

Best of Aberdeen Trail

Highlights & hidden gems of the city



#aberdeentrails

Credits


This trail was curated by Lauren Alexander, Ellen Forsyth and Jennifer Grandison, coordinated by Caroline Hood, of Robert Gordon University

We also wish to thank Norman Adams and intern Sara Mathews for their photographs of this trail

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1-3 are used by courtesy of Robert Gordon University

Accessibility

 Mostly accessible but with some rough or cobbled areas and steep slopes

Transport

This trail is intended to be walked or cycled but buses also cover the route
A day ticket allows unlimited travel by the same bus operator

First Bus 1&2: Garthdee to city centre then Bridge of Don via King Street
Stagecoach 61/68 Fraserburgh/Peterhead: Bridge of Don via King Street
First Bus 13: Holburn Junction through the city centre and Beach Boulevard with a stop at Queens Links Leisure Park for Fittie (26) and Aberdeen Beach (27). Also from there along the links to its terminus at Hillhead of Seaton, near Seaton Park (26) and Brig o' Balgownie (27).

First Bus 17&18: Duthie Park and Ferryhill to city centre

First Bus 20: city centre to Old Aberdeen

Cycling

Cycle routes: www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/cyclemaps www.sustrans.org.uk
Duthie and Seaton Parks have bike racks as does the city centre. The cycle map link shows racks, bike shops, safe routes and other features

National Cycling Network (NCN)

NCN1 Dover to Shetland Isles leads from Duthie Park and Ferryhill through the city centre to Old Aberdeen

NCN195 Deeside Way follows the former Deeside Railway from Garthdee (and beyond) and underpasses the busy Anderson Drive to reach Duthie Park where it joins **NCN1**. Anderson Drive and Bridge of Dee roundabout are on a busy dual carriageway but have crossings.

Likewise East and West North Street at King Street

Opening times

Art Gallery & Maritime Museum: Mon–Sat 10am–5pm Sun 11am–4pm

David Welch Winter Gardens: Mar–Oct 9.30am–4.30pm / 5.30pm Nov–Feb

Cruickshank Botanic Gardens: Oct–Mar 9am–4pm / 7pm Apr–Sept

Aberdeen's parks never close and entry to the above is free

Facilities

Duthie Park: Café with toilets plus automated toilet

Seaton Park: Hot food and refreshments stand, occasional ice cream van, and automated toilet

Safety

Aberdeen is a safe city but it is best to visit the more secluded parts of this trail including parks during daylight

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Welcome to everyone visiting, or new to the city, and those rediscovering it anew. This trail can be walked or cycled in full but has two suggested parts.

Allow around two hours for each part and half a day each or longer if exploring venues like Duthie Park's winter gardens and Aberdeen Art Gallery. There are plenty cafes, restaurants and street food available along the way as well as takeaways and sandwich bars – potential picnic sites are also highlighted.

Country to city

Discovering the ancient southern route to the city centre

Starting from the edge of the built up city on the banks of the River Dee. The trail covers Aberdeen's newest campus but also the second oldest bridge in Scotland, one of two medieval bridges in this booklet, plus the city centre.

Dee to Don

Between Aberdeen's twin rivers from New to Old Aberdeen

River Dee meets the North Sea at the former fishing village of Footdee. Enjoy the city's magnificent seafront before joining the ancient route to the original old town, University of Aberdeen campus and the oldest bridge in Scotland.

Have fun roaming around our beautiful city, discovering its highlights and secrets, and finding out a bit about its history!

Front cover: King Robert the Bruce statue at Marischal College (23)

Above: Leopards are Aberdeen's heraldic guardian, see them in the David Welch Winter Garden in Duthie Park (7) and at Union Bridge on Union Street in the city centre



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1 Gray's School of Art

Robert Gordon, 1668–1731 (see entry 23), founded an institution for adult education as well as technical education, this officially became a university in 1992 when it was awarded university status. This aided the growth of the RGU Garthdee campus as all other disciplines gradually moved over so they were all in one place. Gray's was founded in 1885 as Gray's School of Science and Art, in recognition of the generosity of its founding father, John Gray, 1811–1891. In the early 1880s, he offered to finance and build a new school of science and art, on the condition the governors named it after him. The school opened with 96 students enrolled for the day classes and 322 for the evening classes. The original building (20), is sited at Schoolhill. The Art School, now part of the Robert Gordon University is ranked among the Top 20 Schools of Art and Design in the United Kingdom.



