

Nature of the terrain

The Way criss-crosses the peninsula, traversing the hilly spine in the process. However there are no long steep ascents or descents, and the highest altitude on the Way, gained on days 1 and 6, is a mere 350 m (1150 ft).

The terrain underfoot varies from tarmac roads to trackless moorland, together with forest and farm roads, specially constructed paths, rocky shores and sandy beaches. The paths and tracks are mainly well drained, apart from various places between Machrihanish and Dunaverty.

Almost all stream crossings are bridged. In normal conditions, problems are unlikely, except along the shore between Clachan and Tayinloan. After heavy rain, however, keeping your feet dry can be a challenge almost anywhere.

The Way through Innean Glen



The amount of road-walking is higher than in many long-distance walks in Scotland, though the majority of the distance is along quiet, often scenic roads that carry little traffic. For safety's sake, walk on the right-hand side of the road so as to face oncoming traffic, and be ready to take to the verge whenever there is one. Stay alert, especially near blind corners, and expect large farm and commercial vehicles.

Walking poles may be very useful on the moorland sections, perhaps less so when crossing shingle beaches and rocky shorelines, where you have to go carefully to maintain balance. If you carry poles, you will become an expert in handling them as you cross many sturdy stiles along the Way.

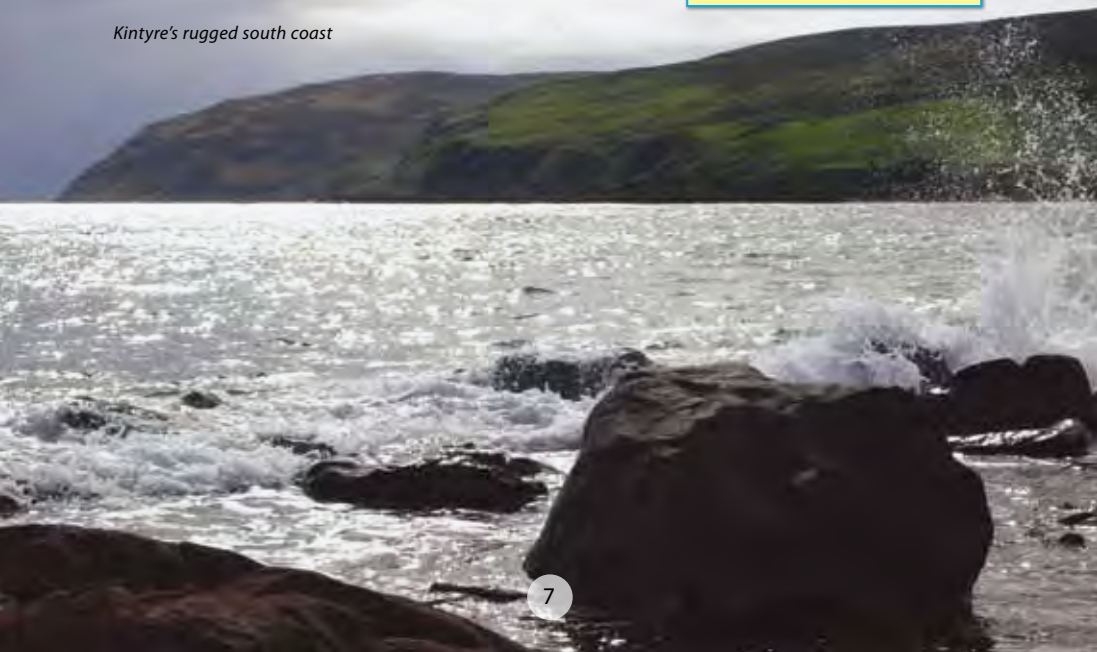
Days, stages and spurs

The first question is in which direction to walk the Way. We describe it from north to south (Tarbert to Dunaverty) for two reasons: the longest days are thus tackled in the later part of the week, when you're well into your stride, and there is something extremely satisfying about finishing at Kintyre's historic, rugged south coast.

