

John Muir Way

Multi-use access notes for route users



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The 134 mile John Muir Way runs coast to coast through Scotland's central heartland. Named after the world-famous conservationist who inspired North America's national parks, the route links Helensburgh, on the west coast from where John Muir set sail to North America, and Dunbar, where he was born. The changing character, views, topography, and the way in which the route reveals the diverse countryside, wildlife and historic features within easy reach of Central Scotland has something to appeal to everyone.

Although the route was originally designed and promoted for walkers and cyclists, much of it is accessible to horseriders, who enjoy equal access rights to walkers and cyclists under the Land Reform (Scotland) Act. Some sections of the route have a long history of equestrian use, or can easily and sustainably accommodate shared use, for example the Strathkelvin Railway Path and some of the tracks which the route follows around fields in East Lothian. Other sections, such as the River Avon walkway and the coastal path around Dunbar, are impassable with a horse and never likely to be suitable for multi-use because of numerous steep steps.

These notes were originally produced by British Horse Society (BHS) Scotland to help anyone interested in using part or all of the John Muir Way to identify the location and brief details of features which may restrict multi-use of the waymarked route. Whilst the focus of these notes is on horseriders, the information on obstructions is equally relevant to a wide range of other users including cyclists, walkers with pushchairs, and people with mobility issues. These notes are intended to supplement other information available, including from the route website www.johnmuirway.org.

Only those restrictions which may present an issue for experienced riders are noted below – shallow fords, vehicular bridges, cross drains, gates which can only be opened or closed if dismounted, rough ground, sheep and cattle are all part of riding off-road and so are not documented. Horse riders should also be aware that the John Muir Way passes through the middle of Edinburgh and various other towns, and various sections include stretches on busy public roads. Inclusion of a particular feature does not necessarily mean that it is impassable with a horse. Photos have been included where appropriate to help you assess for yourself whether a feature such as steps, a narrow footbridge, gate or gap less than 1.5m wide may present an obstruction to you. The route managers will endeavor to update this information when changes are made, but neither the accuracy of this information or accessibility is guaranteed.

Suggestions for parking and alternative routes to avoid restrictions on multi-use are included where possible, but do not constitute a recommendation. All route users are responsible for deciding for themselves whether this route, or any part of it, is suitable for their intended use, taking account of the abilities, skills, fitness and experience of themselves and their horse(s), as well as season, weather conditions etc. Event organisers, groups or commercial operators considering using the John Muir Way are urged to contact the route managers (see route website for details).

Remember that whether on foot, cycle or horseback, rights of access in Scotland depend on access takers and land managers accepting individual responsibility for their actions. The Scottish Outdoor Access Code provides guidance on what this means on the ground <https://www.outdooraccess-scotland.scot/>. Specific information for horse riders can be


downloaded from <http://www.bhsscotland.org.uk/responsible-riding.html>. Courtesy, consideration of others' needs and good communication are the key to sharing paths. Always pass others you meet along the trail at a walk, and elsewhere limit your pace to ground conditions and visibility. On surfaced paths and other well used sections of the route, riders need to be particularly careful to respect other users and clear dung off the path.

Although the route is waymarked throughout, sometimes the waymarks may be less readily visible, so make sure you have a map with you and know how to read it.

Helensburgh to Balloch

A waymarked cycle lane runs parallel to the main road most of the way from Hill House at Helensburgh to Arden, linking onto disused road which runs parallel to the A82 down the western shore of Loch Lomond. The cycle lane provides safe multi-use access which can be used confidently by horse riders even though they are not specified on the standard signage. The off-road waymarked walking route over Bannachra Muir is likely to be more appealing to many riders.


There is limited parking on the seafront car park at Helensburgh at the start of the John Muir Way, and spacious parking at Loch Lomond Shores, Alexandria. Parking at Balloch Country Park before the height restriction barrier is very limited, usually without space for a trailer or box.

Location OSGR	Issue	Alternative option(s)
Path from Bennachra Muir to Daleith Muir NS347827	<p>Several sets of stone steps in line of path, passable with care with a horse</p> 	

Balloch to Strathblane – cycle braid

There are no restrictions on the waymarked route through Balloch Country Park, but the park is very well used, particularly by walkers, many with dogs, young children or buggies so riders should take particular care to respect other users if riding through the park.

