



26 SHETLAND MUCKLE FLUGGA

▶ Distance: 7.6km/4¾ miles ▶ Time: 3-4 hours ▶ Grade: Challenging



Getting away from it all on Shetland.

PHOTO: MARY WELSH



CHOSEN BY... MARY WELSH

This demanding route is eased by good waymarking and generally well-cared-for tracks and paths. It is every ornithologist's dream – at the right time of the year, mid May to mid July. The lighthouse sits on a jagged outcrop, one of a series of sea stacks that make up some of the most northerly bits of rock in the British Isles. The only land to the north is Out Stack. All sit in the path of fierce Atlantic storms. Thomas and David Stevenson, who started work in 1855, built Muckle Flugga lighthouse to protect ships during the Crimean War. It is 20m/64ft high and has 103 steps.

1 Start From parking area, pass through two gates and climb distinct track. Soon marker posts, topped with green paint, guide you on your way. Descend steadily to cross the Burn of Winnaswarta Dale on a long footbridge and follow the track as it bears L through a sheltered hollow, then ascends and divides. Keep L beside burn, the once boggy way now superbly boarded across the moor. Here you pass through the territories of golden plover, wheatear, skylark, oystercatcher and great skua.

2 2km/1¼ miles Where boarding ends, walk ahead for 90m to signpost and turn L for Toolie. During the

PLAN YOUR WALK



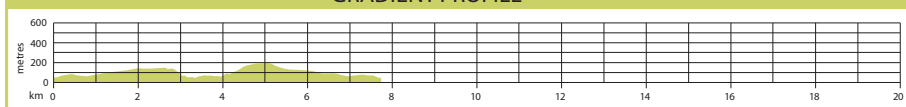
ROUTE

Start/parking In area designated for walk, grid ref HP612149. Take the ferry to Unst, and leave by only road, the A968. Continue towards Haroldswick, eventually turning left to Burrarfirth. Beyond, almost at the end of the road, the road branches, head left
Is it for me? Reinforced tracks, cliff paths, stick to the return path where it passes through boggy moorland
Stiles None

PLANNING

Nearest town Lerwick; nearest village Baltasound
Refreshments Baltasound Hotel – 01957 711334
Public toilets Visitor Centre below car park
Public transport Contact zettransshetland.gov.uk
Maps OS Explorer 470 Landranger 1

GRADIENT PROFILE



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► OS Explorer map 470 ► Buy maps at: ordnancesurvey.co.uk/mapshop

breeding season nothing prepares you for what is ahead on the very high cliffs: first the noise, then smell, and finally the sight of thousands of nesting gannets on cliffs brilliant white with guano. Walk on watching for puffins as they glide in. Further round the cliffs, where there are even more gannets, look down, with care, to see rows of guillemots, all facing into the cliff. Fulmars nest on any grassy ledge, among the thrift. Through all these birds, pairs of great skuas dive, looking for victims.

3 2.5km/1½ miles

Return to the signpost. Ignore your outward track and continue N along the cliffs. Drop down a steep grassy slope to cross a narrow stream. Soon you can glimpse the sturdy, seemingly stumpy lighthouse on Muckle Flugga. Follow the waymarks along the coast and then continue as they lead inland, a short way up the lower slopes of Hermaness Hill. Here sit for a safe view of Muckle Flugga.



4 4.4km/2¾ miles

When you can bear to leave, follow the markers on up Hermaness Hill and descend over the moorland. Do not stray from the path into the

boggy environs. Use duckboards over peat hags. On joining the outward path by the burn, bear L and follow the waymarked route back to the parking area. **CW**



Rugged, bird-covered cliffs near Toolie.

PHOTO: MARY WELSH



TRAILZILLA ID:
TZID27562

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