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Scots look for a love of the outdoors when searching for a partner, according to the National Trust for Scotland

Seven out of ten (68%) Scots believe a love of spending time outdoors is one of the most attractive qualities in a potential friend or partner, according to a new survey by Scotland's largest conservation charity, the National Trust for Scotland.

Findings from the research also show that, with existing relationships, 76% of people believe making memories together outdoors strengthens their connection – making a woodland walk, beach trip or garden stroll the ideal way to spend Valentine's Day.

In addition, 77% of people surveyed said some of their best memories with family and friends took place outdoors. This is something that National Trust for Scotland members Sean Cullen and Jen Winter, who recently featured in a national campaign for the charity, have found in their own relationship.

Jen, from Motherwell, first bought their National Trust for Scotland membership as a Christmas present for Sean, knowing they could use it to visit special places across Scotland together. Favourite Trust places enjoyed so far include Glencoe, Ben Lomond and the Hermitage at Dunkeld, along with Culloden which was high on their list of 'must-visit' Trust properties last year since Sean is an *Outlander* fan and loves Scottish history.

Jen explains: "As a couple, we have always loved going away on little road trips to different areas and exploring new places together. It gives us a chance to see new things, spend quality time together, and most importantly it gets us away from the hustle and bustle of everyday life. It's definitely something that we built our relationship from, and we continue to make time for our weekly walks out in nature.

She continues: "Most of our first dates were either road trips to the coast, going up a hill somewhere, or away on a long walk in some nearby forest. Probably our best early date was when we climbed up Sean's favourite hill to see the sunset. I loved his passion for the outdoors and the thrill of seeing my first sunset at the top had me hooked from then on."

As members of the conservation charity, Jen and Sean can enjoy unlimited free entry to over 100 amazing places across Scotland, exploring our great outdoors and iconic landscapes.

Sean adds: "I've always been a very outdoorsy person and have been going on adventures with my friends for years but there's something very special about being about to get out in nature and experience it with your partner too. So it was always important to me and Jen to experience these things together and is definitely something we think makes our relationship stronger.

"Whether it's going for a long hike up a Munro or walking in forests, being outside lets me de-stress, and for those hours, I feel like the happiest person in the world. There's something very special about showing Jennifer these places."

The results of the research for the National Trust for Scotland highlight the importance of the conservation charity's work to care for and share Scotland's nature, beauty and heritage so that people of all ages can enjoy their benefits. Whether it's a romantic walk in the walled garden at Crathes Castle, a cycle through Balmacara Estate, a picnic in the grounds of Culzean Castle, or wildlife spotting at St Abb's Head National Nature Reserve, there's no shortage of romantic places to explore with the National Trust for Scotland this Valentine's Day.

Another finding from the research is that not only does spending time outdoors make potential partners or friends more attractive, it also improves mental health and wellbeing. 95% of Scots stated that spending time outdoors is effective at reducing stress levels, with 97% confirming that access to the outdoors is important for mental health.

Jen Winter agrees: "Definitely for me being in woodland areas where you can look up at the tall trees is something that always makes me feel happy inside. There's something really relaxing about being in the woodlands and being able to hear the sounds of nature. I think being part of a social media generation I can sometimes get quite overwhelmed and so I like to find places like this where I can put my phone away and just enjoy walking in the sounds of nature to help me reset."

Commenting on the research, **Iain Hawkins, the National Trust for Scotland's Regional Director for the North East, said:**

"At the Trust we know how important Scotland's outdoor places are, so I'm not surprised to learn that people across the country see a love of outdoor experiences as an attractive quality in a friend or partner.

"Our charity has been giving the public access to and shared ownership of some of Scotland's most magnificent landscapes, alongside historic buildings, gardens and collections for over 90 years, and we see every day the impact these places have on our members, like Sean and Jen, and visitors who are discovering them for the first time. We're very lucky in Scotland to be surrounded by such wonderful natural and cultural heritage and, thanks to the support of our members and supporters, we're able to care for and share some of our country's most special places, helping create connections and shared memories that last a lifetime."

For more information on the National Trust for Scotland, or to plan your Valentine's adventure, visit www.nts.org.uk.

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Notes to editors

- Research conducted by Opinion Matters: 28.11.23 – 04.12.23
- 1001 people polled
- Scottish adults - nationally representative

About the National Trust for Scotland

Established in 1931, the National Trust for Scotland is Scotland's largest conservation charity and cares for, shares and speaks up for Scotland's magnificent heritage.

Over the last 90 years the Trust has pioneered public access to and shared ownership of some of the most magnificent buildings, collections and landscapes in Scotland. It cares for more than 100 sites, from ancient houses to battlefields, castles, mills, gardens, coastlines, islands, mountain ranges and the plants and animals which depend upon them.

In March 2022, the National Trust for Scotland launched *Nature, Beauty & Heritage for Everyone*, its ten-year strategy which sets out the ambitions of the charity over the coming decade. From speaking up for Scotland's heritage which doesn't have a voice, to improving the lives and wellbeing of people across the country, and responding to the climate and biodiversity crisis, the Trust will build on its work in recent years to grow its impact and conserve and restore more of Scotland's heritage, as it moves towards its centenary in 2031. The Trust's Gardens Strategy 'Connecting People, Plants and Places 2023-32' sets out the Trust's ambition for its gardens during the Corporate Strategy period.

Scotland's largest membership organisation, the National Trust for Scotland relies on the support of its members and donors to carry out its important work. For more information on the National Trust for Scotland visit www.nts.org.uk.

The National Trust for Scotland is a charity registered in Scotland, Charity Number SC 007410.