

Erskine and the Clyde

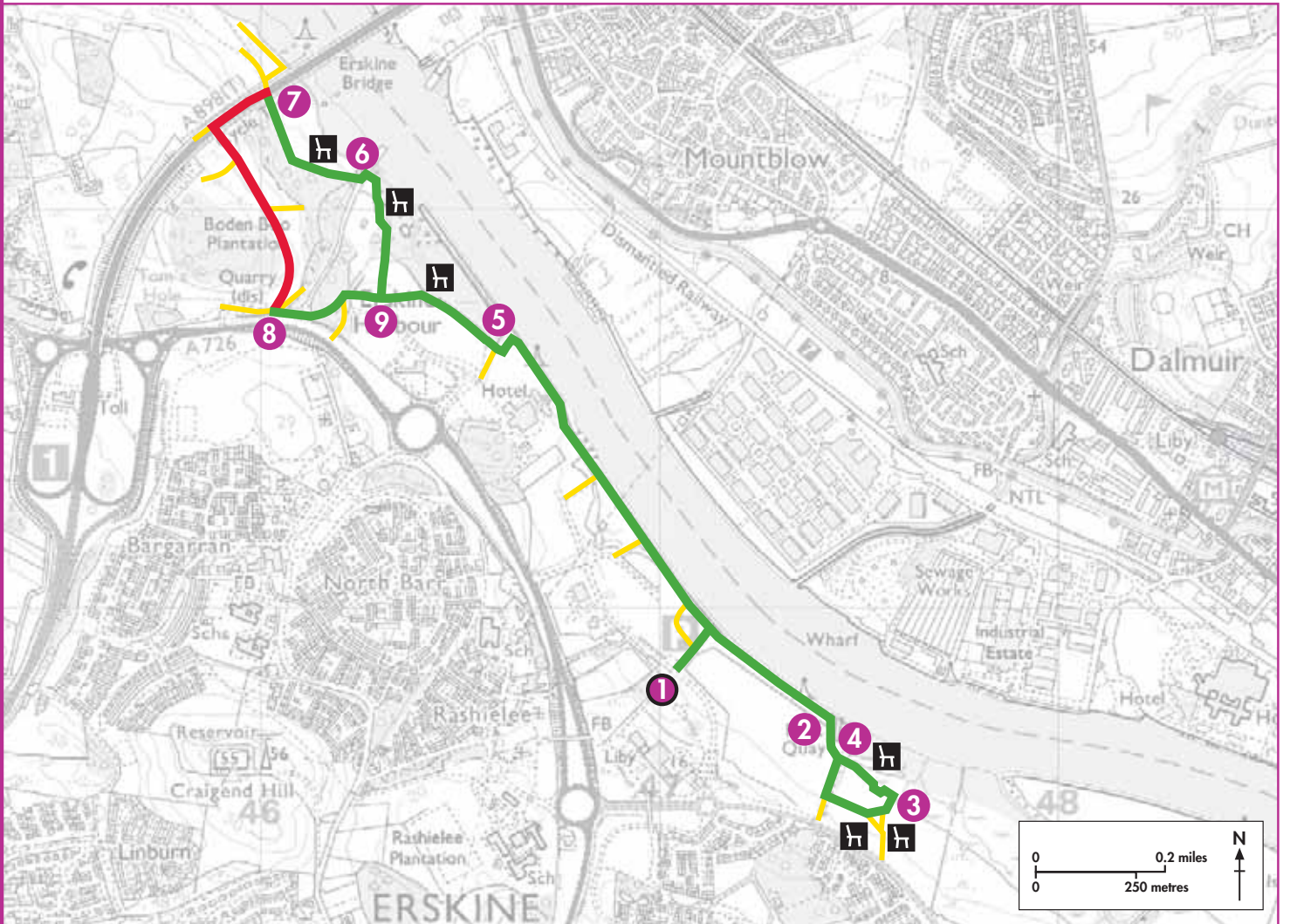
There are a few places in and around Glasgow where you can walk along the Clyde. Erskine is one of the best. It has good footpaths on a long and varied stretch of the river bank. With luck, you might see a ship: but don't bank on it, they are few and far between these days. Upstream, the skyline shows off Clydeside's proud industrial heritage. Downstream, the Kilpatrick Hills loom immediately across the river – and you'll have the chance to walk under Erskine Bridge.

Start and finish Car park signed “Erskine Riverfront Walkway” off Kilpatrick Drive, Erskine. The car park is about 150m behind Erskine town centre towards the River Clyde, near Erskine Community Sports Centre (grid reference NS 470708).

