

The Mack Walks: Short Walks in Scotland Under 10 km

Tarfside-Hill of Rowan Circuit (Angus)

Route Summary

This walk in the Angus Glens is characterised by open views of the sheep grazing country and high hills of the eastern Cairngorms. The short, but steep, ascent to the imposing monument at the top of the Hill of Rowan is rewarded by a fantastic panorama.

Duration: 3 hours.



Route Overview

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Transport/Parking: No public transport services to Tarfside. Free parking at the walk start/end point.

Length: 7.420 km / 4.64 mi

Height Gain: 188 meter.

Height Loss: 188 meter.

Max Height: 373 meter.

Min Height: 196 meter.

Surface: Moderate. More than half the walk is on good vehicle tracks with grass or heather moorland surroundings. The 3 km return section from Waypoint 8 is on a quiet minor public road.

Child Friendly: Yes, if children are used to walks of this distance and overall ascent.

Difficulty: Medium.

Dog Friendly: Yes, on lead on public roads and near farm animals. You are very likely to encounter sheep from Waypoint 3 to Waypoint 8. Take care, too, around ground-nesting birds.

Refreshments: We can recommend the Arches cafe in Fettercairn, Also, options in Edzell.



Description

This is a fairly gentle introduction to walking in the Angus Hills, although there is a short but steep ascent to the summit of the Hill of Rowan (which is optional). The Hill of Rowan is a rounded, heather-clad low hill at the head of Glen Esk, with a large distinctive stone monument on top, which stands out for miles around. From the hilltop and elsewhere, there are marvellous views of this remote area, particularly down to the River North Esk, the high end of Glen Esk, the entrance to Glen Mark, and the many surrounding hills at the eastern edge of the Cairngorms. The walk starts and ends at the tiny hamlet of Tarfside, at the higher end of Glen Esk, where employment is mostly associated with hill farming



(largely sheep), and the private estates dedicated to shooting and fishing. The settlement was once an important staging post for drovers taking cattle to southern markets over the Fungle and Firmouth routes from Deeside. There are three churches in this small community, and a Christian presence here can be traced back to St Drostan in the early 600s. At almost 15 miles long, Glen Esk is the longest and most open of the Angus Glens, enabling a transition along the River North Esk from the gentle arable farmland around Edzell to the high mountain peaks and corries at Invermark, and beyond. A curious feature of the walk is the imposing Maule Monument at the summit of the Hill of Rowan – "... constructed in 1866 by Fox Maule Ramsay, 11th Earl of Dalhousie (1801-74), to commemorate seven deceased members of his family, together with the then-living Lady Christian Maule, Lady Ramsay Macdonald and the Earl himself. It is rubble-built, with a chimney-like finial and has been B-listed since 1971." Thanks to Scottish Places. See: <https://t.ly/RV9p>. And, more Glen Esk information here: <https://t.ly/p9wG> and <https://t.ly/ex3R>.

Waypoints

(1) Start from the Tarfside public car-park

(56.90553; -2.83414)

Start the walk at the public car-park in Tarfside, where there is an information board about the area, and toilets. Walk up to the road and turn left to follow the road past houses and then over the Water of Tarf bridge.



(2) Right onto minor road signed for Milton

(56.90613; -2.83649)

After 170 m, or so, having crossed the bridge, take the minor road on your right signed for Milton for a short distance. (171 m)



(3) Left off minor road and through gate

(56.90622; -2.83756)

In about 65 m, as the road bends right, go through the gate going straight ahead onto a grassy track. Keep following this track as it soon enters low heather moorland and then crosses the Burn of Rowan. Eventually the track starts to climb onto the northern flank of the Hill of Rowan, clearly visible ahead of you, topped by the distinctive Maule Monument. (237 m)



(4) Left up steep track to summit

(56.90752; -2.86421)

After 1.7 km, take the obvious track on your left, marked by a post, that climbs fairly steeply to the summit of the Hill of Rowan. If you would rather not undertake this ascent to the hilltop then you can carry on walking along the track you are on and soon, you will arrive at Waypoint 7, the point you would otherwise descend to from the summit. (1.9 km)



(5) Maule Monument at Hill of Rowan summit

(56.90428; -2.86630)

After a 400 m ascent you will have arrived at the summit of the Hill of Rowan, with its distinctive conical monument*. There are marvellous views all around, particularly down to the River North Esk, the head of Glen Esk, the entrance to Glen Mark, and the many surrounding hills at the eastern edge of the Cairngorms. (2.3 km)

