

MORAY COAST TRAIL - Notes on multi-use access

The Moray Coast Trail in the north-east of Scotland is one of Scotland's Great Trails. Approximately 50 miles long, the route links settlements between Findhorn in the west and Cullen in the east. The waymarked on-road cycle route between Findhorn and Forres links the Moray Coastal Trail with the Dava Way.

The Moray Coast Trail was originally designed and created as a walking route. Many parts of the route are suitable for horse riders, but some sections are impassable with a horse. These notes have been produced by British Horse Society Scotland to help those interested in using part or all of the Moray Coast Trail identify location and brief details of features which may restrict multi-use of the waymarked route. These notes are intended to supplement detailed route guides and other information already available from the route website (<http://www.morayways.org.uk/moray-coast-trail.asp>) and other sources.

Inclusion of narrow footbridges and gates, steps, or sections of very steep, narrow, eroded or boggy path, does not necessarily mean that these are impassable with a horse, but will help you decide for yourself whether particular features might present an obstruction to you. Suggestions for parking and alternative routes to avoid restrictions on multi-use are included where information has been provided, but do not constitute a recommendation. All route users are responsible for deciding for themselves whether this route, or any part thereof, is suitable for their intended use, taking account of their own abilities, skills, fitness and experience, as well as season, weather conditions etc. Event organisers, groups or commercial operators considering using the Moray Coast Trail are urged to contact the route managers (see route website for details).

Remember that whether on foot, cycle or horseback, or driving a horse-drawn vehicle, rights of access in Scotland depend on access takers and land managers accepting individual responsibility for their actions. The Moray Ways website summarises ground rules for responsible access. Further details of what this means on the ground can be found at <http://www.outdooraccess-scotland.com/>. Specific guidance for horse riders can be downloaded from <http://www.bhsscotland.org.uk/responsible-riding.html>.

Courtesy, consideration of others' needs and good communication are the key to sharing paths. Always pass others you meet along the trail at a walk, and elsewhere limit your pace to ground conditions and visibility. On surfaced paths and other well used sections of the route, such as along the disused railway, riders need to be particularly careful to respect other users and either clear dung off the path or move their horse off the path to dung.

Although the route is waymarked throughout, sometimes the waymarks are difficult to find, so make sure you have a map with you.

The background information for these notes was provided by volunteers who surveyed the route in 2014 as part of a multi-use long distance route audit funded by Scottish Natural Heritage. The notes were updated in March 2016 following review with the route managers. The notes will be further updated as and when notification of subsequent changes is received, but neither BHS or the relevant access authorities can guarantee accessibility or the accuracy of information provided.


Findhorn to Burghead

This section of route is best done on horseback at low tide when you can ride for 7 miles along the beach between Findhorn and Burghead. At high tide the remaining shore is in places very rocky with loose, large round stones and a steep cross-gradient. It is therefore vital to check tide times in advance. The waymarked coastal trail along the headland above the beach between Findhorn and Roseisle Forest is narrow in places due to ongoing coastal erosion. Anyone using this section should take particular care to avoid causing damage, and to respect others enjoying the trail. There is ample parking at Findhorn and Roseisle Forest, and various alternative loops can be enjoyed on tracks through Roseisle Forest.



Burghead to Lossiemouth

Between Burghead and Hopeman the Moray Coast Trail follows tarmac cycle route and hard surfaced path along the disused railway, all of which is multi-use and suitable for all abilities.

Location / OS Grid Ref.	Feature/description	Alternative access to avoid restrictions
Hopeman - Covesea	East from Hopeman the coastal trail follows a narrow unsurfaced path between the edge of the golf course and the coast which includes several series of steep steps. 	Follow B9040 and track north from Williamston to rejoin coast trail at NT160700



From OSGR 177707 a new surfaced path has been laid through to Covesea.

Covesea to Stotfield

Severe coastal erosion has lowered the beach and exposed sand cliffs so that at high tide the entire beach is now under water rather than the high tide line as mapped. Rocky outcrops extending out to sea make the beach impassable at high tide and difficult to negotiate if covered by an incoming tide. Sand cliffs mean there is no way up off the beach other than at the signed exits at NJ226709 and NJ203714. At time of survey in spring 2014, high tide path along edge of dunes severely eroded by winter storms.





