

ROB ROY WAY

Notes on multi-use access

The Rob Roy Way is one of Scotland's Great Trails. Starting in Drymen, north of Glasgow, and finishing in Pitlochry in Perthshire, the route follows paths and tracks through the spectacular countryside in the Southern Highlands where Rob Roy McGregor lived and fought in the 17th and 18th centuries. The Rob Roy Way was originally designed and created as a walking route, incorporating some sections of path and track with a long tradition of equestrian or multi-use, and others such as forestry, water authority and hydro roads, quiet lanes and disused railway tracks which are ideal for multi-use, and offer great scope for day rides as well as longer distance enjoyment. However other sections of the route were never envisaged for use by anyone other than walkers. Although Scottish access legislation has changed since the Rob Roy Way was set up, and in theory horse riders and cyclists enjoy equal rights as walkers, at some points along the route there are stiles, kissing gates or barriers which may restrict multi-use. Some of the sections over rough moorland are passable with a horse, but may present more of a challenge for inexperienced riders, particularly during or after wet weather.

These notes have been produced by British Horse Society Scotland to help those interested in using part or all of the West Highland Way to identify location and brief details of features which may restrict multi-use of the waymarked route. Only those which may present an issue for experienced riders are noted below – shallow fords, vehicular bridges without parapets, cross drains, gates which can only be opened or closed if dismounted, rough ground, sheep, cattle and timber stacks are all part of riding off-road and so are not documented. Similarly horse riders can expect to meet traffic, in places heavy traffic, on most route sections on public roads. On the forestry sections you should be prepared to meet forestry vehicles and timber wagons, and be aware that temporary diversions may be in place during timber extraction or other forest operations.

Inclusion of a particular feature within the notes does not necessarily mean that it is impassable with a horse. Photos have been included where appropriate to help you assess for yourself whether a feature such as steps, a narrow footbridge, gate or gap less than 1.5m wide may present an obstruction to you. Maps identifying sections which are accessible with a horse should be available at <http://bhsaccess.org.uk/ridemaps/scotland> from summer 2015. Both the notes and maps are intended to supplement detailed route guides and other information already available from the route website <http://www.robroyway.com>.

The background information for these notes has been provided by volunteer survey in 2012. These notes will be updated as and when notification of subsequent changes is received, but neither BHS or the relevant access authorities can guarantee accessibility or the accuracy of information provided.

Suggestions for parking and alternative routes to avoid restrictions on multi-use are included where information has been provided, but do not constitute a recommendation. All route users are responsible for deciding for themselves whether this route, or any part thereof, is suitable for their intended use, taking account of their own abilities, skills, fitness and experience, as well as season, weather conditions etc. The route goes through some remote countryside, with some relatively steep sections, so riders and their horses should be fit, well-equipped and prepared for the conditions. Event organisers, groups or commercial operators considering using the Rob Roy Way are urged to contact the route managers (see route website for details).

Remember that whether on foot, cycle or horseback, rights of access in Scotland depend on access takers and land managers accepting individual responsibility for their actions. The Scottish Outdoor Access Code defines what this means on the ground <http://www.outdooraccess-scotland.com/>. Specific guidance for horse riders can be downloaded from <http://www.bhsscotland.org.uk/responsible-riding.html>.

Courtesy, consideration of others' needs and good communication are the key to sharing paths. Always pass others you meet along the trail at a walk, and elsewhere limit your pace to ground conditions and visibility. On surfaced paths and other well used sections of the route, riders need to be particularly careful to respect other users and clear dung off the path. Although the route is waymarked throughout, sometimes the waymarks may be less readily visible, so make sure you have a map with you and know how to read it.

Parking

Note: the public car park in the centre of Aberfoyle is invariably busy, with limited space for loading and unloading horses.

