

4. HUNTERHECK DRIVE: 3Km. WALK: 3.5Km.

Leave Moffat on the A708, signposted Selkirk. After about 3 Km., and just past a road junction from which a minor road descends to the river, there is a gate on the left leading into the forest. It has a broad entrance and there is room for parking.

“This forecourt is not part of the highway but belongs to the forest and was formed to allow forestry vehicles, however large, to remain completely off the main road whilst the gate is being opened or closed. However from time to time unattended vehicles have been parked in front of the gate thus completely preventing such access. The owners have expressed their concern about this but do not seem to object to discreet and reasonable parking, and therefore we would request that you refrain from parking here if the space is already congested, and also report to the Moffat and District Community Initiative full details (including date, time and vehicle registration numbers) of any inconsiderate parking, or rubbish dumping, etc. Otherwise there is a danger that residents and visitors alike may lose the benefit of being able to park here. This is a circular walk which can be done in either direction, but doing it anticlockwise gives a gentler ascent and better views.” This is a circular walk which can be done in either direction, but doing it anticlockwise gives a gentler ascent and better views.

Having crossed the stile, take the track which goes off to the right. This climbs steadily up the valley side behind Craigieburn Gardens and after a little more than a kilometre swings round to the left and becomes more grassy. It is eventually replaced by a path, but by this time the cairn at the top of the hill will be visible just some distance off to the right. The view from the cairn is down over Moffat.

The path leading down is less clear, but can be seen directly ahead of the direction you have come as it descends into the trees. After about 30 metres it emerges at a fire break, but do not be tempted to go downhill to the right. Instead, cross the stream and you will soon pick up a more clearly defined path through the fire break which rises ahead and slightly to the left.

This path leads on to a track which descends, in places quite steeply, back to the gate where you parked. The views of Moffat town and Annandale which this section offers the walker are unsurpassed anywhere in the area.

5. RAECLEUCH FOREST DRIVE: 4Km. WALK: Variable

The Greenhillstairs road, the B719, links the A701, Moffat to Edinburgh, to the Evan Water Valley through which runs the A74(M) linking Carlisle with Glasgow. Leave Moffat on the A701, a well engineered road which climbs steadily up the side of the Annan Water valley. Instead of turning left on to the B719 it is worth continuing on the main road as far as the Devil's Beef Tub. On reaching a long left hand bend with several parking spaces on the left, park the car, cross the road and go through the kissing gate towards the monument. The history of the Devil's Beef Tub is described for visitors.

Once on the B719, look for a gate which leads into the forest on the right, about 1 Km. from the road junction. This track gives access to a large area of forest, networked by tracks and many different walks are possible. It is possible, for instance to walk as far as Little Clyde, and although never far from the motorway or the railway line, the noise from either is seldom heard. It is possible to walk to the A701 about 2 Km. north of the Devil's Beef Tub, to return by the road.

Ideally, because there is such an extensive network of tracks, a map is advisable, and the hills with tempting names - Errickstane Hill, Tinny Bank, Williement Hass, and Tippet Hill - can be explored. However, an underground gas pipe crosses the area, and although it is unobtrusive, its numbered marker posts make good landmarks and nobody with a reasonable sense of direction should have trouble with navigation.



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TAKE 5 WALKS FROM THE CAR AROUND MOFFAT



This is a varied selection of walks in the Moffat area. Some could be done without going by car to the starting point, but taking the car allows more time for walking and removes the need to walk on roads which, during the summer particularly, can be very busy.

NOT ALL OF THE WALKS IN THIS SERIES ARE ON PUBLIC RIGHTS OF WAY, AND WALKERS SHOULD RESPECT THE COUNTRYSIDE AND PRACTISE THE COUNTRY CODE AT ALL TIMES. ALL DISTANCES ARE APPROXIMATE. THE SERIES IS WRITTEN BY ANDY ARMSTRONG

1. DRAGOON'S POOL

DRIVE: 2Km. WALK: 1.5Km.

