

The Mack Walks: Short Walks in Scotland Under 10 km

Fraserburgh-Waters of Philorth Return (Aberdeenshire)

Route Summary

This bracing coastal walk is longer than our usual 10 km limit but this is offset by the very low, and hardly noticeable, overall ascent. The focal points are an historic lighthouse, a busy fishing harbour, a wonderful sandy beach, and a peaceful little nature reserve.

Duration: 3.5 hours.



Route Overview

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Transport/Parking: Frequent Stagecoach #67 and #68 from Aberdeen to Fraserburgh. Check timetable. Spacious car-park at Lighthouse Museum/Heritage Centre where walk starts/finishes.

Length: 11.350 km / 7.09 mi

Height Gain: 91 meter

Height Loss: 91 meter

Max Height: 18 meter

Min Height: 0 meter

Surface: Moderate. Mostly paved surfaces, beach or sandy paths.

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

Difficulty: Medium.

Dog Friendly: Yes, but keep dogs on lead on public roads.

Refreshments: Small cafe with excellent sea views at Lighthouse Museum. Options in Fraserburgh.



Description

This coastal walk has a nice mix: the oldest lighthouse in Scotland; one of the busiest fishing harbours in the UK; a wonderful sandy beach that seems to go on for ever; a peaceful estuarine nature reserve; a golf course sheltering amongst the sand dunes; an interesting town centre; and, the old fishing village of Broadsea tucked around the Kinnaird headland. Fraserburgh sits on an exposed knuckle of land where the North Sea meets the Moray Firth. It dates back to when the Fraser family bought the lands of Philorth in 1504. By 1570, the Frasers had built a castle at Kinnaird Head and by the 1590s there was a small harbour. The growth of the herring fishing industry in the 19th century saw major expansion with more than 1000 drifters based there. Huge modern vessels from the long-distance pelagic fleet dominate the modern harbour. The Frasers' castle was sold to the Northern Lighthouse Board in 1787 to be converted into Scotland's first mainland lighthouse. In 1824 Robert Stevenson undertook a major re-design and improvement, uniquely still based upon the old castle. Fraserburgh is renowned for its long, golden sandy beach, backed by an extensive dunes system. On the walk, we reach a turning point at the Waters of Philorth Local Nature Reserve which includes the estuary of the Philorth and an ever-moving sand dune complex. There are also areas of reed bed, salt marsh and mud flats associated with the estuary, which is known for the diversity of its bird life resulting from the range of habitats. The return leg weaves its way through the sand dune system, skirting the golf course. At the end of the walk there is the opportunity to visit the Museum of Scottish Lighthouses (and Kinnaird Head Lighthouse itself), and the neighbouring Fraserburgh Heritage Centre (summer season only). See: <http://lighthousemuseum.org.uk/> and <https://www.fraserburghheritage.com/>



Waypoints

(1) Start walk outside Lighthouse Museum

(57.69732; -2.00607)

The walk starts and finishes at the car-park for the Museum of Scottish Lighthouses and the Fraserburgh Heritage Centre. From here, walk round the north-facing gable end of the museum to join a path that will take you past the buoy park, the fog horn, the lighthouses (old and new), and the old castle wine store.



(2) Kinnaird Head Lighthouse

(57.69809; -2.00445)

In just over 200 m, you pass on your right the old Kinnaird Head Lighthouse* (at the rear), with the new, much smaller operational lighthouse nearer the sea. Carry on along the path in an easterly direction, passing the old building known as the Wine Store** on your left as the path descends in the direction of Fraserburgh Harbour. (230 m)

**Note: Scotland's first lighthouse installed within Fraserburgh Castle in 1787. In 1824 Robert Stevenson constructed a major re-design and improvement.*

***Note: The Wine Tower may have been the wine-cellar for Fraserburgh Castle, built in the 16th Century. It is constructed of rough masonry in three stories, all vaulted, with walls about 5 ft thick. Under this tower is a cave more than 100 feet in length.*



(3) Down and round corner for harbour

(57.69669; -2.00167)

In about 240 m from the lighthouses, pass through a rough car-park and head for a road that turns sharp right around some harbour buildings to reach Fraserburgh Harbour. There are likely to be a range of fishing vessels in the harbour, including some very large boats from the long-distance pelagic fleet. Keep walking around the harbour in an easterly direction, eventually leaving the harbour area along Harbour Road, heading east in the direction of Fraserburgh Beach. (470 m)



(4) Straight ahead for beach esplanade

(57.68672; -2.00135)

In 1.3 km, Harbour Road reaches the start of the Fraserburgh Beach area, passing a caravan park on your left. Continue walking along the beach esplanade in an easterly direction as the huge sweep of the beach along the coast open up before you. Continue walking as the esplanade gives way to a path running straight on, through the sand dunes. If you wish, of course, you can join the beach at any time that suits you! (1.8 km)



