

The background of the entire page is a photograph of a lush green forest. In the foreground, a person in an orange jacket is standing near a large tree, looking down at something in their hands. In the background, several other people are visible, some standing and some sitting on the forest floor, which is covered in ferns and other vegetation. The trees are tall and have green leaves, and the overall scene is bright and sunny.

Self-led learning in the National Park

General Guidance

Loch Lomond & The Trossachs National Park is a unique landscape that provides the perfect outdoor classroom, offering fantastic opportunities to experience nature.

Outdoor learning not only enables an awareness of the natural environment – encouraging care and appreciation of it – being immersed in nature has fantastic health benefits too and can improve the physical, mental and emotional wellbeing of children and adults.

The National Park's education team have created this guidance for schools and groups to use the National Park for a self-led outdoor learning visit so more children, young people and adults can benefit from a day out in the National Park, whatever the learning outcome.

Before you go

- Email the National Park education team for more information and advice as well as updating us on your planned date for the visit: education@lochlomond-trossachs.org
- If you are aiming to use the National Park Visitor Centre in Balmaha, we can advise if any other schools or groups are booked in with the National Park Ranger Service on the day of your proposed visit, and how to avoid it being too busy. We can also assist with information if you are considering a pre-visit site check.
- Visit the [Outdoor Learning pages](#) on the National Park website for more information.
- Visit the [National Parks UK website](#) to find out general information about planning a trip.
- For information about planning day trips and outdoor learning visits in Scotland, visit the [Going Out there framework website](#).



Enjoy Scotland's outdoors responsibly



**KNOW THE CODE
BEFORE YOU GO**
outdooraccess-scotland.com

Everyone has the right to be on most land and inland water providing they act responsibly. Your access rights and responsibilities are explained fully in the Scottish Outdoor Access Code.

Whether you're in the outdoors or managing the outdoors, the key things are to:

- **take responsibility for your own actions**
- **respect the interests of other people**
- **care for the environment.**

Visit outdooraccess-scotland.com or contact your local Scottish Natural Heritage office.

Scottish Outdoor Access Code

In Scotland, you can go on to most land to enjoy the outdoors, including delivering outdoor learning – as long as you behave responsibly.

Scottish access rights apply to hills and moors, forests and woods, beaches and the coast, rivers and lochs, parks and some types of farmland. There are also some common-sense exceptions, including houses and gardens, other buildings and their yards or compounds, school grounds and places which charge for entry.

- [Education resources to promote Responsible Access](#)
- [Information about being a responsible visitor in the National Park](#)

Preparing for the visit

Health & safety advice

Prepare a Risk Assessment and include crossing roads and car parks, falls and ticks as part of your overall assessment. Visit the following webpages for more information

- [Respect the Landscape](#)
- [Advice on Ticks](#)
- [Going Out there framework for off site visits](#)

In an emergency

It is important to know what to do in the event of any emergency incident during your visit. If you get into difficulty away from the road network and need help or medical assistance, please follow these steps:

- Phone the emergency services on 999. When the operator asks which service, state: **Police**.
- Provide accurate details of the incident and location (grid references are very useful or use **What 3 Words**) – if you are in remote location with difficult access, it is important to emphasise this as an ambulance may not be able to access you, for example if you are on a hill or part way along a path route.
- The Police will assess the situation and send help – this may include a Mountain Rescue Team (MRT) and other medical support.
- You should be aware of the location of the nearest Automated Emergency Defibrillator (AED) www.defibfinder.uk
- There is a Minor Injuries Unit in Alexandria at Vale of Leven Hospital for any visits around the Loch Lomond area, also at Stirling Community Hospital serving Callander area.
- There is an A&E at the Royal Alexandra Hospital in Paisley or Queen Elizabeth University Hospital in Glasgow for visits around the Loch Lomond Area, also at the Forth Valley Royal Hospital serving Callander area.

