

Aberdeen Coastal Trail

A guide to Aberdeen's North Sea Trail



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Welcome to Aberdeen's North Sea Trail, a network of paths exploring Aberdeen's enduring relationship with the sea.

The North Sea Trail

The North Sea Trail is a network of coastal paths in countries bordering the North Sea. In Scotland, coastal paths in Aberdeen, Aberdeenshire, East Lothian, Fife and the Moray Firth area are being promoted as part of this network. Aberdeen's section of the North Sea Trail is approximately 20 kilometres or 12 miles long and takes up to 7 hours to walk. However, it's easy to take a short stroll along one of the many distinct sections, such as the beachfront promenade or the rugged cliff top path. Signposts and information panels along the route highlight some of the many things to see and do.

History

The City's coastal heritage dates back more than eight centuries and the harbour still lies at the heart of this bustling modern city. There are traces of human settlement from around 8000 BC. However, the first recorded reference to the port came in 1157 when King David I of Scotland granted the Bishops of Aberdeen the right to levy a tithe on all trade shipping. Global trade, fishing and the offshore oil and gas industries have brought prosperity and innovation to the city, changes woven into a rich heritage that Aberdonians are proud to celebrate. This history is reflected in the built features along the coast, from Bronze Age burial mounds to fishermen's cottages, lighthouses and restaurants.

Wildlife

Aberdeen's coast is also packed with wildlife. The estuary of the Dee has been modified into a commercial port, yet throughout the year, large numbers of salmon enter the river here to spawn upstream. The mouth of the harbour is also one of the best locations in the whole of Scotland for watching dolphins from the shore. The Don estuary is well known for its leaping sea trout and wading birds, which can all be spotted from the bird hide in the Donmouth Local Nature Reserve. A favourite for visitors is watching the Common Seals sunbathing on the island, just upstream from the road bridge.

Welcome to Aberdeen, our beautiful and historic city by the sea! The Coastal Trail explores our enduring relationship with the North Sea – our famous long golden sands beach is a short walk from the city centre.

The coastal heritage dates back more than eight centuries and the harbour still lies at the heart of the bustling modern city. The history is reflected in the built features along the coast, from Bronze Age burial mounds to cute fishermen's cottages in the beautiful and quirky village of Footdee, to Girdleness Lighthouse which was built after the wrecking of a whaling ship in 1813 which only had two survivors.

The coast is packed with wildlife including dolphins playing in the surf from either one of the quays in the harbour or the 19th Century Torry Battery. They come to the area to feed on the salmon which enter the River Dee at the mouth of the harbour and spawn upstream. There is also an abundance of nature in Donmouth Local Nature Reserve, and the River Don estuary is well known for its leaping sea trout, wading birds, and sunbathing seals. There is also family fun to be had including the two-mile sandy beach, Codona's Amusement Park, the Beach Ballroom, Aberdeen Sports Village, Transition Extreme, King's Links Golf Course, along with bars, restaurants and cafes with a stunning sea view.

Have fun roaming around our beautiful city, and finding out a bit about its history through the Coastal Trail!



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Front cover: Aberdeen South Breakwater from the Torry shore

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1 Donmouth Local Nature Reserve

Donmouth has been managed as a local nature reserve since 1992 because of its rich and varied wildlife. It is best known for its birdlife but there are also interesting plants and insects. The original settlement of Aberdeen, now known as Old Aberdeen, was originally built around a port at the mouth of the Don near Donmouth. Leaflets are available at local Tourist Information Centres.



2 Kings Links Golf Course

Kings Links is a traditional, well established 18-hole links course with a variety of holes that challenge all standards of players. The outward nine holes are played facing north, with the inward nine holes played facing south.



3 Aberdeen Fun Beach

Established in 1920 by the Codona family, the Fun Beach area has an exhilarating range of 21st attractions for



all the family including the 100ft ferris wheel, three roller coasters, dodgems, a children's adventure play area, 10 pin bowling, laser tag, crazy golf, pool tables, and a 4D motion simulator. There's also Scotland's first inflatable theme park at the Fun Beach complex, along with restaurants and bars.