2 Garthdee House

Designed by Aberdeen architect William Smith II in 1872, this house and estate was bought in 1953 by Thomas Scott Sutherland, a graduate of Aberdeen School of Architecture. He lived there but gifted the house and land to the then Robert Gordon's College. The Scott Sutherland School of Architecture was formally opened on 24 May 1957, it has since relocated but the building remains in use. Gray's School of Art (1) was built near it and the lands of the estate were ultimately instrumental in bringing the RGU Campus to Garthdee. The two original estate lodge houses still remain on Garthdee Road.



3 RGU Robert Gordon University Campus

This modern campus is set in beautiful riverside parkland with mature woods and rolling lawns. There are four main buildings each showcases of modern architecture. Award winning Aberdeen Business School by Norman Foster and Partners, 1999. RGU Sport, Thomson Craig & Donald, 2005. The Ishbel Gordon Building, Halliday Fraser Munro, 2002. Known as Lady Aberdeen, Ishbel was a philanthropist and advocate for women at a time when many, including her father believed "university is no place for a woman". The Sir Ian Wood Building by Building Design Partnership, 2013, now hosts Scott Sutherland School of Architecture amongst other faculties. The green tower is the RGU Library and the Round and Square Towers are student flats, designed in the style of Scottish fortified tower houses.



4 River Dee – highest tidal point

This is one of the most famous salmon fishing rivers in the world and rises in the Cairngorm Mountains at Pools of Dee, on Scotland's best-known hill pass, the Lairig Ghru. It flows through an area called Deeside in Aberdeenshire, known as Royal Deeside as Queen Victoria visited the area in 1848 and enjoyed herself so much that she and her husband, Prince Albert, built Balmoral Castle there (see 22). These two granite towers mark the highest river point reached by sea tides. However, they are actually syphon houses allowing the waste system to bypass under the river and keep it clean. They are on a rough riverbank path but are in line with the gated track on Garthdee Road, by Sainsbury's supermarket. For more on the river and surroundings in Aberdeen's stretch of Dee Valley see the **Lower Deeside Trail**.



5 Battle of the Brig o' Dee

This was an important crossing point for the main road south, the Causey Mounth, dating from the 1100s, which still exists. At first the river was crossed via a ford, then by Kincorth Ferry and finally the Brig o' Dee around the 1500s. It was Aberdeen's only bridge over the Dee until 1829 (see 8). It is the second oldest bridge in Scotland and is one of Aberdeen's two medieval bridges, along with the oldest in Scotland Brig o' Balgownie (36). It was the site of battle on 18-19 June 1639 during the Wars of the Three Kingdoms (England, Ireland and Scotland) between Covenanters and Royalists. There is a small pocket park on the south side featuring the bridge's sundial and two display panels tell the considerable history of this majestic bridge.



6 Hardgate

This was the ancient road to Aberdeen from the south, which started on what is now a pathway (above) beside Riverside Drive, passing over the picturesque Ruthrieston Pack Bridge (see **Lower Deeside Trail**). It then followed today's remaining Hardgate from Ruthrieston on exactly the same route, joining the eastern end of Justicemill Lane before following Langstane Place and Windmill Brae. It once crossed the Bow Brig (see **Aberdeen Green Trail**) to Aberdeen's town centre via the Green. A walkway (with steps) through the Trinity Centre (daytime only) forms approximately the same connection today.



7 Duthie Park and Banks of Dee

The park was donated to Aberdeen by Miss Duthie in 1880 and opened in 1883. It features the David Welch Winter Gardens, one of Europe's largest indoor gardens and Scotland's third most visited gardens. It is home to Britain's largest collection of cacti and Spike, the world's only talking cactus. The McGrigor Obelisk once stood in what is now Marischal College's quadrangle (23). There is much more to explore in **Duthie Park Trail & Guide**. Banks of Dee is on the opposite side of the river, across the King George VI Bridge, offering an alternative open space of rolling grassland, woods and untamed natural riverbank, a contrast with the formal park. It was over this bridge that Queen Elizabeth's cortege travelled on 11 September 2022. Her final journey south from Balmoral passing through Royal Deeside and Aberdeen.



