

The Mack Walks: Short Walks in Scotland Under 10 km

Insch-Hills of Christ's Kirk and Flinder Circuit (Aberdeenshire)

Route Summary

Walking through farmland, broadleaf and conifer woods, with a moderately taxing overall ascent of over 300 m, to reach two fine open summits with tremendous 360° views of the surrounding rural scene, taking in a patchwork of farm fields, areas of forest, and low hills on all sides.

Duration: 3 hours.



Route Overview

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Transport/Parking: There are Scotrail train and Stagecoach bus options. Check timetables. The Insch Railway Station car-park is signposted for rail customers only. There are on-street parking options nearby.

Length: 8.85 km / 5.5 mi

Height Gain: 316 meter **Height Loss:** 316 meter

Max Height: 311 meter **Min Height:** 126 meter

Surface: Moderate. Mostly on good, grassy paths and rough forest roads. Fallen trees to negotiate after Waypoint 2 in the Beatrice Woodland, and between Waypoints 14 and 15. Not suitable for off-road mobility scooters due to fallen trees.

However, you may start and finish at Waypoint 3, off the Insch-Kennethmont public road where there is a parking area behind closed but unlocked field gates. Note that some slopes are quite steep! At Waypoint 14 do NOT go left as instructed (due to fallen tree obstructions) but instead re-trace your outward route back to the rough car-parking area at Waypoint 3. **Child Friendly:** Yes, but only if children are used to walks of this distance and overall ascent.

Difficulty: Medium/Hard, with some steep ascents

Dog Friendly: Yes, but must be on lead on public roads and around any cattle or sheep encountered.

Refreshments: Options in Insch and Inverurie.



Description

This is a good there and back walk from Insch railway station, with the mid-sections forming an attractively varied figure of eight loop. The route leaves the expanding commuter village of Insch to enter the Beatrice Community Woodland, where a variety of broadleaf tree varieties are signposted along the way. It then enters a dense conifer plantation, but with open and wide grassy tracks, to commence the ascent of a duo of joined-up hills. Hill of Christ's Kirk (311 m) and Hill of Flinder (293 m) are fairly low hills in the scheme of things, but with tremendous panoramic views as you climb towards their summits, and, of course, from the tops themselves. Across the valley to the north lies the immediately recognisable Hill of Dunnydeer (268 m), with the impressive ruin of its ancient hill fort catching the eye, as ever. See our Dunnydear walk: <https://goo.gl/MVQS1F> To the east, the Bennachie massif is prominent. To the west, the pyramid shape of Tap o'Noth dominates the skyline. All around is a patchwork of rolling hills, farmland and forest. The evocatively named Hill of Christ's Kirk refers to a ruined 12th C church of that name (also known as "St Muriel's" - the angel of peace and harmony), obscured in a copse of trees, by a farm of the same name, to the south of the hill. On the way up, the route passes fairly close to the farm known as "Sleepytoun", immortalised in a bothy ballad of the same name which describes the vicissitudes of working life for a "feed" farm labourer in the 19th C. Some versions have many more verses that describe the social and employment conditions of the day, but this fine rendition by Dick Gaughan is fairly short: <https://goo.gl/bH9LwU> . There is archaeological evidence that a fort, surrounded by three earth ramparts, occupied the summit area of Hill of Christ's Kirk, although this is not obvious to the naked eye nowadays.



Waypoints

(1) Start walk at Inch railway station

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Start the walk from the car-park at Inch Railway Station. Leave the car-park at the west end, passing the station buildings on your left. Turn left onto Gordon Terrace and walk over the railway line crossing to join North Road. Walk along the pavement, ignoring the first left turn to Auchleven. Look out for the next left turn signposted for Old Leslie.