The disused railway west of Croftamie is multi-use accessible, as is the West Highland Way south from Gartness, but the bridge over the River Endrick on the disused railway between Croftamie and Gartness is impassable with a horse and the river is too deep and steep-banked to ford. The new Kilpatrick Hills section of John Muir Way opened in April 2016 is multi-use accessible (with one exception – Auchineden Estate gate from Carbeth/B821) and would avoid this section. This involves 13km of upland path which is relatively steep and challenging in a few places and is not suitable for touring bikes. Do-able (and excellent) and for mountain bikes or sturdy hybrids, probably with pushing in several places.

Location OSGR	Issue	Alternative option(s)
<p>NS484865 Pipe bridge over River Endrick</p>	<p>95cm wide metal footbridge over pipe supported on pillars. Bridge span, narrow width and insubstantial open metal mesh decking considered insufficiently robust to support horse.</p> 	<p>Use the JMW walking route over the Kilpatrick Hills – but note this involves 13km of upland path, relatively steep and challenging in a few places (mountain bikes or heavy duty hybrids)</p>

NS513847
Laighparks,
south of
Gartness
on West
Highland
Way

Heavy wooden gate across line of path with weighted self-closing mechanism, wire on top with barbs stripped back only for first 50cm, opening width restricted to 1.25m. Passable with care.



NS526822

On north side of road gate across track with narrow gap to east side.



Stay wire on strainer post alongside gap restricts width.



Gate on east side of track with 1m gap on east side. Gate unlocked but overgrown and very heavy.



NS533796 Easter Carbeth track junction with B821	Self-closing bridlegate onto road opens inwards (i.e. onto field) but telegraph pole in middle restricts exit to 1.1m max at offset angle which makes it difficult to negotiate with a horse. Main gate padlocked.	None
		





Balloch to Strathblane - Kilpatrick Hills walking route (opened April 2016)

The Kilpatrick Hills section of the John Muir Way opened in April 2016 is multi-use accessible, currently with one exception at the access to Auchineden Estate from the B821/Carbeth (see below). The section includes 13km of upland path which is relatively steep and challenging in a few places and is not suitable for touring bikes, but do-able (and excellent) and for mountain bikes or sturdy hybrids, probably with pushing in several places.

Location OSGR	Issue	Alternative option(s)
NS525789 Auchineden Estate access gates from B821 Carbeth	Route passes through narrow hooped metal kissing gate, next to vehicle access gates (usually closed), pedestrian access only. 	Informal access is currently being taken around the end of the short perimeter wall (as shown)

Strathblane to Kirkintilloch

The Strathkelvin Railway Path which links Strathblane and Kirkintilloch is entirely multi-use accessible, although there are several bollards, barriers and bridges which restrict width in places.

Location OSGR	Issue	Alternative option(s)
NS564793 Junction Strathkelvin Railway Path and A891	Gap between central bollard and side posts 1.04m 	
NS610785 Footbridge south of Kilwinnet	Narrow wooden footbridge 1.04m wide, passable with horse if dismounted, decking worn in places. non-slip strips added 2018 	
NS615786 Footbridge over river south of Clachan of Campsie	Narrow wooden footbridge, passable with horse if dismounted, non-slip strips added in 2018 	
NS628776 Bridge over Glazert Water, Lennoxton	Concrete bollards in middle of path either end of bridge, max 1.06m gap either side 	




NS656743 Junction of railway walkway and A803	1.2m gap between offset metal barriers at junction of path and public road. Passable with care but difficult to negotiate with horse due to kerb along grass and low metal railing around grass outside funeral parlour which restricts the functional gap and turning space to a maximum of 1 metre.	
		

Kirkintilloch to Falkirk Wheel



The John Muir Way has separate walking and cycling routes for much of this section. The waymarked walking route along the Antonine Wall is potentially suitable for multi-use but is currently obstructed by various kissing gates and barriers as detailed below. The waymarked cycle route mainly follows the canal towpath, which is passable with a horse other than immediately east of the M80 underpass (see below).




