

Foreword

As a boy growing up in Dumfries & Galloway, I'm ashamed to say the beauty of the local hills passed me by. My father dragged me up Bishop Forest Hill near Glenkiln as a teenager but the 400-metre ascent probably put me off hill-walking for another ten years.

Things changed when I moved away to live in a city. Returning to Dumfries & Galloway, I came to appreciate the wild, empty spaces and the beauty of gentle yet rugged hills. From Screel to Criffel I started to explore the landscape and the breathtaking views. This is not the grand majesty of the Highlands but it is some of the most beautiful countryside in Scotland. Despite being so incredibly accessible, it is also remarkably unspoilt.

On most of my walks in Dumfries & Galloway I rarely meet another soul. Many Munro-baggers further north would be surprised by the peace and solitude. Thanks to my brother who is an experienced hill-walker, I've now had the chance to explore more of what the area has to offer, including joining him on part of the Southern Upland Way.

The Annandale Way runs like a brilliant thread through the local landscape. It offers you superb scenery, solitude and welcoming accommodation. The wildlife viewing is outstanding, as shown by the superb local photographs on pages 19-25. This book is the perfect companion for anyone wanting a modern, honest guide to making the most of the experience. I'm looking forward to filling a flask, lacing up my boots and exploring all it has to offer with this guide as my trusty companion.

Stephen Jardine, journalist and broadcaster



From Joe Graham's monument, south across the Solway Firth

1 Planning

Best time of year

May to September are generally the best months for walking in Annandale. In Scotland, between October and March the hours of daylight are restricted, and the weather apt to be poor. It is lighter in March/April, but the weather still apt to be unsettled and the ground likely to be sodden after the winter.

In spring and summer, birdsong and wildflowers are at their very best, and although the weather can be changeable at any time of year, the long hours of daylight in May/June offer walkers more flexibility over when to set off. On average, the summer weather will be drier than in winter, but come prepared for rain and wet vegetation. You may be lucky enough not to need your waterproof clothing, but you certainly need waterproof boots at any time of year.

If you live within easy travelling distance of Annandale, you may have the luxury of going there at short notice, on a good weather forecast, and perhaps of doing the Way as a series of day walks. The autumn foliage colours can be spectacular, and over-wintering flocks of geese attract bird-watchers from great distances. For most people, however, the decision has to be taken and accommodation booked long in advance; and, for most, the summer months will be preferable.

Which direction?

Traditionally, the route is walked to follow the River Annan 'from the source to the sea', starting at Moffat with the Devil's Beef Tub loop and ending at Newbiebarns, near Annan, on the Solway Firth. This means heading north-to-south overall, and this is the direction that we recommend and follow in the main part of this guidebook. It provides the best views generally, and culminates at the Solway Firth.

However, some may prefer to head south to north, with good reason. The only section with serious altitude gain is the Devil's Beef Tub loop, which rises to 500 m/1640 ft; you may prefer to have a challenging day at the end, rather than at the start, of your itinerary. This loop is walked clockwise for the best views, and starts and finishes in Moffat. For the rest of the route, the net altitude difference is trivial: Moffat is only 110 m/360 ft above sea level. The prevailing wind is south-westerly, and you may prefer to have the wind mostly behind you. Ultimately, your choice depends on how much you care about the better views and whether you feel the Solway makes a more satisfying destination than Moffat. For south-to-north walkers, there's a concise route description in Part 5.

If you want a complete service, holiday companies provide packages combining accommodation and baggage transfer: see page 68 for Gemini Walks and others. Before committing yourself, decide whether you want to walk north to south, and also which route option you prefer: see next page.

Which route option?

The route has two branches, the western one via Lochmaben, the eastern via Lockerbie. Our main route description (Part 3) follows the more strenuous Lochmaben branch which includes a superb viewpoint over Annandale from Almagill Hill (217 m/712 ft). Part 4 describes the alternative branch through Lockerbie: it is slightly shorter than the Lochmaben branch, much less hilly, and has the attraction of Eskrigg Nature Reserve.

The Lockerbie branch is described in Part 4, but only 12 miles (19 km) of its distance differ from the Lochmaben branch, namely Corncockle Wood to Lockerbie and Lockerbie to Sorrysike Moor. From Moffat to Corncockle Wood and from Sorrysike Moor southward, the two branches are identical. Before deciding which branch you favour, it's worth considering your daily distances and accommodation stops.

If you are a self-reliant walker, you may prefer the Lochmaben route for a further reason: at the price of an 18.5-mile (30-km) day, you can avoid the need to use a bus by walking from Moffat to Lochmaben in a day. The Lockerbie option is over 3 miles further, measured to the centre of Lockerbie. Not many walkers enjoy the pressure of having to complete 21.5 miles (35 km) in a single day.



The route divides, Corncockle Wood

How long will it take?

Most people take four to five days to cover the total distance of about 56 miles/90 km. Part 3 is divided into four sections, each a feasible day's walk. However, many who walk from Moffat to Lochmaben, and nearly all who chose Moffat to Lockerbie, will prefer to split this very long section over two days using the bus (or by staying at Johnstonebridge): see page 38. When considering daily distances, bear in mind that inevitably you will walk much further in the course of reaching food, drink and accommodation.

In Moffat and Annan there is plenty of accommodation on or close to the route; as of 2023 Lochmaben has only two hotels, both close to the route; and Lockerbie has plenty of accommodation near the town centre. However, unless you wish to camp or rely on lifts from B&B hosts, you may have to walk significant distances elsewhere. For example, to reach the hotel or B&B in Ecclefechan, near Hoddom Bridge, takes a minimum of 1.5 miles (2.4 km) each way. And although the route ends officially at Newbiebarns, in practice you will almost certainly return to Annan on foot – a further 2-3 miles (3-5 km).

