

DRIVING GUIDE TO THE ANTONINE WALL

The East: Bridgeness to Rough Castle



The following driving itinerary has been designed to guide your exploration of the Antonine Wall at its eastern end, within Falkirk District. This itinerary features some of the best sections of visible Antonine Wall Ditch and Rampart, the only visible fortlet, and the best-preserved Roman fort on the entire Wall.

Along the route are two museums where finds from the Wall are on display, and which feature exhibits that tell the region's long-term history from the pre-Roman days until the more recent past. This itinerary does not cover every visible feature along the Wall in this sector, but includes most of the key sites that offer a fairly comprehensive overview of the Antonine Wall around Falkirk.

The itinerary is best suited for a full-day's outing, but you can adapt it for a shorter exploration by omitting those locations marked with an asterisk (*), and by limiting the amount of time that you spend at each site. Another itinerary has been provided for the western half of the Wall.

BRIDGENESS*

For online directions or GPS, use postcode EH51 9LA.

The Antonine Wall's eastern end was located at or near Bridgeness (Bo'ness) on the Firth of Forth. There are no visible remains of the Rampart, Ditch, or a Roman installation here, but the site is worth visiting to see a new replica of the Bridgeness Distance Slab, unveiled in Kinningars Park in September 2012. The original Distance Slab was discovered in 1868, near Bridgeness Tower, and a Victorian replica had been on display near the corner of Bridgeness Road and Harbour Road until recently.

It is uncertain if the line of the Rampart and Ditch ended near here, or if it continued further east to the fort at Carriden. The new replica is on display within Kinningars Park, off of Harbour Road, just east of the A993 (Grahamsdyke Road).

From Bridgeness, take Harbour Road west to Grahamsdyke Road (A993), and turn right, taking Grahamsdyke Road west toward Kinneil. Between Bridgeness and Kinneil, Grahamsdyke Road follows the line of the Antonine Wall for about 3km, changing name to Dean Road along the way.

About half-way between Bridgeness and Kinneil, you will pass Douglas Park on the right.

Continue heading west until Dean Road begins to curve to the north. Turn left on Provost Road, and then immediately right to enter the long drive at the entrance to Kinneil Estate. You will see Kinneil House directly in front of you. At the end of the drive, turn right, where a small car park is available in front of the Kinneil Museum, or left, to access a larger car park near the woods.

KINNEIL

For online directions or GPS, use the postcode EH51 0PR.

Kinneil offers the only visible example of an Antonine Wall fortlet, in a field to the west of Kinneil House. The Museum features exhibits covering Kinneil's long-term history, including Roman artefacts from the fortlet, but also the story of Kinneil House, local industries, and James Watt's pioneering steam engine experiments. The Antonine Wall ran past the site of the House and parallel to the drive, but it cannot be seen on the ground today. For access to the remains of the fortlet, head west past Kinneil House, and across a small bridge over the burn. Just before crossing the burn, you will see the James Watt cottage and the remains of a boiler used by the inventor as he experimented with an improved steam engine at Kinneil in 1769-70. Upon crossing the burn, you will enter some fields called "the Meadows," where a village existed from the medieval period until it was removed in the 1690s. A short detour to the north of the first field will take you to the ruins of the old Kinneil church, which was probably constructed in the twelfth century over the remains of an earlier church that had been surrounded by a ditched enclosure. To the west of the church, the line of the Antonine Wall follows a subtle hollow and then crosses over a second burn.

You will have to walk south for a short distance to cross this burn and enter the field where the remains of a Roman fortlet are visible.

The fortlet is marked out by original stone kerbing of its ramparts and part of the Antonine Wall's Rampart (which served as the fortlet's north rampart), with stone paving filling out the

areas where original stonework has not survived. Timber posts mark out the location of Roman period post-holes, which give an indication of the fortlet's gateways and internal buildings.

While at Kinneil, a visit to the museum is highly recommended. Several times a year the inside of Kinneil House itself is open for public viewing, and this is highly recommended for the extensive sixteenth-century mural paintings within the house's Palace Wing; for details of open days, see the Friends of Kinneil website (<http://www.kinneil.org.uk>)

Upon leaving Kinneil, take Grangemouth Road (A904) west toward Callendar Park in Falkirk. At the M9, a roundabout takes the A904 underneath the motorway, where the first exit leads to the west-bound A9. Just after crossing the Westquarter Burn, turn left onto Salmon Inn Road, heading south past the Grandsable Cemetery to Polmont Road. Turn right onto Polmont Road (A803), heading west. At the east end of Laurieston village, partially under the houses and partially in the large open field to the north of the road, is the site of Mumrills fort on the Antonine Wall. Continue west as Polmont Road becomes Mary Street and then Callendar Road, on the northern end of Callendar Park. A number of parking options are available in the area, but a designated car park is available at the entrance to Callendar Park. To reach this car park, continue west through several mini-roundabouts and then take the first exit at the roundabout with Estate Avenue at the west end of Callendar Park. Turn left and continue along to the entrance to the House, then take the entrance on the left into the little wooded car park.