8 Ferryhill

Named after the former ferry, at the site of today's Wellington Suspension Bridge (see **Torry Local Area Trail**). Originally a toll bridge, it was another important crossing point and Aberdeen's second Dee bridge after Brig o' Dee (5). Ferryhill was originally a separate settlement which grew up around Dee Village. When the railway came to Aberdeen in 1850 the first temporary station was in Ferryhill (see **Duthie Park Trail & Guide**). Today Ferryhill extends from the River Dee to Holburn Street and from Duthie Park almost to Union Street. It is largely residential but Holburn Street is a hub for local businesses, shops and cafes and just off the street is Ferryhill Library.



9 Super Scurry

Aberdeen is home to Scotland's only street art festival. Nuart began in Stavanger, Norway in 2001 and started in Aberdeen from 2017. It is a global platform and showcase for local and worldwide artists (see 17). Created in 2018 by Conzo and Globel, a Glasgow based duo who have brought the art of sign painting back to life through their public artworks. This piece, titled *Super Scurry*, was their biggest mural yet, and captures the notoriety of Aberdeen's pesky seagulls.



10 Trinity Hall and the Seven Trades

Trinity Hall is where the seven incorporated trades of Aberdeen are located this was founded by men of all trades with a common interest, the good of Aberdeen. They believed coming together to voice their opinions about their city would be the best way to be heard. The seven incorporated trades are still active. They are as follows hammermen, bakers, wrights and coopers, tailors, shoemakers, weavers and fleshers. They moved here from their earlier hall on Union Street, now the main entrance to the Trinity Centre (see **Aberdeen History Trail**). The Fidler's Well outside was originally in Guild Street. Silver City Vault (see 11) has a photo of an elephant drinking from it, part of a circus travelling by train!

11 The Granite City

Union Street is known as the Granite Mile and 499 Union Street is the formal address for this piece of art by Phlegm, chiselling away the granite stones of the city as part of Nuart 2018. This is a nod to the history of Aberdeen and all the Granite buildings and architecture. Aberdeen is known as the Granite City (see **Aberdeen Granite Trail**) and in its western suburbs is Rubislaw Quarry, at one time the deepest excavated hole in Europe.

Its stone was exported worldwide and built much of Aberdeen, whose second nickname the Silver City is due to the sparkle of granite's mica in the sun. The Silver City Vault is the online collection of Aberdeen City Libraries, a treasure trove of images throughout Aberdeen's history and up to the present day: www.silvercityvault.org.uk



12 Christ's College Aberdeen and Library

Ironically, this was built as a college of divinity for training ministers of the Free Church of Scotland, later Church of Scotland, together with New College, Edinburgh and Trinity College, Glasgow. Christ's College Aberdeen still exists within the University of Aberdeen (33). This landmark building was designed in 1850 by Thomas Mackenzie and bookends Union Street, echoing the Salvation Army Citadel at the far end. The tower features one of Aberdeen's notable public clocks. The ornate Alford Place Church opposite was originally the college's library.



