



## Capitalising on the ecotourism potential of Loch Lomond and The Trossachs National Park and the Clyde Sea Lochs

# Ecotourism & Your Business

The beauty and sheer diversity of landscapes are at the heart of the tourist appeal of Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park and the Clyde Sea Lochs. The purpose of these factsheets is to highlight the importance of these landscapes to the wider national park area and to help tourism businesses capitalise more on these outstanding resources and the ecotourism potential on their doorstep.

The information within these factsheets introduces the concept of ecotourism and its importance to regional and local economies. Also featured is information on what it means to be based in and around Scotland's first National Park and practical steps to take to take advantage of this unique opportunity. Finally, these factsheets provide case studies of ecotourism accommodation and activities to help businesses better understand the products and experiences that attracts ecotourists. All this information is aimed at encouraging businesses to enhance their customer's experience in the area and connect with the natural environment and the inspiring and stunning landscapes in this region.

## Contents



- 2: Ecotourism & your Business
- 3: What is Ecotourism
- 3: Responsible travel - does ecotourism and being 'green' pay?
- 4: Market Share
- 5: Who is your market?
- 5: Insights and trends 2017 relating to nature based tourism
- 6: The Importance of Scotland's Landscapes
- 7: What does it mean to be located in a National Park?
- 7: What is special about the National Park & the Clyde Sea Lochs?
- 8: Summary List of Special Qualities of the National Park
- 8: How can these qualities benefit your business?
- 9: Top ten ways to capitalise on the special qualities on your doorstep
- 10: Your responsibilities to your clients and the National Park
- 11: Community involvement
- 12: Collaboration and Cooperation
- 13: Certification and Awards relating to Ecotourism
- 14-17: Ecotourism Activities
- 18-21: Ecotourism Accommodation



# What is Ecotourism?

Ecotourism has many definitions, but at its core can be summarised as sustainable nature-based tourism. Ecotourism is based around uniting conservation, communities and sustainable travel. The International Ecotourism Society (TIES) state that this means that those who implement, participate in and market ecotourism activities should adopt the following ecotourism principles where possible:

- *Minimize physical, social, behavioural, and psychological impacts.*
- *Build environmental and cultural awareness and respect.*
- *Provide positive experiences for both visitors and hosts.*
- *Provide direct financial benefits for conservation.*
- *Generate financial benefits for both local people and private industry.*
- *Deliver memorable interpretative experiences to visitors that help raise sensitivity to host countries' political, environmental, and social climates.*
- *Design, construct and operate low-impact facilities.*
- *Recognize the rights and spiritual beliefs of the Indigenous People in your community and work in partnership with them to create empowerment.*

Ecotourism is also a form of sustainable tourism, which means that it should meet the needs of the present without compromising the needs of future generations.



## Responsible travel - does ecotourism and being 'green' pay?

- 43% of people said they would consider the ethical or environmental footprint of their main holiday in 2014;
- 66% of consumers world-wide say they would rather buy products where the companies gave back to society (Nielsen Wire Survey, 2012) with 46% saying they would pay extra for Corporate Social Responsibility (e.g. businesses giving back to communities);
- When asked if they were willing to pay extra for hotels that were environmentally friendly, 12.5% said they would pay US\$10 - 25 more, while 30% said they would pay US\$ 1 -5 extra;
- 72% or more of US tourists turn off lights and air conditioning when not in the room, adhere to reuse linen/towel programmes and used hotel recycling facilities;
- In 2013 the interest in 'green' travel was the highest in 10 years;
- Marketing and public relations people are aware of this and feel 'green' credentials have moved to the front of the public's mind;
- Hotels are joining in with 85% of USA hotels saying they have 'green' initiatives.

Holiday types are also changing. In 2012, 35% of adults said they would like to undertake a holiday that had some aspect of volunteering and hence supporting local organisations and/or communities (CREST <sup>1</sup>).

### **Businesses can benefit from being green as well through the following actions:**

- Reducing costs and making practices more efficient saves money;
- Being aware of emerging legal requirements and regulations to help you manage risks;
- Engaging your staff with the concept of CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility) as it has been shown to be a key factor in employee satisfaction;
- Offering a variety of experiences to customers will enhance your product against the competition;
- Being aware of and engaging with consumer trends will benefit your business;
- By protecting the environment you will protect your business as well.



## Market Share

The market share of nature based tourism is increasing. Consider the following:

- The International Ecotourism Society states nature-based tourism could grow to 25% of the global travel market.
- Natural heritage was cited as influencing the decision to come to Scotland by 49% of visitors <sup>3</sup> and once here 17% of visitors (2,069,000 people) took a walk or a hike of over one hour.
- 7% of those visitors (approx. 895,000) took part in a wildlife related activity.
- When you consider spend, wildlife watching tourists spend on average £35.76 per person on a day trip compared to £10 - £18 for other rural tourists and £73.00 per person per night compared to £62.81 for a general traveller. Expenses included accommodation and food, but also guided tours, equipment and entrance fees.

Ecotourism also shares a relationship with nature-based adventure activities. Adventure tourism, as defined by the Adventure Travel Trade Association, <sup>4</sup> should have two of the following three attributes: take place in the natural environment, involve immersion in local cultures and participants should engage in physical activity. It can be divided into two types:

- *'Soft' adventure tourism which includes a mixture of ecotourism activities, e.g. bird watching, walking tours, 'meet the locals', educational programmes accounts*
- *'Hard' adventure tourism including all the adrenal rush sports (e.g. climbing, downhill mountain biking, caving) that take people 'out with their comfort zone'*

In 2012 41.9% of European and North American travellers classified themselves as adventure tourists <sup>5</sup> and currently one in four trips include an adventure tourism activity. The economic spend for soft adventure tourists grew 24% between 2009 and 2012, being an average of \$891 US for an average trip, while spend from hard adventure tourists rose by 28%, with an average spend of \$924 on average. Between 2010 and 2013 its global income rose 19% to \$263 bn. If the trend continues, by 2050, 50% of trips will include some form of adventure tourism <sup>6</sup>.





# Who is your market?

Traditionally, the majority of visitors interested in ecotourism and nature often fit into the following profile:

- **Between 21-54 years old**
- **50% female and 50% male**
- **University graduates**
- **Willing to spend more than general tourists**

However, when you consider adventure tourism as well, you appeal to all generations from ages 8 - 80! Ecotourism today can be targeted at anyone who is interested in nature or adventure. These individuals often have a healthy desire for fitness and exercise as well. They may be looking for an activity to pass a few hours, a day, a week or more. In addition, there is a growing market for family friendly activities and accommodation that exist in the same location where they can enjoy these activities and come together in the evening to discuss their day.

Your location in the National Park and the Clyde Sea Lochs gives you an edge in promoting ecotourism. There were 121,651 views of the Trip Advisor page for the NP in May 2016, it was the top ranked site for Scotland (Justin Reid, Trip Advisor, March 2017). Similarly the West Highland Way was ranked as the top walking route. The Activities fact sheet and Appendix A should give you some ideas as to what ecotourism activities you can suggest or provide for your visitors.

Visit Scotland produces a guide to insights and trends for the upcoming year. Below are their suggestions for 2017.



## Insights and trends 2017 relating to nature based tourism

### General interest in wild camping

Potential to restyle existing parks so they offer more natural areas while retaining access to the facilities, and to rebrand existing holiday parks for security and some facilities, but still have the feel of being 'wild'.