CALENDAR PARK

For online directions or GPS, use the FK1 1YR postcode.

Callendar Park, just south-east of Falkirk town centre, features long open stretches of the Antonine Wall Ditch and an excellent museum located within Callendar House, an expansive country house with origins in the fourteenth century. The museum offers permanent exhibits on the Antonine Wall, Callendar House, and the industrial history of Falkirk District. The Antonine Wall Ditch remains are located along the northern end of Callendar Park, immediately south of Callendar Road.

From Callendar Park, head west toward Watling Lodge, the Falkirk Wheel, and Rough Castle fort by taking the B8080 south-west. The distance between Callendar Park and the stretch of Antonine Wall Ditch at Watling Lodge is about 4.5km. As you reach Cow Wynd and Rosehall Terrace, you will be in the vicinity of the Falkirk fort's east annexe. At the roundabout, take the second exit west on the B803/Hodge Street, where you will see the Cowgate Shopping Centre to the north. Between Hodge Street and the shopping centre is the site of the Roman fort at Falkirk, in the area known as "the Pleasance." You will come to two close-set roundabouts: take the first exit on the first roundabout and then the second exit on the next roundabout, continuing on the B8080 (Westburn Avenue) heading west. The road will end at a roundabout just south of the Forth and Clyde Canal at Glenfuir Road; take the first exit westward. Go through one roundabout and then turn right (west) on to Tamfourhill Road, where you will find the beginning of the best-preserved section of Antonine Wall Ditch.

WATLING LODGE/ TAMFOURHILL*

For online directions or GPS, use the postcode FK1 4RE.

Perhaps the best-preserved section of Antonine Wall Ditch can be viewed to both the east and west of Watling Lodge along Tamfourhill Road, easily accessible to the south-west of Falkirk town centre and just east of the Falkirk Wheel. Here, the Ditch has survived to almost its original dimensions, giving the best view of how it may have looked in Roman times. Nearby, on the site of Watling Lodge (in private ownership), was an Antonine Wall fortlet and a medieval motte (called "Maiden Castle"). The motte was destroyed when the arts and crafts villa was built on top of it in the 1890s, while the fortlet lies within the area of garden to the south. No visible traces of the motte or fortlet can be seen on the ground. A short distance to the south, in an open field between the Union Canal and Tamfourhill Wood, is the site of a Roman temporary camp, which is sometimes visible in aerial photographs, but which cannot be seen on the ground today.

From Watling Lodge, continue west on Tamfourhill Road (B816) toward Rough Castle. You will have two choices: you can either park at the Falkirk Wheel and walk west to the site of the Roman fort from there, or you can park closer to the fort near Bonnyside House and walk east to the fort. If you have a tight schedule and want to focus on the Roman remains, park near Bonnyside House. The total driving distance will be about 5.5km. To get here, continue west on Tamfourhill Road, which turns into Bonnyhill Road. After passing a number of fields, the road will end at a large auto salvage yard; turn right and continue through an S-shaped curve and across two railway lines through High Bonnybridge. After crossing the second railway, turn right at the corner of Broomhill Road and Foundry Road. The road then curves right (looping back toward the east) and becomes Bonnyside Road. Continue on Bonnyside Road across the railway again, and past Bonnyside House, where the road ends in a small car park just south of the Antonine Wall and east of Rough Castle fort.

ROUGH CASTLE

For online directions or GPS, use
postcode FK4 2AA

If you can only visit one location on the Antonine Wall, Rough Castle fort is clearly the best choice. Although the fort is the second smallest on the Wall, it is easily the best-preserved and offers the most spectacular and memorable views of the surviving Roman remains. Here you can see an excellent example of the Antonine Wall Ditch, the tallest-surviving portion of Rampart, defensive lilia pits to the north of the Wall, and easily identifiable fort and annexe defences, including multiple ditches and gateways. In addition to the Roman remains, Rough Castle is located very close to the Falkirk Wheel, a twenty-first-century engineering marvel that connects the Forth & Clyde and Union Canals, making this an excellent point to explore multiple aspects of central Scotland's past and present. If you have time, the Falkirk Wheel is a highly recommended additional stop, featuring a small exhibit on the Antonine Wall within its visitors' centre, and boat rides through the Falkirk Wheel boat lift and a tunnel that has been cut directly underneath the line of the Antonine Wall to link the Forth & Clyde and Union Canals.