



One of the cone-shaped cairns, beside the earth path through the pines

Before you go

A loop from Crathie: the estate's map gives its cairns walk as 9 km (5½ miles) with 280 metres of climbing, and Scotland Off the Beaten Track allows about three hours. The estate's shorter Pyramid Walk, by Princess Beatrice's cairn, is 6 km with 180 metres. The paths aren't waymarked and are very muddy after rain, and the phone signal is poor: wear boots and carry a map, food and drink.

Park in the estate's car park beside the A93 at Crathie: £6, cash or card at the machines. Stagecoach's 201, Aberdeen to Braemar, stops at Balmoral Rd End, 80 metres from the car park.



The walk online, with its photographs and map:
hiddenscotland.com/walks/the-balmoral-cairns-walk

It starts at the Balmoral estate's car park beside the A93 at Crathie, NO 263 949.

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

Aberdeenshire Council lists public toilets at the car park; there are none on the paths. Keep dogs on a lead: the estate asks for it, and the Scottish Outdoor Access Code asks for a short lead or close at heel from April to July, when birds nest on the ground. The estate shuts the cairns walk in August and September, when its Pyramid Walk can still be walked.

After the walk

The Tarmachan Café, among silver birches in an old quarry, is about 600 metres east of the car park along the A93, which has no pavement: check its Instagram for the day's hours. Crathie Kirk, beside the car park, is open to visitors from April to October.

A WALK TO THE

Balmoral Cairns



A HIDDEN SCOTLAND WALK

From Crathie to Prince Albert's Pyramid

Across the Dee from Crathie, in the wooded hills behind Balmoral Castle, stand the cairns Queen Victoria raised for her family: one for the buying of the estate in 1852, six for her children's marriages and a great granite pyramid for Prince Albert. The walk climbs through the pines from cairn to cairn, with the pyramid as its high point.

words // Hidden Scotland photography // Hidden Scotland

From the estate's car park beside the A93, a lane drops past the old kirkyard, where John Brown lies, to the suspension bridge over the Dee: built in 1834, with a wooden deck, and now for walkers only. Along the road, go right over a small bridge, then left up the private road past the cottages at Easter Balmoral, quietly, as people live there.

The path climbs steadily through the pines, and it isn't waymarked. Princess Helena's cairn, for her marriage in 1866, is up a rough path on the left; Louise's, for hers in 1871, sits on a rocky knoll. The Purchase Cairn, the first of them all, was built on Craig Gowan on 18 October 1852 for the buying of

Balmoral. A spur leads on to Prince Leopold's cairn of 1882, straight above the castle.

A faint path on the right reaches Prince Arthur's cairn of 1879, and the way goes on through the pines to Princess Alice's, for her marriage in 1862. Then comes the day's steepest climb, to the pyramid on Creag an Lurachain, 442 metres up: dressed granite raised for Albert by his "broken hearted widow", its inscription dated 21 August 1862. The way down passes Princess Beatrice's cairn of 1885 and goes through a metal gate onto the road you came up by, then back over the bridge to the car park.



A loop from Crathie; the estate's map gives its cairns walk as 9 km, or 5½ miles.

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