

The Mack Walks: Short Walks in Scotland Under 10 km

Tap o' Noth Circular (Aberdeenshire)

Route Summary

Unusually, this is a circular walk to the Tap o' Noth, a distinctive hill in remote hill-farming country. The route to the ancient stone fort at the summit provides wonderful open views as the track gently ascends. The final approach to the summit is on a steep moorland path.

Duration: 2.75 hours.



Route Overview

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Transport/Parking: There are Stagecoach bus services to Rhynie from Insch and Huntly, where there are train stations. Check timetables. The walk from Rhynie to the Tap o' Noth car-park is 2.5 km. Park in the Tap o' Noth car-park, signposted up a lane from the A941 Rhynie-Dufftown road, 2.5 km from Rhynie.

Length: 6.320 km / 3.95 mi

Height Gain: 339 meter **Height Loss:** 339 meter

Max Height: 554 meter **Min Height:** 271 meter

Surface: Moderate. Rough roads and grassy and moorland paths/tracks. May be very muddy in places. See also note at Waypoint 2.

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

Difficulty: Medium.

Dog Friendly: Yes, but must be on lead around any cattle or sheep encountered. There is a high stile to negotiate near the start of the walk.

Refreshments: There are cafes, pubs and restaurants in Huntly, just over 14 km from Rhynie.



Description

This is a fine walk in the remote countryside near the village of Rhynie where hill-farming and forestry meet moorland. Most route-guides to the Tap o' Noth describe a linear "there and back" walk on the north-western aspect. Ours is a circular route offering an extended walk-in, eventually climbing from the east, with superb views over the Rhynie area. The focal point, of course, is the summit of Tap o' Noth, one of the "stand-out" hills in rural Aberdeenshire. Its distinctive shape is seen in the distance from all sorts of vantage points.

There is a vitrified stone fort on the summit, dating back to the Bronze or Iron Age. At 563 m it is the second highest hill-fort in Scotland and the former fort covers an area of 100 metres by 30 metres with partly vitrified stone ramparts and extensive rubble approaches that cascade down the sides of the hill.

In the early section of the route, great views open up towards the Bennachie and Menaway Hills, the Hill of Fare, Mount Keen, Morven, Buck of Cabrach, then Lochnagar and Ben A'an as you gain height. Closer to hand across the valley is Wheedlemont Hill (with another ancient fort near its summit, Cnoc Cailliche). From the top, views of Ben Rinnes and the Knock Hill are prominent. As a bonus, on our ascent in mid-August, the path for our final ascent path was strewn with succulent ground-hugging blaeberrries and cowberrries. Fancifully, local legend has it that a giant called Jock o' Noth once inhabited the slopes. Jock frequently engaged in battle with another giant, Jock o' Bennachie, by throwing large boulders at each other from their respective hills. There is said to be a stone on Tap o' Noth that bears the mark of the five fingers of Jock o' Bennachie, which he threw from the Oxen Craig. Something to look out for!



Waypoints

(1) Start at Tap o' Noth car-park

(57.34305; -2.86483) <https://w3w.co/navigate.untruth.handsets>

Start the walk at the Tap o' Noth car-park. After checking out the information board, take the new signed path uphill from the rear of the car-park. Follow the hard-surfaced path uphill, with new fencing on either side, for 210 m. Go through the gate at the top of the field then turn left to continue up the main access route to the Tap o' Noth.



(2) Sharp right off main path

(57.34696; -2.86777)

<https://w3w.co/caressing.evenings.mainframe>

After more than 500 m, go sharp right off the main path to take a track* going east and rising gently uphill. Follow this track for 1.4 km, enjoying great views in all directions. (543 m)

**Note: On our most recent visit (Oct 2021) this track had become more overgrown with young gorse and broom bushes. However, we had no problem getting through. If, in future years, this path becomes impassable then the walk will have to be done as a simple ascent and descent on the main path.*



(3) Carry on through gate

(57.34849; -2.84747) <https://w3w.co/rope.estimate.wimp>

After 1.4 km, carry on through the gate in the deer fence and keep going uphill on the grassy track surrounded by bracken. In about 90 m follow the track as it bends right above a boggy area. Keep following this old landrover track for another 300 m as the surroundings on either side changes to heather moorland. Look out for an indistinct landrover track going steeply uphill on your left (easily missed!). (1.9 km)



