



Best of Culbin (East)

8 Miles/12.8km

A circular walk through Culbin Forest to the Moray Firth and along the shoreline to Findhorn Bay with a chance of seeing seals and birdlife before returning through the forest with views of Forres to the South.



Geocaches on or near to this route are:
If a Duck Quacks in the Woods and Seal Spot



Walk Information

Terrain

Stiles-None
Suitable for most abilities

Planning

Start/Parking

Wellhill Car Park (Charged)
Grid Ref: NH996615
Map OS Landranger 27 or
Explorer 423

Refreshments

M & C Garden Centre

Public Toilets

Wellhill Car Park

Public Transport

Buses from Inverness/
Aberdeen to Forres
Trains from Inverness/
Aberdeen to Forres

Introduction

The Forestry Commission provides a map of Culbin which is normally available in the leaflet rack at the car park. This is very useful as it provides information about various points that you will see and shows the main tracks and the numbered posts mentioned in the Walk description. It has the Ordnance Survey Grid overlaid.

The walk can be undertaken in either direction but the directions are given so that, normally, you will have the sun and wind at your back. Timber operations may restrict access at times and tree growth and timber extraction can change the walking environment from that described. At high tides the beach and shoreline may not be accessible but diversions are possible using the leaflet map.

The walk is **NOT** way marked. Walkers are responsible for their own navigation and use of the tracks and footpaths under the Scottish Outdoor Access Code

The Walk

From the Car Park take the main entrance into the woods following the clear signs for Hill 99. Immediately after you pass the notice boards and leaflet rack look down for the plaque that marks the visit of Prime Minister Harold Wilson in 1969. After about 600 yards, turn Right at the Finger Post signs pointing for Gravel Pit Ponds and Hill 99. Follow the clear path as it winds through the woods with the Ponds appearing on your left. When the path emerges onto a main track, ignore the left turn signed for Hill 99 and go straight ahead across the track to follow a clear, sandy path that will soon make a short climb up a sand dune between young trees: this shows that trees in Culbin grow even in sandy soil. Continue along this sandy path and cross directly over another main track at the top of a slope. The path is easily followed as it meanders through the forest and then climbs a slope in a fire break. At the end of the crest, as the path is about to descend, turn Right along another fire break, leaving the path you have been following but there is also a clear track along this fire break. You will soon emerge onto a main



track at signpost 9: there is a poetry seat here in a hollow across the track behind bushes (Sandlife). Turn Left signposted Buckie Loch and very soon you arrive at point 12 where you take the Right Fork. As you walk, look out to the right to see the memorial stone to Mary McCallum Webster; a noted botanist and enthusiast for Culbin, whose ashes are scattered here. At the major track junction at point 8 continue straight ahead. The track will eventually curve around to the right and descend slightly as you arrive at Buckie Loch. Turn



Left as indicated at the signpost onto a grass track that leads to the shore. Off to your right a wooden seat circle engraved with poetry. You have walked just under three miles. Go on to the beach and turn Right (eastwards) along the beach. You will see Burghead in the far distance ahead and as you walk further along the beach you will see Groyne in the water which were put there many years ago in an attempt to halt erosion. However, the sea is now washing away the steep, high, sand dunes with trees tumbling down from the edge. After you pass the Groyne keep your eyes open for seals either basking on an off-shore sand bank or, if the tide is higher, they may be laying on the edge of the sand ahead of you. If you do see seals, you must avoid them by the maximum distance possible. They are legally protected; it is an offence to approach or disturb them in any way. In just over a mile you turn around the headland into Findhorn Bay. Continue along the shoreline into the bay. Where the bay begins to narrow, scramble up the steep slope to the edge of the trees and follow along until you reach a clear track. Erosion has made leaving the beach impossible further along and you should avoid walking close to the rim as there is a high risk of collapse. There are lovely views across the bay an excellent point for a rest with a lovely view across the bay to the boat yard and cottages of Findhorn.



You are now over halfway around the walk having covered 4.5 miles. Continue along the forestry track that starts here. Turn Right at the first T junction and then again turn Right at the next junction – this appears more of a right turn than a junction. Very shortly after this second junction, you curve left to join a very wide forestry track at Point 3. Turn Left following the signpost for Lady Culbin’s Buried Trees. At the T junction at Point 4 turn Right: the track curves right and descends and you will shortly arrive at the Buried Trees. About 25 yards after the signpost



‘Well Hill Car Park’, look to the left for a delightful woodland glade just a few yards off the track which is the home to birds and red squirrels. Continue on the main track for about 500 yards and then, shortly after a gentle descent, turn Left onto a clear green track. Follow this track as it winds through the woods to a T junction where you turn Right and then 50 yards later turn Left onto a clear track which passes around the side of a metal, horizontal pole gate. Continue for a short distance on this track until it meets a hardcore road where you turn Right and follow the road along the side of the estuary shoreline where the Muckle Burn joins the River Findhorn and enters the bay, the area is a hive of bird activity. You will enjoy distant views of Nelson’s Tower at Forres and the hills to the South. Shortly after the road leaves the riverside with trees on either side of the road, turn sharp Right into the woods at another metal, horizontal pole gate and almost immediately Left taking the green track. This green track which runs through a wide variety of trees will, in just over a mile, bring you back to the Wellhill Car Park at the rear entrance.



Image by Gordon Grant