50 Fascinating facts in and around the Balloch area

1. Loch Lomond, broad and shallow at the southern end, deep and narrow at the northern end is the largest inland stretch of water in Britain. The Loch is 24 miles long and five miles wide and at its deepest point is some 600 feet deep.
2. Because Loch Lomond can be easily reached by train or bicycle from the heart of Glasgow it has always been a popular weekend escape for residents of the city.
3. En route from the city, the transition from industry to idyllic landscape is stark. The enormous shipyard crane at Clydebank is know as the Titan Crane and is now a visitor attraction – you can go to the top and enjoy the views across the river and towards Glasgow, appreciating the scale of the ships it helped to build, too.
4. On the Loch there are approximately 38 Islands, some of them inhabited and there is even a Hotel on one, Inchmurrin. Inchmurrin takes its name from the missionary St Mirrin who spent some time there. There is some debate about the number of islands on Loch Lomond, as there are varying arguments as to what constitutes an island. Some of the islands are "crannogs" – man made islands dating from the Bronze and Iron Ages.
5. Three of the most interesting crannogs are located close to Arden and Cameron House. The Cameron Point crannog has been carbon-dated to 2,000 years ago.
6. The Loch is crossed by the Highland Boundary Fault. The line of the Highland Boundary Fault can be seen clearly from Conic Hill on the south-east shore, looking west across the islands of Inchcailloch, Torrinch, Creinch and Inchmurrin.
7. Some 200 species of birds and over 25% of Britain's wild plants have been recorded in the area.
8. The first commercial pleasure steamer was brought into service in 1827. The first regatta to take place was in 1827. Since then there has been a steady increase in the numbers and type of craft using the Loch for pleasure sport and recreation.
9. The Loch Lomond Rescue Boat (LLRB) was founded in 1977 from monies donated by an unknown sailor. The Boat is sited at the village of Luss and is manned from a pool of around 20 local volunteers.
10. Loch Lomond and The Trossachs National Park is the first National Park in Scotland, founded 24th July 2002. Stretching from Breadalbane to the Argyll Forest, the Park encompasses 720 sq miles of mountain, loch and glen.
11. The sculpture at Stoneymollan roundabout is intended to mark the entrance to the National Park. Designed by Brian McArthur, an Ileach, it is made from locally sourced and sawn timber from a Balloch sawmill. The timbers chosen are Douglas Fir and Larch.
12. The winning design represents a timber crown surrounded by flying geese. Whilst the total cost of the project has been controversial, the bulk of the money was spent on improving the junction layout and providing tourist signage.
13. Ben Lomond, at 3,194ft, is Scotland's most southerly Munro.
14. You'll take the high road …. There are many interpretations of this song, the most common is that two of Bonnie Prince Charlie's men were captured and left behind in Carlisle after the failed rising of 1745. One of the young soldiers was to be executed, the other released. The Spirit of the dead soldier travelling by the 'low road' would reach Scotland before his comrade, who would be struggling along the actual road over high, rugged country. It captures some of the romantic spirit of the lost cause of Bonnie Prince Charlie.
15. The song "Loch Lomond" performed by the The Borderers is a popular tune with many Australian Gaelic and Folk music fans. During one of their performances, when they requested people to dance on stage, they actually broke the stage. At their next concert, a barrier was erected!
16. Luss, a beautiful village on the west shore of Loch Lomond, takes its name, some say, from "fleur de lys". Alternatively, it may simply mean "place of herbs or plants". Formerly known as "clachan dubh", or black village, because of the lack of light and the black slate roofs.

