



Town Walk

1.8 miles/3km 2hrs

A short circular walk through and around the town of Forres, taking in the picturesque Sanquhar Loch - a local beauty spot created at the start of the 20th century by distilling magnate, Alexander Edward as part of his 2000 acre estate.



Geocaches on or near this route: I've Been to Forres.

Walk Information

Terrain

Stiles-None
Suitable for all abilities except for southern side of loch.

Planning

Start/Parking

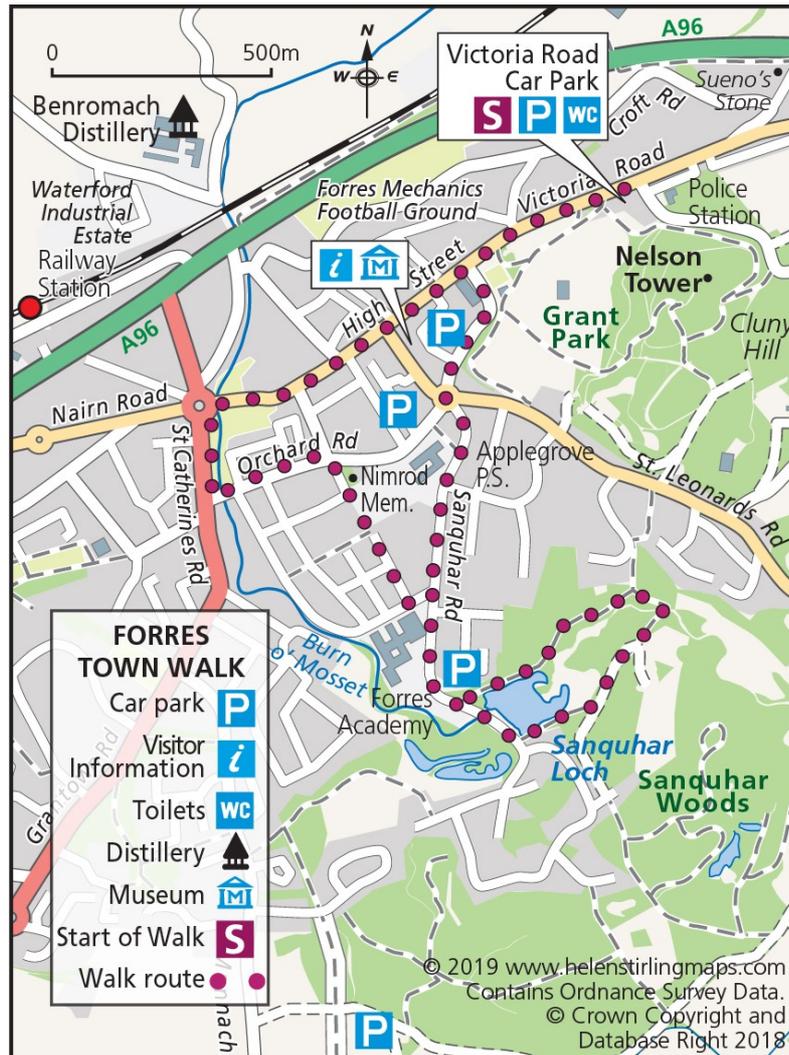
Victoria Road
Grid Ref: NJ043593
Map OS Landranger 27
Explorer 423

