



# Mountain Biking Tourism in Scotland



tourism  
intelligence  
scotland

INNOVATION THROUGH KNOWLEDGE



Scottish Enterprise



Highlands and Islands Enterprise  
Iomairt na Gàidhealtachd 's nan Eilean



opportunities  
for **growth**





- |                         |                        |                                    |
|-------------------------|------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 1. 7stanes Glentress    | 10. Kyle of Sutherland | 19. Pitfichie                      |
| 2. 7stanes Innerleithen | 11. Highland Wildcat   | 20. Glenshee Ski Resort            |
| 3. 7stanes Newcastleton | 12. Learnie Red Rock   | 21. Highland Safaris Bike Trax     |
| 4. 7stanes Mable        | 13. Abriachan Trails   | 22. Comrie Croft Trails            |
| 5. 7stanes Dalbeattie   | 14. Fort William       | 23. Bespoke Trail Callander Estate |
| 6. 7stanes Kirroughtree | 15. Laggan Wolfrax     | 24. Fire Tower Trail               |
| 7. 7stanes Glentool     | 16. Cairngorms         | 25. Carron Valley                  |
| 8. 7stanes Ae           | 17. Lecht Ski Centre   | 26. Isle of Arran                  |
| 9. Drumlarnig           | 18. Moray Monster      |                                    |



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INNOVATION THROUGH KNOWLEDGE

Innovation in product and service development and in business processes, is key to the future competitiveness of the Scottish tourism industry. In this fast-moving consumer marketplace, Scotland needs to continually make the most of its distinctive strengths and keep up with growing competition. The more you know about your customers, the better you can cater for them, the more satisfied they will be and the more money they are likely to spend with you.

Gathering and using good market intelligence to drive innovation is a quick, easy, cheap and effective way to improve your business. To support the industry in this area, a new joint initiative has been developed by Scottish Enterprise, Highlands and Islands Enterprise and VisitScotland, "Tourism Intelligence Scotland". Tourism Intelligence Scotland is a key initiative in supporting the industry to achieve growth and innovation in tourism.

**Tourism Intelligence Scotland is where forward thinking businesses go for easy to use practical insights to inspire them to get ahead...**

It offers businesses the opportunity to access, share and understand a range of useful information – and can help businesses to get ahead and stay competitive. Go to [www.tourism-intelligence.co.uk](http://www.tourism-intelligence.co.uk) to access the library of intelligence. There are insights, hints and tips on a number of topics for every tourism sector.

**What are the benefits?**

Tourism Intelligence Scotland can help you to:

- Obtain useful customer feedback and understand your customers better
- Develop innovative products and services based on good market intelligence
- Find inspirational and relevant information quickly and easily understand the Scottish tourism market better
- Understand global trends that matter to you
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- Be more successful and stay one step ahead

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Scotland has a fantastic reputation for mountain biking – in fact we have been classed as Global Superstars by the International Mountain Biking Association (IMBA) thanks to our beautiful natural landscapes and investment in top quality built facilities. This world-class status has led to a large increase in visitor numbers across the country.

In 2007 the key agencies involved in mountain biking in Scotland recognised that the activity could benefit from a more strategic approach to future development. 'Developing Mountain Biking in Scotland' was created, which aims to increase participation in mountain biking, to achieve sporting success, and 'importantly' to increase tourism and economic development. This will be delivered through a national framework strategy.

**This guide will show you the vast potential of mountain biking tourism to help grow your business, and how it can help you attract more visitors and improve your bottom line.**





# 1 | INTRODUCTION

## Who goes mountain biking?

When you think of mountain biking, it is interesting to note what type of visitors come to mind. You might have the idea that it is a somewhat niche activity, but in reality this is far from the truth.

In a similar way to snowboarding, the early reputation of mountain biking was as a fashionable adventure-seeking activity for young enthusiasts – but that was just the beginning. With growing awareness and an increasing supply of facilities, it has become an accessible activity for everyone!

Nowadays, mountain biking is the perfect social activity for families, an alternative day out for older couples, and an exciting new challenge for beginners. The idea of a healthy adventure activity, where you can just pick up your bike and go, has grabbed the imagination of the mass market. It plays into current trends of health and wellbeing for body and soul, and the search for new, authentic experiences – **and this growing interest is proving very lucrative for tourism businesses!**



## Scotland is on track!

Scotland is recognised as one of the best destinations in the world for mountain biking. The International Mountain Bicycling Association (IMBA) **rates this country as a mountain biking Global Superstar** and in 2007, we were awarded the prestigious opportunity to host the UCI (Union Cycliste Internationale) Mountain Bike and Trials World Championships at Fort William.

Scotland's reputation is largely due to our striking and varied natural environment – in fact, some joke that it's as if Scotland was designed with mountain biking in mind! There are endless miles of forest tracks, cycle trails and country paths to suit every rider's taste and ability. We also have world-class facilities, inspiring events and progressive access legislation, which means riders have unprecedented freedom to explore the countryside – something we should all be shouting from the hilltops!

## Why is it so important?

According to the 'Economic Value of Mountain Biking in Scotland' report commissioned by Scottish Enterprise, mountain biking tourism generates £46.5 million each year for the Scottish economy. This is from people who come here purely to enjoy our mountain biking product. If you count all visitors who engage with mountain biking on a trip and all of their trip expenditure, the figure totals £119 million. It's also a market set for significant growth over the next five years, with potential additional revenue of £36 million, which will increase the market share to £155 million. This is a fantastic time for tourism businesses to get involved.

Scotland voted a "Global Superstar" by the International Mountain Bicycling Association (IMBA) for its "outstanding mountain biking"

2005

7stanes 2007 evaluation shows nearly 400,000 visits to 7stanes

2007

The UCI Mountain Bike World Cup, part of which is held in Fort William, is voted the best mountain bike event in the world by the International Mountain Bike Trade Team Organisation (IMTTO) for the 4th time

2008

Developing Mountain Biking in Scotland established, to deliver arguably the world's first national mountain bike strategy

2009

## Why you should target mountain biking visitors

- For the same reason you would target golfing visitors or heritage visitors – because we have a world-class reputation
- It appeals across the age groups and market sectors
- It can be enjoyed as a single person or as part of a group
- It promotes physical activity, tapping into current health trends
- It capitalises on one of Scotland's best assets – our stunning scenery
- They are all-year round visitors

and even further afield, it's important we don't underestimate the importance of offering our mountain biking visitors an excellent visitor experience. We also need to encourage visitors to extend their stay and spend more while they are here. If Scotland is to stay ahead, tourism businesses must work together to deliver all-round excellent mountain biking visitor experiences.

## Follow the trail...

See how quickly mountain biking has grown!

1973

The birth of mountain biking! Crude downhill-only bikes emerged in California

1982

The UK is introduced to mountain biking when the first bikes are imported

1986

Scotland's first trails developed at Lochaline and Leanachan

1989

Sales reach two million mountain bikes sold in the UK per year represents 70% of all sales

1996

As popularity grows, the Forestry Commission Scotland (FCS) adopts mountain biking as a key recreation

2001

Forestry Commission Scotland and partners start the flagship 7stanes mountain bike project

2002

Fort William (and other locations) hosts the first rounds of the UCI Mountain Bike World Cup

2003

Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003 officially opens up access to Scotland's countryside, allowing mountain bikers a unique freedom to explore



# 2 | WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT...

## What is Mountain Biking?

Mountain biking is an activity that involves riding off-road, over natural or purpose-built paths and tracks. It can be enjoyed by nearly everyone, from young to old and from family groups to serious enthusiasts.

Mountain bikers are not all the same. The activity is made up of several different disciplines, including:

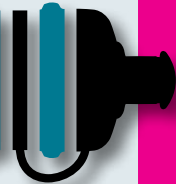
- **Cross-country trail riders** (the majority of riders)
- **Downhillers** (riders who enjoy high speed over a challenging descent)
- **Freeride bikers** (use jump parks and freeride areas – similar to BMX)
- **Trials riders** (involves negotiation of man-made and natural obstacles)



## What does Scotland's mountain biking product look like?

Scotland boasts one of the most accessible networks of mountain biking routes in the world. According to the 'Economic Value of Mountain Biking in Scotland' report, there are a number of purpose-built mountain bike centres here, and they attract about 592,000 visits a year! The 7stanes in Southern Scotland attract around 69% of all visits, being well placed for both day and overnight visitors from outside Scotland.

