

The Mack Walks: Short Walks in Scotland Under 10 km

Tarland-Tomnaverie-Sun Seat Trail (Aberdeenshire)

Route Summary

This is an interesting countryside walk in beautiful surroundings. The route is mostly on well-maintained grassy paths and minor roads, with only gentle ascents and descents. There are points of local interest along the way, notably the ancient stone circle at Tomnaverie.

Duration: 2.75 hours.



Route Overview

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Transport/Parking: Infrequent Stagecoach bus options. Check timetables. On-street car parking in the Square.

Length: 7.060 km / 4.41 mi

Height Gain: 109 meter. **Height Loss:** 109 meter.

Max Height: 177 meter. **Min Height:** 138 meter.

Surface: Moderate. Mostly on well-maintained grassy paths and minor roads. The MacRobert Trust maintain the paths network around Tarland.

Difficulty: Easy.

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

Dog Friendly: Keep dogs on lead near to farm animals.

Refreshments: Angie's Cafe, the Commercial Hotel, the Aberdeen Arms, Tarland Pharmacy & Coffee Shop.



Description

This is a gentle rural ramble in fine scenery, with local points of interest visited along the way. The first focal point is Tomnaverie Stone Circle, one of many ancient sites that point to human activity in the area for at least 6,000 years. The recumbent stone circle is on a low hill that enables wonderful all-around views, framing Lochnagar, 20 miles away on the edge of the Cairngorms, over the recumbent stone in a striking fashion. Much closer, is the hill known as Morven. With its bulky rounded slopes, it is sometimes compared to a sleeping giant. Next, on the route, we visit the old walled garden, now a community asset, at the "fermtoun" of Oldtown of Kinraigie, where there are restored wooden beehives and old-style straw beehives in purpose-built alcoves on the wall. At the mid-point on the walk, at the top of an avenue of young beech trees is the impressive modern stone construction known as the Sun Seat, both for the sunny position of the viewpoint, and the representation of the sun built into the wall behind the seating area. Descending into Muirton pine wood, we pass Alastrean House, now a care home, but originally used as a private residence by the tragic land-owning MacRobert family, who lost three sons in flying incidents before and during WWII. Tarland sits at the centre of The Howe of Cromar, a wide bowl on the eastern edge of the Grampian Mountains between the rivers Dee and Don. The village itself has a fine old Square with some buildings dating back around 300 years. If arriving by car from Aberdeen on the B9119 it is likely that your attention will be immediately grabbed as the road passes over the hill into the Howe of Cromar, with the mountains of Lochnagar, Morven and Mount Keen setting an exceptionally beautiful backdrop to a rolling patchwork of fields and woodlands. Queen Victoria was said to be enchanted by this view of the Howe and a viewpoint is named after her – "The Queen's View". Try not to miss it on your left as you enter the Howe. There is a small car-park across the road.



Waypoints

(1) Leave Tarland Square going south down Bridge Street - the B9119

(57.12751; -2.85947) <https://w3w.co/dwarf.indicates.alert>
Start the walk in the Square at Tarland. Walk east towards the B9119 Aberdeen road to leave the square. Turn right at the information board (look out for useful Tarland Walks leaflets) and walk down the pavement on Bridge Street (B9119).



(2) Just before the bridge go left to join footpath

(57.12613; -2.85819) <https://w3w.co/spicy.relocated.megawatt>
In about 200 m, just before the bridge, cross the road with care and go left onto the path that immediately turns right to cross the Tarland Burn on a footbridge. Carry on taking this path straight ahead, in parallel with the B9119 road on your right side. Eventually, the path goes left around some houses and a field, heading gently uphill towards the B9094 Aboyne Road. (216 m)



