

# Johnstone to Paisley via Gleniffer Braes



A walk from Johnstone to Paisley? Won't that be just houses and traffic? Well, you might be surprised. Within 10 minutes you'll be strolling on footpaths through woodlands, then climbing up past a river gorge for a promenade along Gleniffer Braes with magnificent views to Ben Lomond and beyond. You'll then drop down through a romantic wooded glen beloved of Paisley poet Robert Tannahill, past a spectacular waterfall and back into Paisley.

In Gleniffer Braes Country Park

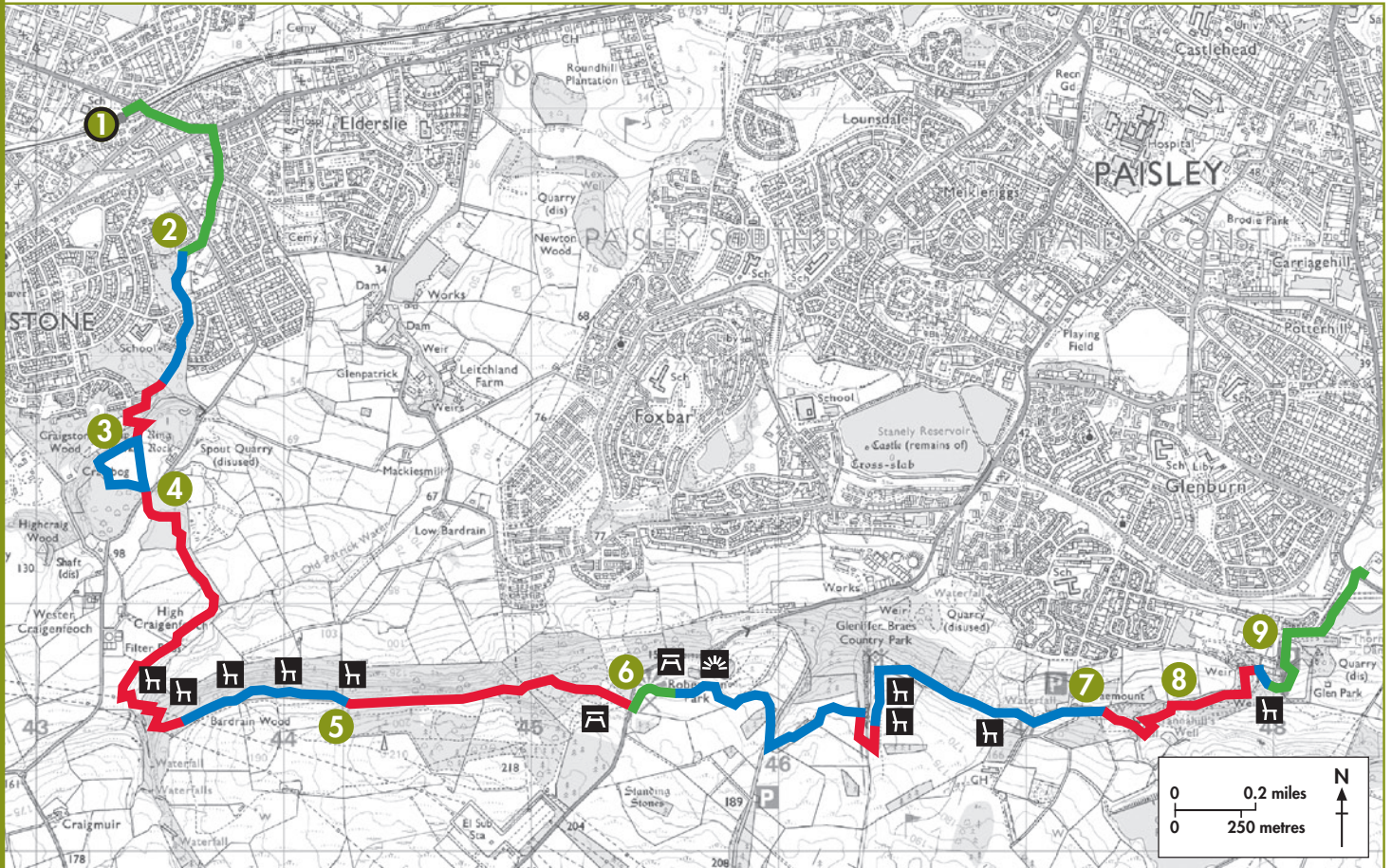


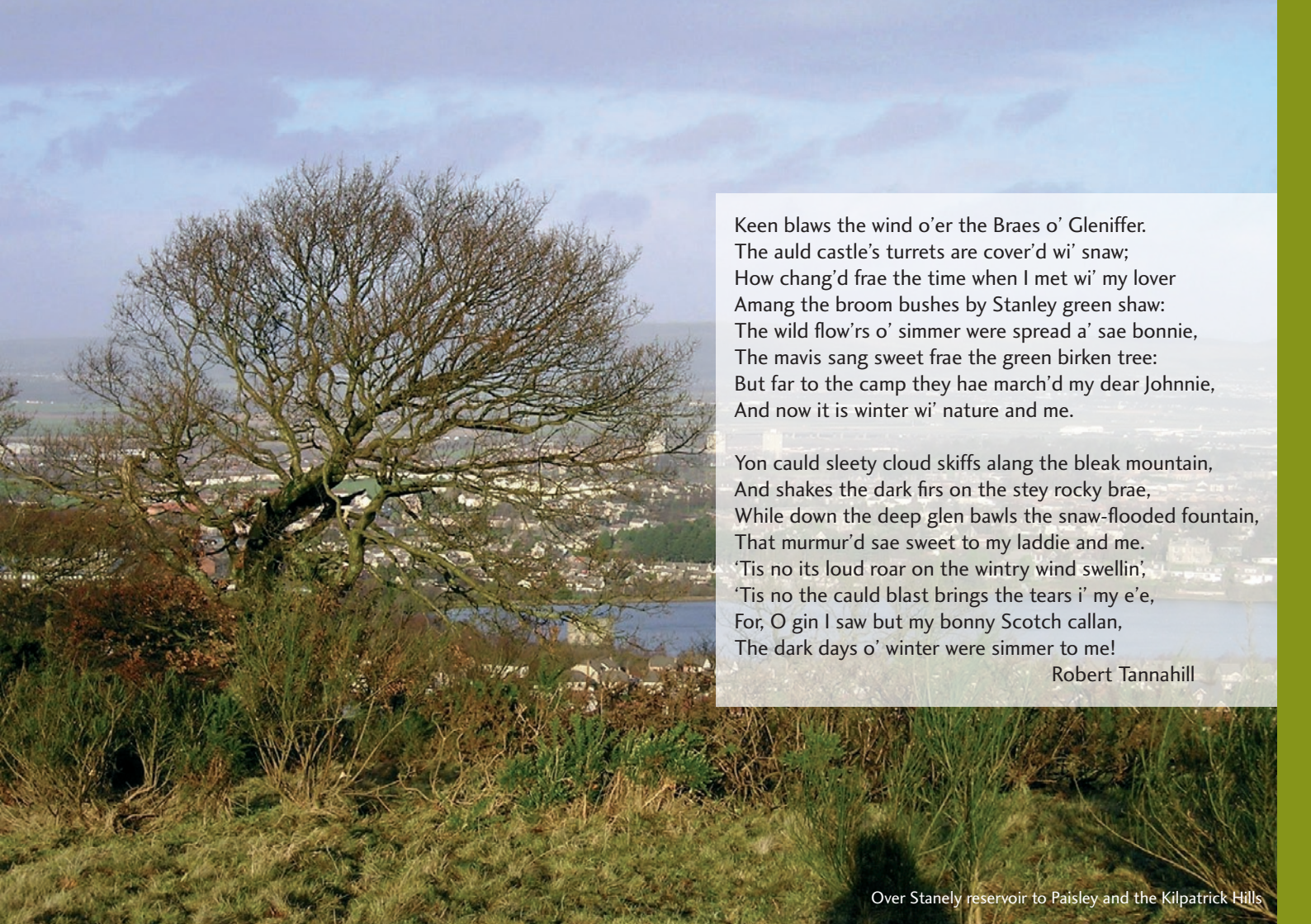
**Start and finish** The walk starts at Johnstone railway station (grid reference NS 433629), and finishes at bus stops near the Gleniffer Braes Visitor Centre, Glenfield Road, Paisley (grid reference NS 483611). We suggest you use public transport so you don't need to get back to the start. Directions are included for getting back to Johnstone if you decide to come by car.

