

# The Mack Walks: Short Walks in Scotland Under 10 km

## Dinnet-Loch Kinnord-Burn O'Vat Circular (Aberdeenshire)

### Route Summary

A gently undulating walk in the pine and birch woods of the National Nature Reserve encircling Kinord Loch. Mid-way, the route diverts to the memorable gorge at Burn O'Vat. There are also interesting insights into the history of human habitation in the Dinnet area.

Duration: 3.5 hours.



### Route Overview

**Duration:** 3.5 hours.

**Transport/Parking:** Regular Stagecoach bus service along Deeside, stops at Dinnet. Check timetables. Cairngorm National Park car-park at walk start/end point. Charges apply.

**Length:** 10.050 km / 6.28 mi

**Height Gain:** 137 meter. **Height Loss:** 137 meter.

**Max Height:** 217 meter. **Min Height:** 160 meter.

**Surface:** Moderate. All on well-maintained waymarked paths. Some sections are stony and/or affected by prominent tree roots. The entry to "The Vat" is on stepping stones which may be slippery.

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

**Difficulty:** Medium.

**Dog Friendly:** Yes, on lead on public roads and near farm animals.

**Refreshments:** Kinord Hotel in Dinnet, at walk start/end point. Options in Aboyne, Ballater and Tarland.



### Description

This is first and foremost a "nature walk", which takes a gentle but extended circuit around the forested banks of Loch Kinnord on Deeside, with an enthralling diversion to the huge Burn O'Vat stone pot, a geological oddity. The route is within the Muir of Dinnet National Nature Reserve, part of the Cairngorm National Park. The Reserve extends 1166 hectares from the River Dee to Culbean Hill, and encompasses a wide range of habitats including dry heath, raised bog, woodland, and two lochs: Loch Kinord and Loch Davan. Due to its shallowness, light penetrates to the floor of Loch Kinord. Consequently, many species of aquatic plants thrive, and in the summer white water lilies bloom on the loch. We walked the route in July, when Blue Northern Damselflies were everywhere to be seen. A quick glance at the Ordnance Survey map reveals that a wealth of ancient sites pepper the landscape. Clearly this area has been an important place of human habitation since the ice sheets melted. During the circuit of the loch the route passes Crannog Island where an Iron Age defensive crannog housed a small community. Nearby is Castle Island where it is believed there was a defensive structure since at least the 11thC. During the Civil War in 1648, the Royalist-held castle was razed by an act of Parliament. On the shore close to Castle Island stands a 9th-century Pictish stone with a cross carved in intricate knot work. A little further away, between Loch Kinord and Loch Davan, there are the remains of an extensive prehistoric settlement. Archaeological examination has determined that the ancient settlement was enclosed by a wall and comprised eighteen structures, ten or more hut circles, cairns, walls and rows of placed stones, two earth-houses, and a chambered enclosure. At the mid-point in the walk, the Burn O'Vat Visitors Centre makes for an interesting diversion before entering the fascinating Burn O'Vat gorge itself.



## Waypoints

### (1) Start walk at Cairngorms Park car-park at Dinnet

(57.07673; -2.89332)

From the Cairngorms National Park car-park take the waymarked path for the Loch Kinord Circular Walk which heads away from the car-park in a NW direction into the pine trees. The Kinord Hotel and Lodges are on your left side in the initial section. Carry on taking the path as it soon passes tranquil Clarack Loch.



### (2) Cross rough road to carry on

(57.07807; -2.90748)

In just over 900 m, pass through the two pedestrian gates to cross a rough access road. Carry on taking the Loch Kinord Circular Path. (931 m)



### (3) Carry straight on at Muir of Dinnet sign

(57.07809; -2.90861)

Within 70 m, pass a large Muir of Dinnet signpost and carry straight on, ignoring the turn-off on your left. (1 km)



### (4) Crannog viewpoint

(57.08491; -2.91936)

In 1.5 km you will have an excellent opportunity to view the small tree-covered Crannog Island\*. When you are ready, carry on taking the Loch Kinord Circular Path. Soon you will pass close to the bigger Castle Island\*\*. (2.5 km)

*\*Note: A crannog is typically a partially or entirely artificial island, usually built in lakes (lochs), rivers and estuarine waters of Scotland, Wales, and Ireland. An iron age crannog was built on Kinord Loch, probably for defensive purposes. Oak tree trunks were driven into the loch bed and stones built up around them. A hut was then built on top of the structure. It is possible that there was more than one crannog on the loch.*





Thanks to the Scottish Crannog Centre for this image.

*\*\*Note: First mentioned in 1335, when supporters of David de Strathbogie sought refuge after the battle of Culblean. The castle on the island in Loch Kinord is mentioned further in 1505 and was used by the Alexander Gordon, Earl of Huntly as a mansion in 1511. Restored and garrisoned in 1646, the castle was razed by an act of Parliament in 1648.*

## (5) Kinord Pictish Stone

(57.08570; -2.92553)

In another 400 m you will arrive at the Loch Kinord Pictish Stone\*, enclosed in a protective fence. When you are ready to move on, follow the main path uphill to pass a bench under a tree. Note that there are known to be adders in this area. Particularly on a sunny day they may be basking in the sun - beware! (2.9 km)



