

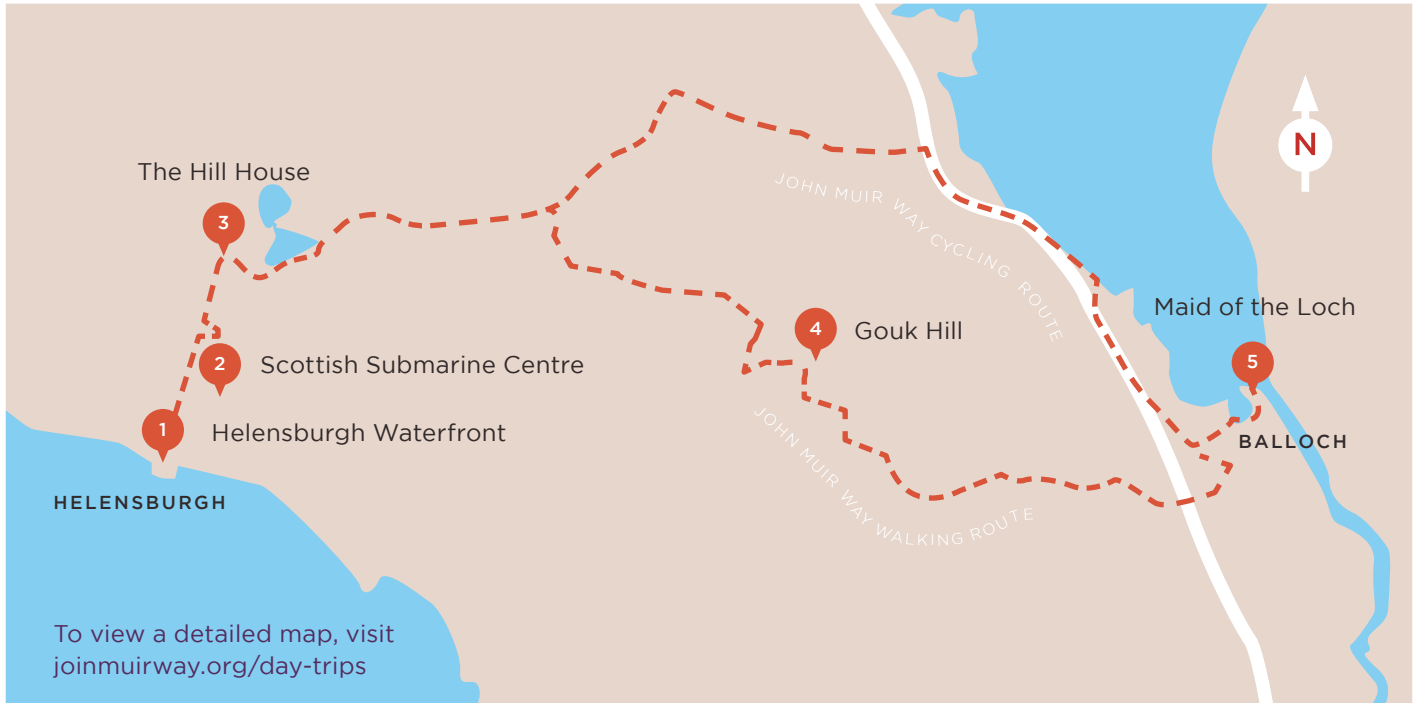
Helensburgh – Balloch Loop

ROUTE TYPE: Cycle

DISTANCE: 17 miles/27 km

AVERAGE TIME TO COMPLETE: 3 Hours

DIFFICULTY LEVEL: ■■■□ Hilly, Off-road



THE ROUTE

This half-day cycle uses both the walking and cycling John Muir Way routes to create a loop connecting Helensburgh to Balloch with stunning views over Loch Lomond in between. For the walking path section a suitable mountain or gravel bike with fat tyres is essential. The descent is somewhat technical in places but for experienced off-road cyclists it's good fun.

Starting and finishing at the John Muir Way's western terminus, explore Helensburgh's waterfront and Colquhoun Square before ascending along quiet streets towards the famous Hill House. Follow the cycle path out of town and then turn right onto the walking route up to Gouk Hill. There's an optional scramble to the summit beside the two ponds at the track's highest point but be prepared to carry or push your bike.

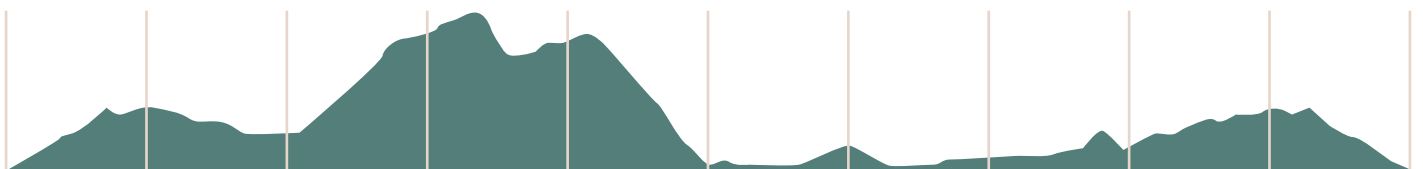
Take care through the woods where there are some steep steps and give way to walkers on the descent to Balloch. The Maid of the Loch steamship on Loch Lomond is your turning point. The return journey follows the much easier tarmac cycle route back to Helensburgh.



Gouk Hill climb

ELEVATION PROFILE

Total ascent 538m / Highest point 277m



PLACES OF INTEREST

- 1 **HELENSBURGH WATERFRONT**
The circular sculpture and seat at the entrance to Helensburgh pier mark the western end of the John Muir Way and also the start/finish of this route.
- 2 **SCOTTISH SUBMARINE CENTRE**
The route passes close to Scotland's only submarine museum where you can view a Stickleback sub and learn about the exploits of those daring submariners.
- 3 **THE HILL HOUSE**
Explore Charles Rennie Mackintosh's finest domestic creation, currently housed inside a protective 'box'. Go on a tour inside and out (even over the roof) and relax in the café.

*The Maid of the Loch**The Hill House*

- 4 **GOUK HILL**
Your reward for the almost constant climb from Helensburgh is the 277m summit of Gouk Hill. Take in the fantastic views over Loch Lomond and the Trossachs.
- 5 **MAID OF THE LOCH**
Loch Lomond's own steam ship is open for visits while being restored at its lochside berth. It also has a tearoom and can stamp route passports.

THE INSIDE TRACK

Helensburgh has some great eateries as well as a bike shop a stone's throw from the route start for those last-minute supplies. In Balloch there's a variety of shops at Loch Lomond Shores as well as boat tours on the loch. Make the time to tour the Maid of the Loch steamship and stop for a cuppa.

TERRAIN

This route uses a mix of quiet roads, sealed cycle path, forest track and rough singletrack footpath. It climbs from the coast to Gouk Hill so you'll need to bring decent fitness and a good range of gears. The walking route section is not designed for bikes but can be tackled on a mountain or gravel bike, taking care on the descent and through the narrow wooded section with steps. Please always slow down and give way when encountering walkers.

Please enjoy Scotland's outdoors responsibly.
Visit: outdooraccess-scotland.com

GETTING THERE

BY RAIL: There are regular trains from Glasgow to Helensburgh Central and a less frequent service to Helensburgh Upper. Balloch is served by a separate line.

BY BUS: First Greater Glasgow service 1B operates between Glasgow, Balloch and Helensburgh.

BY CAR: There is free parking at the far end of Helensburgh Pier.

Plan your trip and find more routes at:
johnmuirway.org/day-trips