

TRAIL
LIVE FOR THE OUTDOORS JULY 2023
T
The one that brought our photographer was a genius for getting Marni 'on to himself' until he admitted he'd just got stuck in traffic.

July 2023

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- Explore the best rocky routes on Scotland's most remote peaks
- Ditch your car and jump on a bus to unlock the Lake District fells



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Cairngorms
Blencathra
Snowdon
Isle of Arran
Glyder Fach

10

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TRAIL
Digital

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Rock-hopping on Star Pollaidh, a mini mountain with one of the best summit scrambles in Scotland. Read our guide to some of the best rocky routes in the north-west Highlands on page 22.



TONY BALL

IT'S (NOT) GRIM UP NORTH

Some friends of mine recently returned from a trip around the world, quite rightly giddy with excitement at the mountain landscapes they'd encountered in New Zealand. They were also shocked when I told them I'd never made the 11,000-mile flight to the far side of the Earth to gaze upon the same scenery. "But have you ever been to Scotland?" I asked. "No," came the response. "Do you think we should?" I don't think anywhere has got under my skin like the mountain regions of western Scotland. From the first peaks of the southern Highlands, all the way out to the islands on that most unique of

weather-beaten coastlines, to me it's about as close to paradise as you can get. And my favourite part is that although I've spent a fairly decent chunk of time there, I've still hardly even scratched the surface. There are mountains and glens and scrambles and islands that I've still never got within 100 miles of, and the article on page 22 of this issue is a timely reminder

that I need to get back up there this summer.

I think you should too because, if the best hillwalking on the planet is what you're after, the Highlands might just save you a fortune on a round-the-world ticket.

Oli Reed, Trail editor



Cover photograph: Place Fell, Lake District, by Tom Bailey.

EDITOR'S PICKS



Sarah Ryan buys a bus ticket that opens up a whole new way of exploring the hills and mountains of the Lake District **p30**



Amar Latif gives a fascinating interview describing how he's explored the world on foot, despite losing his sight as a teenager **p46**



Tom Sargeant dishes out pro tips on how to mix it up on your next overnight adventure by canoeing into the wild with a tent packed into your boat **p62**

TRAIL

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The hills are only one part of this glorious Lakeland adventure!



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BASECAMP

YOUR ADVENTURE STARTS HERE

Goatfell (far right) and the Slacach ridge joining it to North Goatfell, seen from the summit of Cìr Mòr on the Glen Sannox horseshoe.

PEAK OF THE MONTH

ISLE OF ARRAN

Goatfell

Arran is a beautiful and rather gentle island. It's a place of quiet villages, idyllic countryside, ancient stone circles and nearly 70 miles of coastline. It's also an island of saw-toothed, sky-tearing mountains. The most fearsome of these granite-fanged behemoths nestle in a knotted tangle of ridges and peaks on the eastern side of the northern half of Arran. For the most part they gather around two glacier-scooped valleys, Glen Sannox and Glen Rosa. And sitting above their meeting point, higher than anything else on the island, is Goatfell. It's possible to reach Goatfell's highest point – 874m above the Firth of Clyde, whose waters seem almost within diving distance from the summit – as an out-and-back from numerous directions. But the best way – the only way for true mountain connoisseurs – is to include it on a skyline horseshoe of one of the glens it towers above. Glen Rosa is good, particularly if you have the rope and rack skills to tackle the A' Chir ridge on its western side head on, but Glen Sannox is arguably better, cresting a feast of stunning peaks and teetering arêtes as it circumnavigates the wild and wildlife-rich valley below. It's perhaps worth pointing out that Goatfell's actual summit doesn't sit directly on the Glen Sannox skyline; it requires an out-and-back from North Goatfell (its subsidiary outlier) over the Stacach ridge to reach Arran's highest point, a diversion which adds just under 2km to an already substantial day. But it's wholeheartedly worth it. Mountains feel higher above the sea, and Goatfell is no exception. With a 360° panorama over the whole island and across the seas into Galloway, the south-west Highlands, the Paps of Jura and the mountains of Northern Ireland, there are few summits that give such an airy sense of elevation.

■ **WALK IT** Turn to page 93 for a Glen Sannox horseshoe route guide.



CAN YOU TOP THIS?

The entries are pouring in for the coveted title of this year's best mountain photographer – and as you can see from the pic above, the standard is high!

Every year since launching in 2014 we've kicked off our Mountain Photo of the Year competition wondering if it's possible for the level of entries to stay as high as the previous year, and each time we end up being blown away by what we receive.

If you need any further evidence of that, visit the website below and check out the

fast-growing gallery of entries for 2023. This year, with Nature and Countryside categories being added alongside the long-standing Mountain award, there's more variety than ever in terms of landscapes and inspiration for getting outside and exploring the wilder parts of the UK. We never get any shortage of wild camping shots and many of the recent

winners have featured a tent pitched high in the mountains, which is why the above entry from Martin Hornsey got our attention this month. High above the Lake District's ever-popular Great Langdale valley on the kind of morning that reminds all of why we love waking up in weird and wonderful places. Keep them coming!

ENTER AT: WWW.LIVEFORTHEOUTDOORS.COM/OPOTY

Martin Hornsey's entry from a wild camp above Great Langdale, with the Langdale Pikes rising above a cloud inversion. And below, Neil Pennington's early entry into the Countryside category.

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NEIL PENNINGTON

MARTIN HORNSEY

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NATURE

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COUNTRY

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THE JUDGES



TOM BAILEY

The photographer behind the award-winning photography in Bauer Media's outdoor portfolio, Tom is a mountaineer, naturalist and enjoyer of the countryside on foot.



LOUISE PARKER

Trail's art editor has been a judge in every Mountain Photo of the Year competition since 2013. What she doesn't know about impactful mountain images isn't worth knowing.



GUY PROCTER

Editor of *Country Walking* Guy is passionate about helping more people discover the outdoors.



MATT MERRITT

Author and editor of *Bird Watching* magazine Matt has a remarkable sensitivity for the natural world.



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TRAIL Picks

Places we've been, things we've seen, and mountain-related stuff we like

VIEW WITH A ROOM

INCHNADAMPH EXPLORERS' LODGE, ASSYNT

The Explorers' Lodge in Inchnadamph is the perfect base from which to explore the spectacularly beautiful Assynt in the far north-west of Scotland. A former manse (clergy house), this independent hostel sits below the two Munros: Ben More Assynt and Conival. Inchnadamph, which is on both the North Coast 500 and Cape Wrath Trail routes, offers a range of accommodation from bunk dorms, rooms, a shepherd's hut, and cottage. There's a drying room, a kitchen, a shop, plus the opportunity to order Lochinver Larder pies for delivery. It even has reliable Wi-Fi! It's a wonderfully welcoming and friendly place to stay, and prices start from just £29 per night including breakfast. inchnadamph.com



BEST APP FOR NAVIGATING MOUNTAINS

Mountain Rescue has confirmed what we've always known by announcing a new partnership recommending OS Maps as the navigational phone app of choice for hikers. Mountain Rescue England & Wales CEO Mike Park said: "Far too often we're seeing people in very remote and potentially dangerous locations using mapping apps better suited to towns. There has been a shift to online tools and apps in recent years, with many of our volunteers using maps on their phones, but we would always recommend carrying a paper map that doesn't need battery power as a back-up."

MTN RESCUES IN NUMBERS

3629 CALL-OUTS PER YEAR
BUSIEST MONTHS ARE JUNE, AUGUST & SEPTEMBER
 WITH 33% OF INCIDENTS **SATURDAYS & SUNDAYS** MAKE UP 43% OF INCIDENTS

56% MALE
43% FEMALE
20% MISSING PERSON
80% CASUALTIES

COMMON INJURIES



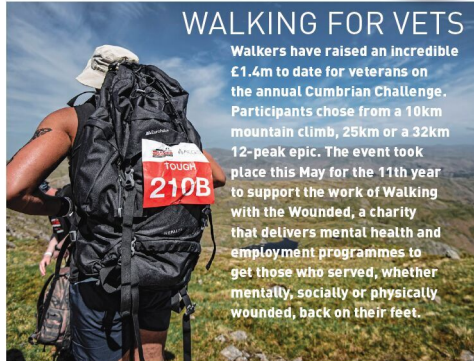
Removing barriers

Around 400 women took part in a one-day navigation course this May. Organiser from Love Her Wild, Bex Band, explained: "Lack of navigation skills was highlighted as one of the biggest barriers stopping women from getting outdoors more." Offered for just £15, courses all around the UK sold out in just a few hours. Stephanie Book said: "It's funny, I spent half my life believing I should to defer to men, but the support of other women and the belief Love Her Wild put in me proves that's rubbish. No one's ever going to snatch the map out of my hand again!"



WALKING FOR VETS

Walkers have raised an incredible **£1.4m** to date for veterans on the annual Cumbrian Challenge. Participants chose from a 10km mountain climb, 25km or a 32km 12-peak epic. The event took place this May for the 11th year to support the work of Walking with the Wounded, a charity that delivers mental health and employment programmes to get those who served, whether mentally, socially or physically wounded, back on their feet.



HARRIET CORP

* TAKEN FROM ENGLAND & WALES MOUNTAIN RESCUE'S MOST RECENT ANNUAL REVIEW, 2022.

Seven wild sleeps on seven special summits



RUSS MOORHOUSE is on a mission to camp out on every **TRAIL 100** peak – a challenge that spans four countries, 100 of the UK's finest hills and mountains, and a punishing 88,339m of ascent. This month he travels back and forth between England and Wales on his very own 7 Summits challenge.

WILD SLEEPS THIS MONTH

High Street

The Old Man of Coniston

Crib Goch

Pillar

Snowdon

(Yr Wyddfa)

The Calf

Pumlumon

TRAIL 100 BIVVY COUNT 39/100



Once more into the beautiful. Wouldn't it be great if life were a mosaic, made up purely from moments of Elysian joy. Well, this month's column takes the

best bits from seven camps to make such a story.

The van door shuts with a clunk, and I head into the mountains. It's hotter than normal for this time of year. I splash ever deeper through the cool water feeling the smooth stones on my feet, then plunge my head under, resurfacing and gasping for air. Senses alive. Secluded Hayeswater is a great wild swimming spot on the climb to High Street.

Above the clouds

Breaking through the cloud I find myself in a sunlit paradise on Crib Goch. The summit ridge and

neighbouring peaks are visible, all else exists in a world below cloud.

Blue sky shines as I glide over the ice-rimmed pinnacles.

In this otherworldly place I am followed along the ridge by an angel in a Brocken spectre, never leaving my side and moving at the same pace.

Offering protection in the dangerous conditions.

There is no better dinner table in the world than on top of Pillar. Surrounded by mountains we eat chicken madras, rice and naan bread, all heated in a huge frying pan. Looking out of the tent to Mickledore, Sca Fell and Scaffell Pike, Lou says, "This is certainly better than a cold sandwich".