(2) Take path into Beatrice Community Woodland

In just over 400 m, at the left turn signposted for Old Leslie, cross the Old Leslie road. Ignore the gate signposted for the Beatrice Community Woodland (this short initial section of the path is blocked). Instead, carry on for 45 m, or so, to where a rough road meets the public road. Cross the rough road and veer very slightly left to join a grassy path through the trees. Keep following the path, going through a number of gates, as it winds through the woods, with the main road to Kennethmont never far away on your right side. Eventually, at a gate, the path emerges from the woods to follow the boundary of a field on your left and the main road on your right towards the base of Hill of Christ's Kirk. (470 m)



(3) Take the rough road going gently uphill

In 1.3 km, arriving at an open car-parking area with (closed gates to the main road), go left to take the rough road going gently uphill with the field on your left and an area of woodland recently harvested and re-planted on your right. (1.7 km)



(4) Go right and uphill on wide grassy track

In 440 m, or so, take the wide grassy track going off right and uphill, passing Sleepytoun Farm across a field on your left. Keep following this path uphill as it starts to bend right, In about 290 m, at a junction, go sharp left. (2.14 km)



(5) Right and uphill

In 820 m from Waypoint 4, and about 525 m from the left turn at a junction, in a relatively open area, where the track you are following offers to go downhill, take a right turn to follow the track going uphill. Keep following this track for about 470 m to the summit of Hill of Christ's Kirk where there is a trig point. (2.96 km)



(6) Trig point at summit of Hill of Christ's Kirk

In about 470 m, you will have ascended on the broad grassy track to the summit of Hill of Christ's Kirk where there is a trig point. After taking in the panoramic views, continue along the grassy track as it heads west and downhill in the direction of the nearby Hill of Flinder. (3.43 km)



(7) Right and uphill

In 700 m, having descended from the summit of Hill of Christ's Kirk, and following a wide grassy track through the trees, follow the track uphill and right at the end of the straight section through the avenue of trees. As you ascend uphill, ignore the first option to go left and downhill. (4.13 km)



(8) Left for path to summit of Hill of Flinder

In 110 m, or so, go left to follow a path through the gorse to the summit of Hill of Flinder. (4.23km)



(9) Summit of Hill of Flinder

In 120 m you will have reached the open top of Hill of Flinder where, once again, there are marvellous views. The Tap o' Noth particularly stands out on the western skyline, and there are great views back to Hill of Christ's Kirk and across the valley to Hill of Dunnydeer, with its ruined fort. When you are ready re-trace your steps down from the hill top and back to the wide track between the trees, heading back in the direction of Hill of Christ's Kirk. However, you will take an alternative path around and up the Hill. Look out for an opening on your right before the ascent. (4.35 km)



(10) Right to skirt south-western flank of Hill of Christ's Kirk

In 540 m from the summit of the Hill of Flinder, after passing through the wide avenue of conifers, veer right before the ascent to Hill of Christ's Kirk to take a track that skirts around the south-western flank of the Hill, with trees on your right side. (4.89 km)



(11) Left and uphill

In 240 m, or so, before entering the woodland, follow a lightly defined track to your left and uphill towards open ground. Soon this track veers right after crossing a broken-down fence to gently ascend up the open grassy hillside, heading east. (5.13 km)



(12) Right and downhill

In 380 m, you will meet the track you took to ascend to the summit of Hill of Christ's Kirk. Turn right to follow this track downhill through the trees. (5.51 km)



(13) Left at t-junction

In another 340 m, go left at the t-junction you previously encountered at Waypoint 5 on the ascent. (5.85 km)



(14) Left onto deeply shaded path through trees

Very soon, in about 130 m, just before the grassy track bends right, go left to follow a deeply shaded path through the trees. This path soon becomes very difficult for a short 30 m section due to obstructions caused by fallen trees. It is passable with care, however*. In about 200 m, the path emerges onto open hillside, looking north over a broken-down fence towards Hill of Dunnydeer. Swing right here (east) to continue the downhill progress. (5.98 km)

** Note: if you don't wish to attempt this section, with fallen tree, or if you are an off-road mobility scooter user, then simply carry on straight ahead here and re-trace your route to base of Christ's Kirk Hill, at Waypoint 3 on the outward route.*



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(15) Left and downhill

In 620 m, arriving at an open grassy x-roads (the trees in the waypoint photo have all been harvested, by the way!), go left and continue downhill, facing Hill of Dunnydeer. This path eventually takes you back to the gated former parking area at the base of Hill of Christ's Kirk, by the main road. From there, re-trace your footsteps back to Inch Railway Station through the Beatrice Community Woodland. (6.6 km)



