

# My Top Places to Run

by Elaine Omand



Running has taken me to some amazing places, both in Scotland and around the world. It's a great way to explore, and an excuse for a trip! I've found myself up hills or in cities where I would never normally have visited, and really appreciate the adventures I have. Here are a few of my favourite places to run in Scotland.

## Dunkeld Hermitage

Sitting just off the A9, the Hermitage is set in gorgeous mature woodland beside a river. The Hermitage itself is a short walk from the car park, but follow the way-marked trails, and you can run deeper into the forest along some lovely undulating trails. Watch out for tree roots underfoot. On a sunny day, the light in the forest is spectacular. It is possible to follow trails all the way to Birnam, and see the huge Macbeth's Oak tree there.



## St. Cuthbert's Way

This 100-kilometer walking route in the Scottish Borders provides loads of choice for interesting routes. My favourite section is the start, between Melrose and Jedburgh, which takes in the Eildon hills, providing brilliant views over the countryside. The hills are quite steep but not very high, so manageable for all runners or walkers. The path follows a river, with sections of boardwalk, and undulating paths through the woods.

Both villages have café options for a postrun coffee.



### Fife Coastal Path

I live in Dundee, so right on my doorstep is the Fife Coastal Path, a marked route running from Newburgh to Kincardine. The route covers a huge range of terrains and passes through lots of villages along the way. A great day out is to start from St. Andrews and run south, along undulating coastal terrain, along the beach and golf course, and through villages. There are bus links with many of the villages along the route, so you can run as far as you wish, then hop on a bus to head back. I like finishing in Anstruther, where you can join the queue for their famous fish and chips at the harbour—a well-deserved reward after a long run!



### Bennachie—Aberdeenshire

Bennachie is a series of hills, half an hour from Aberdeen. The highest top is Oxen Craig at 528 meters so it's accessible to all, but the expanse of the trails here provides options for any length of run. The area is popular with local runners, so you're bound to bump into someone else up there. The Bennachie hill race is one of my favourite routes—an 8-mile loop which takes in three of the peaks. The hill is great as, once you get up onto the summit, you can enjoy the rolling climbs between the other hills—brilliant for some strength training!

### Mull of Kintyre

Tucked away on the West Coast, with narrow, winding roads, the Kintyre peninsula is a hidden gem. The sun always seems to shine on the area and the beaches are blessed with beautiful white sand. The area is popular with walkers, cyclists and artists, and there's no doubt why.

The Kintyre Way Route runs the length of the peninsula—70 miles in total—and weaves its way from west to east and back, taking in the best bits. It's an undulating routemixing hard trails, road, beach and grass, with something for everyone. The tops of the hills provide rewards with views out to Jura and Arran. There is something quite magical about the remoteness of the area; it's definitely worth exploring.

