

The Mack Walks: Short Walks in Scotland Under 10 km

Inver-Glen Feardar-Auchtaven Circuit (Aberdeenshire)

Route Summary

This is an interesting and rewarding hike in the scenic but depopulated landscape of upper Deeside. The walk is accessed from a lay-by on the busy A93 road between Crathie and Braemar but soon provides a sense of solitude and remoteness, on the way to the lonely "clachan" at Auchtaven.

Duration: 3.5 hours.

Route Overview

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Transport/Parking: Fairly frequent Stagecoach bus services along Deeside, from Aberdeen. There is a bus-stop at Inver on the A93 about 450 m from the walk start/end point. Check timetables. There is a large lay-by at the walk start/end point.

Length: 10.56 km / 6.84 mi. **Height Gain/Loss:** 299 meter.

Max Height: 471 meter. **Min Height:** 296 meter.

Surface: Moderate. A mix of hard-surfaced rough roads, moorland land-rover tracks and grassy paths. Initial 1.5 km on tarred minor access road.

*****Please note that the route may be affected by high bracken between Waypoints 10 and 12 during Summer months.***** We believe the

complete circuit is not suitable for off-road mobility scooters due to the return route having a section with a narrow path through high heather. We would recommend changing the route to a linear "there and back" to/from Auchtaven. **Difficulty:** Medium.

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

Dog Friendly: Yes, but keep dogs on lead on public roads and near farm animals. You are likely to encounter sheep at various points.

Refreshments: Options in Ballater, Crathie and Braemar.

Description

This varied walk harmoniously mixes upland farming country with birch woodlands and heather moorland. There are many fine views to enjoy along the way, not least down the sweep of Glen Feardar, south towards Lochnagar and its surrounding hills, and west towards Braemar and beyond, to the highest peaks in the Cairngorms. A clutch of pull-out information boards on the outward route, once part of a drove road to the southern cattle markets, provide some helpful insights into the history behind the landscape.

The focal point on the walk are the buildings and ruins at Auchtaven, an isolated former subsistence farming community, or "clachan", near the head of Glen Feardar (the "glen of the high water") at 450 m above sea level, and dating back to the immediate post-Medieval period, probably in the mid-16thC . Although the views are inspiring, day to day life must always have been hard at this very remote spot. Auchtaven means the "field of the two goats", a reference to the annual rent to be paid by each family to the local feudal superior. It is believed that up to 12 families may have once made their lives here, keeping animals, and growing grain crops which they dried using stone kilns. A little further downhill from the roofless ruins and enclosures are three intact buildings with roofs, sitting alongside the remains of two longhouses. The first of the three, a 19thC house, now used for educational visits, was the last occupied farmhouse at Auchtaven, afterwards being used by the late Queen Mother as a "picnic cottage". Secondly, an older horse-mill, which used the motion of a horse (or cow, or donkey) to turn a millstone, for threshing corn. And thirdly, the even older so-called "hanging-lum" cottage, or "black house", which has a cruck-framed roof and the canopied chimney arrangement that gives it its name. These buildings have all been restored, and are now maintained, by the community of Braemar, who have also provided four excellent information boards at the site. You can also see more information about the buildings and the impressive restoration project here:

<http://www.auchtavan.com/> .



Waypoints

(1) Start walk at lay-by at Inver

<https://w3w.co/reserve.outbound.chart> NO2342893845 The walk starts and finishes at Inver, from a large lay-by (formed from the straightening of a section of the A93 road). The lay-by is 3.5 km (2.17 miles) from Crathie, towards Braemar, on your left. It is 11k km (6.84 miles) from Braemar, towards Crathie, on your right). With your back to the lay-by, facing the A93 road, cross this busy main road with care and go left into a partly overgrown section of the old road. There are likely to be large trailers parked on this old section of road. Pass the trailers on your left side, then turn right onto the minor access road (signposted for Aberardar on the A93 road). Keep walking along this tarred minor road for about 1.5 km.



