

The Mack Walks: Short Walks in Scotland Under 10 km

Collieston-Old Castle of Slains Circular (Aberdeenshire)

Route Summary

This is a good walk along the low grassy cliffs N of Collieston where abundant bird-life and scenic views are guaranteed. The village has a pretty harbour and beach set in a sheltering natural amphitheatre. The ruin of Old Slains Castle is an evocative focal point on the route.

Duration: 2.5 hours



Route Overview

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Transport/Parking: No bus service to Collieston. Cransdale Viewpoint car-park, which is on the northern outskirts of Collieston, and is signposted from the Collieston access road.

Length: 5.820 km / 3.64 mi

Height Gain: 159 meter **Height Loss:** 159 meter

Max Height: 54 meter **Min Height:** 2 meter

Surface: Moderate. The first few metres of the initial ascent to the cliff-top are rough and steep. Otherwise, good paths and roads.

Child Friendly: Yes, if children are used to walks of this distance and overall ascent. Care required near cliff edges.

Difficulty: Moderate

Dog Friendly: Yes. Keep dogs on lead near to any cattle and sheep encountered, and on public roads and streets. Pick up, bag and remove any mess!

Refreshments: The Smuggler's Cone cafe/ice cream vendor (scones especially recommended). Open at weekends in summer months, every day during summer school holidays.



Description

This moderately strenuous little walk nicely combines an often stunning cliff-top trail on the outward leg with a return section that ambles along a quiet country lane between fields. The route ends with the opportunity to explore the quaint and pretty village of Collieston. The focal point on the walk is the intriguing stack on the skyline as you approach the tiny hamlet of Old Castle. This is the ruined remains of the Old Castle of Slains, sitting on a rocky promontory overlooking the beautiful bay and beach at Broad Haven. One sturdy wall of the 13th Century castle remains standing. It was given to Sir Gilbert Hay by Robert the Bruce in recognition for his support against the English enemy. In 1594, Francis Hay, 9th Earl of Erroll, led a rebellion which was put down by King James VI. The castle was then destroyed with gunpowder and cannon fire by the King's army. After returning from exile, Hay built a new, and better known, Slains Castle just a little north of Cruden Bay. There is an excellent view of Collieston at the Cransdale outlook on the St. Catherines Dub headland, overlooking Tarness Haven, close to the walk start-point. The headland is named after the late 16th Century wreck of a Spanish warship, the "Santa Catarina". There are excellent opportunities to observe a variety of sea-birds on the cliff-top sections. During the summer breeding season you may see puffins nesting on the grassy sides of the cliffs, near the ruined old castle.



Waypoints

(1) Start walk at Cransdale Viewpoint car-park

(57.34838; -1.93098) <https://w3w.co/salon.breakfast.shorter>
Start the walk from the Cransdale Viewpoint car-park which is on the northern outskirts of Collieston, and is signposted from the Collieston access road. Immediately climb the steps to the viewpoint where there is a very good view of the village. When you are ready, descend the steps and head north across the car-park towards the cliffs where there is an information board for the Collieston-Cruden Bay path.



(2) Take path up the cliff by signpost

(57.34829; -1.93049) <https://w3w.co/amplifier.dozens.dabbled>
Just right of the Collieston-Cruden Bay path information board there is rough and steep path up the cliff. In the final ascent to the low clifftop there are granite steps. Once at the top, take the obvious path northwards through a gate, with a large field ahead of you, then keep the field and fence on your left as you follow the path. (120 m)



(3) Veer right towards cliffside

(57.35065; -1.92752) <https://w3w.co/avoiding.downhill.prune>
In about 400 m, the main path carries on along the side of the fence. However, you should take the indistinct path veering to your right towards the low clifftop for a good view of the coastline, the little bay below and sea birds nesting on a rocky promontory (summer months). In summer the path is overgrown with long-ish grass and will obviously be wet going if there has been recent rain. Soon, the path leaves the clifftop to re-join the path going north alongside the fenced field. Carry on taking this path as it follows the coastline for about 1.5 km. (512 m)



(4) Veer right slightly and down to road

(57.35991; -1.91734) <https://w3w.co/feed.curries.goofy>
After 1.5 km following the coastal path, as you approach a headland with the obvious ruins of the Old Castle of Slains prominent amongst some houses, follow a path that veers slightly right and gently down to the rough access road to the headland. Don't worry if you miss this path. Instead, just keep following the path along the side of the fence instead. It also leads to the rough access road. When you meet the access road, turn right towards the castle ruin and houses. There are marvellous views of the bay and coastline to your left and right. (2.0 km)



(5) The Old Castle of Slains

(57.36048; -1.91280) <https://w3w.co/tank.burden.fatigued>

In 400 m from the previous waypoint you will have arrived at the area of the ruin of the Old Castle of Slains*. After taking in the scene and accompanying views, head inland on the rough access road, eventually arriving at a farm. (2.4 km)

***Note:** One wall of the 13th Century castle remains standing. It was given to Sir Gilbert Hay by Robert the Bruce in recognition for his support against the English. In 1594, Francis Hay, 9th Earl of Erroll, led a rebellion which was put down by James VI. The otherwise sturdy castle was destroyed with gunpowder and cannon. After returning from exile, Hay built a new Slains Castle near Cruden Bay. [thanks to Wikipedia]



