

DRIVING GUIDE TO THE ANTONINE WALL

The West: Glasgow to Castlecary



The following driving itinerary has been designed to guide your exploration of the Antonine Wall at its western end, within the East and West Dunbartonshire, City of Glasgow, and North Lanarkshire council areas. This itinerary features the most complete Antonine Wall museum exhibit, the best-preserved stone building along the Wall, the most impressive views of the Antonine Wall within its wider landscape setting, and the visible remains of both a Roman fort and a later medieval castle that was built over the line of the Wall. 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 in its western sector. 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 eastern end of the Wall.

HUNTERIAN MUSEUM

For online directions or GPS,
use postcode G12 8QQ.

Although not located on the line of the Antonine Wall, the Hunterian Museum is an essential visit for anyone interested in the Antonine Wall and Roman Scotland in general. The Museum features the largest collection of Antonine Wall artefacts anywhere, and these are prominently displayed within the entrance gallery: "The Antonine Wall: Rome's Final Frontier". This display includes all but two of the surviving Antonine Wall distance slabs (with reproductions of the others and one that was destroyed by fire while on loan in Chicago in 1896), marking the first time that this unique class of sculptured stones can be seen in its entirety.

A wide range of other artefacts and materials are displayed to tell the Antonine Wall's story across four broad themes: the building of the Wall and its impact on the landscape; the life and lifestyle of the Roman army; cultural interactions—including local resistance—between the Roman and native populations; and the Wall's abandonment and cultural biography as it has been rediscovered through antiquarian and archaeological inquiry since the mid-seventeenth century. This display offers a comprehensive and enlightening introduction to the Antonine Wall for visitors of all ages, but it also offers numerous treasures, insights, and opportunities to consider new questions for seasoned enthusiasts and scholars.

From the Hunterian Museum take University Avenue west toward Byres Road, then turn right until you reach Great Western Road (A82). Turn left on Great Western Road and continue north-west through Glasgow until you reach the Kilbowie Roundabout, just past the St Peter the Apostle High School. Take the fourth exit, heading north on Kilbowie Road (A8014). The road will curve twice before reaching another roundabout, and the entrance to Golden Hill Park is just west of the roundabout. The total driving distance from the museum to Duntocher will be just over 11km.

DUNTOCHER*

For online directions or GPS, use postcode G81 6AX (which will lead you to a nearby pub).

Duntocher marks the first visible remains of the Antonine Wall's line from the west, where the Ditch can be traced from around Duntocher Burn eastwards to Golden Hill. On the top of the hill, within the public Golden Hill Park, a small fort (with annexe) and an earlier fortlet have been located and excavated. Subtle traces of the fort are visible in aerial photographs, but no remains are visible on the ground. However, to help visitors, West Dunbartonshire Council has begun to strategically mow grass on the site in order to highlight the lines of the fort's, fortlet's, and Antonine Wall's ramparts. A Roman bath-house was located on the west slope of the hill, and a Roman bridge was probably located in the area of the current "Roman Bridge" across the Duntocher Burn, but visitors should be aware that the current structure was only built in the eighteenth century. The prominent position of Golden Hill Park offers excellent views of the surrounding landscape.

From Duntocher, head east on Glasgow Road (A810), past the Clydebank Golf Course.

After the golf course, the road curves to the left and becomes Duntocher Road. You will go through one roundabout, after which you will see Castlehill on the right. Castlehill was the site of an Antonine Wall fort, and you can recognise the location because of a circular tree plantation on

the summit of the hill. After passing Castlehill, you will enter the western end of modern Bearsden, and you will be driving north of the line of the Antonine Wall. At Bearsden Academy the road will fork, and you should curve right (heading south-east) onto Drymen Road (A809). At Roman Road (A808), turn left, heading east. The preserved Roman bath-house from the Bearsden annexe will be visible on your left. Parking is available behind the bath-house, accessible from Roman Court.

BEARSDEN

For online directions or GPS, use postcode G61 2HS.

The only Antonine Wall fort to see extensive archaeological excavation since the Second World War, the fort at Bearsden is now mostly covered over by roads and houses. Amidst this modern development, however, are the exposed remains of a Roman bath-house and latrine (toilet) within the area of the fort's annexe. These are probably the best examples of preserved and visible Roman stone structures along the entire Antonine Wall, providing insights into the regular rhythms of the soldiers' daily lives.

From the Bearsden bath-house, head east on Roman Road (A808), and turn right on the B8049, heading south-east. At the junction with Milngavie Road (A81) go straight, continuing on Boclair Road (B8049).

The New Kilpatrick Cemetery will be located on the left, just before the golf course. The visible remains of the Antonine Wall Rampart are located near the centre of the cemetery.

NEW KILPATRICK CEMETERY*

For online directions or GPS, use postcode G61 2AF.

Within the grounds of New Kilpatrick Cemetery are two well preserved sections of the stone base of the Antonine Wall Rampart, including its stone kerbs, cobble in-fill, and water drainage culverts. One section is in the centre of the cemetery – follow the left hand path round from the entrance. The second section lies uphill to the right of the first, close to the boundary wall with the neighbouring golf course.

