 16th century, laws were passed all over the UK encouraging people to kill red kites and many other birds of prey. Four hundred years of persecution followed. As they became rarer, red kites were targeted by taxidermists and egg collectors. By 1880, there were only a dozen or so kites left in undisturbed valleys in mid-Wales.

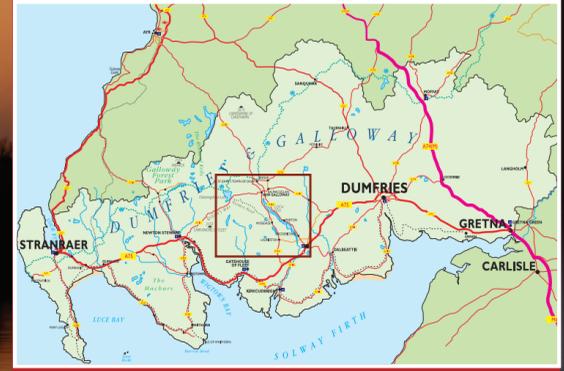
Persecution

Red kites are very social birds of prey and make an awesome spectacle. Tens of thousands of people travel to sites like this every year to see them. It's incredible to think that in the 20th century they were almost extinct in the UK.

The rise and fall of the kite

In the Middle Ages, kites were a common sight in many towns, where they fed on scraps and carrion, helping to keep the streets clean. However, in the Victorian country-side they were not so popular and were wrongly accused of taking lambs and game.

The kite's story



For more information:
www.gallowaykitetrail.com
RSPB Dumfries and Galloway Office,
The Old School, Crossmichael, Castle Douglas DG7 3AP
Tel: 01566 670464
RSPB South and West Scotland Regional Office,
10 Park Quadrant, Glasgow G3 6BS
Tel: 0141 331 0993

www.rspb.org.uk/scotland
Public transport information
Travelline Scotland 0871 2002233.
D&G online – www.dumfries-and-galloway.co.uk/travel

Bike hire
Loch Ken Holiday Park
01644 470282
e-mail: penny@lochkenholidaypark.co.uk

Please note that The Galloway Kite Trail Partnership cannot be held responsible for any changes in the quality or nature of any of the facilities listed around the trail.

Cover by Chris Gomersall (rspb-images.com). Map painting by John Threlfall
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The Galloway Kite Trail is the success of a strong partnership



Red kite by Mark Sisson (rspb-images.com)

Kites were extinct in Scotland

Kite-watching tips

Today, like all birds of prey, kites are protected by law. But sadly, some are still illegally killed, mostly by poisoning. Many local people help to keep an eye on the kites, letting us know if they find birds that are injured or trapped, and taking care not to disturb nesting kites.

Keeping vigilant

Large parts of the loch are internationally important winter roosting sites for Greenland white-fronted and Icelandic greylag geese. These birds come here to escape the harsh Arctic winters. Look for them at RSPB Ken-Dee Marshes nature reserve and the National Trust for Scotland's Threave Nature Reserve between October and April. Both reserves have parking and viewing facilities.

Wetland wonders

Red kites are just one of the wildlife treats to be had in Galloway. Exploring the wetlands, woodlands and heath will quickly reveal a diversity of life.

Other wildlife on the Galloway Kite Trail

The open water and wetlands of Loch Ken and the River Dee make up the largest freshwater body in Southern Scotland and are home to some incredible wildlife.

Woodland wildlife

Woodlands are great places for red kites, which breed and roost here. But they're not the only birds around, so keep your eyes and ears open for pied flycatchers, great spotted woodpeckers, nuthatches and willow tits.

A good place to see woodland birds up close is at the hides at Ken-Dee Marshes reserve. The feeders there are also popular with red squirrels throughout the year.

Peaceful Loch Ken



Mute swan by Sue Kennedy (rspb-images.com)

Historic Galloway

Immediately south of the kite trail is the magnificent Threave Castle, managed by Historic Scotland and situated in National Trust for Scotland's idyllic Threave Nature Reserve. Dalry's tranquil churchyard, with its 16th Century aisle and nearby motte is worth a visit, as is Bruce's Stone overlooking Clatteringshaws Loch.

