

Scotland Mountain Biking

The Wild Trails



Phil McKane

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Photography by **Andy McCandlish**

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Front cover: Nash Masson on the descent from Coire Dubh Mor to Glen Torridon.

Photography by Andy McCandlish unless otherwise credited.



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PLEASE GIVE WAY TO HORSES AND PEDESTRIANS.

Contents



Introduction	vii
Acknowledgements	viii
How to Use this Book	viii
Access Law	ix
Estate Activities	ix
Weather and Terrain	x
Midges	x
Bothies	xi
General Safety	xi
In the Event of an Accident	xii
Rules of the (Off) Road	xii
Planning Your Ride	xii
Maps & Symbols	xiii
Gaelic Translations	xiii

SECTION 1 – Southern & Central Scotland

Southern & Central Scotland Introduction	xiv
Southern & Central Scotland Area Map & Route Finder	4
1 ▲ The Pentland Hills, Edinburgh – 16.5km	7
2 ▲ Mugdock Park, Glasgow – 6.5km	11
3 ▲»▲ Glen Finglas, The Trossachs – 28km	15
4 ▲ Southern Upland Way & The Dempster Road – 30km	19
5 ▲ The Minch Moor, Innerleithen – 40km	25
6 ▲ Glen Kinglass, Bridge of Orchy – 57km	31
7 ▲ Glentool Tour – 90km	39

SECTION 2 – North-West Scotland & Highlands

North-West Scotland & Highlands Introduction	48
North-West Scotland & Highlands Area Map & Route Finder	52

8 ▲ Corroul & Loch Ossian – 15km	55
9 ▲ Loch Affric Loop – 17km	59
10 ▲ The Corrieyairack Pass – 36km	63
11 ▲ The Ardverikie Estate – 34km	69
12 ▲ Ben Alder – 53km	75
13 ▲ Glen Sligachan, Isle of Skye – 46km	81
14 ▲ Torridon Circuit – 46km	87
15 ▲ West Highlands Tour – 69km	95

SECTION 3 – North-East Scotland & Cairngorms

North-East Scotland & Cairngorms Introduction	102
North-East Scotland & Cairngorms Area Map & Route Finder	106
16 ▲ Glen Feshie Singletrack – 16km	109
17 ▲ The Burma Road – 16km	113
18 ▲ Gleann Einich – 28km	117
19 ▲ The Capel Mounth – 24km	121
20 ▲ Ben Avon – 68km	125
21 ▲ Glen Tilt – 54km	133
22 ▲ Mount Keen – 55km	139
23 ▲ Tour of the Cairngorms – 200km	147

SECTION 4 – BONUS SECTION

Bonus Section Introduction	154
24 ▲ Coast to Coast, Fort William to Montrose – 290km	159

APPENDIX	172
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ROUTE GRADES

▲ = EASY ▲ = MEDIUM ▲ = HARD (see page viii)



Introduction

In the past few years the popularity of mountain biking in Scotland has exploded with hundreds of thousands of riders visiting the trail centres of the 7Stanes. My aim with this guidebook was to get away from the purpose-built singletrack and into the wild places of Scotland.

The routes within the book cover the length and breadth of the country and hopefully provide something for all types of rider. There are short sweet loops close to Glasgow and Edinburgh which are perfect for escaping from the city for an hour or two. The easy rides are in stunning areas, giving routes which deliver spectacular scenery and wild landscapes without too many technical challenges along the way. The majority of the trips emphasise the kind of riding which I love – the big days out in remote and spectacular terrain, taking on technical singletrack, big climbs and the odd bit of traditional Scottish bog trotting!

Writing the book has been an immensely enjoyable experience for me. I have explored some areas of the country where I hadn't done much riding before and revisited some old classics which I'd not ridden in a long time. These are some of my favourite routes in the country, and I hope that any one of them will make you say 'That was one of the best mountain bike rides I've ever done'.

This book just scratches the surface of Scottish riding – there are enough trails to keep a mountain biker happy for a lifetime. Ride some of these routes, then get your maps out and start exploring!

