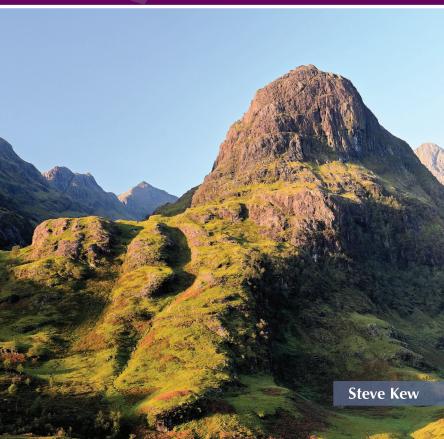
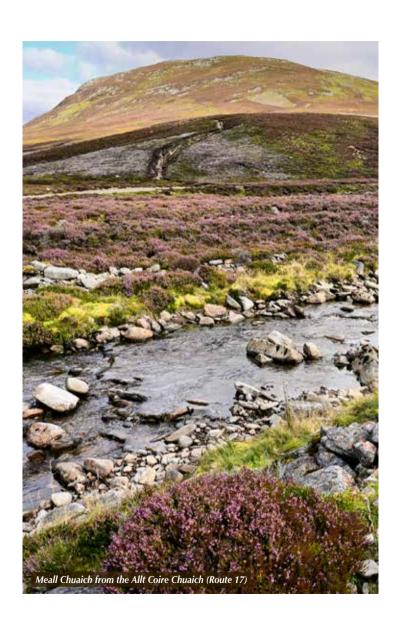


WALKING THE MUNROS

Vol 1 - Southern, Central and Western Highlands







WALKING THE MUNROS

VOLUME ONE:
SOUTHERN, CENTRAL AND WESTERN HIGHLANDS
by Steve Kew



JUNIPER HOUSE, MURLEY MOSS, OXENHOLME ROAD, KENDAL, CUMBRIA LA9 7RL www.cicerone.co.uk © Steve Kew 2021 Fourth Edition 2021 ISBN: 978 1 78631 105 4 Third Edition 2017 Second edition 2012 First edition 2004



Printed in Singapore by KHL Printing on responsibly sourced paper. A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library. All photographs are by the author unless otherwise stated.



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Updates to this Guide

While every effort is made by our authors to ensure the accuracy of guide-books as they go to print, changes can occur during the lifetime of an edition. While we are not aware of any significant changes to routes or facilities at the time of printing, it is likely that the current situation will give rise to more changes than would usually be expected. Any updates that we know of for this guide will be on the Cicerone website (www.cicerone.co.uk/1105/updates), so please check before planning your trip. We also advise that you check information about such things as transport, accommodation and shops locally. Even rights of way can be altered over time.

The route maps in this guide are derived from publicly available data, databases and crowd-sourced data. As such they have not been through the detailed checking procedures that would generally be applied to a published map from an official mapping agency. However, we have reviewed them closely in the light of local knowledge as part of the preparation of this guide.

We are always grateful for information about any discrepancies between a guidebook and the facts on the ground, sent by email to updates@cicerone.co.uk or by post to Cicerone, Juniper House, Murley Moss, Oxenholme Road, Kendal, LA9 7RL.

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Front cover: Gearr Aonach, Pass of Glen Coe – Stob Coire Sgreamhach (I) and Stob Coire nan Lochan (r) Route 32

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Acknowledgements

I am indebted to Beathag Mhoireasan from the Gaelic College in Sleat – Sabhal Mòr Ostaig – for invaluable help with the Gaelic names and pronunciations. Any mistakes or oddities in the handling of these names in the text, however, is entirely my own fault.

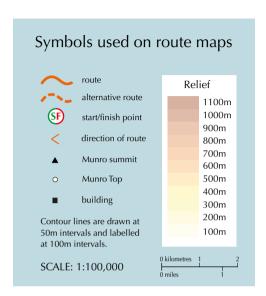
Thanks also are due to Jean Etherington for helping to keep track of where I was on my travels, and also to the numerous youth hostel wardens and local police with whom I left details of routes.

I am also grateful to Ronald Turnbull for his suggestions on the text.

