

The Mack Walks: Short Walks in Scotland Under 10 km

Corrie Hill-Gordon Way-Black Hill Circuit (Aberdeenshire)

Route Summary

An energetic upland walk on grassy woodland paths and open moorland with a reasonably demanding overall ascent of 300 m. There are wide-ranging views from the summit of Black Hill, at the quieter, less-visited western end of the Bennachie range.

Duration: 3 hours.



Route Overview

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Transport/Parking: There is a Stagecoach #422 service between Insh and Alford that passes the start point. Check timetables. The rough access road to the Corrie Hill woods is on the right, 2km from the x-roads at the eastern end of Keig, on the B992 road to Auchleven (Premnay). There is space to park near the entrance, and also at the nearby walk start/end point.

Length: 6.820 km / 4.26 mi

Height Gain: 301 meter. **Height Loss:** 301 meter.

Max Height: 171 meter. **Min Height:** 430 meter.

Surface: Moderate. Mainly a mix of grassy conifer plantation tracks and forest/moorland roads. The path from Waypoint 8 to the Black Hill summit can be very muddy in places.

Difficulty: Medium.

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

Dog Friendly: Yes.

Refreshments: Options in Alford and Insh.



Description

This very enjoyable but vigorous walk makes a fairly relentless ascent on grassy forestry tracks, moorland roads and boggy paths to one of the quieter and lesser known taps on Bennachie. The climb is amply rewarded by extensive views in all directions. At 431 m high, Black Hill is one of the lower summits on the Bennachie range and lacks a distinctive granite peak. It overlooks both Keig and Auchleven (Premnay), on the western edge of the range, which provides it with a marvellous immediate viewpoint over the Howe of Alford, the nearby Menaway Hills and back towards the higher Bennachie tors, with Watch Craig and Hermit's Seat particularly standing out. Looking further east,



over the northern shoulder of Brimmond Hill, you can identify a set of high-rise flats in Aberdeen! Facing the other way, on a wider panorama, Mount Keen, Morven, the Buck of Cabrach, Ben Rinnes, Tap O'Noth, Foudland Hill and Tillymorgan are prominent. There are also good views down to the Hill of Airlie to the immediate south-west. Here, a patchwork of fields lead up to a wooded hilltop. On the summit, hidden in the trees, are the remains of an Iron Age hill-fort, with double defensive rings, known as the Barmkyn of North Keig. An upper section of the outward route follows part of the Gordon Way, an 18 km way-marked linear route that runs from the Esson's car park at the Bennachie Centre, near Chapel of Garioch, to the Suie Road, above Clatt and Alford. Unfortunately, due to financial cutbacks, the trail is no longer being maintained. The Bennachie ridge stretches west to east for 8 km with many taps or peaks, and is a popular destination for walkers. Most of the Bennachie range is owned by Forestry and Land Scotland, which supports a network of paths on and around the hills, several car parks and a visitor centre. A volunteer group, the Bailies of Bennachie, helps with this work and with other environmental and archaeological activities on the hill. See: <https://bit.ly/3mXFaqR> and <https://bit.ly/3nYR39Q> .

Waypoints

(1) Start walk at forestry gate

(57.27862; -2.64012) <https://w3w.co/hindering.lines.fondest>
Start the walk at the entrance gate to the Corrie Hill* woods, near Keig. Go through the gate, turn left for a few metres then almost immediately veer to the right 45 degrees to walk up the obvious grassy track between trees in a NE direction. Follow this track uphill through trees, an open grassy area, and then more trees for 1.1 km. Ignore any paths going off right or left and keep going uphill at all times. In about 800 m, the path bends noticeably to the right as it continues uphill.

**Note: the rough access road to the Corrie Hill woods is on the right, 2km from the x-roads at the eastern end of Keig, on the B992 road to Auchleven (Premnay). There is space to park near the entrance, and also at the walk start/end point, which is 150 m from the B992 road.*



(2) Veer left for path through trees

(57.28471; -2.62764) <https://w3w.co/imitate.ushering.defectors>
In 1.1 km at a clearing, where there is a y-junction*, take the left fork, a narrower path, going approx north into the trees. The path soon opens up to a grassy area, leaving the trees behind. (1.1 km)

**Note: if you start to walk downhill after this clearing you will know that you have missed the y-junction waypoint. In which case, re-trace your steps back to the clearing and find the correct path going into the trees in a N direction.*



(3) Right along Gordon Way path

(57.28657; -2.62508) <https://w3w.co/exploring.model.thinker>
In 300 m, soon after passing a viewpoint bench in an open grassy area, the path you are on meets the Gordon Way* path. Turn right and follow the Gordon Way path as it goes gently downhill for a section. In about 160 m, cross a stile and follow the path uphill, now with a conifer plantation close on your right side. (1.4 km)

**Note: the Gordon Way is an 18.5 km way-marked linear route that runs from the Essons car park at the Bennachie Centre, near Chapel of Garioch, to the Suie Road, between Clatt and Alford. Unfortunately, we understand that the trail is no longer being maintained.*