After tea I sit in my bivvy bag and watch darkness snuff out the light, fiery sunshine pokes through the wispy clouds. The day's final beams of light shine across the universe, highlighting the snow against rock. From the very top of Snowdon, I see the half-moon rise against the darkness after the sun has set, restoring a little light. Time passes quickly, watching the cosmic battle of unearthly spheres before I doze a peaceful sleep.

The essentials of life

It's 3am on The Calf, my door wide open, flapping in the wind. The tent shakes violently. Rain blows in, soaking all in sight. I zip it shut and fall back asleep in a soggy Howgills puddle. When you can find enjoyment in adversity, you know you have life sussed.

I awake from a deep sleep to find the tent zip is now frozen. Forcing it open I see Mark boiling ground coffee in his porch. Behind him a magnificent orange sky hangs above Pumlumon. Light shines on the frost. Drinking from steaming cups we watch the sun pop from behind the horizon.

This is what it's all about. I went to the mountains because I wished to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life, and see what it had to teach. And not, when I come to die, discover I had not lived. **T**

Follow Russ and his 'Trail of 100 Nights' adventure on Instagram @amountainbivvy



WHAT IS THE TRAIL 100?

The **Trail 100** is our definitive collection of the 100 UK peaks every hillwalker should climb in their lifetime. Start your challenge at lfto.com/trail100

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Eternity lasts an hour
We stand here forever
Drinking from the bottle of a dream
Tiny moments in paradise
When sun sets on the mountain top
During the golden light
And our dream comes true
No-one's around, but me and you



Lou joins Russ
on Pillar.



Warm coffee on a
chilly Pumlumon.



The Calf, and (inset) time
for a dip in Hayeswater on
the way to High Street.



Brocken spectre
on Crib Goch.



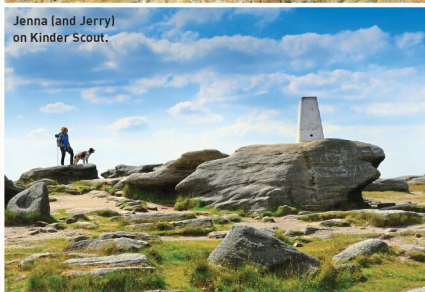
We made it! Celebrating the win on Helm Crag.



Hanging out on Arenig Fach.



Jenna (and Jerry) on Kinder Scout.



The Trail 100: what we've been climbing

It isn't just our readers we're challenging to climb every Trail 100 peak – our magazine team are also out there working through the star names on the list. Here are some of our recent favourites.

OFFICIAL PARTNERS



Arenig Fach, Eryri (Snowdonia)

■ **TOM BAILEY, TRAIL PHOTOGRAPHER**

"Now, let's straighten something out right away. Arenig Fach is certainly not, as the Trail 100 website suggests, dull from afar. Quite the opposite, in fact. It's from a distance that the artist James Dickson Innes used to paint it. Man, he could paint. Ahead of his time, the colour and form, particularly of his skies, were mind bending and life affirming. It's these skies that I see every time I look at Arenig Fach, because it's this Trail 100 mountain that represents, to me, creativity, imagination and tragedy; the holy trinity of life. Could you wish for more? Go climb it."

Quinag, Assynt

■ **BEN WEEKS, TRAIL GEAR EDITOR**

"I've seen Quinag from almost all its angles. It's a sprawling, complex mountain, and an enticing one. That it took me so long to set foot on it is a reflection on Assynt's other attractions. The mountain surprised me. Amongst its three distinct summits are crevices and corners unseen from below. Under the microscope of actually being on Quinag, narrow ridges, exposed rocky promontories, and a wealth of weather-carved textures revealed themselves. It's a colourful mountain too, the combination of the sandstone and quartzite substrates creating shades from pale grey to deep brick, surrounded by seas of green from the

Trail 100 kit

Some of the best spring and summer gear from our Trail 100 partners

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Scarpa Ribelle

Lite HD £310

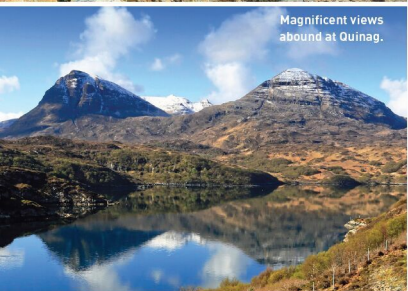
Designed for fast and light mountain walks, scrambles and via ferrata, this boot is fully waterproof yet still breathable.



A glorious day to climb Moel Siabod.



Magnificent views abound at Quinag.



hardy grasses, heather, mosses and delicate montane flora that carpet the slopes. Summit panoramas in Assynt are always good, but rarely does a mountain provide such a good view of itself from its highest point as Quinag – perhaps its best angle yet.”

Kinder Scout, Peak District

■ **JENNA MARYNIAK, TRAIL DEPUTY EDITOR**

“I’ve lost count of the number of times I’ve been on Kinder Scout. Living in the flatlands of eastern England it’s the closest thing to a mountain. The high boggy plateau is about as wild as it gets, but for me it’s all about the edges. The ravines and scrambles that rise up from the Vale of Edale, the gritstone tors, the massive views across to the Great Ridge... Last autumn I had my best day on it yet as part of the **Trail Peak to Pub** route in the Peak District with my dog, Jerry. Up Win Hill from

Laibower, across Kinder Scout to Kinder Low and down Jacob’s Ladder to Edale, it’s a magnificent day out.”

Moel Siabod, Eryri (Snowdonia)

■ **LOUISE PARKER, TRAIL ART EDITOR**

“I climbed Moel Siabod for the second time recently and got a winning day. It has a great walk in, an active scramble up the Daear Ddu ridge, and then ‘BOOM!’ at the top. The view across to Snowdon is massive, so take time to pause and wave at all the people up there. You get the sun on your back as you descend the north-east ridge before a paddle in the Afon Llugwy, followed by cake at the mountain’s namesake café.”

Helm Crag, Lake District

■ **OLI REED, TRAIL EDITOR**

“We picked this tiddler as the first ‘mountain’ to climb with our young sons (7 and 3), and am pleased to report we reached the summit and completed the round trip to Grasmere without having to book any family counselling sessions. Starting in a pretty village (with plenty of ice cream shops) and winding up through woodland before breaking on to open fellside below a rocky and scrambly summit, it’s a short walk with

plenty of ingredients to keep kids excited and motivated all the way. Barring one bashed knee and one unspeakable toilet incident, it was just about the perfect family hillwalk.”



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Lowe Alpine

AirZone Trail Duo ND30L £120
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Lowe Alpine

AirZone Trail Camino 37:42L £170
The generous capacity and clever details make it easy to organise your kit. A perfectly adapted pack for overnights in the wilderness.



Out there

YOUR MOUNTAIN SNAPS
& TALES FROM
THE TRAILS

Y Garn Snowdonia (Eryri)

"We're a group from King's College, Cambridge and we'll be trekking Kilimanjaro in July. This photo was taken at the summit of Y Garn. I'm second from right at the back and front-left is my wife **Sam** and our rescue Jack Russell, **Eddie**. He's a scrambling superdog, but won't be coming with us to Africa." **Stuart Douglas**



Welsh 3000ers Eryri

"I just completed the Welsh 3000s in a solo trip over 3 days, including wild camping for 2 nights. A gruelling (I was carrying a lot of gear) but very rewarding experience!" **Bradley Nichol**



Everest Base Camp Nepal

"This is me with my daughter, **Ashleigh Hyslop**, at the famous landmark this April. It was an amazing experience and the months of training were all worthwhile." **Paul Hyslop**

Yr Wydfffa (Snowdon) Eryri

"Here's me and my partner **Laura Taylor** on the way down from Snowdon's busy summit, after a nice circular route up Rhyd ddhu and down via the south ridge in the beating sun. A perfect day on the trail." **Jacques Croze**



Scafell Pike Lake District

"This is (left to right) **Rich, Matt, Andy & Adam** at the summit of Scafell Pike, a first ascent for all of us. Excuse Rich, he's midway through a homemade sausage roll as a reward for reaching the top!" **Andy McLean**





Y Gribin Eryri

"Here's me taking my partner's brother and his girlfriend (**Dave** and **Chloe**) on their first scramble – the Y Gribin ridge in Eryri – a few weeks ago in the beautiful weather!" **Dave Wilcox**



Tryfan Eryri

"Here we are sitting in front of Adam and Eve, during a trip where we tackled the Welsh 3000s in 5 days. We enjoyed an exhilarating scramble up Tryfan, via the North Ridge and the Glyders via Bristly Ridge. Well worth the views!" **Tim & Toni Aplin**, with buddies **Simon & Sue Townner**



THIS MONTH'S WINNER

Red Pike Lake District

"This is my little man **TGP (aka Tom)**, on Red Pike during the Easter break. After climbing Snowdon at five, doing the Three Peaks for charity when he was seven, and completing 100s of walks, hikes and climbs in the UK and Europe, we've decided our next challenge is to complete all 214 Wainwrights before his 10th birthday. He has just turned nine, and has completed around 30. We will be doing this all to raise money for the Sheffield Children's hospital, Tree Tops Trust." **Craig Perry**



Crib Goch Yr Wyddfa

"Tackling a pinnacle on Crib Goch during a flurry in April. The next day it was T-shirt weather! Just goes to show you can't put your puffers away just yet!"

Linda Nicholson



Squirrel Lake District

"This is my daughter **Charlotte**, a passionate hillwalker, Everest Anywhere participant, Mountains for the Mind supporter and singer. Terry Abraham took this while filming for his latest film project, *Cumbrian Red*, where Charlotte will be singing on the score." **Andrew Potter**

Knoydart Highlands

The **Cumnock Bothy Baggers** on a magical journey through Knoydart, walking and camping.



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Wee beasties of the British mountains

WORDS TOM BAILEY

There's no getting away from the fact that in the British uplands there are millions of blood-sucking creatures just waiting for you to bare some tasty flesh. Welcome to the horror that is the world of midges and ticks.

The Highland midge is the reason midges get a bad reputation. Most of the midge family don't actually bite, and of the few that do, it's only the female Highland midge that wants your blood. This two-winged fly is only about 1.5mm long, with the backs of the wings having a mottled appearance. But don't mistake these tiny critters as a minor inconvenience – take heed from the Scottish saying 'a midge is as big as a mountain', as once a midge has had its fill of your blood, she'll send out a scent signal to attract the others, because there's never just one. And more bad news (sorry!) – the Highland midge is actually widespread throughout Britain.

The need for a blood meal is to help with the development of the female's eggs. These are laid in boggy soil, in which the larvae then live, their collective burrowing activity being important to the health of the soil. Even midges are part of the ecosystem. As well as us, most mammals are fair game, though there are things that Hoover up midges too – bats, swallows, martins, other insects, even plants like the insectivorous sundews.

