

PIPPA'S ISLAND WALKS



THE KIRKWALL
HOTEL

JACK RUSSELL WALK

Website: [Walk Highlands](#)

Distance - 2 miles

Duration - 1 hour

Difficulty - Easy

Explore the historic heart of Kirkwall, including the impressive St Magnus Cathedral and the narrow streets where the notorious ball-game the Ba is played, before heading out to the Peedie Sea and the busy harbour.

- There is a car park on the Kirkwall waterfront on Ayre Road, just west of the harbour; the bus station is very close to here as well. Start by walking east (to the right as you face the sea) keeping straight ahead along harbourside at Kiln Corner roundabout (where you can detour towards the town to visit the Orkney Wireless Museum with its vast collection of domestic and defence wireless equipment) to reach the harbour. The stone building with steps up to the door on the right is the Girnæl, built in the 1500s, it was used to store oats, bere, malt and meal paid in lieu of rent to the Earldom Estate. The building now houses the Orkney Sailing Club and the red, blue and yellow flag that usually flies is the Orkney flag, chosen by the community in 2007 it is based on Norwegian and Scottish colours to represent the shared heritage. Continue along Harbour Street passing the St Ola Hotel and turn right onto Bridge Street.

- This street contains some of the oldest building in Kirkwall, some with characteristic crowstepped gables, including the former Ship Inn (now an

Indian restaurant) where Sir Walter Scott dined in 1814. You can also find a couple of shops selling Orkney-made jewellery and the hardware store has a good selection of Orkney whiskies and beers. Detour to the left along St Olaf's Wynd to see the remains of an archway (on the left) from St Olaf's Kirk which stood on the site of a much earlier Norse wooden church. Return to Bridge Street and continue along it, passing around the corner into Albert Street.

- This street - now the main Kirkwall shopping street - used to face onto the Peedie (Orkney dialect for small, the older traditional version is Peerie) Sea which has since reduced in size as Kirkwall expanded. Many of the original buildings here were destroyed by a fire in 1938. Continue onto Broad Street until St Magnus Cathedral on your left. Founded in 1137 by the Viking, Earl Rognvald, in honour of his uncle St Magnus. Some parts of the sandstone building date back 850 years and it is well worth taking a look inside, it is also possible to take a guided tour which includes a climb up the tower.

- Note the old mercat cross outside the cathedral and turn up to the left onto Palace Road to look at the Bishop's and Earl's Palaces on the far side of the road. These fascinating ancient buildings, homes to the Sinclair earls of Orkney which was at the time under Norwegian control, can be visited on a combined ticket. The Bishop's Palace dates back to the early 12th century, whilst the Earl's Palace was built around 1606. Return to Broad Street and the Orkney Museum is directly ahead, originally the large Tankerness House, used partly as a manse for the cathedral it now houses displays on the history of Orkney.

- Continue to the left to explore Victoria Street which has a number of interesting buildings and shops (note the dates and initials above some of the doors which relate to the marriage of the original residents). This is one of the streets where the Ba is played every Christmas and New Year. The aim of this mass football game which starts from outside the Cathedral and is played between the Uppies and Doonies (local residents split depending on which part of town they're from) is to propel the ball either into the sea (Doonies) or beyond the junction of Main St and New Scapa Rd (Uppies). Games can often last hours as the ball is lost amongst the scrum of players.

- Return back along Victoria Street and turn left after the RBS onto Tankerness Lane and head right through a gateway to visit Tankerness House Gardens which as well as being a pleasant spot for a break is home to the Groatie House, a small folly covered with shells. Return to Tankerness Lane and continue right and at the bottom turn right onto Junction Road passing the impressive Orkney Library and Archives building.

- Turn left onto West Castle St at the corner with the Tourist Information Centre and pass the bus station. At the bottom of the road, opposite the fire station, cross to reach the pavement and turn right along Great Western Road which soon becomes Burgh Road. This soon runs alongside the Peedie Sea. This was originally much bigger but silted up and was reduced in size as the harbour and neighbouring streets expanded. Follow the pavement to the right, heading towards the real sea and bear left at the roundabout and pick up the footway

running alongside the Peedie Sea. This then lets you access a walk around the circular boating lake built in the 1970s.

- A model yacht club still holds races on the boating pond and the perimeter path is also popular with local walkers, cyclists and runners. Once you have walked around it return to Ayre roundabout and cross to the seaward side of the road to return to the start on Ayre Road with views of the harbour ahead.

LABRADOR TRAIL

Website: [Walk Highlands](#)

Distance - 3.5 miles

Duration - 2.5 hours

Difficulty - Moderate

A circular walk from sandy Inganess Bay following the course of the Burn of Wideford; the walk is within easy reach of Kirkwall.

- If walking from Kirkwall take the A960 out of town towards the airport and turn left at a sign for Inganess. Follow the road to the car park at Inganess Bay, with the rusting hulk of former blockship Juniata visible offshore. This bay has a beach of wonderful white sand and is a great location for swimming in the summer and birdwatching in the winter, when waders and grebes are frequent visitors. The small loch behind the car park is inhabited by moorhen, mallard and teal, with the distinctive call of curlew floating over the wetlands beyond.

- Leave the car park by the kissing gate in the south-east corner and follow the course of the Burn of Wideford through unsurprisingly boggy wetlands. Whilst

this is inconvenient for walking, it's an ideal habitat for wildflowers and wooden duckboards span the wettest sections of the path. Regardless - after significant rainfall you'll regret wearing sandals on this route.

