

Caithness Riders Access Group



Rumster Forest

Maximum Distance – 10 miles

Mainly Hard Surface

Information contained in this pack is correct as of 09/07/2005

Rumster Forest

Rumster forest provides a variety of routes, some of them circular, mainly along forest roads. The routes take you through mature forest, young plantations and cleared areas with lovely, varied views and scenery and they can be combined in different ways for shorter or longer rides.

Access From: -. Rumster forest is located on either side of the single track, minor road that links the A99 just south of Lybster to the A9 (Causewaymire) at Achavanich. Coming south along the A99 from Wick, drive through Lybster, passing the Portland Arms hotel on your right. Almost immediately after leaving the 40mph zone, take the first turn on your right onto the Rumster road, which is signed to Achavanich. If you are coming north from Latheron, the turning is on your left just before you enter the 40mph zone for Lybster. Drive up the road for about 4 miles and take a left turn along a forest track, signed for the Rumster Outdoor Centre. (This track is located opposite a car parking area with picnic tables- but do not park here). Coming from Thurso along the A9 Causewaymire, turn left onto the Rumster road at Achavanich. The turning is just after you pass a farm with outbuildings on your right hand side and the road is signed for Lybster. A prominent, two-storey white house stands on the left hand side just beyond the junction. Proceed up the road, passing Loch Stemster and the Achavanich stone circle on your left hand side, and continue for about 3 ½ miles, taking a right hand turn onto the forest track, which is signed for the Rumster Outdoor Centre. After about ¼ mile, a narrow tarmac road joins the forest road on the right hand side. Immediately beyond this, on the left, there is a wide parking area (appropriately called 'The Paddock'), which is the area designated for horseboxes.

Distance from A9 to Start of Ride: - 4 m

Parking: - Take the turning from the Rumster road that is signed for the Rumster Outdoor Centre; after about ¼ of a mile, you will notice a narrow, tarmac road joining the forest road on your right. Just beyond this on the left hand side, there is a wide parking area known as The Paddock. The space is generous with room for about 8 boxes and with plenty of turning space.

Ride Report

There are several possible combinations for the Rumster tracks, depending upon how far you wish to go and the following is a suggested route for riding all of them. The tracks will eventually be way marked and orientation panels are to be erected in the car parks, but they are easy to follow without the markers. Leaving the Paddock, turn left and ride down a gentle hill for about a ¼ of a mile along a track that is firm under foot but with relatively few stones. Turn down the first right hand track that you come to, which continues to wind down hill and eventually you pass a ruined croft beside a burn, on your left hand side. (A track leading off to the left here runs for only a short distance and is a dead end). The track now curves away and begins to climb uphill, becoming stonier and passing a small quarry on your right hand side. Shortly, you come to the start of a new path that is quite narrow and climbs uphill moderately steeply and is raised up for much of its length with drainage ditches at the side. Near the beginning, you pass an old ruined croft on your left hand side, with moss-covered walls and flanked at the back by tall forest trees. The ground is quite boggy and rutted away from the path and since it is narrow must be ridden carefully, especially if passing anyone coming down hill in the opposite direction. At the top of the hill, the path comes out right beside and beneath the tall communications mast with its anchoring cables, which towers above you on the left hand side. You now turn right and wind your way downhill along a narrow tarmac road, its edges marked in places by crash barriers and some stacks of tyres. The road comes out just above the Paddock where you have parked, which lies on your right and this circuit is about 2 ½ miles long.

To continue, turn left and proceed to the Rumster public road and cross obliquely right to the area beside the car park, which is on your left. Ahead lies a forest track guarded by a locked wooden gate, with access via a small side gate (or, you can squeeze around the posts at the side). The track runs for about 1 ½ miles before coming to a dead end and has quite a stony surface for most of its length. Alternatively, simply turn right along the public road for a very short distance (heading towards Lybster) and then turn first right along another forest road. Proceed for about 1 ¼ miles through the forest along a stony track and at the end, turn right onto another new sandy track which runs for about ¾ mile through former pasture land, now planted with seedling trees. You will eventually pass a derelict farm and pond on your left and then proceed through a gate to a T-junction, with the old Rumster Outdoor Centre nestling among the trees on your left. If you turn right here and ride gently uphill for about ¾ mile, you will return to the Paddock. If you turn left, you can extend the ride by going along a lovely grassy track that runs for about 1 ¼ miles and gives an opportunity for a good long canter! Proceed past the Outdoor Centre and through a double metal gate to access this track, which runs straight ahead for at least ½ mile. It then turns sharply left, skirting the edge of fields belonging to Nottingham Mains farm, running slightly downhill.

This section of track can be boggy and rutted, especially after rain. You will pass a small lochan on your left and then a croft house (Newlands of Forse). Shortly, you reach a wooden gate, which is a good place to turn around. (Continuing through this gate, the track soon becomes a narrow tarmac road that joins the A99 main trunk road at Forse, about 2 miles north of Latheron). Retrace your steps and proceed back into the forest past the Outdoor Centre, continuing up the track to return to the Paddock Parking area.

Caithness Riders Access Group Code of Conduct

We would advise anyone planning to ride any route to walk it and assess if it is suitable for them to ride before taking their horse out on it.

Riders should always proceed with courtesy, care and consideration for all other users and landowners.

Remember that hooves can damage surfaces in wet conditions and after frost. Always try to ride on the middle of the track or the verge.

Be aware that others can be frightened of horses; stop, or proceed with caution, and do not canter past them. Whenever possible acknowledge courtesy shown by other users, especially to drivers of motor vehicles.

Leave all gates as you find them.

Park horseboxes carefully and always leave access points clear.

Clear up all droppings from parking areas.

Take your rubbish and litter home.

Ensure that you and your horse are clearly visible to others.

General Information

As with all FC forests you may encounter forestry vehicles occasionally. Read any signs warning you of forest operations such as tree felling and extraction and follow any precautions taken by the land manager. This will ensure that you do not hinder these operations and ensure your safety and that of people working there. In some cases signs may indicate that it is safe to go along a route if the activity has stopped, such as for the weekend.

Forestry Commission office: 01593 721204

Access Officer: David Barclay: 01955 605858

Caithness Riders Access Group: www.caithnessridersaccessgroup.co.uk/



Know the Code before you go

Enjoy Scotland's outdoors. Everyone has the right to be on most land and inland water for recreation, education and for going from place to place providing they act responsibly. These access rights and responsibilities are explained in the Scottish Outdoor Access Code. The key things are:

When you're **in the outdoors:**

- take personal responsibility for your own actions and act safely;
- respect people's privacy and peace of mind;
- help land managers and others to work safely and effectively;
- care for your environment and take your litter home;
- keep your dog under proper control;
- take extra care if you're organising an event or running a business.

If you're **managing the outdoors:**

- respect access rights;
- act reasonably when asking people to avoid land management operations;
- work with your local authority and other bodies to help integrate access and land management
- respect rights of way and customary access

Find out more by visiting www.outdooraccess-scotland.com or phoning your local Scottish Natural Heritage office.

RUMSTER FOREST TRACKS

1:25,000 scale

