

The Mack Walks: Short Walks in Scotland Under 10 km

Findochty-Portknockie Circuit (Moray)

Route Summary

A good walk along the cliffs heading east from the former fishing village of Findochty. On a clear day there are views of the faraway Caithness coast and, at the return point on the route in Portknockie, the amazing Bow Fiddle Rock is guaranteed to make a memorable impression.

Duration: 3 hours.



Route Overview

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Transport/Parking: Regular 35/38 bus service between Buckie and Findochty. Check timetable. On-street parking in Findochty near walk start/end point.

Length: 9.030 km / 5.64 mi

Height Gain: 221 meter.

Height Loss: 221 meter.

Max Height: 45 meter.

Min Height: 2 meter.

Surface: Moderate. Mostly hard-surfaced cycle-way path or tarred surfaces. Some path sections may be very muddy.

Difficulty: Medium.

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

Dog Friendly: Yes. Keep dogs on lead on public roads and near any livestock.

Refreshments: We can recommend the Fly Cup Cafe at the walk mid-point in Portknockie. The Admiral pub in Findochty.



Description

This is a fairly straightforward “there and back” coastal walk along the bracing cliff-top path between the former “Old Banffshire” fishing villages of Findochty and Portknockie. On a clear day you are likely to enjoy views across the Moray Firth to the Caithness hills, picking out the conical shape of Morven, over 80 km away. Findochty (pronounced “Finechty”) traces its history back to a royal charter in the mid 15thC. In the early 18thC, the local landowner developed the beginnings of a fishing industry, and by 1850 it was home to around 150 fishing boats. But the harbour expansion at nearby Buckie provided safer berths and access to a busy fish-market so that, by 1890, Findochty was declining as a fishing port. Findochty harbour now has a marina for leisure craft and is a very pretty and attractive spot, particularly when the sun shines, as it often does on this sheltered stretch of the Moray coast. In 1959, a local artist, Correna Cowie, created a very striking white-painted statue of a seated fisherman, known as “The Mannie”, who casts a protective gaze over the old harbour. Mid-way between Findochty and Cullen sits Portknockie, perched on the cliff-tops. The village has an ancient history, including being the site of an Iron Age/Pictish fort, the “Green Castle”, on a headland protecting the harbour, but its development in modern times is associated with the herring boom of the 1800s. It is also the site of a well-known and very photogenic natural sea arch, the “Bow Fiddle Rock”, so called because it resembles the tip of a fiddle bow. This deservedly popular visitor attraction is the turning point on a relatively easy but enjoyable route.



Waypoints

(1) Start walk at Findochty Harbour

(57.69817; -2.90723) <https://w3w.co/greet.fries.racing>

Start the walk from the stone paving compass just to the west of Findochty Harbour, beside the public toilets, and across the road from the Admiralty Bar. Walk east around the harbour passing the white-painted statue of a seated fisherman, then keep going, with the coastline on your left side, onto Stenlochy Road, and The Hythe, before joining Duke Street. Along the way you may want to divert briefly to the outer harbour barrier for the view back to Findochty, and then to the information board about shipbuilding at The Hythe.



(2) Right past garages for Coastal Trail

(57.70108; -2.89841) <https://w3w.co/bashful.patio.lingering>

In about 950 m, at the end of Duke Street, pass the wooden garages on the right before turning right to join the coastal path at the edge of Sandy Creek bay. At the eastern end of the bay, veer right to take the steep and narrow path uphill onto the clifftop. At the clifftop, the narrow path joins a much wider hard-surfaced path - the Moray Coastal Cycle Route. Go left here, walking in an easterly direction towards Portknockie. Be prepared from some muddy sections, after rain, or in winter. Carry on walking along this path for about 2 km, before reaching the outskirts of Portknockie. (963 m)



