

The Mack Walks: Short Walks in Scotland Under 10 km

Cullen-Findlater Castle Loop (Moray)

Route Summary

There are a few ups and downs on this coastal walk, making for an overall ascent of almost 300 m. The landscape is varied: a seaside village, rolling farmland, a pretty beach and impressive ruined castle on a cliff-top. Some sections on cliff-side paths may be muddy.

Duration: 3.75 hours.



Route Overview

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Transport/Parking: Stagecoach buses from Aberdeen and Elgin pass through Cullen. Check timetables. Easy on-street parking near to the start on Port Long Road.

Length: 9.410 km / 5.88 mi

Height Gain: 293 meter

Height Loss: 293 meter

Max Height: 73 meter

Min Height: 4 meter

Surface: Rough. There are some narrow and steep paths. Also likely to be some very muddy areas on cliff-side path approaching the Findlater Castle viewpoint.

Child Friendly: Yes, if children are used to walks of this distance and overall ascent. Take extreme care on cliff-side paths!

Difficulty: Medium.

Dog Friendly: Yes. On lead on public roads and near to any farm livestock.

Refreshments: Options in Cullen.



Description

This is an excellent walk on the coastline along the border between Moray and Aberdeenshire, an area which enjoys a benign micro-climate. The location is well sheltered by the Grampian mountains, and the Moray Firth, often making for pleasant weather conditions that attract day-trippers and holiday-makers. The route offers variety and historical interest, alongside stunning views. Cullen is an attractive large village. It has a long history, having been made a royal burgh around the end of the 12th C. The old village, which ran downhill from Cullen House and the "Auld Kirk" is long gone. Nowadays, there is a clear distinction between picturesque and colourful Seatown of Cullen, the fishing quarter, nestled into the broad bay and sweeping beach, and the grander "New Cullen" rising uphill and inland. These were planned settlements, built in the 1820's, as was the fine harbour, built by Thomas Telford, to take advantage of the opportunities for trade and the booming herring industry. The route at first goes inland through farmland overlooking the coast before descending to Sunnyside Beach, a beautiful little stretch of golden sand and unusual rock formations, backed by grassy cliffs and sand dunes. From here the path ascends again to gain an unforgettable vantage point over the ruins of Findlater Castle, on a rocky promontory. Here, an information board usefully shows a representation of what the castle may have looked like in its hey-day. The first record of a castle here dates back as far as 1246. Re-constructed in the 1450s, it was abandoned in the 1600s. On the return leg along the coastal path we pass points of interest, "Charlie's Cave", and the "Giant's Steps" beside an outcrop popular with rock-climbers.



Waypoints

(1) Start walk at harbour info board - Port Long Road

(57.69253; -2.82408) <https://w3w.co/stuns.succumbs.lavender>

Start the walk at the entrance to western pier at Cullen harbour where there are a couple of information boards.



(2) Immediately up first side street

(57.69252; -2.82348) <https://w3w.co/minivans.novels.dairy>

Immediately walk up the un-named side street opposite you and take the path at the end of the lane uphill through a grassy area. Look back for great views over the Seatown of Cullen area. (36 m)



(3) Left onto Bayview Road then under arches

(57.69178; -2.82204) <https://w3w.co/sand.snowboard.tape>

In 40 m, or so, turn left where the path meets the pavement on Bayview Road then continue walking under the old railway arches as the road swings right to become Seafield Street. Continue to proceed up Seafield Street, past the square. As you continue uphill past shops the street becomes Seafield Road, the main exit from the village in the Portsoy direction. (168 m)



(4) Left off Seafield Road - then veer left at fork

(57.68872; -2.81593) <https://w3w.co/pencils.access.fans>

In 550 m, after passing the Cullen Community Centre and Library on your left, go left off Seafield Road up an access road then veer left where this access road forks after 40 m, or so. (715 m)



(5) Left over bridge

(57.68914; -2.81293) <https://w3w.co/loafer.arriving.garlic>

In 220 m, follow the road left as it crosses over a bridge. Now the road becomes a rough field access road. (933 m)



(6) Left at fork in farm roads

(57.69121; -2.79822) <https://w3w.co/myth.agency.markets>

In just under 1.1 km, go left at a fork in the rough road, heading down towards the coastline. After passing the ruins of Logie House on the left the road enters a field and turns right. The road is heavily overgrown now and you are best to continue walking around the field margin as it eventually swings left. Look out for a metal pedestrian gate on your right. (2.0 km)



