

# The Mack Walks: Short Walks in Scotland Under 10 km

## Old Aberdeen-Donmouth Circuit (Aberdeen City)

### Route Summary

A gentle stroll that mixes town, and seaside, woodland and park, to create a hugely stimulating all-round experience. At every turn on the trail, history rubs shoulders with the natural environment in a uniquely pleasant and memorable way.

Duration: 2.5 hours.



### Route Overview

**Duration:** 2.5 hours.

**Transport/Parking:** First city buses and Stagecoach country buses stop near to Old Aberdeen. Free public car-park at start/finish of walk.

**Length:** 8.35 km / 5.19 mi. **Height Gain/Loss:** 104 meter.

**Max Height:** 23 meter. **Min Height:** 2 meter.

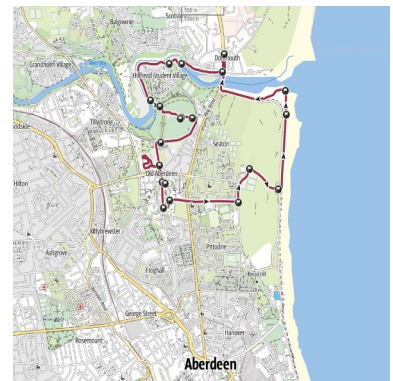
**Surface:** Moderate. A mix of tarred pavements, hard-surfaced and sandy paths. The circuit is suitable for off-road mobility scooters, but only with diversions at various points. See guidance at Waypoints 6, 11, 14, and 17.

**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.

**Refreshments:** Cafe/takeaway snack options in the Old Aberdeen area.



### Description

This is a very varied and interesting urban and seaside walk which enjoys a wide range of visual perspectives, architectural periods and styles, and natural environments. The route takes in notable features in the deservedly award-winning Seaton Park, and provides a taster for some of the main highlights in the historic centre of Old Aberdeen and its ancient university, including St Machar's Cathedral, the Cruickshank Botanic Garden, the Old Town House, and King's College. In a change of scene, the mid-part of the walk heads over the King's Links golf course, possibly the oldest course in Scotland, to the grand sweep of Aberdeen Beach, before meandering through a section of the Donmouth Local Nature Reserve at the mouth of the River Don. On the return leg, after a riverbank section, our route



then crosses the impressive arch of the Brig of Balgownie, perhaps the oldest bridge in Scotland, before returning to Seaton Park on a woodland path high above the gorge of the river. On an historical note: *"The area known as Old Aberdeen is a hidden wee gem – uniquely in Scotland, you can visit a medieval cathedral, a late medieval bridge, a 15th century college, and the fifth oldest university in the world, all in this one spot! Old Aberdeen is one of the oldest parts of the city and was originally an independent town from Aberdeen from 1499 to 1891, and it retains a wonderful sense of history and place. There is an intriguing mix of architecture and street planning, ranging from medieval to fine examples of Georgian and Victorian buildings."*

Thanks to: Aberdeen City: Old Aberdeen Trail: <https://bit.ly/3Fjw7EL> See also:

<https://visit.oldaberdeen.org.uk/>

## Waypoints

### (1) Start walk at the Seaton Park car-park

<https://w3w.co/unique.shift.gladiators> NJ9414309041

From the car-park, walk back up the access road towards Don Street, looking out for an opening on your right.

*\*Note: access the Park car-park from Don Street, off King Street.*



### (2) The Seaton Park Wetland Viewpoint

In about 130 m, turn right onto a reinforced path leading to an area of boardwalk where there is a large information board about the Seaton Park Wetland\*, and a viewpoint over the wetland area. When you are ready, return to the access road and turn right, then right again before the entrance to the Park. Now follow the very pleasant tarred path gently uphill through trees, with intermittent views of the park on your right. (130m)

*\*Note: "Seaton Park ... became increasingly affected by failed land drains and major flooding events. Aberdeen City Council decided a more sustainable solution was required ... they created wetland areas ... and new drainage elsewhere. This means the majority of the rest of the park is now better protected, even during the wettest periods, for sports and all the other recreational activities ... [and] a once unloved, soggy, useless area is now a haven for wildlife of all varieties, shapes and sizes ..."* Thanks to: North East Scotland Biodiversity Partnership: <https://www.nesbiodiversity.org.uk/projects/seaton-wetlandproject/>



