



Noup Head, Westray

This fine circuit visits the spectacular coastal cliffs and seabird colonies of Noup Head - an RSPB reserve, replete with and caves. After reaching the lighthouse the return is along a good track.

TERRAIN

Mostly grassy clifftops; track for return.

PUBLIC TRANSPORT

None to start.

START

Backarass Farm.



Grade ([key](#))



Bog Factor ([key](#))

Walk Statistics

Distance	7km / 4.25 miles
Time	2 - 2.5 hours
Ascent	195m (Profile)
Start Grid Ref	HY411481

Walk Description

STAGE 1

The farm at Backarass is 3km from Pierowall, so it is possible to walk or cycle to the start via Noltland Castle if you don't mind the extra distance. There is limited agreed parking at Backarass, mostly on the left side of the road - be sure not to block any gates. Take the track that heads down from the farm and then a grassy path between two fences that leads down towards the sea. Here cross a stile over a fence, and then turn right over a ladder stile to begin the clifftop walk. Almost immediately there's a view down to a small arch, then looking back a view to another arch.



STAGE 2

A short distance further on cross a stile to access a field, then another stile to remain by the coastline. Soon the cliffs begin to rise again, and after crossing yet another stile the walk enters the RSPB reserve of Noup Head. Pass around the back of Monivey Bay - with a great view of the strata on the cliffs beyond, every ledge occupied by sea birds - mostly guillemots - whilst below are glimpses of a wide sea cave.



STAGE 3

After a short flat stretch the cliffs rise again, soon exceeding 50m on the west side of North Hill, and there are views to the Noup Head lighthouse in the distance.



STAGE 4

Pass through a gate in a fence just to the right of the cliffs, then return to the coast for the best views. Looking back there are glimpses down to Gentlemen's Cave. Eventually you are forced to the right to pass the deep, sheer-sided Ramni Geo. Cross ground almost completely covered with sea pinks (or thrift) in summer. Looking back there is a magnificent

16.9.2019

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natural arch, whilst the cliffs below house a gannetry. Continue steeply up to reach a trig point.



STAGE 5

Just beyond this there is a short rock step; find an easy way down this and then continue to reach the lighthouse; this was built by David A Stevenson in 1898 - he was the last of the famed family of lighthouse builders. Pass to the right of the lighthouse to pass through a gate and reach a small rough parking area.



STAGE 6

Now simply follow the track back to the start. It passes to the east of the Loch of the Stack, later crossing a cattlegrid. Further on the ruins of North House are passed, shortly before the track becomes tarred at Noup. Pass round the right angled bend and follow the road back to Backarass.



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