Distance Just under 6km (4 miles). Allow 2 hours.

Terrain Mostly flat on wide firm footpaths, either tarmac or gravel. No stiles or gates. Steep section in Boden Boo where boots would be useful.





1 From the car park, take the right hand of the two tarmac paths to a semi-circular paved area on the edge of the River Clyde (50m from the start). Then turn right along the river bank, upstream past the big green navigation light.

2 After 500m, the path turns inland at an old harbour. You will reach a path junction with a large sign “Newshot Island Local Nature Reserve”. Turn sharp left here, back to the river’s edge.

An island in the Clyde? Although it no longer looks like an island, Newshot once sat almost in the middle of the Clyde estuary. As bigger ships needed to come up the river, engineers blocked off the channel on the Erskine side with stone dykes. This narrowing of the river made the water flow faster which scoured out a deeper channel. The ‘old channel’ on this side gradually silted up – so what was an island became part of the “mainland”. Although no longer a real island, Newshot is still important. The low-lying, tidal nature of the ground here provides an internationally significant habitat for over-wintering wildfowl, particularly waders such as redshank from Northern Europe.

3 At the viewpoint, the path cuts sharply away from the river up a short slope. Go past a bench to a fork in the path. Turn right past another bench. You will soon reach another path junction with another timber sign saying “Newshot Island Local Nature Reserve”. Turn right again, back towards the river.

4 After 100m, you will reach a fork with a sign - you’ve been here before! Turn left, back along the river bank (the way you came earlier). Continue past the start of the

walk and the Erskine Bridge Hotel, after which the path turns away from the river.

Erskine... new and old Erskine was a village until the 1960s, but has expanded rapidly since it was designated a “New Community” in 1967. It is a smaller version of the better known New Towns like East Kilbride and Cumbernauld, and now has 15,000 residents. A New Community it might be, but its history goes back much further than that... Legend has it that the name “Erskine” originates from Danish raids in the area 800 years ago and means “head on a knife”.

5 50 m after leaving the river bank, the path crosses a footbridge and reaches a T-junction. Turn right. After 300m, turn right at another path junction, signposted “Boden Boo and Erskine Beach”. Erskine Bridge is visible in front of you. The path goes over another footbridge and back to the river’s edge.

Crossing the Clyde People have been crossing the river at Erskine for countless centuries – although they would have got wet feet until only a couple of hundred years ago. Until the eighteenth century, it was possible to cross the river on foot at low tide. But then, as ships got larger, the river bed began to be dredged so that they could sail upstream to Glasgow. This meant that the river became too deep to ford. A ferry then started to operate. You can still see the slipway through the white railings at Ferry Road (point 6 on the route), next to the former Ferry Lodge.

A number of ferries operated for over 200 years – first of all a flat-bottomed punt with poles, and then different chain-ferries. Their long history came to an end only in 1971, when Erskine Bridge opened. Now that the Bridge carries over 20,000 vehicles a day, it's difficult to see how the ferries ever coped. No doubt people said the same thing when the flat-bottomed punt replaced the ford !

6 You soon reach Ferry Road. Cross the road and go through the stone gateposts into the car park (signposted “Erskine Beach Park and Boden Boo Community Woodland”). Follow the obvious path leading out of the other side of the car park towards Erskine Beach.



The Clyde at Erskine

Erskine Park Once you cross Ferry Road and go through the stone gateposts, you are in what used to be Erskine Park. This wasn't a public park. It was the huge estate surrounding Erskine House – a massive mansion which overlooks the Clyde just beyond Erskine Bridge. The House was built in 1828 by a famous architect called Sir Robert Smirke, who also designed the British Museum in London. Erskine House was used as a house for less than a hundred years before it was converted into a hospital for injured soldiers in the First World War. It has now been converted again – to the Mar Hall Hotel, an exclusive 5 star hotel. The extensive parklands around the House once extended all the way to the old ferry (see box **Crossing the Clyde**). They included Boden Boo – the woodland between points 6 and 8 on this walk – and other features like the obelisk you can see from the road between Erskine and Bishopton.

7 When you are almost directly under Erskine Bridge, there is a steep stony track on your left. If you do not have boots, we recommend you return the way you came from Erskine Bridge because from here to point 8 can be a little muddy. If you do have boots, turn left up the steep track, which winds its way through the concrete bridge piers. After the second bridge pier, turn left at the path junction to go back underneath the bridge. Follow the path in a more or less straight line,

parallel with the river. Ignore other small paths on either side. The path is roughly level at first, then begins to lose height gradually. It runs past some big beech trees about 200m from the bridge, and then other mature trees. Keep straight on, now either level or slightly uphill again, and stay on the path as it curves round gradually to the right. 200m from the big beech trees, you will arrive at a layby on Ferry Road.