Location/OS Grid Ref.	Comments
Garadhban NS479907	Forestry Commission car park 15m x 8m, identified as suitable for horseboxes but can be busy at times. Broad forest track 200m connects to Rob Roy Way
Drymen Road Car Park NS506936	Spacious Forestry Commission car park which is rarely busy, with ample space for loading and unloading
Loch Venachar NN593055	Small Forestry Commission car park, able to accommodate boxes or trailers other than when busy
Callander NN627082	2 busy public car parks
Kilmahog car park NN608083	Involves crossing busy A84
Glenogle car park NN558284	
Strathyre car park NN561168	Spacious Forestry Commission car park. (Tourist car park at north end of village at NN561171 is small)
Aberfeldy – Moness Terrace Car Park NN858491	Public car park, restricted space but would accommodate horseboxes if not too busy
Aberfeldy – Cemetery car park NN867497	

Drymen to Aberfoyle

The first few miles of the Rob Roy Way are on public road, which can be busy at times. The West Highland Way provides an off-road alternative but involves a short section on the busy A811 from Drymen. Alternatively riders may prefer to start from Garadhban car park north of Drymen.

From Drymen Road to Aberfoyle, the Rob Roy Way mainly follows broad tracks (stony in places) through Loch Ard Forest, passing a number of aqueducts and inspection towers relating to the Loch Katrine water system. Watch out for a small pig enclosure on the right alongside the road just south of Aberfoyle!

There is ample scope for circular rides combining the Rob Roy Way between Drymen Road car park and Aberfoyle with other forest tracks in Loch Art Forest.

Aberfoyle to Callander

The first part of this section is on tarmac, then on good broad forest tracks, but the central hill section is on rougher stony path and involves several fords.

Location / OS Grid Ref.	Feature/description	Alternative access to avoid restrictions
NN553017	Locked field gate across track, fence adjacent has been "informally lowered". 	None for horses
NN559026	Ladder stile over dyke 	Volunteer surveyor reported no alternative but photo suggests old metal gate adjacent which may be passable
NN567034	Ladder stile over dyke 	Volunteer surveyor reported no alternative but photo suggests old metal gate adjacent which may be passable
NN593055	Metal barrier at junction of track and car park	Gap alongside, ample width for a horse, if in doubt, dismount



Callander to Strathyre

The Rob Roy Way follows National Cycle Network route 7 from Callander to Strathyre, which is well used by walkers and cyclists, but ideally suited to multi-use. There are numerous bridges along this section, and other access facilities such as horse stiles, which are fine for horse-riders but would be too narrow for most horse-drawn carriages.

Location / OS Grid Ref.	Feature/description	Alternative access to avoid restrictions
NN622079	Metal surfaced bridge leading onto railway cycle path with good parapets but surface can be noisy 	For horses which can't cope with the clattering footbridge, follow the cycle route south from Callander over the river, then minor road past Gartchonzie. Although this involves a short section on the A821, there is usually far less traffic on this road than on the very busy A84 between Callander and Kilmahog
NN559169	Waymarked route crosses River Balvaig over suspension footbridge	Follow minor public road north then east into Strathyre village



Strathyre to Killin(including alternative route bypassing Killin)

The Rob Roy Way follows forest tracks between Strathyre and Kingshouse. At the time of survey this section of route was closed during timber extraction, but is understood to be reopen and multi-use accessible. The alternative is to use the very quiet and scenic minor road between Strathyre and Balquhidder.

Between Kingshouse and Killin, the Rob Roy Way follows National Cycle Network Route 7, along which there are numerous barriers and locked gates to restrict illegal vehicular use, all of which have ample room to pass to the side with a horse other than those identified below which require dismounting and untacking. Take particular care crossing the busy A84 in Glen Ogle.

Forest tracks through Auchmore Woods offer scope for circular day rides in conjunction with this part of the Rob Roy Way.

Location / OS Grid Ref.	Feature/description	Alternative access to avoid restrictions
NN583225	Suspension bridge over Kendrum Burn south of Craggan with good parapets, ample width and strength for horses but can be noisy due to tarmac over metal surface 	
NN584237	Cycle cattle grid alongside locked metal	

	<p>gate across track. Side gate narrow with overhead wooden bar. Restricted height and width require dismounting and removing tack.</p> 	
<p>NN582246</p>	<p>Cycle cattle grid alongside locked metal gate across track. Side gate narrow with overhead wooden bar. Restricted height and width require dismounting and removing tack.</p>	
<p>NN581247</p>	<p>Cycle cattle grid alongside locked metal gate across track. Side gate narrow with overhead wooden bar. Restricted height and width require dismounting and removing tack.</p>	
<p>NN578257</p>	<p>Cycle cattle grid alongside locked metal gate across track. Side gate narrow with overhead wooden bar. Restricted height and width require dismounting and removing tack.</p>	
<p>NN559284</p>	<p>6' high overhead barrier, easily bypassed to side</p> 	
<p>NN602314</p>	<p>Main gate across track locked. Adjacent gate through deer fence passable with a horse dismounted but restricted width and height, including wire below top wooden bar which is potentially lethal for mounted horse riders</p>	



