

The Mack Walks: Short Walks in Scotland Under 10 km

Aboyne-Court Hill-River Dee Circuit (Aberdeenshire)

Route Summary

A varied walk, taking in the extended parkland grounds of Aboyne Castle before a gentle ascent onto the wooded shoulder of Court Hill where there are good views. The final section on the bank of the Dee provides an opportunity to appreciate the often sparkling clear waters.

Duration: 3.25 hours.



Route Overview

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Transport/Parking: Stagecoach run regular bus services to Aboyne. Check timetables. Free parking in the village car-park at the walk start/end point.

Length: 8.460 km / 5.29 mi

Height Gain: 123 meter. **Height Loss:** 123 meter.

Max Height: 200 meter. **Min Height:** 123 meter.

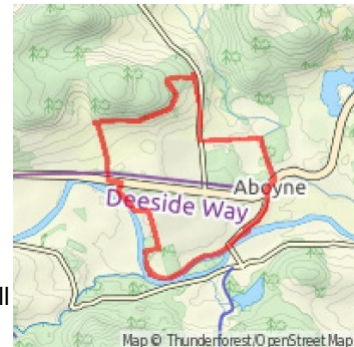
Surface: Moderate. Some walking on quiet tarred roads. Mostly good paths and tracks. Not suitable for off-road mobility scooters due to sections with unavoidable steps, and narrow paths with prominent tree roots.

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 close to farm animals. From April to July, dogs should be kept on a short lead on the riverbank to avoid disturbing ground-nesting birds such as dippers and sandpipers, inhibiting successful breeding.

Refreshments: Options in Aboyne.



Description

Although never far from the busy Deeside village of Aboyne, this varied rural walk often has an “away from it all” feel to it. Leaving the village centre, the route initially enters a parkland environment via the impressive entrance drive to Aboyne Castle, bordered at times on one side by giant Sequoia trees and, on the other side, the gently flowing Tarland Burn. Turning onto the west drive, we pass Aboyne Castle, with its eye-catching classic Scottish Baronial lines. The castle originates from the 13thC when its position provided strategic advantage for the “Mounth” crossings of the Grampian Mountains, particularly important for military purposes and for drovers herding upland “black cattle” to markets in the south of Scotland. The building has been extended and rebuilt at various times, most recently by the current Marquis of Huntly, whose family has owned it since the early 15thC. Soon, the route gently ascends away from the village onto the slopes of Court Hill, on a section of the Tarland Way, before heading west to enter an open attractive mixed woodland environment. Walking along the periphery of the wood, there are some fine views down to Aboyne and to the high hills in the SW – Hill of Cat and Mount Keen being prominent. Dropping back to the western boundary of the village, the walk takes an extended and very scenic route along the banks of the River Dee before returning to the village centre. With its large open “green” at the centre, and well-preserved and re-vitalised railway station square, Aboyne has a very relaxed ambience, making it particularly popular with summer visitors. There are good walking opportunities around and about the village. We are grateful to the [Aboyne Paths & Track Group](#) for the idea for our route, inspired by their “[Paths and Tracks Around Aboyne](#)” leaflet.



Waypoints

(1) Start walk from the car-park in the centre of Aboyne

(57.07609; -2.77986) <https://w3w.co/magical.nodded.brightens>
Start walk from the car-park in the centre of Aboyne just off the main A93 Ballater/Aberdeen Road. Cross the A93 at the pedestrian crossing and turn right to walk along the pavement.



(2) Left down Aboyne Castle drive

(57.07727; -2.77831) <https://w3w.co/surgical.suiting.weddings>
In about 200 m, turn left off the pavement on the A93 road and go through the entrance gates for the main drive to Aboyne Castle. Carry on walking up the drive with the Tarland Burn on your right side. As you progress, you pass a sequence of fine old giant Sequoia trees on your left side. (211 m)



(3) Go left at x-roads by bridge

(57.08169; -2.78129) <https://w3w.co/exacted.piglet.decking>
In just over 500 m, as you approach a stone bridge over the Tarland Burn on your right side, turn left at the x-roads and head along the west drive. Soon you will have a fine view of Aboyne Castle* on your right side, followed by the 'Coo's Cathedral' events venue. Carry on walking in the pleasant parkland environment towards the west gates for Aboyne Castle ahead of you, (738 m)



**Note: The castle originates from the 13thC when its position provided strategic advantage for the "Mounth" crossings of the Grampian Mountains, particularly important for military purposes and for drovers herding upland "black cattle" to markets in the south of Scotland. The building has been extended and rebuilt at various times, most recently by the current Marquis of Huntly, whose family has owned it since the early 15thC.*

(4) Through gates then cross road and turn right

(57.08145; -2.79286) <https://w3w.co/delighted.proved.vertical>
In 650 m, at the west gates, cross the B9094 Tarland Road with care, and turn right to take the Tarland Way path going gently uphill. (1.4 km)



