

The Mack Walks: Short Walks in Scotland Under 10 km

Lumphanan-Cairnbeathie-Hillhead Loop (Aberdeenshire)

Route Summary

This walk from the historic village of Lumphanan occupies a pleasant pastoral landscape in mid-Deeside, with wide-open views throughout. The ascent on an old drove and military road to an area of undulating farmland is gradual, but reveals some breathtaking scenery to enjoy.

Duration: 2.75 hours.



Route Overview

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Transport/Parking: The Stagecoach 202 service from Banchory stops at Lumphanan. Check Timetables. Free public parking in Station Square at the walk start/end point.

Length: 7.700 km / 4.81 mi

Height Gain: 169 meter. **Height Loss:** 169 meter.

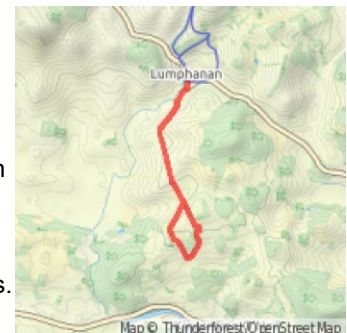
Max Height: 216 meter. **Min Height:** 166 meter.

Surface: Moderate. A mix of surfaces, taking in tarred access roads and, often grassy, farm tracks. **Difficulty:** Easy.

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

Dog Friendly: Yes, but keep on lead near to farm animals and on public roads.

Refreshments: We can recommend the Meet Again Tea Shop on Perkhill Road. The village shops sell hot drinks to take out.



Description

This is a very enjoyable hike in delightful rural surroundings, taking in a gentle ascent to the watershed between Lumphanan and Kincardine O'Neil, mostly walking between old stone field dykes on an old road used by cattle drovers and later consolidated into the 18thC military road network. In the early stages of the ascent you look down on the attractive St Finan's Church and Manse, and the Peel of Lumphanan, the impressive earthwork remains of an important 13thC fortification now maintained by Historic Scotland. As you climb, fine open views to a broad western aspect open up, where you can readily identify prominent hilltops such as Mount Keen, Lochnagar, and Morven. Below you in the middle distance, under Craiglich Hill, is the shallow bowl of farmland that was formerly the Loch of Auchlossan before it was drained in the time of agricultural improvement. At the mid-point on the route there is a short descent from Hillhead of Dess Farm in the direction of Kincardine O'Neil. Here, there are good views of the Deeside valley, with the peaks of Kerloch, Mount Shade, Clachnaben and Peter's Hill particularly standing out. Much of the route follows a section of the Old Military Road that ran from Fochabers to Fettercairn, completed under the direction of General Wade's deputy, Major William Caulfield, in 1761. The village of Lumphanan is famously associated with King Macbeth of Scotland. The Battle of Lumphanan was fought on 15 August 1057, between Macbeth and the future King Malcolm III. According to traditional sources, Macbeth was killed at Lumphanan, having led his retreating forces north to make a final stand. There is a well close to the village where Macbeth is believed to have taken his last drink in the heat of battle and, nearby, "Macbeth's Stone" is said to be the stone upon which Macbeth was beheaded before his body was buried under a cairn. The Lumphanan Paths Group are doing a great job in way-marking and maintaining walking routes in the area. Be sure to check out their excellent Lumphanan Paths leaflet which describes the local walking opportunities and includes a comprehensive summary of local history. See: <https://bit.ly/3nuTz8J>



Waypoints

(1) Start walk at Macbeth Stone garden

(57.12747; -2.68821) <https://w3w.co/basically.spreading.hours>
Start the walk at the little ornamental garden on Perkhill Road, opposite the Macbeth Arms Hotel on the southern side, where there is a community notice board and a pergola housing a representation of 'Macbeth's Stone'. With your back to the notice board, turn left along Perkhill Road in a southerly direction. Cross the road at a suitable point and, when you reach the t-junction at the end of the road, turn right, in a westerly direction, and continue walking along the pavement towards a house at the edge of the village.