(5) Follow path through dunes

(57.68202; -1.99816)

In 600 m, the paved surface of the path gives way to sand. Continue following this well-used path through the sand dunes, heading towards a high sandy dune ahead of you. When you reach the area of the high sand dune, veer left down onto the beach. Continue walking along the beach in an easterly direction for about 2.5 km until you reach the mouth of the Philorth Water (a small estuary). (2.4 km)



(6) Turn right and inland at Mouth of Philorth

(57.67616; -1.95303)

In 2.7 km from Waypoint 5, depending on the state of the tide, you will have reached the estuary mouth of the Waters of Philorth (a small river, or burn). Turn inland here to follow the watercourse, soon passing an information board in the dunes close to the water's edge. Keep going on the path going inland, with the burn on your left. Very shortly you will spot a boardwalk ahead of you with an information board. Veer a little right, away from the burn-side, towards the boardwalk and info board. (5.1 km)



(7) Information board at boardwalk

(57.67411; -1.96543)

In 1.1 km from the estuary mouth at the beach, check out the information board by the boardwalk. It describes how the dunes system has changed, here, over the last 70 years, or so. When you are ready to move on, take the boardwalk in an inland direction, heading towards the car-park for the Local Nature Reserve of Waters of Philorth*. (6.2 km)

**Note: The Waters of Philorth Local Nature Reserve includes the estuary of the River Philorth and the sand dune complex, which is part of the larger Fraserburgh Bay sand dune system. There are also areas of reed bed, salt marsh and mud flats associated with the estuary. The Waters of Philorth site is known for the diversity of its bird life resulting from the range of habitats.*



(8) Veer left towards golf course

(57.67211; -1.96639)

In 200 m, or so, at the Waters of Philorth car-park, go past the flagpole on your right and veer a little left to take the path heading back in the direction of Fraserburgh. This path should soon pass a golf-course green and teeing ground on your left. Keep going on this path through the dunes system with the golf course always fairly close on your left side. Keep going for 2 km, or so, eventually passing the 18th green with the golf club and golf centre across the B9033 road to St Combs on your left side. (6.4 km)



(9) Walk back along old railway line

(57.67965; -1.99760)

In 2.2 km, after passing the 18th green on the golf course, join the old railway line path (part of the Formartine & Buchan Way) as it heads back towards the beach esplanade. (8.6 km)



(10) Cross road and follow path into town

(57.68673; -2.00193)

In 900 m, after passing the beach caravan park on your right, cross the South Harbour Road at the designated crossing point and take the obvious path which almost immediately turns right, heading towards the centre of Fraserburgh. (9.5 km)



(11) Follow streets into centre of town from football ground

(57.68949; -2.00443)

In 300 m, after passing the Leisure Centre on your left, the pavement bends left towards the Fraserburgh Football Club main stand. From here carry on straight towards the shopping centre of the town along Seaforth Street and then Broad Street, passing the Fraserburgh South Parish Church and the Dalrymple Hall on your right side, until you reach Saltoun Square. (9.8 km)



(12) Left along High Street at Saltoun Square

(57.69358; -2.00517)

In 500 m, where Broad Street meets Saltoun Square, check out the attractive fishes sculpture, and the impressive town cross. You may want to wander around the square. The Saltoun Inn building has an interesting plaque detailing its history. When you are ready, head west along the High Street, away from the Square. (10.3 km)



(13) Right down Broadsea Road

(57.69438; -2.01226)

In 500 m, the High Street having become College Bounds*, turn right down Broadsea Road, then veering slightly right, away from the start of Main Street, down an access road to the coastal path at Broadsea Shore. There is an information board about the Broadsea** area up a couple of steps on your left. After checking out the info board, head north-east, back in the direction of your walk start point, passing a number of brightly coloured buoys by the side of the path. (10.8 km)

**Note: A Royal Charter in 1592 gave permission to build a college and university in Fraserburgh, and a grant from the Parliament of Scotland in 1595 allowed the first college building to be erected. The college did not last, however, being used again only for a short time in 1647 when King's College, Aberdeen temporarily relocated owing to an outbreak of plague.*

***Broadsea: a long-standing fishing community, once seen as separate from Fraserburgh itself.*



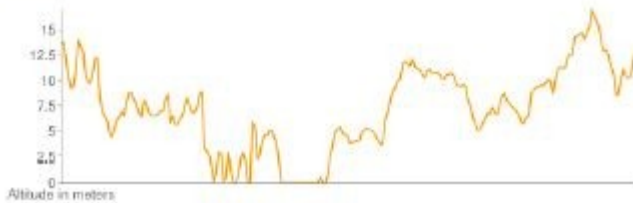
(14) End of walk back at Heritage Centre

(57.69729; -2.00619)

In 600 m, you will have returned to the car-park outside the Lighthouse Museum and Heritage Centre. (11.4 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](#)