

BRIGHOUSE BAY

- Circular coastal and farmland walk**
- 5.5km/3½ miles or 7km/4½ miles, depending on route**
- Allow 1 to 3 hours depending on route**
- Hard surface track and path, grass path and minor road.**
- Moderate**
- Boots recommended.**
- OS Explorer 1:25,000 map number 312**

PARKING is available at the Brighthouse Bay car park, approximately 5 miles south-west of Kirkcudbright. From Kirkcudbright, take the B727 towards Borgue. Follow signs to Brighthouse Bay then to the car park and toilets.

START Walk to the far end of the car park until you come to a small wooden barrier with an arrow pointing ahead. Continue to follow the path, bearing right and take the first path on the left, before you reach the caravan park. This takes you into Graplin Plantation where oak, beech and sycamore predominate. In summer, chiff chaffs and willow warblers add to the resident bird population. There is also a wealth of wildflowers such as red campion, wild garlic and wood sorrel to be seen in spring and summer. There are many minor paths that take you down to the shore but for the purpose of this walk, continue to follow the main path.

The path leaves the wood and goes along the rocky shore, next to the golf course. This part of the coastline is part of a Site of Special Scientific Interest due to the quality and variety of the habitats, for example it is the only place in Scotland where perennial flax can be found. Lizards, slow-worms and adders can sometimes be spotted amongst the grasses or soaking up the heat on rocks in the morning. Watch out for kestrels hovering above, waiting to snatch their prey. Out at sea porpoises and basking sharks may make an appearance. There is always something to see and on a clear day you can see the Isle of Man or across Wigtown Bay to The Machars, a quiet, picturesque peninsula in the west of the region.

Continue following the coastal path until you come to a kissing gate. This takes you into farmland where the walk leaves the coast. In summer, listen out for the high, melodic song of the skylark. Flocks of finches are another welcome sight, especially since they and other farmland birds are declining. Rocky outcrops and gorse give the landscape a rugged feel and the strong winds coming in from the sea give hawthorns their windswept look. Following the arrows, you soon reach a field which has a viewpoint and bench. There are wonderful views out to sea and to the north-west, the modest peaks of Cairnharrow (456m/1496ft) and Ben John (337m/1105ft) dominate the landscape.

Shortly after the viewpoint, go through a kissing gate and join a grassy track heading inland. Where the track meets the farm road at the ruined cottage you reach another stile, taking you onto a track. Here you have the option of taking a shorter route back to the car park.

OPTION - If you wish to take the shorter route, turn right when you reach the farm road then follow the waymarkers through Southpark Farm steading, past the caravan site and straight on back to the car park.

To do the full walk, go straight across the track, following the waymarkers. As you head inland, you pass an area of wetland – Cairniehill Loch. It is best to stay close to the fence line here where the ground is drier. The most obvious plant associated with the loch is lesser bulrush with its big, brown spikes. Also, look out for the large gold-ringed dragonfly hunting for insects hovering above the surface or along the margins of the loch. Swallows and grey wagtails take advantage of the wealth of insects and can be seen swooping or darting to catch them in mid flight.

The path soon meets a farm track that you follow uphill, bearing right. Stay on the track and follow the waymarkers which take you through Cairniehill Farm steading and onto a minor road. Follow the road downhill and through two gates to reach the car park where you started.



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Leave gates as you find them - Keep dogs under close control at all times - Keep to paths across farmland - Take care on country roads
Use gates and stiles to cross fences, hedges and walls - Respect farm livestock, crops and machinery - Take your litter home with you
Protect wildlife, plants and trees - Guard against risk of fire - Make no unnecessary noise.