

The Mack Walks: Short Walks in Scotland Under 10 km

Spey Bay-Garmouth-Kingston Circuit (Moray)

Route Summary

A varied and interesting walk that matches sweeping coastal perspectives and crashing pebble beaches with rural farmland, a racing river, and reedy backwaters. The Spey Viaduct makes for an awe-inspiring crossing between the old Moray villages of Spey Bay, Garmouth and Kingston.

Duration: 3 hours.



Route Overview

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Transport/Parking: No bus services to Spey Bay. Park on or off road near the walk start/end point at the east end of Spey Bay, near the The Bay golf/caravan park clubhouse.

Length: 9.930 km / 6.21 mi

Height Gain: 68 meter.

Height Loss: 68 meter.

Max Height: 24 meter.

Min Height: 2 meter.

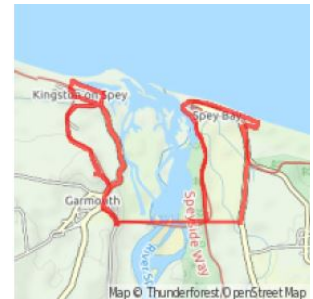
Surface: Moderate. Mostly, good paths and pavements.

Difficulty: Easy.

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

Dog Friendly: Yes, but keep dogs on lead on public roads and near farm animals.

Refreshments: We have visited, and can recommend the Garmouth Hotel and the Dolphin Centre cafe. The Bay golf/caravan park clubhouse at the walk start/end is also open to the public.



Description

This is a coastal walk with a difference, in a special natural environment. The route varies from beach to rural estuary, to beach, and back again, visiting three unusual little Moray villages with individual histories, along the way. Spey Bay is a unique coastal nature reserve with the largest shingle beach in Scotland. To quote an old saying – “*The Spey’s a wanton wuman, who’ll nae stay in her ain bed.*”, and so the fast flowing river creates habitats that are constantly changing, from huge banks of shingle to windblown coastal grasslands, sleepy saltmarsh, and wet woodland.



Depending on the season, you may find large numbers of wildfowl offshore, breeding terns at the river mouth, wildflowers and butterflies in profusion. In summer, ospreys frequently fish here, and bottlenose dolphins are also attracted to the river’s out-flowing bounty, accounting for the presence of the Scottish Dolphin Centre, housed in historic salmon-fishing buildings dating back to the 18thC. To make the route possible, we cross the hugely impressive Spey Viaduct railway bridge, the building of which was an immense civil engineering challenge. Passing through pretty and peaceful Garmouth, it is hard to imagine a scene in 1885 when the police in Elgin were called to deal with 300 navvies marching through the streets in angry protest at being refused a 1d per hour increase in wages for their labours on the bridge! The settlement at Garmouth is very old, and although little evidence is left today, it was once one of the busiest ports along the Moray Firth coast, becoming the prime locus for the export of logs floated down the Spey from the Rothiemurchus Forest. On our route we pass a plaque commemorating the annual “Maggie’s Fair”, first held in 1587, and another plaque marking the landing of King Charles II here in 1650, to launch his campaign to topple Cromwell’s Commonwealth. Nearby, tiny Kingston, huddled at the sea-front, was founded in 1784 by a Yorkshire family who set up shipyards and sawmills there, naming the place after Kingston-upon-Hull.

Waypoints

(1) Start walk at The Bay golf-caravan club house

(57.67169; -3.08359) <https://w3w.co/recover.electrode.blazing>
Start the walk outside The Bay golf-caravan club house* at the east end of Spey Bay**. Walk along the road to the left (sea side) of the The Bay past some recently built houses on your left side. The road bends left past the houses towards the sea.