Look at the map on page two of this guide. Which trails are within travelling distance of your business? Do you have information about them available for your visitors?



## Going Wild

Some visitors may come here to focus their trip around one of our trail centres, preferring the graded trails and amenities that sit around these hubs, while others will want to try 'wild riding'.

Wild riders use their experience and navigational skills to access the wider countryside. Scotland's progressive access legislation provides a great opportunity to sell our product as there is something most businesses can offer right from their doorstep.






Do you know where your visitors can go mountain biking?  
Do you know if there are suitable trails there for your visitor groups?  
Remember that families will be looking for a very different experience to the mountain biking enthusiast. Do you know how to help them find what they need?



# ...MOUNTAIN BIKING

## Understanding the grading system

Scotland's landscape is unique in that it can challenge the experienced rider, but also caters well for beginners. To communicate the levels of difficulty, a colour coded grading system was developed by the Forestry Commission to allow visitors to match trails to their own ability. This information is usually provided at mountain biking centre car parks and the start of the trails, but you can help visitors by making recommendations to suit them.

	FCS % of trails of this type	Suitable for	Bike required	Skills needed	Trail and surface types	Suggested fitness level
 <b>Green: Easy</b>	15%	beginners or novice cyclists.	most bikes and mountain bike hybrids are suitable.	basic bike skills are required for this grade.	these will be relatively flat and wide. Trail surface might be loose, uneven or muddy at times. Might include short flowing singletrack-style sections. Some green routes can take trailers.	suitable for most people in good health.
 <b>Blue: Moderate</b>	40%	intermediate cyclists or mountain bikers with basic off-road riding skills.	basic mountain bike or mountain bike hybrid.	basic off-road riding skills to cope with uneven surfaces and small obstacles.	as for 'green', plus specially constructed singletrack trails. Trail surface might include small obstacles of root and rock.	a good standard of fitness can help.
 <b>Red: Difficult</b>	28%	proficient mountain bikers with good off-roading skills.	quality off-road mountain bikes.	good off-roading skills and techniques to cope with technical trail features.	steeper and tougher, mostly singletrack with technical sections. Expect very variable surface types.	a higher level of fitness and stamina is required.
 <b>Black: Severe</b>	15%	expert mountain bike users, used to physically demanding routes.	a high quality off-road mountain bike is needed.	advanced level off-roading skills and technical ability.	as for 'red', but with an expectation of greater challenge and continuous difficulty.	suitable for very active people used to prolonged effort.
 <b>Orange: Extreme</b>	2%	riders aspiring to an elite level of technical ability; incorporates everything from full on downhill riding to 'big air' jumps.	a high quality off-road mountain bike is needed.	advanced level off-roading skills and technical ability.	severe constructed trails and/or natural features. All sections will be challenging. Includes extreme levels of exposure or risk.	a good standard of fitness is recommended but technical skills are more important.
<b>Forest Road &amp; similar</b>	ungraded	a wide range of cyclists.	most bikes and mountain bike hybrids are suitable.	basic map reading will be helpful for roads which are not way-marked or signposted.	relatively flat and wide. The trail surface might be loose, uneven or muddy at times. These roads might also be used by vehicles and others on foot.	a good standard of fitness can help.



# Volume and value

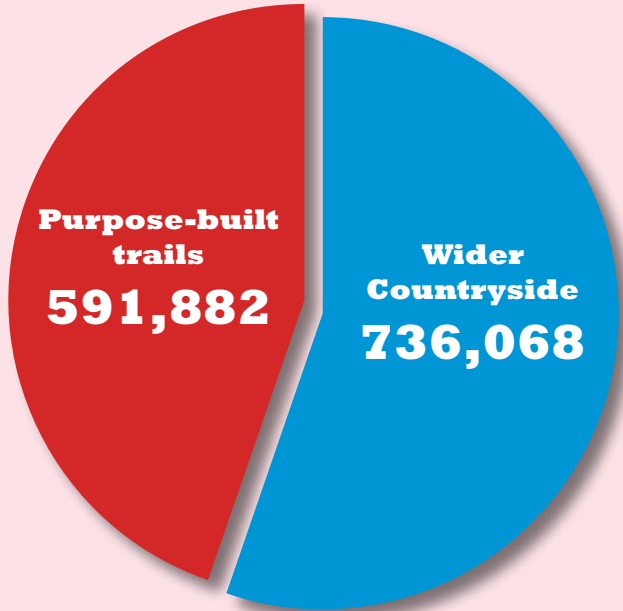
According to 'Economic Value of Mountain Biking in Scotland', visitors for whom mountain biking is the main reason or a key part of their trip, spend an estimated £46.5 million. It's vital that we focus on all potential visitors, from entry-level bikers to specialists.

# Visitor numbers

In 2007 the number of tourists who undertook mountain biking during a trip to Scotland nearly doubled from the previous year, as was shown in the 'UK Tourism Survey' by VisitEngland. Now, 'Economic Value of Mountain Biking in Scotland' estimates the total number of mountain biking visits at over 1.3 million per year. Nearly 600,000 visitors come here to sample our fantastic purpose-built trails.

**Also, 22.5% of these visitors stay overnight – that's nearly 300,000 people! How many of these are staying with you?**

# ANNUAL VISITS



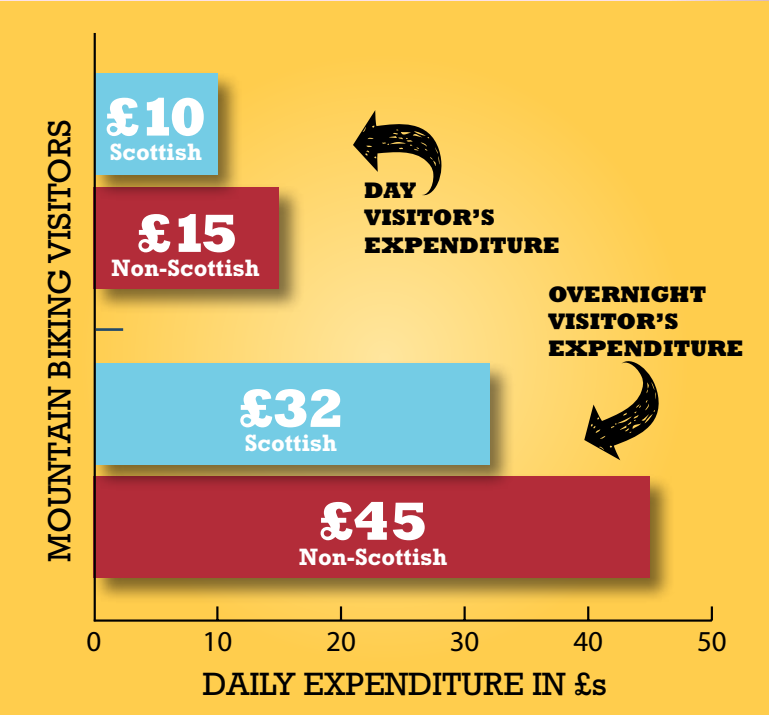
**TOTAL MOUNTAIN BIKING VISITS 1,327,950**

# Visitor spend

Mountain biking visitors who stay overnight spend more than day visitors and actually account for 86% of the total spend of all mountain biking visitors.

If we can make it easier for day visitors to stay overnight, or encourage all visitors to stay longer, local businesses will reap the benefits.

