

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

## Banff-Macduff Ramble (Aberdeenshire)

### Route Summary

This gentle stroll makes for an interesting exploration of the historic coastal towns of Banff and Macduff. There are fine views at several points on the route, punctuated by information boards with lots of fascinating facts about the development of the two settlements.

Duration: 3.25 hours.



### Route Overview

**Duration:** 3.25 hours.

**Transport/Parking:** Frequent #35 Stagecoach bus service to/from Aberdeen/Elgin. Check timetable. Free public car-park at walk start/end point.

**Length:** 9.920 km / 6.20 mi

**Height Gain:** 205 meter. **Height Loss:** 205 meter.

**Max Height:** 61 meter. **Min Height:** 3 meter.

**Surface:** Mostly smooth. This walk is mostly on pavements or similar. The section approaching and leaving the Temple of Venus at Waypoint 15 is on rough paths. The section to and from the Temple viewpoint is not suitable for off-road mobility scooters. Instead, at Waypoint 13, go right instead of left, down Gellymell Street, then left down Shand Street, then left down Station Brae, passing the Macduff Parish Church to join the A98 and cross the Banff Bridge, picking up the main route again at Waypoint 16 (Airlie Gardens).

**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:** We can recommend the Knowes Hotel in Macduff (between waypoints 9 and 10 on route). Other options in Banff and Macduff.



### Description

This is a pleasant coastal walk taking in some fine shoreline views and many of the notable points of historical interest in the linked towns of Banff and Macduff. From the higher points on the route, on a clear day, you will see across the Moray Firth to the Caithness coast, where the conical hill, Morven, typically stands out, 90 km away. There are a number of useful information boards all along the route, detailing the rich history of the towns. The walk starts at picturesque Banff Harbour, whose built origins go back to Guthrie's Haven, in 1625. Progressing along the shoreline, there is an attractive sandy beach at the western mouth of the River Deveron, leading up to the handsome 7-arch Banff Bridge. Completed in 1779, Banff Bridge followed the construction of similar bridges at Coldstream and Perth, designed by the celebrated engineer, John Smeaton. Moving on to Macduff, the route passes the busy fishing harbour, where ship repair work is clearly still an important local industry. Just beyond the harbour is the Macduff Maritime Aquarium, a highly regarded visitor attraction where you can come face to face with all kinds of sea creatures that inhabit the Moray Firth. Reaching the furthest point on the walk, at a viewpoint with handy bench, we stop to look down on the now abandoned remains of the Tarlair Open Air Swimming Pool in a pretty cove. A victim of changing leisure habits, it opened in 1931, and was built in an innovative Art Deco style. The return leg takes a higher route through Macduff, passing the striking War Memorial. In an exposed position, the tall tower also acts as a bearing for mariners. Moving on to the headland on the eastern banks of the Deveron, we encounter the Temple of Venus, an intriguing 18<sup>th</sup>C monument built as part of the landscaped policies of Duff House. Returning to Banff, with its many old buildings, spanning the 16<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, makes for a pleasant and interesting end to the walk. Founded in the 12<sup>th</sup>C, Banff's isolated landward position made for prosperity based on coastal trade, and a reputation as a lawless centre for smuggling!



## Waypoints

### (1) Start walk at Banff Harbour car-park

(57.671111; -2.52454) <https://w3w.co/blunders.loaded.conclude>  
Start the walk from the car-park off the Quayside road, west of Banff Harbour\*. Walk east along the shorefront path to the toilet block at the harbour side. Pass the toilets and go right to join the Quayside road. Now go left to pass the harbour on your left side. There is an interesting information board here about the harbour. Continue walking on pavements along the shoreline of Banff, with the sea on your left side. Eventually, you will cross the Banff Bridge over the River Deveron (take extreme care to keep on the left side of the pavement here, as the pavements on the bridge are very narrow, as is the carriageway for vehicles). After crossing the bridge, go left to follow the pavement into Macduff, and past the harbour on your left side.