### (3) Viewpoint for Cathedral Walk

In 640 m, at an opening in the trees, with St Machar Cathedral behind you, stop and look right for a great view of the eye-catching and much celebrated Cathedral Walk area of Seaton Park\*, with its two parallel pathways separated by flowerbeds and ornamental shrubs. Usually, you will observe the constant flow of university students making their way to and from Hillhead Student Village. When you are ready, carry on for a short distance, then veer left to leave Seaton Park, passing the Cathedral Church of St Machar\*\* on your left side as you make your way up street called the Chanonry. (770 m)



*\*Note: "There are many fine areas in the park from the flowerbeds, to rose beds and up to the walled garden beside the old stables. The Cathedral Walk is always a resplendent sight in midsummer and one of the most popular with visitors to the city. There is also a popular children's play area and large grassy areas popular with sporting groups". Thanks to: Visit Old Aberdeen: <https://visit.oldaberdeen.org.uk/what-to-see/>*



*\*\*Note: "St Machar's Cathedral - The land the building rests on has Celtic and Pictish origins and Christian heritage from Saint Machar himself since 580 AD. The cathedral was built between 1380 and 1520 and has massive twin spires, a 6th century Celtic Cross, a world-famous heraldic ceiling and glorious 19th and 20th century stained glass windows. The oldest building in active use in Aberdeen, it is regularly used for formal worship, outreach and education activities and anyone wishing to do historical research. The cathedral is open 365 days a year to welcome visitors, including those seeking a place of quiet contemplation." Thanks to: Visit Old Aberdeen: <https://visit.oldaberdeen.org.uk/what-to-see/>*

**(4) Divert to visit Cruickshank Botanic Garden**

In 370 m, divert right off the Chanonry to visit the Cruickshank Botanic Garden\*. After taking a stroll round the attractive and interesting garden, return to the Chanonry and turn right to walk the short distance to the x-roads on St Machar Drive. Cross the road at the pedestrian crossing and go straight ahead onto the High Street, passing the Old Town House\* (now the King's Museum) and old Mercat Cross on your left side. Cross the cobbled road and proceed onwards, looking for a lane on your left entitled Wrights' and Coopers' Place. (1.05 km)



*\*Note: "The Cruickshank Botanic Garden exists to promote an appreciation of the beauty, diversity and importance of plants,*



*and an understanding of their role in the natural world. The Garden offers year round interest to visitors. It has shrub borders, a rock and water garden, sunken garden, rose garden, herbaceous border and an arboretum, and houses a nationally important collection of over 2500 labelled plants. The oldest part of the buildings incorporate the Gymnasium Chanonry House School. The school saw many famous alumni including Patrick Manson, the father of tropical medicine and first person to prove insects transmit diseases and Thomas Blake Glover, the Scottish Samurai." Thanks to: Visit Old Aberdeen: <https://visit.oldaberdeen.org.uk/what-to-see/>*



*\*\* Note: "Old Aberdeen Town House - Built in 1788-89 and situated in the heart of Old Aberdeen, the Old Town House was the hub of the Burgh and the focal point for a busy trading community. The Old Town House features the best of Scottish architecture and is used as the logo of The Architectural Heritage Society of Scotland." Thanks to: Visit Old Aberdeen: <https://visit.oldaberdeen.org.uk/what-to-see/>*

### (5) Divert into Wrights' and Coopers' Place

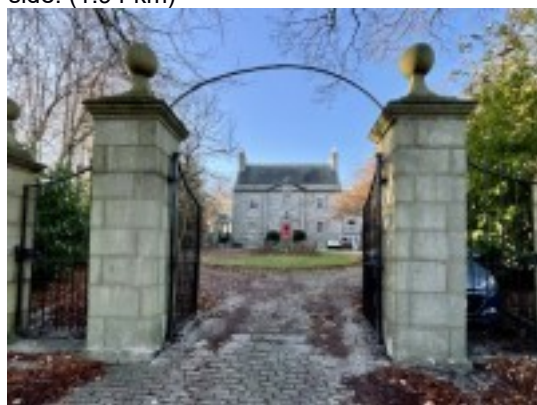
In 95 m from crossing St Machar Drive, divert into Wrights' and Coopers' Place\* and walk down the charming lane. (1.9 km)

*\*Note: "Wright's' and Coopers' Place is named after one of the six incorporated trades of Old Aberdeen – woodworkers and barrelmakers. The Wrights and Coopers owned land here, which was feued (or leased out) and led to the building of this row of houses in the 19th century. The houses in Grant's Place date from the 18th century and are completed with curved, overlapping roof tiles known as pantiles. The area was restored in 1965 for the University and financed by the MacRobert Trust." Thanks to: Visit Old Aberdeen: <https://visit.oldaberdeen.org.uk/what-to-see/>*