**Note: "...the Maule Monument was constructed in 1866 by Fox Maule Ramsay, 11th Earl of Dalhousie (1801-74), to commemorate seven deceased members of his family, together with the then-living Lady Christian Maule, Lady Ramsay Macdonald and the Earl himself. It is rubble-built, with a chimney-like finial and has been B-listed since 1971."* Thanks

to: <https://www.scottish-places.info/features/featurefirst90942.html>



(6) Take western track leaving summit

(56.90442; -2.86666)

When you are ready, take the landrover track heading downhill on the western side of the monument. Soon the track turns NW as it descends to the base of the Hill of Rowan, with the farmhouse and farm buildings at Westbank below you. (2.4 km)



(7) Left along grassy track

(56.90687; -2.87536)

After a gentle descent, in 600 m you will arrive at the (now) grassy track you left earlier to ascend to the hilltop. The tumbled down stone walls of animal enclosures and previous human habitation are all around. Rather than take the rough road ahead of you to Westbank farm, turn left to follow the grassy track around the base of Hill of Rowan. Soon the grassy surroundings change to heather moorland and you pass grouse shooting butts as you continue your counter-clockwise circuit of the hill. Eventually the track enters a birch wood and starts to descend towards the minor road giving access to Invermark Lodge and Loch Lee. (3.0 km)



(8) Through gate and onto tarred road

(56.89660; -2.87420)

After 1.5 km, now walking through Birch woods, the rough road you are on meets the tarred access road for Invermark Lodge and Loch Lee. Go through the gate and turn left to follow the road back to Tarside, with views of Glen Esk opening up as you proceed. The road is quiet, but ensure you take care and walk on the right-hand side to face oncoming traffic. (4.5 km)



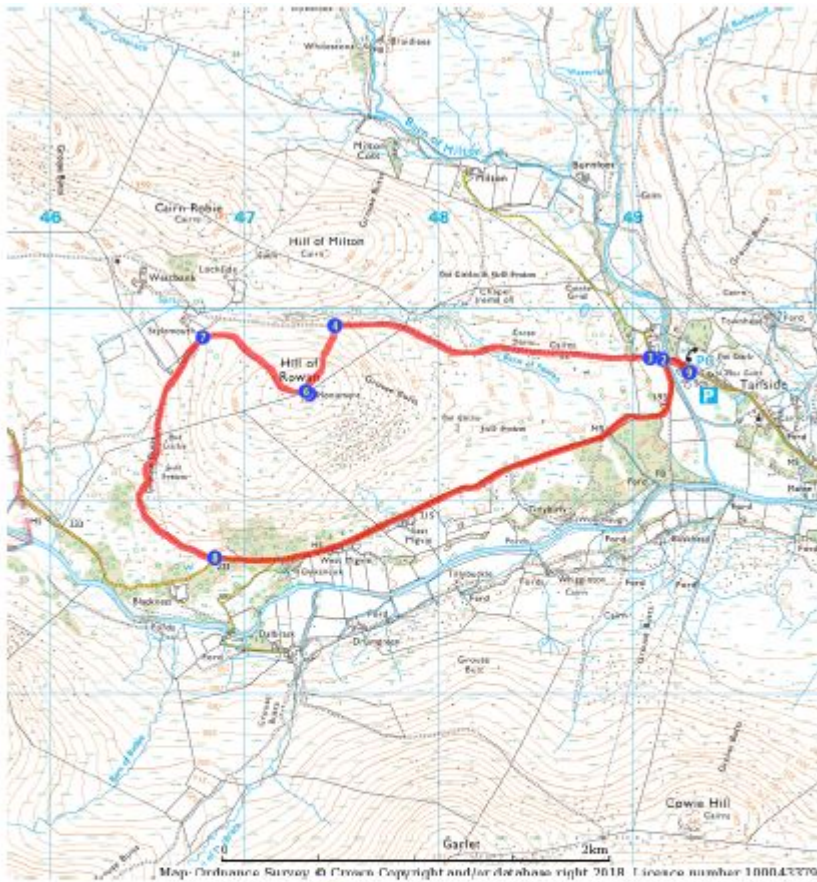
(9) Finish walk back in Tarfside

(56.90553; -2.83425)

After 2.9 km, the tarred road takes you back into Tarfside and the car-park where you started the walk. (7.4 km)



Route Map



Links:

[Photos from walk](#)

[Download Route Guide](#) (PDF with illustrated Waypoints)

[Download GPX file](#) (GPS Exchange Format)

[Access Walk on Viewranger](#)

[Access Walk on Wikiloc](#)