(2) Carry on walking on rough road

In 1.52 km, just after passing the house called Thistledae on your left side, the tarred road ends and becomes a hard-surfaced rough road, entering some woodland. Keep going on this road. (1.52 km)



(3) Take right fork - downhill

In 540 m, at a y-junction, take the right fork, going gently downhill to soon emerge out of the trees into open ground. (2.06 km)



(4) Take right fork

In 180 m, at another y-junction, take the right fork, passing an access road to a house called Balnoe on your right side. The rough road soon starts to ascend and passes the abandoned farm at Balmore, just over the brow of the hill, on your right side. (2.24 km)



(5) Through gate into field

In 610 m, passing the abandoned Balmore farm building on your right side, go straight on, through a field gate (close carefully, behind you), ignoring a rough road going off to the left. Keep following the rough road you are on, downhill through the field, and in about 170 m, go through another field gate, closing it behind you. After crossing over the Feardar Burn, follow the road as it swings left and uphill, amongst birch trees now, ignoring another rough road going off to the right. (2.85 km)



(6) Left at Y-junction

In 1.19 km from the gate at Waypoint 5, go left at a y-junction, where there is an arrowed signpost. (4.04 km)



(7) Auchtaven clachan ruins

In 1.25 km, you will have arrived at the first of the Auchtaven clachan ruins*, where there is a pull-out information board. After checking out the long-abandoned remains of this little settlement, carry on downhill to the intact buildings at Auchtaven, visible ahead of you. (5.28 km)

**Note: the ruins at Auchtaven are what remains of an isolated former subsistence farming community, or "clachan", near the head of Glen Feardar (the "glen of the high water") at 450 m above sea level, and dating back to the immediate post-Medieval period, probably in the mid-16thC. Although the views are inspiring, day to day life must always have been hard at this very remote spot. Auchtaven means the "field of the two goats", a reference to the annual rent to be paid by each family to the local feudal superior. It is believed that up to 12 families may have once made their lives here, keeping animals, and growing grain crops which they dried using stone kilns.*



(8) Auchtaven

In another 270 m, you will have arrived at the Auchtaven buildings*, where there are a number of information boards. After checking out the boards and the buildings, re-trace your steps back to the yjunction at Waypoint 6. (5.56 km)

**Note: three intact buildings with roofs sitting alongside the remains of two longhouses. The first of the three, a 19thC house, now used for educational visits, was the last occupied farmhouse at Auchtaven, afterwards being used by the late Queen Mother as a "picnic cottage". Secondly, an older horsemill, which used the motion of a horse (or cow, or donkey) to turn a millstone, for threshing corn. And thirdly, the even older so-called "hanging-lum" cottage, or "black house", which has a cruck-framed roof and the canopied*



chimney arrangement that gives it its name. These buildings have all been restored, and are now maintained, by the community of Braemar, who have also provided four excellent information boards at the site. You can also see more information about the buildings and the impressive restoration project here: <http://www.auchtavan.com/> .

(9) Left at Y-junction

In 1.68 km, arriving back at the y-junction encountered earlier at Waypoint 6, go left. (7.24 km)



(10) Right and uphill

*****NOTE – ROUTE MAY BE AFFECTED BY BRACKEN IN SUMMER*****

In 250 m, go right to take a grassy road going uphill into the trees. Soon, this track emerges onto open heather moorland. In just less than 300 m, it meets another landrover track at a t-junction, where you turn right and continue walking on the track, through the heather, in a broadly SE direction. In another 500 m, after passing through a gate, the track re-enters the birch woodland as it gradually goes downhill. (7.49 km)



(11) Take left fork

*****NOTE – ROUTE MAY BE AFFECTED BY BRACKEN IN SUMMER*****

In 1.4 km from Waypoint 10, and about 690 m from re-entering the woodland, at an indistinct y-junction on the now grassy track, take the left fork which soon bends sharp left. The track here is indistinct in places, muddy in others, as you continue to descend in the direction of Tullochcoy Farm, passing the ruins at Stronagoar and Balnalan as you emerge into open pasture above Tullochcoy Farm. Keep going on the grassy road, down towards the farm buildings. (8.89 km)



(12) Through gate and downhill

In 750 m, veer to your right, over a collapsed dyke, to avoid a set of double gates and leave the pasture field by a single gate onto the access road to Tullochcoy Farm. Go right and downhill, passing farm buildings on your left side. Carry on down the Tullochcoy access road, then turn left when it meets the tarred road you were on at the start of the walk. Now re-trace your steps for the short distance back to your start-point, taking care when crossing the busy A93 road. (9.64 km)



