

Garden of the week: Little Sparta in Dunsyre



Little Sparta in Dunsyre Picture: Robin Gillanders

Little Sparta

Stonypath, Dunsyre, ML11 8NG

Set in the Pentland Hills, near the South Lanarkshire clachan of Dunsyre, Little Sparta is Ian Hamilton Finlay's greatest work of art. It is a garden of ideas and poetry, with works in stone, wood, ceramic and metal, almost all incorporating words. It is set in surroundings which enhance the landscape; trees and bushes, running water and still ponds, grass and flowers become more significant by being placed within the artistic scheme.

Finlay moved to the semi-derelict farm steading called Stonypath in 1966 and, in partnership with his wife Sue Finlay, began to create what would become an internationally acclaimed garden across seven acres of a wild and exposed moorland site.

Collaborating with stone carvers, letterers, and at times other artists and poets, the numerous (more than 270) sculptures and artworks conceived and designed by Finlay, which are all integral to the garden, explore themes as diverse as the sea and its fishing fleets, our relationship to nature, classical antiquity, the

French Revolution and the Second World War. Individual poetic and sculptural elements in wood, stone, ceramic and metal, are set into what Finlay describes as 'specific landscapes': distinct areas within the garden, each with its own character and mood. The garden in its entirety is the artwork.

Little Sparta is operating a minibus from central **Edinburgh** on the first Saturday of July, August & September to take budding visitors to the garden. It departs from the Scottish Poetry Library at 11:30, arriving back around 16:30, giving passengers up to three hours of exploration time at Little Sparta. To book your seat follow the link on the Visit page of the Little Sparta Trust website.

Website: <https://www.littlesparta.org.uk/visit/>

Telephone: 07826 495677

Opening times: June-September, Thursday-Sunday, 12:30-17:00

Admission costs: Adults/seniors £12.50; Children/students £7.50

Garden of the Week is in association with Discover Scottish Gardens. For more information, advice and day-out ideas, visit discoverscottishgardens.org