TICK SAFETY



- Walk in the middle of paths
- Keep your arms and legs covered
- Applying good quality insect repellent can reduce the incidence of tick bites
- Wear light-coloured fabrics as ticks will be easier to spot
- Check your clothes before you leave the site so you don't take any ticks home
- Do a thorough tick check of clothes and skin when you get home



Water Safety

Getting out and active on or near the water is a great way to enjoy and experience the National Park but whether you are an experienced open water swimmer or just fancy dipping your toes in to cool off, it is essential that you are well prepared before getting in the water. More information is available on our website:

www.lochlomond-trossachs.org/plan-your-visit/respect-park-stay-safe/fun-stay-safe-water/

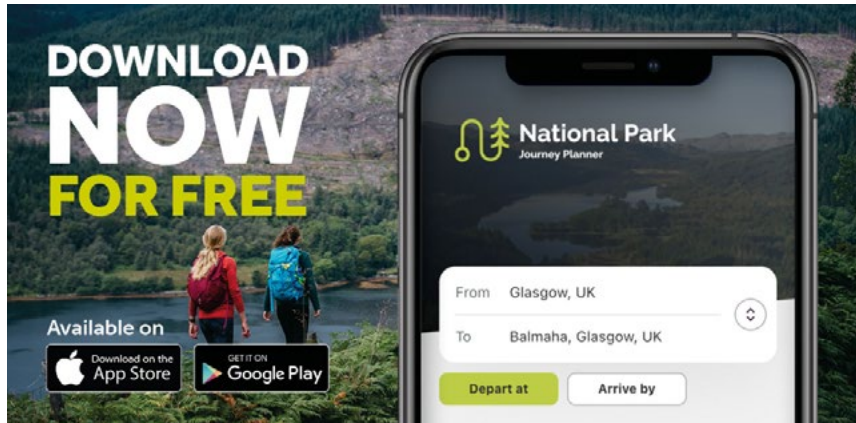
The key points are

- People can get into difficulty even in shallow water. Never go into the water alone and always keep a close eye on your group, particularly young children.
- The water in lochs can change depth suddenly and unexpectedly, sometimes very close to shore with steep drops. It is best to stick to places you already know or find out as much as you can about an area before you get in the water.
- Always stay within your own capabilities and check the depth of the waterbed by walking in carefully – if you cannot swim or are not an experienced swimmer then do not paddle far from the shore as water depth can change suddenly.
- Even on a hot day the water is still very cold. Cold Water Shock can be life threatening even for experienced swimmers. It can set in quickly and rapidly lead to hypothermia. Enter slowly so you have time to get used to it.
- Avoid blue/green algae during the summer months. Keep up to date by following the National Park's social media accounts for any recent reported sightings.
- In an emergency call 999, ask for Police and provide the exact location of the emergency.



Travel and other information

There are ways that we can all reduce our impact on the National Park and take action against the climate emergency. Reducing your impact on the National Park starts before you even arrive. By choosing public transport, such as the train or bus, you will reduce your emissions significantly. More information about reducing the impact of your visit is available on our website.



The National Park Journey Planner is a great app to encourage use of more sustainable modes of transport including public transport and cycling. You can try it on this webpage or download the app to your phone via Apple Store or Google Play.

The National Park Journey Planner allows you to:

- Plan and pay for your journey
- Check travel plans throughout the day (even when offline)
- Check and compare the carbon impacts of different modes of travel

Mobile phone signal and WiFi

The geography of the National Park, especially the mountainous terrain, presents us with quite a challenge when it comes to connecting to the internet or finding a phone signal. It is advisable to not rely on a good signal on the day and if needed download any information, maps, or route details prior to the visit. Balmaha has some areas where a phone signal is particularly weak, but if you move to a different spot, you may find a signal. There is a [map](#) that shows public access points to Wi-Fi or the internet through public access computers on our website.



KIT LIST



You do not need the latest Goretex jacket, trousers or fancy hiking boots to enjoy a visit to the National Park. Sensible footwear (including wellies), a decent waterproof and you are ready to go! Being warm and dry are the priorities, it is not about fashion!

Here's our suggested kit list:

Teachers and group leaders need to ensure that all pupils or members of their group are properly prepared for the potential of poor weather and attend with:

- Appropriate footwear, which means boots/shoes with grip soles and ankle support
- Protective clothing for wet, windy and cold conditions or hot and sunny conditions
- Packed lunch if required
- Sufficient water and liquids for the duration of the visit
- First aid kit

You may also want to bring:

- Midge repellent or midge nets, particularly for visits between May and August.
- Sun cream
- Anti bacterial wipes or gel
- Tick remover
- Mobile phone
- Camera for some action photos and magnificent views
- Bags for disposing of litter
- Clipboards and worksheets if required.