At low tide ride along beach. At high tide follow B9040 parallel to coast instead, rejoining coastal trail via path link at NJ223708

<p>NJ216710</p>	<p>Narrow wooden slatted footbridge across burn with no side rails and questionable weight bearing capacity</p> 	<p>Follow shingle track onto beach to ford burn north of bridge</p> 
<p>NJ230712</p>	<p>Pedestrian path along the shore between West Beach and harbour heavily used by pedestrians with buggies, dogs etc. Broken concrete ramp leading up from beach.</p> 	<p>Horse riders may prefer to join/leave the Moray Coast Trail west of West Beach at Lossiemouth. Follow the main road through town to harbour to avoid conflict with other users. Traffic calming measures restrict vehicular speed.</p>




Lossiemouth to Spey Bay

Location / OS Grid Ref.	Feature/description	Alternative access to avoid restrictions
<p>NJ237705</p>	<p>Fragile narrow 1.1m wide wooden slatted footbridge >100m long across River Lossie. Unsuitable for horses due to very dubious weight bearing capacity and insubstantial structure.</p>	<p>Local riders suggest that at low tide it may be possible to ford the river but it is fairly deep mid-stream, even at low tide, with some soft patches of sand and silt. Access near the bridge is also limited by large boulders reinforcing the river bank. The alternative is to follow the path along the west bank of the River Lossie, south-east to Arthur's Bridge at NJ254673 and link back to the coast trail via forest tracks. You should be aware that the B9103 is a busy road with numerous blind spots and limited</p>

		visibility.
<p>NJ315665 Rifle range west of Garmouht</p>	<p>No access across rifle range, or across the beach north of the range, during active firing when red flags are flying.</p>	<p>Follow forest track from NJ282680 via Binn Hill to minor road, linking back along road to Garmouth, or via track past Corbiewell to rejoin coastal trail at NJ320663</p>
<p>NJ344642</p>	<p>Disused railway bridge over River Spey, central section repaired March 2015 but restricted width. Although there are no barriers to multi-use access, riders should be aware that there are no passing places, nor scope for horses to turn once they have set out across the bridge. The bridge is well used by cyclists, walkers and people pushing buggies, and the side sections are insufficiently robust to support a horse's weight. Horse riders are advised not to consider using this bridge unless they are 100% confident that their horse will not kick or panic if walkers and cyclists pass close by, and will be able to cope with the structure. Look before setting off to make sure the bridge is clear.</p> 	

Spey Bay to Buckie

Trailers may be able to park at Spey Bay Golf Course.

Location / OS Grid Ref.	Feature/description	Alternative access to avoid restrictions
NJ354648	Wooden steps 	Bypass steps by following track 100m east through trees
NJ382642	Narrow 1m wide wooden footbridge 15m span, metal mesh over planks 	Follow track south past Lower Auchenreath then minor road to rejoin Moray Coast Trail at Portannach. Or for those happy to ford burn, follow steep path either side of bridge 
Portann-achy to Buckpool	Waymarked trail follows coast, diverting where necessary around houses. Beach/coastal path rocky in places. No obstacles to multi-use but horse riders are recommended to use more suitable alternative.	For easier, level alternative route, turn right at green garage at NJ386642 onto lane running parallel to coast. Turn right at main Keith road, then left at Portgordon Bowling Club onto waymarked disused railway line, to rejoin waymarked coast trail at NJ405648

Buckie to Findochty

Most of the Moray Coast Trail along this section is unsuitable and unsustainable for multi-use because of narrow sections of path with steep drops to the side as a result of erosion. The sections of disused railway between Buckie and Cullen which have been developed as part of the National Cycle Network provide a multi-use alternative.

The car park at Seatown is too small and the height barrier too low to accommodate trailers or lorries. The car park at Gordonsburgh near the cycle track has a sign saying no caravans or lorries. The public car park at Strathlene Sands is accessible by both lorries and trailers

Findochty to Portnockie

The Moray Coast Trail follows the cycle path for 1 mile between Findochty and Portnockie, which although only signed for walkers and cyclists, is equally suitable for responsible horse-riders.

Portnockie to Cullen

Although some parts of this section of the Moray Coast Trail are accessible with a horse or bike, there are about 50 steps down to Cullen Sands at OSGR NJ496680. The cycle path along the disused railway provides a multi-use alternative.

VWG

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