



# Balmacara Estate and Woodland Walks

## Teacher's information



Balmacara Estate (2,550 hectares) is a diverse Highland crofting estate of high nature conservation and cultural value. The mosaic of arable croft fields around small settlements, with outlying moorland common grazing, reflects a historically important land use of the West Highlands which still remains relevant to local communities today. The townships of Drumbuie, Duirinish and Plockton are exceptional examples of traditional croft management. The low intensity agriculture helps to retain and enhance locally and nationally important habitats, and provides a haven of ecological diversity.

There are many archaeological and historic features around the Estate. The Open Air Church at Plockton and the crannog on Loch Achaidh na h-Inich are both designated Scheduled Ancient Monuments (SAMs). The Lochalsh Woodland Walks provide a series of short sheltered walks by the shores of Loch Alsh. The Coille Mhór Oak-Birch wood is a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and Special Area for Conservation (SAC). The coastline is recognised for its outstanding scenic value and the whole Estate supports a variety of botanical and wildlife habitats.

### **The school visit offers opportunities for cross-curricular work and engaging with the Curriculum for Excellence**

- The Ranger Service can offer a variety of activities relating to the crofting theme - including specific habitats within Balmacara Estate such as rivers, lochs, meadows, woodlands, bogs, moorland and the coast.
- Ranger led walks at various locations throughout Balmacara Estate. These can be adapted to suit class requirements and are available to both primary or secondary schools.
- Ranger visits to local schools (only) are also available (please phone to discuss).
- *The Crofting Landscape & Historic Plockton*: a themed visit - your class can be split into two groups if necessary - each group must be accompanied by a teacher/ school helper. (Maximum 15 pupils per group.) One group learns about the history of Balmacara Estate, modern crofting and the associated wildlife; the other group learns about the planned village of Plockton. They swap round. (The coach will need to move your pupils from one site to the other.) More details will be given on booking.

### **Resources for schools**

- Balmacara Estate leaflet (available on request).
- Interactive CD-ROM includes Crofting Game (available on request).
- Illustrated guidebook (for sale at Estate office and available on request).

### **Balmacara Square Visitor Centre**

- Orientation and interpretation panels.
- Interactive touchscreen computer programme.

### **Plockton Visitor Centre**

- Orientation and interpretation panels.
- Plockton Historical Society display.

### **Planning your visit**

- To book: please contact the Balmacara Estate office to discuss your visit; we can tailor interpretative activities to meet your requirements.
- All class teachers are encouraged to make a preparatory visit to the site.



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### Planning your visit (continued)

- Maximum class size: 30 pupils, with a ratio of 1 teacher/adult to 8 pupils.
- Access: both visitor centres are accessible for wheelchair users but most of the activities on offer take place on ground that is not suitable. Please do phone to discuss your requirements - we will do our utmost to accommodate your pupils.
- Toilets: NOTE there are no public toilets at Balmacara Square but there are fully accessible public toilets at Kyle of Lochalsh and public facilities available at Plockton.
- Refreshments: pupils are welcome to picnic at Balmacara Square or in the Lochalsh Woodland Walks. There are no wet weather facilities. It is advisable to keep your coach for the whole visit. (Advice on picnic sites can be given on booking)
- Clothing: please ensure that your pupils have clothing for outdoors. They should have both warm and waterproof clothing and footwear. For sunny days your pupils should have protection against the hot sun - for instance, a long sleeved jacket, a sun hat or cap. (*Safety First for Outdoor Visits* is available for download – go to Checklists at: [www.nts.org.uk/Learn/schools\\_plan.php](http://www.nts.org.uk/Learn/schools_plan.php)).
- All the activity sites and various locations will have been risk assessed. Teachers should prepare their own Risk Assessment for the visit.
- There is more information about planning a visit to a Trust site on the NTS Learn website: [www.nts.org.uk/Learn/schools\\_plan.php](http://www.nts.org.uk/Learn/schools_plan.php)
- For more information about Balmacara, please go to: <http://www.nts.org.uk/Property/Balmacara-Estate-Woodland-Walks/>

### Charges

- There is no admission charge for schools with NTS educational membership.
- Schools without NTS educational membership will need to pay a charge - charges vary depending on the activity. Please check before booking.
- Class teachers may have a Free preparatory visit to the site
- Membership: please contact the Balmacara Estate office or go to the NTS Learn website: [www.nts.org.uk/Learn/schools\\_membership.php](http://www.nts.org.uk/Learn/schools_membership.php)

### During your class visit

- Most walks will be led by NTS staff - unless you have booked a programme that includes some teacher-led activities (this would be made clear when booking).
- *The Crofting Landscape & Historic Plockton* programme will take 2-3 hours for each session. More details will be given on booking.
- Teachers are responsible for pupils and their behaviour.
- Pupils may take photos/ films during their visit.
- There is no shop at Balmacara Square but there is a cafe close to the visitor centre and tourist facilities are available at Plockton.
- A member of the NTS staff will meet you at a prearranged location.

### Getting to Balmacara Estate

A87 Inverness to Kyle road (from south) or A890 from Lochcarron (from north). Lochalsh Woodland Walks is 2.5 miles east of Kyle, just off the A87(T), as is Balmacara Square.

- Balmacara Square car park. OS map NG 80652831
- Lochalsh Woodland Walks car park. A87. OS map NG80052779.
- Plockton: A87 then follow local signs. OS map NG 80363333
- Coaches can park at: Balmacara Square or the Lochalsh Woodland Walks car park or in Plockton (Details will be confirmed when booking your programme)

### For more information and a booking form, please contact the Estate Office:

Lochalsh House, Balmacara Estate, Balmacara, Kyle of Lochalsh, Ross-shire IV40 8DN

T: 0844 493 2233 Email: [balmacara@nts.org.uk](mailto:balmacara@nts.org.uk)