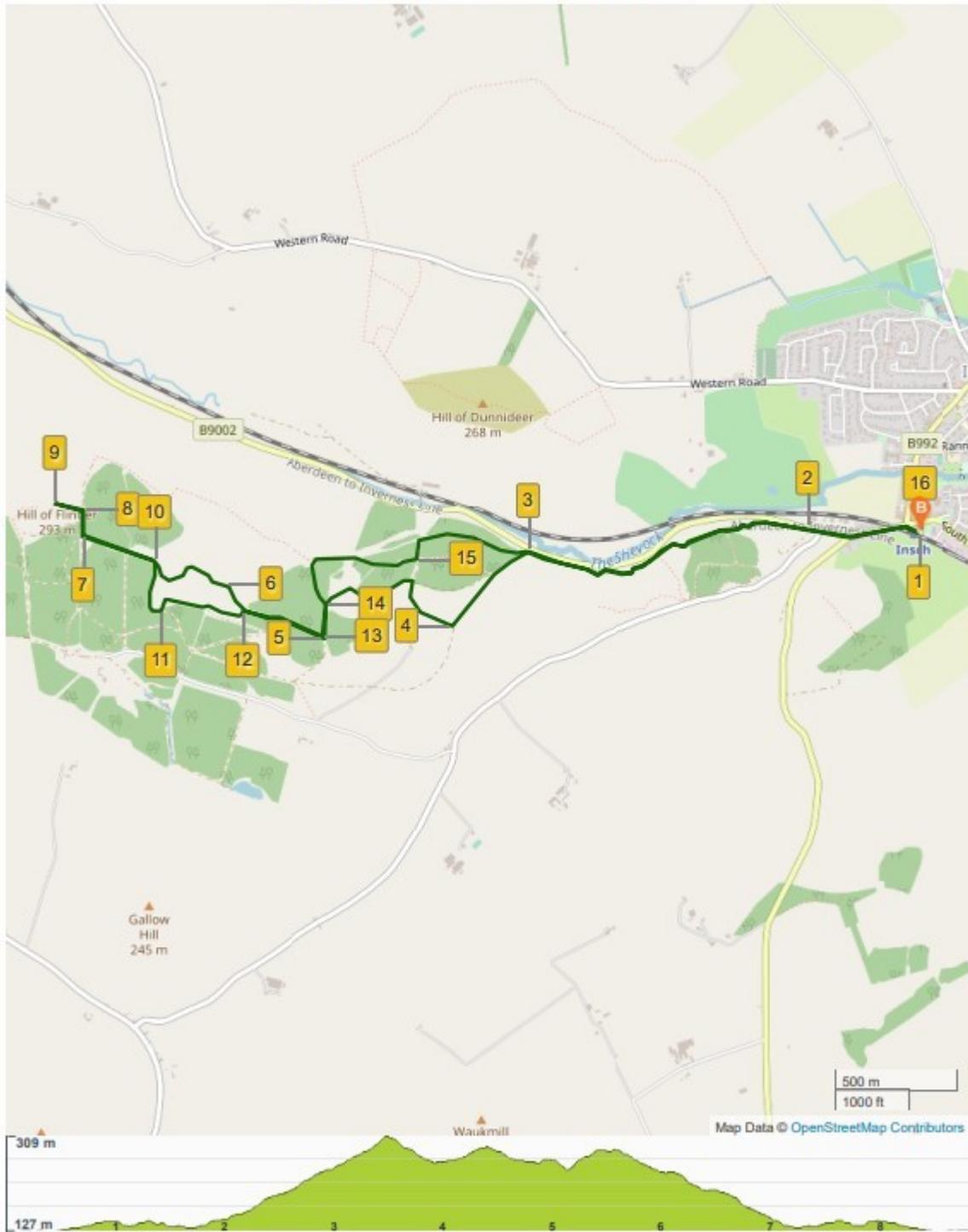
(16) Finish walk back at Inch railway station

In 2.25 km you will have arrived back at Inch Railway Station where you started the walk. (8.85 km)



Route Map (with waypoints)

049-Insch-Hills Of Christ's Kirk And Flinder



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](#)