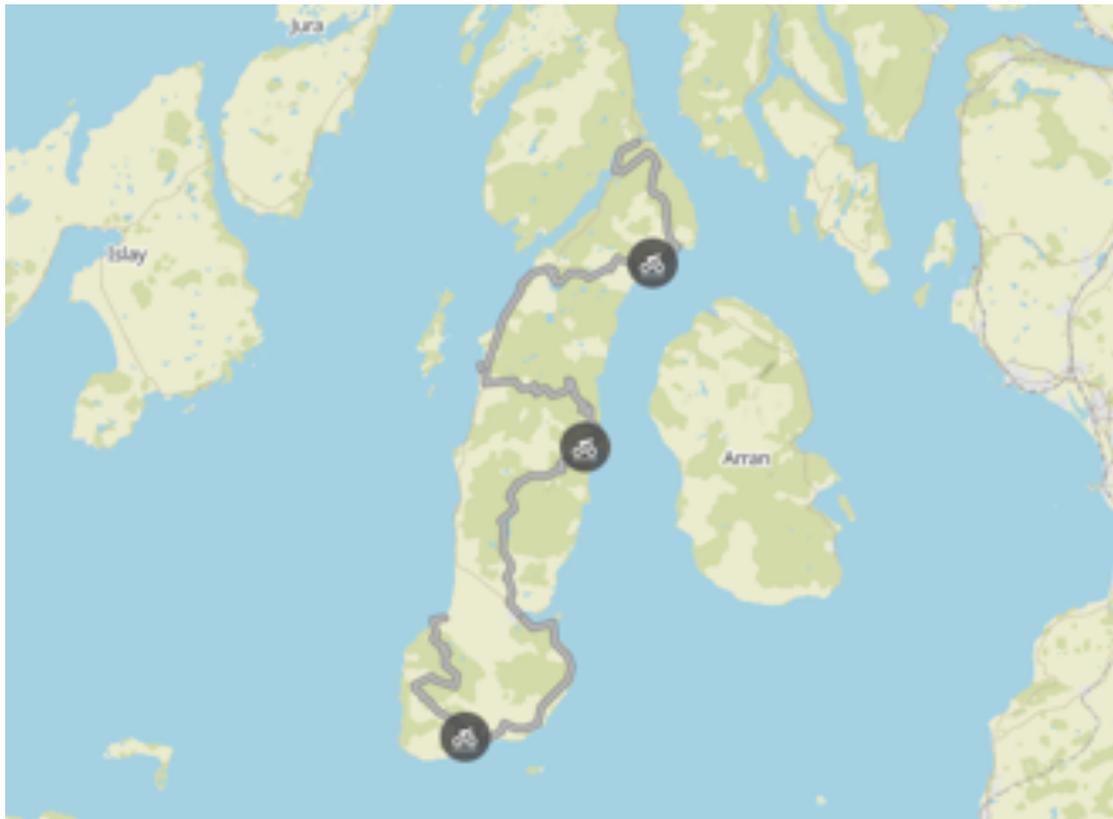


The Kintyre Gravel Bike Way

Disclaimer: we safely followed the route given here but that does not guarantee it is safe for you or a Right of Way. Please use your own common sense and cycle safely.

The Kintyre Way was ahead of its time. Established in 2006, it's a good 100 mile walking route, usually split over seven days. However, since its inception a new breed of outdoor transport has appeared, the gravel bike. It's a hybrid of road and mountain bikes, ideally suited to mixed terrain, and utterly perfect for the Kintyre Way. Almost.



A few sections of the walking route are just too narrow, too steep, or too fragile to be explored on bicycles. What if alternatives could be found to these? What if gravel bike riders could exploit the new rough roads installed for forest harvesting and wind-farm construction? What if there could be a rideable, top to bottom, Kintyre Gravel Bike Way? We decided that would be a good thing, and set out to create it.

Mapping on { [HYPERLINK "https://www.komoot.com/collection/1194773/-kintyre-gravel-bike-way"](https://www.komoot.com/collection/1194773/-kintyre-gravel-bike-way) } and on { [HYPERLINK "https://ridewithgps.com/trips/68273329"](https://ridewithgps.com/trips/68273329) }.

The Kintyre Gravel Way is the perfect introduction to multi-day off-road touring, offering a level of safety that's hard to find in some parts of the Scottish Highlands. It explores seriously wild country running the spine of Kintyre, yet descends to towns and villages every night so cyclists can camp or seek out

accommodation; if this three-day, zig-zag route gets too much it's easy to switch to road riding; there's a mobile phone signal almost all the way. Then there are the views.



Kintyre is a rugged, rounded, peninsula, arguably less dramatic than many parts of the west coast. Yet its location means it's a perfect viewing platform for the mountains of Jura to the west and Arran to the East.