The graph shows the average daily expenditure when mountain biking is a main motivation for a trip



Source: Economic Value of Mountain Biking in Scotland commissioned by Scottish Enterprise, April 2009





# SWOT

# Analysis

## Strengths

- Scotland already has a reputation as a world-class mountain biking destination
- Over 800km of purpose-built trails on Forestry Commission Scotland (FCS) land are free to ride. This offers great value to visitors and so they may spend more with you
- A large diverse network of forest paths, many are close to towns and cities or key destinations
- Unique land access rights to our fantastic landscape, which wows riders and appeals to sight-seeing visitors
- A good balance of products on offer for all levels of riders
- Profile from hosting major events, especially the Mountain Bike World Cup
- A growing number of successful bike-related businesses and services for visitors
- Increasing number of opportunities from experts such as tuition and guided tours
- Strong brand identity of the 7stanes

## Weaknesses

- Non riders can sometimes feel wary about trying the sport through lack of knowledge and poor information
- Lack of co-ordination between mountain biking trails/ businesses and tourism businesses to create joined-up packages for visitors
- Currently some businesses don't understand the needs of mountain bikers well enough and so don't deliver great experiences for them
- Many businesses still believe mountain biking is a niche sport, rather than one for the mass market
- Lack of public transport links to the forests creates a dependency on cars

## Opportunities

- Showcase Scotland to a new mountain biking audience and capture the demand for 'recreational' mountain biking at all levels
- To promote mountain biking in Scotland as a full visitor experience, including visitor centres, cafes and trail amenities
- Promote mountain biking as part of a holiday experience, along with other activities and attractions
- Reach out to the local market to encourage more day visits and short trips to local routes
- New ideas and innovations around mountain biking packages to cater for all types of visitors and abilities
- For tourism businesses to use the popularity of mountain biking to encourage longer stays and visits in the shoulder season
- Create closer links with the wide range of tour operators and other bike businesses in local areas

## Threats

- Mountain biking continues to attract predominately enthusiasts without growing the appeal to other markets
- Disturbance to wildlife/other users if not adhering to the Outdoor Access Code [www.outdooraccess-scotland.com](http://www.outdooraccess-scotland.com)
- The growing competition from other mountain biking destinations such as Wales and the North of England
- Being unable to keep our trails in the best condition and develop them using latest techniques and styles
- Failure to move with the market and attract beginners and families
- Lack of collaboration within areas between tourism businesses
- Businesses not gathering a good level of intelligence and feedback from their visitors so they don't have enough information to drive innovation and product development

# TOP TIPS



## Race to success!

- ☀️ There are already a huge number of visitors coming to Scotland to take part in mountain biking – it's a ready-made market of people that need to eat, drink, sleep, shop, etc. Think of how you can reach out to this vast existing market
- ☀️ Don't be misled into thinking this is just an activity for enthusiasts. Perhaps your visitors would love to give it a try, but don't know where to start. Can you give them a helping hand?
- ☀️ Find out about the trails in your area, where are they, how long it takes to get there and what amenities are on offer. Be prepared to answer your visitors' questions
- ☀️ Know what trail grades your local centres offer so you can advise your visitors where to go for an experience that matches their ability
- ☀️ Mountain biking is a year-round activity. Can you use it to promote your business in the off season?
- ☀️ Some visitors might be interested in having a local guide join them for a day's mountain biking. Who could you collaborate with to offer this service?



# 3 WHO ARE OUR MOUNTAIN BIKING VISITORS?

Some visitors come to Scotland specifically to take part in mountain biking, while others participate as part of a more general holiday to the area. According to ‘*Economic Value of Mountain Biking in Scotland*’, men aged 24 to 35 are still the dominant visitors to trail centres, but there is a growing popularity with women who are increasingly engaging in events and skills sessions. Families too are representing a new growth market.

From these profiles we can see that there is a wide range of age groups and visitor types which could potentially be interested in mountain biking, and it should widen our scope in terms of who we target. However it’s important to distinguish between the type of mountain biking experience they will be looking for with regard to difficulty and intensity, and also what other activities and services they will be looking to enjoy during their stay. By understanding what category your visitors fall into, you can make sure you give them the service and recommendations they are looking for.

The VisitScotland UK market segmentation shows four groups of visitors who are likely to take part in activities:

Market segment	Average age	Preferred accommodation type	General likes
Affluent Active Devotees	50	Hotels and self catering	Good food and drink and exploring beautiful landscapes
Affluent Southern Explorers	45	Individual B&B’s, self catering or 3–4* hotels	Enjoying wildlife, nature and authentic experiences
Mature Devotees	53	3* hotels and B&B’s	Good local food, sightseeing, culture
Younger Domestic Explorers	42	Good value self catering, B&B’s and hotels	Sightseeing, exploring, wildlife watching and attending events

## Why do visitors come here?

Our purpose built mountain bike centres play an important role in attracting day and overnight visitors to make a trip away from home. Visitors from Scotland, the UK and overseas who are primarily interested in mountain biking will often focus their trip around visits to trail centres. The 7stanes development spanning the South of Scotland is particularly appealing.

The built trail centres in Southern Scotland have the greatest proportion of visitors from outside Scotland, whereas the built trail centres in the Highlands has the greatest proportion of Scottish overnight visitors. The North East of Scotland, West and Central Scotland, Perthshire, Fife and Angus are dominated by a day visitors, local residents market, as well as those visiting friends and relatives for overnight stays.

Visit the Forestry Commission Scotland website [www.forestry.gov.uk/scotland](http://www.forestry.gov.uk/scotland), to find out what your local centre has to offer. Consider which types of visitors your local mountain bike centre is attracting and therefore how you can tailor your service to suit them. For example, there is a growing interest in taking part in group visits at mountain bike centres for both day and overnight breaks, particularly at weekends. What packages could you offer that would work for groups of four or more?

## Length of stay and accommodation

Where mountain biking is a main motivation for a trip, the report ‘*Economic Value of Mountain Biking in Scotland*’ estimates the average length of stay for Scottish residents staying overnight at 2.1 nights and visitors from outside Scotland at 4.4 nights.

There is often a perception that all mountain bikers are looking for more basic accommodation, but actually that’s not true. According to the report ‘*7stanes Accommodation and Visitor Attraction Audit*’, in the hotel, guest house and B&B categories, more than half of the demand is for accommodation in three and four star properties.

More often than not, it’s the facilities on offer that will influence visitors’ decisions on what accommodation choice is appropriate. Although mountain bikers are not considered to be particularly price sensitive, like all visitors, they look for welcoming accommodation which is good quality and good value for money.

“There are fantastic mountain bike destinations all over the world and in amazing locations but for those in the know, Scotland has got something that distinguishes it above others. Scotland has bags of charisma and terrain that challenges on all fronts. For me, it’s all of this that makes the Scottish Highlands the best place in the world to cycle.”

Tim Francis, Natural High Guiding, Inverness  
[www.naturalhighguiding.co.uk](http://www.naturalhighguiding.co.uk)



# What do visitors want?

Our mountain biking offering in Scotland is constantly developing, so there is always something new for visitors – especially beginner riders and family groups.

What a visitor needs will depend on their ability and what type of mountain biking experience they are looking for. However, a report by VisitScotland and Forestry Commission Scotland, ‘Cycling and Mountain Biking in Scotland’, identified that there are some needs that are common to all



## Cycle Highlands is based in Deeside and specialises in bike hire, guiding and corporate events.

Since Richard Watts started his business in 2006, he has seen an increase in the number of visitors to Deeside coming to the area looking for mountain biking. This has led Richard to expand his business and now he is able to offer much more than just bike rentals. Richard Watts says, ‘Five years ago I planned to put Ballater on the map for mountain biking and not just for the Royal Family.’

Cycle Highlands collaborates with event and sponsorship organisers to take advantage of a growing corporate business. They also collaborate with other activity providers to cross promote their businesses and are working more closely with local hotels and B&B’s. One additional service that Cycle Highlands offer is to drop off and pick up rental bikes for visitors at their accommodation. This also enabled accommodation providers to offer added value. As visitors don’t always know where to go, particularly when they are new to the area, Richard developed a route map of the local area for visitors to buy. Cycle Highlands has noted an

### What visitors may be looking for from their experience:

- Stimulation/excitement
- Riding/socialising with friends
- Escapism
- Scenery and contact with nature
- Exercise/fitness workout
- Exploration and discovery of new areas
- Developing and improving skills
- Speed and exhilaration



visitors who take part in mountain biking activities in Scotland. The top priorities were the environment and scenery, the accommodation and the available routes and trails. **Are you promoting the beautiful scenery in your area? Do you provide information about your nearest biking trails?**

Secondly, visitors are looking for the provision of other indoor and outdoor activities that will offer variety if the weather isn’t good. **What are the key sightseeing opportunities in your area, and how are you promoting them?**

increase in visits from ‘serious’ bikers who tend to be looking for more nature-based riding rather than only on specified trails. At the other end of the scale, he has also seen a rise in visits from people who are just looking for a nice family day out and want to do an activity to take in all levels of ability.

Richard organises his own mountain biking event every year, as well as being involved with other similar events in the area, as he believes this is a great way to put your business and the area on the map.

**Cycle Highlands top tip:** “Focus on exactly what the visitor wants i.e attracting them in with great visuals of the area, having literature about the trails to hand, being flexible about mealtimes and most importantly getting involved with mountain biking events in the area or organising your own.”

