

The Mack Walks: Short Walks in Scotland Under 10 km

Banff Harbour-Whitehills Circuit (Aberdeenshire)

Route Summary

A good shoreline walk taking in an old golf links and fine beach, and eye-catching old harbours at both Banff and Whitehills. There are some wonderful coastal views to enjoy along the wide sweep of Boyndie Bay, and from higher viewpoints on the route at Whitehills and Banff.

Duration: 3.5 hours.



Route Overview

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Transport/Parking: Frequent #35 Stagecoach bus service to/from Aberdeen. Check timetable. Small car-park at start/finish of walk.

Length: 9.920 km / 6.20 mi

Height Gain: 122 meter **Height Loss:** 122 meter

Max Height: 40 meter **Min Height:** 0 meter

Surface: Smooth. Mostly paved coastal path and pavements. Suitable for an off-road mobility scooter, subject to a diversion to avoid steps at Waypoint 15. See waypoint note.

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

Difficulty: Medium.

Dog Friendly: Yes. On lead in built-up areas and public roads.

Refreshments: We can recommend The Gallery at the harbour in Whitehills. Serve snack as well as full restaurant meals. Other options in Whitehills and Banff.



Description

A good leg-stretching outing along the pleasant sweeping coastline between Banff and Whitehills. On the basis of our experience, the main section over the Banff Links and by Inverboyndie Bay is popular with local people of all ages due to being on the flat and on a good paved pathway. Whitehills, established as a planned settlement in the 18thC, makes for an interesting mid-point on the route, with its harbour (now converted to a marina) and old fishing village, where the attractively painted and distinctive fisher cottages are set out, gable-end to the sea, around the pretty bay. On the return leg the walk takes in the "Red Well", an unusual domed enclosure over an iron-rich spring that may have its origins in Roman times. The Inverboyndie area, just inland of the present-day caravan park at Inverboyndie Beach, is believed to have been the site of a 10thC battle between the Danes and the Scots. The local place name "Swordanes" (once applied to a hotel, now a row of white-washed terraced villas), is understood to refer to a field occupied by one section of an invading Danish army in a battle with the Scots at Inverboyndie in the 10thC. Many skeletons with signs of violent injuries have been found buried in the area surrounding the ruined St Brandon's Kirk (13thC, or earlier). Banff, with its many old buildings, always makes for a pleasant and interesting visit. Founded in the 12thC, its isolated landward position made for prosperity based on coastal trade and a reputation as a lawless centre for smuggling. Banff's inner harbour was built in 1775, with the outer pier added in 1816 by renown civil engineer Thomas Telford. Look out for the pattern of vertically-laid stones, popular as a harbour building method at the time. There are a number of useful information boards all along the route.



Waypoints

(1) Start at car-park behind harbour

(57.67117; -2.52452)

Start the walk at the car-park* on the Quayside road at the west side of Banff Harbour. Head west along the shoreside, passing the sea-cottages at Scotstown on your left. Continue onto the grassy Banff Links. You may wish to walk on Inverboyndie Beach as you pass the caravan park. Keep going after the caravan park, crossing a pedestrian bridge over the Burn of Boyndie.

**Note: as at June 2022, the Quayside car-park is closed due to harbour repair works. There is an alternative sea-front car-park about 150 m west, opposite the new houses at the Water's Edge development.*



(2) Veer right to stay on coastal path

(57.67623; -2.56843)

In 3 km from the start, arriving at a junction with a minor road at the Red Well/information board, veer right to carry on taking the coastal path (you will pass the Red Well again on the return leg). Follow the coastal path as it passes a caravan park (formerly a brick and tile factory site) at Knock Head, where there is also old piers. Continue past a play-park, nearing Whitehills Harbour (now a marina). (3.4 km)



(3) Visit fishermen's memorial and compass rose

(57.68137; -2.57655)

In just over 1 km, just before Whitehills Harbour, take the wooden steps up onto the grassy embankment to check out the compass rose stone mosaic and Fishermen's Memorial. Then, carry on, passing the harbour on your right and Gallery cafe/restaurant on your left. (4.1 km)



(4) Veer right along Harbour Place

(57.67889; -2.57956)