At least midge bites are nothing more than a temporary irritant, the main result being an itchy rash. But if you do get clobbered by them, that could mean hundreds of bites. Ever wondered why red deer head on up the mountains in the warmer months? It is partly to leave the midges behind, as midges generally don't go much higher than 500m. Also, they're not active in dry air conditions, or wind speeds of more than 6-7mph.

Ticks severely test my love of the natural world. These lone hunters of the blood-sucking world can cause us serious health issues. They're a relative of the spider family and appropriately have eight legs. There are 22 species found in Britain, though only one or two bite humans. The target of our collective hatred should be for the sheep tick.

Ticks find their prey by crawling to the tip of a leaf or blade of grass and waiting

for something to brush past. They also have the ability to detect victims by sensing vibrations, heat and, a bit like midges, by focusing in on the carbon dioxide animals breathe out. Once a tick has boarded its victim, it can spend hours crawling about the surface of feathers, fur or clothing, its legs being shaped like little hooks that enable them to cling on.

Now comes the bad part. Once the tick has found a fleshy, soft, humid part of the body, it'll bite. Research has shown that the majority of tick bites actually happen at night. That bite is from a beak-like structure called a rostrum that has a serrated edge. The tick keeps burrowing until half of its

WELCOME TO THE HORROR THAT IS THE WORLD OF MIDGES AND TICKS

head is buried, making it now extremely hard to safely remove. The saliva of a tick contains an anticoagulant, as feeding can take many hours. The tick's body expands from the tiny creature it was, to a fit-to-burrowing bag of blood. The flesh around the bite often swells as the tick is feeding.

Ticks have four stages in their lives; egg, larvae, nymph and adult. It's the nymph stage that we fear. After feeding, they drop off their prey and then have the energy to complete the transformation into adult form. The search for a mate then begins, as the whole cycle starts again. Ticks are active from late spring through to autumn.

Ticks can spread Lyme disease in humans. Take care when removing ticks (see [nhs.uk/conditions/lyme-disease](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/lyme-disease)) and seek medical attention if a 'bull's eye' shaped bruise develops around the bite. I messed up taking a tick out once and needed antibiotics to sort it. Recently, ticks have been found to be carrying the virus encephalitis in Britain. Though it is very rare, it reinforces the point that a routine check for ticks after a walk is an ever increasing necessity. **T**

Tom Bailey is an outdoor writer, nature expert and long-serving Trail magazine photographer.





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For the past four years **Trail** has worked in partnership with **Blackdog Outdoors** to provide free guided hillwalks for **Mountains for the Mind** supporters. This month we caught up with **Andy Higson**, the charity's director and founder, to find out more about the amazing work they do.

For people who don't know Blackdog Outdoors, can you explain the work you do?

"Blackdog Outdoors is a charity that was established to promote and encourage improved mental well-being through a reconnection with nature. There is a growing body of research and evidence that tells us to spend more time in a natural setting, because it is good for our mental health. However, not everyone has the confidence, awareness, or means to do this.

"We aim to help people overcome these constraints by providing outdoor recreational events, such as walking, climbing, and paddling, that are free to attend by those affected by poor mental health. These events are fully



Above: Blackdog Outdoors founder Andy Higson.

insured, delivered by qualified outdoor professionals, and supported by mental health first aiders to ensure a safe and supportive environment."

Blackdog is heading into its fifth year! How much have you grown, learned and changed as a team in that time?

"We've grown at an incredible rate. We delivered nine events in our first year (2019) and, last year, we delivered 148 events throughout mainland UK. Not bad for a small group of volunteers that work around full-time jobs.

"That level of growth doesn't come without change and learning. One of the key learnings was that small is better than big, when it comes to group sizes. Smaller groups can be less intimidating for the attendees, and the other benefit is that the level of conversation is better.

"We've also taken a look at our environmental impact. It is no longer sustainable for leaders to travel long distances to deliver events, so we've spent a lot of energy in identifying trusted leaders and instructors that can operate locally. We're in a much more mature place, as a charity, and are focused on continuing to deliver a quality service for many years to come."

What advice would you give someone wanting to attend a Blackdog event for the first time?

"Those first steps can be quite daunting, but we're here to support. We manage our events through a booking platform called JustGo and the leader details,





Group walks, climbing lessons and kayaking are just a few of the brilliant events Blackdog is hosting across the UK this summer. Which takes your fancy?



information for the event and description of the day are shared in advance to help ease anxieties. We appreciate, however, that people may have specific concerns. There's no such thing as a daft question, so get in touch with the team. We also have a community group page on Facebook where you can meet other people that have enjoyed and benefited from our events. Head on over to stay informed on our events, be inspired by the adventures of others, and meet like-minded people."

What Blackdog events and walks are you personally most excited about this summer?

"Good question! We have a host of amazing events planned for the summer, which can be found at blackdogoutdoors.co.uk/events. On a personal level, I'm really looking forward to the August walking event in Ogwen Valley – it's such an atmospheric location. I'm also hoping (with my wife's permission) to head to Ben Nevis as part of a longer break.

"Beyond that, the climbing events are always great fun, and I'm looking forward to following the progress of the 8 lucky people embarking on a 5-day paddle expedition along the Great Glen. What an adventure that will be!"

With your events being free for everyone to attend, how do you fund so many? And how can Trail readers help raise funds for such an inspirational charity?

"Fundraising is a real challenge as there are so many incredible charities applying for the same funding pots. While our management team offer their time voluntarily, there is still significant overhead cost in managing the charity (insurances, website hosting, social media management etc), not to mention the cost of running the individual events (leader payments and expenses for MHFA volunteers).

"We receive some modest grants to deliver specific programmes of events for groups and charities that support people recovering from addiction, and those with neuro-divergency or serious mental illness. The majority of our funding, however, comes through generous donations and fund-raising events.

"These donations are our lifeblood. If you're planning to do something amazing this year, whether that's walking up Snowdon, crushing the Yorkshire 3 Peaks, or bumbling along the West Highland Way, then why not do it as a fundraiser for us. You can find our charity details on GoFundMe and every penny raised will be used to support people through our events."

Book a Blackdog event

Here are some of this summer's highlights

- Group walk, **Cadair Idris**, north Wales, **Saturday 10 June**
- Group walk, **Ingleborough**, Yorkshire Dales, **Saturday 17 June**
- Paddle expedition, **Great Glen Canoe Trail**, Scotland, **Monday 17-21 July**
- Climbing event, **Carreg y Foel Gron**, north Wales, **Saturday 22 July**
- Mountain Skills Course, north Wales, **Saturday 29 July**
- Climbing event, **Peak District**, **Saturday 2 September**

For more info and to book, see blackdogoutdoors.co.uk/events

Find out how you can join our 17,000-strong community and support the cause at

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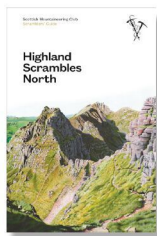
NORTHERN EXPOSURE

The great peaks of the **NORTH-WEST HIGHLANDS** are so plentiful that choosing one to climb can feel almost overwhelming. And if it's a knuckle-tightening scramble you're after, you may need a little extra guidance. Luckily, we know just the guy!

WORDS & PHOTOGRAPHY **IAN THOW**

T

he north-west Highlands of Scotland are the wildest and rockiest part of Britain, so unsurprisingly they have huge amounts of brilliant scrambling. The classic ridges of Liathach, An Teallach, Beinn Alligin and the Forcan Ridge of The Saddle are well known, but it is also crammed with unfrequented rock on wild and rugged peaks. If scrambling is your thing, then this is the place for you! With a new second edition of *Highland Scrambles North* available now, author Ian Thow takes a look at a few gems from his book that might just whet your appetite.



Stac Pollaidh, Assynt

SPIKY SUMMIT SCRAMBLE

Once you get north of Ullapool, the hills become more separated and even more eccentric. Pretty much every hill has at least one scramble on it somewhere, with the easy but exposed traverse of Sulven and the climbers' scrambles of Lurgainn Edge on Cul Beag and Pinnacle Ridge on Cul Mor being outstanding.

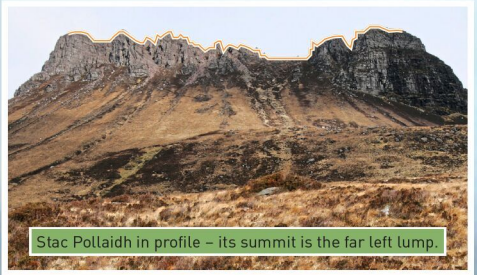
The best route, though, is on everybody's favourite mini-mountain, Stac Pollaidh. Crazy projecting pinnacles are arrayed along the summit spine like a badly disarranged Mohican haircut, and scrambling routes of various standards wind their way in and out of these so you can make the route any grade you fancy.

If you want to get to the highest summit, though, you have to pass one final unavoidable tower, climbed by a deep groove

on its left side. The move to get into this is given a climbing grade of Moderate, but agile hillwalkers often find it fine, as the hard move is at ground-level and for the rest you are enclosed in a deep slot so exposure is nil. Unusually, it's easier to climb down than up, though most do it on their backsides!

The vast choice of routes and the 'exploratory clambering' nature of things make Stac Pollaidh a good place to take adventurous kids. They will need watching, as there are drops around, but are likely to find it a wonderful and inspiring place. I first climbed it as a teenager, loved it, and have been back most years since, sometimes four or five times. Because there is a very good track as far as the saddle on the main ridge it's also a great place to watch a sunset as you can get down quickly afterwards, even in the semi-dark.





Stac Pollaidh in profile - its summit is the far left lump.



Carnan Cruithneachd, Kintail

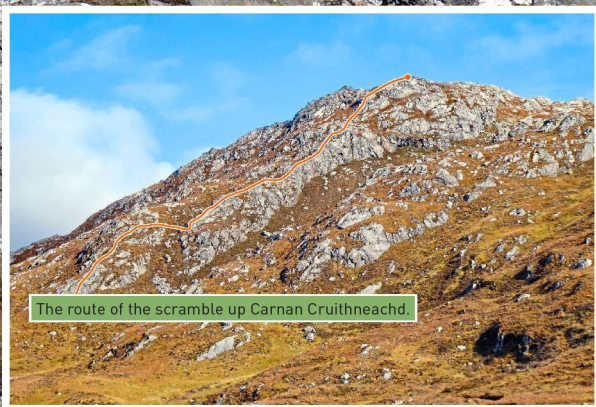
HIDDEN GEM

Kintail is a peak-bagger's paradise, full of shapely peaks with well-defined ridges, and on plenty of these you can start the day with a good scramble. The Forcan Ridge of The Saddle is the obvious classic, but a little-known gem can be found on Carnan Cruithneachd, a distinctive rocky peak which dominates Glen Elchaig above Loch Long. If the main road went that way it would be popular, but as it is you can't even see it from any major road route so it remains quiet.

Its south-west shoulder is an ideal route for those just getting into scrambling as it isn't particularly steep or intimidating and all difficulties can be avoided if necessary. If every challenge is taken directly it's a Grade 2, but if a couple of short sections are avoided it's only

Grade 1. Good paths lead up from Morvich to within only five minutes of the start of the scrambling, then 200m of easy-angled slabby ribs provide lots of easy fun, with some slightly steeper options if you want a bit more of a challenge.