[www.cyclehighlands.com](http://www.cyclehighlands.com)

# The Top Trends affecting mountain biking in Scotland

Some key trends for Scottish tourism were identified through Scottish Enterprise and VisitScotland working with both the Henley Centre and The Future Foundation (for details go to [www.tourism-intelligence.co.uk](http://www.tourism-intelligence.co.uk) and download the guide *Scottish Tourism in the Future*). Consider how you might attract the mountain biking market to your business, using these trends as a hook.



TREND	WHAT YOU CAN DO
1. Visitors are getting older, but they are young at heart, fitter and more likely to travel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Don’t neglect the older market – target Mature Devotees and Affluent Active Devotees. Download the guide <i>Knowing Our Markets... Scotland’s Visitors</i>, available from <a href="http://www.tourism-intelligence.co.uk">www.tourism-intelligence.co.uk</a></li><li>Offer mid-week packages or deals and recommend local green or blue trails</li></ul>
2. People are searching for new experiences that will enrich their lives; ‘being’ is considered more important than ‘having’	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Emphasise the rugged beauty of our natural landscapes in your marketing</li><li>Promote mountain biking for beginners</li><li>Feature testimonials from past visitors to show what a positive impact mountain biking has made to their trip</li></ul>
3. Visitors expect clean, comfortable facilities and competent well-trained staff as standard	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Accommodation providers and visitor attractions should make sure they are graded by VisitScotland Quality Assurance Scheme. Go to <a href="http://www.visitscotland.com/quality-assurance">www.visitscotland.com/quality-assurance</a> for more information</li></ul>
4. Visitors appreciate authenticity and the chance to be part of the ‘real’ Scotland, to explore nature and other attractions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Promote the fact that mountain biking is the perfect way to explore nature</li><li>Serve your mountain biking visitors food and drink from the area – and don’t forget to tell them you have done this. Provenance sells, for more information download the food and drink guide from <a href="http://www.tourism-intelligence.co.uk">www.tourism-intelligence.co.uk</a></li></ul>
5. Health and wellbeing are important so people are looking for holistic experiences that will feed both body and soul	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Include some beautiful imagery on your website and marketing materials showing mountain biking trails</li><li>Fresh air and exercise are the perfect remedy to stuffy work conditions – collaborate with other businesses to offer ‘weekend escapes’ for city dwellers</li></ul>
6. Growing awareness of green issues means people are more conscious of their carbon footprint	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Promote the joys of green pedal power!</li><li>Communicate your own green practices, e.g. recycling, on your website</li><li>Download <i>Sustainable Tourism for Dummies</i>, available from <a href="http://www.tourism-intelligence.co.uk">www.tourism-intelligence.co.uk</a></li></ul>





## Snapshot of 7stanes

7stanes is a series of seven mountain biking areas located in the forests of Dumfries and Galloway and the Scottish Borders. The 7stanes attracts 400,000 visits to the south of Scotland which generate **over £9million net additional spend per annum** to the local economy.

Official development of the 7stanes began in 2001 and since 2011 the marketing and promotion of the 7stanes sites is the responsibility of the 7stanes Mountain Biking Community Interest Company – a not for profit organisation whose aim is to promote the 7stanes centres and work with local businesses across the south of Scotland.

The project has developed over 400km of cross-country, all-weather mountain bike trails. Each trail centre is unique and most have a choice of trails for all abilities. There are also skills areas to allow bikers to work on their technique and freeride and downhill routes.

[www.7stanesmountainbiking.com](http://www.7stanesmountainbiking.com)



### Key 7stanes facts

- 7** The majority of visitors come from outwith the South of Scotland: 43% from elsewhere in Scotland; 32% from elsewhere in the UK; 5% from overseas
- 7** Most visitors travel by car (93%)
- 7** Visitors to the 7stanes participate in a number of other sports and activities too, with walking/hillwalking being the most popular (40%)
- 7** 95% are likely or very likely to visit the 7stanes again in the next three years
- 7** While the majority of visitors come as part of a day trip, around a third stay two days or more
- 7** Mountain biking provides businesses with all year round opportunities

Source: 7stanes Business Development Pack, 2008

## Glentress Forest Lodges

Ian Ritchie opened *Glentress Forest Lodges* in May 2010 when he saw there was a growing demand for suitable, affordable accommodation at the Glentress trailhead.

*"I thought the wigwams were a warm and friendly option, and something a little different," Ian says, "Accommodation like this was desperately needed for the growing number of mountain bikers, and this is such a key location. The lodges are very popular already."*

Ian estimates that around 80% of his visitors are mountain bikers, many of whom come to him through the 7stanes website, others come through [www.wigwamholidays.com](http://www.wigwamholidays.com). The majority of visitors are groups of young men aged 25-35, but Ian has also seen a growing number of mixed groups, families and couples from all over. To make his site stand out Ian encourages campfires and barbeques, which many sites don't allow. He also maintains the facilities to a very high standard.

*"I provide secure bike storage, trail maps and a communal kitchen. There are bike-washing facilities a few yards away and the Café at Glentress is nearby so I make sure visitors know about that."*

**Glentress Forest Lodge's top tip:** *"Make sure you speak to every guest to check they're happy and have what they need. It makes them feel special and costs nothing."*

[www.glentressforestlodges.co.uk](http://www.glentressforestlodges.co.uk)



## TOP TIPS

### Race to success!

-  **Don't narrow your focus when targeting mountain bikers – a wide range of visitor types and ages are interested in taking part in activities**
-  **Mountain biking isn't just about adventure and adrenalin. At all levels, it's also about soaking up the natural beauty of our hills and forests and being part of Scotland's heritage – so be sure you give your visitors the full picture**
-  **Don't forget that it's not only UK or overseas visitors that will stay overnight – Scottish visitors who live more than two hours from a particular trail centre will often be looking for accommodation too**
-  **Not all mountain bikers want to stay in hostels – it depends on the visitor type and the available facilities. They also often stay in three or four star hotel accommodation and need more than just good trails to have an all-round great holiday experience. Think about what part of the market your business would suit and target these visitors**
-  **Set up 'Google Alerts' relating to your nearest trail centre/s and find out what visitors are saying on blogs and forums**





# 4 | HOW TO ATTRACT MOUNTAIN BIKING VISITORS?

## Knowing your markets

To provide the best possible experience you need to have a clear idea of what types of bikers you are targeting and what they want.

### Mountain bike enthusiasts versus leisure mountain bikers

In order to understand the market better, the ‘Cycling and Mountain Biking Scotland’ report commissioned by VisitScotland and FCS, 2005, has split the mountain biking and cycling market into two: leisure and specialist. There were clear distinctions identified between the two in respect to their energy and enthusiasm for cycling on a holiday and also their behaviours.

### Who are they?

#### MOUNTAIN BIKE ENTHUSIASTS

- Have mountain biking as a key driver for their visit
- Want to enjoy mountain biking as the core part of their visit
- Are looking for top class biking facilities, and the prospects of variety and challenge
- Want to be able to plan in advance so need lots of detailed information
- Will bring their own bikes/equipment
- Are seeking the ultimate experience in terms of cycling and the environment and want to improve their skills
- Will appreciate suggestions of things to see and do on rest days

#### LEISURE MOUNTAIN BIKERS

- Have the destination as a key driver for their visit
- Want to enjoy mountain biking as a part of their overall holiday experience
- Are looking for other activities to do during their stay
- Tend to be more flexible in their planning
- Will need equipment provided for sale/hire
- May be new to cycling as an accessible leisure activity which they can enjoy with their family
- May need more information/marketing to persuade them to visit



## Overcoming barriers

Some leisure bikers have the impression that Scotland’s mountain bike offering is tough and that the trails won’t suit entry-level riders. They have also referred to problems such as unclear entry points, absence of safe, short routes for family groups and issues of finding easily accessible bike hire.

On the other hand, some specialist bikers can view Scotland’s offering as simply intermediate, and not challenging or thrilling enough!

Given their distinct needs, it would be wise to target these markets independently and address any wrong perceptions.

## Ae7 Bike Shop & Cafe

Ae7 Bike Shop & Café is based at the Ae Forest 7stanes trail centre near Dumfries. Visitors range from weekend mountain bikers to holiday makers coming with friends and families. They enjoy a lot of repeat business from local bikers and café users, and their e-commerce website means customers can buy online before arriving. They are also very active with social media.

Owner Rob Gray says, “We have Facebook and Twitter accounts, which have allowed us to develop new customers through people making enquiries. This gives us great information on what visitors want.”

Rob believes there are many opportunities from working with mountain biking visitors and mountain biking-related businesses like his.

