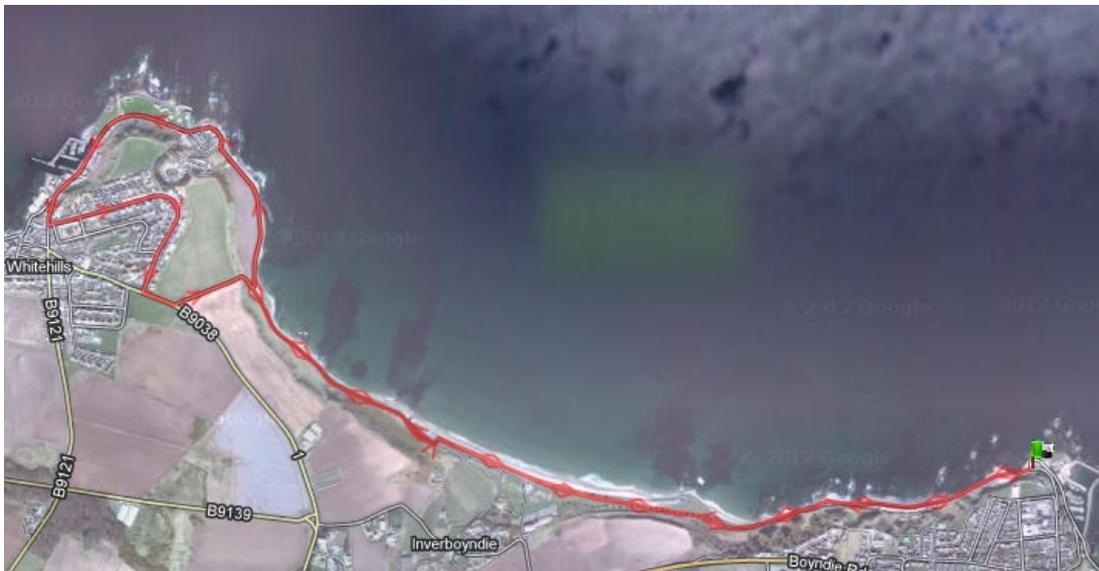


Banff Links to Whitehills Circular Route (approx 6 miles)

Terrain – Relatively flat tarmac paths

Pull on your hiking boots and prepare for a coastal walk that will rock your world. As well as being home to fantastic marine life, many sections of the Banffshire Coast are internationally important geological sites because of their rock formations.

The following easy grade circular route takes in one of the most beautiful coastal trails on The Banffshire Coast from the county capital of Banff to the small fishing village of Whitehills. The area has been designated Site of Special Scientific Interest due to the presence of metamorphic rocks which were formed millions of years ago.



1.

Starting out from Banff Marina, head in a westerly direction towards the collection of modest houses set back from the shoreline. This area is Scotstoun and was originally home to the town's fishing fleet. Fishermen and their families started living here in the 1800s as a result of the boom in the herring industry and the houses in this area are typical of the traditional style of the time.

2.

As you come to the end of the residential area, you will see the rocks belonging to the Dalradian Supergroup that attract geologists from all over the world. These rocks were created about 600 to 800 million years ago when they were deposited as sediments on the edge of an ancient ocean. Continental collision closed the ocean and created a chain of mountains and these Dalradian rocks – buried deep inside the earth – metamorphosed and deformed. The scale of the rock formations is best seen here during periods of low tide.

3.

You will now be heading towards a magnificent sandy beach which is bordered by a large, flat expanse of grass. This is Banff Links – a firm favourite with generations of both locals and visitors alike. Note the white buildings with the blue roofs. The first pavilion that you come to is the home of Banff Water Sports Club. If you want to truly experience the bracing sea temperatures of the Banffshire Coast, call in and book a surfing lesson. Cast your eye out across the sands and you may even see some novice surfers being put through their paces.

4.

Continue walking in a westerly direction along the golden sands towards Whitehills – you may now be able to see the church spires in the distance. While you are looking up, take time to watch out for some of the most common seabirds seen in this area. During the spring and summer months you may be able to see a variety of gull, oystercatcher, and the occasional gannet which may have decided to take a short sightseeing trip from the colony at nearby Troup Head.

Gannets usually tend to make an appearance on The Banffshire Coast from January, before migrating in the late summer and early autumn months. Watching these birds feed is truly incredible – they fly high above and circle as they spot their prey, before suddenly diving head first into the sea. If you are walking in winter you may see scarcer visitors such as red-throated diver.

5.

Onwards onto Boyndie Bay and this time don't just look at the rocks – look at what may be hauled out on them. This area is often frequented by seals and the rocks are one of their favourite places to lounge during low tide. This stretch of coastline is also something of a hotspot for harbour porpoise: these creatures are often confused with dolphins, but are actually much smaller.

6.

Continue up the road and you will pass an unusual feature – a dome-shaped stone structure on the side of the hill. This is the Red Well - one of several iron-bearing springs in the local area which, it is claimed, has remedial properties. It is thought to date back to Roman times, and was very popular with holidaying Victorians who firmly believed that drinking from the spa would benefit their health.

7.

Keep on the tarmac road as you proceed towards the caravan park and onwards to Whitehills, taking care to look out for vehicles which also use this track. As you pass the caravan park you will see some red bricks in the ground – a throwback to the days when the site was home to the Blackpots Brick and Tile Works. Look out too for a compass rose which, as well as pointing out Whitehills, points your eye across the Moray Firth and to the hills of Caithness.

As you enter the village, pass through the children's playpark and walk onwards towards Whitehills Marina. This was converted into a marina in the 1990s following a decline in the fishing industry and is now one of the busiest on the Moray Firth due to the first-class facilities both in the harbour basin and on shore.

8.

If you are a regular visitor to the area, you will know that some of the best quality seafood is to be found here. Why not treat yourself to some produce from the renowned Downie's of Whitehills – they have even managed to take our world famous soup dish Cullen Skink and turn it into a pie. Their retail shop is found by following the road from the harbour. The road then goes off uphill, and by taking the second road on the right you will enter into Loch Street – the heart of the village. You may want to spend some time looking around as there is a very informative town trail complete with interpretation panels and olden day photographs.

9.

If you want to continue back towards your starting point at Banff, keep walking in an easterly direction until you come to a large grassy playing field. Look out for the narrow road on the left: follow this track and you will return to the Red Well and the path back across the foreshore and Banff Links.