The cycle route alternative around Rough Castle is entirely multi-use accessible, but riders should be aware that in places the fenced track runs immediately alongside a railway line. Although there are various car parks along the Forth and Clyde Canal, most are too small to accommodate or allow sufficient turning space for trailers or horse boxes. There is usually spacious parking at the Falkirk Wheel, but please check in advance.

Location OSGR	Issue	Alternative option(s)
NS702759 Track east of Bar Farm, Twechar, leading up to Bar Hill	Locked field gate across track with narrow wooden kissing gate adjacent, impassable with horse	Use canal towpath
		

<p>NS706758 end of track west side of Bar Hill</p>	<p>Locked field gate across track, heavy duty metal fixed squeeze-through stile adjacent impassable with cycle or horse.</p> 	<p>Use canal towpath</p>
<p>NS707758 east end of track leading onto scheduled monument on Bar Hill</p>	<p>Locked metal field gate across track with heavy duty fixed metal squeeze-through stile adjacent, impassable with cycle or horse.</p> 	<p>Use canal towpath</p>
<p>NS714761 Forest boundary east side of Strone Plantation</p>	<p>Metal field gate across track is usually padlocked. Adjacent narrow wooden kissing gate with very restricted space, impassable with cycle or horse</p> 	<p>Use canal towpath</p>

<p>NS720762 forest/farm access track between B802 and Bar Hill</p>	<p>Field gate across track unlocked at time of survey but appears may be locked at other times. Adjacent narrow wooden kissing gate impassable with horse</p> 	<p>Use canal towpath</p>
<p>NS721762 Path junction east side of B803</p>	<p>Narrow heavy duty metal kissing gate impassable with bike or horse</p> 	<p>Use canal towpath (this and the next barrier can be avoided by using the B802 and minor roads through Croy but the barrier on the west side of Croy Hill still presents an obstruction to multi-use access along the John Muir Way)</p>
<p>NS723762 Track at Croy</p>	<p>Padlocked metal gates across track, fixed heavy duty metal chicane adjacent impassable with cycle or horse</p> 	

<p>NS725762 west side Croy Hill</p>	<p>Metal kissing gate with fixed metal barriers/railings on either side. Impassable with a horse, difficult with cycle (cyclists lifting bikes over and horses accessing Croy Hill from east side)</p> 	<p>None other than canal towpath</p>
<p>Auchinstarry Canal Basin (access between road and towpath)</p>	<p>1m wide gap between barriers on link between road and towpath very narrow for horses</p>	<p>None – but no restrictions if following the towpath without linking onto road</p>
<p>NS737774 Craigmarloch drawbridge - east of road between Kilsyth and Dullatur</p>	<p>Main barrier providing access onto the canal towpath is locked. Adjacent offset barriers are too narrow and too tight a turn for a horse. Horse stile potential trip hazard</p> 	<p>None</p>

<p>NS766787 Wyndford (west of Banknock)</p>	<p>Succession of barriers across towpath, varying in width between 0.83m and 1.2m.</p> 	<p>Use alternative track running parallel to towpath</p>
<p>NS789785 M80 underpass Castle Cary</p>	<p>Two metal barriers alongside a locked gate leading onto the towpath from the road, narrowest 0.66m wide, widest 0.94m, impassable with a horse.</p> 	<p>Follow road north through Hags and Longcroft rejoining canal towpath at Underwood</p>
<p>NS838798 West side of Rough Castle</p>	<p>Metal kissing gate adjacent to locked metal gate impassable with a horse</p> 	<p>Use waymarked cycle route</p>




NS845800	Staggered metal barriers, too narrow for a horse to pass. 	Use waymarked cycle route
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Falkirk Wheel to Linlithgow

This section is again mainly split into separate walking and cycling routes. Although alternatives can easily be identified to avoid steps and other restrictions on the waymarked walking route through Falkirk (see below for further details), the promoted cycling route is a more suitable and straightforward option for horse riders. The only restrictions on the cycling route are a metal chicane barrier at Glen Village where the waymarked cycle route leads back down onto the canal towpath from the B8028 at OSGR885782. This can be avoided by continuing north on the B8028 – beware as this is a busy road – then turning first right. At the end of this lane, beyond the last house, a wide path leads south down to the canal towpath. There are two 1.2m gates across the towpath west of Polmont, immediately north of the young offenders’ institute, but these are passable with care with a horse.

