

The Mack Walks: Short Walks in Scotland Under 10 km

Brindy Hill-Satter Hill-Knock Saul Circuit (Aberdeenshire)

Route Summary

This is an energetic 9 km hike with a reasonably demanding overall ascent of 333 m. Based on a section of the Gordon Way, there are some marvellous viewpoints along the way, including where a large area of forest has recently been felled.

Duration: 3.5 hours.



Route Overview

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Transport/Parking: There is a Stagecoach #422 service between Inch and Alford that passes the start point. Check timetables. There is a small parking area at the walk start/end point.

Length: 9.220 km / 5.76 mi

Height Gain: 333 meter. **Height Loss:** 333 meter.

Max Height: 409 meter. **Min Height:** 195 meter.

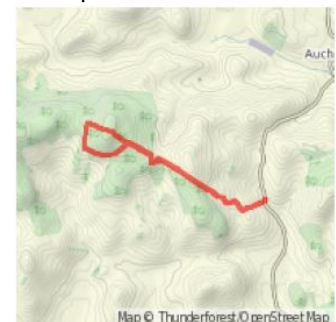
Surface: Moderate. A mix of grassy tracks, forest roads, and narrow paths, often with tree roots. Sections may be muddy.

Difficulty: Medium.

Child Friendly: Yes, if children are used to walks of this distance and considerable overall ascent.

Dog Friendly: Yes, on lead at start/end point on B992 road. Watch out for farm animals in the open pasture area near Waypoint 6.

Refreshments: Options in Alford and Inch.



Description

This very scenic walk ascends the western side of the rural pass, known as Glenbrindy, that divides the Bennachie range from the Suie Hill range. The route starts at a waymarked point on the Gordon Way, near to Brindy Cottage, on the B992 between Auchleven (Premnay) and Keig. We immediately commence a fairly steep ascent up a path on a wide field border on Brindy Hill (the field is now planted with young conifers), where there are fine views back to the Menaway Hills and the western edge of the Bennachie massif. A little further up, on the now tree-planted slopes of Satter Hill, we pass the abandoned sheep-farming croft at Knowhead. Overall, the route is a mix of fairly open ground and conifer



woodland of varying maturity, with the higher summit section passing through heather moorland. There is a trig point and picnic bench at the summit of Knock Saul (412 m), and also a low stone cairn, probably of ancient origin. The views from Knock Saul are wonderful, taking in the patchwork of Aberdeenshire farmland and forests below you, then on to extensive vistas of more distant hilltops. The impressive panorama includes: the Bennachie and Menaway Hills in the east; the Howe of Alford to the south; Foudland and Tillymorgan to the north; the Tap o' Noth and Ben Rinnes in the north-west; and the Deeside, Correen and Donside hills, leading the eye to the faraway Cairngorms to the south-west. This modified "there and back" route is based on a section of the Gordon Way, an 18.5 km way-marked linear route initially supported by the Forestry Commission and Aberdeenshire Council, which runs from the Essons car park at the Bennachie Centre, near Chapel of Garioch, to the Suie Road, between Clatt and Alford. On our route we deviate from the waymarked route to make a partial loop at mid-level around Knock Saul to take in some particularly fine views of the Howe of Alford.

Waypoints

(1) Start walk from car-park area near Brindy Cottage

(57.28430; -2.64717) <https://w3w.co/saving.universes.speaks>

The walk starts from a small car-parking area at the entrance to an access road, just north of Brindy Cottage, on the opposite side of the road from the cottage. This is approximately 3.6 km (2.25 ml) from the centre of Auchleven on the B992 road from Auchleven to Keig, or 3.2 km (2.2 ml) from Keig to Auchleven. Cross the road with care, veering left for the Gordon Way post and pedestrian gate. Walk uphill on Brindy Hill by the wide grassy field edge (the field is now planted with young conifer trees).



