Ayrshire is well known for its coast and castles but venture off the beaten track and discover first class attractions and unique experiences. Slow down the pace and take time out amidst stunning landscapes or get active in the great and magnificent outdoors. It’s all right here waiting to be explored!

Step back in time to a key period in Scotland’s history at the dramatic wilderness setting of Loch Doon Castle, built by the family of Robert the Bruce in the late 1200s. The castle was originally located on an island in the loch but was moved stone by stone to its current location in the 1930s. Set on the banks of Loch Doon, close to the village of Dalmellington, this is an incredible spot to explore Scotland’s past amidst its magnificent natural heritage.

The Scottish Dark Sky Observatory is located within one of only a few ‘gold tier’ Dark Sky Parks in the world. It boasts some of the darkest skies in the UK sitting upon a fantastic hilltop site within Craigengillan Estate. The roll-off roof observatory, dome-housed telescope, viewing deck and activity room are all designed to inspire visitors about the wonder of the universe. Pre-booking is essential.

There are many opportunities for walkers in this area including an extensive network of footpaths at Craigengillan Estate which lies within the Galloway and Southern Ayrshire biosphere. The estate encompasses an area of spectacular scenery, waterfalls, woodlands and wildlife.
OFF THE BEATEN TRACK...

With lush rolling countryside, hills, lochs, rivers and networks of walking and cycling paths, there’s every chance to enjoy the great outdoors.

The Ballochmyle Viaduct built during the 1840s is situated on the River Ayr Way close to Mauchline and featured in the Tom Cruise film Mission Impossible.

The monument to William Wallace “The Spirit of Scotland” is located at Loudoun Hill on one of the Irvine Valley Trails. The structure has a cut out of a human frame which then acts as a frame to various views of the hill and surrounding countryside.

Play a round of golf at Rowallan Castle Golf Club, a course designed by Colin Montgomerie and set between two spectacular castles.

Fly fishing is available at Craufurdland Lochan with the fishery set in the beautiful surroundings of Craufurdland Estate. Fishing is also available at Craigengillian Estate and Cowans Law.
Saved for the nation by the intervention of His Royal Highness The Prince Charles, Duke of Rothesay, Dumfries House is one of Britain’s most beautiful stately homes with an unrivalled collection of original Chippendale furniture. Visitors can explore this stunning 2,000 acre estate, enjoy a woodland walk or take a guided tour of the house.

The Dick Institute in Kilmarnock is one of the most important cultural venues in the south-west of Scotland, featuring the largest museum and galleries space in Ayrshire. It has a programme of nationally important exhibitions, permanent displays of the museum’s own diverse collections and innovative work by contemporary artists, film makers and young people from the area.

For industrial heritage, the magnificent Barony A Frame, near Auchinleck is an outdoor monument celebrating the mining past of the region with spoken stories from some of the men who worked there. It is the last remaining example of its type in Britain, and was restored in 2007 by the Barony A Frame Trust.

Widely considered as Scotland’s national poet, Ayrshire’s Robert Burns lived in Mauchline between 1784 and 1788, years widely regarded as being his most creative and productive period. Burns’ home is now the Burns House Museum. There is also a Burns audio walking tour of the village with handsets available from the museum.
Blackstone Clydesdales is a working family stock farm with a small select breeding herd of prize winning Clydesdale Heavy Horses and Champion Highland Cows. Other farm pets include alpacas, micro Boars, sheep, hens, geese, ducks, peacock, peahens, dogs and Bubbles the donkey.

There are various activities on offer for family days out. Pre booking required.

The New Cumnock outdoor swimming pool was fully refurbished in 2017 and offers a wonderful experience for everyone to enjoy in a wonderful, colourful setting. There are various classes on offer as well as public swimming, so check ahead for opening times.

Dean Castle Country Park is a fantastic free day out for all the family. The country park, covering over 200 acres, is nestled in the heart of Kilmarnock and offers something for all ages to enjoy.

You can explore the park using scenic paths and trails - each season brings with it ever changing plants and wildlife to see along the way. There is also a play area and an opportunity to learn about sustainable living in the Rural Life Centre.

Cycling to Kilmarnock

Walking Group

East Ayrshire Council
Comhairle Siorrachd Air an Ear