Phil McKane





SECTION 1

Southern & Central Scotland

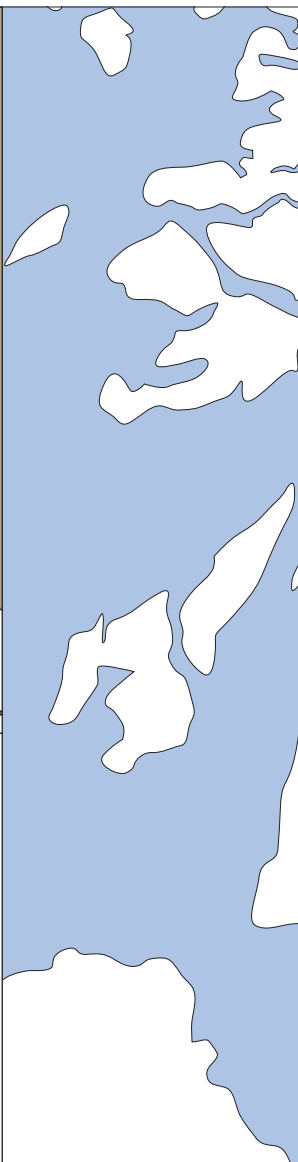
Southern and Central Scotland is home to most of the country's population, but it is by no means crowded. Great mountain bike routes can be found starting in the suburbs of Edinburgh and Glasgow, and fantastic wilderness trails can be found just a short journey from these cities.