From the Raiders Road you could also see the impressive Loch Stroan Viaduct, which carried the old railway celebrated in John Buchan's pre-war novel, *The 39 Steps*. Parton is a picturesque stop with its churchyard being the burial site of eminent physicist, James Clerk Maxwell, a man idolised by Albert Einstein.

Buzzard



Common buzzard by Steve Knell (rspb-images.com)

Watch the skies!

This is a great place to see birds of prey. Red kites, buzzards, sparrowhawks, kestrels, goshawks and peregrines are around the loch throughout the year.

In spring, ospreys arrive from Africa. Hen harriers, and more rarely merlins, can be seen in winter, foraging low over marshes and rough grasslands. Ghostly-white barn owls are regularly seen. Look out for them in the early evening.

Scotch argus



Scotch argus butterfly by FLPA.com

Meadows and grass verges

In summer, the meadows are full of butterflies, including a Galloway speciality: the Scotch argus, which is almost black in colour. Look for it along sheltered roadside verges in the summer sunshine.

Any sunshine may also bring out reptiles including slow worms, common lizards and adders.

Red squirrel by Niall Bennie (rspb-images.com)



1 The Magic Broomstick

141 King Street, Castle Douglas DG7 1DX Tel: 01556 504443
www.themagicbroomstick.co.uk

Whether it's something therapeutic or a quirky gift you want, there are alternative offers to suit most needs. For a change from your usual shopping, come in and look around.

2 The Thistle Inn

Main Street, Crossmichael, Castle Douglas DG7 3AU Tel: 01556 670203

A warm, friendly reception is always given to visitors to this village pub, with its open fire. Specialising in home-cooked cuisine, from a typical menu to very appetising Greek dishes.

3 Airds Farm B&B

Crossmichael, Castle Douglas DG7 3BG Tel: 01556 670418 www.airds.com

Overlooking Loch Ken and the picturesque village of Crossmichael. Let your stresses and cares disappear, as the tranquility of Airds offers a comfortable base for exploring Dumfries & Galloway.

4 Loch Ken Holiday park

Parton, Castle Douglas DG7 3NE Tel: 01644 470282
penny@lochkenholidaypark.co.uk www.lochkenholidaypark.co.uk

A quiet, rural camping and caravan park, situated magnificently on the shores of Loch Ken. This peaceful haven, offers visitors many opportunities to walk, climb, cycle and birdwatch in the surroundings. There's also a small convenience store.

5 Galloway Activity Centre

Loch Ken, Castle Douglas DG7 3NO Tel: 01644 420626
gac@lochken.co.uk www.lochken.co.uk

In a friendly family atmosphere, this outdoor activity centre offers something for everyone from adrenalin junkies to people seeking relaxation. Activities both on and off the loch to suit all levels and ages.

6 The Ken Bridge Hotel

New Galloway, Castle Douglas DG7 3PR Tel: 01644 420211
mail@kenbridgehotel.co.uk www.kenbridgehotel.co.uk

This idyllic riverside setting is a perfect place to stay. The restaurant overlooks the River Ken and its wildlife, and offers excellent locally-produced food, including a highly-praised Sunday carvery.

7 The CatStrand (Glenkens Community and Arts Trust)

High Street, New Galloway, Castle Douglas DG7 3RN
Tel: 01644 420374 www.catstrand.com

Year-round programme of events, including exhibitions, film, theatre, local arts and crafts, cafe, visitor information and free internet access.

8 The Smithy tearoom and craft shop

High Street, New Galloway, Castle Douglas DG7 3RN
Tel: 01644 420269 www.thesmithynewgalloway.com

In a delightful courtyard setting overlooking the waterfall and burn, this is the perfect place for home-cooked light lunches or snacks, with tourist information and eclectic gifts close to hand. Open 10 am-5 pm.

9 FCS Clatteringshaws Visitor Centre

Clatteringshaws, New Galloway
Castle Douglas DG7 3SQ Tel: 01671 402420
Beautifully situated on the shores of Clatteringshaws Loch, enjoy dramatic views of the Forest Park and wild hills or learn about history and wildlife at the visitor centre and cafe. See video of nesting red kites.

10 Mossdale shop

Mossdale, Castle Douglas DG7 2NF Tel: 01644 450281

A very welcoming grocery store. Pick up a walk leaflet or kids' quiz and some refreshments, before setting off on the nearby walk or to admire the red kite sculpture.

