

New Nature Trail Showcases Scotland's Rainforest at Popular Trossachs Visitor Site

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Visitors to Loch Katrine can now discover and enjoy one of the easternmost surviving fragments of Scotland's Temperate Rainforest thanks to the creation of a new nature trail celebrating the internationally important wildlife, landscapes and natural heritage of this famous destination in the heart of the Trossachs.

Scotland's Rainforest Nature Trail has been created by the Steamship Sir Walter Scott Trust along the path leading to their award-winning Scenic Tower & Lookouts above Trossachs Pier, at the site widely recognised as the *Birthplace of Scottish Tourism* in the early 1800s.

The new interpretation experience forms part of ongoing efforts by the charitable trust, responsible for the iconic 126-year-old Steamship Sir Walter Scott, to celebrate and protect the special natural and cultural heritage qualities of Loch Katrine while helping raising awareness and understanding of the rare habitats and stunning landscapes amongst the 250,000 visitors attracted to the loch annually.

Located within Loch Lomond & The Trossachs National Park and the Great Trossachs Forest National Nature Reserve, the woodland just above the busy Trossachs Pier visitor hub, is part of Scotland's Celtic Rainforest, which covers less than 1% of the country. The site is protected through multiple international and national environmental designations including *National Scenic Area*, *Special Area of Conservation* and *Site of Special Scientific Interest* status.

The new Trail explains how these ancient woodlands have evolved slowly over thousands of years since the end of the last Ice Age, creating ideal conditions for rare lichens, mosses, liverworts, butterflies, moths and other wildlife to thrive.

Along the Trail, visitors can discover stories about the remarkable species found within the rainforest, including lichens, which often pick up memorable nicknames from enthusiasts. One such lichen is the shaggy lichen affectionately nicknamed "*Dennis the Menace*" because of its resemblance to the wild-haired Beano comic character first created in 1951. The trail launch also coincides with the 75th anniversary year of Dennis the Menace, and special permission was granted by DC Thomson to feature the beloved mischief maker on one of the information panels.

Experts with interests in lichens, butterflies and moths have undertaken surveys and make regular monitoring visits to the area beside the new Trail, drawn by the richness and diversity of habitats present. Their survey findings have helped shape the new trail, which introduces visitors to this hidden underworld of the woodland through a series of carefully designed birch leaf-shape interpretation panels.

Importantly, the path itself also plays a key conservation role by helping manage visitor movement through sensitive habitats. Visitors are channeled along the enclosed route and boardwalk sections to reduce erosion and disturbance while allowing people to experience the rainforest responsibly.

The nature trail also links directly with the Scenic Tower & Lookouts, opened in 2024 on the rocky headland above Trossachs Pier. The sensitively designed tower and viewing platforms were highly commended recently at the *RSPB's Nature of Scotland Annual Awards Ceremony* and reconnect visitors with the famous views which inspired Sir Walter Scott's *The Lady of the Lake* and helped establish Loch Katrine as one of Scotland's earliest visitor destinations.

James Fraser, CEO and Lead Trustee of the Steamship Sir Walter Scott Trust, said:

"As custodians of this special place, with partners such as Scottish Water, we are keen to ensure that people visiting Loch Katrine not only enjoy the scenery but also better understand the nationally and internationally important rich biodiversity and stories associated with the loch and the surrounding catchment area.

The new Rainforest Nature Trail allows visitors to experience a fragment of Scotland's Rainforest in accessible and engaging ways while helping protect the sensitive woodland canopy.

We have deliberately kept the interpretation light-touch and imaginative, so people still feel immersed in nature while discovering fascinating details about the woodland, its wildlife and its

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The response to the Scenic Tower and Lookouts has been fantastic, with over 70,000 visitors since it opened, and the Rainforest Trail adds another dimension to the overall visitor experience at the site recognised as the 'Birthplace of Scottish Tourism.'

The trail can be explored by visitors walking the short route from Trossachs Pier to the Scenic Tower & Lookouts, where panoramic views stretch across Loch Katrine and the surrounding hills and mountains.

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