(3) Enter Portknockie at Cliff Terrace

(57.70300; -2.86459) <https://w3w.co/handfuls.vowed.hogs>

After just over 2.4 km from Waypoint 2, at the end of Duke Street in Findochty, you will arrive at the outskirts of Portknockie. Walk along Cliff Terrace, which becomes Harbour Road, then Harbour Terrace, looking down on Portknockie Harbour*. (3.3 km)

**Note: *Note: from 'Undiscovered Scotland' - '...Portknockie's harbour is naturally sheltered by the rocky bluff of Green Castle, once a Pictish stronghold. And traces of still earlier Iron Age defences in the area suggest its origins as a port are probably very ancient. But the modern story of Portknockie began in 1677 when a group of fishermen from Cullen moved a little along the coast and started to operate from here. It grew only very slowly over the years, but then expanded rapidly during the herring boom of the 1800s ...'*

See: <https://www.undiscoveredscotland.co.uk/portknockie/portknockie/index.html>



(4) Check out Fishermen's Memorial

(57.70495; -2.86040) <https://w3w.co/speeded.dockers.short>
In 500 m, or so, divert left off Harbour Terrace to visit the Fishermen's Memorial on a headland overlooking the harbour. When you are ready, return to Harbour Terrace and, with your back to the memorial, go immediately left along Patrol Road where there are a couple of interesting information boards about the Green Castle* and the Three Creeks Shore*. (3.8 km)

**Note: The 'Green Castle' is a rocky promontory to your left where wooden fortifications once stood, Pictish and earlier, it is believed. In relation to the "Three Creeks Shore" it's hard to believe, but, at one time, boatbuilding took place on the rocky shores below where you are standing.*



(5) At end of Patrol Road - carry on past sheds for Coastal Trail

(57.70470; -2.85585) <https://w3w.co/iteration.sends.active>
In 200 m, at the end of Patrol Road - carry on walking in an easterly direction, passing sheds and workshops on your left side. At the last building, go sharp left for an entrance-way onto the Coastal Trail. Follow this path as it takes you towards the cliffs above the seashore, with the Bow Fiddle Rock soon visible ahead of you. (4.0 km)



(6) Bow Fiddle Rock Arch viewpoint

(57.70540; -2.85350) <https://w3w.co/purse.organic.idea>
In 200 m you, dipping down a little onto a slightly lower path, you will arrive at a fine viewpoint for the Bow Fiddle Rock*, where there is a simple bench. When you are ready to move on, re-trace your steps back onto Patrol Road, looking out for Seafield Street on your left side. (4.2 km)

**Note: a well-known and very photogenic natural sea arch, so called because it resembles the tip of a fiddle bow.*



(7) Left up Seafield Street

(57.70457; -2.85661)
<https://w3w.co/homework.adopters.proper>
In 300 m from the viewpoint for the Bow Fiddle Rock, turn left up Seafield Street where the window and door surrounds on the houses are painted in the traditional NE fishing village style. In 350 m, at the top of Seafield Street, go right and downhill on Bridge Street for 100 m before following the road as it bends left onto

**Note: look out for an interesting info board about the history of Portknockie in a little park on your left, part way along, before the Spar store.*



(8) Left up Hill Street

(57.70259; -2.85988) <https://w3w.co/clock.sector.stint>

In 500 m from Waypoint 7, at the foot of Seafield Street, go left off Church Street onto Hill Street, passing the Fly Cup Cafe*. In less than 50 m, turn right to walk along High Street, in a westerly direction. (5.0 km)

**Note: If you are looking for a mid-walk refreshment stop, the Fly Cup is well worth a visit. At Feb 2020 the business is for sale, so hopefully there is still a cafe in operation when you pass.*



(9) Cross Station Road and Church Street - onto Cliff Terrace

(57.70266; -2.86355) <https://w3w.co/described.locator.range>

In 300 m, at the end of High Street, where it meets Station Road, cross Station Road and take the narrow flag-stoned path downhill to cross the end of Church Street, then onto Cliff Terrace, where you entered the village at Waypoint 3 on the outward route. Turn left here to head back on the coastal path towards Findochty. (5.3 km)