### (6) MacRobert Memorial Garden

In about 40 m you will arrive at a small courtyard with a shallow pond, the delightful MacRobert Memorial Garden\*. When you are ready, go right down the steps and then right again to walk up Grant's Place, back to the High Street. Note the 1732 date with initials above the lintel of one of the cottages on your right. Turn left and continue along the High Street, enjoying the varied array of historic buildings on either side. (1.94 km)



*\* Note: "The MacRobert Memorial Garden commemorates Lady MacRobert, who had three sons. The first, Sir Alasdair, was accidentally killed flying his own aeroplane in 1938. His brothers, Flight Lieutenant Sir Roderick MacRobert RAF and Pilot Officer Sir Iain MacRobert RAF both died in 1941." Thanks to: Visit Old Aberdeen:*

*<https://visit.oldaberdeen.org.uk/what-to-see/>*

Due to steps, off-road mobility users will need to return to the High Street along Wrights' and Coopers' Place, instead of along Grant's Place.

### (7) King's College

In 290 m, at King's College\*, go left and through the portal to enter the quadrangle courtyard of this iconic building, noting the colourful coats of arms on either side. Arriving at the entrance doors to the Conference Centre (formerly the King's Library), turn left, then veer right to pass the Cromwell Tower, soon emerging onto the pathway around the King's Lawn. Keep going with the cloistered arches of Elphinstone Hall on your right side, until you arrive at a road junction. (2.23 km)



\* Note: "King's College is the historic heart of the University of Aberdeen. When founded in 1495 it was Scotland's third University. Although altered, King's Chapel retains the best preserved pre-reformation chapel interior in Scotland. Its symbolic crown tower is a replacement from 1633 when the original was destroyed in a storm. Other original buildings include the Round Tower from 1525 and the Cromwell Tower from 1661. Otherwise the college retains the feel and courtyard nature of its medieval predecessors, making for a charming walk." Thanks to: Visit Old Aberdeen: <https://visit.oldaberdeen.org.uk/what-to-see/>

### **(8) Right along Regent Walk**

In 150 m, go right along Regent Walk. You may wish to briefly divert to check out the "Youth with Split Apple" sculpture (veer left and up to the grassy area in front of the impressive New King's building). Keep going along Regent Walk, crossing King Street at the pedestrian crossing and then carrying on, with housing (initially low-rise, then high-rise blocks) now on your left side as you proceed towards the green of the King's Links golf course ahead of you. (2.38 km)



\* Note: "This bronze statue of a reclining youth, with a split apple in his hand, was put in place at Aberdeen University in 2005, to celebrate 500 years of teaching and learning at King's College. It demonstrates the central role that students play in the University and how they are a key part of the life and soul of the community. The statue is the work of Kenny Hunter who studied sculpture at the Glasgow School of Art." Thanks to: Joanne Martin Photography:

<https://www.facebook.com/joannemartinphotos/photos/youthwith-a-split-apple-in-the-grounds-of-kings-college-old-aberdeenthis-bronz/1663353137116909/>

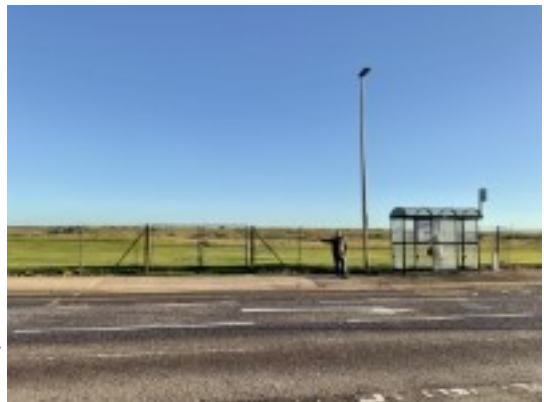


### **(9) Left along Golf Road**

In 810 m, cross Golf Road with care, and, facing the King's Link golf course, turn left along the pavement. In just over 100 m, veer slightly right off the pavement to take the hard-surfaced path on the periphery of the golf course. (3.19 km)