**Distance** 9 km (6 miles). Allow three hours - more if you're taking a picnic.

**Terrain** All on clear paths, although there is one particularly steep uphill section as well as some muddy sections. Boots recommended. It can be much colder on Gleniffer Braes than down in Johnstone and Paisley, so make sure you've got warm clothing to keep the wind out. Dogs should be kept on leads between points 4 and 5, where cattle graze most of the year.

# Johnstone to Paisley via Gleniffer Braes





Keen blows the wind o'er the Braes o' Gleniffer.  
The auld castle's turrets are cover'd wi' snaw;  
How chang'd frae the time when I met wi' my lover  
Among the broom bushes by Stanley green shaw:  
The wild flow'rs o' simmer were spread a' sae bonnie,  
The mavis sang sweet frae the green birken tree:  
But far to the camp they hae march'd my dear Johnnie,  
And now it is winter wi' nature and me.

Yon cauld sleety cloud skiffs along the bleak mountain,  
And shakes the dark firs on the stey rocky brae,  
While down the deep glen bawls the snaw-flooded fountain,  
That murmur'd sae sweet to my laddie and me.  
'Tis no its loud roar on the wintry wind swellin',  
'Tis no the cauld blast brings the tears i' my e'e,  
For, O gin I saw but my bonny Scotch callan,  
The dark days o' winter were simmer to me!

Robert Tannahill

**1** From the railway platform, go up to the main road which crosses the railway line at the Paisley end of the platforms. Turn right (uphill) for 300m to a junction with traffic lights. Continue straight across the road and then turn left. A few metres beyond the lights turn right up Kings Road. Follow this, bending round to the right after 200m, to a T-junction with Auchenlodment Road. Cross the road and follow the tarmac path opposite into the woods, signposted Bluebell Woods and Woodland Walks.

**Johnstone Castle** The woodland you enter after crossing Auchenlodment Road used to be part of the wooded estates surrounding Johnstone Castle. This stately home was built in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century by George Houston, the fourth laird of Johnstone Castle. An enterprising man, Houston laid out the centre of Johnstone and started it on its way to being a prosperous Victorian town, based originally on coal mining. The stately home's heyday was in the nineteenth century when it was surrounded by magnificent wooded parklands. Most of the grounds were redeveloped for housing after World War II – becoming the area now known as Johnstone Castle. Some of the original wooded grounds still remain around the edges of the housing scheme. Between points 2 and 3, our route follows the line of a Victorian track through this former parkland.

**2** After 100m you come to an obvious path junction. Turn

off to the left, signposted Bluebell Woods, along a gravel path. After another 100m you will join another path coming in from your right. Carry on the wider path for just over 500m, following signposts for Bluebell Woods and then Rannoch Road. Just after a small footbridge and a flight of old timber steps, turn sharp left (signposted Rannoch Road). After 100m, turn left off the main path onto another footpath, which leads over a timber footbridge.

**3** Go up the short steep slope with some steps near the top. At the top of the slope, there is a junction with another narrower path to the right. Take either path – they join again after 500m, just before the path crosses a road. (The path to the right is narrower and slightly longer, but has nice views out over Johnstone.)

