

Galloway and Southern Ayrshire





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Covering almost 9,800 km² of southwest Scotland's land and sea, the Galloway and Southern Ayrshire (GSA) UNESCO Biosphere follows the rivers that flow out of the Galloway Hills through forests and farmland, historic villages and towns, all the way to a ruggedly scenic coast.

This is the largest UNESCO Biosphere in the UK, a region that includes wildlife and natural habitats of international importance. It encompasses communities with distinct cultural identities, as well as historic landmarks and heritage sites. This area was awarded UNESCO Biosphere status in 2012, recognising this outstanding heritage and the array of local opportunities for sustainable development.

What makes this UNESCO Designation special?

The heart of the Galloway and Southern Ayrshire Biosphere includes some of Scotland's last remaining wilderness, precious wetlands at Silver Flowe (an international RAMSAR site), and the Merrick, southern Scotland's highest peak.

Elsewhere visitors can explore temperate rainforest, Local and National Nature Reserves, the grand sweep of the Southern Uplands and a fascinating coastal geology, parts of which date back more than 480 million years. Galloway Forest was the UK's first Gold-Tier International Dark Sky Park and across the UNESCO area there is a wonderful nocturnal ecology to observe under a sky filled with stars.

The GSA Biosphere embodies rural Scotland, where the land and its uses remain integral to everyday life. The region is home to historic industries such as farming, fishing and forestry, and communities that range in size from tiny hamlets to small towns. Famous figures from Scotland's past were inspired by local landscapes and everyday life to create literature and art, including Robert Burns, James Boswell and Charles Jencks. Key chapters in

history have been written here, from St Ninian's landing at Whithorn to Robert the Bruce fighting for the crown of Scotland at Glen Trool.



Biosphere Reserves

Galloway and Southern Ayrshire

County: **Dumfries & Galloway, South Ayrshire, and East Ayrshire**