- Cross the burn via a footbridge, then negotiate two stiles before crossing the A960 road with care. On the far side of the road take the small grassy path running close to the burn through planted native woodland on a series of wooden duckboards. The path begins to rise above the burn opposite Wideford Farm and heads into a patch of scrubland, with more developed trees such as hawthorn, rowan and alder - a rarity on windswept Orkney - further down the slope in the sheltered valley.

- The path opens out onto farmland, and several stiles must be crossed as the path heads from one field to the next. Ignore the track crossing the burn and leading up to Wideford Farm and remain on the south (left) bank until the path weaves over a couple of simple footbridges and turns right along a grassy lane between two field boundaries. Cross a stile and follow the arrow-straight path to a junction, where the path leading left should be ignored. Continue forward through the yellow-flowered gorse as the path becomes a bridleway and passes Caldwell Cottage. Reaching a minor road turn right to pass a flooded quarry and reach the A960. Turn left - taking extreme care as this is quite a busy road - and take the first turning on the right.

- Follow this to a T-junction and turn right to follow the minor road back to the car park at Inganess Bay or turn left to walk into Kirkwall.

DOBERMAN HIKE

Website: [Walk Highlands](#)

Distance - 6 miles

Duration - 3 hours

Difficulty - Moderate

A great 'there and back' to climb to the top of Wideford Hill which is a great viewpoint above Kirkwall and visit the impressive chambered cairn on the far side of the hill before returning to Kirkwall.

- Start from the Pickaquoy Centre on Muddisdale Road on the west side of Kirkwall. The centre is a sports and arts venue and has a large parking area. Begin the walk by heading up Muddisdale Road - which branches left from the road to the Pickaquoy Centre car park (or right if you have your back to the Pickaquoy Centre). When the road forks keep right of the bungalows, with the fenced sports fields on your right. Turn left at the farm gate to follow the Muddisdale footpath and cycleway as it climbs gently uphill.

- As the path meanders through groups of trees, ignore any turnings to the right to eventually follow the path just to the left of a stone wall and the golf course. There are good views back to Kirkwall with the red sandstone of St Magnus Cathedral dominant. The path climbs between fields and the masts on top of Wideford Hill can be seen ahead.

- When Sunnybrae Road is reached turn left for a short section on the road, taking the next track on the right signed for Wideford Hill. The rough track climbs and then meets the surfaced road leading up to the summit of the hill. Turn right on

this and follow this around a sharp bend and steeply uphill to reach the top where as well as a trig point, view indicator and masts there is a great view down over Kirkwall and out to the surrounding islands.

- From the summit return downhill to the sharp bend (and small parking area) and take the path on the right for Wideford Cairn. The first part of the path has good views towards Finstown and the islands in the Bay of Firth. Where the path forks keep left heading downhill through a gap in an old fence to reach the fence surrounding the cairn.

- The neolithic cairn dates to about 3000BC and was a communal burial site dug into the side of the hill. You can access the inside via a ladder and the sliding hatch on the top, be sure to take the torch from the box before you enter. The original narrow entrance passageway would have been at the front. By the time this cairn was excavated in the 19th century it had already been robbed so there were no remains of the Orcadian farmers and their belongings which have been found in similar cairns.

- From the cairn return up the path to the Wideford Hill road and return to Kirkwall by the outward route. Turn off the road onto the track and then turn left at Sunnyside Road before turning right onto the path back to Muddisdale and eventually the Picaquoy Centre.

WOLFHOUND WANDER

Website: [St Magnus Way](#)

Distance - 6.3 miles

Duration - 3.5 hours

Difficulty - Moderate

At times of exceptionally high tides, the path leading to the beach at Waulkmill may be flooded and impassable. In those circumstances, walkers are advised to return to the main road and keep on it 'till the next junction and turn right there. Tide times at Waulkmill are approximately the same as for Stromness. Please see [Tide Times](#)

- When leaving The Kirkwall Hotel, turn left and walk along the harbour to the roundabout. Here you will turn left and follow the along the A963 all the way through town until you see Balfour Hospital on your left. Here you will reach a roundabout. Go straight over the roundabout and look for the sign for Crantit Trail. This is a short trail to Scapa Bay.

- Once at the bay turn right and walk along the beach to the west side of Scapa Bay. Here there will be a cliff path which will take you past Scapa Distillery. Continue on this cliff side path until you see a track to the right heading up to The Fovaran restaurant, go past the restaurant and walk up to the A964.

- Turn left and walk along the A964 past the Scapa Garage. There will be track leading back to the shoreline on the left.

- Once you reach the shore, the path will hug the shoreline for a bit before

venturing more inland.

- You will enter the Hobbister Nature Reserve. The track diverts away from the coast to avoid the dwelling called Crook and passes the large, slatted wooden building that acts as Highland Park's peat store. You are now looking into Waulkmill Bay, one of Orkney's iconic beauty spots.
- Continue along the road, past the public loo and a set of steps that lead down to the bay, as far as where the road bends to the north towards the main road. At this corner, a track leads down to the north-east corner of the bay through another lovely area of willow scrub.
- The track continues as a barely visible path through the grass along the back of the beach with, on your right, one of Orkney's most extensive saltmarshes, Skaith, where can be found some scarce (though not very conspicuous!) plants such as Long-bracted Sedge and Narrow Blymus. Eventually one is halted by the Mill Burn which has exited the Kirbister Loch about a kilometre to the north and at this point you are standing on a mysterious archaeological site!