

BEACH GUIDE

# Scotland's Southern Coast

Where every  
name tells a story



Solway Firth  
  
Partnership



Just as beauty is in the eye of the beholder, so the perfect beach depends on your needs and interests. Fortunately, the Dumfries and Galloway coast is long and varied, ensuring that somewhere you will find your dream beach.

The sandy bathing beaches with shallow water are what most people seek for a summer family outing, but if you are searching for something different you do not have to look far. Remote bays, rocky outcrops, rugged cliffs or even vast stretches of intertidal sand and mud all have something to offer the adventurous explorer.

This guide is a good start, but remember to ask people who know the area for the best places to visit or get an Ordnance Survey map and plan your trip.

All names begin by describing a place to another person or group of people, as a way of helping us find our way in the world. Some place names have existed for hundreds of years while others are a modern phenomenon. They all have the potential to tell us a story and provide clues about the people who lived there in the past and those who continue to use the coast today. Names can also tell us much about the environment, and geography, of an area.

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Find out more by visiting: [www.solwayfirthpartnership.co.uk/solway-coastwise](http://www.solwayfirthpartnership.co.uk/solway-coastwise)

**WHERE EVERY BEACH NAME TELLS A STORY**





Enjoy your visit to the coast but remember to be careful.



Scottish weather can be unpredictable. Check weather forecasts and take appropriate clothing and footwear.



Scottish coasts can be rugged and remote, so tell a family member or friend where you are going and when you expect to be back.



The Solway coast has one of the biggest tidal ranges in the world. Remember to check tide times to avoid getting stranded on the vast sandflats or tidal bays.



The coast is bursting with life so try and avoid disturbing wildlife, particularly shore-nesting birds in spring.



The coast is beautiful and to keep it that way, take your litter home with you.



**TAKE CARE**



The European Agricultural Fund  
for Rural Development  
Some funding is available



Supported by  
**The National Lottery**<sup>®</sup>  
through the Heritage Lottery Fund



Dumfries  
& Galloway



COUNCIL



The lay-by at Balyett, Stranraer provides parking for a beach at the southern end of Loch Ryan. A makeover has added a stylish shelter next to the café, and binoculars to make the most of the views up the sea loch towards Ailsa Craig.

When you study a map some beaches, like this one, appear to be nameless. Of course anywhere worth visiting must have a name and the narrow beach has been christened by locals as Cockle Shore – for an obvious reason – the beach is covered in seashells including the rare native oyster and lots of cockles too.

★★★★☆ FAMILY RATING

★★★★☆ ADVENTURERS RATING



350, 358, 360

1

**COCKLE SHORE (BALYETT, STRANRAER)**



OS grid Ref: NX 082 619



This dramatic rocky coast includes spectacular sandy beaches such as Ardwel Bay and Killantringan Bay. From the pretty harbour of Portpatrick the Southern Upland Way footpath hugs the cliff tops leading to several small inlets.

Confusingly some bays are known to locals by different names to those shown on maps, for example, Port Kale from the Gaelic *port caol* meaning narrow port is known locally as Laird's Bay, perhaps because it was the traditional bathing place of the owners of the big house.

This bay is also the location of an ornamental building built in 1852 to house apparatus for testing one of the first telegraph cables laid between Scotland and Ireland.

★★★★★ ADVENTURERS RATING



OS grid Ref: NX 069 449 – NW 982 726



WEST RHINS COAST

2



This long sandy beach is set in a pretty bay with a stone pier and lighthouse at one end and a marine life centre, Logan Fish Pond, at the other.

The small harbour was first developed in the late 1600s but when it was improved in the 1820s it was renamed Port Logan by the owner of Logan Estate.

The earlier name was Port Nessock where nessock is derived from Scandinavian *nasa vik* meaning inlet of the noses, a reference to the headlands that define the sandy bay.

★★★★☆ FAMILY RATING

★★★★☆ ADVENTURERS RATING



407

3

PORT LOGAN



OS grid Ref: NX 096 410



The southern tip of Scotland feels remote and wild on a blustery day and is a spectacular location to visit at any time of year. In the summer the cliffs on the RSPB Reserve are home to many seabirds and you can also climb the lighthouse and learn all about its history.

The Gallie Craig (meaning boat rock) Café provides a welcome after a bracing clifftop walk. The Mull takes its name from the Gaelic *maol* meaning a bold bare headland – a perfect description of this narrow peninsular.