From the High Street take the A701 south, signposted Dumfries. On reaching the motorway, go underneath and at the next roundabout take the third exit. Midway between the entrance to the Dragoon's Pool nursery and the old telephone exchange is a gate which leads down to some rough steps to the old branch line. The railway line to Moffat closed in 1953. Cross the Evan Water by the railway bridge, then cross the stile on the right and walk upstream to the woodland beyond the Dragoon's Pool.

The path becomes less distinct but it is worth following as it wanders through the trees between the railway line and the river. The railway is at a higher level than the path and walkers are protected by a wall, but railway enthusiasts will be excited by the proximity of the trains. It is difficult to imagine now with powerful electric locomotives pulling the Glasgow to London trains that, not so many years ago, three steam engines would sometimes be used to haul the larger trains to the top of Beattock Summit. This stretch of track was immortalised by W. H. Auden in 'The Night Mail'.

The path finishes at a bench beside the river. This is a peaceful spot and although very close to both the railway and the main road, the dominant sounds are those of the river and the birds in the woodland behind. Return by the same route.

2. LOCH SKEEN

DRIVE: 13Km. WALK: 3Km.
but considerable height gain.

From Moffat, take the A708, signposted Selkirk. The road leaves the town past the fire station and the hospital and soon enters the valley of the Moffat Water. This is one of the finest examples of a U shaped valley in the South of Scotland and shows many of the classic features of glacial erosion and deposition. During the last ice age, glaciers carved all of the valleys around Moffat, and to travel this road in winter can give the impression that the ice age has returned.

The Grey Mare's Tail plunges to the valley floor from its hanging valley. There is a car park, and several boards erected by the National Trust give explanations of how the landscape was shaped, and how the fauna and flora have developed.

The path to the left of the waterfall leads to its base. The path to the right leads to the top and on to Loch Skeen. **The path is very steep and quite treacherous and should not be attempted without appropriate footwear or by those with no head for heights.** A herd of feral goats can often be seen grazing on the slopes between the path and the waterfall.

On the journey up, the views down the valley of the Moffat Water are amongst the finest in the area and once at the top of the waterfall the walker is rewarded with a wonderful sensation of space. The path follows the burn all the way to Loch Skeen. It is well trodden and can be quite muddy in places.

The adventurous may be encouraged to walk around the loch, necessitating a difficult climb on to Lochcraig Head. The less adventurous can enjoy the solitude that the loch offers its visitors before making the return journey by the route you came up.

3. HARTFELL SPA

DRIVE: 5 Km. WALK: 8 Km.

From Moffat High Street, head north, and at the old Academy turn right into Beechgrove, which becomes Old Edinburgh Road. It is along this road that the 300 bedroom Hydropathic Hotel was built, but there is alas no longer any evidence of it. It was destroyed by fire in 1921 and demolished shortly afterwards.

This is a minor road, a quiet cul-de-sac, and some may prefer to walk rather than to drive. After about 5 Km. the path to Hartfell Spa leads off to the right beside the Annan Water Hall, a small community hall with parking space outside. A signpost points towards the spa and the Auchencat Burn flows quickly beneath the road.

The path rises to the left of the river and although not always clearly visible, marker posts should make navigation easy. Pass through, successively, two gates and a kissing gate as the path climbs gently through the fields. Cross over a stile after which the path descends to the river by some rough steps and then crosses the river by a rustic bridge. Another such bridge returns the path to the left side after a few yards, after which the path remains on that side. It can be quite rough in places and stout footwear is recommended.

The path heads towards a small ravine and climbs quite steeply in its final approach to the spa. This is protected from the elements by a stone 'beehive' beside which is a sign recording the spa's discovery by John Williamson in 1748.

The water is clean and will taste quite sweet to anyone who enjoys sucking rusty nails!

Return to the car is by the same route.