

# RECOMMENDS

## BEST VALENTINE'S DAY CARD

STEPHEN MCMAHON

**EXPERT**  
Recommends

### 1 CREATE YOUR OWN

It's all about showing your loved one they are special, so what could be better than making your own card? Specialist stationers or arts and crafts stores will have all the supplies needed for a truly individual offering. Use handmade papers, exotic materials like Indian cotton or extravagant ribbons. Beautiful pressed flowers and embellishments also make sure your card stands out.

### 2 USE TRADITIONAL SYMBOLS

Hearts, roses and cupid are Valentine's Day favourites, and rightly so. Hearts have signified love and affection since the Middle Ages when people realised their hearts were beating faster when they met someone they loved.

Roses have traditionally been used to signify the goddess Venus, and legend has it that mischievous Cupid is not only Venus's son but was actually used by her as an "errand boy" sent out to make people fall in love.

### 3 A PICTURE SAYS MORE THAN A THOUSAND WORDS

If you aren't trying to keep your Valentine guessing about your identity, why not incorporate a picture of yourself or a snap of you together as part of the handmade card?

It's an easy way to bring back memories of a great day out or a romantic holiday.

### 4 IT'S WHAT INSIDE THAT COUNTS

Don't just pay attention to your card's appearance - take equal care with the message inside.

If you're not much of a writer, borrow a quote. Shakespeare is a classic choice but less well-known writers were equally creative.

Try Rosemonde Gérard for example: "For you see, each day I love you more; today more than yesterday and less than tomorrow."

### 5 AND DON'T FORGET: "THA GAOL AGAM ORT"

Four words in Gaelic, three in English: no matter what your card is made of, what it looks like and what you write inside it, let your Valentine know the most important thing: "I love you."

● Stephen McMahon manages Daintree Paper on Morningside Road in Edinburgh. [www.daintreepaper.co.uk](http://www.daintreepaper.co.uk)

## BEST PLACE TO BUILD YOUR OWN HOME



Do your bit to reverse the decline of rural communities: build your own home in the Highlands and Islands

# Something to build on

JOHN MACDONALD

### 1 THE ISLE OF SKYE

The Misty Isle is the most popular visitor destination in the Highlands and is known throughout the world for its incredible scenery, hillwalking and vibrant cultural scene.

It is also a great place to self-build, with plenty of plots for sale - ranging from £35,000 to £75,000 - and a good selection of experienced building firms geared towards the self-build market.

A great place to visit and an even better place to live.

### 2 SHETLAND ISLANDS

The Shetlands are simply a fantastic family location with tremendous community facilities across the islands, modern schools with high attainment levels, and low crime rates.

Building plots are very affordable starting from around £25,000 up to about £65,000 and, like in all rural areas, the building trade is geared towards the self-builder.

A recent Bank of Scotland study rated Shetlanders as having the best quality of life in Scotland.

### 3 ARGYLL, BUTE AND THE ISLANDS OF THE WEST

As you drop down the West Coast the landscape becomes noticeably greener near the sea on the low-lying areas.

Good ferry services around Oban allow you to visit the islands, each of which has its own character and history.

It is a Mecca for sailors, with a wide choice of marinas to store and service your yachts and with a lifetime of cruising routes to follow.

For racing yacht enthusiasts there is everything from the intense Scottish Series out of Tarbert Loch Fyne to passage races such as the Round Mull and West Highland Week starting in Oban.

You will find your plot among the many sheltered lochs and inlets.

### 4 ROYAL DEESIDE

We often visit friends in Banchory, which is only a half-hour commute to Aberdeen, where oil-related employment still offers lots of opportunities.

Good farming land, big rivers and forests set the scene, and salmon fishing on the rivers and trout on

stocked freshwater lochs will tantalise the fishermen among you.

Forest walks and Sunday lunches in the old inns overlooking the rivers in villages and towns along this route let you unwind and easy access to the Lecht ski resort, great golf courses and an active amateur music scene should cater for most tastes.

### 5 THE SOUTH

Many people bypass the borderlands on their way in or out of Scotland. But this huge swathe of the country has stunning scenery with a lifestyle to match.

From the rugged Berwickshire coast through the gentle southern uplands and on to the hills and glens of Galloway, the south of Scotland is an unspoilt and undiscovered gem.

Small communities dot the landscape - from Stranraer in the west, through the mill towns of Selkirk, Galashiels and Hawick in the centre and on to Eyemouth in the east. With decent roads and the Waverley rail line now about to become a reality, you are never far from the cities.

● John Macdonald is director of Skye Homes [www.skyehomes.co.uk](http://www.skyehomes.co.uk)

## BEST WALK IN THE GLASGOW AREA

ALISON TURNBULL

**1 CLYDE WALKWAY:** Links the centre of Glasgow to the Falls of Clyde at New Lanark and offers numerous possibilities for short and easy walks. The route stays close to the Clyde and goes through Hamilton, Strathclyde Park and Lanark. It passes many attractions, including Bothwell Castle and Baron's Haugh Nature Reserve.

**2 DRUMPELLIER COUNTRY PARK:** West of Coatbridge, Drumpellier was designated a country park in 1984. It has two natural lochs, and the Monklands Canal lies towards the southern perimeter, attracting large numbers of water birds. A network of paths makes Drumpellier easily accessible for short walks, and many of these paths are suitable for wheelchairs and prams.

**3 CHATELHERAULT COUNTRY PARK:** A restored hunting lodge and visitor centre lie at the heart of the park, located just south of Hamilton, with stunning views north to Ben Lomond. Ancient oaks line many of the footpaths in the park, making for a variety of great short walks. Also within the park, the deep gorge of the Avon Water overlooks 13th-century Cadzow Castle.

**4 WATER TRACK WALK, STRATHBLANE:** From Strathblane Library, old railway tracks lead to the station house. From here, a left turn up Cuilt Brae Road takes you to a sharp bend, where a private road leads off to the right past Ardoch. Bearing left at the fork and heading through a gate and along a track leads to the West Highland Way at Arlehaven. Follow the Way to the right behind Dumgoyne farm. At Glengoyne distillery, cross the stile and head up a grassy track between the distillery warehouses and on to the A81. Slightly to the left, cross the road and follow a rough road past cottages. Bearing right, the road takes you to a gate onto the Water track and back to Strathblane. Approximately three hours.

**5 RIVER KELVIN WALKWAY:** This connects Milngavie with the Glasgow Heliport on the north bank of the Clyde, where it can be linked with the Clyde Walkway. South of Milngavie, the walkway takes a route once used by Highland cattle drovers. It is marked throughout and goes past many parks, museums and galleries. ● Walks in these areas are led throughout the year by Glasgow Ramblers Group - see [www.ramblers.org.uk/scotland](http://www.ramblers.org.uk/scotland).

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