(7) Right off field margin through gate

(57.69502; -2.78967) <https://w3w.co/straw.flock.detergent>

In 700 m from the fork in the rough road at Waypoint 6, you will see a metal pedestrian gate through the fence on your right leading to a narrow path down a grassy ravine towards the coast. The path has been affected by some landslips so take care. (2.7 km)



(8) Right at t-junction after descent

(57.69637; -2.78905) <https://w3w.co/crest.dragon.idealist>

After a descent of around 200 m you will meet the main Cullen-Findlater Castle coastal path. Go right here in the direction of Sunnyside Beach. When you arrive at the beach, passing a stone cairn, it is up to you whether you divert to walk along the beach or carry on taking the main coastal path. We took the option of walking on the pretty beach. (2.9 km)



(9) Right up path for Findlater Castle

(57.69337; -2.78067) <https://w3w.co/lunges.misfits.fractions>

In 600 m, follow the path (or leave the beach to follow the path) that now climbs up to the cliff-top level. There have been drainage and landslip issues on this path (as a sign indicates) and you may find it muddy and slippery in places. Once at the cliff-top level carry on walking in an easterly direction towards the Findlater Castle viewpoint. (3.5 km)



(10) View of Findlater Castle

(57.69142; -2.76925) <https://w3w.co/sleepless.words.tweeted>

After 1 km, you will have arrived at the viewpoint and information board for the ruins of Findlater Castle. We don't advise that you take the path down to the castle. The ruins are in a dangerous condition and the surrounding slopes are very hazardous. When you are ready, re-trace your steps back to Sunnyside Beach and proceed back in the Cullen direction on the coastal path, passing the point where you descended from the fields at Waypoint 8. (4.5 km)



(11) Check out Charlie's Cave

(57.69721; -2.78994) <https://w3w.co/brave.bank.flattery>

In 1.8 km, you arrive at an information board for Charlie's Cave. The cave (more like a shallow recess in the rock) and associated structure (long gone) was home, for a time, to a French Navy deserter called 'Charlie'. The ultimately sad story of 'Charlie' is told on the info board. When you are ready to move on, carry on taking the coastal path back in the direction of Cullen. (6.3 km)



(12) Left up Giant Steps path

(57.69981; -2.79287) <https://w3w.co/storyline.sensitive.buckling>

In 500 m, the coastal path passes a rocky outcrop where you may see rock climbers in action. On the left here is a rough stone staircase and a memorial to the man who made them. Ascend the steps and over the ridge to carry on taking the coastal path back towards Cullen. (6.8 km)



(13) Left for path to clifftop

(57.69524; -2.80461) <https://w3w.co/unlocking.formal.sunroof>

After 1 km, in an open grassy area you come to a fork in the path. The coastal path to the right continues around the headland, but you will take the left fork that will ascend up to the clifftop. (7.8 km)



(14) Divert right for viewpoint

(57.69520; -2.80796) <https://w3w.co/alienated.memo.asset>

In 300 m, upon ascending to the cliff-top, divert right at a sign for 'Nelson's Seat and Viewpoint'. This takes you close to the edge of the cliffs where there is a superb view in all directions. When you are ready, re-trace your steps to the signpost and carry on, right, towards the holiday caravan park, keeping the static caravans on your left side, with the coastline on your right. (8.1 km)



(15) Right for Cullen harbour

(57.69377; -2.81330) <https://w3w.co/barman.catchers.volume>

In 600 m, at the entrance to the holiday caravan park, go right down a lane where a signpost directs you in the direction Cullen Harbour. Eventually the lane joins a road and starts to dip down towards the area of the harbour. (8.7 km)



(16) Right down Campbell Street

(57.69315; -2.81899) <https://w3w.co/digested.cherish.dress>

In 300 m from the caravan park, turn right down Campbell Street. At the bottom of the short street you take a path going left, down to the harbour. When you reach the level of the harbour-side proceed along Port Long Road towards your start-point. (9.0 km)



(17) Finish walk back at Port Long Road - by harbour

(57.69256; -2.82397) <https://w3w.co/stuns.succumbs.lavender>

In 400 m you have arrived back at your start-point near the western harbour pier. (9.4 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 OutdoorActive](#)

[Access Walk on OSMaps](#)

[Access Walk on Wikiloc](#)