

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

## Portsoy-Strathmarchin Bay Ramble (Aberdeenshire)

### Route Summary

This is a gentle coastal walk, mostly on clear grassy paths. There are good viewpoints, walking to and from the attractive and isolated beach at Strathmarchin Bay. Returning to Portsoy we take a detour to the pretty park at Loch Soy before exploring the charming old harbour area.

Duration: 3 hours.



### Route Overview

**Duration:** 3 hours.

**Transport/Parking:** Stagecoach run frequent bus services that pass through Portsoy. Check timetables. There are parking spaces at various points on Links Road near to the walk start/finish point.

**Length:** 7.110 km / 4.44 mi

**Height Gain:** 176 meter. **Height Loss:** 176 meter.

**Max Height:** 64 meter. **Min Height:** 3 meter.

**Surface:** Moderate. Mostly on grassy paths and tracks. Section in Portsoy mostly on paved surfaces. Not suitable for off-road mobility scooters due to sections where, although well-defined, the paths are narrow, steep and rocky.

**Difficulty:** Easy.

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

**Dog Friendly:** Yes, keep dogs on lead near to farm animals.

**Refreshments:** Options in Portsoy.



### Description

This is an excellent short coastal walk to a delightful and secluded sandy beach 2.5 km east of Portsoy. From King's Head point, nearby, there are fine views east along the coast towards Troup Head. On the return route, at the old Coastguard Viewpoint there are also superb views west, and back down towards the large coastal village of Portsoy. In the final sections, the route takes in the pretty artificial lake, Loch Soy, in the centre of Portsoy, and



the picturesque and charming old harbour area. The burgh was

established by Mary, Queen of Scots, in 1550, and the first harbour was built at that time. Today, many old buildings, dating back to the end of the 1600s or early 1700s, survive to enhance the surroundings of the Old Harbour. The route starts and finishes at the Salmon Bothy museum. The salmon house building was purpose built in 1834 by the Seafield Estate, which then owned the salmon fishing rights along the coast. This former working salmon fishing house has been sensitively restored and showcases displays and information about Portsoy, its industries and trade over the centuries, and its harbours and the salmon fishing operations. For more information and opening

times see: <https://salmonbothy.org/museum/>



## Waypoints

### (1) Start walk at Salmon Bothy museum

(57.68524; -2.68663) <https://w3w.co/homecare.soil.besotted>  
Facing the Salmon Bothy museum\*, turn left to walk east along Links Road, passing the caravan park and Sail Loft, with beach on your left side\*\*. Keep going towards the corner of the car-park near the eastern end of the beach.

*\*Note: The route starts and finishes at the Salmon Bothy museum. The salmon house building was purpose built in 1834 by the Seafield Estate, which then owned the salmon fishing rights along the coast. This former working salmon fishing house has been sensitively restored and showcases displays and information about Portsoy, its industries and trade over the centuries, and its harbours and the salmon fishing operations. For more information and opening times see: <https://salmonbothy.org/museum/>*



*\*\*Note: The Sail Loft buildings which make up the self-catering accommodation known as the Sail Loft bunkhouse are listed as Category B. They date from the 1700's and include the former Sail Making Loft, a finely detailed Georgian House and two associated cottages. They were recently restored by a community project. See: <https://www.portsoysailloft.org/sail-loft-story/>*

### (2) Veer left along coastal path

(57.68264; -2.68192) <https://w3w.co/chuckle.envoy.requiring>  
In just over 500 m, at the small car-parking area at the end of Links Road, veer slightly left along the grassy coastal path. (536 m)



### (3) Veer right and uphill on narrow path

(57.68335; -2.68074) <https://w3w.co/pits.outermost.tens>  
In about 100 m, veer right and uphill on a narrow path to meet the main coastal path at the top of the slope. Turn left here to follow the path east. (647 m)



#### (4) Carry straight on after coloured gate

(57.68514; -2.67564) <https://w3w.co/incursion.teacher.walled>  
In 450 m, after passing through a brightly painted gate, carry straight on, ignoring the path going uphill and right. (1.1 km)



#### (5) Continue straight on at path for old Coastguard lookout

(57.68964; -2.66688) <https://w3w.co/amused.monopoly.consoled>  
After following the grassy path for 800 m, continue straight on at junction with path going right and uphill for to Coastguard lookout above you. You will climb to the Coastguard Lookout point later on the walk. Keep going along the coast as the grassy path gets a little narrower and less well-used. (1.9 km)



#### (6) Left at cairn to divert to King's Head

(57.68861; -2.66259) <https://w3w.co/agreeable.energetic.rare>  
In 300 m, where there is a small stone cairn, divert left to follow an indistinct path for about 50 m onto the grassy top of King's Head. From here, there is a good view east along the coast towards Troup Head. On your right, you will also spot the little cove and beach at Strathmarchin Bay, the return point on your route. When you are ready, re-trace your steps to the stone cairn and turn left to continue following the narrow grassy coastal path. (2.2 km)



#### (7) Arrive at Strathmarchin beach

(57.68686; -2.66210) <https://w3w.co/prestige.eclipses.glee>  
In a further 300 m, or so, you will have arrived at the delightful little sandy beach at Strathmarchin Bay. When you have finished exploring the beach and rocks, start re-tracing your steps back along the rough coastal path. (2.5 km)





## (8) Veer left and steep uphill for Coastguard lookout point

(57.68941; -2.66647) <https://w3w.co/stretch.kettles.flamenco>  
After passing the stone cairn at Waypoint 6, now on your right side, in about 250 m from the cairn, look for a short but steep narrow path veering uphill on your left to the old Coastguard Lookout point\*. (3.1 km)