(4) Veer slightly left and uphill

(57.28787; -2.61830) <https://w3w.co/torch.leaky.century>
In 500 m, the path emerges onto a main forest road at a staggered junction with a gate on your left side. Turn right, with your back to the gate, and walk along the forest road for five metres, or so, then go left and uphill on an other, minor forest road, essentially carrying on taking your previous ENE direction, and continuing to follow the Gordon Way route. (1.9 km)



(5) Carry on taking Gordon Way path

(57.28893; -2.60791) <https://w3w.co/brimmed.both.basis>

After a further 600 m gentle ascent, as the rough road levels out, carry on, ignoring the track going uphill to your right. (2.5 km)



(6) Follow Gordon Way path - right and uphill

(57.28936; -2.60733) <https://w3w.co/signed.decorate.described>

In about 100 m, at a Gordon Way post, veer right and gently uphill onto another rough road, continuing to follow the Gordon Way. (2.6 km)



(7) Keep straight on - passing by path on your left

(57.29080; -2.60213) <https://w3w.co/regal.courts.slices>

In 400 m, at a Gordon Way post, carry straight on taking the rough road, ignoring the signposted narrow path going off to your left. (3.0 km)



(8) Right for path to Black Hill summit

(57.29009; -2.60001) <https://w3w.co/enjoys.disbelief.advancing>

In 100 m, or so, turn sharp right off the rough road onto a narrow (and probably muddy) path through the heather which heads off in a SW direction for the trig point at the very broad summit of the Black Hill. The trig point ahead of you will become increasingly obvious as you progress along the 600 m path. (3.1 km)



(9) Trig Point at Black Hill summit

(57.28643; -2.60628) <https://w3w.co/reflect.obstinate.charge>

In 600 m you will have arrived at the trig point at the very broad summit area of the Black Hill*. Once you have taken in the views and are ready to carry on, continue along the path you were on. In about 160 m the path meets a rough road. Turn left here to follow this rough moorland road gently downhill in a broadly S and SW direction for about 900 m, eventually entering an area with conifer trees on both sides, then turning right (to the west) and sharply downhill, with a dry stone wall on your left side and trees on your right side in the final 50 m section. (3.7 km)

**Note: At 431 m high, Black Hill is one of the lower tops on the Bennachie range. It overlooks Keig and Auchleven (Premnay), on the south-western edge of the range, which provides it with a marvellous viewpoint over the Howe of Alford, the nearby Menaway Hills and back towards the higher Bennachie tors, with Watch Craig and Hermit's Seat particularly standing out. In the distance, Mount Keen, Morven, the Buck of Cabrach, Ben Rinnes and Tap O'Noth are prominent. There are good views down to the Hill of Airlie to the immediate west. Here, a patchwork of fields lead up to a wooded hilltop. Hidden in the trees are the remains of an Iron Age hill-fort, with double defensive rings, known as the Barmkyn of North Keig. The hill has very uniform slopes on all sides, allowing our ancestors who lived there, or who sought refuge there, to readily see any potentially hostile approaches.*



(10) Take path through bushes - steeply downhill

(57.27995; -2.61579) <https://w3w.co/grab.fits.stupidly>

In 1.1 km from the trig point on the summit of Black Hill you will have arrived at a junction with a main forest road going right (North). However, you carry straight on. Carry on downhill on the path through a gap in some bushes, keeping the dry stone wall on your left side, and trees on your right side. (4.8 km)



(11) Carry on downhill - passing path on left

(57.27983; -2.61955) <https://w3w.co/cheered.suits.mothering>

In 200 m, ignore a path (signed with an arrow) going left through a gap in the dry stone wall. Keep going downhill. (5.0 km)



(12) Take left fork at y-junction

(57.27996; -2.62096) <https://w3w.co/harsh.knees.work>

In 100 m, after passing a rough road on your left to a house, carry on, taking the left fork at a y-junction. The grassy path appears to be well-maintained here, possibly to support horse-riding. Carry on gently downhill with open views on your left side, and a plantation of conifers on your right side. In about 300 m, the path turn sharp right to continue along the western edge of the plantation. (5.1 km)



(13) Left and downhill at y-junction

(57.28118; -2.62482) <https://w3w.co/valued.loud.giving>

In 500 m from the last waypoint, go left and downhill at a fork. After dipping down into the depression, the grassy path ascends again. (5.6 km)



(14) Sharp left on grassy path

(57.28222; -2.62445) <https://w3w.co/kick.whizzing.narrowest>

In 100 m, or so, go sharp left to follow a grassy path going roughly SSW. In approximately 270 m the grassy path goes sharply right and uphill, then left along a field edge, then veering right again. Keep following the grassy path as it then descends down a shoulder of Corrie Hill, with trees on both sides now towards your start point. (5.7 km)



(15) Finish walk back at forestry gate

(57.27860; -2.64007) <https://w3w.co/hindering.lines.fondest>

After 1.1 km you will have arrived back at your start-point at the forestry gate for Corrie Hill woods. (6.8 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](#)