

BEN NEVIS AND GLEN COE

100 LOW, MID AND HIGH LEVEL WALKS

by Ronald Turnbull

CICERONE

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Warning

Mountain walking, and particularly scrambling or winter walking, can be dangerous activities carrying a risk of personal injury or death. It should be undertaken only by those with a full understanding of the risks and with the training and experience to evaluate them. While every care has been taken in the preparation of this book, the user should be aware that conditions can be highly variable and can change quickly, materially affecting the seriousness of a mountain walk. Therefore, except for any liability that cannot be excluded by law, neither Cicerone nor the author accept liability for damage of any nature (including damage to property, personal injury or death) arising directly or indirectly from the information in this book.

To call out the Mountain Rescue, phone 999 from a landline. From a mobile, phone 999 or 112: these should connect you via any available network. Once connected to the emergency operator, ask for Police Scotland.

Front cover: Arriving on Clach Leathad (Route 85) with Bidean nam Bian behind

about to join the Achintee Road.

To avoid this, fork left on a path under trees, still alongside the river, to join the road further down. After 200 metres cross a green footbridge over the **River Nevis**, then turn right to join the pavement of the Glen Nevis road. At the roundabout by the Nevis Bank Hotel, turn left to the town centre.



ROUTE 7

Ben Nevis by the Mountain Track

| | |
|---------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Start/Finish | Achintee (NN 125 730) |
| Distance | 14.5km/9 miles (up and down) |
| Total ascent | 1300m/4400ft |
| Time | 7hr |
| Terrain | Path well built below, then stony |
| Max altitude | Ben Nevis 1344m |



Length



Difficulty



Even for experienced hillwalkers, the ascent of the Mountain Track, from barely above sea level to Scotland's highest point, is tough and tiring. As hillwalkers go, it's not wonderful; relentlessly uphill for 1200m on a stone-built path, and with no view at all of the mountain's exciting northern side. The summit is in cloud more often than not. Still, Ben Nevis has to be done, and this is the convenient way to do it. Less experienced walkers should bear in mind that on the summit the weather will usually be two clothing-layers colder than at the start, and that for sore legs the rather steep downhill is almost as arduous as up.

A more serious problem can be the leaving of the summit. The path is unclear on the stony plateau, and doglegs between crag drops. Mostly, the way down is obvious because of the other walkers coming up; but the slowest person up, who may also be injured and exhausted, has no such guide. It's worth picking up one of the detailed summit maps handed out in Fort William's shops and information outlets. Compass bearings and GPS references are also in a box below. There is an emergency shelter on the summit; if the Mountain Rescue is alerted to your non-return, this is the first place they'll look. Mobile phone coverage on the upper Mountain Track is good.

ALTERNATIVE START POINTS

This walk can also be started from the Nevis Visitor Centre (NN 123 730) or the informal roadside parking near Glen Nevis youth hostel (NN 128 718). The youth hostel route is shortest, but gives a steep stone-surfaced descent right at the end when you really don't want it.

For Loch Ossian youth hostel: stay on the track as it passes under the railway alongside the stream, then reappears across the stream running southeast around the flank of Beinn na Lap. After 2km you can fork right onto a rough old track, or keep ahead on the smooth new one. Either way, you join a big track at the head of **Loch Ossian**, with the **youth hostel** just ahead and Corrou station 1km up to the right.