(2) Through gate onto footpath

(57.12579; -2.69002) <https://w3w.co/stuff.slouched.birthing>
In 250 m, after passing a house on your right side, where the pavement ends, go through a pedestrian gate, closing it behind you, and walk along the footpath. (250 m)



(3) Turn left through gate and across road

(57.12406; -2.69213) <https://w3w.co/town.bystander.teaching>
In about 230 m, turn left to go through a gate, signed for Kincardine O'Neil. Cross the road with care to follow the track (a section of the Old Military Road) gently uphill. In the early stages of the ascent you will look down on St Finan's Church and the Peel of Lumphanan. Macbeth's Well and Macbeth's Stone are also situated below you, but are not readily visible or identifiable. As you climb, fine open views to a broad western aspect open up, where you can readily identify prominent hilltops such as Mount Keen, Lochnagar, Morven and Craiglich. Below you in the middle distance, under Craiglich, is the area of farmland that was formerly the Loch of Auchlossan before it was drained. Above Cairnbeathie Farm the rough track joins a quiet tarred access road as it continues south on the route of the Old Military Road.* (482 m)



**Note: the highly recommended Lumphanan Walks leaflet, produced by the Lumphanan Paths Group, contains an excellent summary of the historical aspects mentioned above in the 'About Lumphanan' section. See: <https://bit.ly/3nuTz8J>*

(4) Veer left off tarred road at Newton of Auchlossan

(57.11135; -2.69349) <https://w3w.co/adjuster.ratio.civic>

In 1.6 km, veer left off the tarred road at the sign for Newton of Auchlossan. Continue along this undulating rough track as it eventually starts to descend from the watershed above Hillhead Farm towards the River Dee and Kincardine O'Neil. In this section there are now good views towards Kerloch, Mount Shade, Clachnaben and Peter's Hill. Eventually the rough track becomes a tarred access road again. (2.1 km)



(5) Sharp right and uphill onto Old Military Road again

(57.09764; -2.68830) <https://w3w.co/hunt.knees.blush>

In 1.8 km, turn sharp right off the tarred access road and walk uphill towards the Hill of Dess Farm. You have now re-joined a section of the Old Military Road again. After the short ascent, continue on past Hill of Dess House and the neighbouring farm outhouses on your left side. (3.9 km)



(6) Take right fork to continue on Old Military Road

(57.10106; -2.69270) <https://w3w.co/vivid.rose.withdraws>

In 500 m, at a y-junction on the rough track, take the right fork to continue on the Old Military Road. The left fork takes an alternative route by Oldtown Farm*. (4.4 km)

**Note: See the highly recommended Lumphanan Walks leaflet for information about the network of possible paths in this area: <https://bit.ly/3nuTz8J>*



(7) Through gate and left to re-trace steps back to Lumphanan

(57.10743; -2.68947) <https://w3w.co/imperious.divorcing.terms>

In 600 m, after passing through (and carefully closing behind you) a field gate, turn left to re-trace your steps back towards Lumphanan. (5.2 km)



(8) Veer right off tarred road to take signed footpath back to Lumphanan

(57.11840; -2.69671) <https://w3w.co/thousands.converter.breakaway>

In 1.3 km, after passing farm outbuildings on your right side, it is easy to miss the turn-off from the tarred road onto the footpath track signed for Lumphanan. Veer right here to re-trace your steps back to the village, looking down once again on the Peel of Lumphanan and St Finan's Church. On the downhill section there is a well-placed metal bench with a good view down towards Lumphanan. (6.5 km)



