

The Mack Walks: Short Walks in Scotland Under 10 km

St Cyrus Beach and Cliffs Circular (Aberdeenshire)

Route Summary

A good leg-stretching walk in a visually stunning coastal landscape. The St Cyrus Nature Reserve is a very special place for plants and wildlife. The route takes in the old raised beach, a long stretch of golden sand, a waterfall, and wonderful clifftop views.

Duration: 2.5 hours



Route Overview

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Transport/Parking: X7 Stagecoach bus from Stonehaven or Montrose. Car park at the St Cyrus Reserve Visitor Centre.

Length: 6.790 km / 4.24 mi

Height Gain: 151 meter **Height Loss:** 151 meter

Max Height: 67 meter **Min Height:** 0 meter

Surface: Moderate. Mostly smooth beach and good paths. Optional diversion to waterfall at Waypoint 4 involves scrambling over some low rocks. We believe that the beach and return path along the grassy raised beach are accessible for off-road mobility scooters. Due to rocks and steep steps, the mid-section of the route from Waypoint 4 to Waypoint 9 are not accessible.

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

Difficulty: Medium to easy.

Dog Friendly: Dogs on lead or under close control at all times.

Refreshments: The Old Bakery Cafe in St Cyrus village.



Description

This walk explores the very special natural environment that makes up the St Cyrus Nature Reserve. The Reserve is a protective space for many species of birds (resident and migratory), butterflies and moths, and grasses and flowers. The St Cyrus beach is a huge swathe of golden sand running north from the mouth of the River North Esk. It is backed by an ancient raised beach made up of grasses and flower meadows. Above the old raised beach are vegetation-rich low volcanic cliffs that support diverse forms of plants and wildlife, most notably peregrine falcons. The route takes in a large section of beach, heading north towards a rocky headland where the remains of the 15th Century Kaim of Mathers Castle are prominent. At this point, depending on the tide, there is an option to scramble over foreshore rocks to the impressive Woodston Burn Waterfall. The mid-section of the walk ascends to the clifftop where there are stunning coastal views. Descending to the old raised beach, the homeward route takes in the ancient Nether Cemetery, dating back to the 13th Century. The Visitor Centre at the start and finish of the walk provides very interesting information about the Reserve, the wider area and the now discontinued salmon fishing industry.



Waypoints

(1) Start walk at St Cyrus Nature Reserve visitor centre

(56.76141; -2.42405) <https://w3w.co/cuddling.gosh.mason>

Start the walk from the St Cyrus Nature Reserve visitor centre. With your back to the door of the centre, go right to follow the path north towards the Reserve.



(2) Right over bridge towards beach

(56.76235; -2.42189) <https://w3w.co/snug.drove.adopts>

In approximately 170 m you will arrive at a wooden bridge on your right, signposted for the beach. Go right onto the bridge, crossing the now dry former riverbed towards the beach. (171 m)



(3) Left along beach

(56.76152; -2.41744) <https://w3w.co/last.rafters.endlessly>

In another 330 m, or so, upon reaching the beach, go left to walk along the beach in a northerly direction. Obviously, it will depend on the state of the tide as to how much beach there is to walk on. Keep walking towards the rocks at the end of the beach. (499 m)



(4) Through gap in rocks and over

(56.77465; -2.39485) <https://w3w.co/tailwind.struggle.alert>

In 2.3 km, upon reaching the rocks and depending on the state of the tide, you have the option of going through a gap in the rocks and scrambling over the rocky foreshore towards a path on the grassy backshore that takes you to a waterfall at the Woodston Burn. If that is not an option due to the tide, or you don't fancy the rock scrambling, return back along the beach for about 400 m, making for the path up the cliff-side to a white cottage at the clifftop. (2.8 km)



(5) Waterfall at Woodston Burn

(56.77542; -2.39209) <https://w3w.co/fades.fracture.insolvent>

In 200 m, after scrambling over rocks and following a grassy path, you will have arrived at the impressive Woodston Burn waterfall where there is also a ruined cottage. To your right, on the cliff-top, 200 m away or so, you will see the remains of the Kaim of Mathers castle. When you are ready, return back to the St Cyrus beach and make your way towards the path up the cliff-side to a white cottage at the clifftop. (3.0 km)



(6) Up path to clifftop at Woodston Bothy

(56.77365; -2.40056) <https://w3w.co/drill.cuff.standards>

In 600 m from the Woodston Burn waterfall (or 400 m from the rocks at the end of the beach), take the path up to the clifftop towards Woodston Bothy, with its white-painted walls. (3.6 km)



