

Walking Arran's North-East Coast (9.5 miles)

Heritage, Rocks and Marine Life

This stretch of Arran's Coastal Way takes you along a rugged coastline rich in geology and history and with ever-changing views across the Clyde to the Isle of Bute, the tiny island of Inchmarnock, Cowal and Kintyre. On days when the Clyde is like a wide skein of sky blue silk, you may see porpoises, dolphins and even minke whales cruising along this special coastline.



The ruined communal farm of Laggantuin is hidden in a sheltered hollow to the left of the white shipping markers.

Walk directions

Catch a bus from Lochranza to the lay-by opposite the road down to the **North Sannox Pony Trekking Centre**. Walk down the road past the pony trekking centre, to the **North Sannox picnic area**, site of the **Lag nan Sasunnach** (Grave of the Stranger). Above you are the slopes of **Torr Reamhar**, once an Iron Age hill fort. Current thinking is that these forts (which can be found right round Arran's coast) were designed to be impressive spectacles rather than homes, the intention being a show of intimidating power.

Take the trail northwards from the car park. As you walk you are treading on raised beach: in West Scotland the land is still rising in a rebound from the crushing weight of the glaciers of the last Ice Age. You will notice tall white navigation beacons as

you walk, which represent **measured miles**. Ships built on Clydeside used to trial their top speeds using these markers.

A couple of miles into your walk you pass through the landfall known as **Fallen Rocks**.

At grid reference 998488 look up to your left (before the measured mile marker) to see a diagonal path heading uphill into a hidden hollow. At this point you can deviate from your route to the ruins of the communal farm of **Laggantuin** and get a sense of how the people of Arran lived in past centuries. Their long blackhouses had rough stone walls and low roofs made of heather thatch. Each living room had a central hearth with farm animals kept in the byre at the far end of the building. More than fifteen families and a hundred people lived in this way on this coastline up to the end of the 18th century. One of these folks was **Malcolm MacMillan** who was grandfather to Daniel MacMillan, who set up the publishing house, and great-great-grandfather to Harold MacMillan, Prime Minister. The people of **North Sannox**, **Laggantuin** and the **Cock Farm** were to make up the largest group of emigrants to Canada from the island during the period in Scotland known as the Clearances. Look out for the traces of their lives in the ridges of the runrig farming system, the ruined workings of a cottage coal industry and salt pans in the area after **Laggan Cottage**.

The section between Laggantuin and Laggan Cottage is flat, grassy and easy-going. At Milestone Point you cross the Highland Boundary geological fault which divides Highland and Lowland Scotland. Laggan Cottage makes an excellent stopping-point for enjoying your sandwiches and the views. At this point, an alternative path heads inland up and over the hills to the south end of Lochranza. Continuing beside the sea, you are walking in the footsteps of the giant millipede **Arthropleura** which tramped this way on his many legs 300 million years ago. His fossilised trail remains. (Find out more at **Arran Heritage Museum Geology section** and the **Lochranza Geology Centre**.) As you continue you are stepping on different sections of geological time. Notice the changing textures and colours of the rocks dipping and tumbling into the sea.



Spot the giant millipede trail

Further along, look out for **Ossian's Cave** (grid reference 963517) Take care if you wish to explore its dank and dark interior! The entrance is a narrow slit above a low ledge and in summer it can be hidden by leaves and bracken. If you scramble inside, crouch down to find interesting markings on the walls which include a sailing ship- perhaps drawn by an islander of two centuries ago, waiting apprehensively to leave everything familiar and voyage across the Atlantic to Canada.

Curving round the coast from the point known as the **Cock of Arran**, a scrambling challenge awaits you at another section of fallen rocks: the chaotic conglomeration of **An Scriodan**. Choose your footing carefully as you cross it; everything after will feel like easy walking. At **Fairy Dell Cottage** you have the option to head up and over the hill past **the Whins** (crafts and icecreams) or continue round the coast, passing the famous, but not particularly obvious, geological feature known as **Hutton's Unconformity**. You will notice that the rocks sloping to the sea and rocks sloping to the land lie adjacent to each other yet belong to different geological ages, millennia apart. They demonstrate the history of Earth and how violent forces have re-formed landscapes over time.

When you reach **Newton Point** the tantalising view of **Lochranza Hotel** and the Boguille Bar lies ahead of you. Unfortunately, there is no quick way across the waters of the bay and you have no option but to walk round the head of the loch on the Newton Road. Of course, the extra distance will make your beer taste all the better!