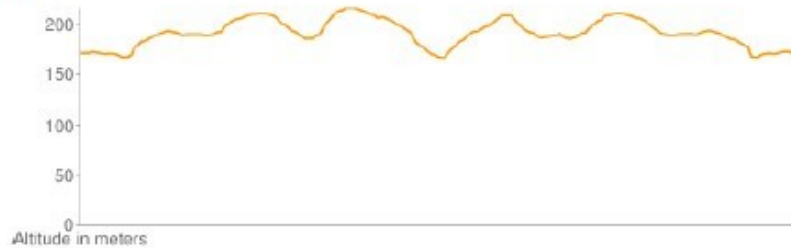
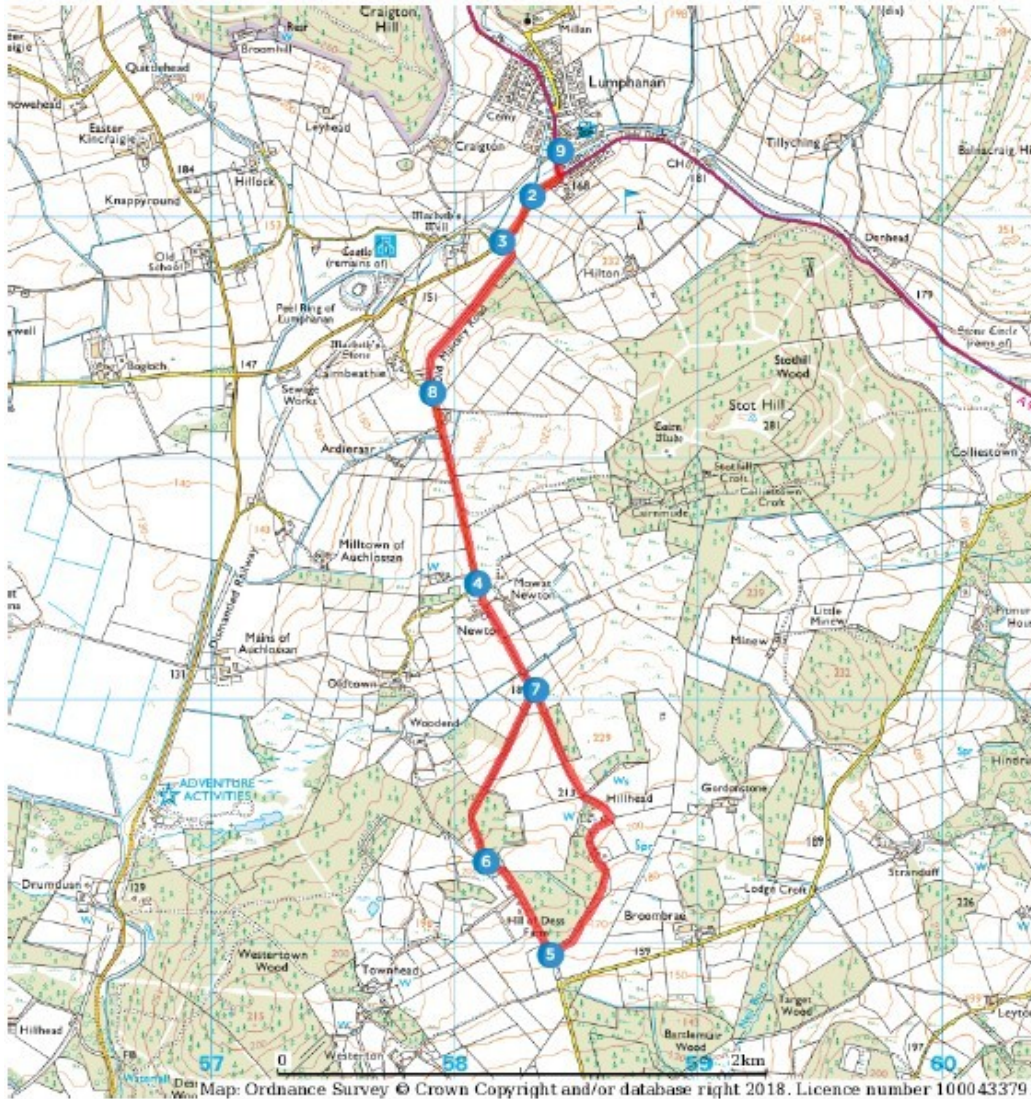
(9) Finish walk back at garden area near Station Square

(57.12745; -2.68816) <https://w3w.co/basically.spreading.hours>

In 1.2 km, you will have returned to your start-point on Perhill Road. (7.7 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](#)