

The bog pools and the hills on the skyline, from inside the Flows Lookout

Before you go

A round trip of a mile (1.6 km), about 45 minutes by the RSPB, with about 10 metres of climb, go4awalk says. Out on a boardwalk with no rim or railing, back on flagstone steps.

Start at the RSPB visitor centre in the old station at Forsinard, on the A897; the car park and the reserve are free. No bus or taxi comes here, the RSPB says, but the train stops: four a day each way, one on Sundays.

The visitor centre and its toilets open every day 9am to 5pm from April to October, and Monday to Friday, 10am to 2pm, from November to March; the trails are open all year. Keep dogs on a short lead, above all from April to July. On 21 December it is light from about 9.02am to 3.24pm.

After the walk

Golden plover, skylarks and meadow pipits are the likeliest birds in spring and summer. There is no café at the visitor centre: the Forsinard Lodge Tearoom, about a mile north on the A897, opens Wednesday to Sunday, 10am to 4pm, and shuts all of January, by its own site.

The walk online, with its photographs and map:
hiddenscotland.com/walks/the-flow-countrys-birds-at-rspb-forsinard-flows

It starts at the RSPB visitor centre in the old station at Forsinard, on the A897 (KW13 6YT), NC 890 425.

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

A WALK AT

Forsinard Flows



A HIDDEN SCOTLAND WALK

Over the Bog Pools to the Flows Lookout

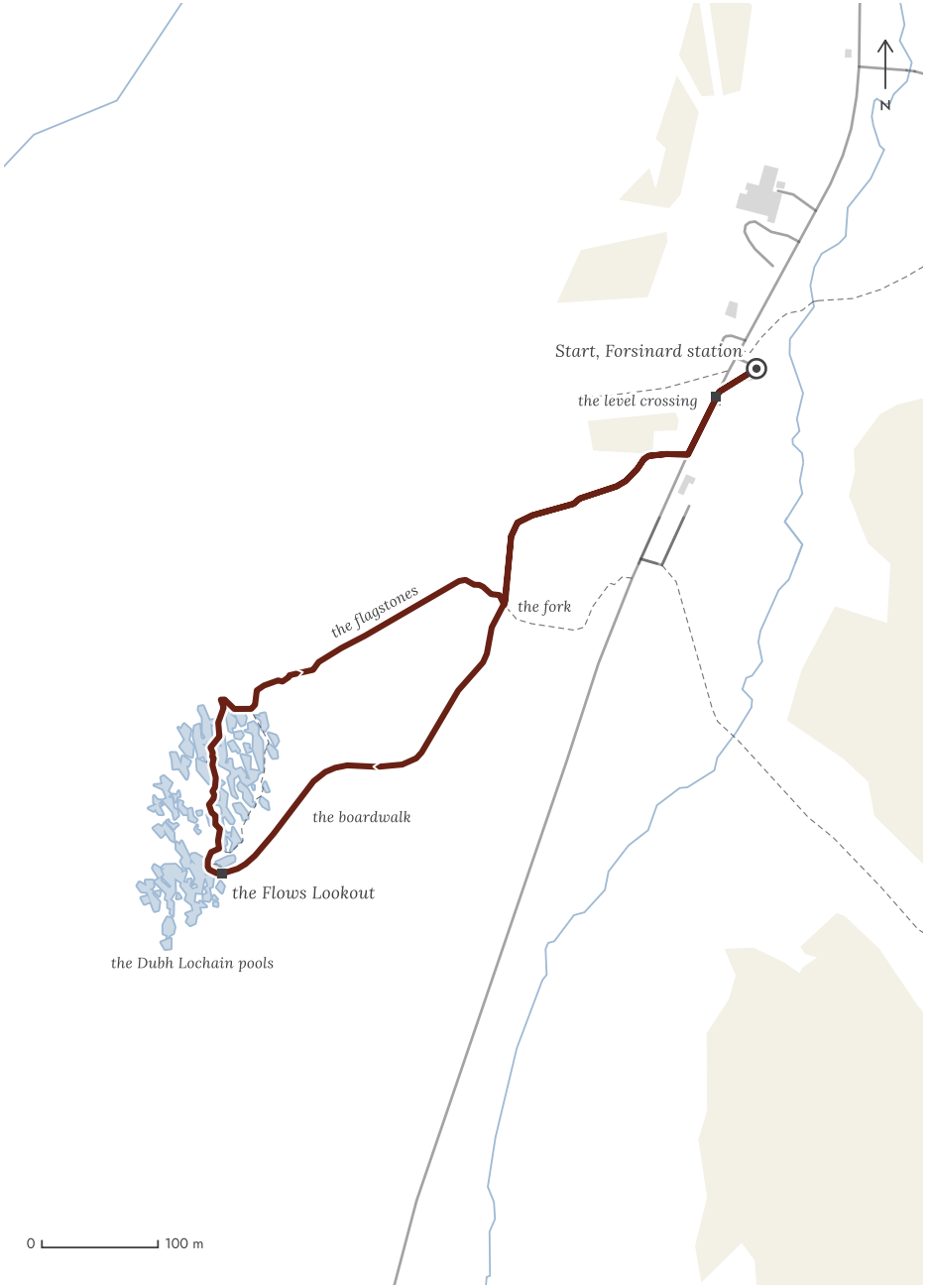
The Flow Country is a great rolling sweep of blanket bog, pools and far-off hills in the very north of Scotland, and RSPB Forsinard Flows looks after a huge stretch of it. The Dubh Lochain Trail is a round trip of a mile from the old station at Forsinard to the Flows Lookout, a two-storey tower over the bog pools: out on a boardwalk and back on flagstones.

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

Start at the RSPB visitor centre in the old station building, beside the free car park, with the reserve's exhibition and toilets; it is not routinely staffed. The boardwalk starts on the far side of the Far North Line, so cross at the station's level crossing, with its half barriers and lights. Trains are few: four a day each way, and one on Sundays.

A wooden boardwalk heads south-west across the bog. It has no rim or railing and undulates with a side camber, the RSPB says; keep to it, as off it, Celtic Lodges warns, your feet get very wet. At a fork the flagstone path you come back on leaves the boardwalk: carry on towards the Lookout, past a bench, the first place to sit. The boardwalk runs among the dark Dubh Lochain pools. Lizards lurk along its edge, dragonflies dart over the water, and sundew and butterwort, plants that catch insects, grow in the bog.

The Flows Lookout is a two-storey tower with two viewing platforms, one up a shallow ramp and the other up two flights of stairs, for the pools from above and the hills on the skyline. It shelters you from the wind, and swallows often nest in it. The way back is a different path, of Caithness flagstone steps through the pools, which rejoins the boardwalk at the fork; with a push-chair or wheelchair, go back by the boardwalk instead. Then cross the railway again to the station.



The Dubh Lochain Trail, out on the boardwalk to the Flows Lookout and back on flagstones: a round trip of a mile (1.6 km), the RSPB says.

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