The new car park at Canada Woods (south-west of Falkirk) next to the café and bike hire centre has been designed to include space for horse trailers, with direct access onto the John Muir Way cycle route and other multi-use tracks, but this car park can get very busy with mountain bikers, particularly at weekends.

Location OSGR	Issue	Alternative option
NS880792 Waymarked walking route west of Falkirk High Station	Locked metal barrier across towpath, metal chicane pedestrian barrier adjacent too narrow to allow horse access. 	Turn off canal Towpath Immediately before barrier, using vehicular Underpass under railway, using roads to rejoin John Muir Way at Glen village or Callendar Park

<p>NS881791 Falkirk High Station</p>	<p>Narrow underpass with restricted head height. Passable with a cycle, or with a horse dismounted, but better avoided by using vehicular underpass</p> 	
<p>NS884790 east of Falkirk High Station</p>	<p>Steps leading up onto road.</p> 	<p>Alternative un-stepped route available to/from the south platform of train station</p>
<p>NS903782 Railway underpass east of Hallglen</p>	<p>60cm wide sloping concrete path with very restricted headspace alongside burn through underpass below railway line, impassable with a horse, very difficult with a bike.</p> 	<p>Use promoted cycling route along canal towpath (noting the alternative access onto towpath from Glen Village)</p>

<p>NS966758 East side of Avon viaduct</p>	<p>Long flight of steps leading down from canal towpath to River Avon path.</p> 	<p>Use waymarked cycle route along towpath</p>
<p>Path along River Avon</p>	<p>Series of boardwalks, steps and narrow wooden footbridges unsuitable for horses</p> 	<p>Use cycle route alternative</p>

Linlithgow to Bo'ness


All of this section is multi-use accessible; width restrictions are noted below.




<p>NS986798 southern end of track through Kinnell Wood Bo'ness</p>	<p>Gap between dyke and fence 1.1m, functional width further restricted by fingerpost</p> 	
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<p>NS982805 Kinneil House</p>	<p>Waymarked JMW goes through 99cm gap in wall in front of castle and across garden</p> 	<p>Easily avoided by following alternative path around outside of buildings and walled garden, waymarked as Antonine Wall Path</p>
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Bo'ness to Queensferry

This section of the John Muir Way follows broad paths and tracks which in theory are suitable for multi-use, but horse access is restricted at the gate to the east of Hopetoun Estate.

Location	Issue	Alternative option
<p>NS985811 Access from car park onto Public park, Castleloan</p>	<p>Two gaps either side of locked vehicle barrier, width 1.3m (bins shown in photo, previously reducing gap to 1m, have been relocated).</p> 	

<p>NS986813</p>	<p>Metal chicane barriers either side of level crossing over railway line. Metal kissing gate 1.2m wide, 2m width between long sides of enclosure, 2.8m long. Tight turn for horse</p> 	
<p>NT012817 path around foreshore alongside works, Grangepans</p>	<p>Beware metal struts protruding out from wall which restrict usable width and height</p> 	<p>Passable with care</p>
<p>NT055802 Blackness Castle</p>	<p>Walking route passes through narrow hooped metal kissing gate leading onto steps along outside of castle wall</p> 	<p>Use alternative waymarked cycle route</p>

NT081792
track into
Hopetoun
Estate east
of Midhope
Burn

Locked wooden deer-height gate across stone track.
Adjacent deer-height wooden self-closing gate 1.5m
gap, into fenced enclosure with second 1.5m self-
closing gate exit, both gates open outwards. Passable
with a cycle. Passable with care with a horse.






NT094787
Track east of
Hopetoun
House





Narrow gateway in stone dyke (gap 90cm, 1.9m high)
leading via self-closing gate into wooden railed
enclosure on east side of dyke, 3.3m long x 1.7m
wide, and 1.2m self-closing exit gate. Main gate
locked. Passable with a cycle. Impassable with horse
due to narrow gap in dyke; potentially passable with
care if dismounted.




Queensferry to The Meadows, Edinburgh

Most of this section should be multi-use accessible but at present a narrow metal barrier just north of Cramond Brig presents an obstruction to horses. The waymarked walking route over Corstorphine Hill is better suited to pedestrians but the only physical restrictions on use are narrow gateways and steps.