### Activities

consider using areas, disused equipment, facilities for adventure activities. Go Ape excellent example of making a forest into an adventure ground, shipping containers become accommodation and shelter, pallets and tyres becoming bike tracks. Non-tourism related industries can provide an insight into their business and industrial heritage and offer opportunities and pass on life skills (e.g. navigation, farming, forestry. And don't forget the power of story-telling, folklore, heritage and history recreating the past and informing the future.

### Technology

the value of free wifi is not to be underestimated as a source of customer loyalty.

### Tourist Trails

routes like the Clyde Sea Lochs Trail and the Trossachs Trail can encourage travelers to your area, but you also need to encourage them to stop and not just use it as a race track to whizz past the views. Think about the Scotland brand, but make it local. Hence you need attractive and accessible stopping places that offer heritage and / or amenities they desire which will be food and comfort stops, and never underestimate the value of the opportunity to purchase good quality local products and produce.

### Health and well-being

not just retreats, spas and yoga, but also time spent in silence in the natural environment in quiet landscapes during the day or night are valued. Dark skies is a growing market, opportunities to view the stars undimmed by urban lights is a growing market. A 'peace pod' at the bottom of your garden could well be a selling point.

### Green credentials

highlight your green credentials and ensure your clients understand what they mean (and will hopefully recognise them in future. Link with other green businesses to promote your ethical products and exercise social responsibility in your purchasing, management and operation of your enterprise.



# The Importance of Scotland's Landscapes

In a recent report, Visit Scotland outlined their thoughts on how the world views Scotland.

([www.visitscotland.org/pdf/How-the-World-Views-Scotland-Oct16.pdf](http://www.visitscotland.org/pdf/How-the-World-Views-Scotland-Oct16.pdf))

It highlights the fact that 'A visit to Scotland is perceived as being a powerfully enriching personal experience' and states that tourists expect to see dramatic landscapes, distinctive culture and enjoy the warmth of the welcome by Scottish people. Visitors want to be 'awed by the majesty, openness and sheer scale of Scotland's landscape; they think in terms of breath-taking and dramatic rather than picturesque'. The emotional benefits for visitors in experience these landscapes include a sense of awe and spirit. The Visit Scotland report also asserts that emotional benefits go beyond a sense of awe and visitors are actively looking to connect with and escape through these landscapes. 'The promise of an emotional experience is critical for today's tourist'. Important for establishing this connection with landscapes and people is marketing area specific activities, events and festivals that will raise awareness of the area's special qualities and encourage people to visit now and stay longer.

## What does it mean to be located in a National Park?

Being located within or near a national park has many advantages for communities and tourism businesses. There are 15 national parks in the UK, two of which are located in Scotland. These areas are protected by the government because of their beautiful countryside and important habitats, wildlife and cultural heritage. Communities live and work in these national parks and their farms, villages and towns are protected along with the landscape and wildlife. National parks welcome visitors and also provide opportunities for everyone to experience, enjoy, and learn about their special qualities (**National Parks UK, 2017**).

Each national park is looked after by an organisation called a national park authority, which includes members, staff and volunteers. National park authorities have to protect the countryside while letting people enjoy it, and also make sure that local communities can make a living. Protecting and promoting these areas helps to preserve their special qualities

and encourage more people to visit the area and support local communities.

### **Loch Lomond and The Trossachs National Park (NPA, 2017)**

The National Park encompasses around 720 sq miles (1,865 sq km) of some of the finest scenery in Scotland and is split into four distinct areas, which are discussed further below. The national park is a place of contrasts, from rolling lowland landscapes in the south to high mountains in the north, and has many lochs and rivers, forests and woodlands. It is also a living, working landscape which has been influenced by people for generations and is visited and enjoyed by many for its recreational value. The Loch Lomond & The Trossachs National Park became fully operational on 19 July 2002 and was officially opened by Princess Anne on 24 July 2002.

### **KEY FACTS**

- The Park is 1,865 sq km (720 sq miles) and has a boundary length of 350km (220miles).
- 50% of Scotland's population lives within an hour's drive of the National Park.
- There are 21 Munros (mountains above 3,000ft) in the Park and the highest is Ben More at 1,174m.
- There are 20 Corbetts (mountains between 2,500ft and 3,000ft).
- There are 22 larger lochs, with numerous smaller lochs and lochans, and about 50 rivers and large burns.
- 15,168 people live in the National Park (2011 census).
- There are two Forest Parks - Queen Elizabeth in the Trossachs and Argyll in Cowal.
- The National Park contains the UK's largest National Nature Reserve - The Great Trossachs Forest.
- Ben Lomond National Memorial Park is Scotland's national memorial to those who have died in conflict.



## Loch Lomond and The Trossachs National Park and Clyde Sea Lochs



### What is special about the National Park & the Clyde Sea Lochs?



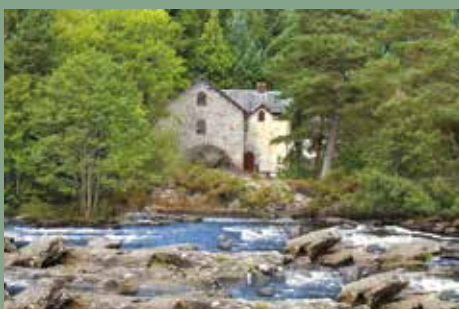
SNH carried out a study on assessing the special qualities of the national park<sup>9</sup>. The results showed that the national park was diverse and defined by four landscape areas (see map above): Argyll Forest, Loch Lomond,

Breadalbane and the Trossachs. The Clyde Sea Lochs add to this diversity by providing a fifth area of interest. The results of the study identified the main features of each area and without ranking them acknowledged that the combination of features gave the areas their scenic beauty.

For more details about how the research was undertaken and the results see:

[www.snh.gov.uk/protecting-scotlands-nature/protected-areas/national-designations/nsa/special-qualities/](http://www.snh.gov.uk/protecting-scotlands-nature/protected-areas/national-designations/nsa/special-qualities/)

# Summary List of Special Qualities of the National Park



## General Qualities

- A world-renowned landscape famed for its rural beauty
- Wild and rugged highlands contrasting with pastoral lowlands
- Water in its many forms
- The rich variety of woodlands
- Settlements nestled within a vast natural backdrop
- Famous through-routes
- Tranquillity
- The easily accessible landscape splendour

## Arygll Forest

- A remote area of high hills and deep glens
- A land of forests and trees
- Arrochar's mountainous and distinctive peaks
- The variety of glens
- The dramatic pass of Rest and Be Thankful
- The seaside architecture of Kilmun and Blairmore

## Loch Lomond

- Immensity of loch and landscape
- Two lochs in one
- A multitude of beautiful islands
- Distinctive mountain groups
- Ben Lomond, widely known, popularly frequented
- Banks of broadleaved woodland
- Peaceful side glens

(reproduced from Scottish Natural Heritage and Loch Lomond and The Trossachs National Park Authority (2010) 9.

