



Disclaimer: we safely followed the route given here but that does not guarantee it is safe for you or a Right of Way. Please use your own common sense and cycle safely.

The Caledonia Way is a somewhat unusual long distance cycling route. While it's mostly on minor roads, you can't ride the whole thing on a road bike. There are at least three sections where it heads into distinctly off-road territory. Not full mountain bike country, but rough enough to give anyone on a 23-25mm skinny tyre a hard time with skids and pinch flats. Touring 28mm and upwards would be fine.

The other curious thing is that the National Cycling Network seems to dis-own a few sections. NCN78 signs are rare between Campbeltown and Oban, confined to the few off-road parts which aren't the Caledonian Canal towpath.

If that wasn't confusing enough, at Fort William the Caledonia Way acquires a second name, and for part of this final section it's better known as the Great Glen Way. The walker's Great Glen Way (which can be ridden on a mountain bike) splits off and takes a different, rough, high route as it approaches Inverness on entirely the opposite side of Loch Ness.

See what I mean about it being unusual? Hopefully, our three videos will clarify things before you ride. Should you choose to come this way, I have one request - please don't ride the A82 between Corran and Fort William unless absolutely necessary, and then make yourself as visible as possible. This is my local patch, but I'd rather ride 35 miles around the loch than 10 miles with fast traffic skimming my elbow.

I've broken this down into the three sections shown in the video and added a few links I hope you'll find useful, including those to the mapping on { HYPERLINK "https://www.komoot.com/collection/991093/-caledonia-way-including-

options?ref=undefined" } and { HYPERLINK "https://www.blogger.com/" }. I also have a { HYPERLINK "https://www.blogger.com/" }.

There is a { HYPERLINK "https://amzn.to/2SuihLl" } to the route and Sustrans has dedicated a { HYPERLINK "https://www.sustrans.org.uk/find-other-routes/the-caledonia-way" } to the Caledonia Way, both of which are helpful. The more detailed maps are not needed unless you want a souvenir of your ride.

{ HYPERLINK "https://www.komoot.com/collection/991093/-caledonia-way-including-options?ref=undefined" }



Campbeltown to Oban 121 miles 8025 ft ascent

{ HYPERLINK "<https://youtu.be/im0q9S6LZI8>" }

Although it's the first section, this is the last one I cycled. I rode it as a return ride after completing the Kintyre Gravel Bike Way with Sean McFarlane, and it was the only route on which I needed accommodation.

I'll list where we stopped for food and overnight accommodation. The accommodation came courtesy of Wild About Argyll but I've also listed a couple of places I think would make good options too.

Getting to the start: ScotRail trains from Glasgow connect with the summer only ferry by Caledonian MacBrayne from Ardrossen on the mainland to Campbeltown. Alternatively you could ride down the A83 on the west side of Kintyre but it's a busy road and not recommended, even though it's part of the new 'KN66' marketing push.

Campbeltown: We stayed in Campbeltown Backpackers (<https://campbeltownbackpackers.co.uk>), which opened for us while it was still working out how it would deal with visitors during a pandemic.



We had a great dinner at Craigard House Hotel (<https://www.craigard-house.co.uk>) and a frankly superb dinner at Ardshiel Hotel which is walking distance from the hostel (<https://ardshiel.co.uk>) and has a multi-award winning whisky bar.



Saddle Bay: You can find the Anthony Gormley statue *GRIP* in the grounds of Saddle Castle on the shore side of the road opposite Saddle Abbey which is marked.



Carradale: two great coffee stops here. Dottie's Cafe (<https://www.dottiescafe.com>) is small and friendly with a bike repair business alongside (<http://www.carradalebikesandbuggies.co.uk>) run by Ian Brodie.



Hopefully you won't need his services.



Torrisdale Castle's Bienn a Tuirc cafe is a little pricier but fabulous quality. They make their own gin and their website is a useful source of local knowledge. (<https://www.torrisdalecastle.com>)



Tarbert: The Gather (<https://thegather.uk>) is a relatively new business where we were allowed to leave a vehicle for the duration of our ride. As well as coffee and food, they have 'glamping' pods. While they can't yet take touring tents, cyclists who camp on the wild land behind their business are allowed to use their showers and facilities. There are many other options around Tarbet worth exploring and it's a good distance to ride on the first day.

We chose to cycle the Kilmory Loop, whereas some people prefer to head directly north towards Lochgilphead.



Kilmory: accommodation options are limited. We managed to get a one night deal in a mobile home (usually 2-night minimum) at Port Ban Holiday Park (<https://www.portban.com>) although they seemed to expect us to travel with all our own bedding. Book well in advance if you want to stay at the Kilberry Inn (<https://www.kilberryinn.com>) a seafood restaurant with rooms.