*\*Note: Banff Harbour is very old. It was first constructed in 1625, then improved and extended in 1775 and 1815.*

### (2) Left down Watt's Lane

(57.67183; -2.49689) <https://w3w.co/expansion.slides.uncouth>  
After 2.9 km, and after passing the western part of Macduff Harbour, turn left to follow Watt's Lane, which soon swings right onto the Low Shore road to pass between Macduff Shipyards buildings. (2.9 km)



### (3) Left onto Laing Street

(57.67230; -2.49549) <https://w3w.co/farmer.polygraph.slept>  
After 200 m, or so, after passing the Macduff Shipyards buildings, go left onto Laing Street. (3.1 km)



#### (4) Macduff Marine Aquarium

(57.67176; -2.49186) <https://w3w.co/burst.dispose.outcasts>

In another 200 m, you will pass the Macduff Marine Aquarium\*, which you may want to visit or check out. After the Aquarium carry on walking along the pavement on the High Shore road, with the sea on your left side. Eventually, the pavement stops as you continue to a viewpoint with a bench, looking down on the old, open air Tarlair Swimming Pool, with the golf course now on your right side. (3.3 km)

*\*Note: '... at Macduff Marine Aquarium you will come face to face with all kinds of sea creatures that live beneath the steely blue Moray Firth waters ...'. See: <http://www.macduff-aquarium.org.uk/>*



#### (5) Viewpoint over Tarlair Swimming Pool

(57.67171; -2.47473) <https://w3w.co/models.fidelity.upset>

In 1.1 km, you will arrive at a viewpoint, where there is a bench, looking down to the now abandoned open air Tarlair Swimming Pool\*. We turn back here, but you may wish to walk down the access road to check out the Pool. From the bench, re-trace your steps back along the High Shore Road to the point where the western boundary of the golf course on your left ends (about 400 m). (4.4 km)

*\*Note: '... Tarlair Swimming Pool opened in 1931 ... built in an Art Deco style with a main building backing onto the cliffs and changing rooms to its left hand side ... Since 2007 it has been protected as a category A listed building. It is considered by Historic Environment Scotland to be the best example of only three surviving outdoor seaside pools in Scotland, the others being at Stonehaven and Gourrock ...'. See: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tarlair\\_Swimming\\_Pool](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tarlair_Swimming_Pool)*



#### (6) Left off High Shore Road and up lane

(57.67210; -2.48133) <https://w3w.co/spelled.captions.mural>

After re-tracing your steps along the High Shore Road from the viewpoint overlooking the Tarlair Swimming Pool for about 400 m, turn left up a path/lane before the housing estate ahead of you, at the point where the western boundary of the golf course on your left ends. (4.8 km)



#### (7) Royal Tarlair Golf Club

(57.67006; -2.48146) <https://w3w.co/loaded.rooftop.squeaking>

In 300 m, at the entrance to the Royal Tarlair Golf Club, turn right to walk down Buchan Street. (5.1 km)



## (8) Left off Buchan Street onto High Street

(57.66993; -2.49157) <https://w3w.co/openly.delays.flipping>  
After 600 m, cross Buchan Street to veer left up the High Street.  
(5.7 km)



## (9) Right onto James Street

(57.66794; -2.49409) <https://w3w.co/skies.bibs.operation>  
In 200 m, turn right into James Street, then go straight on to join John's Lane, a path descending to the Knowes Hotel on your right (you may wish to visit for a refreshment/snack). The Macduff War Memorial is clearly visible on your left at the top of the grassy area known as 'The Knowes'. As you pass the hotel follow the path as it turns left, at the foot of the grassy bank topped by the Memorial.  
(5.9 km)



## (10) Left up steps to war memorial

(57.66753; -2.49762) <https://w3w.co/poodle.couriers.nimbly>  
In 300 m from the turn-off into James Street, turn left to ascend the steps and make your way across the grass towards the War Memorial. (6.2 km)



## (11) Macduff War Memorial

(57.66758; -2.49668) <https://w3w.co/pelt.colonies.saga>  
In 100 m you are standing facing the Macduff War Memorial\*. When you are ready to move on, walk away with your back to the memorial onto the pavement on Fife Street. Turn right here to follow Fife Street past the now closed Park Hotel on your right side before veering left to join McKay Road. (6.3 km)

*\*Note: '... The Macduff war memorial takes the form of a castellated octagonal tower. There are many coastal towns and ports whose war memorials took the form of tall towers erected on a hill or headland which thereby provided useful points of bearing for boats returning to harbour ...' See: <https://www.warmemorialsonline.org.uk/memorial/217586>*



## (12) Follow McKay Road - veering left

(57.66674; -2.49848) <https://w3w.co/shady.gazes.monorail>  
In 200 m from the Memorial, follow McKay Road as it veers left at the junction with Turner Street and McKay Place. At the end of McKay Road, join the footpath going uphill straight ahead, and then follow it as it bends right and descends. (6.5 km)



