

Balmaha Millennium Forest Path

Follow the posts with this symbol. They tell you that this path is part of an exciting project which is helping woodlands all over Scotland. Enjoy your walk.



RHODODENDRON RAMPAGE

Look around you and you'll see glossy-leaved *Rhododendron ponticum* growing here. Maybe you've got one in your garden. They add a wonderful splash of colour in late spring, but take a look at the ground beneath them - other plants can't grow in their deep shade.

Victorians introduced them from Turkey about 150 years ago and now they're taking over the woods and crowding out native wildlife. They're being cut back as part of the woodland's management.

A QUICK FIX?

Think how many ways we use wood - for building, making paper and furniture. Around 100 years ago we needed more timber than our woodlands could supply. New forests were planted with quick growing, non-native conifers like these spruce and larch trees.

Seed-eating birds, like goldcrest, siskin and common crossbill, have found a home here, but many animals and plants have not. Now when we plant a forest, we mix blocks of conifers with broad-leaved trees to help wildlife.

BEECH FEAST

Beech trees aren't native to Scotland. Victorian landlords introduced some here from England. They do well in the mild climate and free-draining soil. Their nuts provide a feast for birds and squirrels, but not every year. Beech trees only produce a good crop of nuts every five to seven years.



MULTI-STORY WILDLIFE PARK

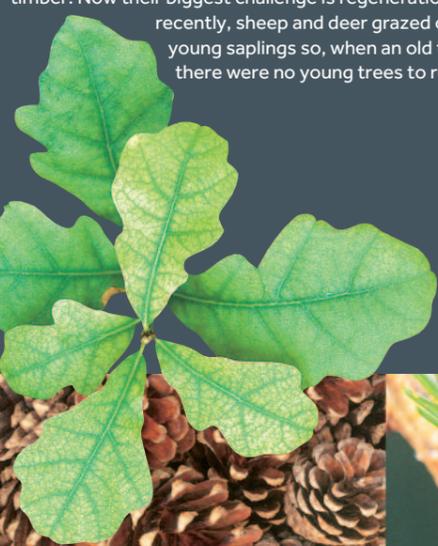
Take a closer look at this oak tree - it's home to an amazing range of wildlife. From the bottom of its trunk to the top of its canopy there are around 400 species of insect living here. Oak trees have grown in Scotland for thousands of years allowing many plants and animals to adapt to them for food and shelter.

LINKING OLD AND NEW

Imagine you were the first person to stand here around 6,000 years ago. Look out at the hills and glens - in every direction there was forest. Since then the woodlands have been used and changed by people, but we know that they were never felled completely. Some of the plants that grow on the woodland floor can only grow in ancient woodlands. These oak woodlands are a fragile link with the past.

THE LONESOME PINE

This soaring tree is a Scots pine - Britain's only large native conifer. Scots pine were part of the Great Caledonian Forest. They were cleared to grow crops and for their timber. Now their biggest challenge is regeneration. Until recently, sheep and deer grazed on their young saplings so, when an old tree died, there were no young trees to replace it.



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BRACKEN - FRIEND OR FOE?

Bracken grows naturally in the woodlands but it sometimes takes over when it gets the chance. Unlike rhododendron, bracken provides a sheltered home for many small insects and grubs. In the past people harvested bracken for bedding and cattle trampled the shoots. They kept it at bay. Plants like bluebells still grow here - they flower before the fronds of bracken unfurl and block out the light.

LET NATURE TAKE CARE OF ITSELF

Thousands of beetles and grubs are hard at work in this dead tree. They help to break down the dead wood and put its richness back into the soil. It's nature's way of managing the forest.



If a tree falls down, unless it poses a danger to people, it is left to rot and the cycle of life begins once more.

COPPICING WOOD

Today when we cut down a tree we think that it's gone forever. That's true for conifers, but most broadleaved trees, like oak, ash and hazel, don't die. The stump lives on and sends up new shoots. This is the key to coppicing, a type of rotational forestry, which was introduced here in the late 1700s to provide timber for charcoal making and bark for tannin, which was used to soften leather.

