Forests of the Far North

Welcome...

...to the forests of the far north. From heart pumping hikes to easy access routes, there is something for everyone to enjoy. As well as a great selection of woodland trails, you can go wild on the natural play features at Camore, lose yourself on our orienteering courses or stride out on the Stratbawn to Strathcorny drove road.

Our forests aren't only about trees, so get near to nature with some of Scotland's finest wildlife, or step back in time and discover brochs, battle sites, burial cairns and more.

1 Rosal

Rosal: Step back in time at Rosal, a deserted township in Stratbawan. Over seventy ruined buildings sit quietly on the hillside overlooking Ben Loyal and the empty slopes of central Sutherland. Rosal was one of many Highland communities torn apart by the Sutherland Clearances some 200 years ago. The atmospheric place sits as an oasis in the falkirk whins. Open here before the arrival of large scale forestry, farming changed the local way of life for ever.

2 Borgie

Borgie: Named in the 1200s this was one of the first forests in Scotland planted by the Forestry Commission. In the early 1920s local families were encouraged to grow their own wood to fuel their fires. Gradually changing, there are fine views over the North Sea coast. As the forest has been opened up we have exposed many of the remaining features, look out for long houses and brochs. Keep your eyes open for the local flora and fauna.

Borgie Glen: Climb the long woodland Fine Trails to meet the tinkers' sculpture and look out over Borgie Forest with good views of Ben Hope to the west. Look out for the tannen pine and the unusual pine cone tables as well.

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4 Rumster

Rumster: Originally crofting ground, which was planted as a commercial timber crop in the 1940s, this forest is gradually changing. There are fine views over the North Sea coast. The forest has been opened up we have exposed many of the remaining features, look out for long houses and brochs. Keep your eyes open for the local flora and fauna.

5 Sibster

Sibster: A new broadleaf woodland on the site of an old Crofters' farm. The planted 2010-11 trees have by 2018 started to flourish. Look out for brightly-coloured wildflowers, insects and birds amongst the young trees.

There are two gentle trails through the young woodland and meadow, with nice open views across the Crofters' landscape. You can even get to Sibster by train - there's a direct path from the station at Georgemas Junction.

6 Newtonhill

Newtonhill: A small and welcoming new community woodland very close to Wick. It's a safe outdoor place to burn off energy whatever your age – try fishing for wee beasties in the dipping pool, wander among the goth paths, or just enjoy the panoramic views across Caithness.

You could join the friends of Newton Hill Community Woodland Group for an activity day or come along to one of the events run by the Highland Council Countryside Rangers.

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Forests of the Far North | Overview map

More places to explore...

Look out for these other Forestry Commission Scotland publications at information points throughout the Highlands or by contacting our Forest District office (contact details on back of this leaflet):

• Our Ross and Cromarty Guide covers some of the forests you can explore between the Dornoch Firth and the Moray Firth
• Our Sutherland Salmon Trail
• Our Loch Ness Romantic Break Trail
• Our Kyle of Sutherland Mountain Bike Trails: Poking out of the leaflet? There are various grades of trails here at Balblair.

The forests...

...at a glance

1. Rosal
   Grid ref: ND 15 14
   Follow the A971 south from Balfour, turning east towards Kinbrace or Cuthill. Follow the road for 5 miles and then take the right turn to Balblair. Continue along the road for 2½ miles.

2. Borgie
   Grid ref: ND 16 18
   The car park is 8½ miles west of Bettyhill along the A836. Follow the A836 for 1 mile and then take the right turn to Balblair. Continue along the road for 2½ miles.

3. Borgie Glen
   Grid ref: ND 16 18
   The car park is situated down a forest road south of the A836, 1 mile west of Balblair.

4. Rumster
   Grid ref: ND 16 18
   A distinctive glacial ridge called an esker dominates much of the woodland. Today, the forest is being managed using continuous cover management.

5. Sibster
   Grid ref: ND 16 18
   Sliver is situated past the A971 near the Geocaching signpost. From here, follow the trail for approximately 3 miles.

6. Newtonhill
   Grid ref: ND 16 18
   From the A836, follow the signs for the trailhead. Continue along the road for 2½ miles.

7. Ferry Wood & Ord Hill
   Grid ref: ND 16 18
   Follow the brown tourist signage to Forestry Commission Centre at Fortrose.

8. Achany - Falls of Shin
   Grid ref: NC 40 18
   Continue along the A836 west to Insh Marsh before turning left at the Forestry Commission car park to continue along the trail.

9. Ravens Rock Gorge
   Grid ref: NC 40 18
   Take the A836 east from Bettyhill towards Dornoch Bridge. Follow the yellow sign of A839 to the entrance.

10. Balblair
    Grid ref: NC 40 18
    From the A836, follow the brown tourist signage to the entrance. Continue along the road for 2½ miles.

11. Skelbo
    Grid ref: NC 40 18
    The car park is situated down a forest road south of the A836, 1 mile west of Balblair. Follow the brown tourist signage to the entrance. Continue along the road for 2½ miles.

12. Camore
    Grid ref: NC 40 18
    Follow the brown tourist signage to the entrance. Continue along the road for 2½ miles.

Enjoy Scotland's outdoors responsibly:

• Take responsibility for your own actions
• Respect the interests of other people
• Care for the environment.