

The Mack Walks: Short Walks in Scotland Under 10 km

Braemar-Morrone Birkwood Circuit (Aberdeenshire)

Route Summary

Without too much effort, this walk provides a great opportunity to experience a special natural environment unique to the Scottish Highlands, and some wonderful views of upper Deeside and the Cairngorm Mountains. The route also takes in a visit to the venue for the Braemar Gathering.

Duration: 2.5 hours.



Route Overview

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Transport/Parking: Regular Stagecoach bus service along Deeside to Braemar. Check timetables. Parking at the Mews and Balnellan Road car-parks near to the walk start/end point.

Length: 6.260 km / 3.91 mi

Height Gain: 136 meter. **Height Loss:** 136 meter.

Max Height: 451 meter. **Min Height:** 341 meter.

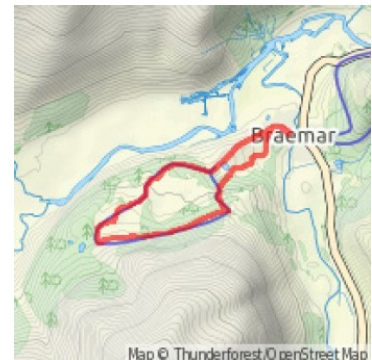
Surface: Moderate. After leaving the village, mostly tracks and paths through woodland and moorland. May be muddy in places. Not suitable for off-road mobility scooters due to narrow paths through thick and high heather.

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.

Refreshments: Options in Braemar.



Description

This very scenic walk from the centre of Braemar gains sufficient height, by a gradual ascent, to provide excellent views down to the village, where the Clunie Water meets the River Dee, and also a wide vista of the Cairngorms. Some of the best views are from the Morrone Viewpoint (*our Waypoint 8*), where the Deeside Field Club's View Indicator identifies a large number of peaks you may, on a clear day, be able to see. Much of the route passes through the Morrone Birkwood on the northern slopes of the hill, a Special Area of Conservation, managed by NatureScot. It is the only surviving example in Britain of a sub-alpine downy birch and juniper woodland, largely unchanged since the end of the last Ice Age. Close to the start of the walk, our route goes through the Princess Royal & Duke of Fife Memorial Park, the site of the world-famous Braemar Gathering, a highland games event traditionally attended by the British Royal Family. The "Games", as they are known locally, are believed to originate from those held by Malcolm III in the 11thC. Today, there is a Highland Games visitor centre in the Park, housed in The Duke of Rothesay Highland Games building, an eye-catching new structure built in traditional "pavilion" style. Braemar sits on the eastern side of the Cairngorms National Park, the largest National Park in the UK, with 9 nature reserves, a diverse range of special natural environments, and a vast sub-arctic mountain plateau. Although remote, the Braemar area was a strategically important crossing point on the Elsick Mounth, an ancient track used by Picts and Romans. It was also an important place for the early kings of Scotland, with Kindrochit Castle first established as a wooden defensive structure and royal hunting lodge there in the 11thC. The 14thC remains of the later stone-built castle can be visited in Braemar village centre after the walk.



Waypoints

(1) Start the walk from the information boards on Mar Road

(57.00585; -3.40064)

<https://w3w.co/social.nutty.chuckling> NO1501891404

Start the walk from the information boards on Mar Road outside the Braemar Mews, and across the road from the Fife Arms. Cross the road to the pavement on the other side and go left, passing shops on your right side as the road gently descends towards a roundabout.



(2) Left for Chapel Brae - then left onto Broombank Terrace

(57.00656; -3.40364) <https://w3w.co/examine.eyeliner.starch>

In about 200 m, take care to cross the road safely at the roundabout. Start to take the road veering left for Chapel Brae but, almost immediately, go left onto Broombank Terrace. Assuming the gates for the Princess Royal & Duke of Fife Memorial Park are open*, walk into the Park and immediately veer left to take the path passing in front of the eye-catching Duke of Rothesay Highland Games Pavilion. (399 m)

**Note: if an event is on which restricts access to the Park, or the park gates are closed (may be closed in evenings or early mornings), take the alternative route up Broombank Terrace, then right onto a rough road, to Waypoint 4, above the Park.*



