



50 Fascinating facts in and around Callander and the Trossachs

1. Callander was mainly developed in the 18th century on lands forfeited by the Drummond family for their support of the Jacobite cause in 1745-6.
2. In the 1890s Callander was a spa town, complete with hydro and there were six coaches a day plying between the town and the Trossachs.
3. There is a long embankment at the southern end of the town said to be the remnants of a Roman camp belonging to Agricola.
4. The Trossachs (Scottish Gaelic, Na Trosaichean) is a small woodland glen between Ben An to the north and Ben Venue to the south, with Loch Katrine to the west and Loch Achray to the east. However, the name is used generally to refer to the wider area of wooded glens and braes with quiet lochs, lying to the east of Ben Lomond.
5. The scenic charms of this area became popular when Walter Scott wrote of Scotland's romantic past with his 1810 poem *Lady of the Lake*, the lady herself being found on Loch Katrine. This was followed up by his historical novel *Rob Roy* romanticising the outlaw cattle thief Raibert Ruadh born by Loch Katrine and buried at nearby Balquhider.
6. The effect of this romantic literature was to draw tourists to the area and make the Trossachs Hotel well known. There is a cluster of film locations associated with the 1959 version of *The 39 Steps*, notably around Balquhider as well as Loch Lubnaig and also near the very top of the Duke's Pass. Further north, the spectacular Falls of Dochart at Killin are also in the film. They turn up again in *Casino Royale* (1967) with its galaxy of stars including Peter Sellers, Ursula Andress, David Niven, Orson Welles and even Ronnie Corbett.
7. Dorothy Wordsworth visited the area in 1803 and described the area around Callander as 'imperfectly cultivated'.
8. One of TV's best loved medical series, *Dr Finlay's Casebook* (1962-1971) featured the experiences of Dr Alan Finlay (Bill Simpson), working in a country medical practice under the tutelage of the veteran Dr Cameron (Andrew Cruickshank) in the fictional Scottish village of Tannochbrae in the late 1920s. In reality, Tannochbrae was the village of Callander.
9. Loch Katrine changed in 1859 when a dam was built at the eastern end and connecting aqueducts built to bring a new main water supply to Glasgow. Queen Victoria had a holiday house built overlooking the loch.
10. The steamer *SS Sir Walter Scott*, from 1900, is still operating on Loch Katrine, giving visitors a delightful way to enjoy the scenery while adding to the picturesque view.
11. Scotland's only lake, the Lake of Menteith, lies about 6 miles to the south east of the glen, on the edge of the Trossachs area. It's not known how it escaped being called a loch!
12. On Inchmahome island in the middle of the lake is Inchmahome Priory, an Augustinian monastery.
13. The Lake of Mentieth is the traditional venue for vast outdoor curling matches, known as 'bonspiels' when weather conditions permit. (The ice has to be 10 inches – 254mm - thick.) The last time this happened was in 1979 and there were 10,000 players and spectators for a North vs South match.
14. In Aberfoyle the Poker Tree is an oak tree close to the main crossroads at the west end of the village, from which is hung a poker. This dates back to an incident in Sir Walter Scott's novel *Rob Roy* in which Bailie Nichol Jarvie makes use of a poker in a fight with Highlanders in an Aberfoyle inn.
15. The Rev Robert Kirk (1641-1692) was a brilliant scholar though a man of strange habits! While minister of the church at Aberfoyle, he took to wandering about the nearby Doon Hill late at night, sometimes lying down with his ear to the ground and murmuring as if in conversation. He then wrote a book called 'The Secret Commonwealth of Elves, Fauns and Fairies' at a time when the church (unsurprisingly) frowned on such dabbings. Then, in 1692, he was found dead in his nightshirt on the hill. Some say he was trapped in Fairyland. There's a signposted trail on the Doon Hill today. But watch out for the tall pine on top. Rumour is that it's the minister, changed by the little folk.