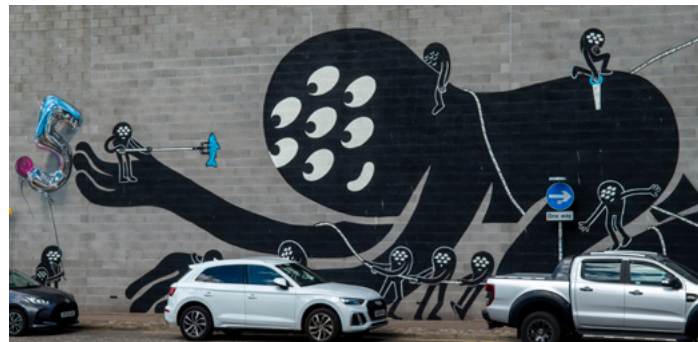
13 Bon Accord Terrace Gardens

Aberdeen has many beloved parks but this is a relatively secret and peaceful oasis near the city centre. Though it was also the site of the Battle of Justice Mills in 1644, one of the bloodiest events of the city's past (see [Aberdeen History](#) and [Bloody Aberdeen Trails](#)). By contrast the present day gardens provide a pleasant green space surrounded by granite properties which provide a reminder of architect Archibald Simpson's contribution to Aberdeen (see [Aberdeen Granite Trail](#)). He was one of the key creators of the Silver City and a monolith block of granite stands tall in nearby Bon Accord Square as memorial to his ability to achieve refinement of line and proportion in the buildings he created in Aberdeen and further afield (see [Sculpture & Curios Trail](#)).



14 Railway Arches

Some of the arches in this railway viaduct are now home to various small businesses. When originally built the eastern side marked the exact edge of the River Dee, following its earlier course. Today's Palmerston Road was once entirely under water! The River Dee was only diverted as late as 1873 to help expand Aberdeen Harbour (see [Torry Local Area Trail](#) and [Aberdeen Denburn Trail](#)).



15 KMG Mural

Aberdeen's KMG is an artist whose work aims to connect to the public and encourage discussion about themes often overlooked. In this piece you can see the correlation to Aberdeen Harbour where the history of fishing is very established and still a big part of Aberdeen's culture. Herring in particular was important starting in 1830s. The flash of silver from shoals of herring gave them their nickname Silver Darlings. There is also a bonus 3D silver balloon by Fanakapan ([24](#))!



16 Union Square Aberdeen

This shopping and entertainment centre is also Aberdeen's travel hub and many will be familiar with its train and bus stations. These also link with Dyce for Aberdeen International Airport and just across the street is the ferry terminal. This connects the city to the northern archipelagos of Orkney and Shetland. Aberdeen was originally a fishing and shipbuilding port but today it is filled with colourful offshore supply vessels and ships. A second harbour, Aberdeen South is being built at Nigg Bay and the city has a long relationship with the sea. This can be explored at the dynamic Aberdeen Maritime Museum (see also [Aberdeen Maritime Trail](#)), nearby on the historic Shiprow. There is also Shiprow Village, a small but vibrant street food zone.



17 Nuart and Painted Doorways

This is Aberdeen's Green (see **Aberdeen Green Trail**), originally a place of trade and crafts. It is one of the city's oldest parts, the original heart of Aberdeen and many streets take their names from the former monasteries of the area. Even today it is a peaceful urban oasis in the city centre with a contrast of old and new. Here you will see the cobble streets and many art pieces from both Nuart and the Painted Doors Project. Interactive maps of both are available. A digital map of Nuartworks: www.pressandjournal.co.uk/nuart-walls/ and the Painted Doors Project: <http://bit.ly/2hczhjb>



18 Arches, Braes, Stairs & Wynds

The historic Green was overpassed by Union Street, completed by Union Bridge in 1805, and the grand project almost bankrupted the city. It is a viaduct, built on a series of arches, some of which here form underpasses, shops, nightclubs and restaurants. Back Wynd Stairs (left) lead up to Union Street and have a tiny pocket park under them. Correction Wynd gives level but cobbled access to St Nicholas Street and via its own set of steps to Union Street. Carnegie's Brae predates Union Street and now continues under it showcasing a subterranean and ever-changing official street art zone. Level access is also available by Hadden Street and Market Street which leads to Union Street.



19 Aberdeen Art Gallery & Belmont Street

The pedestrianised zone around Belmont Street with its various cafes, bars, shops and entertainment venues leads to Aberdeen Art Gallery, designed by Alexander Mackenzie a local architect in 1885 and now the largest public art gallery in the north of Scotland. It was redeveloped and reopened in 2019, including a third floor extension designed by Hoskins Architects. As well as an extensive art collection there are cafes, including one by the rooftop terrace, an idea vantage point. It overlooks Schoolhill and Belmont Street stretches ahead. Nearby is Union Terrace Gardens, a natural feature and now city centre urban valley (see **Aberdeen Denburn Trail**). Opened in 1879 it is Aberdeen's oldest park and was itself redeveloped and reopened in 2022.