(3) Pass the Memorial Park Highland Games Pavilion

(57.00511; -3.40503)

<https://w3w.co/superhero.smudges.evidently>

Pass the Memorial Park Highland Games Pavilion on your left, which you may wish to visit, if open. Carry on walking into the Park, with the show-ground on your right side. Follow the track, passing the lower flagpole on your left side. Swing right to pass the end of the show-ground and ascend up the path to the higher flagpole where there is a good view of the Park, village and hills beyond. With your back to the show-ground below you, veer left towards the metal gates at the upper Park perimeter. (399 m)

**Note: the Braemar Highland Games Centre features objects, photographs, documents and costumes associated with the history of Highland Games, focusing in particular on the Braemar Gathering. See: <https://www.highlandgamescentre.org/>*



(4) Through gate and across rough road onto path

(57.00273; -3.40781) <https://w3w.co/mutual.alongside.wisdom>
In 400 m from the Pavilion, go through the high pedestrian gate at the upper perimeter of the Park, veer slightly right to cross the rough road and take the path by the white post up the heather bank. Cross the rough car-park and follow a track that passes a house sitting on its own on your right, on the hillside. Follow the path up the heather hillside for a short distance to a paths junction. (805 m)



(5) Take path going left after passing house

(57.00232; -3.41104) <https://w3w.co/buckets.flashback.swam>
In 200 m from the Park gate, with the house you passed just behind you, take the path through the heather going left towards birch trees. In 130 m, pass through a wooden pedestrian gate and keep following the path going gently uphill through the birch trees. (1.0 km)



(6) Left onto rough road

(57.00017; -3.41404) <https://w3w.co/pollution.golden.catchers>
In 300 m from Waypoint 5, the path meets a rough road where you turn left to follow the road uphill, passing the house called 'Woodhill' on your left side. (1.3 km)



(7) Veer left onto track through trees

(56.99895; -3.41394) <https://w3w.co/dearest.wiser.alleyway>
In 200 m, as the main track starts to bend right, ignore the direction marker on the walks post, and instead veer slightly left onto a grassy track going uphill through the birch trees and juniper bushes. (1.5 km)



(8) Morrone Viewpoint

(56.99782; -3.41244) <https://w3w.co/backfired.hammer.mastering>
In 200 m, or so, you will arrive at the Morrone Viewpoint where there is a cylindrical stone pedestal upon which the Deeside Field Club's View Indicator is installed. The number of peaks to possibly spot on a clear day is very impressive. When you are ready to move on, follow the path for 30 m to the rough road that you left earlier at Waypoint 7. Here, there is a fine view down to Braemar and a Waymarking signpost. Turn right to follow the rough road downhill for a short distance looking for a path going off to your left. (1.7 km)



(9) Veer left onto Morrone Birkwoods circular path

(56.99773; -3.41350) <https://w3w.co/chromatic.havens.braced>
In 100 m, or so, from the viewpoint, veer left at a walk post onto the Morrone Birkwoods Circular Path. Keep following this path through this special area of long-established birch trees and juniper bushes. Eventually, the path enters an area of heather moorland. (1.8 km)



(10) Sharp right at stile to continue on Birkwoods circular path

(56.99443; -3.43699) <https://w3w.co/shining.sculpting.punch>
In 1.4 km, the path arrives at a large stile that crosses over into a commercial forestry plantation. Your route, however, does not cross the stile. Instead, turn right to follow the waymarked Morrone Birkwoods Circular Path right. Now walking back in the direction of Braemar, now follow this path through moorland before it re-enters the birch/juniper woodland. (3.2 km)



(11) Carry straight on after gate - to duckpond and down Chapel Brae

(57.00186; -3.41556) <https://w3w.co/segregate.fails.fork>
In 1.9 km, carry straight on at a junction after passing through a deer gate. Soon you will pass a scenic duckpond on your right side, with houses on your left side. The rough track soon becomes Chapel Brae. Walk down the road, through houses, back to the roundabout you encountered at Waypoint 2. Re-trace your steps from there back to your start-point in the centre of Braemar. (5.1 km)



