

The walks in this book are not complicated or difficult. Experienced walkers with good directional sense will be able to follow many of the routes from the maps alone. For those who prefer the security of words, I have tried to give very full directions, which will perhaps save the reader some of the many hours I have spent searching, debating and retracing my steps.

The best time of year for walking here is spring or autumn, but winter usually also has plenty of clear, fine days and is rarely very cold. None of the paths will be busy at these times, except near particular beauty spots, and the weather will not be too hot. Those walking the coastal path or the high hills should be aware that there is often little shelter from the sun or rain in these areas. When road-walking, remember to stay on the left facing on-coming traffic where possible.

Hunting in Finistère is not allowed on Tuesdays and Fridays. Otherwise, from September to February, it can take place on any day of the week, the most popular being Sunday and Thursday. It is rare, however, to meet a hunter on the main paths.

Finally, and most important of all, the timings given reflect the intended purpose of these walks - pleasure not endurance.

OTHER ACTIVITIES

The second section of the book provides basic information and contacts as a starting point for those interested in pursuing other activities in Finistère. Golf, cycling, riding, water-sports and fishing are the main topics included. The list of establishments is only a small selection of what's available, and please note that we do not claim personal experience of their facilities.

Opening hours will vary according to the time of year and it is advisable to phone to check before driving long distances in the hope of a game of golf or an afternoon's riding. Contact details are given and the map in this section shows the location of the various activity providers. Some are not open outside the main holiday seasons.

Readers' comments on any of the entries or suggestions for others are welcomed for future editions.

WENDY MEWES

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KEY

MAP SYMBOLS

✧	archaeological or historical feature	☪	fontaine/spring
S	belvedere/viewpoint	☪	menhir
=	bridge	☪	dolmen
■	building(s)	☪	lighthouse
▲	campsite	P	parking for start of walk
♣	château	s	peak
⛐	church or chapel	☪	suspension bridge
†	calvary or wayside cross	A	reference point in the directions
N	fort		

GRADING OF WALKS (for guidance only)

Level 1 : fairly level route

Level 2 : fairly level route with gradual climbs

Level 3 : generally up and down, paths needing care

Level 4 : one or more very steep slope and/or many steps

ABBREVIATIONS

TO = tourist office

hs = high season, normally July/August

ls = low season, normally October to February

GR = long distance footpath

GLOSSARY

aber - estuary

bourg - village with facilities

château - castle or mansion

dolmen - ancient stone tomb

écluse - lock

fontaine - shrine over a spring

landes - moor

lavoir - washing place

marais - marsh

menhir - standing stone

passerelle - footbridge

ria - estuary

sentier - footpath

tourbière - peat bog

WALKING IN FINISTÈRE

Finistère is a walker's paradise, with an immensely varied coastline, the highest hills in Brittany crowning a well-wooded interior, and impressive rivers and estuaries throughout. Lighthouses, distinctive Breton church spires and Neolithic standing stones are constant landmarks in the changing scenery.

Water is never far away here, with the sea on three sides, and each coastline has its own attractions. In the north there is a singular quality of light, together with striking rock formations and wide inlets (abers). The craggy cliffs and vast sandy beaches of the west are pounded by Atlantic breakers, whilst the south is gentler and riven by fine estuaries (rias). A major footpath runs right round the sharply indented coastline, amounting to more than 1200kms of walking.



Of all the rivers, the most impressive is the Aulne, snaking its way right across the centre of Finistère, for a long stretch part of the Nantes/Brest canal, littered with locks. On a smaller scale, but no less beguiling, are the Élorin in the north and the Odet in the south. There are also the Réservoir de St-Michel, in its exceptional setting below the Monts d'Arrée, and nearby Lac du Drennec, both surrounded by walking trails and glorious views.

The interior of the department is divided by two ranges of hills (none over 400m) running roughly east/west. The high

bleak heaths of the Monts d'Arrée in the north are criss-crossed by little-used tracks and afford exceptional views over central Finistère. By contrast, further south are the thickly wooded slopes and pretty villages of the Black Mountains.

Other remains of Brittany's ancient forests linger on the slopes around Huelgoat, where the river Argent tumbles over and tunnels under granite boulders of spectacular size and formation. In addition, well-managed forests such as the Forêt du Cranou and the Forêt de Carnoët provide straightforward and attractive walking trails.