(7) Continue past Woodston Bothy

(56.77518; -2.39922) <https://w3w.co/lyricist.animated.noticing>

In 200 m, or so, you will have ascended to the clifftop at the Woodston Bothy. Continue past the white-painted building. (3.8 km)



(8) Left along clifftop path

(56.77512; -2.40052) <https://w3w.co/germinate.clutches.narrowest>

In 100 m, having passed the white bothy building on your left and a large stone-built house on your right, go left along the clifftop path. (3.9 km)



(9) Down path from clifftop at viewpoint

(56.77262; -2.40757) <https://w3w.co/sponge.quail.somewhere>

In 500 m you will have arrived at the St Cyrus Reserve viewpoint, with information boards. At this point you are close to the village of St Cyrus. When you are ready to move on, take the obvious path down from the clifftop. (4.4 km)



(10) Right along rough road

(56.77251; -2.40459) <https://w3w.co/fuses.panning.educated>

In 400 m, after descending from the clifftop to the old grassy raised beach, go right along the rough road through the Reserve, back in the direction of the Visitor Centre. (4.8 km)



(11) Check out Nether Cemetery

(56.76555; -2.41874) <https://w3w.co/dial.thinks.streak>

In 1.2 km you have the option of visiting the ancient Nether Cemetery. When you are ready to move on, continue heading back to the Visitor Centre. (6.0 km)



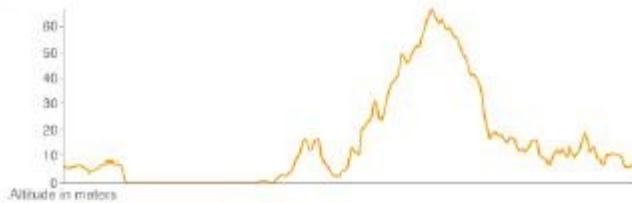
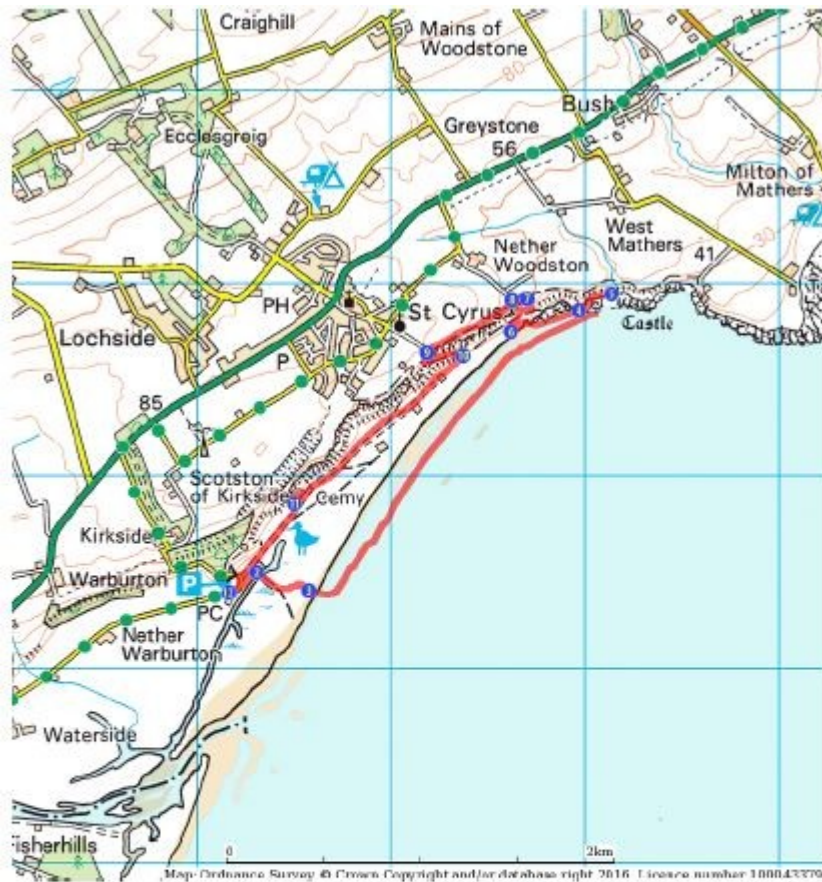
(12) Finish walk back at Visitor Centre

(56.76139; -2.42426) <https://w3w.co/cuddling.gosh.mason>

In 800 m, you will have arrived back at the Visitor Centre where you started the walk. The Centre is interesting, well worth a visit. (6.8 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](#)