In 300 m, after leaving the harbour area, veer right at a y-junction onto Harbour Place, passing Downies fish factory and fish shop on your right. Follow Harbour Place as it bends around the bay, becoming Low Shore then West End, passing many traditional fisher cottages, gable-end to the sea. (4.4 km)



(5) Turn back at west end of village

(57.67816; -2.58583)

In 500 m, at the far west end of the bay, just before the driveways to private houses, stop to take in the view before starting to re-trace your steps. Ignore the very first turning on your right for the West End Road. Instead, look out for the next junction on your right, for Boyne Street. (4.9 km)



(6) Right up Boyne Street

(57.67732; -2.58492)

In less than 200 m, turn right up Boyne Street, which soon bends sharply to your left, rising gently uphill between houses. Carry on to the end of Boyne Street where it meets Ogilvie Street. Turn left at the t-junction, looking out for Chapel Street opening up on your right very soon. (5.1 km)



(7) Right along Chapel Street

(57.67718; -2.58153)

In 200 m, or so, turn right off Ogilvie Street onto Chapel Street. Carry on down Chapel Street, turning left at the t-junction where it meets Seafiel Street. Look out for a small 'heritage square' on your left soon after turning onto Seafiel Street. (5.3 km)



(8) Right down Loch Street opposite little square

(57.67733; -2.57983)

In 200 m, after checking out the information boards at the 'heritage square' on Seafiel Street, cross the road to your right and proceed down Loch Street, one of the access roads for the village. (5.5 km)



(9) Left down minor road at edge of village

(57.67568; -2.57277)

In 400 m, go left down a minor road between fields at the edge of the village, heading for the coast again. (5.9 km)



(10) Pass The Red Well

(57.67625; -2.56867)

In 300 m you will pass the Red Well*. After checking it out, carry on down to the coastal path and start re-tracing your steps from the outward leg, heading back towards Banff, crossing the pedestrian bridge over the Boyndie Burn and passing through the caravan park. (6.2 km)

**Note: this spring is housed in an unusual dome-shaped stone building. The water is iron-rich, and there is evidence that the building originates from Roman times.*

See: <http://www.whitehillsandboyndie.co.uk/the-red-well/>



(11) Veer right out of caravan park to pass Swordanes houses

(57.67040; -2.55347)

In 1.2 km, at the entrance/exit for the caravan park, veer right towards the distinctive row of white terraced villas, once the Swordanes* Hotel. Go left when you reach the houses to pass through a car-parking area that leads you onto the main coastal path to Banff again. (7.4 km)

**Note: the name 'Swordanes' is believed to refer to a field occupied by one section of an invading Danish army in a battle with the Scots at Inverboyndie in the 10thC. Many skeletons with signs of violent injuries have been found buried in this general area.*



(12) Veer right off coastal path to ascend to main road

(57.66937; -2.54475)

In 700 m, veer right off the coastal path to take a path that ascends to the main A98 road. Go left when you meet the pavement at the top, on the verge of the main road. (8.1 km)



(13) Left into Victoria Gardens

(57.66807; -2.53822)

In 400 m, or so, go left off the pavement on the main road, into Victoria Gardens. At the end of the cul-de-sac, take the grassy path veering slightly right through rough ground towards the entrance to a street on the other side. Carry on down Harvey Place as it become St Catherine Street. (8.5 km)



(14) Left along Fife Street

(57.66767; -2.52564)

In 800 m, at a x-roads, go left down Fife Street then right onto Clunie Street to pass the impressive Victorian facade of the Chalmer's Hospital on your left side. (9.3 km)



(15) Down steps to harbour at Braeheads

(57.66882; -2.52348)

In 300 m, cross over North Castle Street towards a signpost for Braeheads. Go down the steps* and take the paved pathway that goes down to Sheriff's Brae, where you turn left and carry on, passing the interesting Banff Harbour on your right side. Look out for an information board on your right side at a mid-point as you pass the harbour. (9.6 km)

**Note: to avoid the steps, off-road mobility users should go right here to go along the Braeheads road, then turn sharp left at the junction with Sherriff's Brae to descend to the harbour area at the final section on the route.*



(16) Finish walk back at harbour car-park

(57.67104; -2.52437)

In another 300 m, after passing the harbour you will arrive back at the car-park 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 OutdoorActive](#)

[Access Walk on OSMaps](#)

[Access Walk on Alltrails](#)

[Access Walk on Wikiloc](#)