



# 26 HIGHLAND STAC POLLAIDH

▶ Distance: 3 miles/5km ▶ Time: 2½ hours ▶ Grade: Moderate



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FEATURE  
ON PAGE 40

Stac Pollaidh  
from Drumrunie.



PHOTO: RUTH LUCKHURST



### CHOSEN BY... RUTH LUCKHURST

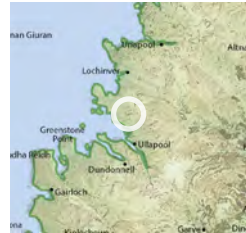
One of several iconic mountains rearing

dramatically from the spectacular landscape of the North West Highland Geopark, Stac Pollaidh lies on the road to the breathtaking Summer Isles. Its name (pronounced ‘Stack Polly’) means “stack of the pooling river”, from the Norse word “stakkr” meaning a steep hill. The mountain’s red Torridonian sandstone was laid in a thick layer on a bedrock of ancient gneiss, about 1000 million years ago. Later, the north western seaboard was crumpled upwards into a chain of mountains when two continental plates collided,

some considerable distance to the south east, welding Scotland and England together. Almost 500 million years of freezing and thawing since then have carved Stac Pollaidh’s rocky spine into towering buttresses and pinnacles, a process that still continues today. Winter storms have ploughed deep gullies through the debris of shattered sandstone lying as scree on plunging slopes sculpted by glaciers during the Ice Age. On the map it looks like a short stroll, but don’t be fooled: it’s a real knee-cruncher that demands agility and a head for heights!

**1 Start**  
From car park cross road to

## PLAN YOUR WALK



### ROUTE

**Start/parking** Stac Pollaidh car park, grid ref NC107095

**Is it for me?** Rugged, rocky path, may be slippery; steps, steep ascent and descent  
**Stiles** None

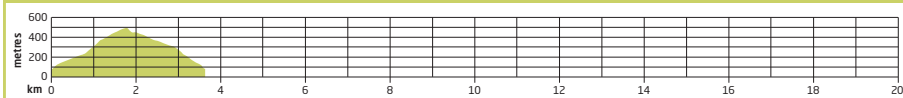
### PLANNING

**Nearest town** Ullapool  
**Refreshments** in Ullapool, seasonal in Achiltibuie, Altandhu, Polglass  
**Public toilets** at Knockan Crag & Achiltibuie  
**Public transport** Scotbus 811 from Ullapool to Achiltibuie  
**Maps** OS Explorer 439, Landranger 15

follow path into birch woodland, going through tall gate in deer fence, with Stac Pollaidh directly ahead. Boulder steps climb steeply through trees clad in moss and ivy and dotted with fungi, their



## GRADIENT PROFILE



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► OS Explorer map 439 ► Buy maps at: [ordnancesurvey.co.uk/shop](http://ordnancesurvey.co.uk/shop)

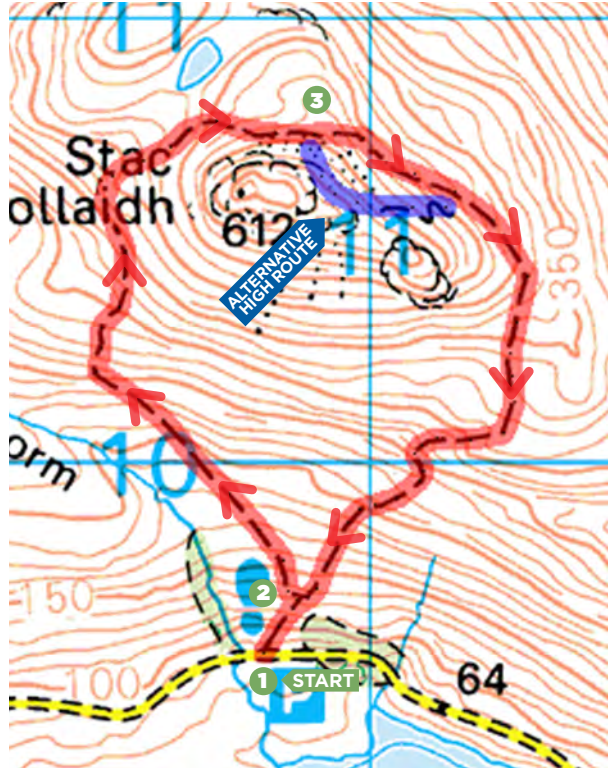
roots nestling in heather and bracken.

## 2½ mile/0.25km

After woodland the path forks to separate gates in another deer fence. Fork L to follow path heading for western flank of mountain – steep steps and cobbles at first, later flattening to a sandy path, boggy in places. Path climbs through the debris of ancient rockfalls – piles of fallen boulders (some very large), themselves eroded smooth, seamed along the original strata, crusted with lichens. Some – conglomerates – have pebbles of older rocks embedded in the sandstone. Stac Pollaidh's crenellated spine serrates the skyline above; below, Loch Lugainn stretches as far as you can see in both directions, pooling around the foot of the mountain. The path climbs through scree and steepens again as it approaches the rocky buttresses. Terraces (eroded strata) are now visible in the towering cliffs, above a boulder field of shattered pinnacles. As you climb, more distant hills come into view, and the sea appears beyond them.

## 3½ miles/2.5km

On the far side of the mountain the path splits. The upper path gives a great close-up of the spectacular rock formations, but is best



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suited to deer and climbers. The lower path has its adventurous moments, but overall it is less exposed. The two rejoin on the eastern flank before the route heads south again. On this northern side of the mountain there are far-reaching views over the lochs and knolls of the distinctive 'cnoc and lochan' landscape of the ancient Lewisian gneiss. After turning south the path becomes sandy and descends more gently,

with cobbles on the steeper corners. Reaching the deer fence above the birches at the start of the walk, retrace your steps to the car park. **CW**

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IN ASSOCIATION WITH



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