We're not trying to detract from the original Kintyre Way. Those blue post waymarks are very welcome when you see them through a haze of pelting rain. They confirm you're on the right track. Yet we think we've improved on it for cyclists.

Using Sean McFarlane's knowledge of racing the Kintyre Way on a bike (he came second) and on foot (Kintyre Way Ultra) plus that of James McNair who runs the { [HYPERLINK "https://www.facebook.com/krbikeproject/"](https://www.facebook.com/krbikeproject/) } in Campbeltown, we've stayed faithful to the experience of the route while allowing the pedals to keep turning - provided you have a good set of lungs and legs.

We've plotted the route we took, having first removed the sections where we became (ahem) temporarily dislocated. We made a video of the ride which you can { [HYPERLINK "https://youtu.be/xon0zTxQOu8"](https://youtu.be/xon0zTxQOu8) }.

Once down the south end, the obvious return route is to follow The Caledonia Way, a cycling specific road route that has been adopted by Sustrans to form part of Route 78 to Inverness. We made a video about that too.



The tourism associations *Explore Kintyre and Gigha* and { *HYPERLINK* "<https://www.wildaboutargyll.co.uk/destinations/kintyre-and-gigha/>" } arranged complimentary accommodation and some meals, for which we're grateful. That said, the businesses listed here are those we feel are worth knowing about, regardless of whether they gave us free stuff.

Tarbert: The Gather (<https://thegather.uk>) is a relatively new business where we were allowed to leave a vehicle for the duration of our ride. As well as coffee and food, they have 'glamping' pods. While they can't take touring tents, cyclists who camp on the wild land behind their business are allowed to use their showers and facilities.



Tayinloan: the obvious first night for accommodation. Ferry Farm B&B is well placed and linked to Big Jessie's Cafe, where we stopped for coffee and cake. However, you might have to travel a short distance up or down the coast to find somewhere, in which case we'd recommend The House at Glenbarr. There's a cafe alongside, plus a local store and strangely a garden centre. As there's nowhere to eat evening meals locally, the owner kindly left a plate of food for us which we devoured in one of the big greenhouses.
<https://www.glenbarrstores.com/the-houseglenbarr>



Carradale: two great coffee stops here. Dottie's Cafe (<https://www.dottiescafe.com>) is small and friendly with a bike repair business alongside (<http://www.carradalebikesandbuggies.co.uk>)

Torrisdale Castle's Bienn a Tuirc cafe is a little pricier but fabulous quality. They make their own gin and their website is a useful source of local knowledge. (<https://www.torrisdalecastle.com>)



Campbletown: We stayed in Campbeltown Backpackers (<https://campbeltownbackpackers.co.uk>), which opened for us while it was still working out how it would deal with visitors during a pandemic.



We had a great dinner at Craigard House Hotel (<https://www.craigard-house.co.uk>) and a frankly superb dinner at Ardshiel Hotel which is walking distance from the hostel (<https://ardshiel.co.uk>) and has a multi-award winning whisky bar.



Southend: The Muneroy Tearoom (<https://muneroy.co.uk>) at the southern tip of Kintyre is something of a legend thanks to chef Francis' jaw-droppingly amazing cakes which are baked fresh every day. It was take-away only on our visit but worth it.



Machrihanish: we only had a snack here but the Old Clubhouse Pub (<https://machrihanishdunes.com/dine/the-old-clubhouse-pub>) was good. Dunlossit House B&B (<https://www.dunlossithouse.com>) was excellent with a room overlooking the first tee of the world-famous golf course, and breakfast overlooking the start of the 6km long beach.



On our return ride up the Caledonia Way, Sustrans 78, we felt the best location for first night accommodation would be around Tarbet. We chose to cycle the Kilmory Loop, whereas some people prefer to head directly north towards Lochgilphead.

Kilmory: accommodation options are limited. We managed to get a one night deal in a mobile home (usually 2-night minimum) at Port Ban Holiday Park (<https://www.portban.com>) although they seemed to expect us to travel with all our own bedding. Book well in advance if you want to stay at the Kilberry Inn (<https://www.kilberryinn.com>) a seafood restaurant with rooms.

Inverneil: More modest but equally popular accommodation can be found in Argyll Backpackers' Hostel (<https://www.argyllbackpackers.com>) where the Kilmory Loop returns to the main road. Run by Kate and Pam, we called in for a coffee and chat, and were impressed by their covid protection measures.

Bridgend: A short detour from route 78, but one of the nicest places we stayed, was King's Reach Vegan B&B (<https://kingsreachbedandbreakfast.co.uk>). Sean and Sara were keen to learn how to be more cycle friendly, so might soon offer kit washing, track pump and bike washing facilities. The Horseshoe Inn (<https://horseshoeinn.co.uk>) is walking distance away for a good meal or alternative accommodation.