NEW SHOOTS

At the end of the last Ice Age 10,000 years ago the huge glacier, which had gouged out Loch Lomond, melted. Woodland plants, like those around you now, gradually recolonised the land. As people settled here they cut down the trees for timber and fuel. In recent centuries the woods have been planted again.

The slopes above you have been damaged by fire. New shoots are now growing, but to help us care for the woodland please avoid all risk of fire and please don't cut down trees.

You've now arrived at Balmaha Pier and the end of Balmaha Millennium Forest Path - we hope you've enjoyed it. You've seen how people have changed the woodlands and in turn affected the plants and animals that live here.



GETTING HERE IS EASY

BY CYCLE, BUS OR CAR

Balmaha is on the West Highland Way, a 95-mile long distance walk from Milngavie, on the outskirts of Glasgow, to Fort William.

A regular bus service operates from Balloch to Balmaha and takes about 25 minutes. For information on public transport services, pick up a copy of 'Exploring the National Park by ferry, train and bus' or contact Traveline Scotland on tel: 0871 200 2233 or www.travelinescotland.com.



By car, follow the A811 from Balloch or Stirling to Drymen and then follow the signs to Balmaha. From Glasgow, follow A809 via Bearsden to Drymen, then left on B837 to Balmaha. Parking is limited on the east side of Loch Lomond, wherever possible use alternatives such as public transport.

WHEN YOU'RE IN THE COUNTRYSIDE PLEASE

- Keep pets under control at all times
- Avoid all risk of fire
- Take your litter home
- Don't pick flowers or take wild plants

Enjoy Scotland's outdoors responsibly

Everyone has the right to be on most land and inland water providing they act responsibly. Your access rights and responsibilities are explained fully in the Scottish Outdoor Access Code.

Whether you're in the outdoors or managing the outdoors, the key things are to:

- take responsibility for your own actions
- respect the interests of other people
- care for the environment.

Visit outdooraccess-scotland.com or contact your local Scottish Natural Heritage office.



KNOW THE CODE BEFORE YOU GO

outdooraccess-scotland.com

Please pass this leaflet on when you have finished with it!

A NATIONAL PARK FOR EVERYONE

It's the nation's park. To discover, to explore, to enjoy. It's all about finding your own space. And then choosing what you do with it...

There is so much to enjoy in Loch Lomond & The Trossachs National Park – woods and forests, wild flowers and wildlife watching, watersports, climbing or just taking in the view.

There's always something to do. Whether you love adventure or prefer more passive pastimes, you'll find an activity to suit.

If you would like further information about paths in the National Park please contact:

National Park Ranger Service
National Park Centre, Balmaha
Tel 01389 722100

or

Loch Lomond & The Trossachs
National Park Headquarters, Carrochan
Carrochan Road, Balloch, G83 8EG
Tel 01389 722600
email: info@lochlomond-trossachs.org
web: www.lochlomond-trossachs.org