20 Former Gray's School of Art

The old campus for Gray's School of Art (1), was designed with architectural similarities to the neighbouring Aberdeen Art Gallery, as requested by its founder John Gray. By the 1960s it had outgrown the building and moved to the new campus we are more familiar with in Garthdee. The building is now the hub for a technology enterprise support centre. When Aberdeen Art Gallery was refurbished an old doorway was uncovered. It had been a direct connection between the two, over the entrance archway (seen above). This site was also the location of Aberdeen Grammar School which gave Schoolhill its name and whose most famous pupil was the poet Lord Byron (see also 36).



21 St Nicholas Kirkyard

This is the graveyard of Aberdeen's Mither Kirk (mother church). St Nicholas is Aberdeen's patron saint and the ancient St Nicholas Kirk (see **Aberdeen History Trail**) is worth visting. Its picturesque grounds are an unexpected but popular place for a break or lunch and are colloquially known as the dead centre of Aberdeen! Originally the front sloped down to the Green but was raised level with Union Street. The magnificent granite screen there was designed by John Smith, Aberdeen's first City Architect, known as Tudor Johnny for his love of Tudor Gothic styling. He was a father to the Granite City (see **Aberdeen Granite Trail**), widened the original 14 foot wide Brig o' Dee (5) and designed Balmoral Castle (see 4) for Queen Victoria. The Schoolhill lodge house was originally at the entrance to Robert Gordon's College.



22 Rainbow Stairs

This is the Bon Accord Centre whose otherwise hidden roof garden is up these rainbow stairs, with wheelchair access on Flourmill Brae, off Upperkirkgate. A welcome spot to relax or picnic which hosts several sculptures (see **Sculpture & Curios Trail**). Also another piece from Nuart 2021 by KMG (15), who aims to engage with the public and draw attention to overlooked issues in society. A longer set of rainbow stairs descend to St Nicholas Street, leading to Union Street and the Green, and there is access to St Nicholas Kirkyard (21).



23 Marischal College

This is the second largest granite building in the world (see **Aberdeen History & Aberdeen Granite Trails**), now the HQ for Aberdeen City Council. Aberdeen-born Robert Gordon, graduated from an earlier Marischal College in 1689; this is who the Robert Gordon University, (RGU) is named after. He made his fortune in Danzig (now Gdańsk) as a merchant trader. The Polish port city was home to many Scots, in 1570 estimated at 30,000, a huge number by population figures of the time. On his return he established Robert Gordon's Hospital, later to become College, and ultimately University. Old Marischal College was where the rear wing now stands as seen from the quadrangle. King Robert the Bruce's statue stands guard in front (see cover). He donated his Freedom Lands to Aberdeen (see **Boundary Stones Trail**), and whose legacy still exists as the Common Good Fund today.

24 Aberdeen Community Health and Care Village

This pulling faces street art is on the back of the building by the East North Street dual carriageway. This piece was created for Nuart 2021 by Fanakapan (see also 15), a famous British artist who is well-known for his realistic depictions of helium balloons. The Health Village is an urban community hospital which opened December 2013.



25 Tiny High-Rise (no access)

This roundabout has a piece from Nuart 2019 by Berlin-based EVOL, representing post-war architecture. He uses multi-layered stencils to create miniature high-rises globally, most often using the same design to suggest their repetitiveness. Look out for many others from his time here in Aberdeen. However, he was inspired by the city's unique high-rise



vernacular to create two original works. This one is on a busy roundabout so please don't try to visit it. The other is at The Noose & Monkey on Rosemount Viaduct and is much more easily viewed. Look closely at the sides with their angular embedded granite rocks, a perfect Aberdonian low-rise! In 2022, life followed art with Historic Environment Scotland protecting many of the city's landmark flats as buildings of outstanding architectural quality in post-war Scotland.