The scenic duckpond:



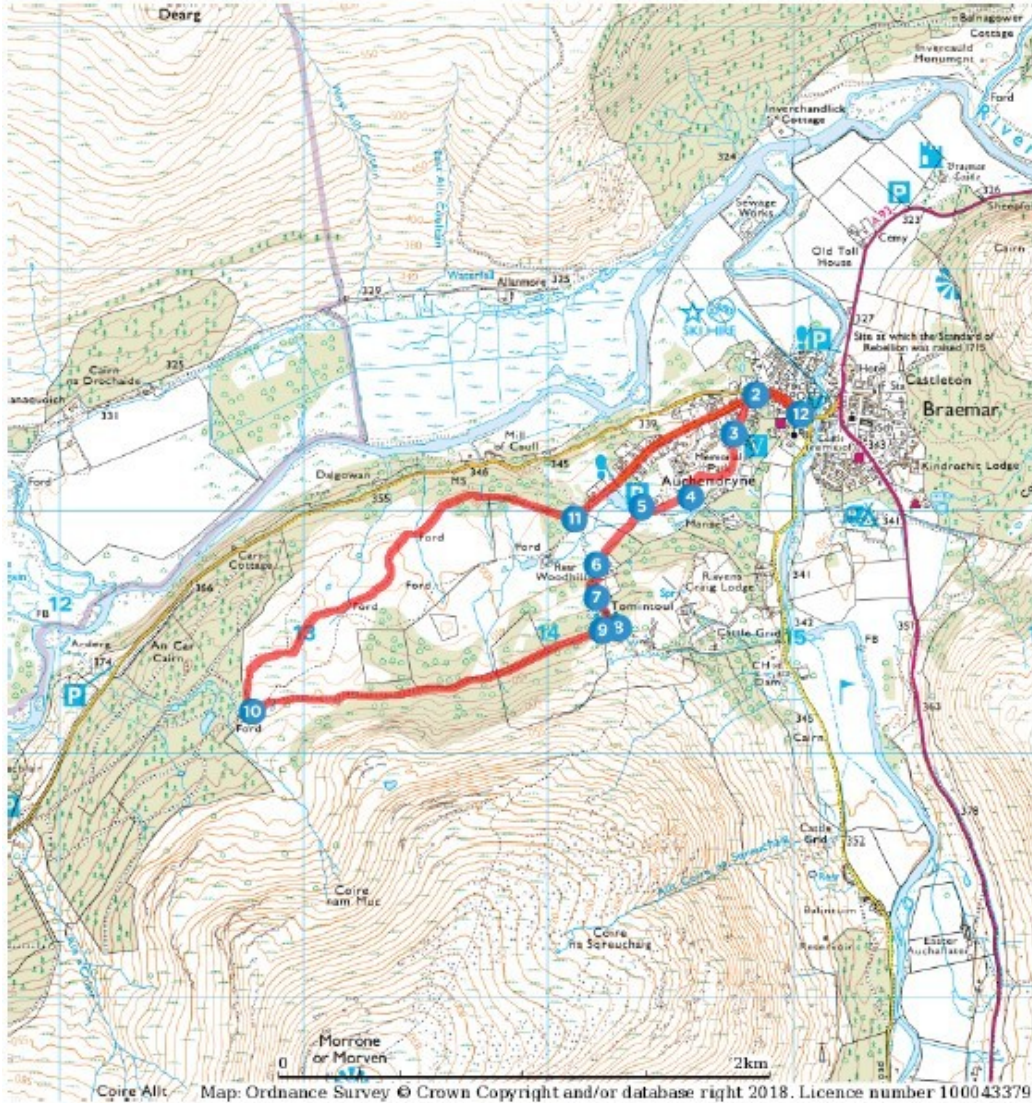
(12) Finish walk back at the info boards on Mar Road

(57.00589; -3.40059) <https://w3w.co/frost.flame.blunders>

In 1.2 km, you will have arrived back at your start-point, the information Boards on Mar Road, by the Braemar Mews. (6.3 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](#)