

The Mack Walks: Short Walks in Scotland Under 10 km

Suie Hill-Knock Saul Return [Gordon Way] (Aberdeenshire)

Route Summary

A stimulating walk on rough paths, through pine forest and over heather moorland. The distance and overall ascent are modest, but the muddy pathway, often over tree roots, can make for more effort than you might imagine. The fantastic views from Knock Saul more than compensate!

Duration: 3 hours.



Route Overview

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Transport/Parking: No public transport links nearby. Free car-park at walk start/end, just off the Suie Road at the top of the hill between Alford and Clatt. Spaces are limited.

Length: 7.400 km / 4.63 mi

Height Gain: 186 meter. **Height Loss:** 186 meter.

Max Height: 415 meter. **Min Height:** 338 meter.

Surface: Moderate. Mostly rough paths in woodland and moorland. Likely to be muddy in many places.

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

Difficulty: Medium.

Dog Friendly: No farmland to concern the dog owner on this walk. Keep your dog under close control in the Whitehaugh car-park, near the Suie Road. You may encounter riders on horseback on forest road sections.

Refreshments: Options in Alford.



Description

This is an enjoyable walk, mostly in conifer woodland of varying maturity, with some sections through heather moorland. The views from the return point at Knock Saul (412 m) are wonderful, taking in the patchwork of Aberdeenshire farmland and forests below you, then on to extensive vistas of more distant hilltops. The impressive panorama includes: the Bennachie and Menaway Hills in the east; Foudland and Tillymorgan to the north; the Tap o' Noth and Ben Rinnes in the north-west; and the Deeside, Correen and Donside hills, leading the eye to the faraway Cairngorms to the south and south-west. This "there and back" route is



based on a reversed final section of the Gordon Way, an 18.5 km way-marked linear route that runs from the Essons car park at the Bennachie Centre, near Chapel of Garioch, to the Suie Road, between Clatt and Alford. Unfortunately, the trail is no longer maintained. On this walk, a partly broken set of wooden steps is encountered at Waypoint 5, descending into the Den of Drumgown. Take care here! Particularly in the first 1,000 m, or so, in dense forest, the opportunities for fungi spotting are first class. There is a low stone cairn at the summit of Knock Saul, probably of ancient origin. You will also encounter old boundary stones in places on the walk, marking where the parishes of Leslie, Tullynessle and Forbes meet. At the beginning or end of the walk, we suggest that you walk or drive to a magnificent nearby viewpoint on the Suie Road, looking down to the countryside between Clatt and Rhynie, with the hugely impressive Tap o'Noth hill dominating. There are benches there to relax, perhaps have a picnic, and absorb the view! The Suie Road has been an important passage from north to south since mediaeval times, and probably before that.

Waypoints

(1) Start walk at Whitehaugh Forest car-park

(57.29714; -2.75319)

Start the walk at the Whitehaugh Forest car-park at the top of the Suie Hill road. Take the slightly overgrown path into the trees, passing a Gordon Way marker post. Watch out for prolific fungi along this section!



(2) Summit of Suie Hill

(57.29647; -2.73642)

In 1.1 km, after emerging from the conifer forest onto the heathery summit area of Suie Hill, divert a short distance to your right to check out the old boundary stone marking where the parishes of Leslie, Tullynessle and Forbes meet. When you are ready, carry on taking the Gordon Way path in an easterly direction, as before. (1.1 km)



(3) Right at forest road

(57.29989; -2.71311)

After a further 1.5 km, you will emerge from the narrow path through the trees onto a wide forest road. Turn right to walk gently uphill a short distance. (2.6 km)



(4) Left off forest road

(57.29957; -2.71247)

In 55 m, or so, turn left off the forest road to take the Gordon Way path into the trees. (2.7 km)



(5) Left after descent to forest road

(57.29893; -2.70829)