Inverneil: More modest but equally popular accommodation can be found in Argyll Backpackers' Hostel (<https://www.argyllbackpackers.com>) where the Kilmory Loop returns to the main road. Run by Kate and Pam, we called in for a coffee and chat, and were impressed by their covid protection measures.



Bridgend: A short detour from route 78, but one of the nicest places we stayed, was King's Reach Vegan B&B (<https://kingsreachbedandbreakfast.co.uk>). IN 2021 this was the only 100% vegan B&B in Argyll. Sean and Sara were keen to learn how to be more cycle friendly, so might soon offer kit washing, track pump and bike washing facilities. The Horseshoe Inn (<https://horseshoeinn.co.uk>) is walking distance away for a good meal or alternative accommodation.



Oban to Fort William 50 miles 1950 ft ascent

{ HYPERLINK "https://youtu.be/KUdso_PQBro" }

I regularly ride this route back from Oban after our weekly shopping and I've seen this improve from being a road ride with a few off-road sections, to being almost entirely segregated cycleway with a surface suitable for a skinny tyred road bike. The newest section, which as you'll see in the video I rode while it was still being finished in 2020, is beautiful and inspired, passing through a nature reserve. Just keep an eye on your watch for the ferry times.

Where the route reaches the outskirts of Ballachulish (pronounced Balla hoo-lish) you can divert east, still on cycle path, into the town itself or Glencoe village for food and/or accommodation. (Glen Coe is the valley, Glencoe is the village). The best supermarket is the Ballachulish Coop. If it's a Sunday you might wish to do the because of the way the ferries work - this is explained in detail in the video.



There are four ways into Fort William, and the two-ferry route is best. The segregated cycleway continues to the Corran Ferry, then you ride a relatively quiet minor road to the Camusnagaul Ferry at the top of the loch.

{ HYPERLINK "<https://www.komoot.com/tour/385019138>" }

The service does not run on Sundays and only four times daily, but on running days it will make a special crossing for two or more cyclists. Operated by Highland Ferries their { HYPERLINK "<https://www.facebook.com/CamusnagaulFerry>" } is updated more frequently than their { HYPERLINK "<http://www.highlandferries.co.uk/>" } (<http://www.highlandferries.co.uk/>).



{ HYPERLINK "<https://www.komoot.com/tour/385019918>" }

If you miss the ferry, or the times don't work out, the safest option is to cycle around the loch adding 22 miles to the journey.

{ HYPERLINK "<https://www.komoot.com/tour/385018393>" }

I can't recommend cycling the busy A82. I have done, and I regularly see people riding it, but it's a scary option.

{ HYPERLINK "<https://www.komoot.com/tour/385021559>" }

There is a great off-road option, but it strays into wild country and requires some hike-a-bike over possibly boggy ground. You can see the route { HYPERLINK "<https://youtu.be/Lvww0o9RW58>" }. There's a second off-road route { HYPERLINK "<https://www.komoot.com/tour/385022499>" }.



Fort William to Inverness 68 miles 3100 ft ascent

{ HYPERLINK "<https://youtu.be/i4KOQwHQDGQ>" }

This was one of the first videos I made, and I've re-cut it to fit the style of the other two. I had to visit a dentist in Inverness, so I decided to ride there, carrying camping equipment that I could test on the return trip.

The twin-names can cause some confusion. The Caledonia Way still exists, but it has acquired the additional title of the Great Glen Way. That changes again shortly.

A few years ago, parts of this section would be strictly mountain bike territory. Sustrans has worked, hard to improve these and added a new cycleway, so now it's all rideable on touring tyres. I still wouldn't take a skinny 23-25mm road tyre on it. A mix of Caledonian Canal towpath and off-road take you to the popular tourist town of Fort Augustus where many people overnight.

The walkers' Great Glen Way now climbs off up the West side of Loch Ness. A version of this can be ridden on an MTB or Gravel Bike, and it's now called the 'Loch Ness 360'. Meanwhile, the Caledonia Way (aka cycling version of the Great Glen Way) head up the steep road hill on the East side of Loch Ness. This is probably the toughest hill on the whole Caledonia Way, so try to divert yourself by Nessie spotting in Loch Ness below.

The route follows the 'back road' to Inverness. While this is much quieter and safer than the A82, it's still a popular road and, first thing in the morning, you find workmen's vans whizzing past.

Lots of cyclists from Inverness ride the roads around here, and tend to congregate in {HYPERLINK "<http://lochnesscottage.com/Camerons-Tea-Room->

and-Farm-Shop.php"} which 78 passes on it's way to Foyers. It's then a flat route beside Loch Ness into Inverness.