

Riding responsibly

- Follow the Scottish Outdoor Access Code (www.outdooraccess-scotland.com).
- Take responsibility for yourself, and your own actions.
- Respect the privacy, safety and livelihoods of those living or working in the countryside – most of the farmland and forestry you will ride through is someone's workplace.
- Respect others enjoying the outdoors and always pass pedestrians at a walk – remember that some people are nervous of horses. Take particular care on narrow paths and those used by people in wheelchairs or with pushchairs.
- Look after the places you visit and routes you enjoy: take only memories, leave only hoofprints.
- Ride slowly past all livestock and leave gates as you find them.
- Leave your dog at home, or have it under very close control, particularly near livestock.
- Always remove litter and dung from parking areas and avoid blocking others who might want to use the same parking area. It is always advisable to turn your trailer/box when you arrive in case the car park fills up while you are out riding.



- Do not jump hedges, gates, stacks of timber or use other people's land for repetitive schooling without their permission.
- Avoid riding or cycling grassy paths or unsurfaced high hill routes after very wet weather when the surface is easily chewed up.



Where else you can ride in the South of Scotland

The Land Reform Scotland Act confirms a right of responsible non-vehicular access on most land in Scotland, including moorland, forests and farmland, and on most firm paths, tracks and many other routes.

You can obtain a leaflet on responsible riding from BHSS, or download it from www.bhss.org.uk.

Most Horses Welcome hosts can recommend additional riding routes in their area, or you may prefer to explore for yourself. On promoted riding routes and those shown on Emagin, you should have no problem, but as yet, there is no easy way of finding out where you might meet obstructions on other routes. For example, only some sections of the Southern Upland Way, Border Abbeys Way and St. Cuthberts Way are rideable. Elsewhere ladder stiles, kissing gates, footbridges and deep peat occasionally restrict equestrian access. Scottish Borders Council access officers may be able to advise you which routes are rideable, or where diversions may be necessary tel. 01835 826509 or look under countryside access on www.scotborders.gov.uk.

The following promoted routes have not had the same capital investment as SOSCT, but you can be confident you can enjoy them on horseback.

Tyne Esk Trails in Midlothian – details can be downloaded from www.southofscotlandcountrysidetrails.co.uk or leaflets are available from BHS Scotland, Woodburn, Crieff PH7 3RG tel. 01764 656334

Riding routes in South Lanarkshire – a leaflet including route descriptions for a variety of off-road riding routes in South Lanarkshire will soon be available from www.visitlanarkshire.com, or from Simon Pilpel, South Lanarkshire access officer, or from Lanarkshire Rural Development Trust.

The most significant of the many other riding routes which link with SOSCT, including numerous in Northumberland, are identified on the SOSCT website.



Every effort has been made to make the SOSCT routes as safe and enjoyable as possible, but you ride at your own risk. Neither BHS nor the other partners involved in SOSCT accept responsibility for any accident or injury incurred by anyone following the routes described.

SOSCT was an innovative partnership project involving British Horse Society Scotland, local community path groups, Scottish Borders Council and Solway Heritage under the umbrella of Southern Uplands Partnership. Capital work to improve the SOSCT routes was funded by Heritage Lottery Fund as part of the Tweed Rivers Heritage Project, European Regional Development Fund, Scottish Natural Heritage and Forestry Commission Scotland.

www.southofscotlandcountrysidetrails.co.uk



South of Scotland Countryside Trails

www.southofscotlandcountrysidetrails.co.uk

Fancy riding somewhere different, or a few days away with your horse, but don't know where to go? Worried where to park, how you'll find your way and where you can be sure you and your horse will be welcome? South of Scotland Countryside Trails (SOSCT) is the answer to your dreams - a 350km network of paths and tracks offering fantastic off-road riding within less than a few hours' drive of Central and Southern Scotland and the north of England.

SOSCT routes are clearly waymarked, most of the gates are easy to open without dismounting, and the drainage and other improvements which have been undertaken through the SOSCT project allow you to ride these routes with confidence that you won't get stuck in a bog or have to turn back when you find your way blocked.



Imagine cantering for miles along the firm grass turf of former drove roads... following in the footsteps of Roman soldiers who marched this way thousands of years ago... riding across the Cheviots over the border to England... enjoying a picnic high on the hills above Peebles looking down on the Tweed winding through the valley below. The possibilities are limited only by your imagination and how much time you have available! Once you've tried some of the SOSCT routes, we know you'll be back to enjoy more.



Where to stay

From impressive castles to friendly farmhouses, there are any number of places ready to welcome you and your horse on your visit to the South of Scotland. Details of accredited horse and rider accommodation on or near the trails which also offer parking, secure tack storage and drying facilities can be found on www.horseswelcome.org. Most Horses Welcome hosts will provide an evening meal or transport to/from a local pub offering food. Packed lunches are usually available on request, and it may be possible to arrange luggage transfer. For other accommodation, try www.visitscotland.com.

When can I ride the SOSCT routes?

Many of the routes around West Linton, Peebles and Innerleithen, the forest paths and tracks in Cardrona, Cademuir, Glentress and Ae Forests, and disused railway lines such as the Waverley Way are suitable for riding at any time of year, whatever the weather. May to September is the best time of year to enjoy the Cheviots and other routes on higher and more exposed ground. The days are long, countryside at its best, weather (usually!) at its kindest and there is less risk of disturbing lambing or other critical farm activities than during winter or spring.

Emergency contacts

Check your horse's shoes before you set off. Most farriers are heavily booked in advance but will usually try and fit you in if you lose a shoe unexpectedly. Horses Welcome accommodation providers can supply local telephone numbers, or try www.farrier-reg.gov.uk.

What to take

No matter what the season, weather can be very unpredictable, particularly on high ground. Make sure you are prepared for all eventualities. For riders, a hoof pick, body brush, head collar and lead rope are useful, together with a whistle in case of emergency.

How long will it take?

The information overleaf and downloadable route descriptions will give you some idea how long it might take to ride each route, but it will depend on how fit you and your horse are, how fast you go, how often you stop for a picnic, to look at your map, take pictures, etc. 15-20 miles is the average most riders expect to cover in a day, but it's up to you to choose your own pace. Allow yourself time to enjoy the spectacular scenery, and to stop for a rest.

Where to ride

The map overleaf provides an overview of the routes. Sections of old Roman road, farm tracks and newly created path links offer a good variety of circular routes around Peebles and Innerleithen in the Tweed Valley, and around West Linton on the Pentland Hills south of Edinburgh. For those with more time, or looking for more of a challenge, there are endless options for longer distance rides on the Cheviot Hills, across to Kielder Forest in Northumberland, or between Moffat and Hawick. And if you've had enough of riding or have non-riding friends and family keen to come with you, the South of Scotland has plenty else to offer, from the 7 Stanes mountain bike trails to gardens, golf courses, historic houses, abbeys, market towns and mill shops.

Suggested itineraries for half- or full-day picnic rides, short breaks and longer distance rides, suitable for riders of all ages and abilities, together with detailed route descriptions can be found on www.southofscotlandcountrysidetrails.co.uk.

Digitised maps of the complete SOSCT route network and larger scale maps of individual routes should be available from January 2010 onwards at www.emagin.org. Ordnance Survey or other similar maps are recommended to help you follow routes on the ground.