26 Fittie Sheds

Footdee, known locally as 'Fittie', was once a fishing village at the far side of Aberdeen harbour and has records dating back as far as 1398. The current cottages face inward for shelter from the stormy North Sea and enclose a magical time capsule of fishing heritage; communal greens with brightly painted individually owned sheds. The vibrant colours echo those used on the original resident's fishing boats. The nearby *Sea Moon* sculpture was created at the Scottish Sculpture Workshop by Janusz Tkaczuk, now an assistant visual arts professor at Gdańsk University of Technology. It depicts the moon, its orbit, sea and tides, echoing the rolling movements of water and ships and reflective nature of the sea.



27 Aberdeen Beach

Aberdeen was a holiday destination before the days of international travel and was marketed as 'The Silver City with the Golden Sands'. Times have changed but this aspect remains true today. If Union Street is the city's Silver Mile these are its Golden Miles. The sands stretch between Aberdeen's twin rivers of the Dee at Footdee to the Don at Donmouth Local Nature Reserve and beyond northwards into Aberdeenshire. The Esplanade and Promenade are popular places to jog, walk and cycle. There is the Art Deco gem the Beach Ballroom, a funfair, multi-screen cinema, vans selling snacks and seafront cafes. For more on this magnificent coastline see [Aberdeen Coastal Trail](#).



28 Aberdeen Science Centre

This registered charity is a science museum offering exhibits and displays for a hands on experience. It began in Justice Mill Lane as Satrosphere and sometimes has pop-up exhibitions in the city centre. The building was originally Aberdeen Swimming Baths (centre and left hand wing) and later, with right hand wing added, a depot for Aberdeen Trams. Aberdeen's tramways began in the 1870s and built up an extensive network but was eventually replaced by buses. The last tram ran in 1958 but the old tram tracks which led here are still visible on the opposite side of the former Hilton DoubleTree Hotel.



29 Gallowgate

Aberdeen started as Aberdon at Donmouth. Gallowgate was part of the ancient road linking Old and New Aberdeen (today's city centre). The church St Margaret of Scotland has been here since 1870, founded by Sussex-born Father John Comper who dedicated his life to the poor. In 2003 the Scottish Episcopal Church declared him a 'Hero of the Faith', equivalent to sainthood. His son Sir Ninian Comper, born in Aberdeen, became a noted church architect and designer, including eight windows at Westminster Abbey. He signed his stained glass with a small wild strawberry as his father is said to have passed away in Duthie Park (7) whilst gathering them for children. Gallowgate is also home to North East Scotland College's main campus. It has sites around Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire plus campus in Fraserburgh and Peterhead's Scottish Maritime Academy. Fraserburgh briefly had a university 1595-1605.



30 Causewayend & Mounthooly

Gallowgate (29) was a stone road, known as a causeway, hence the unusual name where it stopped. This grand castellated building was Causewayend School, designed in 1875 by William Smith II, Marischal College graduate and architect of Garthdee House (2) and the old Trinity Hall. It has a plaque to former pupil, artist Alberto Morrocco, a student at Gray's School of Art and Head of the School of Painting at Dundee's Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art. Mounthooly may come from Mount Holy and at its corner is John Knox Church and graveyard. The bridge behind it crossed the Aberdeenshire Canal of which traces remain (see [Woodside Local Area Trail](#)). It linked the River Dee at Aberdeen Harbour to River Don at Port Elphinstone, Inverurie.

31 Spital

This is a continuation from the Gallowgate of the old road and at its very start is St Margaret's Convent, established by Father John Comper (see 29). The street name comes from 'hospital', specifically St Peter's Hospital, a hospice for elderly priests which was in St Peter's Cemetery, main entrance on King Street but with access off the Spital. The foundations of St Peter's Chapel, later Church can still be seen in the old graveyard. As the name suggests Gallowgate (29) led to the gallows or gibbet and the small hill it stood on is by Trinity Cemetery's west gate, across King Street, not far from here (see [Bloody Aberdeen Trail](#)).



32 Sunnybank Park

Another relatively secret park and a contrast with the city's more traditional public gardens. The site of a former sports centre but from 2011 leased to a community run charity whose aim is 'Keeping the sunny in Sunnybank'! This is reflected in the park which is a vibrant mix of old and new. There are grassed and surfaced spaces for play and sports plus allotments and this trail's second dynamic ever-changing street art zone (above right). 'Sunny Syde' is shown on Aberdeen's earliest town map by Parson Gordon in 1661. The park features the Firhill Well, built 1798 but discovered 1721, better known locally as the Gibberie Wallie. The nickname came from the gingerbread sold to visitors to the well. There is a small wetland – a surviving part of the ancient 'Bogg of Sunnyside', with the park ringed by a woodland walk, a reminder of when this was countryside surrounding Old Aberdeen.