Location OSGR	Issue	Alternative option
NT144787 Long Craig Gate – western access to Dalmeny Estate	<p>Main gate padlocked. Kissing gate to side removed but remaining gap only 84cm wide with further gap 90cm wide at right angle with no turning space between. Impassable with a horse, track beyond wholly suitable for sustainable multi-use.</p> 	<p>Closest fully accessible access point is Leuchold Gate, 800m to SSE</p>
NT178756 eastern entry to Dalmeny Estate north of Cramond Bridge	<p>Main 12' gate across hard stone track padlocked. Adjacent metal offset barriers 1.2m long set back 1m from 1.05m gap between gatepost and further metal barrier in line with gate. Too narrow and too restricted turning with a horse, yet track beyond wholly suitable for sustainable multi-use.</p> 	<p>Alternative access relatively close by at Edinburgh Gate (c.400m to NW) leading into Dalmeny Estate and ultimately allowing links to JMW</p>
NT207737 north side of Corstorphine Hill	<p>Long flight of shallow steps with single metal handrail.</p> 	<p>Use waymarked cycle route on road or beaten earth path which runs parallel to steps</p>




<p>NT211735 Corstorphine Hill path on east side of Edinburgh Zoo</p>	<p>4 relatively shallow stone steps alongside metal fence around zoo</p> 	<p>Use waymarked cycle route</p>
<p>NT211733</p>	<p>90cm wide stone doorway with 90cm wide gap at right angle beyond through dyke</p> 	<p>Use waymarked cycle route or beaten earth path</p>
<p>NT215730 Path junction with A8</p>	<p>1m wide metal self-closing gate. Passable with cycle or horse</p> 	<p>Use waymarked cycle route</p>
<p>NT213727 Link onto disused railway Saughtonhall</p>	<p>Walking route includes steps up onto railway line path.</p> 	<p>Follow waymarked 'JMW Step free option' to link onto railway path</p>




<p>NT219724 Saughton path up to tram station</p>	<p>Ample width for multi-use but unclear if signs are mandatory restriction to pedestrian and cycling only use</p> 	<p>Core Path status so no restrictions on horse access</p>
<p>NT220708 East side of aqueduct of Union Canal over Water of Leith</p>	<p>Long flights of steep steps with a wooden gutter alongside for cycle wheels. Impassable with a horse</p> 	<p>Use waymarked cycle route or avoid this section by linking through on public roads</p>




Edinburgh (The Meadows) to North Berwick

Most of the John Muir Way between Edinburgh and North Berwick is passable with a horse, although in places this may mean a minor deviation or using the cycle route along the road. There is usually unrestricted parking at the public car park near the shore between Prestonpans and the old power station. All of the other car parks along the coast road between Prestonpans and Gullane have height barriers which exclude trailers and horse boxes.

Location OSGR	Issue	Alternative option
<p>NT313726 Brunstane Station</p>	<p>Foot/cycle bridge over railway line.</p>  	<p>Follow waymarked 'JMW step free option' on path then footways initially north around The Range before re-joining John Muir Way on Brunstane Burn Path</p>

<p>NT370738 West side of car park near Morrison's Haven, west of Prestonpans</p>	<p>1.2m gap between fence and metal barrier 1m high.</p> 	<p>Use road and access coast path again through car park</p>
<p>Waymarked walking route around Prestonpans</p>	<p>Various sets of steps, impassable with horse</p> 	<p>None – follow cycle route along road</p>
<p>NT396756 East side of power station Prestonpans</p>	<p>6 shallow concrete steps either side of bridge, passable with care with a horse</p> 	<p>Use waymarked cycle route along road</p>
<p>Cockenzie to Gosford</p>	<p>Technically horses are not allowed on the signed cycle path parallel to the road. Beaten earth path which runs parallel through scrub is passable with care with a horse.</p>	<p>At low tide use beach</p>

