

SCOTTISH OUTDOOR ACCESS CODE

Easy Guide to the Outdoors

2022

Contents

What is the Scottish Outdoor Access Code?	2
Walking - Responsible behaviour by the public	2
Dog Walking - Responsible behaviour by the public	3
Camping - Responsible behaviour by the public	3
Fields of crops - Responsible behaviour by the public	4
Woodlands and Forests - Responsible behaviour by the public	4
Cycling - Responsible behaviour by the public	5
Links	5
Infographics	6

What is the Scottish Outdoor Access Code?

In Scotland, you can go on to most land to enjoy the outdoors – as long as you behave responsibly. This is known as Scottish access rights and is different to the position in England and Wales. **When you are enjoying the outdoors, you must follow the Scottish Outdoor Access Code.**

Scottish access rights apply, for example, 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. Access rights include things like walking, cycling, climbing, horse-riding, kayaking, swimming and watching wildlife, but do not include things like shooting, fishing or access with motor vehicles.

The Scottish Outdoor Access Code is based on three key principles

- Respect the interests of others.
- Care for the environment.
- Take responsibility for your own actions.

The Code provides more detailed guidance on [a range of different activities](#). Land managers must manage their land and water in a way that respects access rights, and the Code also provides guidance to help them do this.

Walking - Responsible behaviour by the public

We all know that being in the outdoors is great for our health and wellbeing and walking can be a key part of this.

Whatever your walking interest, whether it's straight from your front door to walk locally, or further afield in the fantastic Scottish countryside, hills or mountains, there are some key organisations and plenty of information to help you on your way.

What will you use as your inspiration? A guide book, a map, tourist information leaflet, an app for your mobile phone? Some ideas can be found on the [NatureScot](#) website.

The Access Code says:

You can exercise access rights for:

- recreational purposes (such as pastimes, family and social activities, and more active pursuits like horse riding, cycling, wild camping and taking part in events)
- educational purposes (concerned with furthering a person's understanding of the natural and cultural heritage)
- some commercial purposes (where the activities are the same as those done by the general public), and for crossing over land or water.

The three key principles of the Scottish Outdoor Access Code are:

- Respect the interests of other people

- Care for the environment
- Take responsibility for your own actions

Dog Walking - Responsible behaviour by the public

The Access Code says:

Access rights apply to people walking dogs as long as their dogs are kept under proper control. Your main responsibilities are:

Farm animals:

- Never let your dog worry or attack farm animals
- Don't take your dog into fields where there are lambs, calves or other young farm animals
- If you go into a field of farm animals, keep your dog(s) on a short lead or close at heel and keep as far as possible from the animals
- If cattle react aggressively and move towards you, keep calm, let the dog go and take the shortest, safest route out of the field

Crops:

- Don't take your dog into fields of vegetables or fruit unless there is a clear path, such as a core path or right of way, and keep your dog to the path

Ground nesting birds:

- During the breeding season (usually April-July) keep your dog on a short lead or close at heel in areas such as moorland, forests, grasslands, loch shores and the sea shore to avoid disturbing birds that nest on or near the ground
- Recreation areas and public places: avoid causing concern to others by keeping your dog close at heel or on a short lead

Dog waste:

- Pick up and remove your dog's faeces if it defecates in a public open place

Camping - Responsible behaviour by the public

The Access Code says:

Access rights extend to wild camping. This type of camping is lightweight, done in small numbers and only for two or three nights in any one place. You can camp in this way wherever access rights apply, but help to avoid causing problems for local people and land managers by not camping in enclosed fields of crops or farm animals and by keeping well away from buildings, roads or historic structures. Take extra care to avoid disturbing deer stalking or grouse shooting. If you wish to camp close to a house or building, seek the owner's permission. Leave no trace by:

- taking away all [your litter](#)
- removing all traces of your tent pitch and of any open fire (follow the [guidance for lighting fires](#))

- not causing any pollution

Fields of crops - Responsible behaviour by the public

The Access Code says:

- When exercising access rights in a field of crops, avoid damaging the crop by:
- Using any paths or tracks
- Using the margins of the field (if the margin is narrow or has been planted, avoid causing unnecessary damage by keeping close to the edge in single file)
- Going along any unsown ground (providing this does not damage the crop)
- Considering alternative routes on neighbouring ground.

Woodlands and Forests - Responsible behaviour by the public

The Access Code says:

You can exercise access rights in forests and woods. If you are cycling or horse riding, keeping to suitable paths and tracks can help to minimise any damage. If you have a dog with you, keep it under close control or on a short lead during the spring (April to July) so that breeding birds are not disturbed. Livestock might be present in some forests and woods so take care if you come across any animals. Be careful not to trample young trees.

Other information:

IMPORTANT - Ash die-back disease (Chalara dieback of ash (*Hymenoscyphus fraxineus*) has been [confirmed at several sites in Scotland](#).

Public access to woodlands is not restricted and the fungal disease is harmless to people and animals. The public are asked to take some simple [precautions](#) when visiting infected sites or other woodlands, and follow the advice on signs:

- scrape any mud and leaves from footwear, pushchairs, bikes, cars, dogs and horses before leaving woodlands
- before visiting other places, clean mud and leaves from footwear, pushchairs, bikes, cars, dogs and horses
- do not remove leaves, plants or wood

If you are unsure whether a wood is infected, it is always good practice to follow this advice.

Cycling - Responsible behaviour by the public

The Access Code says:

Access rights extend to cycling. Cycling on hard surfaces, such as wide paths and tracks, causes few problems. On narrow routes, cycling may cause problems for other people, such as walkers and horse riders. If this occurs, dismount and walk until the path becomes suitable again. Do not endanger walkers and horse riders: give other users advance warning of your presence and give way to them on a narrow path. Take care not to alarm farm animals, horses and wildlife.

If you are cycling off-path, particularly in winter, avoid:

- going onto wet, boggy or soft ground, and churning up the surface.

Links

<https://www.outdooraccess-scotland.scot/act-and-access-code>

<https://www.outdooraccess-scotland.scot/act-and-access-code/scottish-outdoor-access-code-visitors-and-land-managers>

<https://www.outdooraccess-scotland.scot/act-and-access-code/scottish-outdoor-access-code-visitors-and-land-managers/what-scottish-outdoor-access-code>

Finish the jobbie –
bag it **and** bin it.

Take it home
when bins aren't
available.

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Do not allow your dog
to approach animals or
people uninvited.

Don't linger if
wildlife is disturbed
by your presence.

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Do not allow your dog to approach animals or people uninvited.

Where possible avoid animals – release your dog if threatened by cattle.



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Be a Cool Camper:

- Use a stove, rather than light a fire
- Use campsites when possible
- Leave nothing behind.



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Carry a trowel to bury
your poo, in case there's
no loo to use.

Job done.

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**Take care not to disturb
seals resting on the shore.**

**Keep dogs on the lead –
seals may bite if they feel
threatened.**

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Take care not to disturb wildlife
on riverbanks and loch shores



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Don't block entrances, cause an
obstruction or damage verges when
parking in Scotland's countryside.
Always use a car park if possible.



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Be kind to nature
and each other.

Take all of your
litter away with
you.

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Stop fires starting.

If you're camping,
use a stove.

Follow all local
guidance.

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