

How do you pronounce that station name?

Scotland's towns and cities have fascinating stories behind the origins of their names.

Let's go on a little journey around Scotland looking at places that should come with a pronunciation guide.

Milngavie

"Mill-guy"

Let's start with one of the most commonly baffling names. It's got to be Milngavie! Pronounced Mill-guy. After you've made the faux pas once, never again will you pronounce it wrong. The disconnect between the way the town name is spelled and the way it's pronounced goes back to when the name was adapted into English from Gaelic.

Chatelherault

"Chatel – her – oh"

Next we'll hop on the Argyle Line and head to South Lanarkshire for a walk in the country park right next to Chatelherault station. Sounding like a traditional French town, the station and country park was named after the Duke of Chatelherault, the title bestowed upon James Hamilton by Henry II of France in the 16th century. This is where the name of the district that Chatelherault sits in, 'Hamilton' also came from.

Wemyss Bay

"Weems Bay"

Heading out further west for our next stop, to a town where the railway station is regularly praised as one of the most beautiful in the whole of the UK. On first sight, the station name looks like it should be something along the lines of 'Wem-iss' but it's simply just pronounced Weems. And the station really does sit right on the Bay. You can walk straight off the train, down a short wooden walkway, straight onto the ferry to Rothesay on the Isle of Bute.

Ach...

Let's carry on up north to take a ride on the Kyle Line. Around an hour and a bit after leaving Inverness takes you through the stations of Achanalt, Achnasheen and Achnashellach. Ach comes from the Gaelic word meaning field. The landscapes around all three are beautiful with a dramatic backdrop of mountains. But how on earth do you pronounce them? Similar to Loch, the 'ach' sound is more along the lines of the German 'ach' than a hard 'k' at the end.

Achanalt
"Ack – a - nalt"

Achnasheen
"Ack-na-sheen"

Achnashellach
"Ack-na- shell-ack"

Lochailort

"Lok – eye – lert"

Time to take a ride on one of the most scenic railway routes in the world, the West Highland Line. As you go further north, there's more of a Gaelic influence in the names of places with lots starting with 'loch' meaning lake. We could probably write a whole post on how to pronounce names in the west of Scotland but we'll stick with just a couple for now. The first one – Lochailort. It's pronounced Loch (lok) – eye – lert. True to its name, it has a stunning location at the head of Loch Ailort.

Loch Nan Uamh

"Loch Nan – Oo Av"

Next, heading three miles down from Lochailort, the road takes you to one of Scotland's trickier-to-figure-out-how-its-pronounced viaducts and lochs. Say hello to Loch Nan Uamh Viaduct. Loch Nan is easy enough to figure out but the last four letters leave many a person baffled. In Gaelic 'mh' makes a 'v' sound so it's pronounced 'Oo-av'.

Sanquhar

"San-ker"

We'll finish off our journey in the beautiful countryside of Dumfries and Galloway. The name Sanquhar means 'Old fort', which at face value looks like it links to the old castle ruins that overlook the town. But records show that the name predates this and goes back further past the 15th century. And rather than it being a fussy pronunciation of 'San-kwa-har' it's simply pronounced Sanker.