11 Bellymack Hill Farm Kite feeding station

Laurieston, Castle Douglas DG7 2PJ Tel: 01644 450202
www.bellymackhillfarm.co.uk

Red kite feeding at 2 pm. This is the place to see a circus of red kites at very close range as they mass together in what can only be described as a "feeding frenzy". **Viewpoint open 12-4 pm.**

12 Barstobrick visitor centre

Fellend, Ringford, Castle Douglas DG7 2AT Tel: 01557 820227

Home-cooked food produced on this farm is served in the Neilson's Restaurant. You can find information here and enjoy pleasurable walks around the ponds or up to Neilson's Monument.

13 Meiklewood Farm House B&B

Ringford, Castle Douglas DG7 2AL
Tel: 01557 820226 farmhouse@meiklewood.co.uk

With a farm nature trail, this is a great base to explore Galloway, just off the region's main trunk road, or to unwind more locally. Home baking and evening meals available on request.

14 National Trust for Scotland Threave Nature Reserve and Countryside Centre

Douglas Arms Hotel

206 King Street, Castle Douglas DG7 1DB Tel: 01556 502231
www.douglasarmshotel.com

Modernised 18th century coaching inn in the heart of the region's Food Town, a gateway to the natural and historical attractions in this area. Extensive selection of malts, real ales and good food.

Southern Upland Way Centre

26 Main Street, St Johns Town of Dalry, Kirkcudbrightshire DG7 3UW
Tel: 01644 430015 www.southernuplandway.com

Always on the pulse as the leading source of tourist information for Dumfries & Galloway. Situated on the route of the Southern Upland Way.

West Holmhead Cottage

Craig Farm, Balmaclellan, Castle Douglas DG7 3QR
Tel: 01644 420636 www.craigfarm.co.uk

This out-of-the-way, 250-year-old, self-catering cottage with cosy rooms is a peaceful haven, with a birchwood garden and great landscape and wildlife views.

Galloway Holidays/Galloway Cycling Holidays

Frenchwood, Abercromby Place, Castle Douglas DG7 1GA
Tel: 01556 502979 www.gallowayholidays.co.uk

Whether it's cycling, walking, or car touring breaks in Dumfries and Galloway, we will arrange accommodation, luggage transfer, cycles and minibus transportation to suit your needs.

The Galloway Kite Trail



- Trail route**
(all year)
- Trail route**
(April to September)
- Other roads**
- Walk/path**
- Parking**
- Public Toilets**
(toilet facilities available at some outlets)
- Galloway Kite Trail information**
- Kite feeding station**
- Where to see kites**
- Places to stay, eat or shop**



Where to see kites

- Parton Walk and Viewpoint**
 Parking in layby by Loch Ken Holiday Park. Cross the road to reach the start of the trail path. Trail is 1 km to viewpoint.
- Roost Viewpoint at Glenlaggan**
 Parking in layby 1.7 km north of Parton on main road. Short walk to shoreline of Loch Ken, via gate and some steps. View across loch to Airds Wood around sunset.
- Bennan Viewpoint**
 Parking at Bennan Viewpoint car park (signposted). Uphill walk (steep in places) to viewpoint is 500 m.
- The Secret Cages**
 Parking at Bennan Viewpoint car park (signposted). Circular walk to cages via Bennan Viewpoint and return to car park is 2.5 km. Low level walk to cages from car park is 1.2 km.
- Mossdale Walk**
 Parking at Trail car park (take small road which passes red kite sculpture on left) next to kite sculpture. Path starts at old railway station house. Follow trail under bridge along disused railway. Circular walk is 2.5 km.
- Kite Feeding Station – Bellymack Hill**
 Off the B795 road 500 m east of Laurieston. Follow farm drive to car park at the farm. Feeding of red kites takes place at 2 pm daily. Open from 12 noon-4 pm all year round. The farm will charge for admission.
- RSPB Ken-Dee Marshes nature reserve**
 Parking at Mains of Duchrae. 4.8 km nature trail to two viewing hides and a viewing platform.
- Neilson's Monument**
 South of the all-year trail route, on the A762 road 1 mile north of Ringford. Parking at Barstobrick Visitor Centre. Uphill walk to Neilson's Monument and viewpoint is 1 km.