Killin to Ardeonaig

After branching off the public road south of Killin, the Rob Roy Way follows good firm forest and hydro tracks past Lochan Breachlaich and Creag a Chaorainn, then alongside a large hydro pipe, to the point where the waymarked route branches off the hydro road at NN652324. Although the ditch is shallow and often dry, horses may be inclined to jump it, with limited take-off/landing space in line with the fingerpost. Proposal has been put forward to create a piped culvert crossing. Meanwhile, horse riders may prefer to choose their own crossing a few metres up or downstream of the waymarked crossing.



For the next mile, the route follows an indistinct path over rough and in places boggy ground past Tom na h-lolaire, linking up with a firm track again just before crossing the Newton Burn south of Brae Farm. This hill section is passable with care with a sure-footed native pony (or similar) in dry weather, but may present problems for horses during or after wet weather. Horse riders may prefer to dismount and lead their horse, and pick their own way through the boggier sections rather than follow exactly the same route as walkers.



Location / OS Grid Ref.	Feature/description	Alternative access to avoid restrictions
NN659338	<p>Waymarked walking route crosses wooden sleeper bridge with several partly-concealed holes</p> 	<p>Easily avoided by ignoring waymarks and continuing straight through metal gate across stony track which leads through shallow, firm stone based ford</p> 

There are several cattle grids across the track between Brae Farm and Ardeonaig, each with a gate or hurdle alongside with ample width for horses but unhung so may require dismounting to negotiate.

Ardeonaig to Acharn

Between Ardeonaig and Acharn, the Rob Roy Way follows the public road along the south side of Loch Tay. Although very scenic, this road can be very busy at times, particularly during summer and at weekends.

Acharn to Aberfeldy

Most of the gates along this section of route have been replaced over recent years, many with an independent side gate so that the main gate can be locked to prevent illegal vehicular access. Some of the side gates are narrow and will require dismounting and potentially untacking to get a horse through (and may not be passable with particularly big, wide horses). At the time of survey, where 2-in-1 gates had been installed with pedestrian rather than bridlegate sections, the main gate was unlocked so could be opened full width to allow multi-use access. However, at the time of survey the cattle grid identified below presented a barrier to multi-use with no alternative identified during volunteer survey.

Location / OS Grid Ref.	Feature/description	Alternative access to avoid restrictions
NN78248	Main gate locked, narrow side gate passable if tack removed 	
NN799464	Main gate locked, side gate narrow and at awkward angle for horses 	None
NN838479	Cattle grid with no alternative	None identified during audit

		
NN840481	2km descending into Birks of Aberfeldy follows narrow path over wooden footbridges, boardwalks and steep steps, impassable with a horse	Range of alternative paths potentially suitable (not surveyed)

Aberfeldy to Pitlochry

The first section of the Rob Roy Way heading north from Aberfeldy follows a narrow riverside path which although passable would easily churn up if used by horses during/after wet weather, so horse riders should be particularly careful to respect the need to exercise their access rights responsibly. The middle hill section of the Rob Roy Way between Aberfeldy and Pitlochry was obstructed by two kissing gates at the time of survey. Approach has been made to the route managers to explore replacement of these gates with suitable alternatives accessible for multi-use.

Location / OS Grid Ref.	Feature/description	Alternative access to avoid restrictions
NN875507	Narrow riverside path leading to wooden footbridge, non-slip surface but relatively narrow 	
NN917540	Kissing gate	No alternative

		
<p>NN912547</p>	<p>Narrow wooden footbridge, steps either end</p> 	
<p>NN913548</p>	<p>Kissing gate</p> 	<p>None identified in survey</p>
<p>NN914549</p>	<p>Sleeper crossing over narrow burn</p> 	<p>Ford/jump burn</p>
<p>NN922553</p>	<p>Ladder stile</p> 	<p>Field gate adjacent at forest boundary open at time of survey</p>

		
NN939574	Crossing of very busy A9 without any safety crossing	
NN940577	Narrow metal suspension bridge over River Tummel with metal hoops overhead restricting height 	Public roads