★★★★★ FAMILY RATING

★★★★★ ADVENTURERS RATING

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OS grid Ref: NX 154 304



MULL OF GALLOWAY COAST

4



Adjacent to the small village of Ardwell is Chapel Rossan Bay, a shingle beach with sand exposed at low tide. Little is known about the small chapel that stood on the headland overlooking the bay. Its name may have been derived from the Gaelic *rosán* meaning a small promontory or *Drostan* from the name of the Saint the chapel is believed to have been dedicated to. St Drostan was trained by St Columba and wrote the earliest surviving Scottish manuscript.

Nearby is New England Bay which has a beach with sand, but the reason for the name remains a mystery.

★★★★☆ FAMILY RATING

★★★★☆ ADVENTURERS RATING

 407

5

CHAPEL ROSSAN BAY & NEW ENGLAND BAY



OS grid Ref: NX 111 454 & NX 121 421





It should be no surprise that the small village at the northern end of Luce Bay is called Sandhead. Sand has blown here for thousands of years to create dunes that stretch off into the distance.

When the wind is in the right direction, the bay is busy with kite surfers, and at low tide kite buggies sometimes use the vast expanse of wet sand, but there is plenty of room for everyone on this beach.

★★★★☆ FAMILY RATING

★★★★☆ ADVENTURERS RATING



OS grid Ref: NX 098 497



SANDHEAD

6





Monreith Bay beach is accessible from a flight of steps from the village while the beach at Back Bay can be reached from the car park beyond St Medans Golf Course. Back Bay is a magical combination of sand dunes, rocks and cliffs with twisted rock formations used by nesting seabirds.

When the tide is out it is sometimes possible to explore the many caves in the cliff face but take care not to be cut off by the incoming tide. One small nook has earned the local nickname of Butchers Cave because of the blood red colour of the rocks inside.

★★★★☆ FAMILY RATING

★★★★★ ADVENTURERS RATING

 415, 416 (MONREITH)

7

MONRIETH BAY & BACK BAY, MONRIETH



OS grid Ref: NX 357 408 & NX 364 394



A cliff top walk from the Isle of Whithorn around Burrow Head reveals a rugged shoreline where many ships have sunk and lives been lost. In the mid-1770s the captain and crew of a sailing ship blown onto the cliffs in a terrible storm were able to climb from the mast of their stricken vessel onto rocks below. As a memorial to this lucky escape the small promontory was later named The Rock of Providence.

St Ninian's Cave is a place for pilgrimage where visitors leave driftwood crosses. However, the early stone crosses found in the cave date from the 6th century.

★★★★★ ADVENTURERS RATING



OS grid Ref: NX 422 359 – NX 478 362

**BURROWHEAD COAST**

**8**





There are two large sandy bays, Garlieston Bay and Rigg or Cruggleton Bay, located on either side of the harbour village of Garlieston.

Rigg Bay can be accessed through Galloway House Gardens or along a coastal path from the village. This is probably named after the ridges of rocks in the bay that would have made landing by boat a challenge. At one end of this bay is a rocky promontory covered in seaweed which is called Sliderry Point, named after the Scots term for slippery.

★★★★☆ FAMILY RATING

★★★★☆ ADVENTURERS RATING

 415, 416, 359

9

**GARLIESTON BAY & RIGG BAY**



OS grid Ref: NX 478 462 & NX 476 447



There are a series of small sandy beaches between rocky outcrops adjacent to Mossyard Caravan Park. The beach includes a tombolo, a double beach created by a spit of sand linking the mainland to a small island.

This rocky island is called Garvellan Rocks – derived from the Gaelic *garbh eilean* meaning rough island. Further into the bay is a rock called Craignesket – which is thought to have derived from the Gaelic *creag n'fheusgan* meaning rock of the mussels.

★★★★☆ FAMILY RATING

★★★★☆ ADVENTURERS RATING



OS grid Ref: NX 553 519



MOSSYARD

10





Brighthouse Bay is a sheltered sandy beach flanked by rocky outcrops with shallow water, and an expanse of wet sand and rock pools when the tide goes out. The adjacent holiday park has a shop and café.

From Brighthouse Bay there are a number of waymarked footpaths that help you to explore the rocky shoreline of the Borgue Coast, where there are many evocative names, such as Rumblekirk – a sea cave with blowholes that emit strange rumbling noises in wild weather.

★★★★★ FAMILY RATING

★★★★★ ADVENTURERS RATING

 517,S1

11

**BORGUE COAST & BRIGHOUSE BAY**



OS grid Ref: NX 637 457



The Doon has a number of small sheltered sandy beaches between rocky outcrops. At low tide the wreck of the Monrieth can be seen lying in the sands where it came to rest over 100 years ago. This popular beach is marked on maps as Nun Mill Bay but is more commonly known as The Doon.