## Breadalbane

- Steep mountains and long glens
- Crossroads within remote mountain ranges
- A landscape of distinctive glens and straths
- The narrow Strathyre and Loch Lubnaig ribbon
- Beautiful Balquhiddy
- Wide and straight loch Earn
- The rocky pass of Glen Ogle
- Killin and the Falls of Dochart
- Expansive Glen Dochart
- Wide Strath Fillan
- Sinuous Glen Falloch

## The Trossachs

- A traditional 'Gateway to the Highlands'
- A harmonious concentration of lochs, woods and hills
- Rugged Ben Venue, the centrepiece of the Trossachs
- A landscape of beautiful lochs
- The romance of the Trossachs
- The resort of Aberfoyle and the Duke's Pass
- The curious wooded hillocks of Aberfoyle
- The gateway town of Callander
- The tranquil Lake of Menteith

## Clyde Sea Lochs

- Seals, basking sharks, wading and seabirds seen from the coastal trail
- A diverse and beautiful coastline to explore
- The gateway to historic Dumbarton and the Clyde
- The architecture and history of Helensburgh and Dunoon
- Stunning Arrochar Alps & the Cobbler
- Glacial fjord of Loch Long

## How can these qualities benefit your business?

The wider national park area has world-wide recognition for its stunning landscapes as well as being a route to the west and north. Information about accommodation, services and facilities is the key to encouraging tourists to stop. On route facilities such as manned visitor centres or notice boards are excellent, but web sites provide pre-trip material and mobile technology gives instant up to date information (when a signal is available).

Review sites such as Trip Advisor evaluate businesses on a daily basis, hence are not to be ignored. They provide reviews of

activities, attractions and facilities directed at tourists, but also of other local services such as cafes, shops and garages. Some also provide information on sites of interest, walking routes and view-points as well the more traditional historic sites. The easier it is for tourists to access activities and the services, the more likely they are to recommend / return to your area.



# Top ten ways to capitalise on the special qualities on your doorstep



**1.** Stories and story-telling are a traditional part of our heritage - learn as much as you can about the natural and ancient history of your area. Highlight local events (current and historical) on your notice board, be it the return of ospreys in the spring, the sighting of a basking shark in coastal waters or the role Dumbarton played in naval history.

**2.** Know your area - learn about the best sites to view wildlife or stroll through meadows of wildflowers. Where is the best place to see seals or where might I see an eagle? Be familiar with web sites that can aid you, such as Friends of Loch Lomond and the Trossachs ([www.lochlomondtrossachs.org.uk/](http://www.lochlomondtrossachs.org.uk/)), Wild-Scotland ([www.wild-scotland.org.uk/](http://www.wild-scotland.org.uk/)), RSPB ([www2.rspb.org.uk/about-the-rspb/at-home-and-abroad/scotland/](http://www2.rspb.org.uk/about-the-rspb/at-home-and-abroad/scotland/)) and the BSBI ([www.bsbi.org/](http://www.bsbi.org/)). Run contests on who can spot the first wildflower of spring or the largest fungi in the autumn. Offer pond dipping on a Sunday morning, or star gazing on clear winter nights. Learn about nature and pass it on, you'll have a captive audience. However, be aware of health and safety, your responsibilities towards wildlife (see Codes of Conduct) and the rights of other landowners and users (e.g. shooting and stalking dates).

**3.** Encourage your guests to try new experiences. There are opportunities for people of all fitness levels. Know who and where your local providers are, the fitness level suggested for their activities, cost, transport to and from and any additional gear guests might require. You may have a collection of wellington boots and waterproof gear on offer, it presents opportunities when the weather may suggest otherwise. If you have the skills and facilities, consider offering activities as a means of diversifying your business. It might be instructing a traditional craft session or offering a guided coastal

walk. Many businesses start out as a passion. You may not be an expert, but you probably know more about your area than your guests, if they are truly knowledgeable learn from them. Learning is a life-long experience, enjoy it.

**4.** Invite your visitors to breathe the air, look at the stars, smell the flowers and feel the breeze. Take time to be in the moment and enjoy the space and ambience the park brings. Encourage them to walk a section of the local hiking trails (e.g. Conic Hill, West Highland Way, Three Lochs Way, Ben Ledi, Rob Roy Way) or point out the best places to see wildlife or stunning waterfalls.

**5.** Emotions are an important part of being and holidays are an opportunity to explore them. For some visitors it might be enjoying solitude, for others the opportunity to engage in conversation about their heritage. Some may just want to feel the ambience of the Park and the freedom the space brings. Think about how the landscape, culture and history meets these needs and how you can facilitate their enjoyment.

**6.** Promote seasonal events and highlight activities that take place on specific dates. The Luss Highland games are well known, but what about booking a walk in the hills during the CowalFest, experience local culture during the Killin Folk Festival or cheering on the participants throughout the night in the Great Scottish Swim in August. Be aware in advance of what is going on in your area, highlight it in your newsletter or emails.

**7.** Enhance your marketing material with dramatic images in all weathers, highlighting the joys of each season and the potential activities that can be undertaken.

**8.** Health and well-being is a major concern of today's society and the National Park offers fantastic opportunities for walks and cycling for all fitness levels as well as the opportunity to promote specific activities. Yoga in the freshness of an early summer morning or undercover listening to the rain pattering on the roof is a special experience. A peaceful paddle through shallow waters offers exercise as well as the opportunity to get close to nature and enjoy its sounds and scents. Mindfulness is being in the moment, encourage your guests to enjoy each of theirs while in the park.

**9.** Contribute to the organisations that support the activities in the National Park through your actions and when possible funds. Join the visitor giving scheme (Friends of OUR Park) run by Friends of Loch Lomond and the Trossachs and ensure your guests are aware of the activities it supports. Small activities that you carry out can also make a big difference to the appearance of your village or country road such as a litter pick-ups, guerilla gardening or donating time/money to doing up an eyesore. It is your park, join in to make it even better.

**10.** Finally remember - the park is there to conserve yet enjoy. You are fortunate to be a part of it, help your visitors to see its value.

## Your responsibilities to your clients and the National Park

Ecotourism ventures should help to conserve what makes the National Park special by being low impact. Hence the management of your business and the activities undertaken by your clients should respect of the environment and attempt to minimise resource usage and waste. Sustainability will be dealt with in a later Fact Sheet, but there are various codes of conducts, recommendations and legislation to ensure your business does not damage the natural areas that surround you.

### **Codes of Conduct:**

[www.wild-scotland.org.uk/about-us/wild-scotland-best-practice-guidelines/](http://www.wild-scotland.org.uk/about-us/wild-scotland-best-practice-guidelines/)

[www.outdooraccess-scotland.com/Practical-guide/public/Seasonal-advice](http://www.outdooraccess-scotland.com/Practical-guide/public/Seasonal-advice)

[www.scottish-walks.co.uk/code.html](http://www.scottish-walks.co.uk/code.html)

[www.thewildflowersociety.com/wfs\\_new\\_pages/1f\\_code\\_of\\_conduct.htm](http://www.thewildflowersociety.com/wfs_new_pages/1f_code_of_conduct.htm)

### **Seven 'Leave no Trace' Principles:**

[www.lnt.org/learn/seven-principles-overview](http://www.lnt.org/learn/seven-principles-overview)

### **Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (plus updates)**

[www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1981/69/contents](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1981/69/contents)



# Community Involvement



Tourists come to an area, not just to your business and through their activities are likely to come into contact with local people. For tourism to work well, everyone should benefit. If it can meet the needs and demands of the community as well, your guests have a greater chance of a warm welcome. You are already doing some aspect of customer feedback (if not look at [www.visitscotland.org/business\\_support/advice\\_materials/toolkits/visitor\\_survey\\_toolkit.aspx](http://www.visitscotland.org/business_support/advice_materials/toolkits/visitor_survey_toolkit.aspx)), but you could also spend some time finding out how your business is impacting on the community, both good and bad. If there are issues (e.g. lack of parking, late night arrivals, badly behaved guests, competition for facilities or services), chat with your community about them and try to come to a solution. If you are an activities provider offering some outings for your local school or youth group is a positive step or perhaps organising an open day event involving other tourism providers in your area to show the community what you do and how they can become involved.

