

# Central Scotland



The country's historical roots are deeply embedded in the sandy soils of Central Scotland. Significant ruins and castles that chronicle the region's charismatic history pepper the landscape. Key battlegrounds shaped the country's fortunes around Stirling, and Perth is the former capital where kings were crowned on the Stone of Destiny.

Arriving from the cities of Glasgow and Edinburgh, visitors begin to get a sense of the country further north as the lowland belt gives way to Highland splendour. It is here that the majesty of Scotland's landscape unfolds in deep, dark steely blue lochs that hold the shimmering silhouettes of soaring, sentinel-like craggy peaks on a still day.

This part of Scotland is big-tree country, with pockets of ancient woodlands thriving side by side with regrowth forests, some planted by visionary landowners 300 years ago. Opportunities to enjoy the landscape abound and walking, cycling, mountaineering and wildlife safaris are all easy possibilities. Capping off the exhaustingly fresh outdoors are some of the country's best pubs and eateries, which greet weary visitors at the end of the day.

It's also the variety in the region that pulls the punters – learn all about crannogs, have a drink in an ancient pub that holds scrawlings from Robert Burns, throw a line into a picture-perfect loch and explore one of the country's most stunning wooded glens all in a day.

The coastline along the 'kingdom' of Fife offers quaint fishing villages along East Neuk and one of Scotland's most enjoyable towns – St Andrews. The township, touched with a gentle dignity, has a medieval shell that belies the sophistication and dynamism of a student population drawn from around the globe.

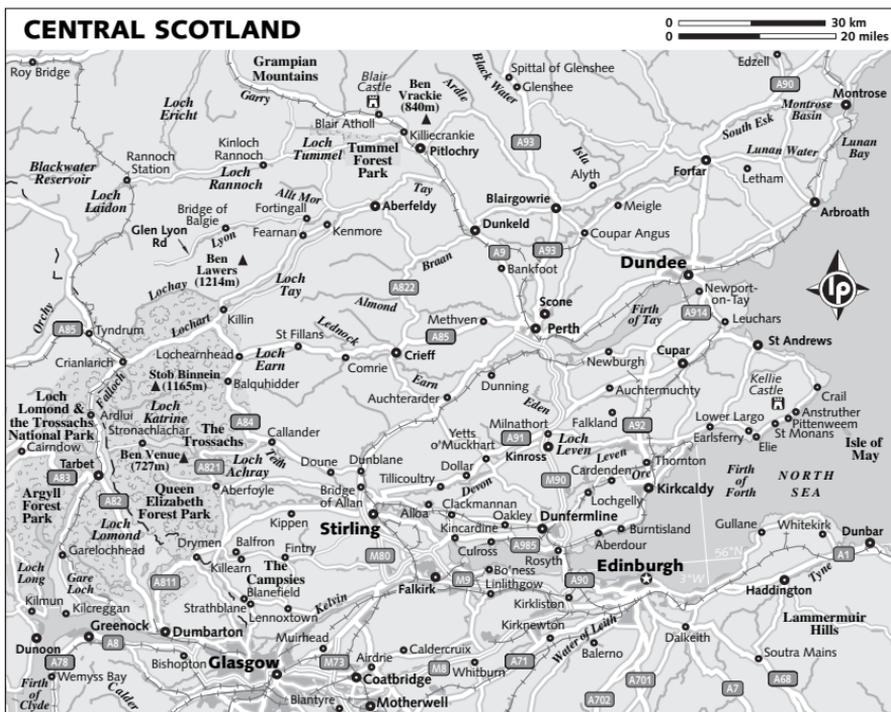
## HIGHLIGHTS

- Walking the eerie fields of Bannockburn and rambling through the imperious castle lording it over the city in **Stirling** (p193)
- Mixing history, nostalgia and, of course, golf on the hallowed fairways of **St Andrews Old Course** (p211)
- Bagging magnificent **Ben Lawers** (p224), and keeping an eye out for Neolithic rock art on the way
- Whizzing down the slopes of **Glenshee** (p230), one of the country's largest ski runs
- Nursing a pint of Ale of Atholl and toasting the toes by a roaring log fire at the **Moulin Inn** (p229), a pub dripping with Scottish character.



■ POPULATION: 764,000

■ AREA: 9254 SQ KM



## Getting Around

For public-transport info, call **Traveline** (☎ 0871 200 2233). **Scottish Citylink** (☎ 0870 550 5050) connects the main towns in the area, and Perth is a major hub for its services. **Royal Mail postbuses** (☎ 01246-546329) serve many remote communities, such as those in West Perthshire, charging on average £2 to £5 for single journeys.

The Central Scotland Rover rail ticket (£30), valid for three days out of seven, allows train travel between Edinburgh, Glasgow, Falkirk and Stirling.

## STIRLING REGION

Stirling is one of those regions central Scotland specialises in. It provides a taste of both lowlands and Highlands; has a staggering share of landmark battlegrounds; is peppered with castles and tales of legendary figures; and contains a slice of natural beauty that will literally leave you gasping. And all that packed cheek by jowl into such a small and delightful area.

The capital, also named Stirling, controlled the main route into the Highlands and its strategic location meant it was the stage for some of Scotland's crucial battles of independence against the repressive English. The region was home to Rob Roy, and the legendary exploits of this champion of the poor still echo around the southern border of the Highlands.

The region has lured walkers and climbers since Victorian times, and the forests and wildlife in this unique environment are protected as part of the Loch Lomond & the Trossachs National Park (p267).

## Getting Around

For local transport information in the Stirling region, phone ☎ 01786-442707. The main bus operator is **First** (☎ 0870 872 7271). Its First-Day ticket (£5) gives one day's travel on all its services in the central Scotland region and through to Edinburgh or Glasgow.

From late May (although sometimes delayed until June or July) to early October the vintage **Trossachs Trundler** (☎ 01786-442707) is a useful bus service circling Aberfoyle, Callander and Trossachs Pier on Loch Katrine.