Visiting Culbin

Culbin is a wonderful place to walk, cycle, ride and relax.

First visit?

Head to our car park at Wellhill. The way-marked Gravel Pit Ponds and Hill 99 trails are a perfect introduction to this fantastic forest. Climb to the top of the Hill 99 viewpoint for a birds-eye view over the forest, the shore and the Moray Firth.

On your bike?

The relatively flat gravel track network is perfect for cycling. In low-lying areas, some of the tracks can be wet and muddy.

Hooting??

Start your visit at Cloghymoch. The quieter car park has room for larger vehicles and horse boxes.

For more information about visiting, visit www.culbin.org.uk

Time & Tide

People have lived in and around Culbin’s changing landscape for thousands of years, farming the land and using the rich coastal resources.

First visitors

Archaeologists have found flint arrowheads, shell midden and Bronze Age cremation burials in Culbin evidence of the people who were here before us.

Fish supper

Salmon fishing was once an important local industry. Look out for the remains of old netting equipment along the shoreline. Salmon netting has stopped now, but the salmon will still swim by on their way to the local rivers.

Memories of war

Wandering about the Wall, you may spot traces of the Duncansburgh fort. The soldiers were there during World War II, to prevent the Germans from digging on the hill. The remains of the houses and farms are still out there, buried deep beneath the sands. In a changing climate, what does the future hold for Culbin?

Lost Lands

Richard de Monmore is the first recorded owner of Culbin, around 1250. The Kinnaird family inherited Culbin from the Monmore family in the 15th century. The Kinnairds owned the estate for the next 200 years, until a sandstorm finally overwhelmed the estate.

Culbin had suffered from sandstorms for centuries. Unfortunately, local people made the situation worse by uprooting mammar grass for thatching their roofs. This destabilised the dunes further, and by 1614 a great sandstorm engulfed the man house and surrounding farms. Some say the sandstorms were the result of the devil, Alexander Kinnaird, playing cards with the devil on Sunday. Others said it was a quirk, or diene retribution for allowing smugglers to take on the estate. They remain of the houses and farms are still out there, buried deep beneath the sands. In a changing climate, what does the future hold for Culbin?

‘impossible terrors of sand with a force and violence almost overpowering’

John Barrow 18th century

Unbridgeable landlessness after desolation

19th century writer to the ‘Dawn Waltz’ of Culbin.

The sandstorm engulfed the main house and surrounding farms. Some say the sandstorms were the result of the devil, Alexander Kinnaird, playing cards with the devil on Sunday. Others said it was a quirk, or divine retribution for allowing smugglers to take on the estate. They remain of the houses and farms are still out there, buried deep beneath the sands. In a changing climate, what does the future hold for Culbin?

Along the shore

Most of Culbin’s shoreline, from the trews to the low tide mark, is an RSPB reserve. This rich mix of saltmarsh, mudflats, sands and shingles, is vital breeding ground for wading birds throughout the year.

The shelter of the dunes provides ideal conditions for wading sea birds and geese. Look out for seater ducks, long-tailed ducks and pink-footed geese.

If you get down to the open sea, look out for bottlenose dolphins, grey seals and common seals. Listen carefully and you might even hear the seals calling.

- Allow birds to feed and rest in peace. If they have to fly away, they are wasting valuable energy.
- If you spot seals on the beach, address them from a distance. If they start to move, you’ve had close.
- The saltmarsh is a fragile habitat. Help it survive by walking around the edge rather than through it.

Enjoy Scotland’s outdoors responsibly

- Take responsibility for your own actions
- Respect the interests of other people
- Care for the environment.

The Wild Side of Culbin

Culbin is a tough place to live, but lots of wildlife has adapted to survive and thrive here.

In the forest

Culbin is a really good place for unusual plant, lichen and fungi species. An impressive 300 species of flowering plant and 150 species of lichen have been found here. In summer and autumn, colourful fungi appear like magic amongst the trees.

In summer, dragonflies, butterflies and moths are the most obvious of the many insects here. Look more closely and you’ll spot tiny woodants, bringing back food and building material to their large communal homes.

You can often hear the birds in a forest before you see them. Listen out for noisy ‘chip-chip’ calls of noisy crossbills and the cheerful churring of crested tits.

Larger animals live here too, but they can be quite elusive.

The Forest

Managing the Forest

We carefully plan all our forestry work in Culbin. All the timber from the forest is independently certified as sustainable.