Community Enterprises are becoming more common in Scotland and some of these directly benefit tourism. These can be pop up for events or more permanent offerings that can provide something to do in wet weather or to extend the season. . Community gardens are also popular, not only as a means of growing food, but also as a place to go for health and well-being ([www.food.list.co.uk/article/58551-growing-our-own-community-gardens-across-scotland/](http://www.food.list.co.uk/article/58551-growing-our-own-community-gardens-across-scotland/)). In Finland there is a 'Fruiticetum' near the shores of Lake Lohja where apples and soft fruits are grown by volunteers. Every year it holds an apple festival to celebrate the diversity of native apples. While in Cuba visitors can take a tour of community run collective organic gardens and learn about horticulture in the tropics.

## Case Study: **Explore Abernethy**

[www.nethybridge.com/explore-abernethy](http://www.nethybridge.com/explore-abernethy)

The Explore Abernethy Project is a community-led initiative to interpret the natural and cultural heritage of the Nethy Bridge area. A network of footpaths, an orientation centre and related interpretation have been created to help visitors and residents find out more about the natural heritage of the area. The project also provides guided walks, leaflets, illustrated talks, events and project work with local schools.

## Case Study: **Aberfeldy Community Cinema**

[www.birkscinema.co.uk](http://www.birkscinema.co.uk)

Its objective is to offer affordable entertainment to residents and visitors in Highland Perthshire. It is owned by the community through The Birks Cinema Trust, which aims to ensure that there is something for everyone in each monthly programme of events. A loyal team of volunteers supplement our dedicated staff in keeping the operation ticking over smoothly and efficiently.

## Case Study: **Pit Stop Diner, Arrochar**

The Pitstop uses fresh produce to make the finest homemade meals and snacks. The Pitstop is owned by Arrochar & Tarbet Community Development Trust. It was purchased in 2004 with support from the Scottish Land Fund, Social Investment, Scotland and Scottish Enterprise Dunbartonshire. Income from the Pitstop is used to support local initiatives and future development of a village hall.



# Collaboration & Cooperation

**Customer experience is the bottom line in tourism. A good customer experience is facilitated by collaboration and cooperation between providers. Being aware of the activities and services on offer in your area and being able to tell your clients is the basis for a good customer experience. Data protection prevents you from sharing guest's details, but by suggesting activities or recommend reliable service providers you will please your visitors as well as other local businesses. Similarly if someone has a bad experience, find out why, it will inform your choice in future and if you pass it back to the trader, alert them to poor performance.**

An important task within collaboration amongst tourism businesses is selling the destination. For example, the Cowal Marketing Group is made up of 60+ tourism related businesses within the local area. They live and work in Cowal and want to make sure as many people as possible know just why Cowal is a great destination to visit. They do this through a website which promotes activities, events, accommodation and restaurants throughout the region.



Case Study: **Three Lochs Way**  
[www.threelochsway.co.uk](http://www.threelochsway.co.uk)

You don't have to be government funded to create a great activity for ecotourists! The Three Lochs Way is a long distance hiking trail that is managed and maintained by the voluntary efforts of members of Helensburgh & District Access Trust. With Loch Lomond, The Gareloch and Loch Long as recurrent scenic backdrops, the Three Lochs Way is a 55km trail that links a necklace of communities strung along the Clyde Sea Lochs fringe of Scotland's first national park.



Case Study: **Kathmandu Environmental Education Project (KEEP)**  
[www.keeppnepal.org](http://www.keeppnepal.org)

KEEP was founded after the death of a climber to highlight the environmental pressure in the trekking areas of Nepal. It recently celebrated its 25th year of operation. Its offices in Kathmandu provide a comfortable area to meet with other trekkers, chat with knowledgeable staff and read volumes of hand written trekking experience evaluations. Basically, trip advisor without the web. The insights are fascinating even inspiring, as well as highlighting the bad if not dangerous practices of some trekking experiences. You may have a visitors book where people comment on your business, why not also have a second one devoted to other experiences and services, so other guests can see what is good and what should be avoided.

One idea for collaboration is to link up with area tour operators to encourage a visit to your organisation or area. For example, Lochs and Glens is a family owned company that provides coach tours around Scotland since 1979. They have partnered and created working relationships with multiple tourism businesses in the wider national park area and often bring their busy coach tours to these areas.

Other ideas for collaboration include sharing transport and pick-ups to ensure your clients can move freely about the area. If you can only offer limited activities, act as a broker and bring in other businesses. It provides your clients with a greater diversity of activities while providing in a small income for you. The other business benefits by having the additional trade as well as having access to a new market without the cost of advertising. A good example of sharing transport was the Ring of Breadalbane Explorer. For three days a week during the summer months of 2012 to 2016, two minibuses have made four complete circuits of a Killin - Kenmore - Acharn - Aberfeldy - Amulree - Crieff - Comrie - St Fillans - Lochearnhead - Killin circular route, travelling in both directions. The Explorer sold more than 10,000 tickets over those 5 years and brought visitors and locals alike to see many of the area's special qualities but unfortunately funding was cut short in 2016 and the project was unable to continue.



Case Study: **Rota Vincentia, Portugal**  
[www.en.rotavincentina.com](http://www.en.rotavincentina.com)

Rota Vincentia literature states that is more than a walking route in Portugal, it is a series of linked trails of varying length, signposted and supported by the 160+ partner companies that make up the organisation. The web site offers maps and a guidebook, tips on how using public and private transportation and luggage and passengers service throughout the area. There are long distance trails, shorter circular routes and short walks to viewpoints all supported by 'where to walk' information. Details of accommodation providers, restaurant and service providers, a trip planner and interactive map are included. They offer a complete holiday service where everything is organised for you as well as access to service providers such as guides, cultural tours, cycle hire and even donkey trekking. The main web site has enticing photographs and videos of the area and acts as a booking service, so it is a one stop shop for visitors.





**Certification shows your guests that you care strongly enough about good practice to meet the standards required by a certifying organisation and awards mean that someone else has noticed what you are doing. However, it is not always possible to meet the requirements (e.g. if you have an older building it can be difficult and expensive to meet the needs of a certifying body), although you can use these as something to aspire to and hence make your business the best it can be. At last count there were over 150 organisations that provide some type of certification relevant to businesses offering nature based activities, some of these are listed at ([www.visitscotland.org/business\\_support/sustainable\\_tourism/green\\_certification\\_schemes.aspx](http://www.visitscotland.org/business_support/sustainable_tourism/green_certification_schemes.aspx)).**

In Scotland, the Green Tourism Business Scheme (GTBS) ([www.green-tourism.com/business/step-by-step-guide-to-joining/](http://www.green-tourism.com/business/step-by-step-guide-to-joining/)) is the most widely used 'green' accreditation scheme for accommodation providers. For a fee it will assess your business, attribute a rating and on an annual inspection (additional cost) suggest how your business can retain or even improve the level of award. Another scheme is the Green Globe ([www.greenglobe.com/green-globe-certification/](http://www.greenglobe.com/green-globe-certification/)) which is international. Adventure tourism providers have codes of conduct and may require certified training as an instructor before offering specific activities. Even if not required, a serious provider will have undergone training in the sport for health and safety and insurance reasons.

