

The Mack Walks: Short Walks in Scotland Under 10 km

Cambus O'May-Torphantrick Wood Circuit (Aberdeenshire)

Route Summary

A fairly short and easy excursion into a birch and conifer woodland, returning on a path along the south bank of the River Dee, near Ballater. The focal point on the walk are the fine lines of the striking white-painted suspension footbridge at Cambus O'May.

Duration: 2.5 hours.



Route Overview

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Transport/Parking: Frequent Stagecoach bus services along Deeside. A request stop may be possible at Cambus O'May. Check timetables. There is a small car-park at the walk start/end point. See Waypoint 1 for information about getting there.

Length: 5.660 km / 3.54 mi

Height Gain: 105 meter. **Height Loss:** 105 meter.

Max Height: 184 meter. **Min Height:** 234 meter.

Surface: Moderate. A mix of good paths and forestry roads. The route is not suitable for off-road mobility scooters due to revolving gates on the bridge, and rough narrow paths with prominent tree roots on the riverbank.

Difficulty: Easy.

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

Dog Friendly: Yes, on lead in public areas and near farm livestock.

Refreshments: Options in Ballater and Aboyne.



Description

This is a gentle little walk in mature woodland, to the east of Ballater, with the return route taking a scenic fishers' path along the southern bank of the River Dee. Some areas in Torphantrick Wood have recently been felled, but this helps to give the walk a more open feel. Of course, the main event is undoubtedly crossing the white-painted Cambus O'May suspension bridge, built in the Edwardian era to replace a row-boat ferry. This handsome iron bridge was financed by a bequest from the estate of Alexander Gordon, a local man who made his fortune in the brewing trade in London. Apparently, when he was a boy, Alexander had witnessed an accidental drowning incident near this spot on the Dee, which inspired his desire to provide a safe crossing by bridge. He was also responsible for funding the similar Polhollick Suspension Bridge, west of Ballater. In 1988, the bridge had to be rebuilt for safety reasons, but was constructed to the same design as the original. The bridge was badly damaged during Storm Frank in 2015 and only re-opened in 2021 after a community funding effort that included contributions from the Scottish Government and Prince Charles. Soon after crossing the suspension bridge, in a small clearing in the woods, the route passes the ruins of Torphantrick "fermtoun", all that is left of a small farming community, comprising the remains of longhouses and small enclosures. It is believed that an old droving road going south passed through here, following a forded crossing of the River Dee nearby. Before long, the outward route reaches an open area of farmland at Glascorrie, surrounded on all sides by trees. Here, the route descends to the riverbank for the return leg alongside the sparkling clear waters of the River Dee. At the start and finish, the walk has a very short section on the Deeside Way, a 66 km trail that follows, in part, the bed of the former Deeside Railway.



Waypoints

(1) Start walk at Cambus O'May Bridge car-park

(57.06467; -2.95429) <https://w3w.co/called.driven.blatantly>
With your back to the car-park, turn left towards the information board. There is a great deal of information on the board about the area, the Deeside Way, and the Cambus O'May bridge. Unfortunately, the board is quite old, and the text is fading. Continue past the board a short way and go left down the steps onto a path that descends to the Deeside Way* path where you turn right. Soon you will glimpse the white-painted Cambus O'May bridge crossing the River Dee on your left side.



Note: The signposted car-park for the Cambus O'May bridge is 4.3 km from the centre of Dinnit, just off the A93 road from Dinnit to Ballater, on the left side, about 500 m SW from the junction with the B9119, signed for Strathdon. There are two entrance/exits. If coming from the Ballater side, the car-park is approximately 6.3 km from the centre, on your right side. The car-park can be busy, although there are frequent comings and goings if visitors are only stopping to view the bridge. All the same, it may be a good idea to arrive early at the weekend.