**4** Cross the road carefully. Continue along the gravel path, signposted as the Brandy Burn Way to Gleniffer Braes Country Park. The path leads through an old woodland and then along the edge of fields above the Brandy Burn. After about 1.5km, the path drops down to a footbridge across the river, and then climbs steeply up the hillside beyond. There is a handrail up the steepest section at the start of the climb, and seats for rests. After the path levels out at the top, there is a view indicator on a stone cairn to the left of the path. Continue along the path for another 500m or so to a pedestrian gate.

**The Brandy Burn** Although its official name is the Glenpatrick Burn, locals call it the Brandy Burn. If you see its colour after heavy rain, you'll understand why! Just upstream from the footbridge, the Burn tumbles down through a gorge with a series of waterfalls: seven, according to local legend. Although there is no easy path up to the waterfalls, in the winter you can just glimpse the first one from the footbridge.

**5** Go through the pedestrian gate. You are now in Gleniffer Braes Country Park. Continue straight on, following the path that contours along the hillside towards an electricity pylon 1 km away on the skyline. The path is narrower and muddy in places, but quite clear. Ignore any smaller tracks off to the side. The path leads you slightly to the left (downhill) of the pylon. You will cross a small burn underneath the electricity cables. About 150m further on, the path forks. Take the right fork, a wide grassy path leading gently uphill towards a clump of conifer trees. 200m beyond this fork, the path forks again either side of two rowan trees. Take the right hand fork, which squeezes between a couple of conifers after about 50m. Keep going in roughly the same direction, slightly uphill, past two picnic benches after another 150m and then up to the road just beyond.





**How far can you see?** One of the highlights of this walk is the view across the Clyde valley to the Highlands. You'll go past a couple of view indicators that will help you pick out what's on the horizon: one is at the top of the steep hill after the footbridge (between points 4 and 5) and the other is near the car park in Gleniffer Braes Country Park (just after point 6). On a clear day you can easily see Ben Lomond 42km (26 miles) away, and sometimes too the twin peaks of Ben More and Stobinian peeping out a little to the right 63km (40 miles) distant.

**6** Cross the road very carefully - vehicles can approach extremely quickly. Go into the car park and follow it to the far end. Continue along the obvious level track past the view indicator. The path goes through a metal gate about 200m beyond the view indicator, and then crosses a road after another 500m. Continue along the path, now signposted as the Tannahill Walkway towards Glen Park. 500m from the road

there is a diversion from the tarmac path due to an unsafe bridge over the gorge. Follow the grassy path up along the bank of the river for 100m to cross at a small timber footbridge, then turn left to rejoin the tarmac path on the other side of the closed bridge. The path soon starts heading steeply downhill towards Paisley, then curves round to the right and contours along the hillside. You will come to a car park 1 km from the footbridge.

**7** Go through the car park, across the road, and through a metal gate into Glen Park. There is a signpost to a waterfall and information centre. The path forks after 100m. Take the right fork, along a muddy track through rhododendrons and across a footbridge over a burn after 150m. 50m beyond the burn, a path on the left is signposted to the waterfall. Follow this, going down a steep flight of steps with the waterfall on your left (there is a viewpoint at the foot of the waterfall). Continue down the glen for

100m, past Tannahill's Well on your right and then a commemorative cairn on your left.

**8** A few metres after the cairn, cross the burn by a small stone bridge. Climb the short flight of steps and turn right along the narrow muddy path which continues on down the glen. You will pass a pond on your right. Continue along the path in the same direction without crossing the dam. This leads you past a second pond. Cross the footbridge and dam at the foot of this pond. At the end of the dam, bear right for a few metres, across a small grassy area, and join a gravel track heading uphill for about 50m to a wider tarmac track. Turn left downhill, past the play area. The tarmac track curves downhill, taking you past the Gleniffer Braes Visitor Centre to Glenfield Road.

**9** Turn right along Glenfield Road. After 500m you will come to a

T junction. There is a bus shelter immediately on your right (don't cross the road). All buses on this side of the road go into Paisley town centre.