(2) Right and down to Gordon Way gate

(57.28236; -2.65508) <https://w3w.co/straying.relegate.ideals>

After ascending over the brow of Brindy Hill, in just over 550 m, at the corner of the field, go right and downhill on a narrow path for a short distance to the Gordon Way post, and then go through the pedestrian gate. (555 m)



(3) Immediately uphill on path through trees then go right

(57.28258; -2.65548) <https://w3w.co/mimed.stroke.rucksack>

In 40 m, or so, with your back to the Gordon Way gate, go immediately uphill on a narrow path through trees then go sharp right at the Gordon Way post to walk through an avenue of broadleaf trees. (597 m)



(4) Left in open cleared area then take rough road

(57.28404; -2.65735) <https://w3w.co/recently.umpires.circulate>

In 200 m, after emerging from the avenue of young trees, turn left at another Gordon Way post in an open grassy area. Very soon, join an old rough road ahead of you on your right side that swings to the right and gently uphill through an area of gorse and broom bushes. This will take you to the abandoned croft at Knowhead. (797 m)



(5) Pass abandoned Knowhead Croft

(57.28454; -2.66111) <https://w3w.co/stencil.abode.uplifting>

In 300 m, or so, you will pass the abandoned croft of Knowhead on your left side. After the croft, follow the grassy path as it at first veers left and then straight uphill. Be aware that this stage from Knowhead Croft to the next waypoint, covers 1.5 km in total.

Soon, the path, in a very wide grassy area with trees on both sides, will start to ascend more steeply up the shoulder of Satter Hill. Follow the path down the other side of the hill through some widely spaced mature trees edged by a large area of gorse on your right side. At this point, the commercial forest on your left side, over a fence, has been cleared, opening up tremendous views to the west and over the Howe of Alford. Keep following the path, now through grassy pasture, as it bottoms out and then starts to ascend again, with a conifer plantation once more on the left side. You are making for a Gordon Way pedestrian gate into the trees on your left side, part way up the slope. (1.1 km)



(6) Left through pedestrian gate into forest

(57.29135; -2.68206) <https://w3w.co/grandson.diplomats.evoked>

In 1.5 km from Knowhead Croft, go left through the Gordon Way pedestrian gate into the conifer forest, ensuring you re-fasten the security chain behind you. Follow the path through the trees, passing another Gordon Way post as you head for a nearby forest road. (2.6 km)



(7) Right and up forest road

(57.29072; -2.68472)

<https://w3w.co/collision.dreaming.graduated>

In about 150 m, the path emerges onto a forest road where there is a Gordon Way post with an arrow pointing right. Go right for a short distance (150 m) along the forest road until the next Gordon Way post. (2.8 km)



(8) Left off forest road

(57.29205; -2.68456) <https://w3w.co/shelter.tonality.wasps>

In 150 m, at the next Gordon Way post, go left to follow the path into the forest. Follow this path through the trees, crossing over a couple of forest roads. Eventually the path emerges from the trees onto heather moorland as you start the final short stage of the ascent to the summit of Knock Saul. (2.9 km)



(9) Summit of Knock Saul

(57.29646; -2.69908) <https://w3w.co/grew.scowls.scored>

In 1 km from Waypoint 8, you will have arrived at the open, heathery summit area of Knock Saul where there is an ancient cairn and a modern trig point and picnic bench. There are wonderful views in all directions: the Bennachie and Menaway Hills in the east; the Tap o' Noth and Ben Rinnies in the north-west; and the Deeside hills and Cairngorms to the south and south-west. When you are ready, carry on taking the Gordon Way path going west, past the trig point. Follow this path as it starts to descend through the heathery ground towards trees again. (3.9 km)



(10) Left along forest road

(57.29777; -2.70527) <https://w3w.co/used.converged.unwound>

In 400 m from the Knock Saul summit, where the Gordon Way path crosses over a forest road, leave the Gordon Way to take the forest road left, in a southerly direction. (4.3 km)



(11) Keep going straight on

(57.29608; -2.70585) <https://w3w.co/larger.reseller.shears>

In 200 m, at a wide junction in the forest roads, keep going in a broadly southerly direction, ignoring the option to go downhill and westerly, to your right. (4.5 km)