**Note: The Bay is associated with the golf course and caravan park but is open to the public for snacks and refreshments.*

***Note: for information about Spey Bay, see: <https://www.undiscoveredscotland.co.uk/speybay/speybay/index.html>*



(2) Left onto coastal path

(57.67187; -3.08166) <https://w3w.co/nourished.traded.trainers>
In 150 m, or so, leave the road to go left onto the coastal path. Once on the path, go left to walk in a westerly direction along the coastline, towards the estuary of the River Spey. (146 m)



(3) Pass the Dolphin Centre

(57.67398; -3.09312) <https://w3w.co/instead.reds.inert>
In 750 m, or so, you will pass the Scottish Dolphin Centre*. Veer left to cross the car-park past the osprey sculpture and former salmon fishing ice-houses on your left side. There are a number of information boards around the car-park. When you are ready, follow the Speyside Way/Moray Coastal Path waymarked path leaving the car-park going south, inland, with the River Spey estuary on your right side. Keep following this path for about 1.4 km, ignoring any options to leave the path on the right and left until you arrive at a paths signpost for the old railway line bridge. (882 m)

**Note: The Centre is '... a haven for wildlife including bottlenose dolphins, ospreys, grey and common seals, the occasional otter and many coastal birds. The Centre is based in an 18th Century salmon fishing station and has a fascinating history. See: <https://dolphincentre.whales.org/>*



(4) Right to cross old railway bridge

(57.66279; -3.09057) <https://w3w.co/easy.forever.quaking>
After 1.4 km from the Dolphin Centre car-park, turn right at a set of walks signposts to take the path that crosses the old railway line bridge over the River Spey. (2.3 km)

**Note: for information about this impressive viaduct/bridge, see: <http://www.speymouth.co.uk/the-spey-viaduct/>*



(5) Left off path and up to Garmouth road

(57.66275; -3.10597) <https://w3w.co/mimics.duet.salad>
In 900 m, after crossing the bridge, and just before the path goes under a road bridge, go left and uphill onto the road at the outskirts of Garmouth. Turn right at the road to walk into Garmouth. (3.2 km)



(6) Right at Garmouth Hotel junction

(57.66412; -3.10866) <https://w3w.co/graph.soaps.robos>
In 300 m, or so, with the Garmouth Hotel on your left side, go right at a sign for the Moray Coastal Path. (3.5 km)



(7) Pass Maggie Fair commemorative plaque

(57.66531; -3.10828) <https://w3w.co/kebabs.helm.tidal>

In 100 m, or so, you will pass the Maggie Fair* commemorative plaque on a wall on your right side. You will eventually leave Garmouth behind as you keep going on the B9015 road to Kingston, with the golf course and Spey estuary on your right side. There is a pavement, or footpath by the roadside, all the way. (3.6 km)

**Note: '... The fair officially entered the calendar on the 30th of June 1587, when Garmouth, or 'Garmoch', as it was known, was raised in status by Crown Charter to a Burgh of Barony. This Charter gave the village the right to create free burghers, erect a Cross, and construct a harbour. Also, the right to hold two annual fairs, one in June, the other on the 20th of September. The second fair seems to have disappeared, but the first continued as the 'Margaret Fair' or 'Maggie Fair' ...' See: <http://www.speymouth.co.uk/the-horrible-history-of-the-maggie-fair-2/>*



(8) Left down Lein Road

(57.67370; -3.10900) <https://w3w.co/innovator.scuba.joke>

In 1.1 km, just after entering Kingston, turn left to go down Lein Road. (4.7 km)



(9) Right down lane towards sea-front

(57.67448; -3.11387) <https://w3w.co/worthy.sorry.tinkle>

In about 300 m, turn right up an un-named lane heading in the direction of the sea. At the end of the lane, turn left, and head down a ramp onto Beach Road and towards a small park at the sea-front. The park is just in front of you on your right side. (5.0 km)



(10) Right onto path across park to sea-front

(57.67504; -3.11448) <https://w3w.co/horn.subsets.commit>

In about 100 m from Waypoint 9, turn right off Beach Road to follow a path into a small park. Walk down the path towards the sea-front to take in the view up and down the coastline from there. (5.1 km)



(11) Veer left to follow coastal path

(57.67579; -3.11365) <https://w3w.co/innocence.suppose.hunt>

In 100 m, after taking in the view at the sea-front, go right down an access road and almost immediately veer left to follow a path along the coastline, with a creek in the Spey Estuary on your left side, and houses on your right side. Soon you will arrive at a grassy area with benches and car-parking where there are good views to the east over the Spey Bay Nature Reserve. (5.2 km)