8 Turn left along Ferry Road. There is no pavement: it's a quiet road, but watch for traffic. Where the road curves round to the left after 100m, you will see a tarmac path straight in front of you, signposted "Clyde Walkway". Follow this path through the stone wall for 150m to a path junction. Turn left here, signposted "Erskine Harbour 550m and Erskine Riverside". At the next path junction 100m further on, carry straight on, signposted "Clyde Walkway".

9 You are now retracing your steps back to the start of the route, but in the opposite direction. When you arrive at the first path junction after 300m, make sure you turn left over the footbridge (point 5 on the way out). Then keep to the river bank for another 1 km to a fingerpost pointing to "Car Park", the fourth path on the right after passing the Hotel. This takes you back to the car park at the start of the walk after 150m.

Do you want to explore further ?

Many people walk on beyond Erskine Bridge along the bank of the Clyde through the grounds of Mar Hall Hotel (see box **Erskine Park**). There are good views of Erskine House itself and downstream towards Dumbarton. After 1.5km, the path leads to Big Wood. This is also part of the former estate grounds. It contains a network of footpaths dating from Victorian times.



Clyde at Erskine, looking toward Clydebank



Erskine Chain Ferry
(Courtesy of the Mitchell Library, Glasgow)

Getting to the start

Bus Several Arriva buses run to Erskine town centre, less than 5 minutes walk from the start of the route. Arriva 22 and 300 from Paisley (7 days a week), Arriva 23 from Renfrew and Glasgow (7 days a week), and Arriva 27 from Bishopton and Glasgow (not Sundays). From the town centre bus turning circle, walk back out onto Kilpatrick Drive. Turn left, downhill, past the Sports Centre. 100 metres past the Sports Centre is a small wooden sign on the right hand side of the road pointing to “Erskine Riverfront Walkway”. The walk proper starts here.

Rail and bus Frequent services to Paisley Gilmour Street from Glasgow, Greenock, Johnstone and Ayrshire. Then bus (Arriva 22 or 300) to Erskine town centre. See **Bus** section above for directions to the start of the walk.

Bicycle It is possible to cycle on public roads to Erskine, but please bear in mind that the roads from Renfrew, Paisley and Johnstone all have stretches with 60mph speed limits and can be busy. Cycle stands are situated at the entrance to Erskine Community Sports Centre, 100m before the start of the walk. Bring a lock. (See **Car** section for detailed directions.).

Car From Glasgow or Paisley use either M8 jn 29 and A726, or M8 jn 30, M898 and A726 (turn off for Erskine before Erskine Bridge toll). From Greenock use M8 jn 30, M898 and A726 (turn off for Erskine before Erskine Bridge toll). From Clydebank and Dumbarton, use A82 and Erskine Bridge (turn off to Erskine after toll). Once on

A726 from either direction, follow signs for Town Centre. As you approach the town centre, you will pick up a sign at a roundabout for Erskine Community Sports Centre. Follow this, down Kilpatrick Drive towards the River Clyde, passing the Sports Centre on your left. 100m further on, turn right at small wooden sign “Erskine Riverfront Walkway” into car park.

Please check rail and bus times with Traveline Scotland before travelling. Tel: 0870 608 2 608 www.travelinescotland.com

Refreshments

Erskine Bridge Hotel Teas, coffees and bar meals for non-residents. About halfway along the route. Tel: 0870 246 1791

Dani's Diner Café and takeaway. In the town centre 300m from the start/finish of the walk. Tel: 0141 812 1874

Bridgewater Tavern In the town centre. Meals at weekends only. Tel: 0141 812 0223

Erskine Community Sports Centre Drinks and snacks machines. 100m from the start/finish of the walk on Kilpatrick Drive. Tel: 0141 812 7722

Erskine Home Coffee Shop Teas, coffees, snacks and light meals. Located in the Garden Centre at Erskine Home. Get there by bus (Arriva 300 from town centre bus turning circle) or car (from start/finish of route follow signs for A82 Dumbarton, go under approach to Erskine Bridge, then turn right at roundabout). Tel: 0141 812 1100.

Mar Hall five star hotel in the transformed Erskine House. Restaurant, bar, spa and accommodation. Non-residents should phone ahead. Tel: 0141 812 9999.



Robertson Park, Renfrew