

The Mack Walks: Short Walks in Scotland Under 10 km

Pitmedden House-Tolquhon Castle Circular (Aberdeenshire)

Route Summary

An easy walk through farmland and woodland with little appreciable overall ascent, and on mostly good paths. The route starts and finishes at the National Trust for Scotland owned Pitmedden House & Gardens. However, the focal point of this walk is the splendid ruin of 16th Century Tolquhon Castle maintained by Historic Environment Scotland.

Duration: 3 hours (including castle visit)



Route Overview

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Transport/Parking: There is an infrequent Stagecoach bus service from Ellon to Pitmedden. Check timetables. Pitmedden House NTS car-park (charges apply for non-members).

Length: 6.430 km / 4.02 mi

Height Gain: 80 meter **Height Loss:** 80 meter

Max Height: 120 meter **Min Height:** 70 meter

Surface: Moderate. Mostly good grassy paths. A short section on a narrow tarred access road at Raitshill.

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

Difficulty: Easy.

Dog Friendly: Yes. On lead on public roads and near farm livestock.

Refreshments: Excellent cafe in Pitmedden House.



Description

This is a very pleasant and easy walk amongst the gentle rolling fields and hedgerows of the Formartine area of Aberdeenshire. The focal point on the route is, of course, the ruin of Tolquhon Castle, built in the 1580s and highly regarded for its visual attraction and completeness. During the summer months the castle and grounds are open to the public for a modest charge and are well sign-posted by Historic Environment Scotland. We strongly advise a visit (*see Waypoint 11 for entry information*). From the 1200s Tolquhon was one of the main residences of the Thanage of Formartine. In 1390 the Thanage was granted by Robert III to Sir Thomas Preston, who built the Preston Tower in the early 1400s, part of which still stands. The later, much bigger castle was built to emphasise the wealth and status of William Forbes, the 7th Laird of Tolquhon. A contemporary inscription on the grand gatehouse tells us about the building of the castle: "*All this warke except the auld tour was begun be William Forbes 15 Aprile 1584 and endit be him 20 Ocober 1589*". The 11th Laird lost the family fortune by backing the disastrous scheme for a Scottish colony on the Darien peninsula in Panama, and the castle was sold in 1716. It remained uninhabited as a farmhouse into the 1800s, but a painting from the 1850s shows how it had already fallen into disrepair. At the end of the walk there is the option to take in the gardens and museum of farming life at Pitmedden House maintained by the National Trust for Scotland. The gardens are recreated in the formal 18th Century Renaissance style. In summer, the floral borders and fruit gardens are also a delight, whilst the museum is an interesting and important record of agricultural life in former times.



Waypoints

(1) Start at Pitmedden House car-park

(57.34197; -2.19422) <https://w3w.co/yesterday.pack.sketching>
Start the walk from the car-park at Pitmedden House & Gardens*. From the car-parking area walk on the access road and turn left, going away from the house and gardens.

**Note: as this is a National Trust for Scotland property, car-parking charges apply if you are not a member.*



(2) Head out exit road from car-park

(57.34147; -2.19458) <https://w3w.co/builds.branch.schooling>
In about 80 m from the car-park, pass a sign saying 'Exit' on the narrow road leading away from Pitmedden House & Gardens. (130 m)



(3) Left onto path in woods

(57.34123; -2.19517) <https://w3w.co/parks.herb.blogging>
In just another 50 m, or so, go off the exit road and take a narrow path on your left into the woods for a short distance. (130 m)



(4) Veer right to take path by boundary stone

(57.34112; -2.19530) <https://w3w.co/balanced.fool.abstracts>
In only 15 m, or so, from the road, veer right to take a path that passes a low boundary stone (or similar). Carry on walking on this path until it reaches the main A920 road at the exit from Pitmedden House. Go left at this main road along the verge, walking towards the Formartine FC football ground. (146 m)



(5) Right to cross road onto Countryside Path

(57.33896; -2.19782) <https://w3w.co/wimp.emptyed.wolf>

In 375 m, just before the Formartine FC football ground, cross the A920 road with great care, and take the path straight ahead of you beside a sign saying 'Countryside Path'. Follow this path with a line of trees on your left and a field on your right. Shortly, the path will take a right turn, still with a line of trees on your left and a field on your right. (520 m)



(6) Left over bridge onto Fishers Walk

(57.34322; -2.20461) <https://w3w.co/handyman.momentous.harp>

In 800 m the path you are on will cross a narrow bridge made of railway sleepers to meet the Fishers Walk right-of-way. Go left along the Fishers Walk. (1.3 km)



(7) Through gate veering left past house

(57.34290; -2.21758) <https://w3w.co/fishery.nylon.tight>

In 700 m, the right-of-way goes through a gate (closing it behind you) and the back garden of a modern house at a place marked on the map as Dalchon, Veer slightly left and past the house to meet a narrow tarred road which you turn right along.