*\*Note: If you feel the path described above is too steep or muddy, perhaps, just continue along the coastal path for another 50 m, or so, to Waypoint 5 on the outward route. Here, you would turn left and take the signed path going uphill to the old Coastguard Lookout point.*



## (9) Coastguard lookout point

(57.68936; -2.66687) <https://w3w.co/opts.mixes.juicy>  
In 30 m, or so, you will have arrived at the old Coastguard Lookout point where there are superb views west, and back down towards Portsoy. Nothing remains of the lookout structure except the overgrown base. On the day we visited, the area was marked by a rectangle of white posts with pennant flags and a small sign at ground level. Close to the lookout point is a 'faerie grotto' with memorial bench, garden gnomes and similar ornaments. When you are ready, take the obvious path, passing a white post, and returning through the gorse bushes in the direction of Portsoy. (3.1 km)



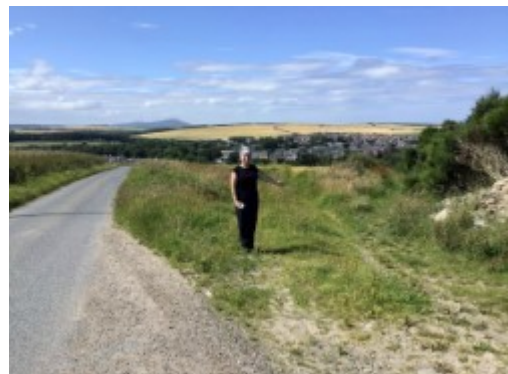
## (10) Left and uphill

(57.68485; -2.67541) <https://w3w.co/releasing.nodded.thinks>  
After following the path through the gorse for 800 m, at a t-junction, go left and uphill. Soon you will cross a little wooden bridge and follow the informal path around the fenced field, at first uphill, and then right, back in the direction of Portsoy. Soon, the path emerges onto the access road for Rosehall Croft, below you. Carry on along the access road as Portsoy gets closer below you on your right side. (3.9 km)



## (11) Sharp right and down path back to Portsoy

(57.67919; -2.67761) <https://w3w.co/unheated.overt.faster>  
In 700 m, where the rough access road meets a minor tarred road, turn sharp right to follow the grassy path downhill towards Portsoy. At the bottom of the hill you cross a stone bridge over the Burn of Durn and climb uphill for a short section. 4.6 km)



### (12) Left at y-junction and up to main road

(57.68093; -2.68589) <https://w3w.co/nitrogen.workforce.ratty>  
In 500 m, as you climb uphill away from the bridge over the Burn of Durn, at a y-junction, go left for a short distance to meet the A98 at Aird Street. Turn left here to walk along the pavement, heading away from the centre of the village. (5.1 km)



### (13) Across main road and up narrow access drive

(57.67868; -2.68777) <https://w3w.co/smoking.socket.taxpayers>  
In 400 m, cross the busy road with care and take the narrow access drive uphill for a short distance. There is an old house on your right, but you take a path veering left away from the house. This path takes you to the public park at the Loch Soy recreational area, passing the striking former railway station building (now used as a scout hall) on your way. (5.5 km)



### (14) Walk around Loch Soy

(57.67956; -2.69043) <https://w3w.co/spotty.spindles.wriggle>  
In 300 m, or so, you will have arrived at the edge of little Loch Soy, a pretty artificial lake. We suggest that you walk anti-clockwise on the path around the water's edge and take the lane out of the park area towards Seafield Street. (5.8 km)



### (15) Left along Seafield Street then right down South High Street

(57.68147; -2.69122) <https://w3w.co/shampoos.depend.cookies>  
In 300 m, at Seafield Street, Portsoy's main street, go left past the Co-op, cross the road with care and go right down South High Street. You will arrive at the old town square, where you continue on, veering slightly right to take the offset North High Street (past the now closed Boyne Hotel) down towards the old harbour area. Note the many fine old buildings on this street. (6.1 km)



## (16) Left at bottom of North High Street to explore old harbour area

(57.68455; -2.69099) <https://w3w.co/prompts.dignitary.quietest>  
In 400 m, at the bottom of North High Street, you will have arrived at the picturesque and charming old harbour area where we suggest you first turn left\*. You will want to explore this area. Ensure you don't miss the dolphin sculpture and viewpoint above the western end of the old harbour. (6.5 km)

*\*Note: Portsoy was established as a burgh by Mary, Queen of Scots, in 1550 and the first harbour was built at that time. Today, many old buildings, dating back to the end of the 1600s or early 1700s, survive to enhance the surroundings of the Old Harbour.*



## (17) Right up steps across from public toilets

(57.68458; -2.69013) <https://w3w.co/iceberg.meatball.nutty>  
When you are ready to leave the old harbour area, walk back along the Shorehead road, passing the ends of North High Street and Low Street on your right side. After passing the Shore Inn on your right side, take the steps onto the Lodging Brae path, passing a small garden area with an old fishing boat. (6.9 km)



## (18) Left at Schoolhendry Street then right down path to Salmon Bothy

(57.68487; -2.68865) <https://w3w.co/crisprier.butlers.result>  
In 100 m, or so, when the path meets Schoolhendry Street, turn left, then very quickly go right down a pathway that will take you down to Main Street and then right, to the back of the Salmon Bothy building, then around to the front of the Bothy where you started the walk. (7.0 km)



## (19) Finish walk back at Salmon Bothy museum

(57.68529; -2.68669) <https://w3w.co/homecare.soil.besotted>  
In 100 m, or so, you are back at the place where you started the walk outside the front of the Salmon Bothy building, where the walk ends. (7.1 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](#)