From the New Kilpatrick Cemetery, head east on Boclair Road (B8049). Drive straight through one roundabout and past the Bardowie Loch on your left. Continue straight on Balmore Road (A807), through one roundabout and across both the River Kelvin and the Forth and Clyde Canal. At the next roundabout, take the first exit, eastward on Kirkintilloch Road (A803). You will cross the Canal once more and then enter the western end of Kirkintilloch. At the next roundabout, take the second exit onto West High Street and past Peel Park. Just before the corner with Cowgate, you will see the Auld Kirk Museum and a car park.

KIRKINTILLOCH

For online directions or GPS, use postcode G66 1HN.

Peel Park in Kirkintilloch marks the site of a Roman fort on the Antonine Wall. Nothing of the fort is visible on the ground today, but the site is well worth a visit because of the adjacent Auld Kirk Museum, and the site's history as an Antonine Wall location that was refortified in later centuries. Within Peel Park are the visible remains of a later medieval motte (the Kirkintilloch Peel) and stone castle (Kirkintilloch Castle), which were constructed over the remains of the Antonine Wall and part of the fort during the twelfth to fourteenth centuries. The medieval remains provide a tantalising glimpse into a period that hasn't been very well explored along the Antonine Wall, when the former Roman frontier was—

at least in this location—refortified and functioning as a militarised borderland, swapping hands between Scottish and English forces during the Scottish War of Independence. The museum features objects from the area, and exhibits are conveniently organised in chronological order, allowing visitors to virtually travel through Kirkintilloch's history, from prehistory to the industrial and modern era.

From the car park behind the Auld Kirk Museum, turn left onto West High Street and then take the second exit on the roundabout, heading eastward onto the Glasgow-Kilsyth Road (A803). After passing straight through one roundabout, the road will follow the Forth and Clyde Canal on its north side. Just before the road crosses the River Kelvin, turn right onto the B8023. You will pass the Auchendavie Farm, which sits on the site of the former Auchendavy Roman fort, with the road following the line of the former Roman Military Way, straight through the centre of the Roman fort. After passing several farm fields, the road will join up with the Canal once again, and soon after this, a bridge will cross the Canal on the right-hand side. Turn right at the bridge, heading south-east on Main Street and into Twechar village. Parking is available in Twechar, and the site of Bar Hill fort is accessible on foot from the path opposite the community centre, about a 1km walk up the hill, with some steep, uneven, sections.

BAR HILL

For online directions and GPS, use postcode G65 9TA (for Twechar village, at the bottom of Bar Hill's west slope).

The fort at Bar Hill lies at the highest altitude of all Antonine Wall forts, with spectacular views in all directions. The fort platform, east gate, and the exposed remains of the fort's headquarters building and bath-house are visible on the ground.

The fort is unique along the Antonine Wall as it is not directly connected to the line of the Wall, but is set back about 30m to the south of the Wall's Rampart.

Within the fort are traces of an earlier enclosure that is now considered to have been a temporary camp occupied during the construction of the Antonine Wall. A second probable temporary camp has also been located outside of the fort's south-west corner. Parts of the earlier enclosure can still be traced within the fort's interior, but nothing of the external camp is visible on the ground today. Also of interest at Bar Hill is the presence of an Iron Age fort (called "Castle Hill") located immediately north-east of the Roman fort and south of the Antonine Wall Rampart.

From Twechar, head south on Main Street past the Boardloch Wood. After the road begins to run parallel to the railway, you will arrive at a roundabout. Take the first exit, crossing the railway to another, larger, roundabout. Take the first exit again, heading eastward on the B8048. Stay on the B8048 through five roundabouts and then merge onto the M80, heading north-east past Cumbernauld. Take the first exit off of the M80 and onto Castlecary Road (B816), heading north-east. Go through two roundabouts and past the Wardpark Industrial Estate. The Castlecary House Hotel will be on your left, and there is a car park directly behind it.

GARNHALL/TOLLPARK*

For online directions or GPS, use postcode G68 0HD.

A long and largely uninterrupted section of Antonine Wall Ditch and Outer Mound is located between Castlecary and the Cumbernauld Airport, across the fields of the former Garnhall and Tollpark farms. The area is accessible from an entry point through the fields behind the Castlecary House Hotel, off of Castlecary Road. Within this area were also three Roman temporary camps and a possible Roman watch-tower within a ditched enclosure, but there are no traces of these visible on the ground. Combined, the Tollpark and Garnhall sections provide one of the longest continuous stretches of the Antonine Wall that can be seen on the ground today.

Due to modern development in the area, the views to the south are now diminished, but the area offers a wide view of the landscape to the north of the Wall.

From the Castlecary House Hotel, head north-east on Castlecary Road (B816). The road will cross the railway and then cross over the M80. Immediately after crossing the M80, turn right onto Walton Road. The fort will be directly ahead of you. Streetside parking is available.

CASTLECARY

For online directions or GPS, use postcode G68 0HG.

Near the old Castlecary schoolhouse is the site of a Roman fort and annexe on the Antonine Wall. The fort is bisected by the Edinburgh to Glasgow railway line, which enters the fort at its south-east corner and exits just south of the fort's west gateway. The fort is one of only two along the Antonine Wall to have featured stone ramparts. The portion to the north of the railway can be visited today, and an information panel and site plan is on display. Visible remains include a low mound and portions of exposed stonework from the fort's east rampart, small portions of the headquarters building near a cluster of trees within the centre of the fort, and—depending on the current height of grass—traces of stonework at the north gate.