33 King's College and University Campus

The University of Aberdeen is the the UK's fifth-oldest, founded in 1495. Until the 1800s Aberdeen had two of Scotland's five universities while England itself had only two. King's College and Marischal College (23) later merged in 1929 by Christ's College (12). There is also a medical campus at Foresterhill beside Aberdeen Royal Infirmary. When RGU (3) was formed in 1992, the city again had twin universities. Bishop Elphinstone's memorial in front commemorates a key force in the creation of King's College and Brig o' Dee (5). Nearby is a bronze sculpture *Youth with Split Apple* by Kenny Hunter, of a student reclining, as many do on the surrounding grass of King's Lawn. Cruickshank Botanic Garden off the Chanonry was gifted in 1898, and is a partnership between the University and Cruickshank Charitable Trust, it is open to the public. **Old Aberdeen Trail** details many more of the old town's attractions.



34 St Machar's Cathedral

This fortress-like church complete with battlements was built from the 1300s onwards. It has a fine heraldic ceiling and is open to visitors. Originally it was even more impressive with a massive square tower at the opposite end. This collapsed after Oliver Cromwell's invading army removed stones to create a fortification at the site of Aberdeen's old castle on Castlehill, east of Castlegate, where part of Cromwell's Bastion can still be seen. Outside the cathedral's east gate is a star shaped stone. Local legend claims it as a burial place of Sir William Wallace's arm, following his gruesome execution in London.



35 Seaton Park

Seaton is a translation from Gaelic meaning 'peaceful retreat'. It is said that St Columba told St Machar to establish a church where a river bends into the shape of a bishop's crozier before flowing into the sea. In fact the steep slope below the cathedral (34) is a riverbank, formed when today's park was a loop of the River Don. There is a wetland on part of the old river's course with an ancient tree trunk from those days and a large rock left here by a glacier. Other features include a WWII pill-box and Tillydrone Motte, a defensive hill with origins 4,000 years ago. Nearby, Benholm's Lodge, a fortified townhouse circa 1588 was better known as a pub The Wallace Tower, before it was moved here in 1965. There is also an in-park street food stand. For these and much more see **Seaton Park Trail & Guide**.



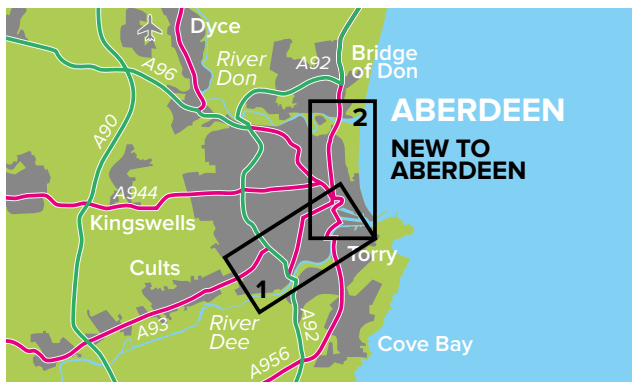
36 Cot Town and Brig o' Balgownie

A woodland riverbank walk in Seaton Park (35), or via Don Street, leads to this charming old settlement. Spanning the river is the magnificent soaring arch of the Brig o' Balgownie, the oldest bridge in Scotland, and this trail's second medieval bridge. Robert the Bruce likely oversaw the original (see **Old Aberdeen Trail**). Like Brig o' Dee (5), it was the sole river crossing, in its case until 1827. It is associated with Lord Byron (see 20) who commemorated it in his epic poem, *Don Juan*. Some old postcards call it 'Auld Brig o' Balgownie (Byron's Bridge)'.



Best of Aberdeen Trail

Old favourites and hidden gems



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This is one in a series of themed Aberdeen City trails. All are available via the free **GoABZ** mobile app and at www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/trails



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