

Great Glen Way - Notes on multi-use access

As its name implies, this 79 mile long distance off-road route runs through Scotland's Great Glen, linking Fort William and Inverness along canal towpaths, forest roads and paths. Although at first glance the Great Glen Way website and logo suggest the route is for walkers, cyclists and canoeists, nearly all the route is suitable for multi-use. Many of the previous kissing gates and footbridges have been removed or replaced with more accessible alternatives. All gates, gaps and bridges are minimum 1.2 m wide unless noted below.

These notes have been produced to identify remaining restrictions on use as at March 2018, and are intended to supplement detailed route guides and other information available from <https://www.highland.gov.uk/ggw/>. Further information on riding the Great Glen Way can be downloaded from https://www.highland.gov.uk/greatglenway/downloads/download/5/ggw_on_horseback

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 <http://www.outdooraccess-scotland.scot/> offers guidance on what this means on the ground. 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 formally surfaced paths and sections through or around towns and villages, riders need to be particularly careful to respect other users and either clear dung off the path or move their horse off the path to dung.

All route users are responsible for deciding for themselves which, if any, sections of the Great Glen Way are suitable for their intended use, taking account of their own abilities, skills, fitness and experience, as well as season, weather conditions etc. Event organisers, groups or commercial operators considering using the Great Glen Way are urged to contact the route managers (see route website for details).

Fort William to Banavie

The Soldiers' Bridge over the River Lochy between Inverlochy and Lochyside is narrow and insufficiently robust to support a horse, with steps at the northern end impassable with horse (ramp closed at time of survey). The waymarked cycle route via Victoria Bridge provides an alternative.

Banavie to Laggan Locks

This section of the route is fully multi-use accessible.

Laggan Locks to Oich Bridge

Horses are not allowed over the lock gates at Laggan Locks at the northern end of Loch Lochy. Continue on the waymarked cycle route on the north side of the canal via Balma Glaster to North Laggan. The recommended route for horse riders continues on the north side of the glen through North Laggan Plantation and Invergarry, or you can cross Laggan Swing Bridge to rejoin the route along the old military road on the south side of Loch Oich. The two routes merge at Oich Bridge.

There are three locked gates across the southern route, two at the western end, and one onto the A82 on the east side of Oich Bridge. The central section of each gate opens to create a gap easily wide enough for a horse, but requires stepping over the metal bars in the centre of the gate. Consequently this section is impassable with a mobility buggy.



Oich Bridge to Fort Augustus

From Oich Bridge, riders should follow the path on the west side of the canal to avoid the lock gates at Cullochey Lock which are impassable with a horse. The rest of the towpath to Fort Augustus is multi-use accessible.

Fort Augustus to Drumnadrochit via Invermoriston

The footbridge over Allt a Bhrochain below the Inch Hotel is only 90 cm wide, which is a very tight squeeze with a horse. However, there is a shallow ford immediately to the east.

South of Lewiston, the signed route follows a track through Clunebeg Wood. The main gate across the track at OSGR NH510281 is locked, and the side gate signed for horses is maximum 1m wide – watch out for the protruding catch. There is a further locked gate across the track with adjacent kissing gate and 1.1m wide bridlegate (again with protruding catch) further north along this track at OSGR NH586202.



Drumnadrochit to Leachkin

Fully multi-use accessible, but take particular care along the very busy A82 through Drumnadrochit. There is a narrow 90 cm wide gate at the northern end of narrow path through the wood past Caiplich Farm at OSGR NH548368.

Leachkin to Inverness

The underpass at OSGR649441 has a 110 cm gap between barriers mid-way under road.



Alternatively follow the path up the bank and cross carefully over the road at the end of the safety barriers.

A steep flight of steps with a 90 degree bend leads up onto the canal towpath at OSGR NH652443. Some cyclists scrabble up the bank alongside, but an alternative ramp has recently been opened up to the west of the steps.



Vyv Wood Gee - updated March 2018
SNH – minor updates February 2019