

**Top to bottom:** Northern end of Glenisla – Cairngorms National Park beyond. Park Neuk stone circle. Balintore Castle. Reekie Linn waterfall



**Weekender**

# Cateran Country

The quiet countryside just south of the Cairngorms is ideal for a big day out on a road bike. **Markus Stitz** is your guide



## An off-road alternative

Fancy trail-riding in the Cairngorms? Visit: [cyclinguk.org/great-rides-cairngorm](https://cyclinguk.org/great-rides-cairngorm)



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Adventure cyclist

Markus is the founder of Bikepacking Scotland, and works with tourism organisations to create new routes north of the border

**S**tretching from the Valley of Strathmore into the southern edge of the Cairngorms National Park, the Cateran Ecomuseum is one of Scotland's lesser travelled destinations. It has quiet roads and beautiful scenery.

All of the museum's sites are free and outside, and are described in detail on the museum's website ([cateranecomuseum.co.uk](https://cateranecomuseum.co.uk)). This road bike loop, just a few kilometres short of the official Cateran Gran Fondo distance, takes you past some of the area's key points of interest and through breathtaking Highland and Lowland scenery.

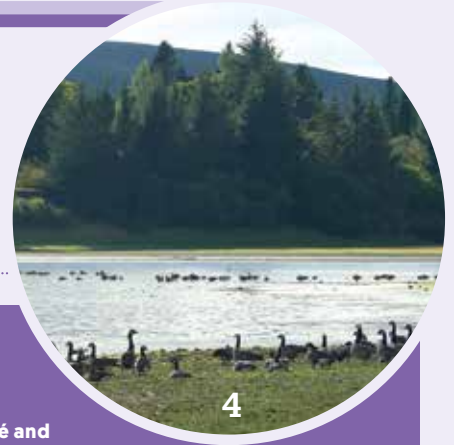
I cycled the route in a day on my singlespeed Claud Butler, joined by cycling journalist Trevor Ward. With many sights and picturesque villages along the way, the ride can easily be split into two days.

There's no train station in Alyth; Dunkeld (29km/18 miles) is the best option for travelling to the start by train. Ember, Scotland's first electric bus service, also takes bikes for free and unboxed from Edinburgh to Dundee. Meigle, a good alternative start and finish, is about 16km (10 miles) away from the bus stop in the west of Dundee.

## Weekend ride

## CATERAN COUNTRY

•Route name: CATERAN Gran Fondo •Start/finish: Alyth, Market Square, PH11 8AB (NO 24612 48519)  
 •Maps: OS Landrangers 43, 53, 54 •Ride length: 109km (86 miles) •Climbing: 1,050m •Bike type: Road bike, touner  
 •Ride level: Beginner in two days, regular rider in one. •GPX file: [cyclinguk.org/ride-caterancountry](http://cyclinguk.org/ride-caterancountry)



4

## 1 ALYTH

For centuries Alyth was an important market town: farmers brought sheep and cattle in on drove roads. Alyth's Pack Bridge is one of the oldest masonry bridges in Scotland, and the Den o' Alyth, a wooded gorge lying on either side of the Alyth Burn, is a designated Site of Special Scientific Interest.

## 2 Park Neuk stone circle

Just a short walk off the route, this small stone circle is set on the shoulder of a low hill. In a nearby wood a collection of larger stones was once thought to be the remains of another circle. It's now believed to be simply field clearance.

## 4 LINTRATHEN WILDLIFE RESERVE

Stop at the Wee Bear Café and enjoy this beautiful loch. During the summer the area is home to breeding songbirds. In winter large numbers of wintering birds, particularly greylag geese, visit the reserve. There are two hides on the banks of the loch, which can be accessed by separate paths.

## 3 Reekie Linn

Another walk takes you to a spectacular waterfall. At the base is a dark cave called Black Dub, where legend has it that an outlaw once hid – until the devil appeared before him as a giant black dog. He turned himself in the next day.

