



24 HIGHLAND BEN MACDUI

Distance: 10½ miles/16.9km ■ Time: 7-8 hours ■ Grade: Challenging



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FEATURE
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PHOTO: DAVID MARSH

Glenmore and Loch Morlich from Point 4



CHOSEN BY... DAVID MARSH

It's hard to

exaggerate how extreme an environment the Cairngorm plateau is. As the largest expanse of ground above 1000m in the UK, it frequently experiences hurricane-force winds, near-zero visibility and it can snow in any month of the year.

The highest point in the Cairngorms (second only in the UK to Ben Nevis) is Ben Macdui at 1309m (4295 feet). In clement weather the walk to it from the Cairngorm Mountain Resort car park is long but straightforward and gives an excellent taste of this sub-Arctic wilderness. Unsurprisingly, great views

abound, especially of the pointed tops of Cairn Toul and The Angel's Peak but also of the cliffs of the Northern Corries. Such a unique environment also has unique wildlife: keep an eye open for ptarmigan, mountain hares and snow buntings. But do choose a day with a good weather forecast!

1 Start

From the SW corner of the car park, by the buildings, descend on the path to cross stream, then climb steps and take the path that curves R. After 400m, keep R when path forks and follow excellent path down to cross the Allt Coire an t-Sneachda watercourse. Continue on path

PLAN YOUR WALK



ROUTE

Start/parking Cairngorm Mountain Resort Car Park, PH22 1RB, grid ref NH990061

Is it for me? A long walk into remote country, much of it at altitude on the Cairngorm plateau. Mostly good paths but some boulder fields and expect lying snow for much of the year. Recommended in good visibility only
Stiles None

PLANNING

Nearest town Aviemore (10 miles)

Refreshments Glenmore Forest Cafe (01479 861700)

Public toilets Cairngorm Mountain Resort

Public transport Stagecoach 30 from Aviemore

Maps OS Explorer OL57, Landranger 36; Harvey Superwalker Cairn Gorm

GRADIENT PROFILE



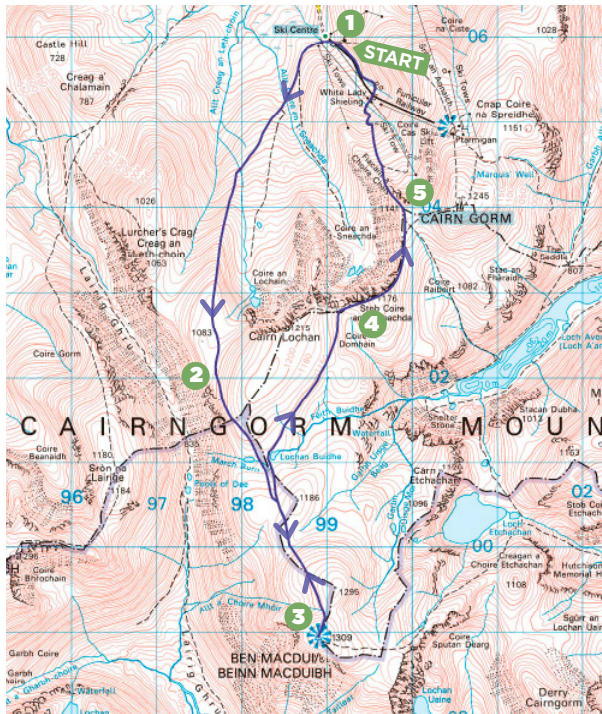
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■ OS Explorer map OL57 ■ Buy maps at: ordnancesurvey.co.uk/shop

to make long, steady ascent with the cliffs of Coire an Lochain to L. Eventually the gradient eases and the path crosses a flat, wet, grassy area before starting to climb again as it approaches the great cleft of the Lairig Ghru, which is worth detouring off the path to view.

2 **2¾ miles/4.5km**
Return to main, frequently cairned, path and follow as it rises then falls to drop down to pass close to Lochan Buidhe with Ben Macdui directly ahead. Cairns guide the way. Path reappears to cross flatter section then climbs steeply and rockily before levelling off again. Final section to the summit has frequent cairns and curves R to cross the boulder field and reach the flat summit with its trig point, viewfinder and assorted wind shelters.

3 **5 miles/8.1km**
Retrace outbound route back towards Lochan Buidhe. After boulder field, pick up R-hand of two paths, which passes closest to lochan, rather than one 100m further W. Bear R after lochan onto curving path that contours around higher ground, toward Cairn Gorm ahead. Follow it to junction of paths at the col between Cairn Lochan and Stob Coire an t-Sneachda.



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4 **7¾ miles/12.4km**
Turn R to ascend Stob Coire an t-Sneachda. After passing the cairned 1176m summit, path descends through rocky terrain. Path curves L then starts to ascend again. Ignore paths branching R, which lead to Cairn Gorm, but instead continue to large cairn at 1141m where the Fiacail a' Choire Chais ridge meets the plateau.

5 **8¾ miles/14.1km**
Descend engineered path down Fiacail a' Choire Chais

ridge until path veers R, off ridge, toward ski infrastructure of Coire Cas. When path ends at broad track, turn L and descend zigzags, then follow track beneath funicular railway line, after which it swings L to descend to the car park. **CW**

VIEW THE WALK ON OS MAPS ONLINE:
walk1000miles.co.uk/cwroutes

IN ASSOCIATION WITH



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DATE WALKED

TIME TAKEN

YOUR RATING