4 Beach Leisure Centre/Linx Ice Arena

The Beach Leisure Centre has a well equipped fitness studio, health suites, saunas, steam room, hydrojet and leisure pool with waves, fountain and rapids. The Linx Ice Arena is one of Scotland's premier skating facilities. Opened in 1992 the Arena offers a "competition size" ice pad with spectator seating for up to 1100, a café, occasional bar and inline skate hire.

5 Queens Links Leisure Park

An excellent place to stop off for a bite to eat on the Trail, with a fine range of established restaurants to tempt any palate or for those of you wanting to catch the latest movies there is a ten screen cinema located here.





6 Beach Ballroom

This art deco building on the sea front was built in 1926. It is home to one of Scotland's finest dance floors – which floats on fixed steel springs. A regular venue for music and dance, conferences, weddings and sporting events. Famous past performers include The Beatles, The Small Faces, Pink Floyd, The Who, Cream, Joe Loss and Them, featuring Van Morrison. For more information visit www.beachballroom.com

7 Footdee

The village of Footdee, or Fittie as it is pronounced locally, is a creation of the 19th century. The original fishing village lay further north around Fittie Church, St Clements. It is not known when the village began, but there is reference to Fittie Wynd dating to 1317, and by this time the village was already rather old. Please respect the privacy of the residents if you visit the area.



8 Aberdeen Harbour

Aberdeen Harbour attracts over 8,000 vessels annually – specialist ships serving the offshore oil and gas industry, for which it is the European hub of support; daily ferries to and from Orkney and Shetland; coastal traders, fishing boats, cruise ships and freight vessels from across the world. Britain's oldest business, the harbour is a world class port handling over 4 million tonnes of cargo a year. Panoramic views can be obtained from Torry Point Battery and the Maritime Museum. For more information visit www.aberdeen-harbour.co.uk



9 Aberdeen Maritime Museum

Incorporating Provost Ross's House built in 1593, Aberdeen Maritime Museum tells the story of the city's long relationship with the Sea. This award-winning, free entry museum houses a unique collection covering shipbuilding, fast sailing ships, fishing and port history. This museum with its multimedia displays and a year round programme of events is the only place in the UK where you can see displays of the North Sea oil industry. For more information visit: www.aagm.co.uk/am



10 Marine Laboratory

This is part of Fisheries Research Services, an agency of the Scottish Executive Environment and Rural Affairs Department. It provides expert advice on marine fisheries, fish farming and the wider marine environment. Visitors are welcome to pick up leaflets from the front desk reception or to download them from www.marlab.ac.uk



11 Dolphin watching at the harbour entrance

You may think that you can only see dolphins in the warmer waters of the world but this is not the case. The waters around Scotland are home to a number of species of dolphins and other large sea mammals. The information panel at Torry Battery provides more details on how to spot them. If you are lucky you might see a Bottlenose, White Beaked dolphin, or even a porpoise. Look in the harbour entrance itself. It is amazing how close in they come!



12 Nigg Bay Golf Club

This golf course covers approximately half of the headland. It is a municipal 18 hole course with a playing distance of 6,200 yards. An amazing 200 species of birds have been seen on the headland including some rare species. Look out for Redwing, Fieldfares in the winter and Swallows in the summer.

13 Torry Battery Coastal Defences

This was built in 1860, on the Girdleness headland in order to protect the port and harbour of Aberdeen from sea-borne attack. It was built at the same time as another battery on the north side of the mouth of the River Dee. It was partially dismantled and decommissioned in the 1890s and was not manned again until the First World War.



14 Girdleness Lighthouse

The lighthouse was designed by Robert Stevenson, grandfather of Robert Louis Stevenson and is of architectural/historic interest. It was lit for the first time at sunset on 15th October 1833. The tower is 37 metres high with 182 steps to the top. During WW2 a mine drifted ashore on 18 November 1944 and exploded, but damage was mainly confined to the doors and windows in the dwelling house and the tower. The fog horn was put into operation when visibility fell below five miles and is known as The Torry Coo.



15 St Fitticks Church

Although there has been a church on this site since about the late 12th century, the ruins probably date to either the late 17th or early 18th century. The church itself was in use until 1829. The churchyard features a number of very elegant 17th and 18th century grave stones.