“The number of mountain biking visitors coming to use the trails is substantial, and there is such a varied range of people. We display flyers/posters for other businesses in the area, and make recommendations about bike-friendly accommodation, good places to eat, etc. Get in touch with your local bike shop and find out what they do and what they can offer your visitors.”

**Ae7 Bike Shop & Café’s top tip:** “If you have something to offer mountain bikers then you need to get out there and let them know you exist, whether through advertising, networking or word of mouth”. [www.ae7.com](http://www.ae7.com)

## How to reach them

MOUNTAIN BIKE ENTHUSIASTS	LEISURE MOUNTAIN BIKERS
Promote mountain biking as the best way to experience Scotland given the sheer variety and challenge of the landscape	Promote mountain biking as part of the Scottish outdoor experience, open to everyone – not just the die-hards!
Acknowledge skills levels and individual needs	Promote that it’s a way to spend time together, opening up new experiences for fun and exploration
Provide information about improving skills and meeting new personal challenges	Provide information about the wide range of trails and emphasise the accessibility of Green and Blue trails and tuition for beginners
Provide information about bike storage, washing and repair	Provide information about bike and equipment hire and how to get to the nearest trails
Direct them to trail centres for information about joining group activities and provide links to mountain bike tour operators who can organise challenging day rides, especially useful if they haven’t biked in Scotland before	Direct them to trail centres for more route information, guidance and tuition



# Widen your appeal

When considering the tourism opportunities of mountain biking, don't just think of the specialist bikers who live and breathe the sport. In fact the leisure market is showing real growth potential and may be a more lucrative market to target.

## 3 KEY MARKETS (in order of greatest potential for tourism growth)

- 1. Dabblers (leisure): beginners, families and those just dipping in
- 2. Seniors (leisure): older activity participants, 55+
- 3. Fanatics (specialists): eat, sleep, live mountain biking!

If you have people in these groups coming to your business, then you can set yourself apart from competitors and delight them by offering information about local mountain biking experiences. Perhaps the Dabblers and Seniors would love to do more mountain biking, but don't always have the opportunity or nerve! Can you persuade them?

### Key visitor groups to target

Visitor group	Most likely to enjoy	Why they are here	Philosophy	Level of facilities and info needed	Most likely to be	Interested in
Dabblers	Green, blue	Mix of social activities	Social activity that provides a new experience	Hand-holding and guidance. Need equipment hire and map-reading skills	Young family groups, or groups of male/female singles	Scottish experience. Ease of organisation. Might like bunkhouses, B&Bs
Seniors	Green, blue	Mix of pursuits – wildlife, history, culture	Healthy pastime that includes exploring the countryside	Maps and referrals about trail grades. Need equipment hire and map-reading skills	Older couples or couple groups	Want warmth and comfort so perhaps would stay in hotels, guest houses, B&Bs
Fanatics	Red, black, orange, challenging wild trails	Only to bike (but don't forget rest day options)	Pure sport, remote and rugged – to challenge and build skills	Little info needed, skilled and knowledgeable - but wild trail info useful	Males 20-40, but growing number of females	Like functionality and key amenities Might like self-catering, B&Bs and hotels

# Let's go wild!

The Land Reform (Scotland) Act gives everyone, including mountain bikers, new rights of responsible access to Scotland's outdoors – and at the same time gives Scotland an impressive advantage over competitor mountain biking destinations. It means that people now have the right of responsible non-motorised access to most land in Scotland, including private roads, tracks and paths, for recreation and to get from place to place. In just about every corner of the country, around hills, along river banks or canals, on sheep tracks or stalker paths, there are miles of unspoilt trails to explore – giving visitors freedom and access to the 'real' Scotland!

Prepare your visitors for an adventure by checking they have maps of the area, a rucksack packed with spares and kit, recommend books and websites that give them more information about wild trails, and provide weather forecasts so they are not caught out. For more details of wild riding in the Highlands go to:

[www.mtb-highland.com](http://www.mtb-highland.com)

[www.outdooraccess-scotland.com](http://www.outdooraccess-scotland.com)

### 'Know the Code before you go'

Common sense is required to avoid danger and riders should also be aware of their responsibilities under the Scottish Outdoor Access Code. It sets the guidelines that should be followed by mountain bikers on all trails in terms of their access rights and responsibility towards others and the environment.

For more information and advice to pass on to your outdoor activity visitors go to:





## Practical things you can do today to improve your service

Like all visitors, mountain bikers need a good, Scottish welcome! And this needs to be available to suit their schedule – for example specialist bikers may arrive as part of a tour group in the early evening, at which point they will need to hose their bikes down, have a hot shower, and then sit down with a cup of tea (or something stronger!) to talk about the day's ride. Are you set up for that? And one of the key things they will look for is a secure storage area for their bikes; when bikes can cost anything up to £3,000, you can understand why care and maintenance is vital!

## Make your business stand out

There are some key products and services that a mountain biker looks for during a visit, so it's important to get these right. Also have a think about how you can add value to make the experience you offer really stand out!

## Accommodation

### THE BASICS

#### A comfortable post-biking experience

A place to wash bikes (outdoor hose); a drying room for clothing, shoes and other equipment; facilities to wash and dry muddy clothes; a hot shower whenever required

#### Bike security

Can you offer a secure bike rack or lock-up? A garage, shed or basement could be transformed into added value for your business, as it could be used for any adventure sport equipment

#### WiFi

Provide free internet access so visitors can book equipment hire, tuition or visitor attraction tickets from your premises

#### Trail guidance

Know where your nearest graded and wild trails are. You could put a large OS map or area map in your hall or guest lounge. Ordnance Survey offers a product called OS Select, for a map centred on your business. Visit: <http://leisure.ordnancesurvey.co.uk/osselect>

#### Local information

Provide an information pack of local biking opportunities, bike hire companies, bike shops, trails, guides, transportation options and choices for eating out. For example trail maps have been developed in Dundee and Highland Perthshire

#### Flexibility

Mountain bikers might arrive late in the evening and may be up early in the morning, so they need a flexible approach to meal times, transport, etc.

### ADDING VALUE

#### Emergency kit

Could you stock some basic bicycle repair items if there isn't a specialist shop near you?

#### Transport for themselves and their bikes

Could you offer transport for guests to/from local trails or the airport?

#### Weather updates

Print off a daily weather forecast to put on your notice board – <http://news.bbc.co.uk/weather>

#### Information about other activities/attractions

Leisure bikers will be looking for other activities to enjoy so put out leaflets for nearby attractions. Also prepare some bad weather options for your active guests. Is there a climbing wall nearby? Or a swimming pool or ice rink?

#### Interesting reads

Put out some recent editions of mountain biking magazines along with information on local wildlife and other visitor attractions

#### Energy food

Think big plates and lots of carbs to replenish energy for the next day. Packed lunches should include healthy, energy-boosting snacks

## Visitor attractions

### THE BASICS

#### Information about other attractions

Display leaflets and flyers to show the wealth of attractions on offer and give them more reasons to return to the area

#### Information about mountain biking

Sell bike guidebooks or maps of the area. There are a number of good books about mountain biking on both built and wild trails in Scotland

#### Good facilities

For those cycling to your attraction, do you have lockable bike facilities and a storage area?

## Eating and drinking

### THE BASICS

#### Flexibility

Be flexible about meal times. Offering meals later into the evening and earlier in the morning allows you to cater for riders who have been out on day trips or riders who have an early start.

For more information on how food and drink tourism can help to grow your business, download the guide at [www.tourism-intelligence.co.uk](http://www.tourism-intelligence.co.uk)

#### Energy foods

Offer energy foods such as sports drinks, cereal bars and bananas during the day and good portions in the evening

#### Good atmosphere

Remember these visitors are on holiday! They will enjoy a good Scottish atmosphere – and local produce wherever possible

### ADDING VALUE

#### It all has to be easy

Ensure that accommodation providers are aware of your services (particularly prices and opening hours, and if you have a restaurant, pub or café)

#### Food and drink

Do you have a café? Promote your hot drinks and warming bites

### ADDING VALUE

#### Packed lunches

Can you offer a packed lunch service to nearby accommodation providers, for late order and early delivery? Include generous portions of high carbohydrate foods, fruit/nuts and non-fizzy drinks

#### Local information

Provide information about things to see and do in the area, especially if your visitors include non-mountain biking members of a party

#### Pit stops

Mountain bikers enjoy a stop at coffee shops providing cakes and hot drinks





## Courses and tours

**There are lots of opportunities offered by trail centres and tour companies. Why not refer your visitors to these to enhance their experience?**

### Skills courses

Many trail centres offer opportunities for visitors to develop their abilities, whether through themed technical skills days or private lessons. In some instances more than 50% of demand for these coaches is from people living outside Scotland. Improved technique will be something that visitors can take home with them and will increase the scope of their activity on future trips.