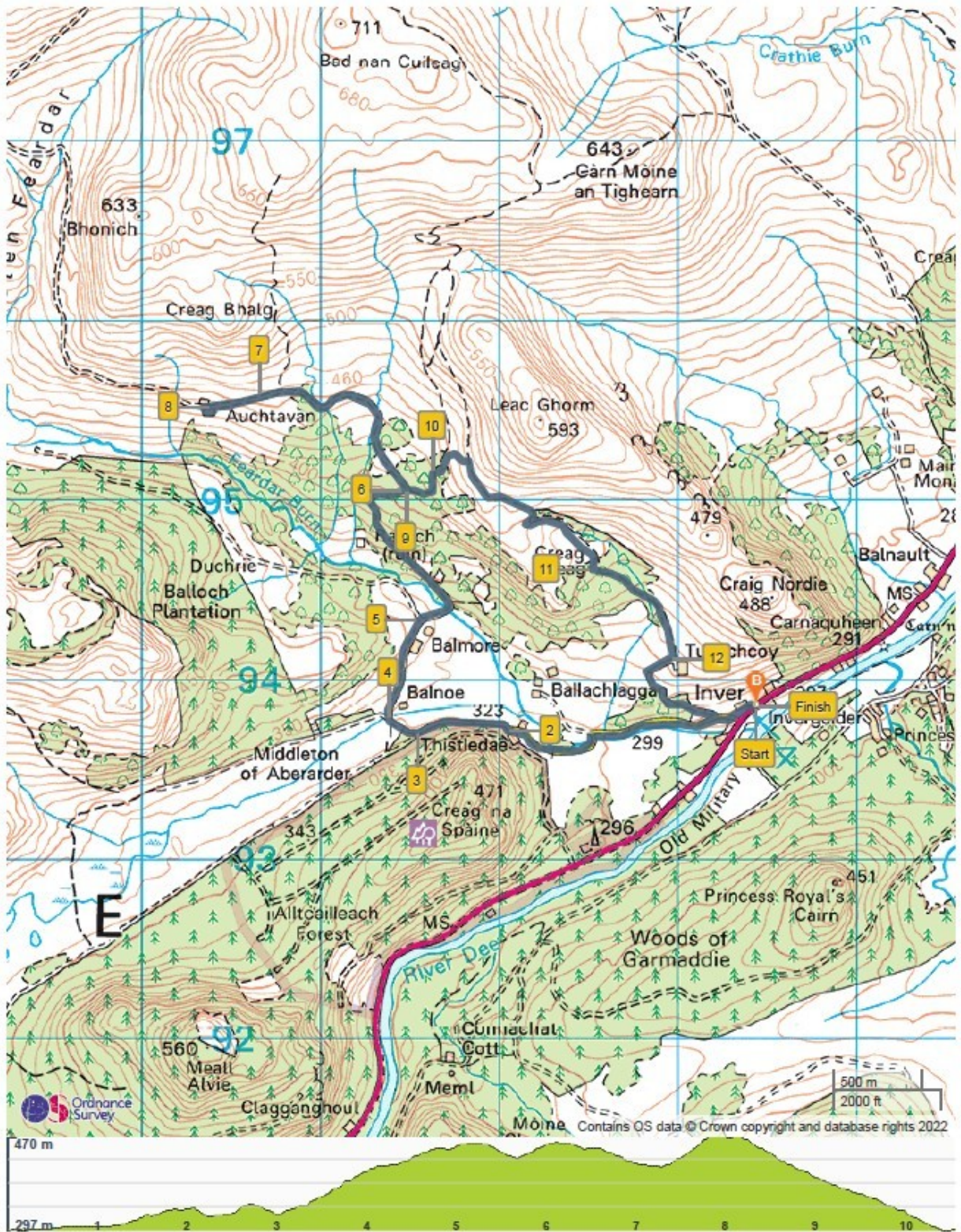
(13) Finish walk back at Inver lay-by

In 920 m from Waypoint 12 at Tullochcoy Farm, you will have arrived back at your start-point in the old-road lay-by off the A93 road. (10.56 km)