The short quote from *The Songs of Duncan Ban Macintyre* in the section on Beinn Dorain comes from a translation by Angus Macleod, published by Oliver and Boyd for the Scottish Gaelic Texts Society 1952. It is worth getting hold of this book, if only for an extraordinary description it contains of the qualities of the water in a little burn on the east side of Beinn Dorain called the Allt na h-Annait.

Above all this was for Tink, who was with me every step of the way.

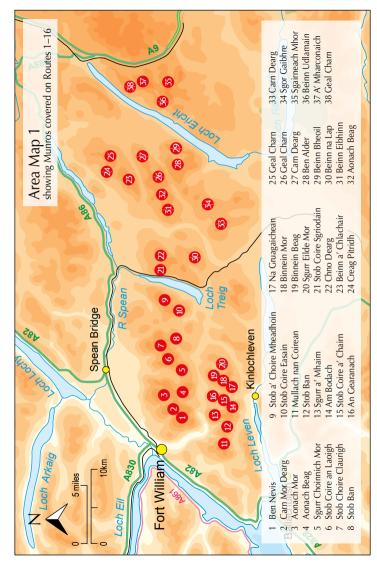


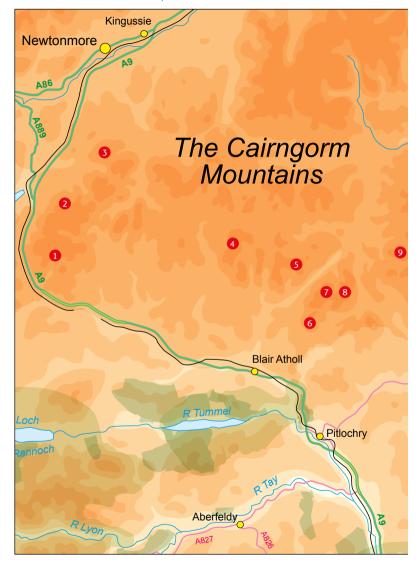


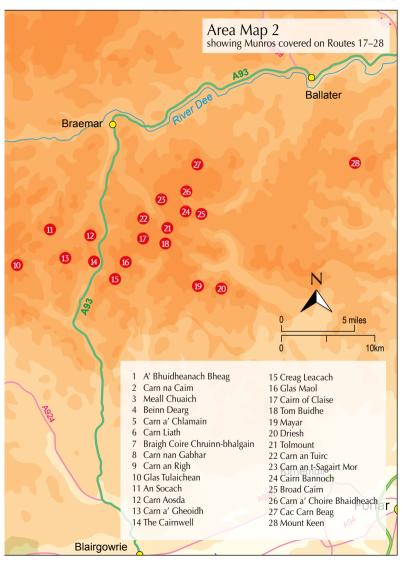
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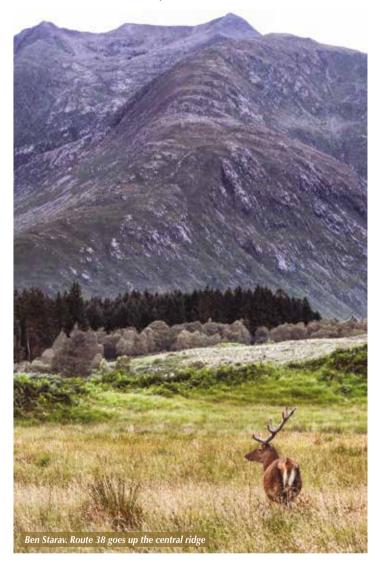
Every mountain walk has its dangers, and those described in this guidebook are no exception. All who walk or climb in the mountains should recognise this and take responsibility for themselves and their companions along the way. The author and publisher have made every effort to ensure that the information contained in this guide was correct when it went to press, but, except for any liability that cannot be excluded by law, they cannot accept responsibility for any loss, injury or inconvenience sustained by any person using this book.

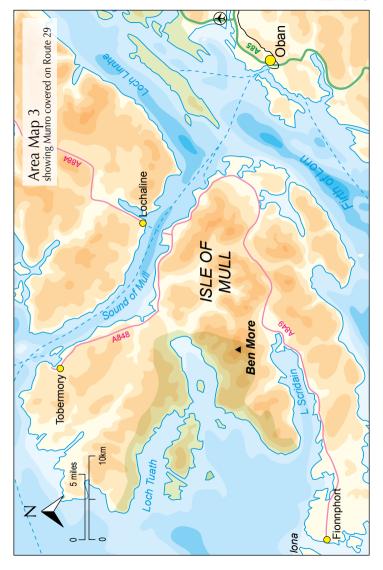
To call out the Mountain Rescue, ring 999 (in the UK) or the international emergency number 112: this will connect you via any available network. Once connected to the emergency operator, ask for the police..