(3) Cross the Aboyne Road for footpath to the stone circle

(57.12093; -2.85539) <https://w3w.co/reject.nutty.alley>
In 700 m from the bridge cross the B9094 Aboyne Road with care and turn left to go through a gate for the footpath to the Tomnaverie stone circle*. After crossing a stile in about 200 m, follow the path through a small field on a diagonal route towards a gate and path below the Tomnaverie Stone Circle, which sits on a low hilltop. (900 m)

**Note: on the day we most recently walked this route there were cattle in the small field you must cross to get to the stone circle. This was the first time we had met cattle on this path. If you can see cattle on the hillside field ahead of you and don't want to walk through the field, you may take an alternative route as follows: 1) go left upon crossing the B9094 Aboyne Road to walk along the road, in the direction of Aboyne. Take care to walk on the right side and step up on the verge when meeting oncoming traffic. 2) In about 600 m you will arrive at a path on your right side at a small lay-by. Take the path uphill towards the stone circle on the low hilltop.*



(4) Tomanaverie Stone Circle

(57.11949; -2.84957) <https://w3w.co/basics.mutual.mocked>
In 500 m you will have at the low hilltop where you find the Tomnaverie Stone Circle*. After checking out the information board, the circle, and the views. Take the path downhill from the circle towards the visitor car-park, walking in an easterly direction (towards Aboyne), Walk through the car-park towards the entrance onto the B9094 Aboyne Road. (1.4 km)

**Note: As result of excavations at the Tomnaverie Stone Circle and other ancient sites in the area it is understood that there has been human activity in this area for at least 6,000 years. The recumbent stone circle is on a low hill that enables wonderful all-around views – framing Lochanagar over the recumbent stone in a truly spectacular fashion.*



(5) Leave car-park and veer right along footpath

(57.11982; -2.84411) <https://w3w.co/bookings.chugging.waddled>
In 400 m from the stone circle, near the entrance to the visitor car-park, veer right by a walks post to take a grassy path between fences that goes parallel with the road. In about 120 m the path ends and you must cross the B9094 Aboyne Road with care to rejoin the path on the other side. Follow this path as it goes right, then left, to gently descend towards a bridge over the Tarland Burn. (1.8 km)



(6) Cross bridge and follow footpath

(57.12254; -2.83989) <https://w3w.co/sectors.crackles.unlucky>
In 500 m from Waypoint 5 you will arrive at a footbridge. Go straight ahead, over the bridge and then follow the grassy footpath as it goes right, then left, heading now towards the minor road out of Tarland to Coull. (2.3 km)



(7) Through gate and right onto tarred road

(57.12752; -2.83733) <https://w3w.co/ourselves.creeps.topping>
In 700 m, go through the gate and turn right onto the Coull road. Take care to walk on the right side and step up on the verge when meeting oncoming traffic. (3.0 km)



(8) Left onto road to Oldtown

(57.12576; -2.83260) <https://w3w.co/glance.clincher.madder>
In 300 m, turn left to join the narrow road signed for Oldtown.
(3.3 km)



(9) Oldtown walled garden

(57.13128; -2.82592) <https://w3w.co/basically.haunt.silks>
In 900 m, after the road twists and turns through the farm buildings and houses at Oldtown of Kincaraigie, look out for the Oldtown walled garden* on your left side. Enter the gate to the garden to follow the path past various restored bee hives and herb pots (summertime). When you are ready to move on, return to the gate, turn left and continue along the narrow tarred road in a northerly direction, noting, also, the community orchard on your right side. (4.2 km)

**Note: This is now a community owned garden. There are restored beehives here and an enclosed area at the far-left corner where there are modern bee hives for honey bees (take care when approaching the enclosure!). On your right you can see recesses in the stone wall for old-style straw beehives. See: <https://www.tarland.org.uk/community/tarland-bee-group/>*



(10) Left off tarred road onto path to Sun Seat

(57.13299; -2.82459) <https://w3w.co/trickster.identify.magnum>
In about 200 m from leaving the Oldtown walled garden, at a walk marker post, go left off the tarred road onto a grassy path (if you continue on the tarred road and arrive at the Horse Mill house on your left then you have gone too far! Go back to find the path). Follow the path a short distance in a westerly direction, passing between gorse and broom bushes. (4.5 km)