DESCENDING LOWTHER HILL, NEAR WANLOCKHEAD

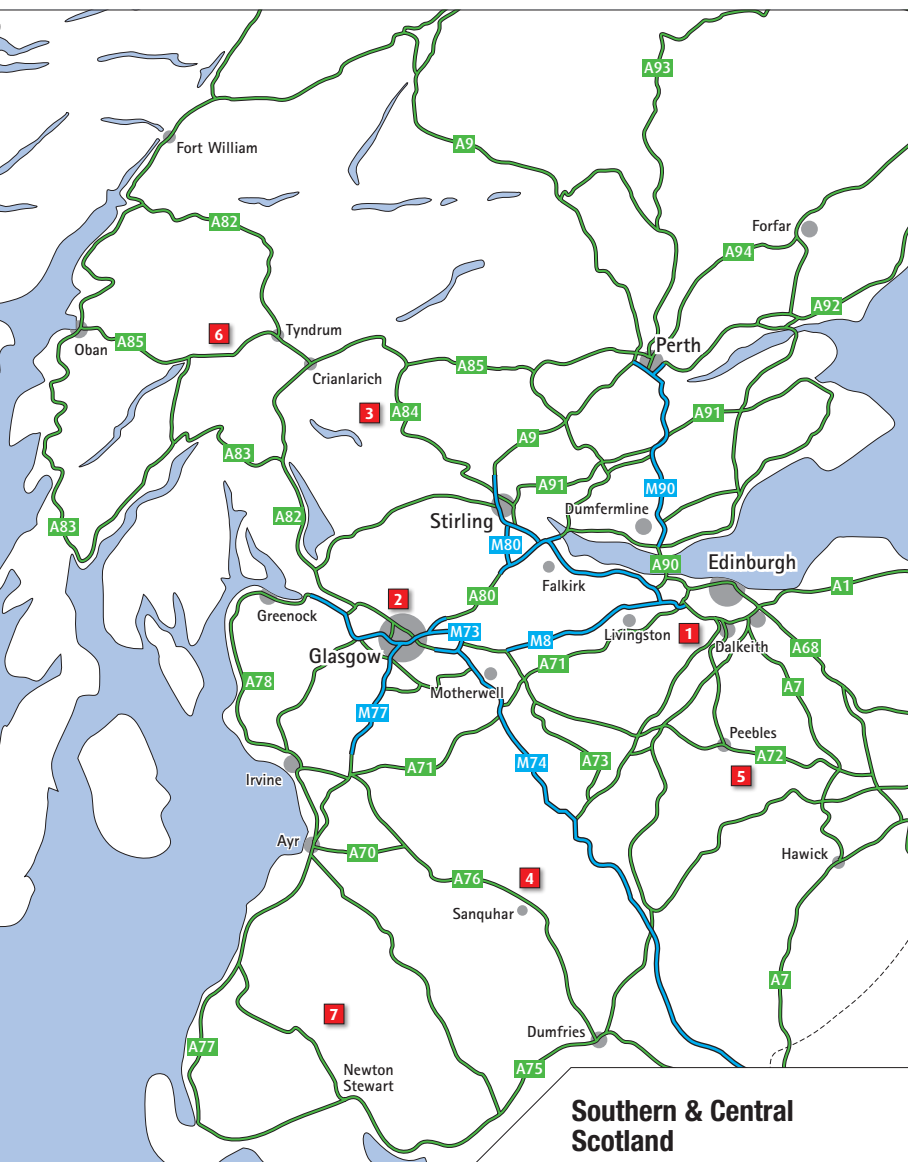




Southern & Central Scotland

route finder

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|----------|---|-----|
| 1 | The Pentland Hills, Edinburgh..... | p7 |
| 2 | Mugdock Park, Glasgow..... | p11 |
| 3 | Glen Finglas, The Trossachs..... | p15 |
| 4 | Southern Upland Way & The Dempster Road.... | p19 |
| 5 | The Minch Moor, Innerleithen..... | p25 |
| 6 | Glen Kinglass, Bridge of Orchy..... | p31 |
| 7 | Glentool Tour..... | p39 |



Southern & Central Scotland

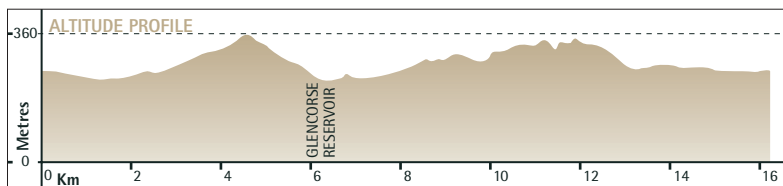


Introduction

The Pentland Hills have a real remote, big-mountain feel, despite being within easy riding distance of the city of Edinburgh. They are the perfect destination for everything from a quick blast to blow away the cobwebs, to an all-day epic. Due to their proximity to the city, the trails bear a heavy burden of mountain bikers and other outdoor enthusiasts, and some trails are susceptible to damage in very wet conditions. This route covers tracks that drain well in the wet, and remain rideable on a year-round basis.

The Ride

Starting at Harlaw House Visitor Centre, a short tarmac section allows for a warm-up before the first climb up Cock Rig. A gravelly track leads to the top of Maidens Cleugh and a high-speed rocky descent down to Glencorse Reservoir. A tarmac lane along the side of Logan Burn leads to Loganlea Reservoir before the singletrack starts again. In Green Cleugh it's easy to forget you're only a few miles from Edinburgh as the rugged hills tower steeply up and the trail winds by waterfalls and splashes through the burn. At Bavelaw Castle a fantastic rooty singletrack descent runs parallel to the road before a spin along the edge of Threipmuir Reservoir leads back to the start.



THE PENTLAND HILLS – EDINBURGH

GRADE: ▲

TOTAL DISTANCE: 16.5KM » TOTAL ASCENT: 420M » TIME: 1.5–2.5 HOURS » START/FINISH: CAR PARK, HARLAW RESERVOIR » START GRID REF: NT 182655 » SATNAV: EH14 7AS » OS MAP: LANDRANGER 66
CONTACT: PENTLAND HILLS REGIONAL PARK TEL: 0131 529 2401 » CAFÉ: NONE ON ROUTE