To Corrou by Leum Uilleim

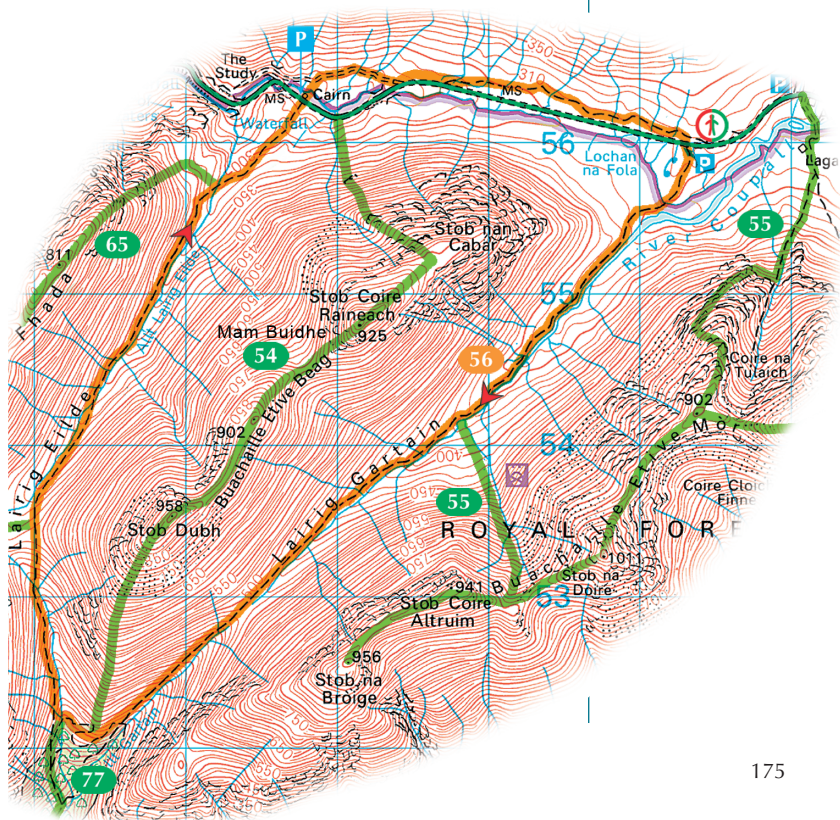
From **Loch Chiarain** it's almost as easy to get to Corrou over the Corbett Leum Uilleim (less distance, more climb). Or if you're overnighing in the bothy, you can make an afternoon up-and-down of this undemanding hill.

Cross stepping-stones below the bothy at the foot of Loch Chiarain. Even if the stones are underwater, this wide sandy bit of river is the best wading point. Above the stepping-stones there's a small path, which is most welcome as it gets you up into the zone of shorter grass. Moderate grassy slopes lead up to the preliminary top **Beinn a' Bhric**. Its final ridge has small outcrops of orange rock (dykes of porphyry).

From the small cairn on Beinn a' Bhric you may need to take a compass bearing to avoid being carried down slopes southwards. Make a way east down a short, quite steep slope to reach a wide col. Head east up the slope opposite to summit **Leum Uilleim** with its fair-sized cairn with small shelter arms.

Retrace your steps westwards into the wide col. Contour round right, eventually north, below the north-east ridge of Beinn a' Bhric, finding quad-bike wheelmarks. The quad-bike trail climbs very slightly, to reach the crest of the northeast ridge, and goes straight down it. The faint track over short grass and moss is a very pleasant stroll. The wheelmarks lead to a small cairn at the ridge tip (**An Diollaid**), then bear down to the right. Across the moorland below the going becomes peaty and swampy; then abruptly a well-surfaced path starts. It takes you across the **Allt Coire a' Bhric Beag**, and reaches the railway and **Corrou station**.

ROUTE 56 – ROUND BUACHAILLE BEAG: THE TWO PASSES



left, down into the gorge, and heads downstream for 50 metres or so to the crossing place.

The main path – and more exciting route – runs along the gorge side, above a waterfall, soon getting less exposed. The river rises to join the path, which clambers over big boulders to reach the crossing point.

On either path, the crossing point of the stream is a gravel beach below a hut-sized boulder. The stream here is wide and fairly shallow, so can be paddled if the stepping stones are under water or wobbly. On the opposite (east) side, the path continues to left of the stream as refurbished stone steps. There's a section up a rock groove, harder in descent and when wet. The path then crosses the boulderpile that blocks off the Lost Valley and descends onto the gravel plain. It arrives beside a notable boulder, with a much larger one back on the right.

From here you can wander up the gravel valley between its high walls of steep grass, little streams and big crags. Return the same way. If you came by the gorge wall, you could return by the upper path. After the stream crossing, that upper path turns left, upstream, for 50 metres before clambering up right, out of the gorge.

*The path into
the Lost Valley*

