

CHALLENGE Cycling the 100-mile Ring of Breadalbane loop is a gruelling test for Fiona



My leg muscles ache as I push the pedals of my bike for miles up a steep single-track road in Perthshire.

I can feel my heart pumping furiously and the sweat glides down my back.

But, thankfully, there are many rewards for the epic climb through the glens of Sma and Quaich in the Breadalbane area.

The views over heather-clad hillsides and sparkling lochs are

“Glens here are like the landscape in the Tolkien books

spectacular and I see three kites soaring in a bright blue sky just above my head.

Then comes the fabulous descent when I whizz downhill, grinning madly, from a high of 1763ft to the loch-side village of Kenmore.

While I have enjoyed cycling in this wildly

beautiful yet easily accessible region before, there is a new reason to come to Perthshire with my bike.

A 100-mile Ring of Breadalbane road cycling loop has been launched and the goal is to ride it in one day.

The route is one of a collection of newly charted Rings for road and

In the footsteps of Burns

More than two centuries ago in 1787, Scotland's famous bard Robbie Burns travelled through Breadalbane on his Highland Tour.

He journeyed via Glen Quaich and Glen

Lyon to Aberfeldy. His poem, *The Birks o' Aberfeldy*, was written while standing close to the stunning waterfalls of Moness.

Near there you can rest on a bench alongside a sculpture of the poet.



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mountain cyclists in Braghaid Alban, the High Ground of Scotland that gives Breadalbane its name.

There are also new Breadalbane Walking Rings and trail guides for golfers and anglers.

The Rings of Breadalbane initiative is the brainchild of an enthusiastic local tourism cooperative.

Run by volunteers, the group is keen to showcase to visitors the natural wonders of this less-visited area.

Andrew Donaldson is the director of Breadalbane Tourism Cooperative and also director at Comrie Crofts

trails and camping centre. He said: "It all started a couple of years ago with a summer Explorer Bus, which provides locals and visitors with an easy hop on, hop off service in Breadalbane.

"This means people can easily get around the area, between towns and villages, without the need for their own transport.

"The walking, cycling, golf and angling trails came from there with the bus route giving easy access to different start and finish points along the trails."

The routes – or the Rings – are inspired by what Andrew describes as the "Tolkienesque scenery of Breadalbane".

He said: "Many of us likened the landscape depicted in the Tolkien books and films, like *Lord of the Rings*, to Breadalbane's mountains and

glens. And our planned walking and cycling routes are loops, or Rings.

"So that's how the Rings of Breadalbane came about."

In addition, the area is home to a number of Neolithic stone rings and markings.

Andrew said: "It all seemed to make sense and the Rings theme has come together to offer lots of fantastic options for outdoors fans."

The cycling rings have been mapped out by Andrew.

The Road Cycling Ring travels between Crieff, Kenmore, Aberfeldy, Killin and Lochearnhead, via fabulous glens and alongside glorious lochs.

The Trail Cycling Ring routes are spread over six sections of between 13 and 40 miles from Killin, via St Fillans, Crieff, Aberfeldy, Bridge of Balgie, Tyndrum and back to Killin. Andrew

A NOVEL WAY TO RING THE CHANGES

Taking on 100 miles in one day of the new Ring of Breadalbane cycle route in Perthshire is like riding through the glorious scenery depicted in *Lord Of The Rings*.

