

3.5 Elie to Crail

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Distance 11.0 miles 17.7 km

Terrain mostly flattish mixture of pavements, coastal and other paths, rocky stretches, ending on pavement

Food and drink Elie, St Monans, Pittenweem, Anstruther, Crail

Side trips Anstruther Fisheries Museum, Crail Museum & Heritage Centre

Summary excellent shoreside and cliff-edge walking interspersed with superbly maintained buildings in old fishing villages; wide views frame historic sites and an unusual natural feature



- From Toll Green, turn right along Stenton Row and The Toft. Turn left along Admiralty Lane, then right along a lane to the shore at Ruby Bay (mile 55.4).
- From a parking area, follow a signed path through grassy dunes.
- After about 150 m the official route turns left, but instead make a small detour along a clear path ahead. It approaches the distinctive lighthouse, then passes Lady's Tower (built in 1770 for Lady Janet Anstruther). Rejoin the main route at mile 55.6.



Elie Parish Church

Romantic ruins of Lady's Tower



- With excellent views south and east to North Berwick Law, Bass Rock and Isle of May, a path above the shore leads to Ardrross Farm and Castle (mile 56-6). (To access a farm shop and the main road go up a track below the old railway trackbed.) The Path goes between the two surviving sections of the castle, dating from the mid-14th to 16th centuries.

- Continue along the undulating path, with some steps. Below Newark Castle, note warnings about dogs, grazing cattle and high tide.
- Go up and through a gate. Shortly the alternative route leads left through another gate. Further on, bear right and follow a field-edge path. At a junction, turn right and continue to a minor road and on to rejoin the main Path near the church.

- On the main route, you pass a 16th century dovecote on the approach to Newark Castle. Its western part fell into the sea long ago, but most of its ground floor is still visible, if unstable. Take care if you inspect these ruins!



- The path continues just above the shore and passes below St Monans Church. Climb narrow steps in its stone-built sea defence to reach the church entrance: see panel.
- Follow a signposted tarmac path between cottages to a minor road. Keep right, down West End to St Monans harbour (mile 58).
- At a junction on the left, continue ahead along Mid Shore. To borrow a key for the windmill, turn left along Station Road and left into West Street for 50 m to the Spar shop; return afterwards to Mid Shore.



St Monans Church



Built as a chapel in the 1360s, this sandstone church is the closest to the sea in Scotland, only 20 m from the cliff edge. Its name may come from 'Monance', a little known saint.

It became the local parish church in 1646. Its unusual shape, a truncated cross, is topped by an octagonal tower. The church is roofed with Cumberland slate. Inside it is pleasantly light, thanks to the extensive use of limewash (paint) on almost every surface. For visitor info, see www.scottishchurches.org.uk.



- On the main route, at a four-way junction, bear left up to Rose Street and turn right, past fine stone terrace houses to a car park and wide path above the shore (mile 58.3).
- Approaching St Monans Windmill, note the tidal swimming pool, although at high tide it's submerged. The best view of the nearby salt pans is from the windmill itself.
- At the east end of the site an information panel explains the surviving stonework of a panhouse here. Follow the wide path ahead.
- At mile 59.1, the path forks: bear left up steps to a park. Pass a shelter to a path above the shore, and go on to a small park on the edge of Pittenweem.
- The path leads between houses and the sea wall to a road. Veer right to the esplanade, and continue along Mid Shore beside the harbour, crowded with fishing boats. It was improved by Sir John Anstruther (1718-1799) in conjunction with his enterprise at St Monans. He was also the local MP on three occasions.
- To detour to the town centre turn left up Water Wynd (mile 59.7). Otherwise, continue past lovely stone buildings and bear left up Abbey Wall Road after the harbour. Leave it after 120 m at a left bend to go through a gap in the wall.
- Follow a cobbled path and cross a small park. Nearly 500 m after leaving the road, bear right down to the edge of a golf course.



St Monans Windmill

This, the sole surviving windmill in Fife, was built in the late 18th century by Sir John Anstruther

whose Newark Coal & Salt Company opened a mine nearby. Nine salt pans (still visible) were dug on the beach below and roofed over. The windmill pumped sea water to the pans where coal was burned to evaporate the water. The salt residue was sent by rail to Pittenweem harbour, and used mainly in food preservation. Salt production ceased around 1820. To visit the windmill, borrow a key from the Spar shop which is open until 9 pm and means a round trip detour of about 2 km.

Pittenweem waterfront houses



- White stakes mark the golf course boundary, and the Path clings to it. At a fork go straight on. After you pass a tiny shell beach, encouragingly Anstruther comes into view ahead.
- Cross a small park to a wide tarmac path above the beach and go on to a minor road, soon passing Anstruther Golf Club (1890). Follow Shore Road for about 250 m and make a left-right dogleg onto the A917 and follow it to the narrow, busy High Street.
- Bear right on High Street East and right again down to Shore Street and the busy marina and harbour. Boats leave here for the Isle of May (see page 24) and the Fisheries Museum is opposite: see page 18.
- Continue on the path beside James Street for 300 m, passing a building proclaiming its date as 1723.
- At Tolbooth Wynd, cross diagonally right to John Street, with terraced houses of various sizes and architectural styles. After 450 m you reach Cellardyke harbour, with its tiny narrow entrance.
- Continue past Cellardyke play park on left, and go straight on to a car park. At Kilrenny Mill Caravan Park (mile 62.4), tarmac yields to a vehicle track, then a shoreside path.
- About 800 m further on, pass Caiplie houses. After a further 500 m, cross a stone wall on a step stile. Continue to mile 64 where you see the low, tiered sandstone outcrop that is Caiplie Coves or Caves (known locally as simply 'The Coves'). Early Christian crosses are carved on the wall of the largest cave, but explore with care because rock falls are possible.
- A grassy path leads ahead and after another 500 m, as you cross a stone wall, note the warning about dogs and livestock. Then follow about 200 m of rocky going and take a path across a low headland.
- Crail harbour comes into view. Head up West Braes to the main road and turn right beside it. Continue ahead for 250 m through the town centre to the Crail Museum & Heritage Centre which has displays about its church, farming, fishing and both World Wars: www.crailmuseum.uk.



Cellardyke

Caiplie Caves or Coves