(10) Carry on taking high-level cycleway path

(57.69944; -2.89433) <https://w3w.co/topics.gained.arts>

In 2.1 km from Waypoint 9 you will arrive at the point where you ascended from Sandy Creek bay. Do NOT go right onto this narrow path but, instead, carry on taking the high-level cycleway path towards the higher level of Findochty, entering the village at Cliff Street. It is up to you what route you now take back to the harbour area. We took Cliff Street, then Mackenzie Street, then Hall Street, briefly ascending on Station Road before taking Seaview Road then Netherton Terrace. This takes you to a convenient point for ascending on a path to the Findochty War Memorial on the clifftop above the harbour on the west side. On the way up there is a fine anchor sculpture and a great perspective for taking in a view of the harbour. (7.4 km)



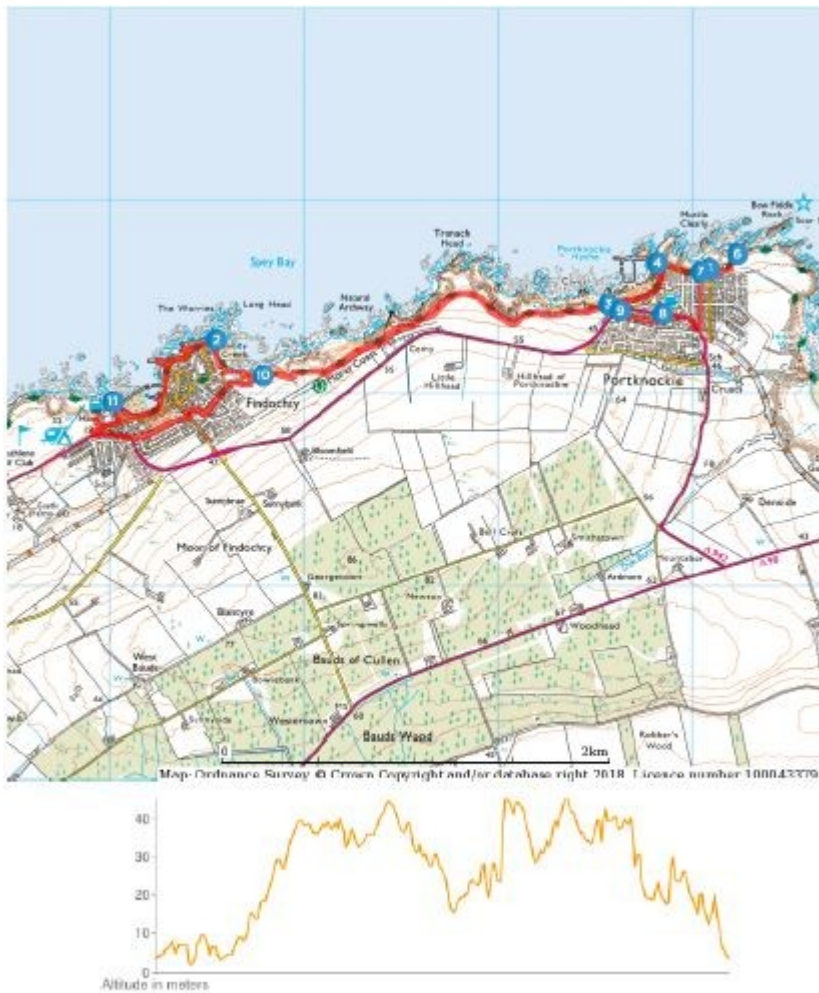
(11) Finish walk back at Findochty Harbour

(57.69816; -2.90735) <https://w3w.co/greet.fries.racing>

In 1.6 km (if you take our suggested route through the village, diverting to the War Memorial), you will have arrived back at your start point near the public toilets at Findochty Harbour. (9.0 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](#)