\* Note: "Early mentions of golf in Aberdeen may relate to target golf, but in 1625 there is a reference to 'the first hole and the Quenis hole', presumed to be golf holes, later clarified in a local publication. It is not until 1661 that golf on the town links is described, though they had been in general leisure use since at least 1575. There is no record of the number of the early holes, but the Aberdeen Golf Club laid out a proper course in August 1780 for their inaugural September meeting to avoid 'disagreeable Interferences', implying that play up to that point was somewhat haphazard. The holes were apparently marked by stones, which were soon vandalised. This is the first record of a golf course being laid out, and only the second place where we know there was a defined course layout." Thanks to: Scottish Golf History:

<https://www.scottishgolfhistory.org/18-x-18-oldest-18-hole-courses/1876-aberdeen-links-kings-links/>



**(10) Right to cross King's Links golf course**

In 390 m, with Mrs Murray's Home for Stray Cats and Dogs across an access road on your left side, at a walks signpost for "The Beach", turn right and follow the path across the golf course towards the beach-front. Take care, and please give way to golfers as you cross over the fairways, heading towards a large tunnel under the Beach Esplanade road. (3.58 km)



**(11) Through tunnel to beach walkway**

In 420 m, go through the large tunnel to access the beach walkway where you turn left and proceed onwards in a N direction, with the beach on your right side, and the Beach Esplanade\* road above you on your left. (4.01 km)

*\* Note: "Having received the Resort Seaside Award in 2013, Aberdeen's Beach Esplanade is certainly worthy of being at the top of any hit list during your city break. The four kilometre stretch from Footdee to the Bridge of Don, along Aberdeen Bay, provides plenty to see and do for all ages. The pleasure beach includes a skatepark, climbing centre, leisure centre, ice rink, a golf course, driving range, ballroom and, of course, the traditional beach amusement arcade. But it's not all bright lights and mod-cons. Having opened in 1885, there's history on display too, as remnants of the old Beach Bathing Station can still be spotted."*

Thanks to: Hidden Scotland: <https://hiddenscotland.co/listings/aberdeen-beach/>

See also:

<https://doriccolumns.wordpress.com/welcome/aberdeen-city/parks/sea-beach/#:~:text=Construction%20of%20the%20Beach%20Esplanade,be%20seen%20in%20the%20distance>

[https://www.abdn.ac.uk/geosciences/documents/Aberdeen\\_Beach\\_-\\_Case\\_Study.pdf](https://www.abdn.ac.uk/geosciences/documents/Aberdeen_Beach_-_Case_Study.pdf)



Due to eventually encountering a narrow sandy path, or alternatively steps, off-road mobility scooter users will require to, instead of the tunnel, take the grassy road up to the Beach Esplanade road. Cross the busy road with care and follow the pavement all the way to the pedestrian crossing on the Ellon Rod at Waypoint 14.

**(12) Carry straight on - taking sandy path**

In 800 m, where the tarred beach walkway path ends, carry straight onto the narrow sandy path. Almost immediately the path curves left to join another sandy path through the grassy dunes, heading N towards the headland on the S side of the River Don estuary. (4.81 km)



### (13) Donmouth headland viewpoint

In 250 m, you will have arrived at a natural viewpoint at the mouth of the River Don. You are now at the eastern end of the Donmouth Nature Reserve\*, which extends west to the Don Bridge on King Street. Once you have taken in the view, negotiate the short but steep descent\* to the riverbank area. Veer left and walk on one of the grassy paths which will, sooner or later take you to a boardwalk, heading W towards the Don Bridge. Follow the boardwalk until it ends and you emerge onto a grassy area with the Esplanade road on your left side. Either walk along the grass, or the adjoining pavement, in the direction of King Street and the Don Bridge. When you reach King Street, turn right along the pavement to walk across the Don Bridge. In about 350 m from meeting King Street, after crossing the bridge and then the pedestrian crossing at Links Road, you will arrive at the first pedestrian crossing over the Ellon Road. (5.06 km)



*\* Note: "The site was designated a Local Nature Reserve in 1992 ... Donmouth Local Nature Reserve is a beach site in the historic Old Aberdeen part of the City, where the River Don meets the sea. A great place to see seals and a range of interesting birds. The beach area has changed over time as the river has changed its course. There are lots of interesting plants in the dunes and beach area. The Bird hide is an excellent shelter from which to watch the wildlife." Thanks to: Visit Aberdeen/Aberdeenshire: <https://www.visitabdn.com/listing/donmouth-local-nature-reserve>*

### (14) Cross road at Ellon Road crossing

In 1.18 km from the Donmouth Nature Reserve headland at Waypoint 13, cross the busy dual-carriageway Ellon Road at the pedestrian crossing, then turn left, back towards the town centre. At Balgownie Road, cross with care and veer right to take the tarred access road going uphill with the Brig Inn and Shish Tandoori premises on your right side. Keep going for about 100 m, with houses on your right and the Ellon Road dual-carriageway below you on your left, until you arrive at steps descending to the pavement at the N end of the Don Bridge. (6.23 km)



Due to steps (in two places), off-road mobility scooter users will require to turn right after crossing Balgownie Road and follow the road for just under 300 m, until diverting left down the Cottown of Balgownie Road for the Brig of Balgownie.

