

The Mack Walks: Short Walks in Scotland Under 10 km

Corgarff Castle-Carn Oighreag Circuit (Aberdeenshire)

Route Summary

Over a relatively short distance, this is a good hill walk through moorland, involving some steep ascents. The starkness of white-walled Corgarff Castle in the upland landscape, proximity to the Cairngorms and the high hills of upper Deeside, add to the sense of remoteness.

Duration: 2.75 hours.



Route Overview

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Transport/Parking: No public transport nearby. The route starts and ends at the Corgarff Castle car-park, 8 miles west of Strathdon on the A939 road to Tomintoul (AB36 8YP).

Length: 8.380 km / 5.24 mi

Height Gain: 350 meter. **Height Loss:** 350 meter.

Max Height: 702 meter. **Min Height:** 404 meter.

Surface: Rough. An initial section on tarred road is followed by well-defined land-rover tracks for the rest of the walk.

Difficulty: Medium/Hard.

Child Friendly: There is a steep ascent to a wind-swept moorland hilltop. Consider whether this is suitable for your children.

Dog Friendly: There are sheep grazing throughout the walk. Dogs on lead.

Refreshments: We can recommend the Goodbrand & Ross tea room, Corgarff.



Description

This circular hill walk on the eastern edge of the Cairngorm Mountains, definitely has a remote feel to it. There is a sense of leaving the last green corner of Strathdon behind you as you climb up and away from the hill sheep grazing by the meandering River Don, close to its headwaters under the eastern slopes of the Ben Avon massif. The route begins at the car-park for the imposing white-walled **Corgarff Castle** which stands out starkly in the landscape, reflecting its former role as a forbidding base for, and symbol of, state power in the pacification of the rebellious Highlands. The route makes initially easy progress along the narrow road to Delnadamph. The hunting lodge there, once considered as the possible Highland home for Prince Charles and his first wife, Diana, is no longer standing, having been demolished some years ago. The route soon starts to climb relentlessly through the heather, past grouse butts, up the steep western shoulder of Carn Oighreah. The entirety of this walk is on the Delnadamph Estate, purchased by the Royal Family in the early 1970's to supplement the grouse shooting on their Balmoral Estate. At first there are good views down to the valley of the Don and the Lecht road to Tomintoul. As you climb higher, weather permitting, there are uninterrupted views west to the Cairngorms, with the tors of Ben Avon, and the peak of Beinn A'Bhuird most noticeable. Near the summit area, the best views are from the Shepherd's Cairn, where there is a good perspective on the now distant Corgarff Castle, shining white beneath you. During the descent from the top there are many tantalising glimpses of the Castle. Corgarff Castle, originally built around 1530, had a chequered history, having been partially destroyed by burning a number of times over the tumultuous centuries. After the Battle of Culloden, the British government rebuilt it as a barracks on the military road from Braemar Castle to Fort George. It is now maintained by Historic Environment Scotland as a visitor attraction (*temporarily closed at the time of writing due to the Covid pandemic*). See: <https://www.historicenvironment.scot/visit-a-place/places/corgarff-castle/>



Waypoints

(1) Walk up private road from Corgarff Castle car-park

(57.16523; -3.23493) <https://w3w.co/numeral.decks.priced>

At the Corgarff Castle car-park*, with your back to the castle on the hillside above you, turn left and go through the pedestrian gate onto the private road for Delnadamph Lodge (now demolished). Keep going as you eventually pass Badochurn Cottage on your left. The River Don meanders through the valley on your right side. Look out for a land-rover track going off left, in about 1.5 km.