There are also various organisations and schemes that might help your business attract certain types of customers, e.g. Friends of Loch Lomond and the Trossachs ([www.lochlomondtrossachs.org.uk/](http://www.lochlomondtrossachs.org.uk/)), Wild Scotland ([www.wild-scotland.org.uk/](http://www.wild-scotland.org.uk/)), Walkers are Welcome ([www.walkersarewelcome.org.uk/membership/](http://www.walkersarewelcome.org.uk/membership/)) or Cyclists Welcome ([www.cyclistswelcome.co.uk/](http://www.cyclistswelcome.co.uk/)). The degree of support varies from listings to links, but all raise your profile. However, it should be noted that some studies have shown that logo recognition amongst the general public is poor, e.g. 4 out of 10 is a good score on what would be considered well known logos, so ensure whatever you join has a well recognised logo and display it prominently so it becomes more widely known.

The Friends of Loch Lomond and the Trossachs visitor giving scheme, Friends of OUR Park, is an innovative and 'win-win' scheme for your business and your visitors. This scheme allows visitors to make small contributions through your business which are then used directly towards local projects that protect and promote the wider national park area.

Nature based tourism offers exciting business opportunities as well as ideas to keep you engaged and moving ahead. Networking with other businesses and organisations in person or via the web will provide you with new ideas to improve how and what you do to ensure your clients have a memorable experience.



# Ecotourism Activities

Ecotourism activities are generally nature-based and often involve an element of adventure. Activities in nature can be as simple as a guided nature walk through woodland to paragliding off Ben Lomond. Health and safety, land ownership and demand are key factors, but within this are endless opportunities. However, nature-based or adventure tourism is not only for the activity providers. If you are an accommodation business, by expanding your remit by offering a few activities or by linking with other providers you can improve your customer service as well as increase your income.

Below is a word cloud of some of the key ecotourism activities. This is followed by some more detailed case studies that highlight a mixture of self-guided ecotourism activities and others provided by a tour operator. In either case, understanding what activities are on offer locally enables you to enhance the overall experience of your customers. In Appendix A, you will find a separate document which highlights many of the ecotourism activities (*e.g. long distance walking trails, mountain bike trails, water activities*) found in the national park and surrounding areas.







### BLISS Art Trail, LETi

(Loch Earn Tourism Partnership)

[www.robroycountry.com/blisstrail](http://www.robroycountry.com/blisstrail)

**Activity Type:** Art Trail, driving and walking

**Location:** Balquhiddar to St Fillans

**Overview:** The BLISS trail was established to celebrate the year of Innovation, Architecture and Design 2016. It includes art installations from well-known sculptures, as well as local pieces of work, ornamental features of various kinds and food and drink stops. Information about the trail is available online and at the Loch Earn Tourist Information Centre. The aim of the tour was to 'Smile/Stop/Spend time and Money' in the area. The target audience was anyone who was passing through as well as encouraging residents to walk, cycle and drive through the region. The trail was established with a minimal budget using ingenuity to deal with issues such as the cost of insuring the sculptures (located all the valuable pieces on private land, so their public indemnity insurance covered them). Additional items were purchased through grants and two of the items on the trail are part of the Scottish Scenic Routes Project.

**Why is it special?** The trail was set up on a shoestring budget and offers a variety of pieces from a wooden way marker that was carved by a local to sculptures by well-known artists such as Rob Mulholland, Kev Paxton, June McEwan and Lynne Shroder. One of the pieces, Bill the Bull, was painted by school children who each paid a small fee with the proceeds going to charity. The trail has enlivened the area and tourists have stopped to look rather than merely rushing through on their way further north.

**Key message:** Implementing an innovative, yet simple, art trail on a collaborative basis that adds to the area and encourages people to visit; impressive collaboration between small and medium sized businesses.

### Experience Scotland's Wild

[www.scotlandswild.com](http://www.scotlandswild.com)

**Activity Type:** Guided walking and scenic driving tours

**Location:** Loch Lomond National Park and surrounding areas

**Overview:** This independent local tour company uses their knowledge and experience to give their clients an immersive experience in Scotland's landscapes. They offer active sightseeing tours of Loch Lomond and The Trossachs National Park and also Glencoe and the Highlands for around £45 per person.

**Why is it special?** This is a small scale operation where customers won't feel 'like cattle herded into the back of a coach'. They only operate small groups for up to 8 clients at a time and the focus on their tours is getting clients out of the bus and exploring the countryside through walks and immersive experiences.

**Key message:** Active sightseeing tours, encouraging clients to connect with landscapes.

### Hidden Glen Safaris

[www.hiddenglensafaris.co.uk](http://www.hiddenglensafaris.co.uk)

**Activity Type:** Scenic and Wildlife Viewing Landrover safaris

**Location:** Trossachs and surrounding areas

**Overview:** Land Rover tours in the historic Balquhiddar glen area showcasing the fabulous wildlife and bringing alive the rich local history and of course the Rob Roy legend. The company offers twice daily tours and exclusive full day tours with lunch options in their Landrover Defender. They are small scale with a max of 8 passengers and offer exclusive access through stunning landscapes and extensive wildlife and farming knowledge.

**Why is it special?** Customers are transported through a timeless place as an experienced guide helps them get close to nature. Spy for the elusive red deer and soaring golden eagle. Feel the history beneath your feet in the stamping ground of Rob Roy MacGregor. Learn how farming past and present has shaped this landscape.

**Key message:** Focus on landscapes and wildlife, special access with Landrover.







## CowalFest

[www.cowalfest.org](http://www.cowalfest.org)

**Activity Type:** Walking and Outdoors Festival

**Location:** Cowal

## Trossachs Mobility

[www.trossachsmobility.com](http://www.trossachsmobility.com)

**Activity Type:** Guided walking and scenic driving tours

**Location:** Loch Lomond National Park and surrounding areas

## Laggan Outdoor

[www.lagganoutdoor.co.uk](http://www.lagganoutdoor.co.uk)

**Activity Type:** Accommodation and Outdoor adventure

**Location:** Gatehouse of Fleet, Castle Douglas, Dumfries and Galloway DG7 2ES

**Overview:** Cowalfest offers a 10 day festival during October. This annual Walking and Outdoors Festival is one of the largest and most varied walking festivals in Scotland, with more than 60 walks led by expert and knowledgeable walk leaders. All ages and abilities are catered for and the walks cover interest areas of wildlife, bird watching, drama, photography, art, history, heritage, folklore, tai chi, great gardens, great houses and some great hill walks.

**Why is it special?** CowalFest Argyll 2017 is organised by the Cowal Walking Festival Association - a voluntary body which draws support from the people, communities, organisations and businesses from throughout the Cowal Peninsula. This festival is a unique strategy for focusing on and promoting the areas special qualities.

