

ST ABB'S HEAD (Moderate)



What you'll see: Stunning cliff top scenery and a major seabird colony

STABB'S Head lies at the entrance to the Firth of Forth, facing into the North Sea where the Berwickshire coast turns to meet the border with England.

The walk around the volcanic rocks of the headland gives an invigorating outing with stunning cliff top scenery and rock architecture more associated with the coastline of northern Scotland than somewhere just along the coast from Edinburgh.

The headland cliffs are 300 feet (90m) high and, if you so desire, you can get precariously close to sheer drops that are guaranteed to give an exhilarating and heady sense of exposure. Needless to say, care is required in places.

This is a nature reserve owned and managed by the National Trust for Scotland. The headland is a major seabird colony and it provides a spectacular vantage point from which to watch a number of seabirds. A steady stream of migratory birds also visits the headland, the loch and the adjacent grasslands, which are rich in flowers.

The headland lighthouse was built in 1862



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in the same year that the engineers, David and Thomas Stevenson, also completed the Holburn Head (Thurso) and Butt of Lewis lighthouses. Thomas was in fact the father of the writer Robert Louis Stevenson, who did not follow in the family tradition.

The tops of the cliffs are often obscured by mist, so the light is actually located lower down. In 1876 the siren fog signal was added, the first of its kind in Scotland. The St Abbs lighthouse became the control centre for the Firth of Forth lighthouses.

The distance and timing for this walk is for the more inquisitive route with time taken to

explore the edges and to look into the impressive chasms and clefts where the sea has gouged into the headland. An all-ability path leads to the first viewpoint at Starney Bay, a short distance from the car park and there is a dedicated disabled parking area at the lighthouse itself, gained by an access road.

Walk towards St Abbs, then follow a path away from the road to gain the cliff top path leading around Starney Bay, then down to sea level at Horsecastle Bay.

After crossing a stile, continue on the main path for 50m, then take a smaller path that cuts up and across Kirk Hill to the cliff

top; the main path continues directly to the lighthouse.

Now follow the edge of the cliffs to the lighthouse. Cross the access road to walk around the north-west side of the headland, then drop down a grassy gully to regain the road at sea level at Pettico Wick. Take the path along the right side of Mire Loch and at the head of the loch follow a track left through gate to pick up the main path coming down from the lighthouse and follow this back.

The essentials

MAP OS LANDRANGER
SHEET 67

DISTANCE 5 MILES
(8 KM)

APPROXIMATE TIME
2 - 3 HOURS

GRADE MODERATE

START/FINISH THE
NATIONAL TRUST FOR
SCOTLAND ST ABB'S
CAR PARK (NT 913 674),
OFF THE A1 EAST OF
EDINBURGH



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