Alternatively, if you prefer not to walk through the garden and drive of the house you can take a path to your left that takes you to the narrow road slightly further down, where you turn right.

(2.1 km)



(8) Follow old drove road

(57.34508; -2.22537) <https://w3w.co/lanes.plausible.whistling>

In 600 m, passing by houses at Raitshill, the tarred road ends. Go straight ahead to follow the grassy road that continues through a short avenue of trees. This is an old right-of-way, an old 'drove road', also called the 'Old Aberdeen Road'. If followed to the end, it takes you to the village of Tarves. (2.7 km)



(9) Right for Tolquhon Castle

(57.35099; -2.22266) <https://w3w.co/scrambles.mailings.scars>
In another 700 m, with views to Tolquhon Castle on your right, below you, take the path between fields down towards the castle. (3.4 km)



(10) Right past information board

(57.34924; -2.21407) <https://w3w.co/escalated.enhanced.popped>
In 600 m, at a small car-park, you will arrive at an information board for Tolquhon Castle set on a low stone base. After checking out the info, move on, veering right towards the gates of the castle and a low building to the left of the gates. (4.0 km)



(11) Follow sign for shop on left

(57.34895; -2.21363) <https://w3w.co/rollers.jots.forwarded>
In less than 50 m, take the path towards the small reception and shop for Tolquhon Castle. We strongly recommend visiting the ruins of Tolquhon Castle if it is open*. It looks splendid and the ruins are quite complete and well-signed. If you are not visiting the castle, jump to Waypoint 13.

**Note: Opening times: 1 Apr to 30 Sept: Daily, 9.30am to 5.30pm (may close for lunch) Last entry 5pm. Closed: 1 Oct to 31 Mar. Entry price for adult (2018): £5. See: <https://bit.ly/2wKQW8G>*



(12) Tolquhon Castle

(57.34834; -2.21341) <https://w3w.co/them.ballpoint.pounce>
If visiting the castle take you time to wander around the well-signed ruins and the grounds. When you are ready, make your way to the exit gate to the left of the reception/shop. (4.1 km)



(13) Leave castle gates and go right down narrow road

(57.34900; -2.21379) <https://w3w.co/brilliant.payer.theme>
Outside of the gates to the castle, with the castle behind you, go right down the narrow tarred road (but don't miss the ruined doocot as you pass the gable end of the reception/shop building). (4.5 km)



(14) Carry straight on with gallery on left

(57.34756; -2.21088) <https://w3w.co/fingertip.royal.smoker>
In 200 m, passing the entrance to the Tolquhon Gallery on your left and two field openings on your right, carry straight on down a farm road. Pass through or around a couple of sets of steel gates into an area of rough ground. Close all gates securely and take care if there are any livestock around! (4.7 km)



(15) Veer right and downhill on rough ground

(57.34563; -2.21014) <https://w3w.co/factored.paradise.draw>
In 300 m from the gallery entrance, veer right and downhill away from a tipping area for stone and soil. Follow the rough track down towards the Fisher Walk path you were on earlier in the walk (Waypoint 6). At a t-junction with the Fisher Walk path there is a steel gate. Ensure you securely close the wire tyer for the gate after you have entered through the gate. Turn left and follow the Fisher Walk path back in the direction of Pitmedden House. (5.0 km)



(16) Veer right off Fishers Walk into trees

(57.34347; -2.20035) <https://w3w.co/inferior.haystack.canny>
In 900 m, upon entering the edge of Limekiln Wood, veer slightly right to take the path into the wood, passing the disused limekiln building before you reach the main A920 road. (5.9 km)



(17) Cross road and head for Pitmedden House

(57.34361; -2.19790) <https://w3w.co/yacht.segmented.cute>
In 200 m, or so, the path meets the busy A920 road at the entrance to Pitmedden House. Cross the road with extreme care and either start taking the path, or walk on the verge of the Pitmedden House access road. If you take the path through the trees you will need to leave the path before the nearby access road starts to turn right towards the front of Pitmedden House. Walk past the front of Pitmedden House on the verge of the access road, heading for the car-park where you started the walk. (6.1 km)



(18) Finish walk back at Pitmedden House car-park

(57.34202; -2.19405) <https://w3w.co/yesterday.pack.sketching>
In 300 m you will have arrived back at the NTS car-park where you started the walk. (6.4 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](#)