The rock is lovely rough psammite (metamorphosed sandstone) with lots of beautiful swirly patterns in it and loads of useful holds. Above the main scrambling the interest continues as, although the ridge is now easy, walking the huge drop northwards into Glen Elchaig adds that frisson of excitement. The view is tremendous, especially from the higher west summit, a delightfully pointed perch.



The route of the scramble up Carnan Cruithneachd.

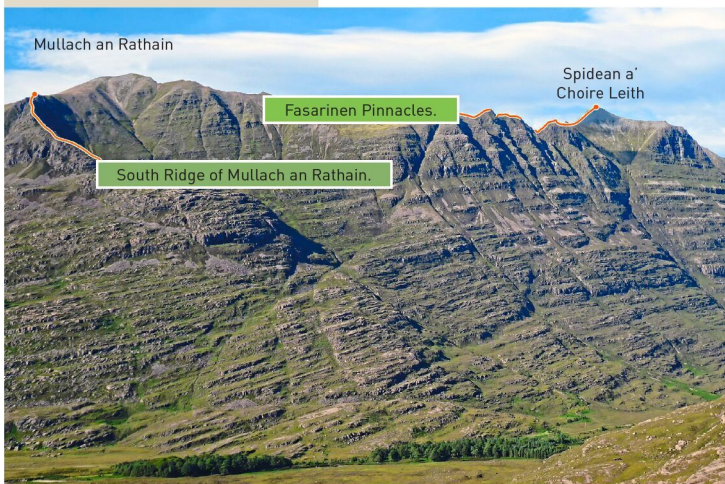
Liathach, Torridon

DODGE THE CROWDS

Further north, Torridon is a scrambler's heaven, with Liathach the jewel in the crown. The main ridge traverse is arguably the best known scramble in the north-west, but few people start it by doing the South Ridge of Mullach an Rathain. This adds another 200m of enjoyable scrambling to what is already a great day out.

It also means that you are doing the main Fasarinen Pinnacles west to east, so going up the best bits rather than down them, which is easier and far more fun. The Pinnacles are benchmark Grade 2 – not particularly difficult but often wildly exposed – and the South Ridge is of the same grade but nearer the top end of it, especially the awkward last little wall. This isn't exposed but the holds are smaller than you would like and it's slightly steeper than the rest of the route. You can avoid it on the right but it does provide a memorable climax.

Most of the ridge is much easier – the narrow arêtes having an atmospheric 'perched above the sea' feel which the main ridge lacks. It's less well travelled than the main ridge so there is the odd loose hold, but there is always another equally good one available, and the setting is tremendous.



SCRAMBLING GRADES

GRADE 1 Agile hillwalkers without a fear of heights should find these OK.

GRADE 2 Some awkward moves and some exposure, but usually not at the same time. A good grade for adventurous hillwalkers.

GRADE 3 Serious and usually exposed, may include technical moves that climbers will generally solo but most hillwalkers will want a rope for.

It may seem obvious but it's worth pointing out that everything gets a lot harder in bad weather!

Foinaven, Sutherland

KING IN THE NORTH

Right up at the north-west corner of the country is Foinaven, home to a complex ridge that sees few visitors, largely because it fails to make Munro height by three metres. It's often thought of as a quartzite mountain, and most of the summit ridge is indeed that, but the huge slabs on the north-east flank are gneiss and provide literally acres of great scrambling.

Linking together the North Face of Cnoc Duail, Left Hand Route on Coire Duail Slabs and Ganu Mor Slabs Direct is one of the finest scrambling days out in Britain, but at a sustained Grade 3 it's one for the competent and experienced. However, there is an easier version of it that gets you the atmosphere of the slabs with considerably less seriousness.

Start with the beautifully patterned slabs just left of the climbers' crag of Creag a' Mhadaidh. These look intimidating from below but have such great friction that you can walk up them largely with hands in pockets. After this, head leftwards to do Right Hand Route on Coire Duail Slabs, mostly easy but with some Grade



2 at the start and finish. From here you can cut across into the wonderful Coire Ghranda with its rock-cradled lochan.

Nothing man-made is visible from

here and it's a place that has remained pretty much unchanged since the ice melted 10,000 years ago. The 120m plate of Ganu Mor Slabs is just above, looking desperate from here! It's nowhere near as steep as it looks though, and the route straight up the middle is technically quite easy for Grade 3, although it is sustained and the lack of big ledges makes it serious.

For those less sure of things, however, tackling the right edge is a much better plan. This still has some delicate moves but you can easily walk off rightwards if things get too hairy. At the top of the slabs, steeper but more broken outcrops lead up to a shoulder, then a blocky quartzite ridge takes you to the summit. The view is magical; below you the knobbly gneiss country seems flat, strewn with a maze of lochans and backed by an arc of ocean with the Outer Hebrides and Orkney at each end, then inland there's a lifetime's worth of peaks to explore. From here, life seems good!



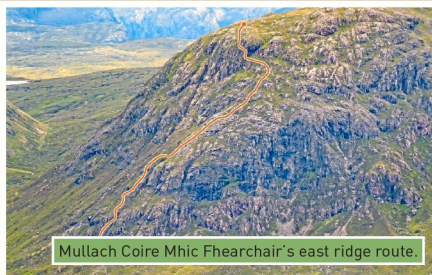
Route of the Ganu Mor Slabs scramble.

Mullach Coire Mhic Fhearchair, Fisherfield Forest

SHARP RIDGE SCRAMBLE

The Fisherfield Forest would be most people's choice as the wildest corner of the north-west, and it contains a clutch of highly prized Munros. The highest of these is Mullach Coire Mhic Fhearchair, which throws out a long ridge eastwards to provide alpine-feeling scrambling on a sharp ridge with a real feeling of remoteness. It also gives you the chance to do the two easternmost Fisherfield Munros in a day trip from the road, albeit in quite a long day.

It's technically easy (Grade 1) but with some exposure over the pinnacles, which are reminiscent of Bristly Ridge in Eryri's Glyders. Below them there is a good start up rough slabs, slightly harder (easy Grade 2) but with everything escapable if you need to. Just to the north there is a huge ramp of easy-angled quartzite slabs, really impressive from a distance but actually walking angle. They make an interesting descent, especially if you visit the quirky little knobble of Meallan an Laoigh perched above them. It's a big day out but a hugely rewarding one.



Mullach Coire Mhic Fhearchair's east ridge route.



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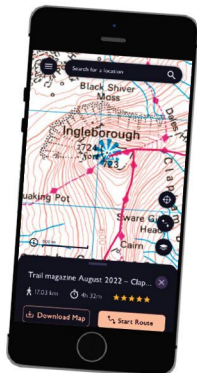


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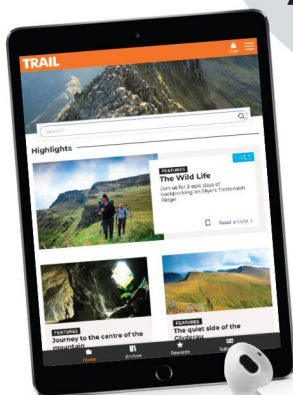


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TRAIL

LAKE DISTRICT



NEXT THE



From the bus stop you could be here: climbing Fairfield, with Cofa Pike and St Sunday Crag below your boots.

STOP: MOUNTAINS

Wainwright couldn't drive when he wrote his seven legendary **LAKE DISTRICT** guides, so we figured we don't need to either. Here's why it's worth ditching the car to explore the hills.

WORDS SARAH RYAN PHOTOGRAPHY TOM BAILEY

When you're a kid, buses are great. Double deckers especially. They come rumbling up from somewhere, wobble to a halt, people get off, people get on and they rumble off again somewhere else. The bus driver, to a two-year-old, might as well be an astronaut. Then you get older and the sense of discovery dissolves from the bus. Desire for efficiency, ease and autonomy rise up in its place. But really, what could be more efficient than one vehicle carrying tens of people? Easier than being carried to your destination? And autonomy? That's what the hills are for.

The Lake District – a little area, though tall – has been suffering from weight of traffic for years. Verges are churned up, car parks full, the A66 stock still again. Though rural, it gets 20 million visitors every year. That's roughly the entire population of Greater London, Greater Manchester, the West Midlands, West Yorkshire, Glasgow, Liverpool, Hampshire, Tyneside and Nottingham put together. Most of whom arrive and travel around by car. ▶

No wonder the hills are groaning. The residents and the visitors circling each other in the car parks are too.

Looking at maps and routes, we (photographer Tom and I) discovered that taking the bus could allow us to start and end in different places too, making it a real point-to-point journey. That end point could be a pub – and we could have a pint when we were there. I started to feel a glimmer of excitement.

We planned to start in Patterdale and end at the Kirkstone Pass Inn, climbing eight Wainwrights of the Eastern Fells on the way, with burly Fairfield the highest. By the morning of the walk, bag packed, sun shining, I found myself watching the road outside Windermere train station with anticipation. The bus was coming! And it was going to take us on an adventure. What I hadn't predicted was that the journey would be something of an adventure itself.

The journey

The route took us over Troutbeck and into the Kirkstone Pass: the highest tarmac mountain pass in the Lakes. The summit for the bus. I'd slung my bag down on a seat on the left but this side was all nearside slope and shielding trees. The window on the right looked over a

drystone wall to the broad green valley of Troutbeck. So as the bus ground down a gear and heaved forward, I scooted to the other side of the aisle.

Framed by the window, a grassy slope swept across to the lilting horizon of the Far Eastern fells: Yoke, Ill Bell and Froswick. Hills I'd never considered before now scrawled on my personal, mental map of the Lakes. The road turned away, crossed a high wide col, and climbed into the Kirkstone Pass. Back on the left, the waters of Windermere flashed briefly into view, and The Struggle – a narrow road too steep for the bus – came wavering up from Ambleside. Where it met the pass, the walls closed in.

Here, at the 455m point, the road crests the pass and enters a deep, narrow v-shaped trench. Red Screes rose on the left, so sheer and high I could barely take it in from the window; the crags of St Raven's Edge on the right. The pub flashed by on the right and we dipped into the confines of the descent. I plastered myself to the window.

There were drifts of grey-green slate, insurmountable cliffs, the young churning Kirkstone Beck. Where the sun caught the edges, they gleamed; where fissures scored the rock, shadows lay still, damp and dark. I gazed hard out the window, turned around and looked out the back into the retreating depths of Caiston Glen. Its beck came

Looking over to
Nethermost Pike on the
way up St Sunday Crag.



Taking in the scenery surrounding Middle Dodd on the bus route from Windermere to Patterdale.



down in flashes of white and I noticed, properly, High Hartsop Dodd's folded summit. This wasn't just passage, it was a tour.