(12) Follow forest road veering left and uphill past gate

(57.29324; -2.70613) <https://w3w.co/standards.resettle.lectured>

In 300 m, at a junction, do NOT go downhill to your right. Carry on, as the forest road veers left and gently uphill towards a gate. Pass around the gate and carry on walking on the forest road as good views open up on your right side. (4.8 km)



(13) Follow forest road veering left and uphill at y-junction

(57.29218; -2.69687) <https://w3w.co/store.spillage.flamenco>

In 600 m, at a junction, keep following the forest road as it veers left and uphill at a y-junction. (5.4 km)



(14) Right to re-trace steps on Gordon Way path

(57.29432; -2.69255) <https://w3w.co/goose.coach.removed>

In 400 m, at a Gordon Way post, leave the forest road and go right to regain the Gordon Way path. Now re-trace your steps* all the way back to your start point near Brindy Cottage. (5.8 km)

**Note: take care after passing the abandoned Knowhead Croft to follow the rough road away from the croft as it eventually veers left towards the Gordon Way post you encountered at Waypoint 4. As there are a number of cleared grassy tracks through the trees in this area, it is possible to head too far right and downhill, which would add to the length of the walk.*



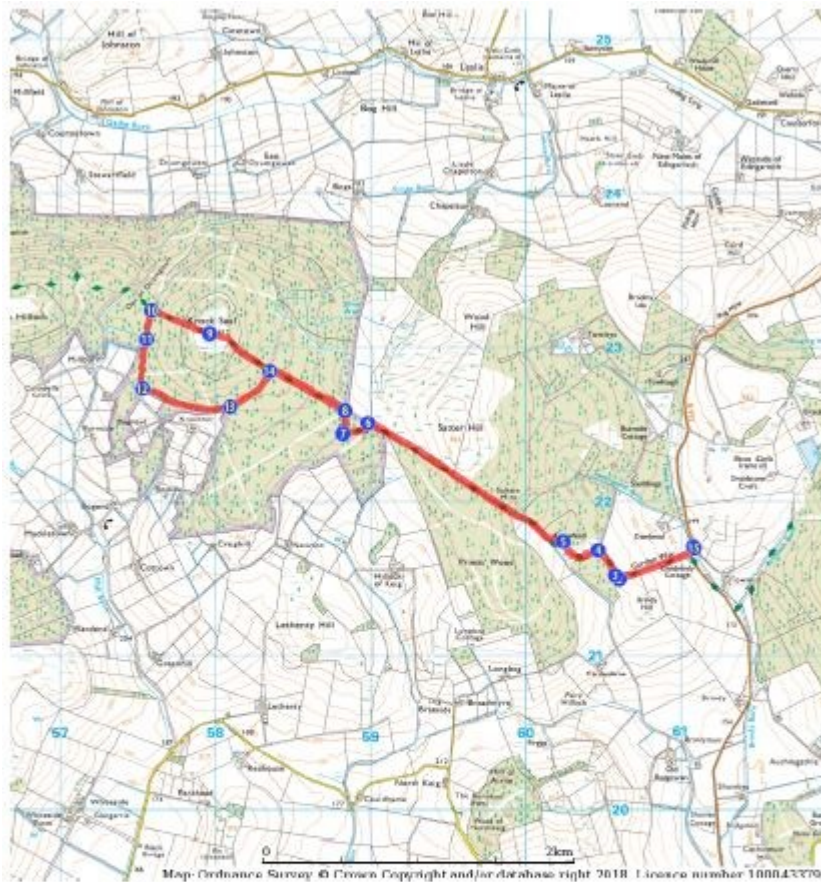
(15) Finish walk back at car-park near Brindy Cottage

(57.28423; -2.64716) <https://w3w.co/comb.estuaries.kneeled>

In 3.4 km, you will have arrived back at the little parking area near Brindy Cottage where you started the walk. (9.2 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](#)