**Note: the car-park for Corgarff Castle is 8 miles west of Strathdon on the A939 road to Tomintoul (AB36 8YP).*



(2) Left up land-rover track

(57.16747; -3.25776) <https://w3w.co/toys.scrubber.embellish>

In 1.5 km, go left off the tarred road onto a land-rover track going uphill. You will follow this track going uphill, steeply at times, for about 2.1 km until the next waypoint at the Shepherd's Cairn. At first there are good views all around and particularly down to the valley of the Don and the Lecht road to Tomintoul on the north side. As you climb higher, weather permitting, there are uninterrupted views to the Cairngorms to the west, with the tors of Ben Avon and the peak of Beinn A'Bhuird most noticeable. (1.5 km)



(3) The Shepherd's Cairn

(57.15208; -3.26490) <https://w3w.co/deluded.shapeless.destroyer>

After ascending for 2.1 km on the land-rover track you will arrive at the small but well-defined Shepherd's Cairn on a lower top on the western shoulder of Carn Oighreag. There is a good view down to the now distant Corgarff Castle, shining white beneath you on the lower slopes of the Don Valley. Now, carry on walking along the land-rover track which dips a little before a gradual ascent to the broad and flat summit of Carn Oighreag. (3.6 km)



(4) Summit of Carn Oighreag

(57.14825; -3.25773) <https://w3w.co/slack.saddens.lighter>

In 700 m, you will arrive at the summit of Carn Oighreag on a flat featureless hilltop. There is a low grouping of stones that we take to be the summit 'cairn', although it is easily missed. Carry on walking along the land-rover track which soon starts to descend. Keep following the track downhill as it eventually passes a small plantation of conifers. The Cock Burn flows beneath you in the valley to your right. Soon, you will pass through a gate (please ensure that you close it securely behind you). (4.3 km)



(5) Left up grassy track

(57.15968; -3.23493)

<https://w3w.co/someone.bookcases.condiment>

In 3.1 km from the summit, with the castle visible ahead, go left off the land-rover road to take a grassy track that bends uphill and right to be at a level with castle. (7.4 km)



(6) Go straight on - taking path towards castle

(57.16149; -3.23523) <https://w3w.co/adding.unstated.doormat>

In 300 m, as the grassy track veers left (NW), follow a grassy path straight on towards a small field at the rear of the castle (you will soon re-join the grassy track you were on, but this diversion gives you a close-up view of Corgarff Castle). When you reach a gate at the corner of the small field, go left to follow the fence in a WNW direction. In about 130 m you will re-join the grassy track you were on as it approaches a gate to another field. (7.7 km)



(7) Through gate then sharp right downhill

(57.16277; -3.23727) <https://w3w.co/gross.outgrown.mouth>

In 200 m from Waypoint 6, go through the farm gate (securing it carefully behind you), over a small stream of water, and then turn right to follow a track downhill through the pasture. Soon a gate to the field comes into view at the bottom of the field, close to the castle car-park where you started the walk. (7.9 km)



(8) Finish walk back at Corgarff Castle car-park

(57.16525; -3.23483) <https://w3w.co/numeral.decks.priced>

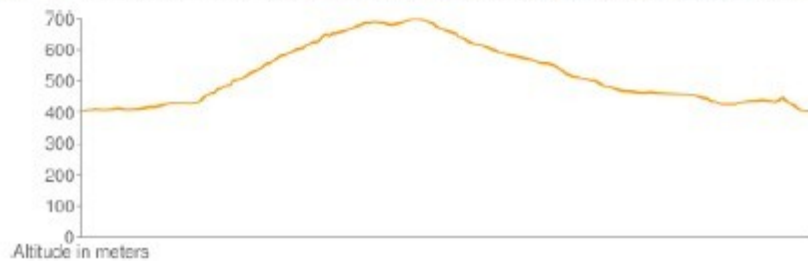
In 400 m, after exiting the field (carefully securing the gate behind you), you will have arrived back at the car-park for Corgarff Castle where you started the walk. If the Castle is open*, and you wish to make a visit, make your way up the access track to check it out. (8.3 km)

*Note: due to the Covid situation (2020), the Castle is not scheduled to open to the public until Spring 2021. See:



<https://www.historicenvironment.scot/visit-a-place/places/corgarff-castle/>

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](#)