By the time the bus juddered to a halt outside the Patterdale Hotel, I'd fallen into a kind of trance. I could have sat on that bus for hours watching the scenery pass by, like the dreamy images that flow through the mind before sleep. But we weren't just there to see hills – we were there to climb them.

The Wainwrights

The first was Arnison Crag – more truthfully, a promontory. A 433m bluff branching off from Birks, itself an offshoot of St Sunday Crag, with Fairfield the mighty parent of them all. We intended to follow them, in that order, before turning south-east across the broad undulating ridgeline to Red Screes, never once dropping below 519m.

Getting off the bus I had felt lethargic and heavy, but the crisp air stirred me into wakefulness. Steady to start then, to wake up the legs. Behind the hotel, we took the path through a copse, turning uphill through dense bracken. When the breath came hard in my chest, I stopped and turned. There was Ullswater: a blue-grey pool, its great snaking length shielded from view, and around it the

green, rough-hewn fells. My heart lifted and so, suddenly, did the energy in my legs. Up then to the outcrops of andesite and small jumbled cairn that mark the top.

Arnison Crag is charming. A rough but pretty little knoll, an exceptional viewpoint and we stopped to take it in. To the south-east were the hills we'd just travelled through and the distant wiggle of the road through the Kirkstone Pass. West were Hart Crag and Fairfield, more westerly still, our next stop, Birks. It's everything that Arnison is not: broad, flanked with low grass, dull.

We passed over that one quickly, straight to St Sunday Crag and on the way there crossed that mysterious boundary onto the open hill. That point at which the worldly cares and trappings of daily life fall away like loosened ropes. Thoughts don't crowd in anymore, they dissipate in the open sky.

We scooted up through the jutting rocks, briefly grasping some then leaving go, questing up and towards the sky. To the right was the deep plunge of Grisedale and the cliffs that dropped there, realm of Grade 3 scrambles at the easiest. And then the climb eased and we emerged onto the broad, scaly summit. The third Wainwright and first real hill of the day.

The ridges

A breeze lifted over the crest, that and my own breathing, the only sounds. A ridge connected this hill to Fairfield and the whole Helvellyn massif. That sat across from us, its ridges buried so deeply in shadow I could barely make out the detail of them. Cloud grazed the summit. Fairfield though, was wonderfully, mysteriously, clear.

The ground between is the kind of wide, stony brow that you can cross without paying particular attention. The sort of walking that allows you to take in the view. Nearer, and demanding of real attention though, was Cofa Pike. Not a Wainwright, not a hill, not on any major list, but wonderful in just the only way a scramble fin of rock can be. It looks intimidating but is easy; precipitous but is fine. You get a thrill of excitement with little real danger. It's a lot of fun. Looking back, we got St Sunday Crag at its most dramatic, the swell of it leaning to the west like a sail in the wind.

One last section of ridge and we were up on the dome of Fairfield, legs warmed up, gulping down wind. Everywhere, all around, were mountains: the Langdale Pikes; grand Bowfell, the Scafells, Crinkle Crag, Pike of Blisco and the mass of hills they rise among. Beyond them the horizon was the same grey, humped profile as the


clouds above, the distant hills as intangible as the sky.

Feeling limber, legs strengthened by the walk, hearts by the view, we left the summit for the rise and fall of the long ridge. There was a bus to catch. So it was over Hart Crag, with the wind and the sun drying the sweat on my face. Down a bit and up again to 792m Dove Crag. All the way we were carried by the view and the gentle rise and fall of the ridge, bouyed by the sun. This was sky walking at its best.

The final peak

Little Hart Crag, at 637m is diminutive in this company. Like Arnison at the start, it's a quiet,

characterful outcrop and was perhaps my favourite perch of the walk. We paused there for a while, tired legs kicking in the sun, snacked, drank, then got up again. Red Screes, the final peak of the day, was next. On the way, we crossed the head of Caiston Glen and I looked down, in the afternoon light, at the valley I'd gazed up at that morning from the bus. One last stern climb brought us up on the top of Red Screes, looking giddily down at the Kirkstone Pass. The east face of this hill flattens so abruptly, it's almost as if it crashed into the road. It gives an exhilarating experience of height.

At the bottom of the valley was the thin line of the road and the tiny block of the pub – our 



The backdrop of Dollywaggon Pike and the Helvellyn range jostle for attention while climbing Fairfield.

HOW TO DO IT

Get hold of a bus timetable and look at it alongside an OS map. The *2023 Lakes by Bus* guide has full timetable information and a map on the back page. Find it at tinyurl.com/lakesbybus

Search Google for bus stops. Not all of them show up on the route and it will give you an up-to-date and accurate start/end point.

Calculate your route timing and make sure you will realistically get to the bus stop in time to catch your bus. Remember to include time for breaks and things to go a little wrong. It's worth carrying some kind of payment in case they do.

If you're planning to stop at a pub or café, check their opening times too.

Sit back, relax, gaze out the window, don't miss your stop!

85% OF VISITORS ARRIVED
IN THE LAKE DISTRICT
BY CAR BEFORE THE
PANDEMIC AND THAT
NUMBER IS ESTIMATED TO HAVE RISEN

Feeling weary on the final summit of Red Screes, little did Sarah know that her restorative pint was a little further away than anticipated...



finishing block. We made a final stop beside the summit pool, and looked out west to the Scafell massif. The sun beat down, a chill wind raced up the pass and over the top, and it was time to go.

Down then, through the screes, steeply and carefully. This is exactly the place where things can go wrong, legs wobbly and mind wandering with fatigue. We picked our way down the loose path, hit the gentler, lower slopes and jogged the runout to the pub. People sat around the picnic tables, sunglasses on, backpacks off. None though, were nursing a pint.

The Kirkstone Inn, it turns out, was closed on Tuesdays (it's currently closed for good) and though the bus stop was still operating, the next one wouldn't arrive for another hour and a half. I'd love to say that this ended with a pint but it ends with a warning, or perhaps strong

recommendation. Perfect planning, as they say, prevents plonkers being stranded on a hill.

The beauty of the bus

There are so many good reasons to take the bus. You don't have to worry about where to park or how much it's going to cost. You don't have to drive – you can gaze out of the window or nap against your pack. You might meet people – fellow walkers are a cheerful and easily identifiable lot. And there's something to be said for diminishing the 'tyranny of choice'. The bus takes you somewhere and you do your best with that.

Then there's the effect on others. Roads are clear, the air fresh. Verges bloom with a mad array of plants and flowers. And by using the bus, you help keep it running. Your ticket isn't just a ticket, it's

a vote for good public transport. If you think this is a good idea and that services would be better improved, get the bus. If they aren't used, they won't run.

There are, of course, benefits to cars. They're convenient, comfy and reliable. Journey times tend to be shorter. You decide your destination and how you're going to get there. You can fill them with stuff. But all of those benefits are limited to the person in the car. When you have lots of people in lots of cars, things tend to get worse. It isn't a case, of course, of one or the other. But every car that comes off the road leaves a patch of clear, fresh air.

In the end, we walked back to Windermere. We did get a pint. It was cold and delicious, and I drank it while dangling my hot feet in the lake. Taking the bus did, in the end, make it more of an adventure – so did missing it. **T**



WORTH A STOP

Five big hills by bus (and the pubs that accompany them)

SKIDDAW

Bus X4

ROUTE From Keswick climb the little lookout of Latrigg, then turn and ascend the broad slopes to Little Man and Skiddaw's slatey summit. Veer south-west on the return to Carl Side and follow the glorious Longside Edge to Ullock Pike. Then stop at Ravenstone Manor for a glass of something fancy.

STATS 16km / 1125m

IF YOU'RE BASED IN...

Keswick, Penrith or Cockermouth.

BOWFELL

Bus 516

ROUTE From Dungeon Ghyll walk up Mickleden past Angle Tarn to Esk Hause, then turn south-west to Esk Pike and Bow Fell. Dip south to Crinkle Crag and over to Pike of Blisco then descend Wrynose Fell to Side Pike and drag your weary legs along the river to the Dungeon Ghyll pub.

STATS 20km / 1448m

IF YOU'RE BASED IN...

Kendal, Windermere or Ambleside.

CAT BELLS

Bus 77

ROUTE From the Cattle Grid at Hawse End, trek up the nose of Cat Bells to the charming summit, then continue to bulky Maiden Moor. Keep south on high ground to High Spy before turning west to ascend Dale Head. From here, follow the edges to Robinson then drop west to Buttermere and a big icy glass of lemonade.

STATS 14km / 1181m

IF YOU'RE BASED IN...

Keswick, Buttermere or Cockermouth.

HELVELLYN

Bus 508

ROUTE From Glenridding, ascend Birkhouse Moor and follow the spur across to Hole-in-the-Wall before picking up Striding Edge. After that joy, reach the summit and turn north-east to descend via Swirral Edge and Catstye Cam. Drop down to Glenridding Beck, the village and the pub.

STATS 13km / 927m

IF YOU'RE BASED IN...

Kendal, Windermere, Penrith or Pooley Bridge.

GREAT GABLE

Bus 77

ROUTE From Honister Slate Mine, climb Grey Knotts and Brandreth on the way to Green Gable. Stop here for the view before climbing Great Gable and crossing Sty Head to Sprinkling Tarn and Allen Crag. Then north to Glaramara and a homemade scone at Glaramara Hotel, Seatoller.

STATS 14.5km / 1127m

IF YOU'RE BASED IN...

Cockermouth, Keswick or Buttermere.



FASHIONABLY LATE

How do you get the **PEAK DISTRICT**'s favourite sunrise spot all to yourself? Simple – just get stuck in traffic and turn up late.

WORDS & PHOTOGRAPHY **TOM BAILEY**

Climbing the steps
on Back Tor in the
golden hour.



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The impressive and unstable south-east face of Mam Tor.

England's ever popular Peak District is the proud home of the Great Ridge. To anyone who doesn't know, it's situated near Edale, and is indeed, both a ridge and great. It's probably the most popular place in the Peak District and rightly so. But there is a way to have it (almost) to yourself. Set the alarm, and go early, because I'm going to let you in to a secret.

Everybody knows about getting up early to see the sunrise, and hill tops are the obvious place for that. Mam Tor, the highest point on the Great Ridge at 517m, is one such place, made even more perfect as a place to worship the sunrise by the fact that it's a 15-minute walk to the top from the highest of the parking spots.

So, on any day when there's a good forecast, particularly at times of the year when sunrise is at a more civilised hour, summits such as Mam Tor can be surprisingly busy, just like those same people's Insta accounts in the hours afterwards. But I've noticed something and it's this gem of information that I think us mountain walkers can benefit from – most of the people who go to see a sunrise then go home,

to a café for breakfast, or to work, or all three. Have you twigged it yet?

Yep, there are a few golden hours, after the sunrise club has 'done one', where the likes of you and I can walk in splendid isolation, before the first of the day walkers gets there. Here's what happened to me on just such a morning.

