The wild west of Scotland is closer than you think. Only an hour away from Glasgow, you can find yourself amongst the mountains, lochs and forests of Argyll, and enjoy the vast range of indoor and outdoor attractions available here. The Cowal peninsula – easily accessible from Gourock on the Clyde – is home to large tracts of the Argyll Forest Park, a paradise for walkers, cyclists and watersports enthusiasts. Further north, Inveraray on the shores of Loch Fyne is a family favourite and a gateway to beaches, islands and historical sites aplenty.
OPEN SPACES

6. Argyll Forest Park – This extensive forest offers a perfect introduction to the Loch Lomond & Trossachs National Park. Start at the Ardgartan Visitor Centre on the A813 at the North of Loch Long. Here there are the Boathouse and Riverside walks which provide options for pushchairs. You'll also find cycle paths, a play area and refreshments. With its spectacular mountains, glens, lochs and woodlands, many claim that Britain’s first forest park is also the finest.

7. Benmore Botanic Garden – Benmore, just north of Dunoon, is home to an amazing variety of plants. Stand in awe, looking up from the bottom of some of Britain’s tallest trees – the Giant Redwoods soar to over 40m high! You can also marvel at how the climate of Benmore is perfect for recreating some Chilean rainforest plantings. The Monkey Puzzle is always a favourite with children.

8. Kilbran Forest – A favourite sandy bay towards the tip of Lochween, Kilbran Forest is very popular in the summer months with families. Excellent for paddling, the beach also boasts strange rock formations that will fascinate the kids.

9. Knapdale Forest – Knapdale Forest is located in a National Scenic Area and is bounded by the Crinan Canal in the north and the Sound of Jura in the west. The forest contains many walking, cycling and horse riding trails, whilst also having plenty of areas for fishing and picnicking. Knapdale is an excellent site for spotting otters but be sure to start earlier or stay late; they prefer dusk and dawn.

10. Rest and Be Thankful – Located within the Argyll Forest Park, the Rest & Be Thankful, so named on account of its position at the summit of a high pass between Lochs Long and Fyne on the A83, has been a favourite picnic spot since Victorian times. Sit back, soak up the views and feel on top of the world!

11. Ardentinny to Carrick Castle – From the Forest Enterprise car park near Shepherds Point, north of Ardentinny, follow the path uphill through the woods to join a well surfaced forest road. Follow the path into the forest, where the going becomes a little slower, until the path nears the shore of Loch Goil. Carrick Castle dominates the scenery along the side of Loch Goil – even the first glimpse of it from high up in the woods is impressive. Allow 4 hours for the 7-mile trip.

12. The Cowal Way – The Cowal Way is a 47-mile walk that stretches from Portavadie in the south-west to Ardgartan in the north-east. The route itself can be split into six separate sections that differ in difficulty and terrain.

13. Kilmore Woodland Park – Start from the car park beside the information shelter, on the A83 Lochgilphead to Inveraray road. Follow the blue waymarked posts through the walled garden and past the home farm. Near Kilmore Loch take a track on the left and climb up to a high viewpoint before descending back to the main track. A short detour to climb Dun Mor is well worth it! Follow the main track back through the woods; take a look at the lime kiln near the path and continue through some newly planted woodland back to the start point. Allow 2 hours for this 2-mile walk.

14. Head north of Dunoon on A880 to Dumbarton X. To the north of Dumbarton X, you will eventually reach Loch Goil. Follow the blue waymarked posts through the woods; take a look at the lime kiln near the path and continue through some newly planted woodland back to the start point. Allow 2 hours for this 2-mile walk.

15. Arctic Penguin Maritime Heritage Museum, Inveraray – The schooner has many displays and hands-on activities, including a cinema. Recently added to the museum’s collection is the Eilean Eisdeal puffer boat.

16. Auchindrain Township Open Air Museum – Auchindrain is an original 18th century Highland township, typical of the many which once existed throughout the Highlands of Scotland, but now long gone. Surviving the Highland Clearances, the conserved buildings of Auchindrain have been furnished and equipped to provide a fascinating glimpse into Highland life.

17. Cowal Bird Garden hosts a large number of animal and bird species, including donkeys, rabbits, parrots, macaws and owls – not to mention Bluebell, the wild roe deer. With ancient woodland and a nature trail, the garden also features a covered picnic area, tobbogan run, the Camel’s Hump slide, and a large children’s playground.

18. Inveraray Castle – Since the early 16th century Inveraray Castle has been the headquarters of the Clan Campbell, with the present Clan Chief, the 13th Duke of Argyll, and his family still living in the castle.

19. Kilmartin Glen – The museum and visitor centre here give a fascinating insight into the 350 different archaeological treasures scattered through the picturesque glen, 100 of which date back to prehistoric times.

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FOOD & DRINK

20. The Kintyre Tearooms, Inveraray – This quaint little tea room is a welcome stop for any visitors to Inveraray. Tea and scones here are a must but, if you’re looking for something more substantial, a light lunch menu is available. A great place to stop for an ice-cream on the way back from the beach!

21. The Cairnbaan Hotel – This privately-owned, family-run small hotel in tranquil surroundings in Cairnbaan, by Lochgilphead, overlooks the Crinan Canal. Over the years the hotel has hosted famous guests, including The Princess Royal, former President Bill Clinton and Congresswoman Hilary Clinton. There is an à la carte menu, a bistro-style menu and one specially for children so they cater for all tastes.

22. At the head of Loch Fyne, you have a couple of options. The Caimdow Stagecoach Inn serves a children’s menu in the airy conservatory and on the lochside patio, both ideal for family dining. Just a little north of this is the Tree Shop. After you’ve browsed their range of woodcraft, you can partake in food such as soups, filled rolls and home-baking, to sit down or take away for munching by the loch.

HORSE RIDING

Horse riding is an activity that the whole family can enjoy, and there is no shortage of stables throughout the Argyll area. Argyll Adventure in Inveraray is a 4-star activity centre that suits beginners’ needs, with trails through the Duke of Argyll’s forest and along the banks of Loch Fyne. There are locations and landscapes to suit all riders, from pony trekking to trail riding, and the area around Lochgilphead can certainly meet all needs. Three excellent riding centres, Dalloch Equestrian Centre, Appaloosa Holidays and Argyll Trail Riding are all

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For more information, call 0845 22 55 121 or visitscotland.com