*\*Note: a 9th-century (?), cross slab Pictish stone. It is carved with intricate knot work and indicates that there may have been a small monastery or chapel located nearby. At some point in history, the cross was lost and buried however it was dug up again 1820's and erected at Aboyne Castle. In 1959 it was returned to its current location. Thanks to deesidewalks.com for the following: 'There are two theories regarding the origin of the stone. First of all, it is thought that it may have been commissioned by St Furnoc around 800 AD, in the period following the collapse of the Roman Empire and when Christianity was sweeping across Europe. Alternatively, some believe that it was carved 200 years later, around 1058 AD, on the instructions of Queen Margaret, the wife of Malcolm Canmore. Malcolm Canmore, or Malcolm III of Scotland (1031 - 1093) is the 'Malcolm' in Shakespeare's MacBeth. In 1040 MacBeth killed Malcolm's father Duncan I and Malcolm fled to England. He returned in 1057, defeated MacBeth in battle and killed him in Lumphanan, near Loch Kinord.'*

## (6) Divert to Old Kinord ruin

(57.08769; -2.92630)

In 300 m, or so, divert off the main path to take a rough road to the ruined farm buildings at Old Kinord. (3.2 km)





## (7) Old Kinord

(57.08892; -2.92378)

In 200 m, or so, you will have arrived at the ruins of a farm house and outbuildings at Old Kinord. This is a scenic spot, with good views all around from the slightly elevated position. If you care to explore, there are the stone foundation remains of a pre-historic village\* in the woods to the NE of the old farmhouse, near to the banks of nearby Loch Davan. When you are ready, re-trace your steps to Waypoint 6 and turn right to carry on taking the main circular path. (3.4 km)

\*Note: see:

<https://canmore.org.uk/site/17072/old-kinord>

[https://www.themodernantiquarian.com/site/15619/old\\_kinord.html](https://www.themodernantiquarian.com/site/15619/old_kinord.html)



## (8) Burn O'Vat Visitor Centre

(57.08484; -2.94331)

In 1.5 km, after leaving the Loch Kinord Circular Path and carefully crossing the busy B9119 road you will have arrived at the Burn O'Vat Visitor Centre where you can view some interesting information, images and artefacts associated with the Muir of Dinnet Nature Reserve. Now take the signed path for the Burn O'Vat gorge, passing the Visitor Centre and toilet block on your right side. (4.9 km)



## (9) Burn O'Vat Gorge\*

(57.08389; -2.95016)

In 500 m, following the course of the Vat Burn and eventually taking the waymarked spur path you will arrive at a narrow passage through the rock face with the burn running at your feet. Carefully use the stepping stones to enter the very impressive bowl, or gorge. When you are ready, re-trace your steps back through the rocky entrance to regain the spur path back to a wooden bridge. (5.4 km)



*\*Note: The Burn O'Vat was formed approximately 13,000 years ago by meltwater from a retreating ice sheet. The glacial pothole is thought to have formed when a rock became lodged in the river bed causing a torrent of water to spiral around and carve out the underlying granite bedrock. The impressive amphitheatre of the "Vat" is accessed via a narrow passage in the rock on the course of the Vat Burn. It has been a popular visitor attraction since Queen Victoria visited. It was reputedly used as a refuge by Patrick Gilroy Macgregor, a 17th-century cattle rustler.*

### (10) Left over bridge and up

(57.08416; -2.94881)

In about 100 m from the Burn O'Vat gorge, re-tracing your steps to the wooden footbridge over the Vat Burn, turn left to cross the bridge and ascend the path on the other side. (5.5 km)



### (11) Right at t-junction

(57.08481; -2.94757)

In 200 m, the path ascends to a t-junction. Go right here. (5.7 km)



### (12) Loch Kinord viewpoint

(57.08499; -2.94468)

In another 200 m you will arrive at the Muir of Dinnet/Loch Kinord viewpoint. Once you have taken in the great view and the information boards, carry on taking the path back to the Visitor Centre, gradually dropping downhill again. When you are back at the Centre, re-trace your steps back to cross the B9119 road with care to re-join the Loch Kinord Circular Path where you left it earlier. (5.9 km)



### (13) Back to Muir of Dinnet Circular path - go right

(57.08469; -2.94261)

In 200 m from the viewpoint, having crossed the B9119 road with care, re-join the Loch Kinord Circular Path where you left it earlier, now turning right to continue your circuit of the loch. You will continue following this path for 3 km, eventually reaching the loch-side at various points, where there are some marvellous views. (6.1 km)



### (14) Right at Muir of Dinnet sign to re-trace steps to car-park

(57.07805; -2.90853)

In 3 km you will arrive at the Muir of Dinnet National Nature Reserve sign that you encountered at Waypoint 3 on the outward leg of the walk. Turn right here to take the path back your start-point at the Dinnet car-park, with Clarack Loch now on your right side. (9.1 km)



### (15) Finish walk back at Dinnet Car-park

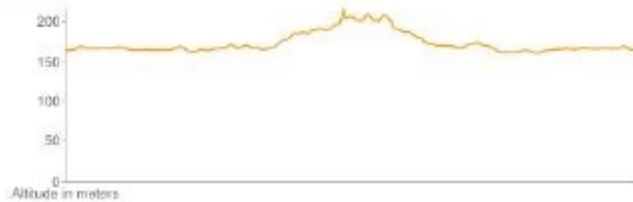
(57.07669; -2.89337)

In 900 m you will have arrived back at the Dinnet car-park where you started the walk. (10.05 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](#)