### (15) Viewpoint over Don Bridge

In 220 m from the pedestrian crossing at Waypoint 14 you will be standing above steps descending to the pavement at the N end of the Don Bridge. This is a good viewpoint for the bridge and river mouth area. When you are ready, descend the steps and turn right to take the waymarked path along the riverside, heading up-river towards the Brig of Balgownie. When the path reaches the bridge it veers a little right and rises up to stone steps that take you onto the Cottown of Balgownie Road. Turn left here to cross the Bridge. (6.45 km)



### (16) Bridge of Balgownie

In 530 m, cross the Brig of Balgownie\* where there are good views both up and down stream. When you are ready, carry on taking the winding uphill road (now Don Street) through a picturesque little huddle of old houses, looking out for an opening into Seaton Woods on your right side just after the last of these houses is passed. (6.98 km)

*\* Note: "Brig o' Balgownie and Cottown o' Balgownie - Local legend suggests that this bridge was started by Bishop Henry Cheyne in the late 13th or early 14th century and completed by Robert the Bruce. The bridge was entirely rebuilt in the early 17th century. This was the main crossing on the Don leading to the north from Aberdeen, and Old Aberdeen was therefore well located to make the most of passing trade.*

*After the construction of the adjacent Bridge of Don in 1831, most of the traffic favoured the new bridge and Old Aberdeen's importance declined and in 1891 Old Aberdeen was absorbed into Aberdeen City." Thanks to: Visit Old Aberdeen: <https://visit.oldaberdeen.org.uk/what-to-see/>*



### (17) Right onto Seaton Park Wood path

In 180 m, go right through a gap in the wall onto the waymarked path through Seaton Park Wood. Follow this path, with the River Don now in a wide gorge, far below you on your right. In about 450 m, at a y-junction, take the right fork, as the path descends on shallow steps to continue along the bank of the river, with the water now fairly close, just below your level, on your right side. Keep going on this riverside path, with the river on your right side. (7.16 km)

Due to steps, off-road mobility scooter users will require to take the left fork in 450 m, continuing through Seaton Wood and missing out the riverside path section.





**(18) Take left fork away from river**

In 760 m from entering Seaton Park Wood at Waypoint 17, on the riverside, take a path veering left away from the river. From here, make your way across a network of criss-crossing paths towards the park fountain, visible ahead of you. (7.91 km)



**(19) Hay Memorial Fountain**

In 130 m, you will have arrived at the Hay Memorial Fountain\*. Pass by the Fountain and carry on towards the N end of the Cathedral Walk where you go left along the tarred road through the Park back towards your start-point in the car-park. You may wish to divert onto the grass as you near the attractive children's play area with the gaily painted old shunting loco engine taking pride of place. (8.04 km)

*\* Note: "...a wonderfully ornate fountain ... [the nearby plaque read as follows:] ... This fountain was erected in 1984 in memory of Malcolm Vivian Hay the last Laird of Seaton born 21st January 1881 died 27th December 1962 and of his second wife Alice Ivy Hay or Wigmore died 21 August 1982. Bless the Lord you fountain sing his praise and exult him forever - Daniel 3 v 77" Thanks to: About Aberdeen: [https://aboutaberdeen.com/Seaton- Park-Aberdeen](https://aboutaberdeen.com/Seaton-Park-Aberdeen)*



**(20) Finish walk back at Seaton Park car-park**

In 310 m from the Fountain, you will have arrived back at your startpoint in the Seaton Park car-park. (8.35 km)



# Route Map (with waypoints)

## 193-Old Aberdeen-Donmouth Circuit



## Route Map



### Links:

[Photos from walk](#)

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

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

[Access Walk on OutdoorActive](#)

[Access Walk on OSMaps](#)

[Access Walk on Alltrails](#)

[Access Walk on Wikiloc](#)