We usually thin or fell small areas of trees each year in Culbin. We do plant new trees here, though we often encourage young trees to grow naturally from seed. Our native Scots pine grows best in most areas of Culbin. We do plant new trees in Culbin. We usually thin or fell small areas of trees each year in Culbin. We do plant new trees here, though we often encourage young trees to grow naturally from seed. Our native Scots pine grows best in most areas of Culbin. We do plant new trees.

We usually thin or fell small areas of trees each year in Culbin. We do plant new trees here, though we often encourage young trees to grow naturally from seed. Our native Scots pine grows best in most areas of Culbin. We do plant new trees in Culbin. We usually thin or fell small areas of trees each year in Culbin. We do plant new trees here, though we often encourage young trees to grow naturally from seed. Our native Scots pine grows best in most areas of Culbin. We do plant new trees.

We usually thin or fell small areas of trees each year in Culbin. We do plant new trees here, though we often encourage young trees to grow naturally from seed. Our native Scots pine grows best in most areas of Culbin. We do plant new trees in Culbin. We usually thin or fell small areas of trees each year in Culbin. We do plant new trees here, though we often encourage young trees to grow naturally from seed. Our native Scots pine grows best in most areas of Culbin. We do plant new trees in Culbin. We usually thin or fell small areas of trees each year in Culbin. We do plant new trees here, though we often encourage young trees to grow naturally from seed. Our native Scots pine grows best in most areas of Culbin. We do plant new trees in Culbin.

Working together

If we are working in Culbin, we’ll let you know with information on our webpages, and clear signage in the forest. Please keep yourself, other visitors and the wildlife safe by following any signs you see.

Timber!

We usually thin or fell small areas of trees in Culbin. We do plant new trees here, though we often encourage young trees to grow naturally from seed. Our native Scots pine grows best in most areas of Culbin. We do plant new trees.

The Forestry Commission bought Culbin in the 1920s, and started to plant pine trees to stabilise the shifting sands. These days, we cut around 400 lorry loads of timber each year in Culbin. A lot of the wood goes to making our own adventure.

The network of gravel tracks and sandy paths offer dozens of different routes to explore on foot, bike or horse-back.

If you’re exploring away from the car parks and way marked trails, take this map with you. It shows the position of designated and protected by law.

Enjoy Scotland’s outdoors responsibly

- Take responsibility for your own actions
- Respect the interests of other people
- Care for the environment.

Along the shore

Most of Culbin’s shoreline, from the trews to the low tide mark, is an RSPB reserve. This rich mix of saltmarsh, mudflats, sands and shingles, is vital breeding ground for wading birds throughout the year.

The shelter of the dunes provides ideal conditions for wading sea birds and geese. Look out for seater ducks, long-tailed ducks and pink-footed geese.

If you get down to the open sea, look out for bottlenose dolphins, grey seals and common seals. Listen carefully and you might even hear the seals calling.

- Allow birds to feed and rest in peace. If they have to fly away, they are wasting valuable energy.
- If you spot seals on the beach, address them from a distance. If they start to move, you’ve had close.
- The saltmarsh is a fragile habitat. Help it survive by walking around the edge rather than through it.

Enjoy Scotland’s outdoors responsibly

- Take responsibility for your own actions
- Respect the interests of other people
- Care for the environment.

Traveline Scotland, 0871 2002233 or

For information on public transport services contact:

Enquiries.east@forestryandland.gov.scot

Forestry and Land Scotland, East Region

© Crown Copyright 2020

For more ideas of great days out in the forest, please visit our website: www.culbin.org.uk

For more ideas of great days out in the forest, please visit our website: www.culbin.org.uk

For more ideas of great days out in the forest, please visit our website: www.culbin.org.uk

For more ideas of great days out in the forest, please visit our website: www.culbin.org.uk

For more ideas of great days out in the forest, please visit our website: www.culbin.org.uk

For more ideas of great days out in the forest, please visit our website: www.culbin.org.uk

For more ideas of great days out in the forest, please visit our website: www.culbin.org.uk

For more ideas of great days out in the forest, please visit our website: www.culbin.org.uk

For more ideas of great days out in the forest, please visit our website: www.culbin.org.uk

For more ideas of great days out in the forest, please visit our website: www.culbin.org.uk

For more ideas of great days out in the forest, please visit our website: www.culbin.org.uk