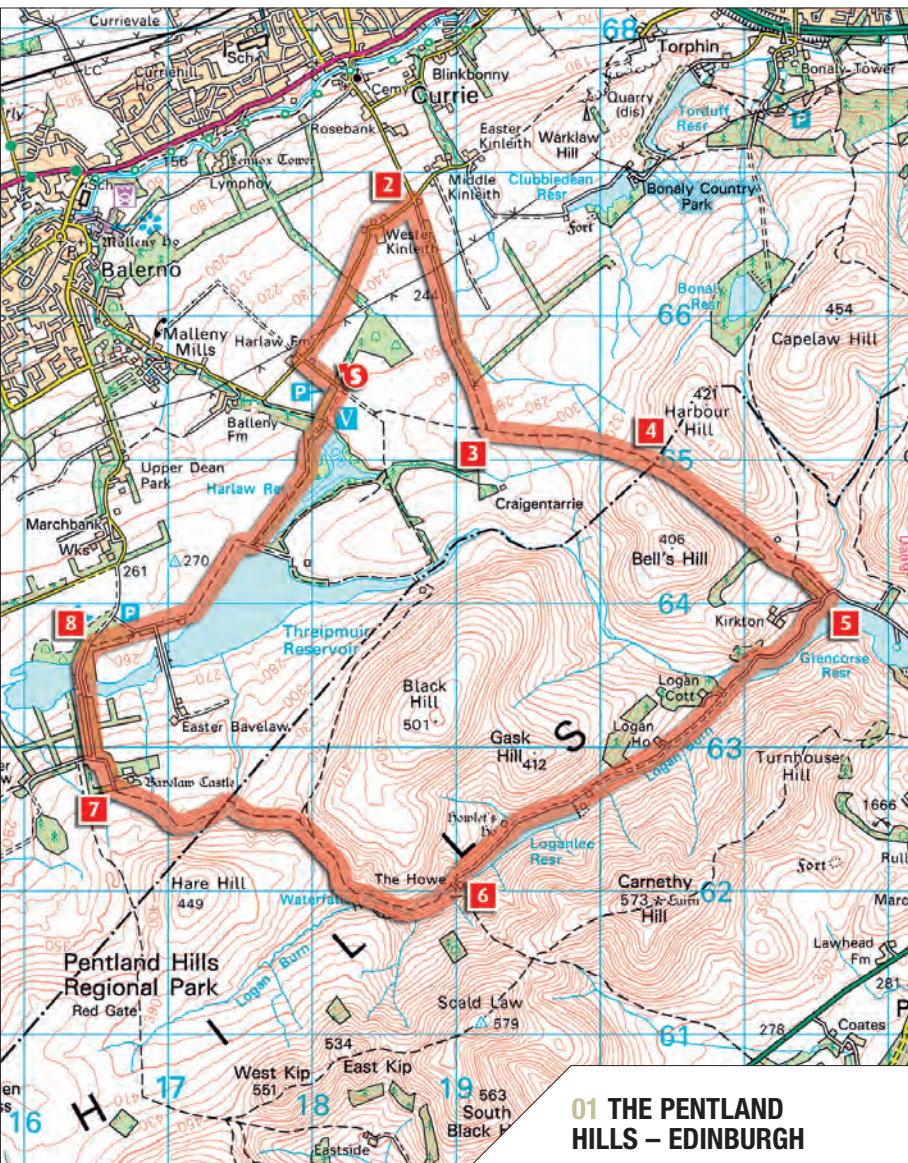
Directions – The Pentland Hills – Edinburgh



- 5** Take the road towards Harlaw Farm and turn **R** towards Wester Kinleith.
- 2** After the farm at Wester Kinleith, turn **R** onto the rocky track heading uphill. There is some rooty singletrack through the trees to the left of the main track, but the ground is very soft. It's best avoided unless very dry or frozen.
- 3** At the junction go through the gate and follow the gravel track as it climbs uphill. There are several wooden water bars on this section. Please don't make the path any wider by riding around the sides of these – use a well-timed bunnyhop instead!
- 4** At the top of Maidens Cleugh go through the gate, and then drop your saddle for the fantastic descent to Glencorse. It is rutted at the top, has some big tricky drainage channels in the fast middle section and becomes rocky just before the finish.
- 5** Turn **R** onto the single lane tarmac road at Glencorse Reservoir. Follow this along the Logan Burn to The Howe at the western end of Loganlea Reservoir.
- 6** The track branches in several directions at The Howe. Take the riverside track to Green Cleugh, signposted *Balerno*. This is grassy, and boggy in places at first, but becomes good gravel singletrack in the narrow valley between Black Hill and Hare Hill.
- 7** At Bavelaw Castle go through the gate and join the tarmac road. The road makes a 90° **L** turn followed soon after by a 90° **R** turn. On the outside of the right turn a fantastic narrow singletrack winds down the left side of the road, between the trees and the drainage ditch. Rejoin the tarmac and cross the reservoir at Redford Bridge.
- 8** Pick up the singletrack through Redford Wood, and follow the track beside Threipmuir and Harlaw Reservoirs back to the start. There is some rooty singletrack right on the waters edge, but again this is susceptible to damage in all but the driest conditions.

Making a day of it

The Pentland Hills are criss-crossed with miles of trails that can be combined to make for epic days out. This route could be extended to include Allermuir Hill and Phantom's Cleugh to the north east or the Kipps, North Esk Reservoir and the Bore Stane to the south west. Be prepared to alter your route depending on the conditions on the ground and if in doubt, phone the Ranger Service for advice.



01 THE PENTLAND HILLS – EDINBURGH

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