In 300 m, after a steep descent to the forest road in the Den of Drumgown, negotiate the broken steps with care and turn left to walk forward for a short distance. (3.0 km)



(6) Veer right at junction then right and up steep path

(57.29914; -2.70776)

In about 40 m, take the forest road veering right at a junction. Almost immediately, take the steep Gordon Way path on your right, climbing up the easterly side of the Den of Drumgown hillside. (3.0 km)



(7) Cross forest road and continue uphill

(57.29779; -2.70526)

In 300 m, cross another forest road and continue uphill on the Gordon Way path. (3.3 km)



(8) Summit of Knock Saul

(57.29640; -2.69883)

In 400 m, you will have arrived at the open, heathery summit area of Knock Saul where there is an ancient cairn and a modern trig point and picnic bench. There are wonderful views in all directions: the Bennachie and Menaway Hills in the east; the Tap o' Noth and Ben Rinnes in the north-west; and the Deeside hills and Cairngorms to the south and south-west. When you are ready, re-trace your outward route back to the Whitehaugh Forest car-park where you started the walk. (3.7 km)



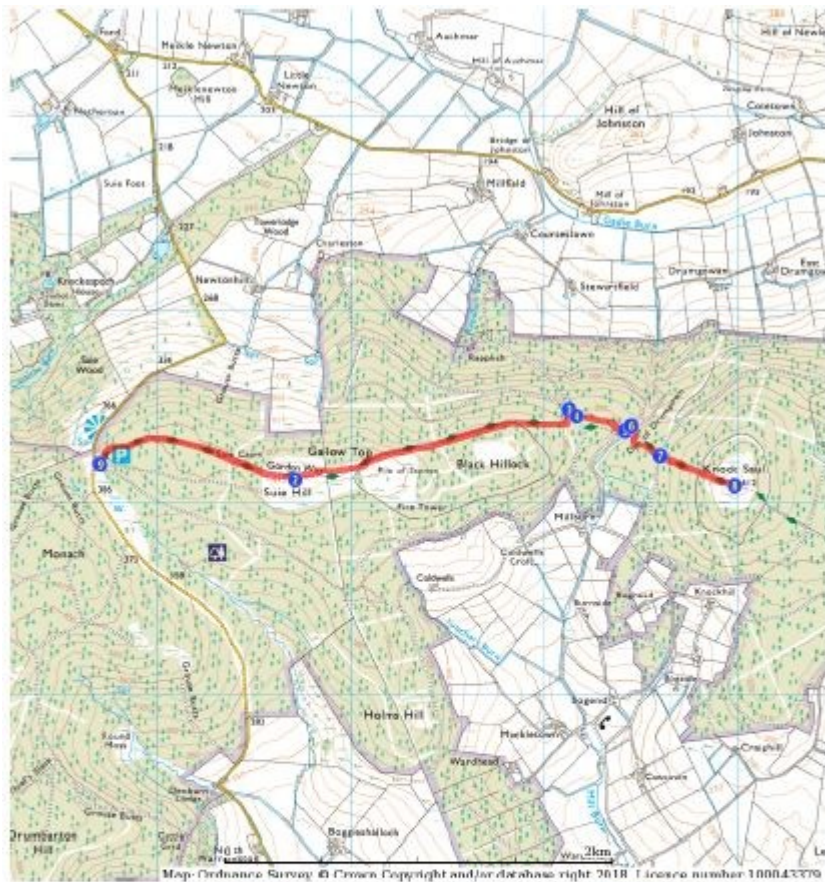
(9) Finish walk back at Whitehaugh Forest car-park

(57.29711; -2.75312)

In 3.7 km you will have returned to the Whitehaugh Forest car-park where you started the walk. You may want to walk a short distance down from here on the verge of the Suie Road (take care!), in a northerly direction, to the nearby viewpoint over Clatt and Rhynie, and towards the hugely impressive Tap o'Noth hill, with the remains of an old hill-fort figuring prominently. (7.4 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](#)