For more ideas of great days out in the forest, please visit our website: www.culbin.org.uk

For more ideas of great days out in the forest, please visit our website: www.culbin.org.uk

For more ideas of great days out in the forest, please visit our website: www.culbin.org.uk

For more ideas of great days out in the forest, please visit our website: www.culbin.org.uk

For more ideas of great days out in the forest, please visit our website: www.culbin.org.uk

For more ideas of great days out in the forest, please visit our website: www.culbin.org.uk

For more ideas of great days out in the forest, please visit our website: www.culbin.org.uk

For more ideas of great days out in the forest, please visit our website: www.culbin.org.uk

For more ideas of great days out in the forest, please visit our website: www.culbin.org.uk

For more ideas of great days out in the forest, please visit our website: www.culbin.org.uk

For more ideas of great days out in the forest, please visit our website: www.culbin.org.uk

For more ideas of great days out in the forest, please visit our website: www.culbin.org.uk

For more ideas of great days out in the forest, please visit our website: www.culbin.org.uk

For more ideas of great days out in the forest, please visit our website: www.culbin.org.uk

For more ideas of great days out in the forest, please visit our website: www.culbin.org.uk

For more ideas of great days out in the forest, please visit our website: www.culbin.org.uk

For more ideas of great days out in the forest, please visit our website: www.culbin.org.uk
Explore Culbin

Welhill car park is the perfect starting point for your visit, with two great way-marked trails plus a large car park, toilets and picnic benches.

If you’re ready to explore a bit further, we’ve highlighted some other great destinations on the map. There is always something new to discover here. Culbin is a big forest so take the map with you!

The Minister’s Pool

At 99 feet high, this is Culbin’s tallest sand dune. Climb up the viewing tower for fantastic views.

Gravel Pit Ponds Trail

A gentle wander through pine and birch woodland, and around the Gravel Pit Ponds.

Firm and smooth gravel surface. Generally flat with gentle slopes and some short moderate sections. No obstacles.

1 mile / 1.6 km
Allow ¾ hr

Hill 99 Trail

Wend through the pine-covered sand dunes to the viewing tower on Hill 99 for a ‘squirrel’s eye’ view over the forest and across the Moray Firth.

Largely wide, firm and smooth gravel and sandy surface. Generally flat with moderate slopes and short steep sections. Includes some steps up to the viewing platform.

2 ½ miles / 3.9 km
Allow 2 hrs

Hill 99 Viewpoint

At 99 feet high, this is Culbin’s tallest sand dune. Climb up the viewing tower for fantastic views.

Hidden History

What lies beneath Culbin’s ever-shifting sand? History echoes in the evocative sculpture here.

Dragonfly Pool

On warmer summer days, spot damselflies and dragonflies at this small and peaceful wetland.

Gravel Pit Ponds

Easy to get to and a great place to play, picnic or just relax. Look out for footpiles in the spring and colourful fungi in the autumn.

The Otter Pool

We created this small pool to give wildlife an extra source of fresh water. So quietly and you might just spot an otter!

Part of the RSPB reserve, the mud flats are a good place to look for wading birds like sanderlings, redshank and curlew.

The Gut

Once open to the sea, Buckie Loch is a sheltered grassland area next to a big sandy beach. A great destination for a bike ride or a longer walk.

Buckie Loch

A peaceful spot, looking across to Findhorn village. Watch out for eels and fishing here during the summer months.

Findhorn Bay

A peaceful place, looking across to Findhorn village. Watch out for eels and fishing here during the summer months.

Tidal Sand Beach

Easy to get to and a great place to play, picnic or just relax. Look out for footpiles in the spring and colourful fungi in the autumn.

The Museum's Pool

At the start of the RSPB nature reserve, this shallow wetland was named after a local minister who skated here.

The Gut

A sheltered grassland area next to a big sandy beach. A great destination for a bike ride or a longer walk.

Tidal Sand

A peaceful place, looking across to Findhorn village. Watch out for eels and fishing here during the summer months.

RSPB Nature Reserve

A sheltered grassland area next to a big sandy beach. A great destination for a bike ride or a longer walk.

Visit www.culbin.org.uk for more details.

© Crown copyright and database right 2018. All rights reserved. Ordnance Survey Licence number 100021242.

Map created by Forestry Commission Scotland on behalf of Moira Harrower. © Crown copyright and database right 2018. All rights reserved. Ordnance Survey Licence number 100021242.