## (13) Left up Gellymill Street

(57.66607; -2.50067) <https://w3w.co/moon.private.skate>  
In 200 m, or so, at the end of the footpath, go left up Gellymill Street. There are houses on your left, and open views towards Banff Bay on your right. (6.7 km)



## (14) Right off Gellymill Street for path around field edge

(57.66389; -2.50274) <https://w3w.co/test.arranged.vibrating>  
In 300 m, at a lamp-post, just before the last of a row of houses on your left, turn right off the road to follow a path around the field edge. The path initially heads towards the coast, then swings left, then left again. In about 400 m, the path veers right away from the field edge through gorse and rough grass towards the now obvious Temple of Venus building ahead of you. (7.0 km)



## (15) Temple of Venus

(57.66288; -2.50839) <https://w3w.co/spaceship.knee.resurgent>  
In 600 m from the turn-off at Gellymill Road you will have arrived at the 'Temple of Venus\*'. There are superb views here of Banff and its bay, also down to the Deveron River valley and Duff House. When you are ready, follow the path down hill to the A947 road and then re-cross the Banff Bridge (remember to take extreme care on the narrow pavement on this very busy bridge), heading back into Banff. (7.6 km)

*Note: The Temple of Venus is associated with the policies of Duff House. It was designed by William Adam, the architect for the House. '...A belvedere in the form of a domed arcaded rotunda stands in a commanding position on Hill of Doune overlooking Banff and Duff House. It was commenced in 1737 but was still not completed by 1743. It was restored in 1985-6 ...' See:*

<https://online.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/smrpub/master/detail.aspx?tab=main&refno=NJ66SE0103>



## (16) Right off A98 for Airlie Gardens

(57.66221; -2.51882) <https://w3w.co/balancing.evolver.curving>  
In 800 m from the Temple, having crossed the Banff Bridge and walking back into the town, turn right off the pavement along the A98 road signposted for Airlie Gardens and Temple View. Within 50 m, or so, go left onto the path taking you into the Duff House Gardens (not adjacent to Duff House itself, which is some distance away on the other side of the A98). (8.4 km)



## (17) Duff House Garden

(57.66237; -2.52046) <https://w3w.co/fellow.hacking.broadcast>  
Walk up through the Gardens and take the path onto Low Street. Turn right onto Low Street and walk into the historic centre of old Banff\*, passing many fine old buildings. Passing the Town House, at the far end of Low Street, follow the road as it bends right onto Carmelite Street. (8.6 km)

*\*Note: '...within Banff a wide variety of buildings from the 16th to the 20th centuries can be seen, reflecting the historic character of the town. These range from Early Post-Medieval hostleries to Georgian Townhouses, but the most prosperous period dates to the 16th - 18th centuries during which the town attracted the local gentry landowners who built their large houses ...'. See:*



<https://www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/environment/built-heritage/brief-history-of-banff/> For a full appraisal of the historic built infrastructure in Banff, see:  
<https://www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/media/20792/banff-conservation-area.pdf>

## (18) Left at Merchant's House along High Shore

(57.66481; -2.52084) <https://w3w.co/enclosing.talent.summer>  
In 400 m, at the pink-walled 17th C Merchant's House, turn left along High Shore, with the historic St Mary's Kirkyard\* (which is very worthy of a visit) on your right side. Walk along High Shore, and in less than 50 m, turn left up Water Path (now a street, not a path). (9.0 km)

*\*Note: In the '...kirkyard you will find the tombs of the people of Banff from the 17th to the 19th century: masons, provosts, saddlers, ministers, teachers, soldiers, all together. Note the small 1765 stone on the left of the path to the aisle which has a full relief figure of Death, with his scythe and hourglass on the back ...'. See:*

<https://www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/leisure-sport-and-culture/archaeology/projects/historic-kirkyards/st-marys-kirkyard-banff/>



## (19) Right off Water Path for Banff Castle park

(57.66566; -2.52220) <https://w3w.co/fictional.destroyer.lengthen>  
In 100 m, as you ascend the street called the Water Path, just before an apparent fork, in front of the gable end of an imposing 3 storey building, turn sharp right through the entrance-way in a wall onto a path in a grassy area, looking down to your right to the rear of houses on the High Shore street. You are now in the immediate grounds of Banff Castle. Follow the path as it gently ascends then bends left up to the grassy area where the castle once stood. (9.1 km)



