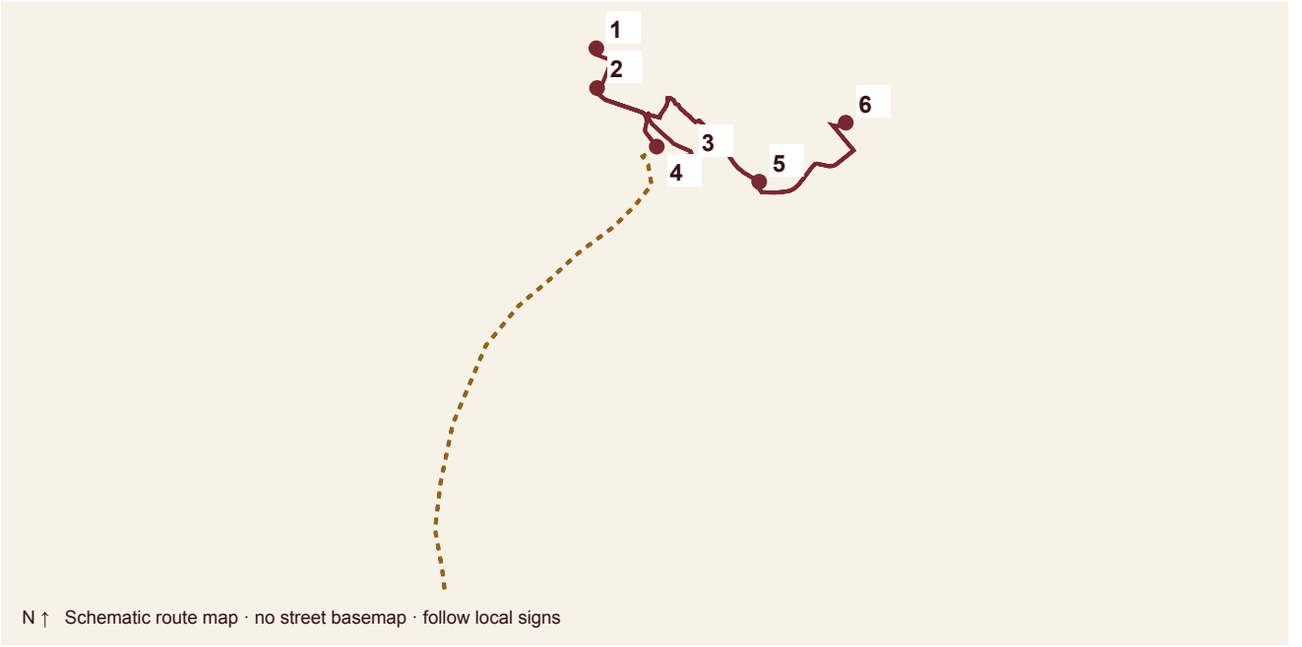
Bram Stoker’s Cruden Bay

Bram first came to Port Erroll, now Cruden Bay, most probably in 1893 (earlier accounts give 1892), and returned almost every summer until 1910. Follow one continuous walk from his village lodgings to the harbour, across Ladiesbridge and south along the sands. Return to the village, then continue past the Watter’s Mou’ to Slains Castle and back. For the shorter walk, leave out the beach out-and-back and keep the village, harbour and Castle approach.

About 9.4 km / 5.8 miles · 3–4 hours, plus visits, reading and refreshments



N ↑ Schematic route map · no street basemap · follow local signs

Before you set out

Village pavements, a wooden footbridge, tidal sand and uneven exposed paths; unguarded cliffs on the Castle section

The beach line is illustrative, not a fixed path or a tide forecast. Follow the open sand, turn earlier if needed and return over the same bridge. The Castle approach starts from Main Street after you return to the village.

No advance booking is needed for the outdoor walk. Check tides and weather for the beach and the exposed Castle section before setting out.

Scan for the live guide, booking links and current access notices.
https://www.bramstokerestate.com/resources/self-guided-walks/cruden-bay

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1 / 3

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Stops and practical information

1. Hilton Cottage – upper Bridge Street area

The village's literary history begins at the scale of a garden and a summer's working day. Hilton Cottage helps place the novels among the ordinary arrangements of Bram's holidays.

Practical: Private home. View it from the public street and please do not enter the garden or grounds.

Next: Walk down Bridge Street to the Kilmarnock Arms.

2. Kilmarnock Arms Hotel

A few lines in a guestbook bring the writer close to the everyday life of a working hotel. They give this literary stop the warmth of a place he was glad to return to.

Practical: Working hotel. Ask staff before entering or viewing memorabilia; the guestbook is not necessarily on display.

Next: Follow Main Street and Harbour Street to Port Erroll harbour, then Ladiesbridge. For the full walk, take the beach out-and-back; for the shorter walk, stay off the sand and return through the village before continuing towards the Castle.

3. Port Erroll harbour

Before it becomes a story setting, this is a place of boats, work and shelter. Read the harbour with those practical demands in mind: they give Bram's coastal fiction much of its force.

Practical: Working harbour: keep clear of operations and the water's edge. The next section returns along Harbour Street to the beach bridge.

Next: Retrace Harbour Street to the signed beach approach. Cross the Water of Cruden on Ladiesbridge; do not try to cross the river mouth on the sand.

4. Cruden Bay beach – Ladiesbridge and the Sand Craigs

The curve of the shore, changing waterline and distant rocks make this a walk within the walk. Leave room for the landscape itself as well as the stories Bram set here.

Practical: Allow about 4.5 km / 2.8 miles and 1–1½ hours for the mapped beach out-and-back. Use Ladiesbridge for the river crossing in both directions. The sand line is illustrative and changes with tides and weather; turn sooner whenever necessary.

Next: Full walk: return north along the same beach and cross Ladiesbridge. Shorter walk: view the beach from Ladiesbridge and skip the sand out-and-back. Both versions then follow Harbour Street and Main Street back to the Kilmarnock Arms, before continuing through the Main Street car park onto the signed path to the Watter's Mou' and Slains Castle.

5. The Watter's Mou' – a reading stop beside the gorge

Read the inlet's story from the signed path beside the gorge. The mouth itself lies farther downstream, below the cliffs. Keep to the path and continue towards Slains.

Practical: The pin marks a reading stop on the signed path beside the gorge. The inlet mouth lies farther downstream below the cliffs; the walk stays on the approach path. Keep well back from exposed, unguarded edges, follow local notices and omit this section in high winds or poor visibility. Do not descend towards the inlet.

Next: Continue on the signed path towards Slains Castle. The mapped Castle pin is on the approach path outside the ruin; remain outside its walls.

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6. Slains Castle – view from the approach path

The last landmark of the walk is a good place to bring the real landscape and the imagined castle into the same frame. The details that invite comparison are smaller than the dramatic silhouette.

Practical: The mapped viewpoint is on the approach path outside the ruin. This final section, including the Watter's Mou', is about 3.3 km return from the hotel. Stay outside the walls and well back from the unguarded cliffs; omit it in high winds or poor visibility.

Finish: Retrace the signed path past the Watter's Mou' and the woodland bridge to the Main Street car park. Return to the Kilmarnock Arms, where the full walk finishes.

Optional A. Kilmarnock Arms – optional lunch at Brams Bar

Optional dining at Bram's holiday hotel. Check food service and reserve directly with the Kilmarnock Arms.

Practical: Optional and paid; check opening and food-service times, accessibility and dietary needs directly with the hotel. The Bram Stoker Estate receives no commission or payment from recommendations or bookings.

Next: Rejoin the village walk towards Port Erroll harbour, or return to your chosen coastal section.

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3 / 3

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