Slow start

In truth, I'd meant to get to Mam Tor's summit for sunrise, but I'd been delayed on the drive over. What should have been

a two-and-a-half hour journey turned in to a bit of an epic. Anyway, honesty is everything! Where was I? Oh yes, arriving at Mam Tor five minutes after sunrise.

On the path up, I encountered dozens of people coming down, after the buzz of seeing a glorious sunrise. The result was that when I stood at the summit marker, I had it all to myself. Not 10 minutes before that I'd have been jostling for space with the other sun worshippers (or should that be self worshippers? I'm sure not as many people used to do this kind of thing before social media, but I would say that, cause I'm an old fart).

It got better – not only was the sun still mouth-wateringly low in the sky, but the path ahead, leading along the length of the Great Ridge, was completely empty. Cognitive electrical connections in my brain fired up with a pre-digital revolution speed. I'd clearly recognised the significance of my discovery. Flushed with the excitement of my situation, I shunned the warm drink I'd promised myself I'd have at the top of Mam Tor, because I knew I had to have that ridge while it was ripe for the picking.





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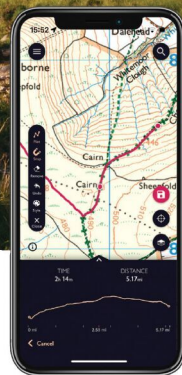


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SEE > BETTER PLACE

Almost getting the Great Ridge to himself, Tom heads towards Lose Hill.

Ridge raiding

Here's the next part of my plan: The Great Ridge, or the popular bit, isn't actually a long walk. It's this section of the ridge, from Mam Tor to Lose Hill, that I'd made the target of my early morning ramble, so as to be sure I walked it when the light was at its most tantalising and when there were fewer people about. I just didn't realise how empty the void immediately after sunrise would be. So instead of making the Great Ridge part of a much longer, more mountain-worthy walk, like the Edale Horseshoe, I intended to isolate it, walking out, then turning around and walking back.

I wanted to get to know the Great Ridge, as even though I'd been there many times,

I never felt like I'd really connected with it. The sun, low in the east, fully lit my east-facing face as I strode towards it. I could feel it light up for the second time minutes later, as a smile the width of the horizon beamed out from my more usually serious features. I think the best thing about being an experienced walker is having the ability, through that back catalogue of experiences, to know when something has the potential to be mind-blowing.

My mind was alive that morning, more than it's been for years. And I hadn't even had my usual coffee hit. Looking up into the fathomless blue of the sky, I saw a passenger jet scratching at the perfection of the scene. ▶



"SEEING TARMAC CRACKED
AND TILTED UP INTO
IMPOSSIBLE ANGLES IS
A HUMBLING REMINDER
THAT WE LIVE IN A VERY
STABLE, PRIVILEGED
PART OF THE WORLD"

The landslips on
Mam Tor's south-
east flanks.

Where were they going so early in the morning? I bet they saw the sunrise way before it got here. I don't care where that jet was going, even if it was to the most spectacular destination, I wouldn't have traded places with any of its passengers. As far as I was concerned, I was in the best place on Earth at that particular moment in time.

Capturing the moment

The flagstone path that leads down from Mam Tor looked, in those low beams of new sun, like some ancient Roman highway. I wouldn't have been surprised to pass a marching army at that moment, but I'm glad I didn't. Low sunlight accentuates the smallest of contours.

The prehistoric earthworks around the sacred peak of Mam Tor were a glaringly obvious link to a time when hills like this were important to their people in ways which we'll never fully know.

Those reasons are almost as ancient and as abstract as the buttery sunlight that illuminated everything before me. You can't reach out and touch a moment in time, even if it's happening right then and there. Moments are by their very definition fleeting – by the time you reach out for it, it's become another moment altogether. That's where learning to capture a moment in the mind is more important and more worthwhile than trying to steal the soul of it with a camera.

Walking in the hills gives us this by the bucket-load. We're lucky that way, but, my gosh, we have to earn it, don't we? After all, we have to climb mountains for it.

I wandered through the next couple of hours on my 'ribbon in the sky' (10 points for anyone who can tell me what song that line's from – without searching it up!), never asking how, or even wondering why. I was just utterly glad to be there. An old stone gatepost took on an elevated significance. I looked on it as if it were an ancient standing stone and peering through the hole carved into it, I saw Mam Tor luxuriating in the ever warming cloak of sunlight.

Bizarrely, the soil sections of the path along the ridge were riddled with small earthworms, thousands of them, and they all looked dead. Well, that or they have a secret fondness for sunbathing, which would be a dangerous habit when you think they run the obvious gauntlet of the 'early bird'. Maybe they saw safety in numbers? I'm sad to say, there were so



Climbing the south-east ridge of Mam Tor.

many of them I probably squashed a few inadvertently as I tried to avoid them. Apart from those worms, nature was definitely having a lay-in. As is always the case, two ravens did deign to put in an appearance. Clearly not interested in such small prey as worms, they made a bee-line for me, circling a safe distance away, watching me for the opportunity my presence on the ridge might create.

Time waits for no-one

By the time I'd made it to Lose Hill (my turn-around point) the lack of people was even stranger, as daylight was strong now, even though it was still before 9am. Through binoculars I could see that upright, ant-like forms were moving on the summit crown of Mam Tor. The day had definitely started over there.

To avoid meeting the masses coming the other way, I had one last plan. It was simple really – I opted to parallel the ridge crest path by taking the lower path on the south-east flank. This brought me back up to Hollins Cross, where I then descended to the foot of Mam Tor's east face. It's here that you can get up close and personal with the huge series of landslips that have wiped out the road that used to, until very recently, snake its way up past Mam Tor. This is live geology, a reminder that there are forces at work far greater than our own. It is, after all, called the Great Ridge. Seeing tarmac cracked and tilted up into impossible angles, is a humbling reminder that we live in a very stable, privileged part of the world.

The best part of being at the foot of Mam Tor's east face is that it gives the chance to climb the south-east

ridge. This allows a view over to the striated bands of shale that make up the obviously unstable east face. It's clear that significant parts of the mountain have eroded away since the prehistoric earthwork was created several thousand years ago.

Time waits for no-one and I finished by climbing nearly back up to Mam Tor's summit, shunning it and the crowds at the last minute, to descend back down to where I'd parked. I sat on the tail gate of the car, with my boots off and a cup of warm coffee at last in my hand. I felt like I'd got to know this part of 'the Peak', the one that everyone wants, only I'd done it on my own terms and been rewarded for my efforts. The only thing left for me to say is, don't tell a soul about the post-dawn window. I only told you because I know I can trust you... **T**

HOW TO WALK THE GREAT RIDGE

This is one of the most popular walking locations in the Peak District National Park, running for around 3km above the villages of Castleton and Hope. Unlike famous Lake District ridges such as Striding Edge and Sharp Edge, this is very much a straightforward hillwalk rather than a technical scramble requiring a head for heights. If you catch it on a good day, the views are extensive and impressive in all directions, particularly if you're walking towards Mam Tor and its mighty east face. If you want a good circular route, start from Castleton, work your way up towards Lose Hill, then head for Mam Tor via Hollins Cross. Unless you start early like Tom you're unlikely to get it to yourself, but that's a small price to pay for a day among such grand scenery.



SENSE OF ADVENTURE

Blind adventurer **Amar Latif** catches up with **Trail** to discuss trekking through a jungle in 40°C heat, overcoming adversity, and the best biscuit he's ever had.

WORDS SARAH RYAN

“Now, if I don't get outside for a matter of time, I feel it. I start to feel like I'm enclosed, restricted, like I'm missing something, you know?” says Amar Latif. The adventurer and TV host has travelled to over 100 countries and was recently elected President of the Ramblers Association. He's also registered blind.

Amar was just four years old when he was diagnosed with retinitis pigmentosa, an incurable genetic eye condition, and over the next 14 years his vision gradually deteriorated. He stopped being able to ride a bike and then to make out his family's faces. By the time he was 18, he had lost 95% of his vision.

“When you're blind it can be quite difficult to go out easily, so I feel it a lot, that restriction,” he says, “And that's why I'm passionate about unlocking the outdoors for other people.” The 48-year-old has dedicated most of his career to travel and getting outdoors: he walked the Yorkshire Three Peaks – 26 miles in 10 hours, trekked 220 miles coast to coast across Nicaragua,

and runs his own travel company pairing visually impaired with sighted travellers. And that's just a precis.

“My earliest experience of adventure would have been when I was about seven years old and I could still see,” he remembers. “We walked to Queen's Park in Glasgow. I remember entering the gates and suddenly seeing this expanse of grass with trees in the distance. The sky seemed so big and wide and open, and I could smell the grass. When you're a kid, everything seems so big. It felt incredible – like entering a new world.”

At 18, when he lost his sight, he retained that sense of adventure. He completed his third year of university in Canada and when he came back sought out companies that would help him to experience more of the world. Not being able to find one, he set up his own: Traveleyes. “We started putting on tours involving walking in different parts of the world, like Kas in Turkey and Andalucia in Spain,” he says. “It was only then that I actually started to fall in love with walking.” Now he's committed.





Amar in the Blue Mountains, Australia.

GETTING AWAY FROM IT ALL

Amar's company, **Traveleyes**, provides journeys for blind and partially sighted people, with discounted places for sighted guides. Trek in Bulgaria's Rila Mountains, along the Innsbruck Way in Austria, or complete the last 100km of the Camino de Santiago. There are other trips too, but these ones have hills. traveleyes-international.com

Looking the other way

"I can see light and dark," Amar explains. "I can see the sun shining. When I'm walking through trees and the sun is shining between the branches, I feel the heat and light on my face. I love that."

On his Yorkshire Three Peaks walk, he described the wind on his face and seeing different shades of the green rolling hills. For many sighted people, the view is one of the primary reasons they might give for enjoying a walk, but this, reckons Amar, can in some ways be a distraction from the landscape.

"Sight is the dominant sense," says Amar. "But being blind, I'm not distracted by it." Instead, the other senses come in. Amar uses a cane and sometimes walks with a sighted guide, but still has to pay particular attention to where and how he places his feet.

"As soon as I set out somewhere, I notice the ground underneath my feet. That's the first thing," he says. "Then, as I'm walking, I notice the soundscape. I pick up on whether it's an open space, like a hillside, or a woodland which sounds more muffled and closed. I'll hear the sounds close by: the birds, the wind whistling through the grass, and then the more distant sounds."

Like a far-reaching view, a distant soundscape can provoke an enormous feeling of space. "I long to go places that are really quiet, and they can be



Helen and Amar on the Mount Toubkal climb in Morocco.

"AS SOON AS I SET OFF, I NOTICE THE GROUND UNDERNEATH MY FEET. THEN I NOTICE THE SOUNDSCAPE"



hard to find," he says. "You can often hear a road or cars in the background. But if I'm lucky, I'll just hear the distant sounds of the ocean."