This 'unofficial' name is a reference to the ancient monument on the hill behind the beach called The Doon which is derived from the Celtic word *dún* meaning fort or fortified hill.

★★★★☆ FAMILY RATING

★★★★☆ ADVENTURERS RATING

 517,S1



OS grid Ref: NX 657 487



THE DOON (NUN MILL BAY)

12





The scenery of Auchencairn Bay and Hestan Island provide one of the most beautiful views in the area, but many vantage points can only be reached on foot.

White Port is probably named after the colour of numerous seashells washed up, while Red Haven has reddish coloured sand – note that when asking for directions locals pronounce it ‘Reid Ha’en’.

Take care the tidal island of Hestan should only be visited with a thorough knowledge of the Solway tides.

★★★★☆ ADVENTURERS RATING

13

AUCHENCAIRN COAST

OS grid Ref: NX 840 519 – NX 809 483





The picturesque village of Rockcliffe has a sandy beach with rocky outcrops. Many of the buildings were built by Victorian developers who constructed villas to attract the 'well to do' to the fashionable rugged coast and christened it Rockcliffe.

The National Trust for Scotland manage much of the surrounding countryside including Rough Island which has a tidal causeway and can be visited on foot outside the breeding season for ground nesting birds such as the ringed plover.

★★★★☆ FAMILY RATING

★★★★☆ ADVENTURERS RATING

 372A



OS grid Ref: NX 848 537



ROCKCLIFFE

14





The Colvend Coast provides the setting for the East Stowtry Coast National Scenic Area and has an indented shore with towering cliffs and secret bays which can be discovered by taking the cliff-top footpath that runs between Sandyhills and Rockcliffe.

The big tides, shifting sands and rugged rocks are fun to explore but have been the cause of many shipwrecks in the past. Perhaps this treacherous shore has led people to believe that the shore at Bogle Hole is haunted by a terrifying ghost.

★★★★★ ADVENTURERS RATING

15 COLVEND COAST



OS grid Ref: NX 891 552 – NX 850 536



Sandyhills is a sandy beach set within a large sheltered bay with shallow waters. At low tide the base of the towering cliffs further west can be explored and include the tall narrow rock arch known as Needles Eye after its distinctive shape.

Next to it is Piper's Cave, a natural cave extended by copper mining and reputed to be haunted by a man who entered playing bagpipes and has never returned. Can you hear the drone of the pipes in the mouth of the cave?

★★★★☆ FAMILY RATING

★★★☆☆ ADVENTURERS RATING



OS grid Ref: NX 891 553



SANDYHILLS

16





Southernness is a small village constructed in the 1760s around the base of an old lighthouse erected to warn sailing ships approaching Dumfries of dangerous rocky outcrops. Sandy beaches are found on both sides of the village and to the west extend out to the vast Mersehead Sands.

The promontory was once called Saulterness, meaning saltmakers point, after the salt pans that produced salt which was important for preserving food. The village has a long history as a sea bathing resort and now has a large holiday park, pub, chip shop and general store.

★★★★☆ FAMILY RATING

★★★★☆ ADVENTURERS RATING

 372,825

17

SOUTHERNESS



OS grid Ref: NX 997 543



Powfoot is a rare example of a sandy beach on the muddy shores of the inner Solway. A traditional line of cottages at White Row offered lodging for sea bathers and for a short while the village was called Queensberry after the owner of the estate. However, the name didn't stick and reverted to Powfoot which is derived from the location at the foot of a *pow* - Scots for a slow moving stream.

The Edwardian red brick houses are all that were completed of an ambitious plan to create a new sea resort designed to be a rival to Blackpool!

★★★★☆ FAMILY RATING

★★★★☆ ADVENTURERS RATING



OS grid Ref: NY 140 652



POWFOOT

18





- 1** COCKLE SHORE (BALYETT, STRANRAER)
- 2** WEST RHINS COAST
- 3** PORT LOGAN
- 4** MULL OF GALLOWAY COAST
- 5** CHAPEL ROSSAN BAY & NEW ENGLAND BAY

- 6** SANDHEAD
- 7** MONRIETH BAY & BACK BAY, MONRIETH
- 8** BURROWHEAD COAST
- 9** GARLIESTON BAY & RIGG BAY
- 10** MOSSYARD
- 11** BORGUE COAST & BRIGHOUSE BAY

- 12** THE DOON (NUN MILL BAY)
- 13** AUCHENCAIRN COAST
- 14** ROCKCLIFFE
- 15** COLVEND COAST
- 16** SANDYHILLS
- 17** SOUTHERNESS
- 18** POWFOOT

## KEY

Cafe 

Shop 

Toilets 

Walking 

Parking (free) 

Parking (pay) 