Lots of beginner group sessions welcome children alongside their parents, and there is an increasing number of kids-only clubs. Look out for the MBLA qualification (Mountain Bikers Leaders Association), developed by Scottish Cycling. Go Mountain Bike is a mountain bike proficiency course, available across Scotland.

[www.scottishcycling.org.uk](http://www.scottishcycling.org.uk)

### Trail guides

If visitors are new to mountain biking in Scotland, want to upgrade their skills or are keen to find the best options locally, then hiring a trail guide is a great way to make the most of their biking break. Some adventure and mountain bike travel companies in Scotland have a range of multi-day guided mountain bike trips, from epic coast-to-coasts to island journeys. Guides can tell them more about the local area, history and where to spot wildlife, and visitors can enjoy a more social experience as part of a guided group.



## Highland Safaris

Based near Aberfeldy in the heart of Highland Perthshire, Highland Safaris offer days of fun and discovery with award winning Land Rover safaris. Surrounded by stunning views into the Appin Valley, the Highland Safaris Visitor and Trail Centre also offers miles of beautiful woodland walks and biking trails to explore, Gold & Gem Panning, Red Deer Park, Tractor and Trike Park and the Safari Lodge Café and Gift Shop.

The company's latest innovation, Biketrax mountain bike skills loop, is Highland Perthshire's first purpose-built mountain biking skills course. The course is packed with features suitable for all levels from beginners to enthusiasts.

Manager Colin MacAskill says, "The owners, Donald and Julie, are bike enthusiasts, and recognised that it was a good time to expand their mountain biking offer. Highland Safaris is a great place to base yourself for a huge range of forest trails, getting you into the outdoors and enjoying the magnificent scenery. Biketrax is ideal for families – they can spend as little or as much time on the course as they want, there's no charge for entry, and of course we have the Safari Lodge Café to refuel in!"



**Highland Safari's top tip:** "Families love the opportunity to take part in an outdoor activity together, so make sure your offer is accessible for them."

[www.highlandsafaris.net](http://www.highlandsafaris.net)

# TOP TIPS

## Race to success!

- ☀ Important things for mountain biking visitors are the right facilities – lockable storage for their bikes, bike washing, and the means to wash muddy clothes for the next day
- ☀ Remember that the facilities you offer for mountain bikers are often similar to those needed by other active visitors – so an investment could also benefit walkers, kayakers, touring cyclists and others
- ☀ A mixed group of bikers and non-bikers will need different services, and require a range of local information on events, activities, food and drink and shopping
- ☀ Look at the 'Key visitor groups to target' on page 20 and decide which group best fits your business. Focus on targeting those visitors on your website and in your marketing materials
- ☀ Be aware of the opportunities that the 'Right of Responsible Access' offers riders in the wider countryside, and be prepared to advise them on the Outdoor Access Code, [www.outdooraccess-scotland.com](http://www.outdooraccess-scotland.com)
- ☀ Remember that mountain bikers are here on holiday – and they will want to eat hearty Scottish meals in good eateries and possibly spend money shopping for holiday treats!



# 5 | HOW TO GROW YOUR BUSINESS



All of these organisations are involved in bringing mountain biking tourism to your visitors. How many do you collaborate with to offer a fantastic experience to visitors?

## Marketing your business

Word of mouth and recommendations from family and friends are the key information resources for mountain bikers. If you give your visitors a fantastic experience, they will be more likely to recommend you to others and come back for repeat visits. However, the internet is also a powerful tool for these web-savvy visitors, and a good (or bad!) experience can spread like wildfire on forums! Do you know if your visitors say anything about you on Trip Advisor? [www.tripadvisor.co.uk](http://www.tripadvisor.co.uk)



### 5 Online ideas

1. Sign up to mountain bike or holiday forums/websites to get first-hand knowledge of what riders are looking for – and what they're not looking for! For many mountain bikers, these sites are essential when booking a holiday.
2. Your website will probably be your visitors' first experience of your business. Create the right welcoming picture for mountain bikers by using imagery of people out on trails. Promote your key selling points – like your drying room, or lock-up facilities, or home-cooked packed lunches – so they won't look elsewhere!
3. Talk about your local trail centres by name on your website – it will help boost the profile of your business to mountain bikers through Search Engine Optimisation (SEO).
4. Add some links to other activity websites, local trails, and wildlife centres to show you're genuinely interested in what your visitors want.
5. Ensure you're mentioned on your community or local business association websites. Would they include a link to your site?

### DOS AND DON'TS OF SOCIAL MEDIA

- Do include videos or blogs if they are relevant for your business. Mountain biking action visuals could be a great way to grab the attention of this market
- Do respond to feedback on sites such as [www.tripadvisor.co.uk](http://www.tripadvisor.co.uk). If you receive a criticism you can show that you're listening and will use the information to improve your service
- Do engage in conversation with your customers and learn from their experiences
- Do test ideas and try new things – this trendy market will respond to innovative and quirky ideas
- Do invest time in updating Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn etc
- Don't limit yourself – use a number of social networking sites to ensure you reach a wider market
- Don't try the hard sell through social media. People can make their own decisions – use it to build trust and awareness

### 5 Offline ideas

1. Talk about mountain biking opportunities and local trails in your promotional materials, and include some photos so readers know that you welcome mountain bikers.
2. Collaborate on packages or joint marketing with other local businesses/your local destination management organisation.
3. VisitScotland has a variety of opportunities for promotion to visitors as part of seasonal or themed campaigns – speak to your VisitScotland contact for more information.
4. VisitScotland invite journalists from the UK and overseas to Scotland for familiarisation trips throughout the year. Some of these visits may be themed around activities, and your business could get involved.
5. Forestry Commission Scotland will consider applications from quality businesses for a licence to use the FCS trails or park logos for retail or promotional purposes. For the 7stanes logo contact the 7stanes Mountain Biking Community Interest Company. For the 7stanes logo contact the 7stanes Mountain Biking Community Interest Company: [www.7stanesmountainbiking.com](http://www.7stanesmountainbiking.com)

### HANDLING ENQUIRIES AND GATHERING FEEDBACK

- If you are responding to potential visitors by telephone, make sure you have the relevant mountain biking information to hand. If responding by email, include some information about your area and the local trails – it might just make you stand out.
- When responding to bookings, request contact details and gather some information about the enquirer so you can give them the correct advice and keep a record of their details for future promotions.
- Also be sure to ask your visitors for feedback. For more information about gathering feedback, download the 'Listening to our Visitors' guide available at [www.tourism-intelligence.co.uk](http://www.tourism-intelligence.co.uk)





### VisitScotland Cyclists Welcome scheme

The Cyclists Welcome scheme recognises the special efforts made by operators (accommodation providers and non-accommodation businesses) to provide for cycling visitors. Becoming a part of the scheme will go a long way to ensuring you're offering the right facilities to attract mountain bikers and give you a marketing advantage. The scheme is free of charge if you are Quality Assured, and you can use the logo on your website and marketing materials. For more information go to [www.visitscotland.org](http://www.visitscotland.org).



### Developing Mountain Biking in Scotland (DMBinS)

DMBinS is developing a new mountain biking website, to be launched in the Autumn of 2011, which will have photography freely available for businesses to use on their websites and in their promotional materials, the ability to network with other businesses in Scotland and advice on developing new mountain biking tourism products.

The website will also feature sections on how to get started in the activity, routes and trails suitable for all abilities, mountain biking events, advice on responsible mountain biking, the range of coaching, leadership and proficiency awards available and guides on good practice when developing purpose built trails. See [www.developingmountainbikinginscotland.com](http://www.developingmountainbikinginscotland.com) for updated information.