(11) Sun Seat

(57.13318; -2.82600) <https://w3w.co/powers.slurping.recruited>
In about 100 m from leaving the tarred road you will arrive at the large stone seat known as the "Sun Seat". There are fine views west from here back towards Muirton Wood and the imposing local hill, Morven. When you are ready to move on, follow the path gently downhill through an avenue of young beech trees, towards Muirton Wood. At the end of the avenue, cross the wooden footbridge straight ahead of you and follow the track into Muirton Wood as the route veers slightly right at first to join an estate road through the pine wood towards Alastrean House. (4.6 km)

**Note: The Sun Seat was designed by Dave and Simon Power, and built by local stonemason, Dave Bullock, in 2009.*



(12) Carry straight on towards Alastrean House

(57.13149; -2.83797) <https://w3w.co/spearhead.evolver.brings>
In 800 m from the Sun Seat, ignore a path with walk marker post going right into the trees. Carry on taking the estate forest road towards Alastrean House. At the end of the forest road, at a t-junction with a narrow tarred road, go right and follow the road past out houses. Alastrean House is now obvious, ahead of you on your left side. (5.4 km)



(13) Pass Alastrean House

(57.13172; -2.84288) <https://w3w.co/shaped.beauty.annoys>
In 400 m, you will arrive at the entrance driveway for Alastrean House, now a care home. Keep on past the House, following the tarred road in a westerly direction, with the House on your left side as you pass it. (5.8 km)

**Note: Alastrean House, now a care home, was built as a private residence by the tragic land-owning MacRobert family, who lost three sons in flying incidents before and during WWII. Formerly known as the House of Cromar, it is one of two large country houses on the MacRobert estate, Douneside House being the other. It was built in 1905 by Lord Aberdeen, as a country retreat for his wife, and was originally surrounded by 9,000 acres of agricultural land which made up the Cromar Estate. An arrangement made in 1920 between Lord Aberdeen and his friend and neighbour, Sir Alexander MacRobert, saw the Cromar Estate and house eventually pass to Lady MacRobert in 1934. The house was to be for the use of the MacRobert boys and their families, but sadly they never had a chance to use it extensively. For the tragic story, see: <http://www.themacroberttrust.org.uk/about-the-trust/history/>*



(14) Left off access road onto footpath

(57.13190; -2.84468) <https://w3w.co/finalists.fines.streaks>

In 100 m, or so, at wooden barriers on your left, go left off the tarred road onto the path through the trees. The path leads to an open area with bench overlooking Tarland Golf Course, and a wonderful view beyond, towards Mount Keen. Keep following the path as it passes the granite MacRobert Mausoleum on your right side. (5.9 km)



(15) Veer left at y-junction on footpath

(57.13045; -2.84752) <https://w3w.co/slurs.relishing.rider>

In 300 m, at a fork in the path, we suggest you take the path veering left (both paths meet the tarred access road). Soon, it meets the tarred access road for Alastrean House. Turn left to follow the road out of Muirton Wood and past St Moluag's Church* on your right side, and Tarland Golf clubhouse on your left side. Then turn left to follow B9019 Aberdeen Road back towards the centre of the village, where you finish the walk at the Square where you started. (6.2 km)



*Note: Saint Moluag (c. 510–592) was a Christian missionary. A contemporary of Saint Columba, he worked to evangelise Pictish society.

(16) Finish walk back in Tarland Square

(57.12761; -2.85943) <https://w3w.co/fishnet.rich.trucked>

In 900 m from Waypoint 15, in Muirton Wood, you will have arrived back at the village Square* where you started the walk. (7.1 km)

*Note: The village of Tarland has a fine old Square with some buildings dating back around 300 years.



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](#)