The Way can be completed in six days, but this makes the last two days very long: see Table 1. See page 13 for accommodation options from Claonaig.

	<i>miles</i>	<i>km</i>
Tarbert		
Claonaig	11	18
Clachan	10	16
Tayinloan	9	14
Carradale	16	26
Campbeltown	20	32
Dunaverty	21	34
Total	87	140

Kintyre's rugged south coast





*The ferry leaves Gigha
almost hourly for Tayinloan*

Many independent walkers will prefer to have their baggage transferred, and (in 2011) there's a choice of three baggage handlers listed on www.kintyreway.com. If you book a Kintyre Way package with a tour operator, their arrangements can avoid unduly long days by means of vehicle transfer to overnight stops. Some accommodation providers offer a pick-up/drop-off service – check in advance.

There are several worthwhile side-trips to places of interest accessible from the Way, notably the Isle of Gigha (see pages 23-5), and also Skipness Castle (page 35) and Saddell Abbey (page 48). We recommend you to take them into account in your plans.

For most independent walkers, tackling the 21 miles (34 km) from Campbeltown to Dunaverty in a single day would be too daunting. One solution is the Campbeltown to Machrihanish bus service, routes 442 or 200. This cuts out 5½ miles (9 km) of road-walking; even so, you'll need to catch an early bus to Machrihanish for the strenuous 15½-mile walk to Dunaverty. Another is to shorten the stage by overnighing at Amod or Ormsary, postponing to the next day your arrival at Southend and return journey.

If completing every step of the Way is important, you could split this 22-mile section over two days, returning to Campbeltown by bus after walking to Machrihanish. This would give you time to explore this historic town: see pages 52-4. Take the bus to Machrihanish early the following day to complete your walk to Dunaverty.

From Dunaverty, it's a short walk to accommodation in or near Southend. If instead you intend to stay in Campbeltown, check the timetable for the 400/444 bus in advance: the service is limited.

There are two spurs linking coastal villages with the main Way: from Bellochantuy on the west coast (south of Tayinloan) to the northern end of Lussa Loch, and from Peninver on the east coast (south of Saddell) to near its southern end. These are of little interest to walkers intent on completing the Way end-to-end, but could be worth considering if your walk is part of a family holiday in Kintyre.

However, accommodation is very limited at both Bellochantuy and Peninver. Moreover, the greater part of both spurs consists of road-walking through uninspiring conifer forest. Outline descriptions of these two routes are provided on page 51.

There is also the option of a diversion to Saddell, important for its Abbey and Stones: see pages 47-8. Afterwards, you can resume the main Way without backtracking: see page 49. Like the spurs, this option is shown on our drop-down map in alternative route style.

South over Bellochantuy Bay, from the spur



Waymarking

The route is waymarked with pale blue posts, mostly bearing the distinctive logo, a stylised mountain range on its side. However, you need to be vigilant on the cross-country sections where the Way does not follow a formal path or track. It's easy to overshoot a turning where the marker is hidden by vegetation or just out of sight.

An eccentric feature of the Kintyre waymarkers is that they lack direction arrows, and their angular tops are oriented at random. So you must decide whether each marker post merely confirms 'continue ahead' or whether it really means 'turn here', and if so, which way. This is easier if you can spot the next waymarker, but in poor visibility, or where markers are sparse, navigation can be tricky. If you haven't seen a waymarker for about 10 minutes, or if you reach an unmarked junction, you may no longer be on the Way. If in doubt, retrace your steps and check your position from the map and printed directions. Note that North is rotated by 10° on all drop-down map panels.



There are Kintyre Way information boards at key locations, including the start and finish of the Way, a car park south of Clachan and the Tayinloan ferry terminal.

The Scottish Outdoor Access Code

Know the Code before you go . . . 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.

Find out more by visiting www.outdooraccess-scotland.com or by phoning Scottish Natural Heritage; see page 61 for details.