**Key message:** Community led initiative focussed on promoting areas special qualities.

**Overview:** Funded by the community hydro scheme in Callander, Trossachs Mobility are a non-profit group with the aim of providing all-terrain access for the physically challenged within the Trossachs. The organisation provides the use of all-terrain chairs for anyone with limited mobility. The chairs can be hired out for a couple of hours with a friend or a full days guided tour with a group.

**Why is it special?** Trossachs Mobility is a new and innovative charity that offers opportunities to people who are wheelchair users to get out and about in the outdoors-the spectacular terrain, woodland and hills in the Trossachs.

**Key message:** Access for all to experience special landscapes.

**Overview:** This business began with a £2000 investment to set up an archery range in a cattle shed while the inhabitants were out to grass. It has expanded to become the National winner of the Scottish Thistle Award 2016/2017, offering activities, designer accommodation, a café, a Finnish 'kota' barbeque hut and is opening a wedding venue later this year. It offers nine activities as diverse as Segways, clay pigeon shooting, a 820m zip wire, zorbing/ water balling (like a giant hamster ball) and most recently a human slingshot. The owner has diversified his business by seeing what is available elsewhere, particularly in North America and New Zealand, and modifying it for Scotland. Day activities or packages with overnight stays or longer are available including access to the various activities.

**Why is it special?** The adventurous spirit, 'just do it' attitude and imagination of the owner is without doubt what drives this business forward. His approach appears to be that if it looks interesting, have a go, get trained and offer it. In addition his team is made up of young people from all backgrounds who once accepted onto the team are trained in the activities with the caveat that they stay with him for three years. This ensures continuity of staff, but also by having excellent training enables them to move on with valuable skills to other businesses after the initial period. He also encourages his staff to be fully engaged in the planning and management of the business, acknowledging the value of new outlooks and ideas.

**Outlay and Profit:** The initial outlay was small, but it has increased considerably as new activities are offered. However, it keeps the business to the forefront of adventure tourism.

**Key message:** Imagination, having a go, engaging your staff.







## 7 Stanes Trail, Scottish Borders

[www.scotland.forestry.gov.uk/activities/mountain-biking/7stanes](http://www.scotland.forestry.gov.uk/activities/mountain-biking/7stanes)

**Activity Type:** Mountain biking and walking

**Location:** Various locations throughout the Scottish Borders

**Overview:** The first 7 Stanes trail was developed in 2001 and since then sites have been developed at Glentree, Kirtree, Dalbeattie, Mabie, Ae, Glentree and Newcastleton. Their ratings vary on Trip Advisor, but Glentree is still considered to be the top attraction in the Peebles area. The nearby villages of Innerleithen and Walkerburn have benefited from both the overnight and day visitors to the areas with new businesses opening up to support Glentree and the additional trails at Innerleithen. Internationally the area is known for its 'guerrilla' trails (trails cut into parts of the forest by local mountain bikers) as they are even more challenging. Glentree is further designated as the 'hub' of the sport with the development of The Mountain Biking Centre of Scotland in Peel tower. It brings together organisations, research institutions and businesses involved in mountain biking. Once such organisation, Developing Mountain Biking in Scotland ([www.dmbins.com](http://www.dmbins.com)) supports all aspects of innovation, training and development within the sport. Visit Scotland has produced a leaflet on the sport ([www.visitscotland.org/pdf/TIS%202011%20mountain%20biking.pdf](http://www.visitscotland.org/pdf/TIS%202011%20mountain%20biking.pdf)) which offers excellent advice and information.

**Why is it special?** The Forestry Commission have facilitated this activity by utilising forest roads and developing new trails of various levels to suit beginners to competition riders. It has expanded tourism in the trail areas and in the nearby villages. Trails are free to ride, and services such as bike hire, cafeterias and bike equipment are franchised to local businesses. The Commission derives income from the carparks, as well as good publicity for its role in encouraging tourism in the natural environment.

The sport has taken off dramatically since 2001 and competitions and events have shown Scotland to be among the top locations in the world. Much of the publicity is free via biking magazines, web pages including You Tube, TV and word of mouth, with competition events and festivals such as Tweedlove encouraging further participation. The downside of the sport is the high number of accidents and injuries requiring ambulance attendance and hospitalisation at the expense of the region. However, this is an interesting model of collaboration and cooperation between various organisations and businesses.

**Key message:** Collaboration and cooperation



## Cruise Loch Lomond

[www.cruiselochlomond.co.uk](http://www.cruiselochlomond.co.uk)

**Activity Type:** scenic and themed boat tours

**Location:** Tarbet, Loch Lomond

**Overview:** Cruise Loch Lomond offers their guests the opportunity to experience the serenity of the 'bonnie banks' from the comfort of one of seven vessels in their fleet. The company has been operating cruises from the Western shore of Loch Lomond since 1978. The operation has grown over the years and they now provide a full schedule of cruises from Tarbet, Inversnaid, Rowardennan and Luss. The numerous list of products offer day trippers, holiday makers and walking enthusiasts exciting opportunities to see the Loch and explore the surrounding area at their leisure. Cruise Loch Lomond have set up themed tours that link with walking, cycling and wildlife (e.g. RSPB) and showcase the areas special features.

**Why is it special?** Cruise Loch Lomond are a good example of capitalising on the assets of the local area. Their tours, which link with walks and have an educational element, have enabled them to provide a multi-faceted experience for their customers.

**Key message:** Unusual activities, but ensure that they use best practice





# Ecotourism Accommodation

**Overview:** Accommodation to suit various budgets is an important element in ecotourism. It may require extra facilities (e.g. drying rooms, bike washing and/or repair stations), services (e.g. packed lunches, early or late breakfasts and meals) or activities (e.g. equipment to lend or hire, guided tours, self-guided tour maps, study facilities including microscopes, etc.), but this diversification ensures it is suitable for a variety of tourists. Ecotourism visitors are most often interested in accommodation that is located in, or close to, the natural environment in which they hope to explore. They are also often attracted to accommodation providers which are environmentally friendly and support local communities.

Below is a list of tips for accommodation providers who wish to host more ecotourism visitors. This is followed by a list of case studies which highlight some local, national and international examples of ecotourism and 'green' accommodation.