Ground feel, temperature, humidity and sound all help to build a sense of place. Whether it's a woodland, beach, low gentle hills or high mountain tops. "Then there's the different smells," he says. "The sheep, the cattle, the scent of grass... These are all inputs that help me to create an incredible multi-dimensional sensory experience."

"When I'm with a sighted person, I'll ask them to describe in detail what they can see, and as they're describing it, I'll draw it out on a clean sheet of paper in my mind. I end up with a very vivid idea of what's around me. It lifts me up, and

Amar (centre) at the iconic Machu Picchu in Peru.



it changes my mood.”

What he’s describing sounds similar to the practice of mindfulness, paying careful attention to your experience and I wonder if it changes the experience for his guides too.


“When someone describes something to you, it’s like reading a book versus watching the film,” he says. “People who can see are watching the film but if you’re blind, you’re reading the book – and we all know that the book is often better!”

Having a vision

Listening to Amar talk now, he’s warm, inquisitive and enthusiastic, but that attitude came with some difficulty, and only after the grief of losing his sight.

A period of sadness accompanied part of his teenage years, as his peers learned to drive and explored the freedoms of young adulthood while his own freedoms seemingly diminished.

But this, he decided, was not how he wanted to live his life. “I developed this mentality that basically says, ‘no matter what challenge comes your way, if you have a positive mindset, you can not only overcome it, you can create something beautiful,’” he says. It’s a mindset that has channelled him across countries and into an enormously successful career.

It’s also been tested, perhaps most seriously in the jungles and mountains of Nicaragua, Central America. The journey, as part of a BBC series, *Beyond Boundaries*, saw 11 disabled people attempt to cross 



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the country, from the Atlantic to the Pacific Coast.

"I hadn't done any major walks back then," he recalls. "And we had to walk through dense tropical jungles, across a shark-infested lake and up an active volcano to make it to the finishing line." Scaling 1610m (5280ft) Volcán Concepción required Amar to traverse a narrow ridge with sheer drops on either side, following terrifying instructions from his sighted guides like, 'Don't go two inches to the right because there's a 1000ft drop – and the same on your left.'

"In that, what I learnt was, it didn't matter how fit you were, it all came down to mental resilience," he says. "I was pushing a wheelchair through the jungle in 40°C heat. I was exhausted and I wanted to give up every single day.

"But there were real moments of beauty too. It was my first time properly camping, sleeping in hammocks, bathing in the rivers... it gave me a real taste of the outdoors. The jungle at night just



Amar with Sarah Pascoe, in BBC Two's *Travelling Blind*, in which they explored Istanbul and the surrounding area together.

Amar hiking in Oman.



comes alive. You hear noises in 3D, like nature's on surround sound, and I loved it. Some other people were frightened, because it's dark and noisy, but I was intrigued. I was listening to every little sound."

Crossing a country presented plenty of challenges, but in 2020 he faced quite another: "I couldn't go out for a walk because people were isolating," he says. "So I had the idea to get a friend to guide me on a video call. I'd strap my phone to my chest, put my earphones in, and off I went to my local woods.

"Friends from all over the world were guiding me, saying 'left a bit, right a bit!'. They would describe the surroundings and give me prompts, like reaching down to feel a patch of bluebells. I was like, 'Oh my God! I'm blind and I'm on my own, there's nobody around me!' It felt incredible."

The view from here

Exploring the world on foot – and through all the other senses – is something Amar is keen to help others people do too, through his travel company *Traveleyes*, which takes blind and sighted travellers to destinations around the world, and now as President of the Ramblers.

"I think I've got a unique opportunity to inspire people and help them realise that if they do challenge themselves, they can change their whole mindset," he says. "I can't see what's around me but I'm so curious, and what I've found is that when you really start to engage with the world around you it becomes alive." **T**



IN SLOVENIA


In a world full of hustle and hassle, it's comforting to know that there are places that exist at a gentler pace, where nature is revered above technology and the landscape is something to be cherished rather than exploited. What's not to love about **SLOVENIA**?

WORDS & PHOTOGRAPHY **BEN WEEKS**



On Triglav's cable-protected summit ridge, with the hills and forest of Slovenia's spectacular natural beauty laid out below.

WITH TRIGLAV

My love affair with the petite Central European country began as soon as the plane broke the clouds and started its descent to Ljubljana. Slovenia is small – smaller than Wales – with a population of just 2.1 million (compared to Wales' 3.1 million). It's a heavily forested country; around 60% of its land is covered in trees. These forests are home to wolves and bears, and looking out of the plane window as it neared the capital it was easy to imagine them stalking through the vast expanse of dense green below. But my main reason for heading to Slovenia lay above the forests. Slovenia is also a mountainous country. The greatest cluster of them gathers in the north-west corner of the country: the Julian Alps. King of these peaks, sitting at the centre of Slovenia's only national park – a park that bears its name – is Triglav. 





If there's another country that holds its highest peak in such great esteem, that has made a mountain such an integral part of its culture, I don't know of it. Triglav is depicted on Slovenia's coat of arms, which in turn appears on its national flag. During WWII, Triglav was the symbol of the Liberation Front of the Slovene Nation; the distinctive three-pronged caps worn by partisans were known as triglavkas. The mountain features on the Slovene 50 cent coin. And in 1991, former president Milan Kučan stated that: "It is a duty of every Slovenian person to climb Triglav at least once in their lifetime." Although a personal opinion rather than an act of legislation, it's something that Slovenes have taken to heart.

My guide, Mitje Kovacic of BricAlp guiding, collected me from my hotel beside Lake Bohinj and drove us towards the mountains. En route we stopped in one of many picturesque villages so Mitje could pick up some coffee and chocolate

"for the girls in the hut." Curious. As the car climbed through the lush forest that surrounds the mountain, we passed people heading into the trees with wicker baskets slung over their arms. "They are foraging for mushrooms," Mitje explained. "You can only pick one basket a day. All the locals will keep a basket in their car." Sure enough, when Mitje opened the boot of his car in the parking area at Pokljuka, tucked in next to his rucksack was a round-bottomed wicker basket.

The Pokljuka Plateau is a popular start point for climbing Triglav. There are many options, from the steep via ferrata routes on the mountain's north face, to the long multi-day approach from the south-west through the Seven Lakes Valley, all offering something different. The Pokljuka Plateau route from the south-east is one of the shorter options, albeit not the easiest, but it offers a mix of terrain and a variety of scenery – all of it gob-smackingly incredible.

We climbed through the dappled forest

that had already become so familiar, the scent of spruce heavy in the air. Occasional breaks revealed more of the mountain scenery, with distant slopes equally carpeted in trees. But soon the trees began to thin and the trail to level as it contoured around the slopes, rather than climbing them. Passing above the idyllic mountain pastureland of Planina Konjsica, with its small huddle of typically alpine buildings, the views opened up as the pale rock path began to climb once more. The landscape is typically limestone, albeit more vegetated than we're used to in the UK. Imagine the Yorkshire Dales and the White Peak had a child and raised it on Im-Bru, then add a generous sprinkling of juniper and a smattering of spruce and you're almost there.

The Jezerce plateau is a grass blanketed, flat-bottomed hollow set amongst and sheltered by lofty limestone towers, with an improbably perfect freshwater stream running through it. If wild camping were permitted in Triglav

Refueling at the Vodnik Dom Hut.

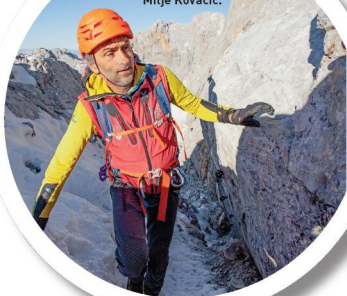


Slovenia's forests are as beautiful as its mountains.



One of the 'girls' at the heart of the Dom Planika Hut.

Slovenian mountain guide extraordinaire, Mitje Kovacic.



National Park, this would be the jackpot. A loose, steepening trail climbed up and out of it, cresting a ridge between the bulk of a mountain and a satellite peak. This was the Studorski Preval Ridge, strung like a slackline between the mass of Veliki Draški vrh and the small but handsome outlier Ablanca. The views that greeted us on the opposite side of

the ridge were even greater than anything that had gone before, stretching over jade valleys to the distant peaks of the south-western Julian Alps ("They're some of my favourite mountains," Mitje told me). The landscape here suggested that the Dales and the Peaks might have put aside the Irr-Bru and pumped their offspring full of steroids and protein shakes. And it was about to get even better.

The path continued, contouring around the sun-soaked southern slopes of Tosc, narrowing in places to little more than a ledge below steep cliffs with brightly coloured signs warning of the potential for rockfall. As the trail turned north, bigger, higher and more spectacular looking peaks rose into view. They no longer bore any resemblance to any relation of any of England's limestone scenery. Instead, what I stared at now appeared to be the love child of the Italian Dolomites and Spain's Picos de Europa; towering limestone giants with teeth and claws. And then, the biggest of them all, a three-headed behemoth more muscular and bolder than anything else; Triglav, and it was beautiful.

A MOUNTAIN UNDER PRESSURE

It's the nation's most popular peak, a focus point for mountain tourism. The vast number of visitors is causing issues with erosion, littering, and irresponsible behaviour. The mountain sits within an increasingly busy national park that is struggling to balance the need for a thriving tourist industry with environmental sustainability, and for which car use and parking is beginning to create problems.

Sound familiar? Yes, we could be talking about Yr Wyddfa, but Slovenia's Triglav is vulnerable to all the same pressures. Here's how you can enjoy this magnificent peak while minimising your impact and making a positive contribution.

USE PUBLIC TRANSPORT:

The buses and trains are surprisingly low-cost, and there are bike hire options within the park.

HIRE A GUIDE: Even if you're a capable mountaineer, a guide will point out things you might miss, give you a greater insight into Triglav and Slovenia, and you'll be contributing to the park's economy.

TAKE YOUR TIME: You could rush up and down Triglav, but what a waste. Take your time, consider one of the longer multi-day routes, and enjoy a more relaxed experience.

STAY IN HUTS: Not only are you again contributing to the economy, but you'll spend more time on the mountain, see more of it, and meet different people.

GIVE TRIGLAV SOME SPACE: There's a lot more to the Julian Alps than Triglav, and the Juliana Trail is a great place to start – see the panel on page 58 for more info...

Find out more about Triglav National Park at tnp.si



We stopped at Vodnik Dom Hut for something to eat (ričet, a tasty and highly restorative Slovenian stew of barley, vegetables, and smoked pork), and to enjoy being in the mountains. There are many huts dotted around Triglav, offering a place to stay overnight or simply rest for a while to refuel and replenish. And as we left Vodnik Dom, we could see our day's destination high above us, tucked below the highest summit slopes of Triglav. The Dom Planika Hut.

Between the two huts the terrain became more mountainous. Steel cables protected some of the more exposed sections, and the bulk of Triglav grew above with each forward step. We passed through pockets of wildflower meadow, a recent but mostly departed covering of snow having subdued but not entirely killed off the edelweiss. Except it wasn't edelweiss; the Slovenian word is Planika, and it's after this delicate mountain flower that the Dom Planika Hut is named.