There is also plenty of gentle rural walking through farmland and secluded hamlets. Most of the tracks alongside fields and through woods (ancient lines of communication between villages) are still communal land, and, unlike England, very few footpaths in this area involve crossing any private property. Country roads are still usually quiet enough for comfortable walking.



Towns also provide many stimulating walks, with routes of historic interest and hilly viewpoints. Those situated on estuaries often retain the fine buildings of their rich commercial past and elaborate religious establishments. Rural scenery is never far away even here: Douarnenez, for example, has the green acres of the Plomarc'h alongside its busy ports and from the centre of Pont Aven, a short stroll leads to wooded hills.

The best viewpoint of all, and a good hilly climb, is the summit of Ménez Hom, which on a clear day provides 360° panoramic views of the sea and coast, the hills and valleys of the interior, as well as the serpentine course of the Aulne estuary.

Walks in this book reflect the exceptional variety of the most unexpected and rewarding scenery in Brittany.

North	1 DORDUFF ESTUARY		Long
Length 13kms	Time 4hrs	Level 3	
Location & parking: north of MORLAIX. From the centre, take the D76 along the estuary, then turn right to Ploujean and follow signs to the Château de Suscinio (now also an agricultural college). Park by the gates of the château with the college to the right.			
Refreshments: none on route.			



This is a glorious route along the Dorduff estuary, with views of the Bay of Morlaix, and peaceful river valleys. Inland sections meander through small hamlets and past ancient buildings such as the Château of Suscinio. Near and distant views across wooded hills enhance this walk, which does include many ups and downs and a couple of steep slopes.



DIRECTIONS

The Château of Suscinio dates from the 17th century and once belonged to Cornic, a flamboyant corsair, well-known along the coasts around Morlaix and honoured by Louis XV. Today it is an agricultural college, whose members maintain the gardens, which are open to the public.

A From the parking, walk back uphill a few metres and take the stony track on the right, along the low wall of the château grounds.

At the end of the track, bear right down a tarmac road. When the track goes sharply left, turn off right into the woods, where a wooden board points left down a narrow path.

Follow this all the way down through the trees to the waterside. Care is needed on this path. At the bottom, turn right along the Dorduff estuary.

The path borders the estuary and then a creek. At the little tarmac road, turn left to go down the other side of the creek. This comes out onto a small quay on the Dorduff.

The road now turns uphill and inland. It is a steady climb, with good views behind to the bay of Morlaix. At the top, the track runs between fields with fine open views, including the Château of Suscinio to the right.

B When the road bends to the right, leave it and go straight ahead on a sunken footpath between high banks.

At the road, turn left into the hamlet of Keryvon. Follow the road round to the right and continue straight ahead to the hamlet of Poulhouët.

Soon after a long low house on the left, turn left down a grassy wooded track between banks.

At the river, turn right and follow the path ahead. At a little road, turn right to continue the walk (noting to the left a parking area with seat and good view) past a mill on the opposite bank. About 300m ahead, the track meets the main D46.



Turn right and walk carefully up this road – beware traffic – for about 200m. Then take a wide stony track on the left, and follow this to the river again, continuing past a fish pond and bridge. The path narrows here and starts to go up and down, with good views. Ignore small turnings off and keep to the main path.



C The path turns uphill and eventually reaches a T-junction. Turn sharp left downhill here. Cross the stream on a plank bridge and follow the path beside a river meadow.

At a T-junction of paths, turn right uphill, to the left of the farm at Coat Morvan (note the old house on the right) and at the top turn right.



Continue ahead, with good open views over the Dorduff valley. At the hamlet of Kerguinou, follow the road round to the right. At a T-junction turn left, and continue ahead through Kerlapousset and La Villeneuve to the D46.

Turn right and walk along the main road - beware traffic - for about 200m. Take the first road on the left to Goazveur Izella and follow it through houses to the end, where a grassy track goes straight ahead along the back of a stone building. Take this path, which almost immediately turns right. Follow this and continue ahead to a road. Turn left.

D Follow this road bearing left downhill through Kerbaul with views across to the château and college. After 250m, at a parking area on the right, take the tarmac track to the right (marked no through road) along a stream valley.

E After about 600m, look out for an electricity tower on the left with stone steps up to it. Follow the woodland path up to the right of the tower. The château of Suscinio is on the right. Bear left at a junction of paths. Go straight ahead almost to the college buildings and turn right to the car-park.