<p>NT441771 immediately north west of junction of B1348 and A198</p>	<p>1.1m wide wooden footbridge on waymarked pedestrian route, step either end onto/off bridge. Passable with care with a horse if dismounted</p> 	<p>At low tide use beach</p>
<p>NT449789 Burn from North Wood into Gosford Bay</p>	<p>Step either end of 1.2m wide wooden footbridge</p> 	
<p>NT513840 East end of track between Archerfield and Dirleton</p>	<p>1.1m gap alongside locked gate across track, signed for multi-use.</p> 	




<p>NT524852 Field boundary NW Invereil House</p>	<p>Bridlegate from field onto fenced path, opening one way onto field. Step slightly set back from line of gate with electric cable over. Step makes it very difficult for horses to negotiate this gate in either direction due to trip hazard and difficulty manoeuvring to use opening mechanism</p> 	
	<p>Stay for telegraph post restricts path height and width</p> 	
<p>NT539854 Gateway onto West Links from path west of North Berwick</p>	<p>Metal gate in stone dyke 1.1m wide, gate usually propped open</p> 	




North Berwick to Dunbar




The waymarked John Muir Way cycle route between North Berwick and Dunbar mainly follows the road or tarmac cycle tracks running parallel to the old A1. Much of the waymarked John Muir Way walking route on this section is multi-use accessible, some parts being regularly used by horses, but the initial section south from North Berwick is not currently passable with a horse, the only alternative being public road, linking back onto the John Muir Way south of North Berwick Law, west of Bonnington Farm.

There is limited parking for trailers and boxes at John Muir Country Park, although bye-laws require a permit, obtainable from East Lothian Council. Information boards near the car park identify other routes promoted for horse riders.

Location OSGR	Issue	Alternative options
<p>T553842 Car park onto North Berwick Law</p>	<p>Locked gate across the track with a narrow stone squeeze stile adjacent to it, behind a metal railing alongside burn. This leads into a small fenced wooden enclosure max 2m square with a bridlegate opening outwards onto the hill. Impassable with a horse or bike.</p> 	<p>None other than public roads – beware fast traffic and blind bends on B1347</p>
		

<p>NT553840 Fence around south west of North Berwick Law</p>	<p>Padlocked metal field gate with adjacent new wooden kissing gate, difficult with cycle, impassable with horse</p> 	<p>See above</p>
<p>NT555834 Track junction west of Bonnington</p>	<p>Double metal gates on north side of track, open at time of survey. If closed would be tricky to open as off hinges and fastened with string. Further wide span double metal gates on south side of track, off hinges, broken rails, fastened with rope. Narrow stone squeeze stile adjacent</p> 	<p>Passable with care</p>
<p>NT584779 Track junction with B1377 south of Drylaw Hill</p>	<p>Wooden steps lead from fenced pedestrian path down onto road, impassable with horse</p> 	<p>Use metal gate across track before fingerpost which links directly onto road</p>

<p>NT594778 Burn/leat west of Preston Mill</p>	<p>1.09m wide bridge with 2 side rails, 2 steps off bridge at southern end</p> 	<p>Use track from East Linton via Phantassie Farm to rejoin John Muir Way at bridge over River Tyne (see below)</p>
<p>NT594778 Bridge over River Tyne south of Preston Mill</p>	<p>Steep steps either end of weak wooden decked bridge, impassable with horse</p> 	<p>Use track from East Linton via Phantassie Farm to rejoin John Muir Way over multi-use bridge over River Tyne at NT600775</p>
<p>NT634785 Path along south side Hedderwick Sands</p>	<p>Wooden boardwalk with some rotten decking planks. Repairs to decking and handrail in 2018, now passable with care.</p> 	<p>Use waymarked cycle route</p>

<p>NT640788 Hedderwick Burn crossing</p>	<p>1.1m wide wooden bridge with two side rails and bottom kick rail. Extension ramps added on either side of bridge since photo below.</p> 	<p>Passable with care or use waymarked cycle route</p>
<p>NT657784 Biel Water bridge between West Barns and Belhaven</p>	<p>Metal footbridge over Biel Water, concrete steps either side, impassable with horse</p> 	<p>Use waymarked cycle route</p>
<p>NT667792 Belhaven Bay to Dunbar</p>	<p>Numerous flights of concrete steps with two narrow stone archways</p> 	<p>Use alternative Waymarked cycle route along Back Road</p>