(4) Left up moorland road

(57.34767; -2.84383) <https://w3w.co/practical.ejects.marathon>
In another 400 m, go sharp left up a rough moorland road. The initial ascent is quite steep. Keep following this rough road as it levels out on the wide ridge between Tap o' Noth and Hill of Noth, and starts to head in the direction of the Tap, still towering above you. (2.3 km)



(5) Follow rough road through fence and uphill

(57.35233; -2.84990) <https://w3w.co/splint.laminated.bowls>
In 700 m, the rough moorland road/track, heading west now, goes through an opening in a low fence and starts to ascend the steep slope of Tap o' Noth. Follow the track as it climbs towards the summit area. (3.0 km)



(6) Right and up road to summit

(57.35069; -2.85720) <https://w3w.co/restless.rich.remission>
After 500 m ascent, you will arrive at the rough access road to the summit of the Tap. Check out the information board with large map of the area before carrying on uphill to the top of the hill where there is a sheltered depression surrounded by the stone walls of the ancient fort. (3.5 km)



(7) Top of the Tap!

(57.35121; -2.85898) <https://w3w.co/loafer.rooks.pats>
As you circle around the old stone ramparts, clearly vitrified in places, you will pass the trig point. As you will appreciate, the views in all directions are tremendous. When you are ready, head back to the access road and start your descent on the road, passing the information board with map on your right as the road gently bends around the hillside as it goes downhill. (3.7 km)



(8) Veer slightly left through gate

(57.35104; -2.86755) <https://w3w.co/greeting.cobbled.fidgeting>
After descending for 1.4 km, veer slightly left off the rough road to go through the gate in the deer fence and carry on downhill through the young broadleaf plantation. At the base of this area you will turn left to follow the track which eventually passes Waypoint 2 on your ascent. Carry on downhill, then go right, through the gate onto the new hard-surfaced path which descends to the rear of the car-park. (5.1 km)

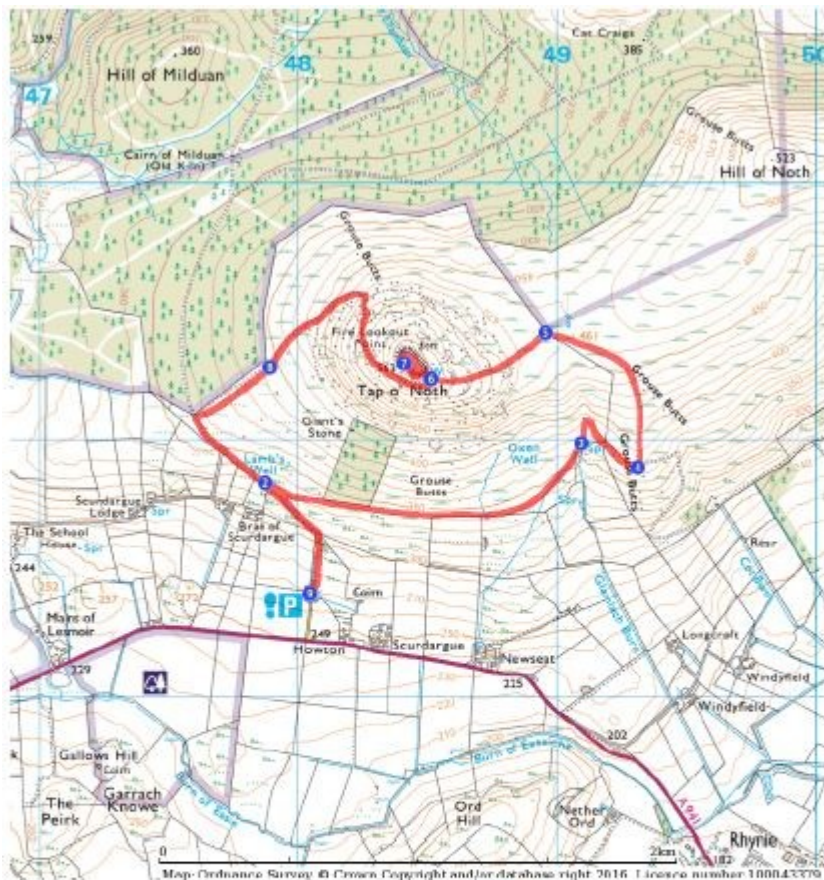


(9) Finish walk back at car-park

(57.34312; -2.86482)
<https://w3w.co/navigate.untruth.handsets>
In 1.2 km you will have arrived back at your start-point in the Tap o' Noth car-park. (6.3 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](#)