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of the Highlands it is not possible to get a signal. Your best chance of getting a signal in many mountain areas may be high up on the summits, but even here it may not be possible.

WHEN TO GO

This guide has been written with the summer walker in mind. Summer conditions will usually prevail between May and September, although deeplying snow can last into the summer in some high places, affecting the safety of otherwise 'easy' routes. 'Winter' storms are not uncommon in May or September – I have been caught out by snow in June! You should always obtain an up-to-date weather forecast from one of the many specialized forecast services before venturing into the

Scottish hills. Avalanche warnings for specific areas are available on the internet at www.sais.gov.uk.

In winter conditions many routes may not be possible without strong all-round mountaineering experience. Navigation becomes more difficult, simple scrambles can become technical climbs, daylight is short and deteriorating weather can quickly lead to Arctic conditions. While a covering of snow can greatly add to the beauty and atmosphere of these mountains, remember that paths, cairns and other markers can guickly be obliterated; corniced ridges, snowdrifts and iced-up rock can make simple summer routes slow and fraught with danger. The Scottish hills should never be underestimated.

Enjoy them safely. Happy climbing!

NEVIS

ROUTE 1

Ben Nevis (1344m), Carn Mor Dearg (1220m)

Pronunciation: Ben Nevis; Karn More Jerrack **Translation:** Venomous Mountain; Big Red Cairn

Start Footpath from Glen Nevis, which is stepped and engineered

 Distance
 15km

 Ascent
 1700m

 Time
 7hr

Difficulty Demanding route with exposed section (the Carn Mor Dearg

arête) that in summer involves some simple scrambling (up to grade 1). Accurate navigation from summit of Ben Nevis is

essential in poor weather.

Maps OS sheet 41; Explorer map 392; Harvey's Superwalker map

Ben Nevis; Area Map 1

Parking Visitor centre car park or by YHA or at Ben Nevis Inn

Hostel YHA Glen Nevis; Independent Glen Nevis

B&B/hotel Fort William Camping Glen Nevis

Access No stalking in this area; John Muir Trust tel 0131 554 0114

This tough, long route takes you on a spectacular circuit around the Nevis horseshoe to reach the highest point in Britain. It takes you through a wonderful variety of mountain terrain and includes some easy scrambling on the exposed Carn Mor Dearg arête. It is not the easiest way up Ben Nevis, however, and in poor weather can become a serious and demanding expedition.

To paraphrase Dickens: it is the best of hills, it is the worst of hills. The magnificent mountain architecture on the north side of Ben Nevis (or just

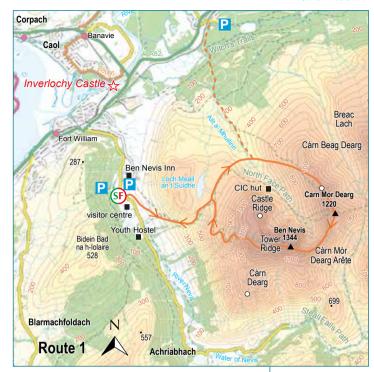
'the Ben' as it is affectionately known) offers one of the most awesome and impressive vistas in Britain – a huge and complex cathedral of rock, born of volcanic forces and massive intrusions of granite, relentless weathering and the scouring action of glaciation. It is a place that inspires fear and poetry and excitement. It is a magnet to everyone who loves mountains. But there is also the other Ben Nevis.

A climber's first experience of reaching the summit on a clear summer's day is likely to come as a severe shock. There are often more people to be found here on a Saturday afternoon than in Sauchiehall Street, many of them totally ill-equipped and unprepared for a day on a mountain. The usual route from Glen Nevis is now like a motorway cut into the hill. The plateau itself is frequently covered with litter. Following a major clear-up in 2009 a line of cairns was constructed as markers to and from the trig point on a dog-leg following the safest line across the summit plateau (see text for bearings).