## (20) Site of Banff Castle

(57.66637; -2.52286) <https://w3w.co/type.deflated.parsnips>  
On the grassy area where Banff Castle\* stood there is a grass labyrinth on your left. The mansion house on your right as you ascended was built in 1750 by John Adam. It is now a community centre. After taking in the fine views and reading the information board, walk out of the grassy castle site onto the High Street and turn right. (9.3 km)

*\*Note: for information about Banff Castle, see: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Banff\\_Castle](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Banff_Castle) and <https://canmore.org.uk/site/18455/banff-castle-street-banff-castle-and-old-castle>*



## (21) Right down George Street

(57.66766; -2.52356)  
<https://w3w.co/juggled.nourished.magnitude>  
In 200 m from the previous waypoint on the Water Path, turn right off the High Street onto George Street. In about 50 m, turn left off George Street onto the Braeheads lane, where, as you progress along it, there is a fine view down to Banff Harbour. Follow Braeheads until it meets North Castle Street where you turn down right to return to your walk starting point at the Quayside car-park for Banff Harbour. (9.5 km)

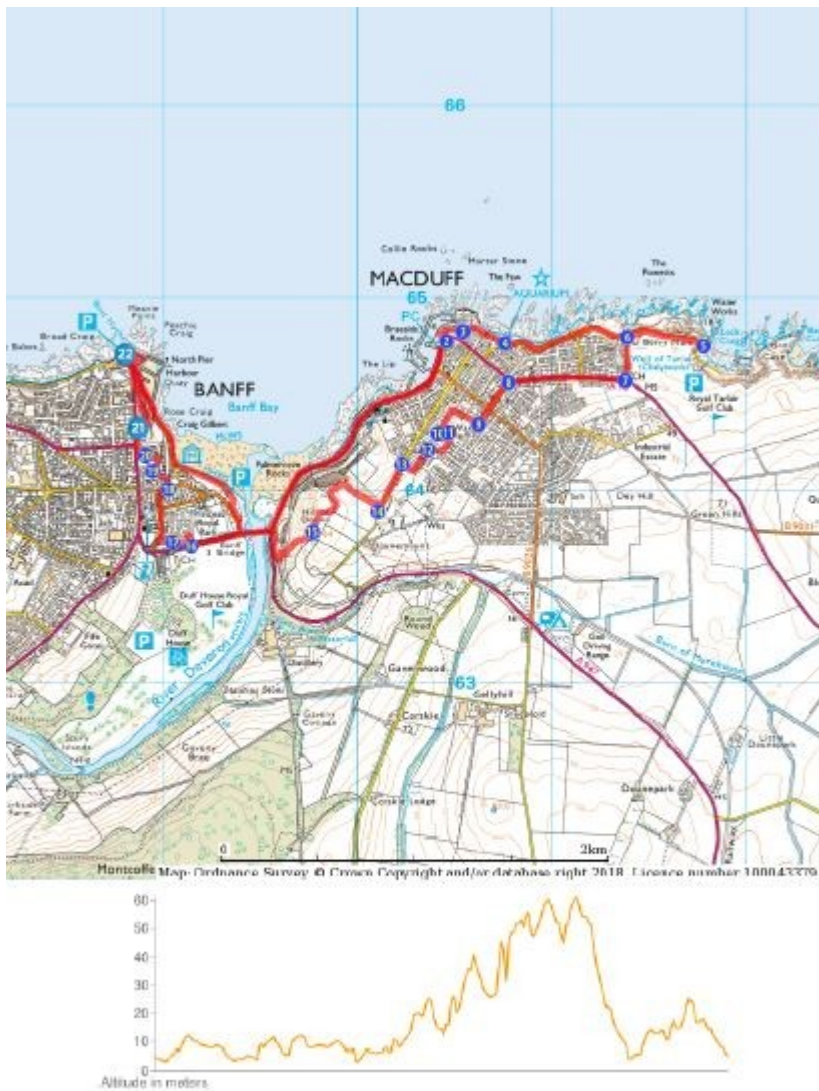


## (22) Finish walk back at Banff Harbour car-park

(57.67110; -2.52468) <https://w3w.co/blunders.loaded.conclude>  
In 400 m, you will have returned to your walk starting point at the Quayside car-park for Banff Harbour. (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](#)