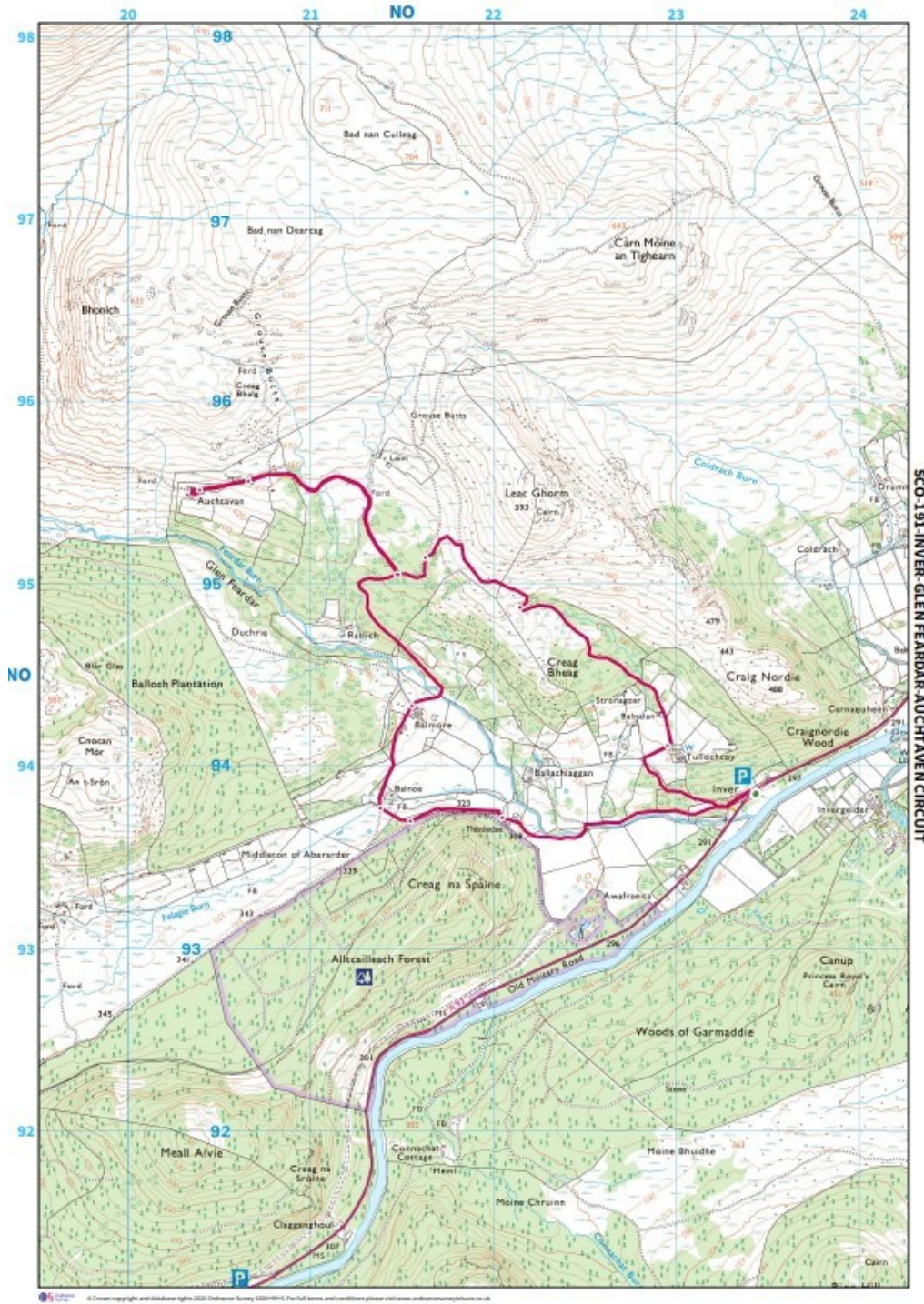


Route Map (with waypoints)

191-Inver-Glen Feardar-Auchtaven Circuit



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 OSM](#)

[Access Walk on Alltrails](#)

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