Despite all of this, the traverse described here is a wonderful route. Winter is definitely the best time to do it, when the tourist hordes are snuggled up at home in front of their fires, though in winter conditions it becomes a much more serious expedition which calls for all-round mountaineering skills.

Start from the visitor centre car park (12299 73088), from the YHA or from the Ben Nevis Inn (12591 72969). The paths from all three join not far up the hill. When the path begins to level out above Lochan Meall an t-Suidhe take a left fork. This eventually winds around to reach the CIC (Charles Inglis Clark) hut beneath the north face, but after about 1km leave this path and drop quite steeply down heather slopes to the Allt a' Mhuilinn. This can be crossed without difficulty at 15497 73792.

This point can also be reached by a path from Torlundy, which has the advantage of shortening your encounter with the tourists. (If you prefer to approach the hill from this side, start from the North Face Car Park, which is signposted from the A82 in Torlundy. Don't try to access the Allt a' Mhuilinn via the golf course, as your presence will not be appreciated.)



From the river crossing, climb straight up the heathery hillside to Carn Beag Dearg. The slope soon becomes bouldery. Stay on the crest of the ridge all the way to Carn Dearg Meadhonach (17602 72672). There is a lower path that traverses the west side of these hills to emerge below Carn Mor Dearg, but the best views are to be had higher up – not only of the magnificent north face of Ben Nevis, but also of the dozens of gullies etched into the flanks of Aonach Mor across the valley to the east. From the summit of Carn Dearg Meadhonach drop down over the pink/grey granite boulders and then climb again to the summit of Carn Mor Dearg at 17753 72161 (4hr 20min from the YHA).

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From here you drop down to the south with quite a substantial loss of height before the ridge eventually curves round to the southwest. Stay on or very close to the crest of the arête (which is little more than a line of piled-up blocks). It is narrow but not difficult or intimidating in summer weather. Soon the ascent begins, past an abseil post, which marks a possible line of descent into Coire Leis. Then comes a steep climb over large andesite boulders to the summit of **Ben Nevis** at 16687 71275. There is an intermittent path and a line of rusting posts which in very poor weather may be a useful guide to the top (5hr 20min).

Follow the tourist trail back to the valley. It is essential in poor visibility to find the right line of descent. There have been many fatalities where parties have either stumbled over the northeast face or mistaken one of the Glen Nevis gullies for the way off. If in any doubt walk 150m from the summit trig pillar on a grid bearing of 231°, then follow a second grid bearing of 282° for just over 1km to reach the top of the zigzags and safer ground. Don't forget to add the necessary adjustment for magnetic variation to these grid bearings. In 2006 the variation was just under 3°W. Follow the Mountain Trail down through the zigzags to rejoin the outward route.

Ben Nevis from Carn Mor Dearg arête



THE AONACHS

ROUTE 2

Aonach Mor (1221m), Aonach Beag (1234m)

Pronunciation: Ernoch More; Ernoch Bake **Translation:** Big Ridge; Little Ridge

Start Footpath from the east end of the car park through Nevis

gorge

Distance 15km Ascent 1240m Time 7hr

Difficulty Accurate navigation is essential, and in poor visibility can be

notoriously difficult on these hills

Maps OS sheet 41; Explorer map 392; Harvey's Superwalker map

Ben Nevis; Area Map 1

Parking Car park at the end of Glen Nevis

Hostel YHA, Glen Nevis; Independent Glen Nevis

B&B/hotel Fort William **Camping** Glen Nevis

Access Hillphones tel 01397 732362

These two grand old men of the Scottish hills have been somewhat humbled by the ski-lift developments on the northern flanks of Aonach Mor, but approached from Glen Nevis they have lost none of their rugged appeal. There is an air of seriousness about them. Like many grand old men they need to be approached with care.

Aonach Mor is a granite mountain, being part of the Outer Granite of Ben Nevis. Aonach Beag is mostly composed of Dalradian schists. There has been extensive geological folding hereabouts. Impressive crags on both the east and west sides of these hills, which have been eroded into a series of deep gullies and scree slopes, limit the lines of escape in bad weather. The huge bulk of the Ben Nevis horseshoe fills the western horizon.