

## Experience Galloway in miniature

Taking a walk at Mossdale is a great way to experience Galloway in miniature. The start of the route owes its creation to the great steam railway that once crossed this land. Though the trains are now long gone, what remains is a peaceful landscape of rugged farmland and woods that are full of life.

### What you might see

Mossdale has become a hotspot for red kites. These aerobatic birds, with their distinctive forked tails, can be seen here all year round. Look out for them soaring in the sky overhead, and listen for their whistling calls.

As well as the kites, the woods support a range of wildlife, including birds such as great spotted woodpeckers and nuthatches. In summer, the fields come alive with the wild calls of curlews and skylarks, while in winter, you might see hen harriers hunting over open ground.

Bog myrtle and carnivorous sundews grow in the bogs, while spring sees a multi-coloured carpet of wild flowers on the pasture, attracting butterflies such as ringlets and meadow browns.

Don't forget to watch out for red squirrels, which can often be seen scampering through the trees in Garel's Wood.

Red squirrel

## Enjoy the Galloway Kite Trail

Mossdale walk is owned by Airds Estate and Forestry Commission Scotland. It is part of the Galloway Kite Trail, a circular route that takes you to the best places to see the area's famous red kites.

Red kites are one of the rarest birds of prey in Scotland, and were extinct in this area until 2001. A re-introduction programme, over several years, has brought them back, and the birds are now once again breeding in the wild.

Why not visit some of the other sites on the Galloway Kite Trail?

- The secret cages – under one mile from Mossdale, the cages were the original release site for the kites.
- The kite feeding station – near Laurieston. The kites are fed here every day at 2 pm. It's a fantastic opportunity to see large numbers of the birds up close.
- RSPB Ken-Dee Marshes nature reserve – a great place to see kites, and lots of other wildlife such as water birds, woodland birds and red squirrels.

### Find out more:

RSPB Scotland, The Old School, Crossmichael, Castle Douglas DG7 3AP  
Tel: 01556 670464

[www.gallowaykitetrail.com](http://www.gallowaykitetrail.com)  
[www.rspb.org.uk/scotland](http://www.rspb.org.uk/scotland)



RSPB Scotland is part of the RSPB, which speaks out for birds and wildlife, tackling the problems that threaten our environment. Nature is amazing – help us keep it that way.

Images: red kite by Sue Tranter, red squirrel by Andy Hay, sundew by Andy Hay and nuthatch by Ben Hall (all rspb-images.com).

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# On the trail of the kite

## A walk from Mossdale



# This way!



Sundew



Nuthatch

## Key

To the secret cages ↑



Coniferous woodland



Broadleaved woodland



Farmland



Water



Road



Mossdale walk



Walk to Loch Stroan



Car park



Village shop



Information



- From the car park, walk down the track towards the old station and under “echo” bridge. Try creating your own echoes here – fun for kids of all ages!
- Follow the old “Paddy line”, until you reach the waymarkers directing you over the farmland towards the forest. This line was once the Dumfries to Portpatrick railway, which carried various kings, queens and other famous folk.
- After a few hundred metres, on the edge of the forest, you’ll reach a kissing gate. Gates like this are designed to allow people through, but keep animals out.
- Follow the track to a second gate at the Raiders’ Road forest drive. This is an old drove road featured in the novel *The Raiders* by Samuel Rutherford Crockett.
- Turn right and follow the Raiders’ Road until the walk re-enters the woodland and drops down to the shore of Mosssdale Loch. This is a fishing loch, stocked with brown and rainbow trout.
- Follow the loch shore through oak woodlands and then back towards Mossdale across farmland to where you started.
- The walk should take about 1½ hours.

## *The Thirty-Nine Steps*

When you walk under the echoing bridge at Mossdale, just think of all those who have passed this way before you. One of these was author John Buchan who used to visit the area on holiday. When he wrote his famous book, *The Thirty-Nine Steps*, Buchan set Richard Hannay’s thrilling escape on the train near here.