

IT'S GREAT OUTDOORS

LLAMA DRAMA Enjoys views of breathtaking Cairngorms National Park on the trek from Blairgowrie

KIT OF THE WEEK

Gore Power 2.0 Lady bibshort+

For long-lasting comfort while cycling this summer, Gore Bike Wear women's bib shorts are hard to beat. The Power 2.0 bibs are perfect for longer distance outings and have a superb padded seat insert, chaf-free seams and gripper leg hems. But the best feature is the patented two-zip system at the rear of the shorts, which allows for easier toilet breaks. The shorts are sold in black and white or black and red size XS to XXL, priced around £99.

My tip is to buy a size bigger than you would normally choose because they can be quite snug. See www.goreapparel.co.uk and www.wiggle.co.uk



FEEL THE BURN

Give your legs and lungs a workout in a hill-running series called Bog & Burn. There are 12 Wednesday night hill races across Central Scotland during the summer. The races in 2015 start with Beinn Dubh, near Luss, on April 22, which is 6.5km with an ascent of 620m. The final race is 3.6km with 300m climb on Caerketton Hill, in the Pentlands, on August 12. Points are awarded for a finishing position in each race and the aggregate score is calculated from the best six results. See www.shr.uk.com

NO-SWEAT BOOTS ARE QUITE A FEET

A new footwear technology called Gore-Tex Surround is claimed to stop sweaty feet while hiking. Instead of having a Gore-Tex membrane on the top of the boot only, the Surround wraps around under the foot too.

This "360-degree breathability" is what Gore-Tex say will allow moisture to escape above and below the foot. It also provides the usual high levels of waterproofing that this brand is renowned for. So what this means is feet will stay comfortable and dry whether it's raining or sunny.

One of the first products to use the technology is Mammut's Comfort High GTX Surround boots, left. The lightweight hiking boot also boasts lots of great features to ensure comfort, durability, grip and anti-fatigue.

£169.99, www.ellis-brigham.com



Advice and ideas



Have you tried?

Take a walk with super furry animals



FIONA RUSSELL

You don't have to go to the Andes to enjoy a spot of llama trekking. The Calvin family, from Perthshire, offer walks with the animals through stunning scenery.

LLAMA TREKKING

What is it?

A scenic walking tour accompanied by beautiful llamas on countryside paths and woodland tracks in the Cairngorms National Park.

Tell me more It seems that the climate in the Cairngorms climate is similar to the Andes, where llamas would more traditionally be found.

Llamas, with their thick coats, do not feel the cold and when it rains, the water just rolls off them. They are also happy on rough grazing – and they love thistle tops.

Four llamas – Jett, Bradley, Atticus and Bonita – have been given a home with the Calvin family, mum and dad Fiona and Simon, and kids Atticus and Bonita, near Blairgowrie, from where the llama trekking tours take place.

The hands-on experience starts with visitors feeding the llamas with a special muesli-style breakfast and learning about the traits, habits and characteristics of the animals.

They then help to get the llamas into their halters before setting out on a walking trek that includes leading the llamas. Each trekker leads one of the llamas, while in larger parties, trekkers take it in turn to lead.



WISH YOU WERE EAR Friendly llamas Atticus, left, and Jett

Anything else to know?

Breath-taking scenery is guaranteed on the 90-minute exploration of forest paths and llamas aren't the only creatures that make an appearance. The chances are you'll also spot deer, red squirrel and birds of prey. At the halfway point you will be treated to organic hot chocolate and home baking.

But I thought... Many people think llamas are bad-tempered and spit. But owner Simon Calvin said: "Our llamas do not spit at people, they are big, gentle and a bit quirky. They are fun characters and we find most people do not want to say goodbye to them."

When can we do this?

Spring to autumn. **Who is it for?** Families, animal-loving singles and couples.

What's the cost? 2.5hr Llama Treks are £32 per adult (minimum of two) and £65 for a family of four. Additional adults/children charged at £15. Full-day treks are priced on request. You can also buy a "Certified llama Wrangling" certificate for £1.50.

What else can we do? The Calvins also run Glenshee Ecocamp at Blacklunans with a range of glamping options, such as pods, tents and huts. Visitors can give geocaching a go too.

Join me on my adventures in Scotland's great outdoors by checking out my award-winning website at www.fionaoutdoors.co.uk – you'll find lots of great information about walking, cycling, running, other outdoor activities and kit reviews.