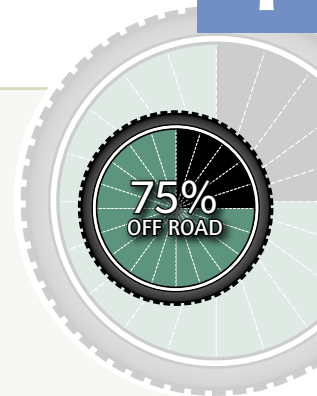


Route 4

In the Shadow of Ben Nevis

START/FINISH	Fort William NN 104 743
DISTANCE	44.5km (27¾ miles)
ON ROAD	10km (6¼ miles)
OFF ROAD	34.5km (21½ miles)
ASCENT	485m (1590ft)
GRADE	■
TIME	3hrs 30mins–4hrs 30mins
PUB	Plenty of pubs in Fort William
CAFÉ	Spean Bridge Woollen Mill Café or bring food
PARKING	Numerous car parks in Fort William



Lochaber has plenty more to offer than just its outdoor adventures. The area is rich in history and this circuit incorporates some of the highlights giving a 'grand tour' of the area. The route passes the ruined Inverlochy Castle that can be dated back as far as the 13th century. Highbridge was the scene of the first skirmish of the Jacobite uprising in 1745. Just before Banavie on the Caledonian Canal is Neptune's Staircase with its eight lock gates, making it the longest lock system in the UK. You'll also gain a real appreciation for how much Ben Nevis dominates the surroundings with exceptional views into the north face. This circuit mixes a number of tracks and trails to provide a long moderate grade ride with only a short section of difficulty.

Overview

The route heads out of Fort William on the Great Glen Way breaking off at Soldiers Bridge and passing Inverlochy Castle. It's a short section on a cycleway then the A82 before picking up a track that runs close the River Lochy. Crossing a minor road leads to a rough trail with stunning views to Ben Nevis and behind down to Loch Linnhe. The track improves as it continues to Highbridge then onto a minor road that leads up into the Leanachan Forest. A nice section of singletrack flows down to Spean Bridge and is followed by another short section of road climbing. A lovely trail runs next to the River Spean passing the remains of the old bridge

Following the waters of the River Lochy

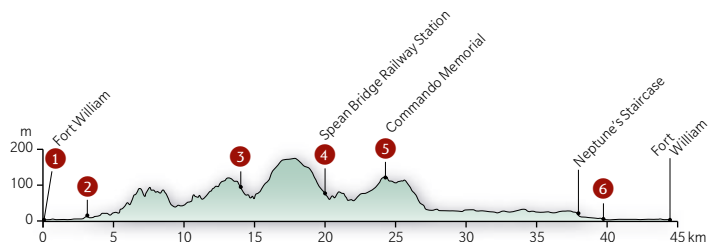


Observing the speed limit along the Caledonian Canal!

at Highbridge. A short climb leads to the Commando Memorial where there are panoramic views of the surrounding area. A minor road heads down to Gairloch and onto the Great Glen Way giving an easy ride along the Caledonian Canal to Banavie. A final short section of road leads back to Soldiers Bridge and into Fort William.

Directions

- 1 The Great Glen Way starts on the waterfront at Fort William at the east end of town in front of West Highland College. Follow the Great Glen Way markers from its official starting point to the roundabout opposite Morrisons supermarket. Take the second exit that cuts onto the cycleway marked Route 78 to the left of McDonalds. Pass the shinty field and on between the houses taking a → then ←. Just after the bridge crossing the River Nevis turn ← onto a trail that swings right following the River Lochy. This trail then heads away from the river to a kissing gate. Turn ← onto a tarmac road that brings you to two bridges. Turn → under the railway bridge past **Inverlochy Castle** and turn immediately ← where the cycleway leads to the **A82** and a roundabout. Turn ← onto the **A82** going ↑ at the roundabout to just where the road bends right. Take the track on the ← of the bend signposted for **Tomacharich**.
- 2 Follow the track that descends slightly to the river then through the forest ignoring a turn to the right. At the Y-junction stay → where the track leads to a gate. Go through the gate and take a → at the next Y-junction. Climb a little to another gate at the minor road. Take a ← onto the road then immediately → at a gate with a sign for **Highbridge**. The rough track swings slightly right then climbs to a gate and enters an area of wood. The track continues to another gate just after a ford. From here the trail becomes more obvious as it enters farmland. Beware, as there can be **cattle and sheep grazing** here. Continue on the good track to the farm sheds at **Achindaul**. Turn ← at



the T-junction climbing slightly, taking the first → crossing a ford to a gate. Go through the gate and follow the track until it reaches the minor road at **Highbridge**.

- 3 Turn → along the singletrack road until the T-junction with the **A82**. Go ↑ up the minor road towards the forest. Just after the road enters the forest take a ← through a gate onto a forest track. Follow the level track to where it intersects a path at some fencing on the left and right. Take a ←, signposted for *Spean Bridge* and descend on a fast trail through the woods. This eventually turns sharp right and joins another forest track. Don't follow that forest track, instead turn ← at this junction and then → at a fork with a small marker post shortly after. Another fast descent brings you to the golf course and Spean Bridge Railway Station. Take care on this descent, as it is a **popular walking route**.
- 4 At the parking area for the golf course turn → heading over the railway bridge and then a ← that leads to a T-junction with the **A82**. Follow the **A82** as it swings left and starts to climb. Turn off ← onto a gated track for the



Ben Nevis remains a constant companion throughout the ride



The good track climbing to the Commando Memorial

Commando Memorial. Descend on this fast hard packed trail running parallel with the River Spean, passing the remains of the old bridge. The trail then climbs steadily then swings **right** to run parallel with the **B8004** to a kissing gate by the **Commando Memorial**.

- 5 Turn ← after the kissing gate and join the **B8004** descending to Gairloch and the Caledonian Canal. Turn ← before the swing bridge over the canal onto the towpath and follow the hard packed track all the way to **Neptune's Staircase**. Just beyond cross the **A830** and go ↑ over the railway track continuing on the towpath to the final lock gates at **Corpach**.
- 6 Take a ← following the **Great Glen Way** along the shoreline with Ben Nevis in full view. At the end of the track join the minor road between the houses and the shore. Continue to the end of the road turning ← then → at a T-junction. As the road begins to climb over the rail bridge take a → down and across 'Soldiers Bridge'. A short distance after the bridge take a → through the gate and retrace your steps following the Great Glen Way back to the start of the route in **Fort William**.