



39 **DALBEATTIE FOREST**
Dumfries & Galloway



Featuring the 'Slab' and the 'Terrible Twins', the Hardrock Trail in Dalbeattie Forest is an essential expert off-road experience. Come here for granite-littered built trails at their best. Two other trails in the forest are slightly easier, so you can work up to the big one. The forest lies just outside Dalbeattie town, and is one of the 7 Stanes dedicated sites.

Combine a trip with riding in Mable Forest, 18km back near Dumfries, go north to Drumlanrig, or continue west to Galloway Forest for more dedicated trails at Kirthcree and an easy classic through Glen Trool.

WHERE TO RIDE

Guided & supported Contact Lets Offroad (tel 020 8402 6652, www.letsoffroaduk.com).

Dedicated routes

Hardrock Trail (27km, intermediate-difficult, 2-4 hours, it can hurt when you fall, but all the tricky bits have easier options), featuring expert swoopy singletrack, the Moby Dick granite hump, the 15m-high granite Slab, followed by the steeper Terrible Twins! Returning to the car park, find Volunteer Ridge, a 100m black graded rockfest section. All the difficult sections all have escape routes, and there's a skills loop at the start to warm up on.

Moyle Hill Trail (14km, easy-intermediate, 2.5-3 hours) One for newcomers, this route climbs on forest trails from the Richorn car park to a great view over the Urr valley and the Solway coast. There's also easy taster singletrack if you want it.

Iron Hash Trail (10.5km, easy, 1.5-2 hours) Moderate with some steep sections, generally easy riding.

Location Trails start from the Richorn car park, 1.5km S of Dalbeattie, down the A710 'Solway Coast' road, from the second Forestry car park on the left.

Station Dumfries (23km NE).

Mapping Go to www.7stanes.gov.uk, Dalbeattie section, to download route maps; good route leaflet for the site (from the garage in Dalbeattie, local bike shops, and the Forestry Commission, tel 01387 860247, email

feae@forestry.gsi.gov.uk);

OS Landranger 84, Explorer 313.

Bike shops Castle Douglas Cycle Centre (sales & repairs, Castle Douglas, open Tue-Sat, tel 01556 504542); Grierson & Graham, Dumfries (tel 01387 259483); The Shed on-site at Mable (see entry).

Where to stay

Camping/accommodation Kippford Holiday Park, Kippford (bike wash, storage, on A710 3km S of car park, tel 01556 620636).

Independent Hostel

Barnsoul Farm, Shawhead, N off A75 10km W of Dumfries (scenic farm, with four heated bothies for 4/5 people (tel 01387 730249, email barnsouldg@aol.com).

Self-catering Redcastle House, Haugh of Urr, 7km from 7 Stanes (tel 01665 660475).

B&Bs

The Cottage, Rockcliffe, 10mins from 7 Stanes (tel 01556 630460); Bellvue, Port Rd, Dalbeattie, 2mins from 7 Stanes (tel 01556 611833); Cowans Farm Guesthouse, Kirkgunzeon on the A711 halfway between Dalbeattie and Dumfries (tel 01387 760284, sarah@cowansfarmguesthouse.co.uk).

Hotel Anchor Hotel, Kippford, 5mins from 7 Stanes (run by cyclists, tel 01556 620205).

Tourist offices Dumfries (seasonal, tel 01387 253862); Castle Douglas (tel 01556 502611).



DEESIDE & THE MOUNTH ROADS
Aberdeenshire

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(see also Bunzeach, Drumtochty and Pitfichie Forests)

The river Dee flows from the Cairngorms to Aberdeen and forms the central spine of this surprisingly mountainous region, running between Banchory, Braemar and Glen Esk.

WHERE TO RIDE - all self-navigating

Classic Route: Braemar return via Lairig An Laiogh, Glen Avon and Culardoch (67km/42mi, all off-road, no facilities. In places extreme and a push). Start Linn O'Dee car pk (trail-head 8km from Braemar). NW Glen Lui to Derry Lodge, climb N up Glen Derry. 5km from Derry Lodge, leave main path for big climb of Lairig An Laiogh N. Turn E, DH through Glen Avon, towards Faindouran Lodge. Cont to Linn of Avon then S. Round Loch Builg, right soon after, right again straight after bridge. Brutal climb round Culardoch, descent to Invercauld. Return Braemar or Linn O'Dee via Allenquoich.

Classic Route: Mount Keen Circuit (50km/30mi). Start end public rd Glen Tanar, S of Aboyne. Side of Glen Tanar Hse. Main track SW. 4km after forest, see wide track on far side of water up W side of Mt Keen (Mounth Rd). Cross and start climb. Push on final section. Split in path: left for summit, or cont ahead. Epic downhill (care at switchbacks) to rd at Glen Mark. E to immediately after Tarfside bridge, track left ('Firmounth'), relentless climb, cont to top.

Monster DH, technical, watch for drainage channels across track, back to Glen Tanar.

Lunatic Ascent/Descent of Morven (10km, take great care) Braemar, 3.5km S minor rd by Clunie Water. 500m climb W to mast. Technical DH NE. Big rocky drop-offs.

Easier Options abound between Glen Tanar and Forest of Birse. Dead end tracks interlinked by good forest tracks. **Rail Trail** Good for 9km Dinnit-Ballater.

Mapping & Info OS Landrangers 36, 43 & 44. See also 'Find a Route' on www.cyclescotland.com.

Location Braemar is 35mi N of Perth on the A93.

Bike & Mountain Shops Braemar Mountain Sports (tel 01339 741242); Huntly Cycle Centre (tel 01466 793508); Inverurie Pedal Power (tel 01467 624323).

Where to Stay For Braemar/Glen Avon classic, Inverry YHA Hostel (no showers; tel 0870 004 1126). Ballater and Braemar on tourist route. Large campsite at Banchory.

Tourist Offices Ballater (tel 01339 755306); Braemar (tel 01339 741600).

DRUMLANRIG Dumfries & Galloway
(see also Dalbeattie and Mable)

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The estate at grand Drumlanrig Castle has pleasantly demanding singletrack riding, plus easier trails for all abilities, also Rik's Bike Shed, a bicycle museum and a notable adventure playground.

WHERE TO RIDE Ctry Park entry £3/2 adult/U16.

Red Route (16km) Piles of interesting, woody s-track and steep rocky descents. **Nith Linns Loop** (10km, blue)

Mixed trails with a superb descent. **Auchenknight**

Adventure Loop (blue) For any bike, several climbs lead to a big descent. Plus two easy family green routes. **Other**

Attractions The Castle, and the Bicycle Museum

commemorating the invention of the beast 3mi away.

Bike Facilities Rik's Bike Shed (sales, repairs & hire, tel 01848 330080). **Eating** Two fine cafes at the castle.

Mapping & Info OS Landranger 78. Buccleuch.com, the estate website, has all visitor and historic info.

Location Signposted off the A76 3mi N of Thornhill.

Tourist Office Dumfries (tel 01387 253862).