Refreshments

Various in Forres

Public Toilets

Grant Park



Following the **RED** arrows, turn left along Victoria Road. Pause by the floral display and the Sunken Garden to your left in Grant Park. **1** To your right on this stretch are St. John's Episcopalian Church which is known locally as the Italian Church (because of the style) and St. Margaret's Roman Catholic Church. Crossing over the junction at South Street you will find Anderson's Primary School. **2** Continue along what has now become High Street and on your right hand side you will see firstly St. Leonard's Church; the foundation stone of which was laid by Lord Strathcona, and secondly the Town Hall. **3** Continuing in a westerly direction, stop on the corner of Tolbooth Street. Turn to your left and across the cobble stones you will see the Falconer Museum. **4** Ahead of you is the imposing building of the Tolbooth. **5** Pass the Tolbooth and you will meet the Market Cross. **6** Now stroll along the remainder of the High Street and note the many contrasts of architectural style in the buildings on both sides of you. Stop again when you reach the impressive site of St. Laurence Church **7** standing majestically above the street level. Staying on the left side of the road continue out of the town and as you start to move down the slope stop at the wrought iron gates which enter Castlehill **8** and lead to the Thomson Memorial. Returning to the road, cross over and you will see the Rose Garden which runs up to the rear of the Mosset Tavern. **9** Re-cross the road onto the bridge where you will see a plaque to Lord Strathcona. **10** Continue down to the roundabout and turn left by the award winning War Memorial. Take the path beside the burn to the next bridge and turn left into Orchard Road. Cross over the burn and walk down to the War Veterans Cottages where you will see a delightful garden, with a model of a Nimrod aircraft in the centre **11** Stop here and enjoy a wee rest. From

here turn back and go immediately left into Albert Street. Follow the track past the tennis courts and alongside Roysvale Park where you may be lucky and catch a game of football in progress. Turn left into Burdsyard Road, you will find yourself opposite Forres Academy and Swimming Pool. At the junction with Sanquhar Road turn right and cross the road. Walk until you reach the Loch on your left hand side. The beginning of the Loch is indicated by a small Parking Area. Before going alongside the Loch, you may wish to pop over the road to the opposite side for a look at the Fish Ladder. The Loch **12** (by definition a Pond) is now much smaller than it used to be. It is estimated that 60% of the original water area has been lost to silting, progressing to colonisation by plants and trees which in turn has become a haven for birds and wildlife. As you walk round listen and watch for some of the inhabitants which include swans, wrens, moorhen, heron, dippers (they nest behind the cascading water at the waterfall), thrushes, blackbirds, mallards, redwing, great spotted woodpecker, wagtails, tits, warblers have all been seen and heard here. As you progress round the Loch and cross the footbridge look for the remains of the weir and see if you can find the start of what was once the mill lade which carried water down to Plasmon Mill. They are there! To go around the Loch move from the Parking Area. Go over the bank to be met by the lovely vista of the Loch and the surrounding woodland. Follow the footpath to the bottom of the Loch and cross over the footbridge. Still keeping the Loch to your right, continue around until you return to the road near the Parking Area. Retrace your steps back along Sanquhar Road and stay until you come to the roundabout. On your right is the British Legion. Cross over St. Leonard's Road and move along and up South Street. On your right is the start of Grant Park.

Supporting Notes

1 Grant Park

Once the site of Forres House, the sunken gardens are now a peaceful oasis on a hot day. Strolling amongst the floral displays you can appreciate the imagination of the designs that have brought numerous awards to this beautiful 32 acre park. Have a game of bowls, watch a cricket match or see young football stars in the making. Youngsters will enjoy a visit to the play area. There is so much to do and see here or you could simply sit a while and watch the world go by. This park has been instrumental in the towns success in 'Scotland In Bloom' and 'Britain In Bloom' over the years.

2 Anderson's Primary School

Formally known as Anderson's Institute, the building was designed by Elgin Architect William Robertson. It was opened in 1823 as a charity school.

3 Town Hall

Formerly The Mechanics Institute, improvements in 1938 were designed by Alistair MacDonald, son of Prime Minister Ramsey MacDonald. During the First World War the building was used as an auxiliary hospital.

4 Falconer Museum

This museum is named after the brothers Hugh and Alexander Falconer who bequeathed £1,500 to found a museum in their native town. The building was designed by Alexander Reid, of Elgin and opened to the public in 1812. Although relatively small, the museum is an Aladdin's Cave of treasures and exhibits. Well worth a visit.