**Tannahill's Well and Glen** The most famous of Paisley's weaver-poets is Robert Tannahill, born in 1774. A multi-talented man, he taught himself to play the flute and composed songs as well as poetry, keeping an old flute and writing implements beside his loom as he worked. He also went for long walks on Gleniffer Braes, and wrote poems about his local haunts. But, despite his talents, he was prone to depression. When his second book of poems was rejected by a publisher in 1810, he drowned himself in despair.



Round the sylvan fairy nooks,  
Feathery breckans fringe the rocks,  
'Neath the brae the burnie jouks,  
An' ilka thing is cheery O.  
Robert Tannahill

### Getting to the start

**Rail** Trains run to Johnstone station every 15 minutes from Glasgow, Paisley and Ayrshire.

**Bus** Johnstone station is well served by a number of buses. The main services are: Arriva 36 between Glasgow, Paisley and Kilbarchan (5-6 an hour Mondays-Saturdays, hourly on Sundays). Arriva 38 and 39 between Glasgow, Paisley and Johnstone. Arriva 17 between Glasgow, Paisley, Beith and Largs (hourly including Sundays). Riverside 301 between Renfrew, Paisley and Bridge of Weir (hourly Mondays to Saturdays only). Gillens/Key 307 from Lochwinnoch and Howwood (hourly every day).

**Bicycle** Johnstone station is 1 km from National Cycle Network cycletrack 75 between Paisley, Lochwinnoch and Ayrshire. The station is signposted from the cycletrack. Bring a lock for your bike.

**Car** To get to Johnstone from the M8, take the A737 exit signposted Irvine (junction 28a, immediately after Glasgow Airport). Then take the second exit (signposted Johnstone) and turn left at the top of the slip road. Continue straight through the town centre: the station is on your right about 1 km from the A737, on the B789 between Johnstone and Paisley. There is a large free car park at the station.

### Getting back from the finish

The walk ends at the bus stop on Caplethill Road (do not cross over the road). To get back to Paisley town centre, catch Arriva no. 1 or 4. Monday-Saturday 10 buses an hour, Sunday 3 buses an hour, journey time less than 10 minutes.

Remember that the walk ends 9km from the start. If you come by car or by bike, you will need to get back to Johnstone station. This is simple enough by bus and train. First catch a bus into Paisley town centre. Alight at Central Road (underneath the Piazza shopping centre). Paisley Gilmour Street railway station is on County Square, about 100m in front of you. There

are frequent trains back to Johnstone (Monday-Saturday 4 trains an hour, Sunday 3 trains an hour, journey time less than 10 minutes).

**Please check rail and bus times with Traveline Scotland before travelling.**

**Tel: 0870 608 2 608 [www.travelinescotland.com](http://www.travelinescotland.com)**

### Refreshments

Please note that there is nowhere to get refreshments after the first 500m of the route until you get back into Paisley town centre after the end of the walk. There are however plenty of picnic benches (see map), so you might want to take a picnic with you. And there might even be an ice cream van in Robertson Car Park (point 6) on a nice summer's day !

At the start of the walk, there is a newsagent in Johnstone station and grocers on Thorn Brae. If you want something more substantial, there are cafes, shops and pubs in the centre of Johnstone, down Thorn Brae and the High Street in the other direction.

### Further information

**Johnstone Library** is a useful place to start if you'd like to find out more about the area. It is in Houstoun Court in the town centre, between Ludovic Square and Houstoun Square. Tel: 01505 329726. Open 6 days a week, including some evenings.

For general information about **Johnstone** and **Paisley**, visit [www.happyhaggis.co.uk](http://www.happyhaggis.co.uk)

For a **history of Johnstone Castle**, and other more detailed information about the town, visit [www.johnstonetown.org.uk](http://www.johnstonetown.org.uk)

For more information on **Gleniffer Braes Country Park**, look on the noticeboard as you pass the Visitor Centre (point 9 on the walk), call the Countryside Ranger Service (tel: 0141 884 3794), or visit [www.renfrewshire.gov.uk](http://www.renfrewshire.gov.uk) and search for "gleniffer braes country park".