## Marthrown of Mabie

**Marthrown of Mabie in Dumfries and Galloway, offers a range of unique accommodation styles including a Tipi, Yurt, Bunkhouse and Woodland Camping. Based near 7stanes Mabie, they estimate that around 35% of their visitors are mountain bikers. Owners, Mike and Pam Hazlehurst, understand the needs of their mountain biking visitors and provide a bike repair area, cleaning facilities, storage, and a popular on-site hot tub and sauna.**

After attending a Scottish Enterprise **Listening to our Visitors** workshop, Pam took some other positive steps: *"We now provide feedback forms for our visitors directly and on the website, and we also joined TripAdvisor. We get lots of useful ideas that we would never have thought of ourselves, like some people found the campsite too dark at night, so we put up solar lights on the main path, and we got a number of requests for herbal teas and de-cafeinated coffee, so now we provide them."*

Marthrown's attentive approach has led to a huge number of repeat visits. They also target their advertising carefully to reach the right markets.

*"At the moment we're concentrating on a mid-week push, so we've advertised in Soldier magazine. Now that mountain biking is officially classed as an adventure sport, the army will pay for trips as part of their training."*

**Marthrown's top tip:**  
*"Be flexible and friendly. Offer a service for late arrivals and flexible mealtimes."*

[www.marthrownmabie.com](http://www.marthrownmabie.com)



## Working together

**Living fast-paced lifestyles with information at our fingertips, many visitors simply don't have the time or patience to browse websites or guidebooks for hours – they would prefer an easy 'off the shelf' package that ticks all the boxes.**

Consider the opportunities to increase your visitor numbers by packaging your own service with local trail centre offerings, other mountain bike-related businesses, or even specialist tour operators. These visitors are coming anyway for mountain biking, so don't sit back waiting, make sure they come to you! What extra value can you add?

Conversely, if you work in a mountain bike-related business, then actively reaching out to the tourism market can give your businesses a competitive edge. Consider how you can work with other local businesses on ideas to offer great service and encourage visitors to stay longer in your area.

### IF YOU'RE A MOUNTAIN BIKING BUSINESS YOU CAN:

- Introduce yourself to accommodation businesses in your area and make them aware of the services you offer.
- Let them know if you hire bikes for the day or by the hour for visitors – can you supply for them exclusively?
- Do you extend your opening hours in the summer so that visitors can take advantage of the longer days? Make sure other businesses know about it if you do.
- Consider linking up with a local restaurant or café to offer your mountain biking visitors a discounted 'pit stop' or evening meal.
- Some visitors want to 'get away from it all'. If you run a mountain biking trail centre, can you work with a local accommodation provider and transport service to create the perfect activity escape?

### IF YOU'RE A TOURISM BUSINESS YOU CAN:

- Think about how you can work with mountain biking tour companies to tap into key opportunities from the trend of taking biking holidays with partners, families and groups of friends.
- Offer a joined-up experience for a group of visitors. For example, if you're an accommodation provider could you partner with a bike hire company and a local restaurant to offer a fuller experience?
- Link up with your local bike hire companies, so you can assist your visitors to book what they need, on or before arrival. The hire company may also be able to deliver to your premises, or directly to your visitors at the trails site they're visiting.
- Share your success stories: a good idea that has worked for you may work for other local businesses too.





## Go Where

Go Where is a mountain biking guiding and transport company. They also own self-catering accommodation in Innerleithen ([www.innerhaven.co.uk](http://www.innerhaven.co.uk)), which welcomes cyclists and mountain bikers and is part of the Tweed Valley Tourist Consortium's Mountain Biking Hospitality Scheme.

Go Where owner, Andy McKenna, says, "**Mountain biking enthusiasts tend to be quite self-sufficient so our visitors looking for guiding are often novices or improvers. They may not have the knowledge or navigation skills to set out on their own, so we can provide a 'hand-holding' service and itinerary to match their fitness level.**"

**"Our tours can take us all over Scotland so we're always looking for new places to eat, suitable accommodation and unusual activities for our clients to enjoy on 'off-bike' days. We look for quality services across all budgets; places with a Scottish feel that will offer great memories. There's a section on our website that talks about collaborative opportunities – we already work with a lot of businesses, brands and events."**

Andy's latest innovation is a joint venture with Dirt School ([www.dirtschool.co.uk](http://www.dirtschool.co.uk)), a mountain biking coaching company. They have been awarded the Tourism Innovation Fund by Scottish Enterprise to create 'learning trips' for mountain bikers, which will take groups on a journey through the sites and tastes of Scotland while building biking skills.

**Go Where's top tip: "Get in touch with businesses like ours to understand what we provide. We need to collectively offer an outstanding experience in Scotland to stay competitive"**

[www.go-where.co.uk](http://www.go-where.co.uk)



## Where to get market information

**Tourism Intelligence Scotland** is a joint venture developed by Scottish Enterprise, VisitScotland and Highlands and Islands Enterprise in partnership with the tourism industry. We distribute a range of materials to Scottish tourism businesses to help them grow and drive innovation through effective use of market and other intelligence.

Access all of our guides, as well as a wealth of market intelligence for businesses, at [www.tourism-intelligence.co.uk](http://www.tourism-intelligence.co.uk). There are facts about visitors to Scotland, practical tips on how to get ahead and innovative ideas to help grow your business.



## Regional business networks

Joining local business forums such as Newcastleton Business Forum (NBF), Tweed Valley Tourist Consortium, Dumfries and Galloway Mountain Bike Business Network, The Outdoor Capital of the UK, VisitCairngorms, can improve your business profile and help you network with other local businesses. For those in Tayside and Fife, there is the opportunity to be involved in the DMBinS 'Tayside and Fife MTB Development Cluster' which gives businesses the opportunity to improve their performance and benefit from the local MTB community.

Some of these organisations run their own mountain bike schemes to complement the VisitScotland Cyclists Welcome Scheme. For example, the Tweed Valley Mountain Bike Hospitality Scheme is run by the Tweed Valley Tourist Consortium and works towards matching the world-class biking in the area with world-class hospitality. Accommodation providers have come together to allow visitors to book in the confidence that their bike and kit will be looked after, wherever they choose to stay. Members feature a special MTB hospitality logo that tells visitors they have all the required facilities and information for a stay that will meet their needs.

## Support for innovative business ideas

The Scottish Enterprise Tourism Innovation Fund provides matched funding of up to £30,000 and up to five days consultancy support to enable tourism operators to develop innovative business ideas. Support is aimed at single businesses or groups of businesses that offer a brand new experience that will entice more visitors to Scotland. This could be a product or business service and can build on an existing market or open up a new market.

For details of how to apply go to [www.scottish-enterprise.com/tourism-innovation-fund](http://www.scottish-enterprise.com/tourism-innovation-fund). Businesses in the Highlands and Islands Enterprise area should refer to the HIE website for more information on innovation support at [www.hie.co.uk](http://www.hie.co.uk).



## Newcastleton Business Forum

The Newcastleton Business Forum was formed by a group of local businesses that work together to promote the village of Newcastleton in the Borders. They rely heavily on the bike leisure market – both passing cyclists and mountain bikers coming to the 7stanes and biking events – because it provides steady year-round visitors. They market themselves as the 'bike-friendly village' and are the first village to sign up to VisitScotland's 'Cyclists Welcome Scheme'.

Businesses within the village have embraced the initiative to provide services such as bike-washing, free tyre inflation and water bottle top-ups at the local garage, plus cycle parking outside the local shops on Douglas Square, where there are also public toilets and hot showers.

Trevor Cambridge, a NBF member, says, "**We make sure businesses in the area are aware of what's going on and what the upcoming events are. We also work across the areas, collaborating with the Tweed Valley Tourist Consortium and Dumfries and Galloway Mountain Bike Business Network.**"

### Newcastleton's top tip:

**"A lot of hard work, and good teamwork. By working together we can create a better all-round experience for visitors."**

[www.visitnewcastleton.com](http://www.visitnewcastleton.com)



## Events

Mountain biking events can be an excellent platform for you to bring in more business. For example, some of the events held at 7stanes in the past have attracted anywhere between 150 and 1000 competitors, many from outside the area, often with other family and friends accompanying them. If the organised events last just one day, there is potential to increase the length of stay by offering visitors something extra on the day before or after an event.

Go to [www.bikeeventsscotland.com](http://www.bikeeventsscotland.com) for details of upcoming events. What can your business do on the back of existing events?



**Comrie Croft Bikes** is based on a beautiful old farm near Crieff in Perthshire. Among other things, the business offers high quality bike hire with a delivery option, bike sales and repairs, a singletrack trails network, and guided biking trips and packages for groups.

They attract a mix of hard-core mountain bikers (for their trails), families/beginners/intermediates (for bike hire), and foreign and corporate groups (for guided biking and packages).