## 5 Balintore Castle

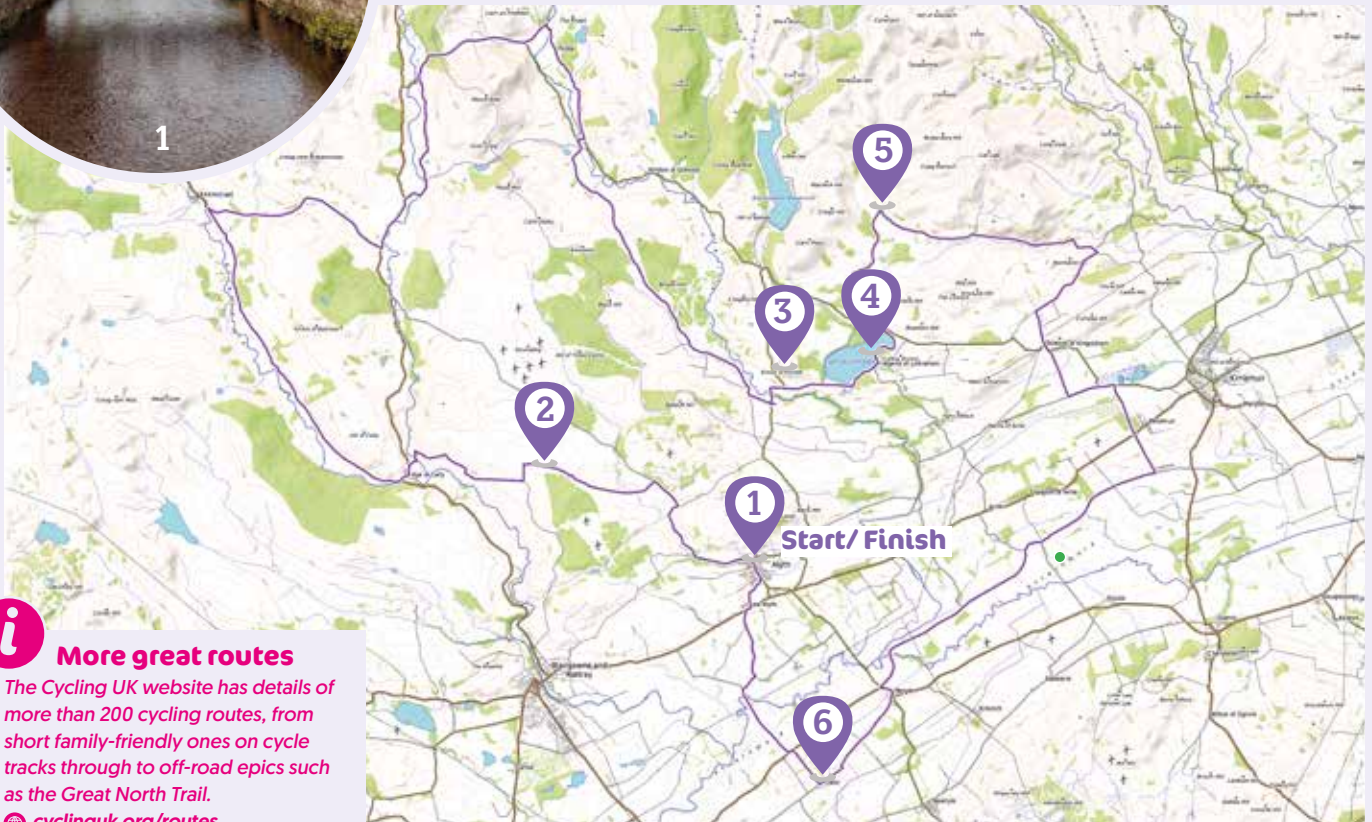
Commissioned as a shooting lodge in the late 1800s by David Lyon, a slave owner and parliamentarian, the castle features an abundance of towers and gables. After being abandoned in the 1960s, it is now being restored privately.

## 6 Meikle Sculptured Stone Museum

This magnificent collection of carved stones dates back to the late 700s. All found in Meikle, mostly in the churchyard or built into the church, they are all that survives of a centre of Pictish wealth and patronage.



1



### More great routes

The Cycling UK website has details of more than 200 cycling routes, from short family-friendly ones on cycle tracks through to off-road epics such as the Great North Trail.

[cyclinguk.org/routes](http://cyclinguk.org/routes)