## Top Tips for hosting visitors interested in ecotourism:

- Understand your clients and attempt to meet their needs
- Communication: including Wifi, bulletin boards with maps, local events and weather updates, suggestions for activities, information about local health centres, hospitals, police, etc.
- Ensure accommodation is clean and in good repair with comfortable communal spaces stocked with relevant books, pamphlets and newspapers
- Be welcoming - a smile, a hot cup of tea and a scone is a good start, but if you are catering for active people think high energy food
- Transportation - can you collect or drop your guests (and their equipment) at transport hubs to enable them not to come by public transport?
- Flexibility - Many of the activities require early or late starts or just take longer than anticipated. Be aware of this and try to accommodate clients' needs
- Network - recommend other providers in your area and share facilities/transport/ideas
- Location - capitalise on the NP, it's special
- Don't forget the 'WOW' factor and your USP

## Your business:

- Location - make the most of what the park has to offer, but do so sustainably
- Staff - your staff are at the 'coal face' ensure they understand and support the ethos of your business
- Cooperate and collaborate - it expands your offering and spreads the benefits (and challenges) around
- You - make time for you and ensure your staff have 'me' time as well, exhausted grumpy people do not make for good tourism





### Main Farm Wigwams

Thornhill, Thornhill, Stirling FK8 3Q

**Owners:** Louise and Martyn Steedman

**www.mainsfarmwigwams.com**

**Trip Advisor Score:** 4.4 (94 reviews)

**Accommodation Type:** Glamping and Camping

### Trossachs Yurts

West Moss-side Organic Farm,

Thornhill, Stirling, FK8 3QJ

**www.trossachsyurts.com**

**Trip Advisor Score:** 5 (23 reviews)

**Accommodation Type:** Glamping

### Iloranta

Rukkoil, Hauho, Finland

**www.iloranta.fi/english**

**Trip Advisor Score:** 4.5 (3 reviews)

**Accommodation Type:** Homestay, farmhouse

**Overview:** Owned by Louise and Martyn Steedman, this is a family friendly business with a caravan/ campsite and fifteen insulated wooden wigwams for four adults (shared facilities) and six luxury wigwams with their own facilities. Their most recent endeavour was to refurbish a Sea King helicopter to become high quality self-catering accommodation for two adults and up to three children. Activities on site include a mountain bike trail catering for beginners and intermediates. The nearby village offers a shop and several pubs and its proximity to Flanders Moss provides excellent walking opportunities.

**Why is it special?** Main Farm was one of the earlier providers of wigwam based accommodation and benefit from a good client base with return visits. However, the new novel Sea King helicopter provides a unique glamping experience at £150 a night for a couple.

**Outlay & Profit?** A basic wigwam rents around £46 per night (additional cost if more than two people) which includes access to wash room and kitchen facilities. Deluxe wigwams with their own facilities come in at £72 / night for two people. The cost of a basic wigwam ranges from just under £6,000 (ex VAT) to up to £16,500 (ex VAT) for a large one with shower room. In addition there are site costs such as foundations, electrics, drainage and plumbing and other facilities such as kitchens and washrooms for non-self-contained units.

**Key messages?** The business model works as shown by a steady increase in bookings over the years and an extended season.

**Overview:** The owner of this organic farm has diversified into offering seminar space, accommodation in the form of three yurts and various courses (19 plus), yoga retreats and therapies as well as the actual farm business of raising organic sheep and cattle. The owner provides guided walks around the farm and the location offers direct access to Flanders Moss.

**Why is it special?** The yurts are fitted with wood burning stoves, carpets and local craft work. Bedding (excluding towels) is included in the price of £100 per yurt (sleeps up to 4 adults plus a child). Homemade bread and meat from the farm can be purchased on site (pre-order) and various activities can be undertaken at an additional price. Further details are available at: [www.canopyandstars.co.uk/britain/scotland/stirling/trossachs-yurts/stuc-a-chroin](http://www.canopyandstars.co.uk/britain/scotland/stirling/trossachs-yurts/stuc-a-chroin)

A Yurt with traditional felt lining and canvas floors ranges from around £2,200 for a 3 m to £12,000 for one of 10 m in diameter. They can be taken down in less than two hours depending on size and overwintered under cover. Maintenance includes oiling the wood structure and water proofing the canvas as needed. They can last 20 years or more with proper care.

**Key messages?** They are a simple way to diversify your offering, assuming you can provide the additional kitchen and washroom facilities

**Overview:** The business began in the late 1930's and specialises in full board family holidays with homey accommodation from single rooms to small family units. Activities include any that can be carried out in, around or on the lake throughout the year (including free access to boats) along with cycling and outdoor games (e.g. tennis, football, children's activities). They also offer health and well-being stays specialising in yoga, aroma therapy, massage and craft work. There is a traditional sauna and a smoke sauna fired up daily for the guests. An unusual offering is an iron-age banquet offering traditional food.

**Why is it special?** The house is a traditional Finnish farmhouse with original features. Its hub is the wood floored dining room where guests dine refectory style on long wooden tables offering the opportunity to mingle with other visitors. Meals are served buffet style with an emphasis on local and organic. The owners spend time getting to know their guests to the extent that potential visitors are asked detailed questions about their group so their holiday can be booked with similar individuals (e.g. families with children of similar ages, couples, pensioners, etc.). This results in regular repeat bookings with often three generations of a family returning for the same week every year. Full board daily rates including meals are from €120 - 145 and €685 - 830 per adult for a week.

**Key messages?** Attention to customers' needs, quality food and a warm welcome.





### Skyewalker Hostel

Old School, Portnalong IV47 8SL

[www.skyewalkerhostel.com](http://www.skyewalkerhostel.com)

**Trip Advisor Score:** 5 (283 reviews)

**Accommodation Type:** Hostel/bunkhouse



### Hunting Hall

Beal, Berwick-upon-Tweed TD15 2TP

[www.huntinghall.co.uk](http://www.huntinghall.co.uk)

**Accommodation Type:** Self-catering cottages



### Oak Tree Inn

Balmaha, Loch Lomond G63 0JQ

[www.theoaktreeinn.co.uk](http://www.theoaktreeinn.co.uk)

**Trip Advisor Score:** Hall of Fame (awarded certificate of excellence for five consecutive years).

**Accommodation Type:** B&B

**Overview:** Located in the prime walking area of the Cuillin and Minginish peninsula this award-winning hostel offers clean and comfortable accommodation for up to 40 people from £17 per night. It has been voted best in Scotland three times since 2012. This converted 1920's school house offers private rooms, two bed bunk rooms and a ten bed dorm. Additionally, there is a kitchen, comfortable sitting room, parking and an outside space to relax and watch the stars.

**Why is it special?** The location is fantastic for access to the hills, but it is the welcome that make this the award winning hostel it is. The owners are keen musicians and the impromptu ceildhs have made it so unique that it has been described as a destination amongst the hostelling world.

**Key messages?** A good location helps, but the USP is the real selling point here - Scottish culture in a truly Scottish landscape.

**Overview:** This award winning farm business (Visit England Rose, 2016) is owned by Tom and Karen Burn and offers two eco-friendly cottages (four and five star gold, Visit England) renovated using environmentally friendly materials and supplied with eco-friendly products such as organic cotton sheets, recycled glassware and organic food. The cottages cost from £285 - 708 per week and sleep four people. The surrounding area has a woodland walk, orchard and pond which guarantee a peaceful and relaxing holiday. The conversions and wildlife areas were planned with the help of local school pupils who researched the issues and designed the solutions. The converted piggery is used for local classes and the Burn family offers star gazing and spinning as well as a prize of a bottle of wine if you leave your car at home for two days and explore the countryside by bike.

**Why is it special?** The owners are delightful and the accommodation beautifully appointed with wood burning stoves, antiques and a welcome basket with homemade cake and local produce. The personal touches make it less like a 'holiday let' and more like being welcomed into someone's home. The success of this venture is shown by bookings. When compared with other similar sized and quality accommodation in their area, they had twice as many weeks booked by the middle of January and were fully booked by late March. They have a core of repeat customers who delight in the personal service, warm atmosphere of the cottages and attention to detail by the owners. Their 'green' values are in evidence through all aspects of the business

**Key messages?** True engagement with visitors; high quality accommodation, but with a relaxed and homely style; little touches, e.g. homemade cake and bread along with local honey in the welcome basket.