5 Tolbooth

As the name implies, the Tolbooth was originally the office for the Collector of Tolls. It has occupied this site since the middle ages. By the 17th Century the Tolbooth contained the Burgh jail, Courtroom, Municipal Offices and a Council Chamber. The present day Tolbooth was built in 1839 and was designed by William Robertson of Elgin. A curious mixture of architectural styles, the tower and dome echo the outline of the former building. Inside the Scottish Baronial exterior can be found an elegant Regency Courtroom and a Victorian Prison. The building is now used as a meeting place and houses offices of the Moray Council.

6 Market Cross

The first Market Cross was erected here in the 12th Century but was replaced in the 18th Century by the current structure. Gothic in style, it is a miniature of the Scott Monument in Edinburgh. Until the 19th Century criminals were punished by being placed in rings that were attached to the cross. They can now be found in the Falconer Museum. Close by you will see a plinth indicating the site of a former well.

7 St Laurence Church

The foundation stone for this church was laid by Lord Strathcona in August 1904. This is the fifth church to be built on this site. The total amount subscribed towards the cost of this was £6,500 but it left a shortfall of £1,500. Lord Strathcona had great pleasure in making up this difference. The original church was built in the 13th century by King Alexander III in memory of his wife, Queen Margaret. This was burned by the Wolf of Badenoch in 1390.

8 Castlehill and Thomson Memorial

The wrought iron gates at the entrance to Castlehill Park were designed by Alistair MacDonald, architect son of the Prime Minister Ramsey MacDonald. As the name implies, Forres Castle was situated on this site. Following the death of King Duffus the Castle was demolished but must have been reinstated in some form since in 1346 Randolph, Earl of Moray, dates his charters from the Castle of Forres. Over time the Castle has disappeared with the final few remaining stones removed in 1933. The stone edifice is a memorial to Dr. James Thomson, a surgeon who tended the sick and wounded in the Crimea in 1854.

9 The Mosset Tavern

This hostelry stands on the site of the former Taylor Mills and Laundry. Part of the old building can be seen in Burn Green Lane at the rear of the inn.

10 Lord Strathcona's Plaque

Born Donald Alexander Smith, at the age of seventeen he left Forres for Canada. There he became the resident Governor of The Hudson Bay Company. He created the Canadian Pacific Railway (completed in 1885). In 1886 he was knighted by Queen Victoria and was given the title Lord Strathcona.

11 Nimrod Aircraft

The Nimrod model was made by apprentice engineers of Varis Engineering (Now AJ Engineering) of Forres. The model sits in the centre of small stones of red white and blue to reflect the RAF roundel. This Nimrod marks 40 years of flying from RAF Kinloss and commemorates all those personnel who have died in accidents involving the Nimrod. There were 3 Nimrod accidents in which people died. In November 1980, the two pilots of an aircraft of 206 Squadron that struck birds whilst taking off from RAF Kinloss were killed when it crashed into trees just off the runway: 16 crew members survived. All seven members of a 120 Squadron crew died when a Nimrod crashed into Lake Ontario, Toronto during an air display in September 1995. There is a memorial window to them in the Church of Scotland church in Kinloss village. The 15 personnel on board a Nimrod of 120 Squadron died when it exploded over Afghanistan in September 2006. A memorial to them, paid for by public donations, is on the grass area beside the War Memorial.

12 Sanquhar Loch

Sanquhar Loch is less than a mile from the High Street. Yet here is an oasis of peace and tranquillity where the walker can pause awhile to feast his eyes on this beautiful spot which was once part of the 2,000 acre Sanquhar Estate owned by distilling magnate, Alexander Edward. It is now much smaller than it used to be. It is estimated that 60% of the original water area has been lost to silting, progressing to colonisation by plants and trees which in turn has become a haven for birds and wildlife. As you walk round listen and watch for some of the inhabitants which include swans, wrens, moorhen, heron, dippers - they nest behind the cascading water at the waterfall -thrushes, blackbirds, mallards, redwing, great spotted woodpecker, wagtails, tits, warblers have all been seen and heard here.

Walking round you will have noticed footpaths appearing, disappearing. The Loch is at the centre of a network of footpaths which invite you to return and sample the pleasures that await the walker prepared to explore a little further afield.