17. The Celtic missionary St.Kessog had a monastic retreat on the island of Inchtavannich just opposite the village.
18. Kessog was martyred in 520AD and his effigy now stands in Luss church.
19. The village of Luss ("Glendarroch") on the shores of the loch was the location for the TV soap Take the High Road, and the loch itself was given the fictional name Loch Darroch for the purpose of the series.
20. The delightful village kirk at Luss is probably the third on the site. The present one was built as a memorial by James Colquhoun to his father, who along with five ghillies, drowned in the loch during a storm.
21. Rossdhu House, "Black point" with its imposing coat of arms over the gateway, was once the seat of the Colquhoun family. The house, rebuilt in 1775, is now the clubhouse for the exclusive Loch Lomond Golf Club.
22. Rowena Ferguson designed a new tartan to commemorate the National Park. Called "Loch Lomond District" it takes its colours from the clans surrounding the loch and references to the colours of the vegetation in the park.
23. In The Adventures of Tintin cartoon book series, Captain Haddock's and Snowy's favourite drink is Scotch whisky of the brand Loch Lomond.
24. The area of Loch Lomond is close to the kingdoms of the Picts, Scots and Britons and was even invaded by the Vikings. In 1263 Magnus dragged his longboats across land from Loch Long and set forth destroying the communities around Loch Lomond.
25. The Clans in the area continued the spirit of rivalry, cheating and stealing. The main clans in the region were the MacGregors (of Rob Roy fame), the Buchanans, the Colquhouns and the MacFarlanes. Raids, cattle stealing, broken alliances and skirmishes led to the battle at Glen Fruin in 1603.
26. Loch Lomond Shores opened its doors in 2002 and has since succeeded in providing a focal point for visitors to the southern end of Loch Lomond. Drumkinnon Tower is home to the Loch Lomond Aquarium. Attractions at the aquarium include touch pools, ray tanks and a tropical ocean tunnel. Its 26 displays contain mainly native Scottish species.
27. Loch Lomond itself contains more species of fish than any other in Scotland, including salmon, trout, sea-trout, pike and powan – a type of 'fresh water herring' found in only here and in Loch Eck near Dunoon.
28. The Lomond Folk Festival is held annually during the month of July at Balloch on the shores of Loch Lomond. 2008 Festival Dates - Friday July 27th to Sunday July 29th.
29. Balloch became an important gateway to Loch Lomond during the 1800s, when many steamers operated on the loch. In 1850 the railway reached Balloch, and continued right to a station built alongside the newly completed Balloch Pier on the loch.
30. The country park at Balloch, at the southern end of Loch Lomond, has a visitor centre in Balloch Castle. The original castle which had been built in 1238 by the Earls of Lennox (before they built a more secure stronghold on Inchmurrin Island on the loch). The country park itself is 200 acres of woodland, parkland and ornamental gardens with pathways which go down to the shores of Loch Lomond. There are lots of corners for quiet picnics and the visitor centre has a small exhibition on the plants and animals which can be seen in the area. The park is particularly attractive in the spring when the large numbers of rhododendrons and azaleas are in bloom.
31. The estate of Buchanan Castle stretched for 100,000 acres and was the seat of the Duke of Montrose until the end of the 17c. Used as a military hospital during WW2 it was also the scene of Rudolph Hess' interrogation after landing in Scotland. The roof of the castle was removed in 1970.
32. The name "Lomond" has a number of possible sources. Possibly Brythonic (Welsh) meaning "beacon" or perhaps from Scottish Gaelic "leamhan" meaning "elm trees". This would account for the River Leven, which flows from Loch Lomond to the Clyde. A text from 1535 refers to the loch as "Levin".
33. The Maid of the Loch is the last paddle steamer to be built in Britain and is currently undergoing a major re-fit thanks to enthusiastic volunteers.
34. There is a sea plane service that runs from Loch Lomond to scenic spots such as Oban, Tobermory and Skye.
35. Timber from the area around Loch Lomond was felled for the building of both Paisley Abbey and Glasgow Cathedral.
36. In the 1700s Drymen found itself on the route of the military road from Stirling to Dumbarton. The Clachan Inn, on a corner of The Square, dates back to this period and carries signs proclaiming that it was first licensed in 1734.

37. The Glengoyne distillery at Drymen is one of the most picturesque in Scotland and is open to the public.
38. Inchmurrin is the largest of the islands in Loch Lomond. The name means "the island of the spears" as it was used for hunting. The castle dates from the late 14c.
39. Fraoch Eilean, "heather island", is said to have been a prison colony for wives who talked too much and failed to do as they were told.
40. A few miles south of Loch Lomond is Helensburgh where Charles Rennie Mackintosh's brilliantly-designed and decorated Hill House is open to the public.
41. Helensburgh was partly designed and laid out by Sir James Colquhoun of Luss. He named the town after his wife.
42. John Logie Baird, who invented television, was born in Helensburgh.
43. In Glen Fruin, beyond Helensburgh, there was a very bloody battle between the Colquhouns and MacGregors in 1603. There were 140 dead on the Colquhoun side but only two dead MacGregors… a bit of a thrashing for the Colquhouns!
44. Over the hills to the west of Loch Lomond is a range of challenging peaks known as the Arrochar Alps where the pioneers of hill-walking and mountaineering in Scotland would come to escape from the factories and shipyards of Glasgow in the 1920s and 30s.
45. Dumbarton lies at the other end of the river Leven from Balloch, where it meets the river Clyde.
46. It was said to have been the birthplace of St.Patrick in 387AD but he's also been linked to Old Kirkpatrick, a few miles east, near where the Roman Antonine Wall ends.
47. It was at the heart of Scottish heavy industry all through the heyday of ship-building and engineering. The Cutty Sark tea clipper was build there in 1869.
48. Between 1905 and 1914 a director of Denny's shipyard in Dumbarton designed some primitive helicopters, at least one of which flew successfully, if briefly.
49. Most of the famous Cunard passenger liners of the twentieth century were build just along the Clyde at Clydebank, in John Brown's Shipyard, including the Queen Mary (launched in 1934) and the Queen Elizabeth (launched 1940) and QE2 (1969).
50. Also in Clydebank is the only distillery in Scotland to produce triple-distilled malt whisky: Auchentoshan. All the rest is just double-distilled. This distillery has a visitor centre, too.