**Overview:** This family run business began as a means of employing young people in the area. It has expanded so it now offers B&B accommodation, a restaurant, bar, village shop, coffee shop and ice cream parlour and micro -brewery. In 2015 it was named Scotland's Best Independent Pub at the SLTN awards. The accommodation is in the inn itself and in cottages nearby offering single, twin, double and family rooms all ensuite. Rooms range from £80 to 165 (for the family suite) and there are 'pods' as well at £100 each. Food is sourced locally wherever possible including from their own market garden, micro-brewery, ice cream making business and smoke house. Their food map of Scotland, shows their emphasis on Scottish products. The business uses the brand name, Loch Lomond, very successfully and drives more interest in the area.

**Why is it special?** It's location next to the West Highland Way ensures plenty of customers, but this has also directed what it offers and how it is offered. It specialises in offering a variety of family friendly good value accommodation and food to long distance walkers, general outdoor adventurers and families. Other businesses are now developing around it showing once a critical mass is reached development follows. It has changed Balmaha from a transit site to an actual destination involving the community as well as the other businesses. It illustrates the impact small businesses can have on an area and how they can be a real force for change.

**Key messages?** Start small, but think big.





## Forest Holidays

Strathyre and Argyll

[www.forestholidays.co.uk](http://www.forestholidays.co.uk)

**Trip Advisor Score:** 4.5 or 5, Award Winning for Excellence

**Accommodation Type:** Self-catering cottages

**Overview:** This award winning business features a range luxury self-catering cabins in stunning natural areas. The business features 9 UK holiday locations, 2 of which are in Scotland and both are located within Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park. They have a mixture of accommodation types from tree houses to cabins with hot tubs. They are members of the Green Tourism Scheme, earning a Silver award. They have recycling schemes at all of their locations, efficient and eco-friendly heating to keep the cabins cosy and support local businesses.

**Why is it special?** The natural environment is central to the Forest Holidays experience and they recognise their responsibility to protect it. Their 9 UK holiday locations are designed, built and managed with sensitivity to their forest setting, incorporating eco-sensitive features and best practice in order to limit our environmental impact. They are part owned by the Forestry Commission and share with them a responsibility for sustaining and conserving our forests for the enjoyment of everyone, now and into the future.

**Key messages?** This is a larger company providing a luxury product with their key message being, 'Come relax at our stunning locations'. Their focus on the local landscapes is supported by their eco-friendly operations.



## Additional Glamping Experiences:

Traditional wooden horse drawn caravans (now static):

[www.roulotteretreat.com](http://www.roulotteretreat.com)

Tree houses: many of the 'tree houses' listed in the UK are really houses built on raised platforms of varying heights. For inspiration try:

[www.explorewestsweden.com/treehouse-getaway/](http://www.explorewestsweden.com/treehouse-getaway/)

For a simple design or for more upmarket accommodation:

[www.smithandfamily.co.uk/child-friendly-hotels/treehotel](http://www.smithandfamily.co.uk/child-friendly-hotels/treehotel) or

[www.pedrassalgadaspark.com/en/accommodation/tree-houses/](http://www.pedrassalgadaspark.com/en/accommodation/tree-houses/)

Other ideas: [www.coolcamping.com/campsites/glamping](http://www.coolcamping.com/campsites/glamping) or [www.goglamping.net](http://www.goglamping.net)

**Note:** All alternative accommodation must meet Health and Safety Standards and may require planning permission. Contact your local council for more information.

## Sources

- (1) CREST (2015) The Case for Responsible Travel: Trends and Statistics 2015 [www.thetravelfoundation.org.uk/images/media/Whitepaper\\_Survival\\_of\\_the\\_Fittest\\_2012.pdf](http://www.thetravelfoundation.org.uk/images/media/Whitepaper_Survival_of_the_Fittest_2012.pdf)
- (2) Forum for the Future and The Travel Foundation. 2012. Survival of the Fittest: Sustainable Tourism Means Business. July 2012. Bristol, UK, pp. 9-16
- (3) System Three Tourism Attitude Survey 1999
- (4) UNWTO (2014) Global report on adventure tourism  
[http://cf.cdn.unwto.org/sites/all/files/pdf/final\\_1global\\_report\\_on\\_adventure\\_tourism.pdf](http://cf.cdn.unwto.org/sites/all/files/pdf/final_1global_report_on_adventure_tourism.pdf)
- (1) George Washington University and Adventure Travel Trade Association (2013) Adventure Tourism Market Study.  
<http://files.adventuretravel.biz/docs/research/adventure-tourism-market-study-2013-web.pdf>
- (1) ATTA 2012
- (2) HIE 2015 Adventure Tourism in Scotland downloaded at  
<http://www.hie.co.uk/search/google.html?q=adventure%20tourism%20scotland>
- (1) Insight Department Visit Scotland (2016) Trends 2017 [http://www.visitscotland.org/pdf/VisitScotlandInsightTrends2017\(2\).pdf](http://www.visitscotland.org/pdf/VisitScotlandInsightTrends2017(2).pdf)
- (2) Scottish Natural Heritage and Loch Lomond and The Trossachs National Park Authority (2010) The special landscape qualities of the Loch Lomond and The Trossachs National Park. Scottish Natural Heritage Commissioned Report, No. 375. (iBids and Project no 648)

## Additional reading

- [www.trekkssoft.com/en/blog/travel-tourism-stats-2016](http://www.trekkssoft.com/en/blog/travel-tourism-stats-2016)
- [www.sustainabletourism.net/sustainable-tourism/](http://www.sustainabletourism.net/sustainable-tourism/)
- [www.tia.org.nz/assets/Uploads/2016-adventure-tourism-development-index.pdf](http://www.tia.org.nz/assets/Uploads/2016-adventure-tourism-development-index.pdf)
- [www.telegraph.co.uk/luxury/travel/1983/sustainable-responsible-tourism-luxury-travels-new-trend.html](http://www.telegraph.co.uk/luxury/travel/1983/sustainable-responsible-tourism-luxury-travels-new-trend.html)
- [www.visitscotland.org/pdf/Insights%20Trends%202016.pdf](http://www.visitscotland.org/pdf/Insights%20Trends%202016.pdf)
- [www.hie.co.uk/regional-information/economic-reports-and-research/archive/adventure-tourism-research-2015.html](http://www.hie.co.uk/regional-information/economic-reports-and-research/archive/adventure-tourism-research-2015.html)  
(for a series of HIE reports on Adventure tourism)
- [www.visitscotland.org/business\\_support/advice\\_materials.aspx](http://www.visitscotland.org/business_support/advice_materials.aspx) (for advice, toolkits, training opportunities, funding opportunities)
- [www.gov.scot/Resource/Doc/311951/0098489.pdf](http://www.gov.scot/Resource/Doc/311951/0098489.pdf) (International Centre for Tourism and Hospitality Research (2010) Economic impact of wildlife tourism on Scotland, Bournemouth).



[www.lochlomondtrossachs.org.uk](http://www.lochlomondtrossachs.org.uk)

Photography courtesy of Paul Saunders, John Urquhart and Loch Lomond and The Trossachs National Park, Flickr Creative Commons



Friends of Loch Lomond and The Trossachs,  
Carrochan, Carrochan Road, Balloch G83 8EG  
Tel: 01389 727761