16. Situated only a mile north of Aberfoyle, the David Marshall Lodge is the visitor centre for the Queen Elizabeth Forest Park. The Park has Orienteering routes and walks and visitors can watch birds of prey in the forest on the webcam monitors in the lodge.
17. Sir Walter Scott published "The Lady of the Lake" in 1810 and tourism in the Trossachs increased by 500% overnight. As a southern gateway to the area, Aberfoyle was transformed during the 1800s into a desirable Victorian resort. In 1882 it became the terminus of a branch railway specifically intended to service the tourist trade. In 1886 its attraction was increased further when "The Duke's Road" was built to connect Aberfoyle with Loch Achray to the north and form a link with the road into the Trossachs from Callander.
18. Despite the new-found wealth from tourism slate mining remained important. By the end of the 1800s the four quarries to the north west of Aberfoyle together comprised Scotland's third largest source of slates, with 1.4 million being produced each year.
19. The high point of the industry came in the 1930s when slate from Aberfoyle was used for the billiard tables on the luxury liner Queen Mary. But demand for slate declined and the railway to the quarries was closed in 1947, to be followed by closure of the quarries themselves in 1958.
20. The name Brig o'Turk comes from Scottish Gaelic meaning "Bridge of the pig"; "tuirc" is pig or boar.
21. There used to be a railway from Callander to Crianlarich and this has since been converted into a tarmac, car-free cycle path that runs for 30 flat-ish miles as far as the top of Glen Ogle. It's been extended down through woodland into the village of Killin.
22. Balquhidder is the home turf of Rob Roy MacGregor and the churchyard there houses his grave and that of his family.
23. After a battle between the MacGregors and Colquhouns in Glen Fruin in 1603 in which 140 Colquhouns were slain, the name MacGregor was banned. The ban was renewed in 1694 but finally it ended in 1775. During this time, Rob Roy MacGregor took the surname Campbell.
24. The area around Balquhidder is actually the ancestral land of the MacLaren clan, though it's now more commonly associated with the MacGregors because of the Rob Roy legend.
25. There are some very popular hill-walking routes around Callander, notably two Munros: mountains over 3000 feet high: Ben Vorlich and Stuc a'Chroin. Ben Ledi is not a Munro but is also a well-walked hill.
26. Blair Drummond safari park is a few miles south of Callander and is home to all sorts of wild animals more associated with Africa than Scotland. It's open April to October.
27. There is a sanctuary for red kites at Ardgaty that welcomes visitors and allows them to watch the birds of prey being fed.
28. Stirling was recently ranked 11th out of 189 UK towns and cities for its quality of life by 21-44 year olds.
29. Scotland's first successful aeroplane flight was in Stirling in 1911. The Barnwell brothers went on to be aircraft designers during both World Wars.
30. In 1782 Stirling had one public house for every 48 citizens.
31. In 1506, whilst staying at Stirling castle, King James 4th bought twelve golf balls to use in a round of golf in the King's Park.
32. The oldest football in the world, dating from around 1540, is in the Smith Art Gallery. It was found in the roof structure of the Castle during restoration work in 1981
33. David Stirling, third son of Archibald Stirling of Keir, founded the SAS in 1941. Captured in 1943 he spent the remainder of the war in Colditz castle. An imposing statute to his memory can be seen on the road between Bridge of Allan and Doune.
34. The Stirling Heads is a collection of 38 intricately carved and brightly painted oak panels originally used to decorate the ceiling of the King's presence Chamber in the Palace and demonstrates the sophistication of the Scottish Court in the 1540s.
35. With the departure of the monarchy in 1603, the palace was converted into a fortress and a garrison remained until the departure of the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders in 1964.
36. Robert the Bruce's body may be in Dunfermline and his heart at Melrose Abbey but the scene of his greatest victory was undoubtedly at Bannockburn.
37. During the 19th Bannockburn (now part of Stirling) produced around 90% of the world's tartan.
38. The Tolbooth once the town hall, offices and jail now houses a modern theatre space and restaurant. During the conversion remains of former prisoners were discovered in the courtyard.

39. In the 19th century Stirling had the biggest oil refinery in the UK, situated at the Forthbank works.
40. The Stirling Jug was the standard Scottish measure for liquids until the introduction of the Imperial measure in 1707.
41. The first public fireworks display in the UK was part of the pageant at the christening ceremony of Prince James (later James 6th) in 1566.
42. The first Forth Bridge appears on the Matthew Paris map of Scotland, which shows the mainland of Scotland, linked to the highlands by means of a bridge at Stirling circa 1250.
43. When Henry Campbell Bannerman, the Liberal MP for Stirling, became Prime Minister he was the first to take the title. Previous PMs had been referred to as "First Lord of the Treasury". These words are still on the brass plate on the door of Number Ten.
44. It was Campbell Bannerman who was the first to introduce the State Old Age pension.
45. Tennis aces Andy Murray, Jamie Murray and Jamie Baker all grew up in Dunblane.
46. From around 1645 the town of Doune was renowned for the manufacture of firearms. Industry there had moved to cotton milling in the 19th century, with the mill employing over 1000 spinners and weavers.
47. Doune castle was one of the locations for the filming of the Monty Python classic 'Monty Python and the Holy Grail'.
48. It was built in the late 14th century by Robert Stewart, 1st Duke of Albany. He was the Governor of Scotland from 1388 – 1420, initially because of his father's ill-health and subsequently because he was more capable than his brother, Robert III, who'd become king after their father's death.
49. Deanston malt whisky comes from the distillery at Doune, though this is currently not in production.
50. During excavations for the building of a local school in Doune in 1999 a set of sophisticated Roman surgical instruments was found.