

Achmelvich Bay from the rocks: white sand, turquoise water and low hills behind

Before you go

About 0.8 km each way, about a mile there and back. Hostelling Scotland gives 10 to 15 minutes each way; allow about an hour with time at the castle and on the sand. A road and grass tracks past the camp site, then an unsurfaced path over a low, rocky headland, with no cover on the way.

Start at the Achmelvich beach car park, three miles north-west of Lochinver by a single-track road. It is pay and display: £3 up to 4 hours, £4 up to 6 and £5 up to 8, by Highland Council's 2026 order. The 809 bus only sets down at the youth hostel.

The toilets there have an accessible toilet and baby changing; Assynt Development Trust says they are expected to close in winter. Highland Council asks for dogs at heel or on a short lead when others are on the beach, and under control on the croft land round it, especially at lambing time. Hold small hands on the rock.

After the walk

Lochinver Larder, about three and a half miles back by the road, is open Tuesday to Saturday, 10am to 4pm, for pies to eat in or by the River Inver. Discover Assynt names this coast for otters, and for dolphins and whales offshore.

The walk online, with its photographs and map:
hiddenscotland.com/walks/achmelvich-beach-walk-to-the-hermits-castle

It starts at the Achmelvich beach car park, at the end of the road, NC 058 248.

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

A WALK TO THE

Hermit's Castle



A HIDDEN SCOTLAND WALK

From the White Sand at Achmelvich to a Folly on the Rocks

Achmelvich is a cove on the Assynt coast of the north-west Highlands, three miles from Lochinver, its sand white with crushed shell. A short walk from its beach, over a low headland of grey rock, finds the Hermit's Castle: a tiny concrete folly on the rocks, sometimes used as a bothy, with a story to it.

words // Hidden Scotland *photography* // Simon Hird

Start at the car park at the end of the road, beside the youth hostel. The road runs west behind the bay, with machair between it and the sand. The sand is white because it is mostly crushed shell, and on a bright day the water over it turns turquoise.

Past the Shore Caravan Site, keep to the outside of its fence towards a broken-down old ruin, as Undiscovered Scotland describes the way: the straight line over the higher ground can miss the castle. At the foot of the headland is a small cove of sand, Sinky Sands on OpenStreetMap, where the path turns west over the rock. The grey rock all round is Lewisian gneiss, formed about 3,000 million years ago, and at its highest the headland is only about 13 metres above the sea.

The path drops to the rocky point. The castle is so close in colour to the rock that it is often passed without being seen, and it looks bigger from a distance than it is. It was built, so the story is told, around 1950 by David Scott, a Norwich architect, who landed his materials by boat and worked on it alone for six months, then spent one weekend in it and never came back. You go in from the sea side, and inside there is room for little more than a concrete bed and a fireplace; the square holes in one wall once held glass. Come back the same way, and look inland for the tall west end of Suilven standing over the moor.



There and back the same way: about 0.8 km each way, a mile in all.

Map data © OpenStreetMap contributors

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