(6) Straight on - inland

(57.36155; -1.92199) <https://w3w.co/collected.crest.fuels>

In 500 m from the castle ruins, arriving at farm buildings, carry straight on inland on the rough access road, ignoring a road going off to your right. (2.9 km)



(7) Left upon meeting minor road

(57.35759; -1.93009) <https://w3w.co/useful.guru.bombshell>

In another 700 m, you arrive at at-junction, meeting a narrow, tarred minor road. Go left here, heading back towards Collieston, passing the Collieston Church on the outskirts of the village. (3.6 km)



(8) Left at main road into Collieston

(57.35066; -1.93395) <https://w3w.co/clays.september.slumped>

In 900 m, descending on the road from the church, cross the main road into Collieston and turn left to follow the pavement into the edge of the village. (4.5 km)



(9) Veer left and down Harbour Road then right

(57.34885; -1.93475) <https://w3w.co/join.available.offstage>

In 200 m, cross the road with care, veering left and downhill on the road signposted for the harbour. Almost immediately take the lane past houses on your right, signposted as a dead-end. After the tarred lane ends, continue along the path past 3 detached houses on your right looking out on the harbour and bay. (4.7 km)



(10) Sharp left and down towards harbour

(57.34690; -1.93570) <https://w3w.co/bedding.general.euphoric>

In 300 m from the main road, just after passing a line of three houses, at a small black traditional shed, stop to take in the surrounding views of the village, beach, harbour and bay. When you are ready, turn sharp left and take the path sloping gently down towards the harbour and beach-front area at the Smuggler's Cone cafe/ice cream vendor (scones especially recommended, open at weekends in summer months, every day during summer school holidays). From here we suggest you explore the beach area and harbour pier. There are a couple of useful information boards to check out, too. (5.0 km)



(11) Up and veer right at The Cliff sign

(57.34809; -1.93430) <https://w3w.co/rails.richly.prank>

After exploring the Collieston harbour and beach area, close to the information board at the landward side of the harbour pier, go up a little at the 'The Cliff' sign and then immediately veer right. (5.5 km)



(12) Left and up stone steps - then right

(57.34804; -1.93384) <https://w3w.co/jukebox.snack.undivided>

In just 30 m, or so, go left and up stone steps, then immediately turn right past some cottages overlooking the harbour. Carry on as the path rounds a headland to a little cove and beach. You will see the Cransdale viewpoint and car-park ahead of you, where you started the walk. (5.5 km)



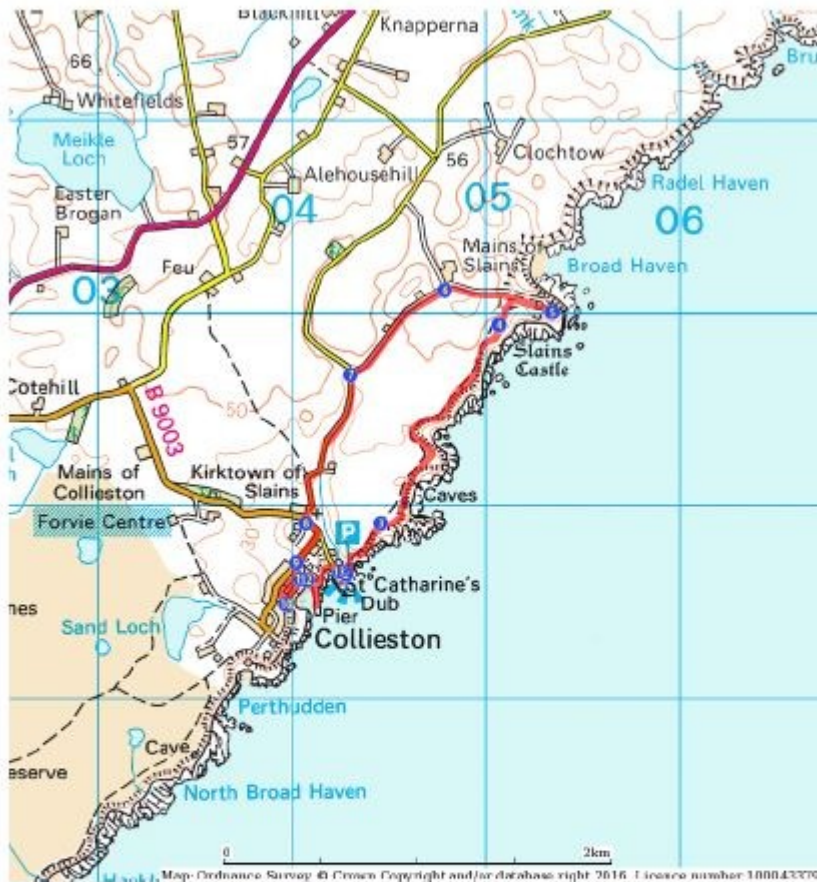
(13) Finish walk back at Cransdale View car-park

(57.34843; -1.93103) <https://w3w.co/salon.breakfast.shorter>

In 300 m from the Collieston harbour area you will have arrived back at your start-point in the Cransdale View car-park where the walk ends. (5.8 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](#)