

Fordyce – Glenglassaugh Distillery – Portsoy (approx 4.5 miles)

Terrain – Relatively flat route; mainly tarmac roads and pavements with some grassy coastal paths

Decisions, decisions, decisions. The Banffshire Coast has such incredible scenery and visitor attractions that sometimes it's hard to know whether to spend time in the great outdoors or the equally great indoors.

The following walk offers visitors the very best of both worlds as it teams the countryside and coastal landscape with some of our first-rate visitor experiences. It's possible to take in the entire route and the associated activities in one day, and starts out in the historic village of Fordyce.



1.

Fordyce is a charming village that dates back to medieval times – a fact that will become apparent as you meander through the pretty streets and take a closer look at historic buildings such as Fordyce Castle and Fordyce Church.

2.

Head towards Church Street and the Joiner's Workshop Museum. You can either explore the Victorian gardens or step inside the museum to get an idea of how craftsmen worked in the days before mass production.

3.

From here, turn left and head out of the village, passing along Bridge Street and onto The Loan. Please be aware that, although quiet, vehicles do use this road so you should take care at all times. Take the first right and, pausing from time to time to take in the coastal panorama beyond, head down towards the main road.

4.

Once you join the A98, take extra care crossing the road. There are some large open fields here – sometimes they are populated by a super-cute herd of Highland cattle – and you will see the ruins of an unusual building. The feature is known locally as the cup and saucer and is all that remains of an early windmill. Head in an easterly direction and walk towards Glenglassaugh Distillery a few hundred yards down the road.

5.

The distillery is the most coastal distillery on the Scottish mainland and still produces fine single malt Scotch whisky by traditional methods. It has a visitor centre and regular tours – led by members of production staff rather than guides – and these are tailored to suit everyone from whisky novices to real aficionados. You can sample the product at the end of the tour or enjoy a non-alcoholic refreshment at the visitor centre café.

6.

So far, you'll have walked just over two miles and now it's time to hit the road again by walking through the distillery grounds and onto the coastal path. The path can be accessed from the north side of the site and by crossing the bridge over the Glassaugh Burn. When you reach the path you'll be able to see Sandend Bay, but you will once again go east and towards Portsoy.

7.

The path goes cross country over turf and eventually you will come to a fork on the road. At this point, it may be worth heading left and down to the headland where there's the chance to see seabirds such as cormorant and fabulous rocky outcrops. This stretch of coastline was once the territory of pirates and smugglers – not only did they use the caverns and caves to stash their illicit goods, they also hid out here from the excisemen!

8.

Return to the main path and keep heading towards Portsoy. Continue straight ahead and you will pass what remains of an old saltwater swimming pool – once a popular attraction for both visitors and locals during its heyday. Eventually you will reach a view point overlooking the old harbour.

9.

You will enter the town from the High Street before joining Shorehead and coming down to sea level at the harbour. Look out for the unusual design of the stones, which are placed vertically instead of horizontally. Keep walking on the road around the side of the harbour and reach...another harbour! This one is considered the 'new' harbour, having been built in 1825 to accommodate the fast-growing herring fleet.

10.

Walk past the fish merchants and onwards towards the caravan park and beach, where you will be able to learn even more about Portsoy's association with fishing at The Salmon Bothy. This museum, which stands in what was once the ice chambers of the historic building, gives a fascinating insight into the local boatbuilding and fishing industries. The bothy, where workers would have once slept, is now a genealogical research facility where you can get advice on tracing your family history, while upstairs in an area where salmon nets would have once hung is a community space used for musical concerts, art exhibitions and arts and crafts groups.