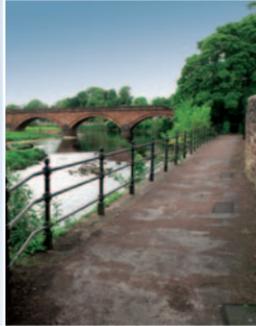
Unless you are an experienced walker, avoid committing yourself to overlong daily distances. Not only do you risk turning your holiday into an endurance test, but also time pressure may make you miss wildlife sightings or feel too rushed to relish the views. And although the Way is mostly low-level, be aware of slow going on some challenging terrain, especially in poor weather. The table shows how to split the overall distance into four or five days. We advise you to give yourself the blessing of at least one extra day unless you are experienced and have severe time constraints. And if you have little or no previous experience of long-distance walking, we strongly recommend that you obtain our *Notes for Novices*: see page 69.

Distances

<i>Via Lochmaben</i>	5 days		4 days		
	miles	km	miles	km	pages
Devil's Beef Tub loop	13-9	22-4	13-9	22-4	26-31
Moffat	8-0	12-8			
A701/Raehills	10-6	17-0	18-5	29-8	32-41
Lochmaben	14-0	22-6	14-0	22-6	43-48
Hoddom Bridge	9-3	15-0	9-3	15-0	49-52
Newbiebarns					
Total via Lochmaben	55-8	89-8			

<i>Via Lockerbie</i>	5 days		4 days		
	miles	km	miles	km	pages
Devil's Beef Tub loop	13-9	22-4	13-9	22-4	26-31
Moffat	8-0	12-8			
A701/Raehills	13-1	21-1	21-1	33-8	55-59
Lockerbie*	8-6	13-8	8-6	13-8	60-61
Hoddom Bridge	9-3	15-0	9-3	15-0	49-52
Newbiebarns					
Total via Lockerbie	52-9	85-1			

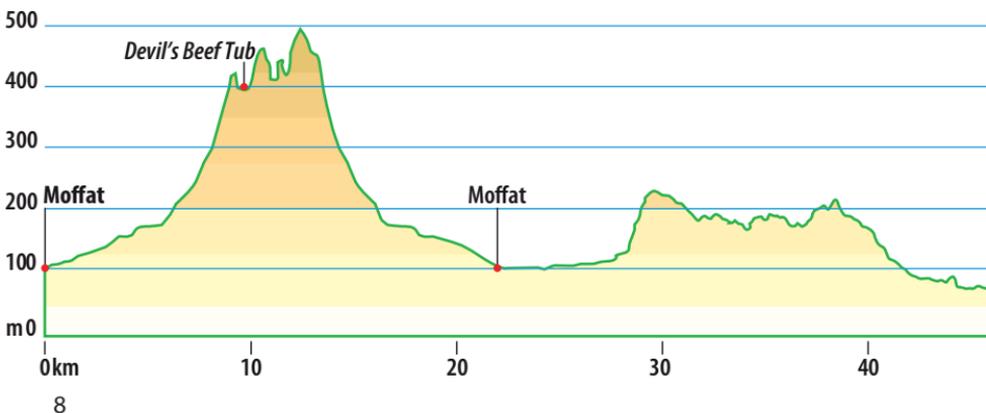
* distance to Carlisle Road, ½ mile south of Lockerbie town centre



Terrain and gradients

The going underfoot varies from riverside and field paths to tracks and minor roads, with roadside verges and some tarmac sections and also some trod paths across fields and open hillside. In places, it can be muddy or boggy, and even in dry summer weather the field-edge paths can be heavy with long, wet vegetation.

Gradients vary, with the Moffat loop having the greatest height gain and also the highest point of the route on Chalk Rig Edge (500 m/1640 ft). The Lochmaben branch also has a stiff climb up Almagill Hill, whereas the Lockerbie branch is generally flatter. South of Hoddom Bridge, the gradients are barely noticeable.



The Scottish Outdoor Access Code and dogs

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.scot for full details. See also page 68.



KNOW THE CODE BEFORE YOU GO
outdooraccess-scotland.scot

Under the Scottish Outdoor Access Code (SOAC), everyone has the statutory right to access to land for recreational purposes, but access rights must be exercised responsibly. This right applies to most land in Scotland, including that which is privately owned, with the exceptions of gardens, farmyards and cultivated crops.

The route of the Annandale Way has been negotiated with land managers and owners and it is important to respect their rights and maintain their goodwill. Be sure to avoid causing any damage or excessive noise, and read the section below about gates and livestock. Lambing and calving takes place between March and June: never disturb pregnant animals nor approach young or sick animals, even if you think they have been abandoned. If you are seriously worried about a farm animal, try to inform a local farmer.

Think hard before deciding to bring your dog on your walk. Unless you are camping and eating outdoors, it may be impossible to organise your accommodation and meals because your dog (unless an assistance dog) may not be admitted. Some B&Bs accept dogs, others impose extra cleaning charges, restrict dogs to 'very well-behaved' or refuse them altogether: you certainly need to ask before booking. Dogs must be kept under close control, and some create problems on the walk, especially where livestock are in fields. Never allow your dog to approach livestock which are, or may be, pregnant, let alone if they are with young. Always clean up after your dog if it soils the path.

