Culbin is a wonderful place to walk, cycle and ride. You can spend all day here going as far as you can, but Culbin is also somewhere to enjoy losing track of time. First-timers can enjoy a great circular walk: The fully-accessible viewpoint trail easy reach Gravel Pit ponds.

Today this huge forest of Scots and Corsican pine, birches, alder and more is a complete and interdependent world. It’s home to birds, mammals, insects and over 500 types of plants, fungi and lichens. Trees are felled only in small areas at a time and new seedlings replace them naturally. What started as a planted forest is becoming even more varied and natural.

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12 in autumn; wood-ant hills and flowering plants. Culbin is constantly changing. Pebbles driven inshore over 5000 years ago by storm and tide.

Along your way...
- Look up to life in the rolling tree canopy. Listen... Look down. Lush carpets of moss and lichen speckled with fungi in autumn, wood ant hills and flowering plants. Culbin is constantly changing. Look round (bed) edges of pebbles - drawnshore over 5000 years ago by storm and tide.

Maviston Dunes
The highest of these sculpted dunes is more than 15 m tall - and all created by sand grains no bigger than the head of a pin. The lichen on these ancient dunes has eroded away to create waves of U-shaped dunes facing west.

Culbin must get a fine view of Maviston's beautiful curves.

Hidden History
See over the page for Culbin's amazing story!

Sandlife
See section on the other side of this leaflet.

Gravel-pit Ponds
A great place for the Forestry Commission ranger to lead school pond-dipping visits. These ponds were dug to provide a source of fresh water for birds, mammals and insects. Although man-made, all Culbin ponds and channels now play a critical part in the natural balance of life here. Take a seat on the benches and relax. Look out for yellow flag iris, chickweed watergrass and some unusual mosses nearby, too.

Dragonfly Pool
On a warm summer's day the air here is alive with bird-song and even the sound of brilliantly-coloured dragonflies, resting as they shelter through the air carefully and you may see discarded larvae cases. Feed half-way up plant stems. The dragonflies emerge from these, in the same way as butterflies, which also thrive at Culbin.

The Gut
Most of the narrow Culbin shoreline is an RSPB nature reserve, which stretches from the edge of the forest to the low-tide mark. It's made up of saltmarsh, sheltered mudflats, sand and shingle; this is ideal for long-legged, long-beaked wading birds all year round and a perfect 'winter resort' for thousands of waterbirds who migrate here from their relatively cooler breeding grounds further north.

People have lived in this constantly changing landscape for thousands of years. Piles of seaweeds left from a feast thousands of years ago can still be found deep in the forest.

The circular route onwards from the viewpoint takes you to Hill 99 and its 'squirrel's back down the way they came.

This route is ideal for first-time visitors. It'll lead you along sandy paths, through forest and moorland clearings.

The route up to Hill 99 and its 'squirrel's way' viewpoint is well worth it; it's suitable for nearly all abilities and takes a gentle climb. The path is well-marked and will bring you to Culbin's tallest hill.

This route is — Put here in World War II to prevent enemy gliders from landing!

At high tide and with storm-force winds behind it, the sea can crash over the first low dunes of Buckie Loch and into its marshy grassland beyond. Only the toughest of plants and animals can survive here, so look for very heather and shelly black grass. Once this was an inlet, but then the sand cut it off from the sea. Look out from the shore and you'll see that bit by bit, the sea is winning back the sand. Its salt spray kills the trees before the waves claim them. Floating tree-trunks are a hazard for shipping, so trees along the edge are often removed before they fall. Nature may soon come full circle here, making Buckie Loch a bay once more.

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Findhorn Bay
From here, Findhorn can look as though it is floating out to sea. The river has changed its course many times, most recently in the early 18th century. Unlike their neighbours at Culbin, Findhorn villagers had earlier adapted to survive, moving their settlement to its current river mouth home, from an earlier site now under the sea.

Lady Culbin’s Buried Trees
Lady Culbin is the largest single sand-dune system here, now covered with trees. Near Junction 4 is an area of ‘buried trees’ – Digging down around old stumps has shown that sand continued to shift around the trees as they grew. Some stumps actually tips downwards towards the notch – rather like the tip of a pencil! Find out about this and much more at www.culbin.org.uk

The Minister’s Pool
At the western end of the RSPB nature reserve, this is a good place to sit, reflect and watch water birds enjoy a bath. They often fly in and land with a splash to clean their feathers here. The rare sedge bed habitat nearby is worth looking at, too. As for the name, legend has it that a Minister once used to slate here!