Owner Andrew Donaldson says, "Our visitors are looking for friendly support and backup. Most people (particularly with children) want to avoid cycling on busy main roads so we provide good quality bikes, and good routes and maps so they can enjoy our trails."

## UCI Mountain Bike World Cup, Fort William

According to Rare Management, which runs the UCI Mountain Bike World Cup event in Scotland, since 2002 the World Cups and World Championships have brought more than £16 million into the area. Further World Cups up to 2013 could raise this figure to beyond £20 million!

Looking to the future, over the three days, the maximum number of visitors is likely to be 18,000-20,000 each year and more than 75% of these visitors are from outside the Highland region and therefore likely to be looking for places to stay.

Local businesses can benefit through extended stays, repeat visits, marketing exposure and publicity. How can your business get involved? Can you do joint marketing, special offers, extend your opening hours, or offer packages targeted at this specific demographic? Even if your business is not nearby, many visitors from abroad may be interested in other trips before or after the event.

## Strathpuffer, Strathpeffer

The 'Strathpuffer' is billed as the world's only 24-hour mountain bike race, and is held in the forests around Strathpeffer every January – at the height of the area's low season. It attracts up to 500 competitors, the majority of whom are young males, bringing an average of two supporters with them. The average spend per competitor in 2008 was in excess of £210, on things such as bike repair, travel and food and drink.

**If you are in the area, are you networking with the event organisers to boost your bottom line during this quiet season? If not, what mountain biking events in your own area could you be involved in?** Almost four in 10 of these competitors made a familiarisation trip to the local area before the event and nearly all of them said they would be back to the area, so this could mean some profitable repeat business.

## Comrie Croft

Comrie Croft Bikes promotes heavily through self-catering holiday properties and is working to secure bike hire business for the large local hotels and resorts in the area.

They market through word of mouth, social media and publicity, and also stage collaborative local events.

**"We have staged an open mountain biking race for four years called the 'Hairy Cool!', which is part of the local 'Drovers Tryst' outdoor festival ([www.droverstryst.com](http://www.droverstryst.com)). This year we are staging a round of the Scottish X-Country series."**

Comrie Croft's top tip: **"If you can, provide a facility for mountain bikers to store their precious kit securely!"**

[www.comriecroftbikes.co.uk](http://www.comriecroftbikes.co.uk)

## TOP TIPS

### Race to success!

- ☀ Your website is probably the first port of call for mountain bikers, so it's important that they know straight away if you have the right services for them. Make sure you tell them about all the great things you have to offer!
- ☀ Make sure you're listed on sites like [www.tripadvisor.co.uk](http://www.tripadvisor.co.uk) and that you respond to feedback. Include images of mountain bikers in beautiful scenery in your marketing materials to grab the attention of potential visitors
- ☀ Ask your visitors what they thought about their visit so you can consistently improve your offer. For more information on gathering feedback download 'Listening to our Visitors' from [www.tourism-intelligence.co.uk](http://www.tourism-intelligence.co.uk)
- ☀ Consider joining the 'Cyclists Welcome Scheme' by VisitScotland so visitors know you have what they need and you can stand out from competitors
- ☀ Think about which mountain biking-related businesses you could partner with to offer visitors an exciting package – and remove the 'hassle factor' for them



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LINKS AND RESOURCES

NATIONAL ORGANISATIONS	WEBSITE	WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW
Developing Mountain Biking in Scotland	www.developingmountainbikinginscotland.com	One stop shop for information on mountain biking development in Scotland
Forestry Commission Scotland	www.forestry.gov.uk/mtbscotland	Info about forest trails and the grading system
VisitScotland Active	http://active.visitscotland.com	Official site for outdoor adventure holidays with details of activity providers
Bike Events	www.bikeeventsscotland.com	Calendar of Scottish mountain biking events
Scottish Cycling	www.scottishcycling.org.uk	Governing body for cycle-sport in Scotland
Cycling Scotland	www.cyclingscotland.org	National cycle promotion organisation for Scotland
Scottish Outdoor Access Code	www.outdooraccess-scotland.com	Information on using the outdoors responsibly
IMBA UK	www.imba.org.uk	Supports mountain biking in the UK and Ireland, and defends rights of way for MTB's
REGIONAL SITES:		
Highland Mountain Biking	www.mtb-highland.com	Purpose-built and wild trails in the Highlands and other useful information
7stanes	www.7stanesmountainbiking.com	Specific information about each of the seven sites plus details of business support
Tweed Valley Tourist Consortium	www.visittweedvalley.co.uk	Information includes local bike shops, tour companies and events
Newcastleton Business Forum	www.visitnewcastleton.com	Information on local accommodation, bike hire and events
Dumfries and Galloway Mountain Bike Business Network	www.eat-sleep-ride.com	Includes an interactive mountain bike map plus news and events
Loch Lomond & The Trossachs National Park	www.lochlomond-trossachs.org	Links to route ideas for the national park
Cairngorm National Park Authority	www.cairngorms.co.uk	Information on good practice when off-road cycling in the area
Nevis Range Mountain Experience	http://bike.nevisrange.co.uk	Information about trails, competitions and trip planning
Visit Cairngorms	http://visitcairngorms.com	Lists cycle routes, biking events and activity providers in the area
Outdoor Capital of the UK	www.outdoorcapital.co.uk	Information on riding in the area as well as listing local activity providers

MOUNTAIN BIKE MAGAZINES:

*What Mountain Bike*  
www.magazine.bikeradar.com

*MBR (Mountain Bike Rider)*  
www.mbr.co.uk

*MBUK (Mountain Biking UK)*  
www.magazine.bikeradar.com

*Dirt Mag*  
http://dirt.mpora.com/

*Singletrack*  
www.singletrackworld.com

*Bike Magic*  
www.bikemagic.com

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*Economic Value of Mountain Biking in Scotland* commissioned by Scottish Enterprise, April 2009

*Best Practice in Forest Tourism* commissioned by Scottish Enterprise, June 2008

*Tweed Valley Forest Park Development Strategy and Action Plan, October 2008*

*Developing Mountain Biking in Scotland, Annual Report 2010* by Scottish Mountain Bike Framework

*Developing Mountain Biking in Scotland, Advocacy Pack 2010* by Scottish Mountain Bike Framework

*7stanes Business Development Pack, 2008*

*VisitScotland Mountain Biking Guide, 2009*

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NEXT STEPS FOR SCOTLAND

What are you going to do?

Who are our mountain biking visitors?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>This is not just an activity for hard-core bikers. Remember to target couples, families and older people too</li><li>Some of your visitors may be nervous about trying a new activity. Give them the advice and the support they need to give it a try. It will be well worth the effort when they come back for more</li><li>Not all mountain biking visitors want cheap accommodation – the facilities on offer are more important</li><li>Mountain biking tends to be a group activity. Remember that they will want information on other things to do in the area and good places to eat and drink at the end of the day</li></ul>
How to attract mountain bikers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Understand why people love to mountain bike in Scotland and align your business accordingly through your promotions and collaborations</li><li>Promote the enjoyment of Scotland’s landscapes as part of the mountain biking experience – it’s a huge selling point</li><li>Find out about your local trail centres and gradings so you can advise visitors to suit their abilities</li><li>Mountain biking is a year-round activity. Promote packages to boost your business in the low season</li></ul>
How to react to the key visitor trends	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>People are looking for new experiences and often see this as a new social currency – tell them about this fun and exciting new activity to try and offer incentives and promotions to encourage uptake!</li><li>Health and wellbeing are at the forefront of people’s priorities at the moment. Promote weekend packages so people can ‘get away from it all’</li></ul>
How to offer great experiences to visitors and also grow your business	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Mountain biking visitors are here on holiday, so like other visitors, they are looking for an authentic, good value Scottish experience. Who can you collaborate with to make sure they get it?</li><li>Activity visitors look for good hearty meals, so stock up on the carbs and energy foods</li><li>Gather feedback from your visitors and share this with others in your area to collectively address any issues and make sure that visitors come back</li></ul>
Collaborate to grow your business	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Contact mountain biking guides to see how your business can link with theirs and to offer more value to a visitor group</li><li>Sign up to social media sites and use them to communicate with visitors about what is on offer in your business and your area</li><li>Join the VisitScotland Cyclists Welcome Scheme to show mountain biking visitors you have the facilities and services that they need</li><li>Get involved in local regional initiatives and ensure your business adds to the experience on offer in the area</li></ul>



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