**Note: At the start and finish, the walk has a very short section on the Deeside Way, a 66 km trail that follows, in part, the bed of the former Deeside Railway. See: <http://www.deesideway.org/>*

(2) Cross bridge

(57.06597; -2.95634) <https://w3w.co/riders.knees.cement>
In about 200 m, you will have arrived at the very handsome Cambus O'May suspension footbridge*. Turn left off the Deeside Way to cross the bridge. At the other side, veer slightly left to take the path heading south around the edge of the Torphantrick woodland which soon joins a rough, grassy road. (205 m)



**Note: The white-painted Cambus O'May suspension bridge was built in the Edwardian era (1905) to replace a row-boat ferry. This handsome iron bridge was financed by a bequest from the estate of Alexander Gordon, a local man who made his fortune in the brewing trade in London. Apparently, when he was a boy, Alexander had witnessed an accidental drowning incident near this spot on the Dee, which inspired his desire to provide a safe crossing by bridge. He was also responsible for funding the similar Polhollick Suspension Bridge, west of Ballater. In 1988, the bridge had to be rebuilt for safety reasons, but was constructed to the same design as the original. The bridge was badly damaged during Storm Frank in 2015 and only re-opened in 2021 after a community funding effort that included contributions from the Scottish Government and Prince Charles.*

(3) Pass ruins of Torphantrick fermtoun

(57.06389; -2.95895) <https://w3w.co/slicer.unsecured.blurts>
Soon, in about 320 m from the last waypoint, before crossing the bridge, you will pass some low ruins on either side of the track. There is a swing-out information board here with some brief information about the old settlement of Torphantrick*. When you are ready, move on. (528 m)



**Note: The ruins of Torphantrick "fermtoun" are all that is left of a small farming community, comprising the remains of longhouses and small enclosures. It is believed that an old droving road going south passed through here, following a forded crossing of the River Dee nearby.*

(4) Cross forestry road and carry on taking path ahead

(57.06344; -2.96810) <https://w3w.co/foresight.grows.cascaded>
In 600 m, cross a forestry road and carry on through the trees.
(1.1 km)



(5) Veer left off forestry road onto waymarked path

(57.06375; -2.97601) <https://w3w.co/scoop.resort.arise>
In 500 m, in a cleared area (year 2021), take the signed path veering slightly left, then go straight on, as the forestry road you were on bends to the right. Follow the path as it eventually comes close to the fenced fields at Glascorrie and starts to go around the fencing on the north side. As you pass the large modern house at Glascorrie, some distance away from you on your left, you are now looking for a narrow path on your right that reverses your direction and descends to the riverbank.
(1.6 km)



(6) Sharp right and downhill to riverbank

(57.06215; -2.99197) <https://w3w.co/palm.solicitor.fairy>
OS Grid Reference: NO 39937 97224

In about 850 m, the path you are on passes the east corner of a grassy field. Continue following the path for another 260 m, with the field fencing now close on your left side. Just after the path descends on a gentle slope, and as you pass the large modern house at Glascorrie, some distance away from you on your left, look out for an easily missed narrow path* on your right that reverses your direction and descends to the riverbank. This is the turning point on your route. Turn sharp right and follow the narrow path down to the riverbank. Now carry on taking the riverbank path, with the river on your left side. (2.7 km)



**Note: If you come to the west corner of the field where the path goes sharp left, in a southerly direction, to follow the shape of the field, THEN YOU HAVE GONE TOO FAR! In which case, re-trace your steps about 20 m and you will see the path going down to the riverbank on your left.*

(7) Pass fishers' hut and then go left

(57.06759; -2.98004) <https://w3w.co/balance.outfitter.glorious>
In 1 km, pass a wooden fishing hut on your left side*. Within a few metres, after passing the hut and a picnic table, veer left off the access track for the hut to carry on taking a path/land-rover track with the river fairly close on your left side. (3.7 km)

** Note: thanks to Ian Sharp for a report and photo in April 2023 indicating that the hut has been almost completely demolished/dismantled. A replacement hut may be planned?*



(8) Carry straight on at junction

(57.06965; -2.96666) <https://w3w.co/resurgent.yours.unhappy>
In 900 m, after passing a newly built wooden fishing hut on your right side, where the rough access road bends away to the right, carry straight on, taking a less well-used track through the trees, with the river still fairly close on your left side. There are two or three places along this section where you can divert to the riverbank if you wish to stop to take in the river view. (4.6 km)