(5) Keep straight on at Tarland Way junction

(57.08687; -2.79398) <https://w3w.co/deaf.newer.converged>
In 700 m, where the waymarked Tarland Way path veers right, carry on straight ahead on the rough road. (2.1 km)



(6) Left and gently uphill into Court Hill wood

(57.08860; -2.79469) <https://w3w.co/crisps.steady.vitamins>
In 200 m, or so, at a prominent dead tree* on your right, go sharp left and follow the track going gently uphill into the Court Hill wood. (2.3 km)

**Note: at August 2023, the dead tree on the right is gone and there are large piles of recently harvested logs. The woodland on the left has been cut down. The track going left is covered in broken branches for a short section but is readily passable. Ignore the very rough forestry vehicle tracks on either side of the main track.*



(7) Left and gently downhill - following electricity lines

(57.08786; -2.80004) <https://w3w.co/unusually.treatable.accompany>

In 400 m, at a y-junction, take the left fork and follow the path gently downhill. In the initial section the path is in a clear area, following electricity poles and lines, with trees on either side. In about 200 m the path veers to the right with occasional views down to Aboyne. Keep following the path as in it passes a section with mature beech trees on your left side and conifer woodland on your right. Keep following the obvious path through the trees, with views, now, of high hills to the south-west, with Mount Keen and Hill of Cat dominating the distant perspective (2.7 km)



(8) Left and downhill-through gate-then left down access road

(57.08351; -2.81413) <https://w3w.co/earth.octagonal.national>
After 1.3 km, leave the forest track by going left and downhill to pass through a gate, then turn left and walk down the rough Dykehead access road in a southerly direction towards the A93 main road. (4.0 km)



(9) Left along pavement of A93 Ballater Road

(57.07719; -2.81157) <https://w3w.co/emotional.dizziness.half>
In 700 m, turn left on meeting the A93 Ballater Road and walk along the pavement towards a bus shelter ahead of you. (4.7 km)



(10) Right and cross A93 road onto path through trees

(57.07696; -2.80892) <https://w3w.co/reader.investor.impresses>
In less than 200 m, just after passing the bus shelter, cross the road with care to enter a path into the trees. Follow the path down to a point above the River Dee where the path bends left to follow the river*. Continue following the path through the trees with the river below you on your right side, ignoring any paths going off to your left. Eventually the path bends left when it meets the wall of a large house. Keep following the path as it descends through an open area of rough ground, passing a small row of houses on your left side just before it reaches a tarred road. (4.9 km)



Note: You may wish to divert briefly here by following a path that drops down closer to the riverbank at this stage to obtain some fine views up and down stream. There is a narrow path immediately above the flow of the river here but it is unsafe in places, and is contributing to erosion of the riverbank.

(11) Right down Rhu-na-Haven Road

(57.07388; -2.80359) <https://w3w.co/custodian.huddling.herring>
In 600 m, you will emerge onto Rhu-na-Haven Road where you turn right to walk down the road which gives access to the drives for a series of large houses. (5.5 km)



(12) Right onto woodland path

(57.06982; -2.80146) <https://w3w.co/officials.unloading.gathers>
After walking down Rhu-na-Haven Road for 400 m, and just as it bends left, away from the access drive for Rhu-na-Haven House which carries on straight ahead of you, turn right by a black bin and corner road sign to follow a path into the trees. Fairly soon, the path reaches a point on the top of the riverbank with the garden wall of Rhu-na-Haven House on your left side. Drop down the steep riverbank path here to turn left and follow a path along the riverbank going downstream, with the river on your right side and Rhu-na-Haven House and grounds on your left side. (5.9 km)



(13) Divert right down steps to riverside bench

(57.06723; -2.80312) <https://w3w.co/mergers.highlight.crest>

In 500 m, just after passing Rhu-na-Haven House, divert right to take some rough steps and a path to the riverbank where you will spot a bench close-by on your left side. (6.4 km)



(14) Riverside bench

(57.06699; -2.80326) <https://w3w.co/mergers.highlight.crest>

In less than 50 m, you will have arrived at the bench, which provides a fine viewpoint over the river. Once you are ready to proceed, re-trace your steps back to the path you diverted from and carry on walking downstream towards the centre of Aboyne, with the river on your right side. Eventually the path passes under the bridge over the River Dee on Bridgeview Road. Do not ascend from the path to Charlestown Road at this point but, instead, carry on taking the riverbank path. (6.45 km)



(15) Left to follow path up and onto Charlestown Road

(57.07176; -2.78362)

<https://w3w.co/greyhound.segments.verse>

In 1.3 km from Waypoint 14, at the riverside bench*, and 280 m after passing under the road bridge, turn left to follow the path going up and onto Charlestown Road. Turn right when you meet the road, and follow the pavement back to the centre of Aboyne where you started the walk, with the Charlestown Green on your left side, across the road, for most of the way. (7.8 km)

* Note: at August 2023, the bench has gone.



