



Portmahomack's houses round the curve of its sandy bay

Before you go

A loop of 13.5 to 14.6 km (8½ to 9 miles): 3¾ hours by Go4awalk, 4 to 4½ hours by Scotland Off the Beaten Track and 4 hours 40 minutes by Walking Britain. A shore path, faint in places, with gates and stiles; the last 2.7 km by the road.

Start at the middle car park by the beach in Portmahomack, which has a voluntary donation box. The 416A bus from Tain runs Tuesday to Thursday only; none goes to the lighthouse.

The village's public toilets are open daily all year; there are none at the lighthouse.



The walk online, with its photographs and map:

hiddenscotland.com/walks/a-walk-to-tarbat-ness-lighthouse-from-portmahomack

It starts at the middle car park by the beach in Portmahomack, NH 914 842.

In an emergency, call 999 or 112 and ask for the police.

Keep dogs on a lead near the cattle and sheep, but let go if cattle threaten you. Hold on to children near the cliff edges. From November to January, set off by 10am: the sun sets between 3.28pm and 4pm.

After the walk

Take a flask: there is nowhere to buy a drink beyond the village. For a short walk another day, drive to the car park near the lighthouse, with a donation box and no toilets: a tarmac track of about 420 m leads to the tower.

A WALK ROUND

Tarbat Ness



A HIDDEN SCOTLAND WALK

From Portmahomack to the Lighthouse and Home by Rockfield

Tarbat Ness is the long, low point where the Dornoch Firth meets the Moray Firth, and at the end of it stands the tallest lighthouse on the Scottish mainland, white with two red bands. The walk is the round of the headland from the harbour village of Portmahomack: out to the lighthouse along one shore and back by the other.

words // Hidden Scotland photography // Hidden Scotland

From the middle car park by the beach, walk along the village to the gate at the end of the road, where the Core Path sets off along the shore. Cattle and sheep graze the fields beyond, and a sign at the stile gives a number to ring. The path runs close to the edge of the bank, gorse on one side and a drop to shingle and rocks on the other. It fades in places, and there are gates and stiles.

The path keeps to the top of the bank, never much above the sea, with the lighthouse ahead. Robert Stevenson's tower was first lit in 1830, and its two red bands were added in 1915. At 41

metres it is the tallest lighthouse on the Scottish mainland, and the Northern Lighthouse Board puts it third in Scotland. It is a working light: the grounds are private and the tower is not open. The path ends on the rocks of the point, where grey seals are seen daily and bottlenose dolphins all year.

Past the lighthouse car park and down Wilkhaven Pier Road, a second path follows the east shore south, past Ballone Castle, which is private, to Rockfield. From Rockfield the road takes you back over the headland to the village, about 2.7 km.



The round of the headland from Portmahomack, out by the north shore and back by Rockfield: Map data © OpenStreetMap contributors 13.5 to 14.6 km, or 8½ to 9 miles, by the published guides.