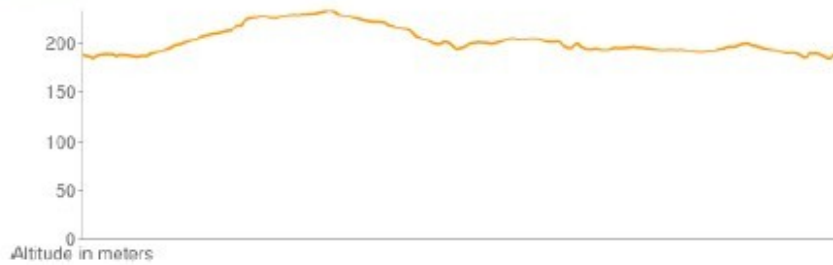
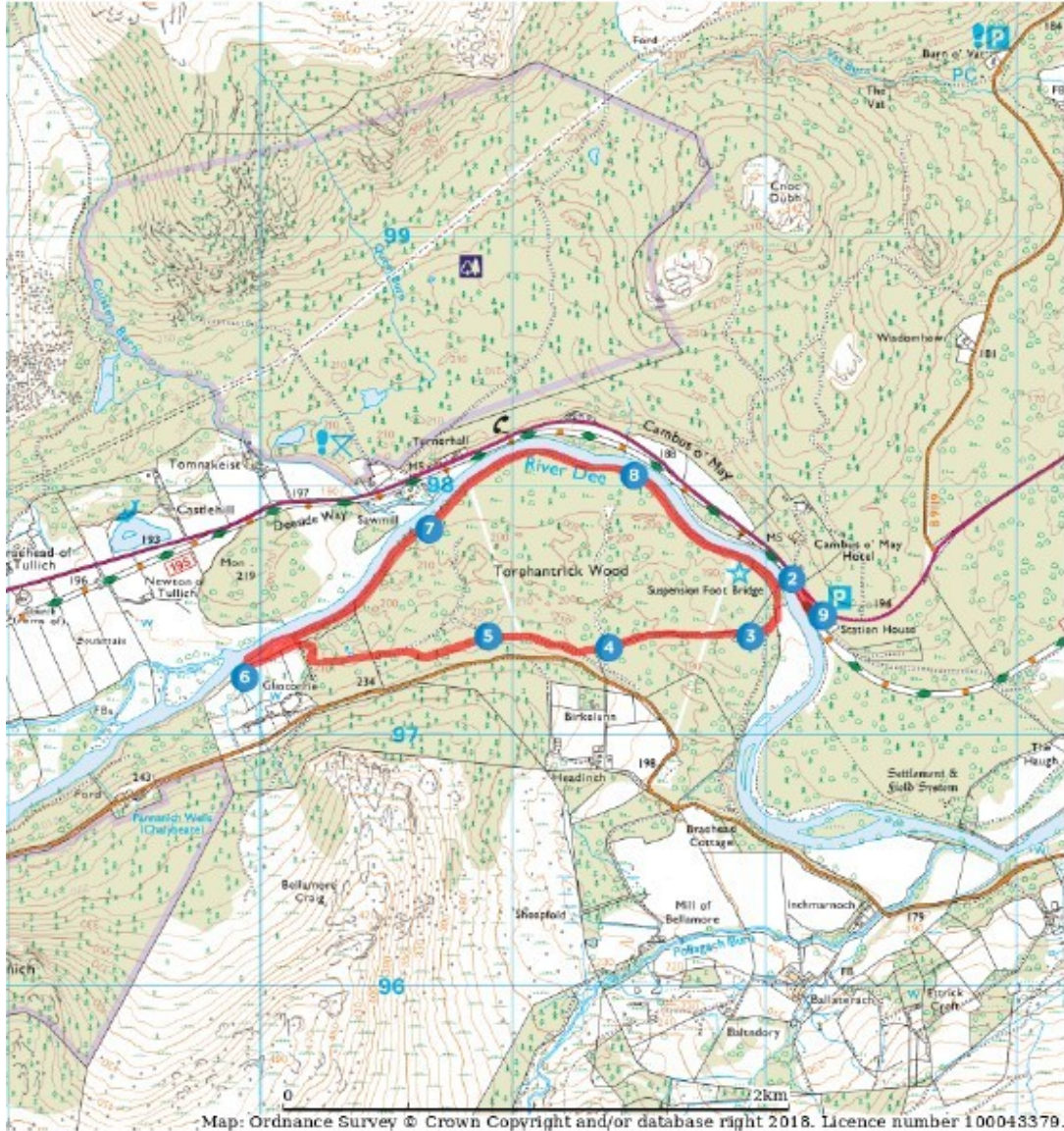


(9) Cross bridge and return to car-park

(57.06470; -2.95419) <https://w3w.co/called.driven.blatantly>
In 1.1 km, you will have crossed the Cambus O'May bridge and returned to your start/end point at the car-park. (5.7 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](#)