(12) Pass Kingston bi-centenary sculpture

(57.67445; -3.10869) <https://w3w.co/pavilions.forehand.boring>

In 400 m, from the viewpoint/car-parking for the Nature Reserve, head inland, passing the Kingston bi-centenary sculpture* as you head straight on, down the street that leads to the Garmouth Road. Look out for Lein Road on your right, that you entered earlier, at Waypoint 8. (5.6 km)

**Note: For the interesting history of Kingston, see: <https://www.undiscoveredscotland.co.uk/kingston/kingston/index.html>*



(13) Right onto Lein Road again - then left

(57.67365; -3.10910) <https://w3w.co/shoppers.havens.blackmail>

In 100 m, or so, turn right into Lein Road. Almost immediately take the access road on your left called Burnside Road. Keep following this quiet narrow access road as it crosses the Drainer Burn and curves its way inland away from the sea. (5.7 km)



(14) Straight on for Garmouth by School Brae

(57.67146; -3.11478)

<https://w3w.co/craftsman.manly.mentioned>

In 500 m, at a walks signpost, carry on straight ahead in the direction signposted for Garmouth by School Brae, looking out for a path veering left off the rough road in about 100 m. (6.2 km)



(15) Veer left onto School Brae path

(57.67071; -3.11465) <https://w3w.co/ready.scorecard.activity>

In 100 m, or so, veer left off the rough road to pass a small farm building on your right side. Follow this path as it ascends onto an ancient raised beach. There are good views over the farmland below to the river estuary and the coastline to the east, with the Bin Hill at Cullen prominent on the skyline. (6.3 km)



(16) Divert right for old Water Tower and standing stones

(57.66738; -3.10934)

<https://w3w.co/anchors.outbursts.appealing>

In 500 m, divert along a short grassy path to an area where there is an old water supply tower and the remains of ancient standing stones. There are information boards for the tower and the stones, and also a topograph indicating the direction of hilltops and landmarks. When you are ready, return to the School Brae path, turning right onto the path to continue walking into the outskirts of Garmouth, passing the old school building (now a private house) as you then descend down the brae into the village. (6.8 km)



(17) Right up Church Street

(57.66597; -3.10752) <https://w3w.co/month.aliens.honestly>

In 300 m from the previous waypoint, upon reaching Spey Street, turn right and walk up the street. (7.1 km)



(18) Pass King Charles II plaque

(57.66564; -3.10776) <https://w3w.co/outwit.euphoric.forks>

In about 50 m, look on for the King Charles II plaque* on the gable end of a house on your left side (you passed this earlier in the walk but probably missed it!). Carry on through Garmouth, and, re-tracing your steps back over the old Spey railway bridge that you crossed earlier. (7.1 km)

**Note: This plaque commemorates the landing of '... King Charles II on 23 June 1650, in defiance of Cromwell, and his signing of the Covenant and the Solemn League immediately after coming ashore ...'.*

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



(19) Carry straight on after crossing old railway bridge

(57.66277; -3.09050) <https://w3w.co/easy.forever.quaking>

In 1.4 km, after re-crossing the old Spey railway bridge and arriving back at the paths x-roads encountered at Waypoint 4, on the outward leg, carry straight on, with fields on either side, as you make for the B9104 road, about 400 m ahead of you. (8.5 km)



(20) Left along pavement back to Spey Bay village

(57.66270; -3.08458) <https://w3w.co/tailwind.year.dads>

In 400 m, upon arriving at a t-junction with the B9104 road, cross the road with care, and turn left to walk back along the pavement to Spey Bay, where you started the walk. (8.9 km)



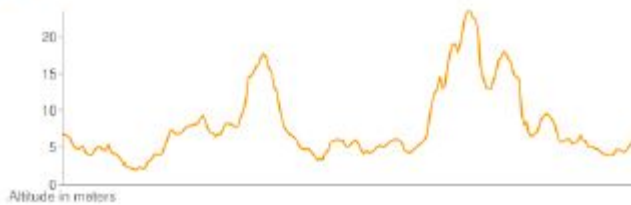
(21) Finish walk back at The Bay clubhouse

(57.67161; -3.08367) <https://w3w.co/recover.electrode.blazing>

In 1 km, you will have returned to the The Bay, at the Spey Bay caravan park and golf course, where you started the walk. (9.9 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](#)