Large print version of this leaflet is available on request

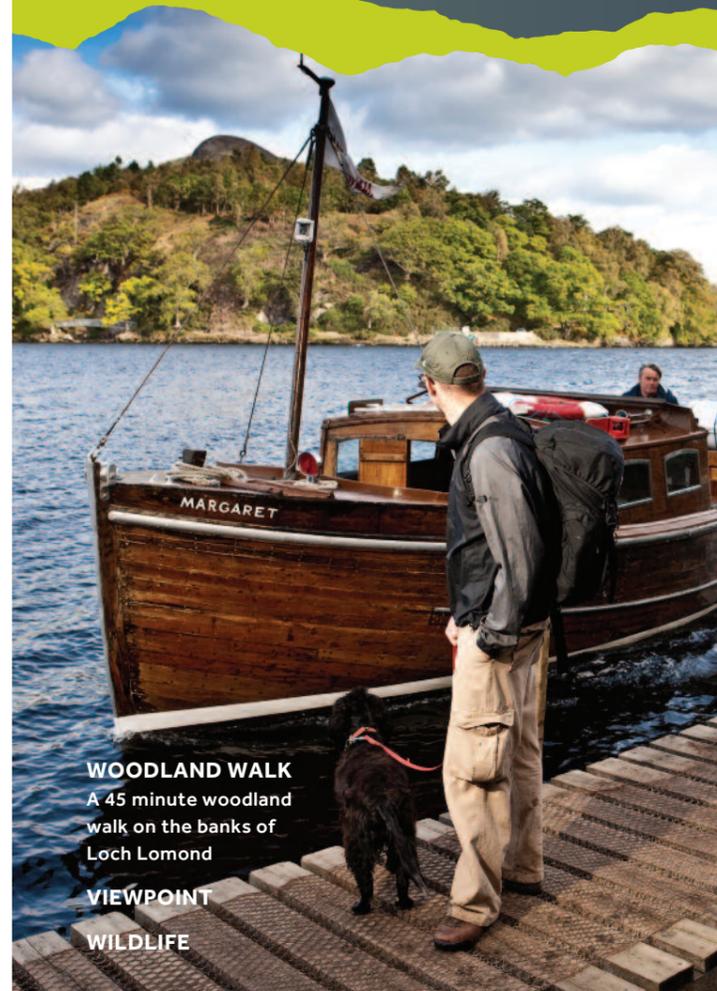


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Balmaha Millennium Forest Path



WOODLAND WALK
A 45 minute woodland walk on the banks of Loch Lomond

VIEWPOINT
WILDLIFE

lochlomond-trossachs.org

Welcome to the Balmaha Millennium Forest Path

Village... on the edge



The ancient village of Balmaha lies at the meeting place between the Highlands and the Lowlands. The Highland Boundary Fault passes just north of the village through Craigie Fort and Conic Hill,

marking a change not only in the landscape, but also in the culture and the wildlife.

The rugged landscape to the north was never well suited to growing crops, but has been wooded for thousands of years. The village marks the start of a chain of ancient oak woodlands that almost encircles the loch. Balmaha Millennium Forest Path provides an ideal introduction to the woodlands and the people who shaped them and depended on them.



WONDERFUL WOODLANDS

The woodlands here are special. Once woodlands like these covered most of Scotland, but now they cover only a small area. The oak woodlands are very old and go most of the way around the loch. Like rain forests in the tropics, they are home to a huge variety of plants and animals. A single oak tree may be home to more than 400 different types of insect. In the summer the woodlands are filled with the sound of singing birds, many of which migrate from Africa to enjoy this rich supply of food.

The woodlands have always been important to the people who live here. Once they were at heart of the country's industry. They provided wood for charcoal, which was used to smelt iron, and bark for tannin, which was used to soften leather. The leather was then used to make belts that drove the machinery of the Industrial Revolution.

Now they are a source of pride to local people and to the country. They are of international importance and are protected by a number of conservation designations including Site of Special Scientific Interest, a National Nature Reserve and Special Area of Conservation.

EXPLORING THE FOREST

The Balmaha Millennium Forest Path is a great place to find out how these woodlands, and the plants and animals that live here, reflect the way people have used the woods for thousands of years.

This mile-long path, which takes 45 minutes to walk at a leisurely pace, explores the different types of woodlands around the village, from ancient oakwoods to modern plantations. The path begins at the back of the car park (just beneath the slopes of Conic Hill) and travels along the loch shore to Craigie Fort on the Highland Boundary Fault. There's a short, but steep, walk to the summit of Craigie Fort from where you'll get magnificent views of the oakwoods all along the eastern shores of the loch.

If you want to explore further into the oakwoods, you can follow the West Highland Way north along the shore. Alternatively, you can visit Inchcailloch, the densely wooded island just off shore and which is part of Loch Lomond National Nature Reserve. You can reach the island by ferry from Balmaha and Luss.