16 East Tullis Burn Wetlands

The East Tullis Burn was neglected and polluted resulting in an unattractive eyesore with little wildlife. In 2014, the burn was transformed into a meandering course, with wetland areas and ponds, a mix of wetland flowers and better access around the site. This project complemented other improvements in St. Fitticks Park including the planting of trees which has been important for wildlife as well as shelter and interest for people too. Before the last ice age the River Dee would have flowed into the sea through what is now St. Fitticks Park.

17 Aberdeen South Harbour

The latest development in the long history of Aberdeen Harbour is South Harbour, to allow the port to accommodate large passenger cruise ships and will increase tourist numbers to Aberdeen and the surrounding countryside. The four quays are named after some of the most iconic castles in Scotland including Balmoral (which is owned by the Queen), Dunnottar, Crathes and Castlegate. They were named in honour of the history and heritage of the north-east of Scotland.



18 Tullos Hill

Tullos Hill is a Local Nature Conservation Site within easy walking distance of the Coastal Path. It offers fine views of the City and contains numerous archaeological sites, including Bronze Age burial cairns dating from about 2000BC. This large area of dry heathland attracts large mammals such as foxes and roe deer. Work is continuing to improve the wildlife and path networks in this area.



19 Doonies Farm

An opportunity to visit a working farm with a wide range of rare breeds of British farm animals. These include breeds of Golden Guernsey goats, Gloucester cattle, Kerry Hill Sheep, Eriskay Ponies and Tamworth Pigs. Doonies Farm is a working farm that is managed using traditional farming methods, where conservation and biodiversity combine to encourage a variety of wildlife.



20 Cove Harbour

An attractive small fishing harbour on Colsea Road, Cove. At low tide there are good opportunities to go rock pooling. Take care; please be aware of incoming tides. All of the coastal strip from Cove to Balnagask is designated as a Local Nature Conservation Site.



[#getoutthere](#)



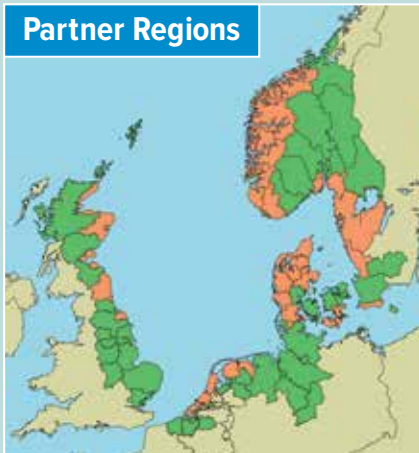
Harbour Area Trail



Please avoid walking on the dunes as they are particularly vulnerable to erosion. The full trail is approx 12 miles or 20 km and takes 6 to 7 hours to walk. Use more remote sections during the daytime only.

The Nortrail Project

The North Sea Trail has been developed through the NAVE Nortrail project. This is an ambitious collaboration between 26 partners from 7 countries (indicated in orange). This work is supported by the European Community through the Interreg IIB fund.



The aim is to develop sustainable tourism and to explore the heritage of communities along the North Sea Coastline. Pathways have been upgraded and the historical and natural features they link together have been researched and promoted. www.northseatrail.org



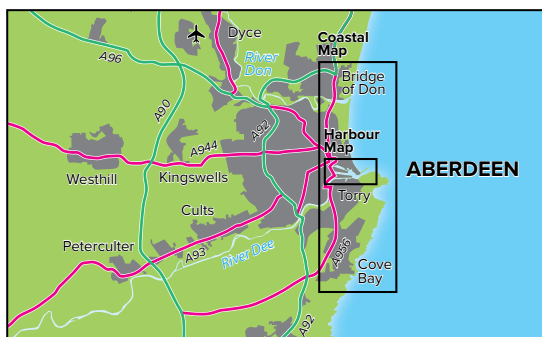
Interreg North Sea Region

Aberdeen's Coastal Trail



Coastal Trail

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www.visitscotland.com

For public transport information contact Travel Line
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This is one in a series of themed trails in Aberdeen City, visit the website to see more: www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/trails

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