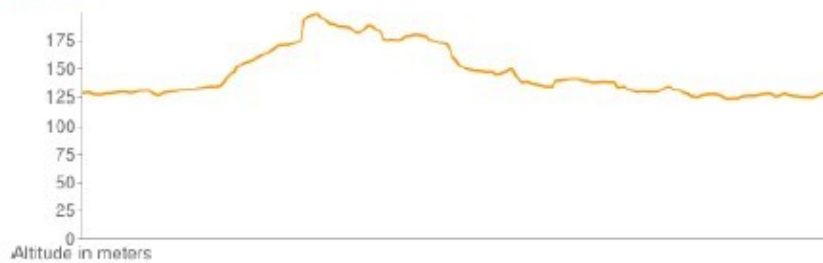
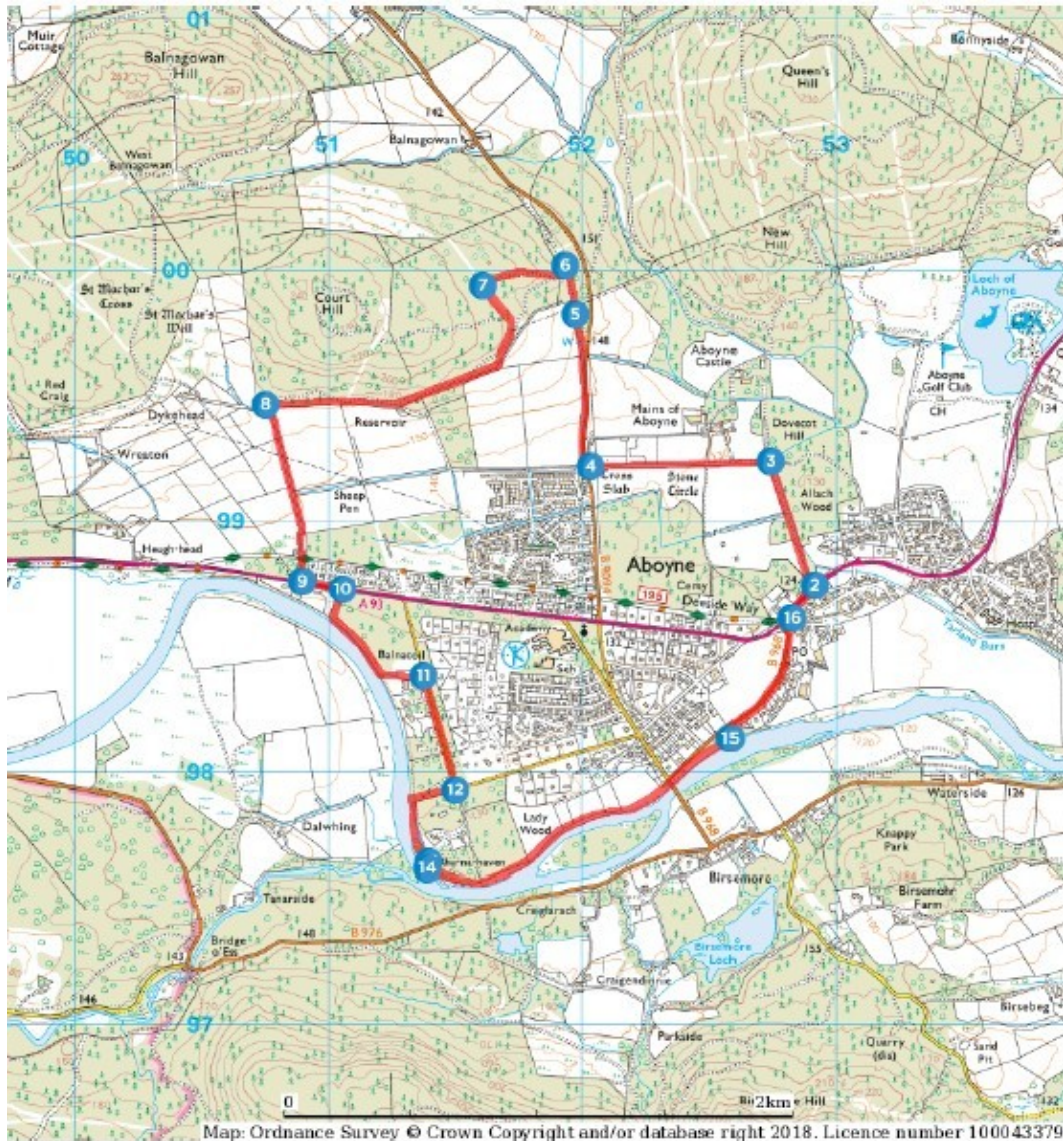
(16) Finish the walk back in the centre of Aboyne

(57.07608; -2.77978) <https://w3w.co/magical.nodded.brightens>

In 700 m, you will have arrived back at your start point in the car-park at the centre of Aboyne. (8.5 km)



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](#)