This mountain refuge sits at 2401m, with Triglav's remaining 463m of steep limestone rock looming over it; the summit feels almost within touching distance. The hut itself is too big to be accurately called a 'hut'. It's some four storeys tall, and there's an additional dorm building next to it. The toilet block sits outside and is possibly the most fabulously located facility of its kind on the planet. Mitje headed straight into the main building while I waited outside, watching as other hikers converged from various trails. A short time later Mitje reappeared. "Come and meet the girls!"

The 'girls' turned out to be three matronly nannas with big smiles and bigger aprons. They split their year between the farms below and working in the hut where they run the kitchen. They are the heart of Dom Planika. With his gift of coffee and chocolate, Mitje had bought us VIP seats for dinner – a table in the corner of the kitchen, the warmest room in



“IT IS A DUTY OF EVERY
SLOVENIAN PERSON TO
CLIMB TRIGLAV AT LEAST
ONCE IN THEIR LIFETIME”

The Dom Planika Hut,
set high above the
clouds on the upper
slopes of Triglav.



“IT LOOKS A LOT LIKE THE ROCKET FROM *BUTTON MOON*, BUT ITS SYMBOLISM IS HUGEY IMPORTANT”

the building. After eating we re-joined the main dining area, chatting to the other guests. Some were planning to summit in the morning, others were on their way down, all had fascinating stories to share. Outside, the sun had set, the stars had begun to pierce the sky, the temperature had plummeted, and the distant lights of Slovenia's low grounds shone brightly below.

If the evening before had been a delight, the morning was exquisite. Sunrises are rarely so magnificent as when seen from a mountain, and when that mountain is the highest in a country as beautiful as Slovenia, the unveiling of the dawn is akin to a spiritual awakening. We began our ascent to the summit early. Some of the steeper or more exposed sections of the route to the top are

protected by cable and aided by metal stemples, so we'd left the hut with harnesses on and via ferrata leashes attached. In the end, they weren't needed – simply using the cable as an occasional handrail was enough. But that final 400+ metres to Triglav's summit proved to be some of the most incredible mountain scenery I've ever climbed.

The initial ascent from Dom Planika was steep, a broken wall negotiated through narrow ledges and snaking paths. But soon it joined the ridge above, meeting the trail from the Kredarica Hut out to the east. The ridge narrowed and climbed, rising to and dropping from a series of false summits. Protected by cable, these narrowest arêtes – with plunging drops to either side – were exactly the kind of exhilarating mountaineering many of us crave; safely manageable but exposed enough to get the heart thumping. Combined with a sapphire sky, crystal clarity in the air, and enough of a snow smattering to make it feel like a truly high mountain, it was perfection. When the Aljaž Tower appeared on the skyline, marking the 2864m summit of Triglav, I was almost disappointed. I could have climbed that ridge all day.

The Aljaž Tower was built in 1895 by Jakob Aljaž, a priest who had purchased the summit of the mountain for 1 Austro-Hungarian gulden – roughly £200 in today's money. It looks a lot like the rocket from *Button Moon*, but its symbolism is hugely important. It was erected to reaffirm Triglav as a symbol of Slovenian identity, a purpose it still serves today. The tower is hollow and can be used as a shelter at a push, but more commonly entering through its curving metal door is the final step to becoming a 'true Slovene'. Customarily, this is accompanied by being spanked on the behind with a rope as you enter. But Mitje didn't offer, and I didn't ask.

It probably goes without saying, but the view from the top of Triglav was astounding. Most of Slovenia (including its modest 47km of coastline on the Adriatic Sea) could be pointed out from the summit, and the views extended into its neighbouring countries: Italy, Austria, and Croatia. Clouds gathered densely in the valleys below the mountains, while higher wisps brushed the distant tops. The pale rock of the limestone, the dense green of the forests, the white dashes of snow and that impossibly blue sky saturated the panorama with colour. The cold air pricked the senses, and bar the odd whispers of awe from other summiteers, there was almost silence. The mountains of the world are full of special places, and Triglav's summit is certainly one of them.

That evening, as I returned to my hotel tired but fulfilled, the receptionist asked where I'd been. "Triglav!" I exclaimed proudly. The smile on her face was a genuine one. "Congratulations! Now you are Slovenian!" Sadly, and as much as I'd love an EU passport, I don't think that's legally binding. But if nothing else, I will always carry something of Slovenia in my heart. **T**

THE JULIANA TRAIL

This epic 267km trail is a superb way to see more of the mountains of Slovenia. Created to spread the effect of tourists more evenly across Triglav National Park, including visiting some quiet, hidden valleys and villages that would previously have gone unseen, the trail circumnavigates the Triglav National Park, even wandering out of Slovenia and into Italy on its north-western section.

Taking in alpine pastures, view-soaked mountain passes, historic country borders, expansive valleys, turquoise rivers, bejewelled

waterfalls, and stunning medieval towns (including Radovljica, home to what might be the best chocolate shop in the world), there's something for everyone. And if you don't want to walk the 166 miles all in one go, the trail can be broken down into separate sections and stages linked by public transport and assisted by digital mapping.

Visit julian-alps.com for more information and to find out how the official Julian Alps Booking Center can help you create your perfect tailor-made Julian Alps experience.





The Aljaž Tower, symbol and summit of a nation.



Spectacular scenery fills every window.

The incredible limestone scenery of the Julian Alps, with Triglav dominating the skyline.



HILL HACKS

SKILLS, TIPS & TRICKS TO GET YOU HIKING LIKE A PRO

HOW TO

MAKE UPHILLS PAINLESS



DO adjust your pack. Ensure it fits snugly against your back with most of the weight through your hips. Tighten the compression straps and adjust the load lifter straps on the shoulders to stabilise the bag and stop it pulling backwards.

DO start slow. Aim for a steady plod at a conversational pace. Starting off fast can deplete glycogen (glucose) reserves, making the higher portion of the hill much harder.

DO take baby steps. Small steps are more efficient than large ones so, where possible, tiptoe uphill. This is even more important when you're carrying a heavy pack.

DO pick your route. Check the map and survey the slope. Where are the steepest sections? Where are the flatter, easier sections? Zigzagging uphill can take the burn out of the climb but paths are frequently more efficient.

DO lean in. Lean towards the slope slightly as you climb but keep your back straight, your torso over your hips and your chest open so you can gulp in air. Clasp your hands behind your back can help with this and maintaining a relaxed pace.

DO train your hill fitness. Running up hills is the most direct way to train. Hill repetitions, stairs and certain gym machines, like a treadmill set at a high gradient, all help.

DON'T just wait for the slowest of your party to catch up if you're ahead. Give them time for a breather when they rejoin the group too.

DON'T forget your poles. Using poles aids stability which preserves energy, and transfers the load of a heavy pack more evenly through your body. Adjust them to a length which is comfortable to lift and place in front of you – generally slightly shorter than on the flat.

KNOWLEDGE

ADVICE FROM MOUNTAIN RESCUE COVER UP

Layers and spare clothes are just as important in the summer months as in the winter, but they're more about coverage than warmth. Keeping a long-sleeved linen shirt or thin thermal in your sack means that you can protect your arms and something to cover the sides and back of your neck could save on painful sunburn too.



HOW TO SPOT AN:

ADDER *VIPERA BERUS*

SIZE: 45-60cm long, weighing 50-100g. Females are typically larger and longer than males.

ABOUT: The base colour can vary from grey to reddish-brown or greenish-yellow but all have a distinctive zigzag pattern down the spine with an arrow pointing forward over the brow. This is Britain's only venomous snake and you're most likely to spot one basking on a quiet path or rock on a warm, sunny day.

YOUR EXPERTS



Sarah Ryan

Outdoor writer and qualified Mountain Leader



Ben Weeks

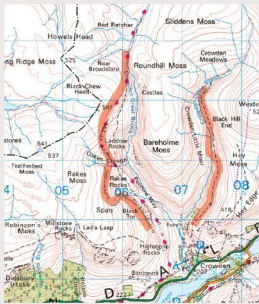
Trail's gear editor



Rob Johnson MIC

International expedition leader and mountain instructor

A-Z NAVIGATION HANDRAILING



This is an incredibly useful technique which can help you navigate accurately across large areas. It means simply following an easily identifiable linear feature across a landscape. This could be an escarpment, an edge, a ridge, a river or even a road. Features to be aware of are those which can change. Forestry can be cut down and fences moved. If you're using these features, check them regularly against the map to make sure they still match.

7mph the maximum wind speed a midge can tolerate

[HOW TO TAKE GREAT PHOTOS]

On bright sunny days

FIRST: Find the right angle.

Usually this means getting the sun behind you so you're not shooting directly into the brightest light. But if you're photographing a person, a side angle so they aren't squinting into the sun, might be better.

THEN: Adjust the exposure for the sky, not the ground. It's easier to recover detail from a dark area of a photograph than a scorched one.

NEXT: Try using the flash to

moderate harsh shadows. This works best when you're shooting close to someone or something, about 3-4m distance, maximum.

FINALLY: Think of ways high contrast can enhance your photograph and create drama. Hill landscapes where high, jagged ridgelines or boulder outcrops cast deep shadows onto nearby slopes present plenty of opportunity.

[WHAT'S IN A NAME?]

Slioch: The Spear, from the Gaelic, though the classic view from Loch Maree is much more of a buttress. Pronounced 'sleeuch'.

■ PUB QUIZ

- A: What is the smallest Munro?
- B: Which mountain is said to send you mad or turn you into a poet if you spend a night on its summit?
- C: What's the most northerly pub in the UK?

- A: Ben Vane, at 914m
- B: Ca' d'Ar' Idris
- C: Baita Light, Shetland



HOW TO CLIMB...

BRISTLY RIDGE

ASCENT 276m, from Bwlch Tryfan to the head of the ridge

DISTANCE 560m

ROUTE

From Bwlch Tryfan, this classic Grade 1 scramble climbs a spine of rock to Glyder Fach's summit plateau. It makes a spectacular enchainment following an ascent of Tryfan's North Ridge. The Bochlwyd horseshoe then drops down Y Gribin ridge to the llyn.

TIME TO ALLOW

For the ridge itself, it's wise to allow at least an hour but that doesn't account for the walk in and the descent. This is half a day at its most straightforward, but really you want to allow a good six hours.

PERFECT IF

You're up early enough on a sunny day to beat the crowds and have already cut your teeth (or, more realistically, grazed your fingers) on a similar Grade 1 scramble.

KIT TO BRING

The standard day kit with layers, water and sugary snacks. A guidebook, such as *North Wales Scrambles* by Garry Smith, is especially helpful for locating the starting gully.

SPECIFIC HAZARDS

The crest of the ridge is attained via Sinister (meaning left, not gruesome) Gully but there are two other similar gullies, both highly eroded at the top end and prone to rockfall. Look for a pro of rock overhanging the gully about halfway up to confirm.

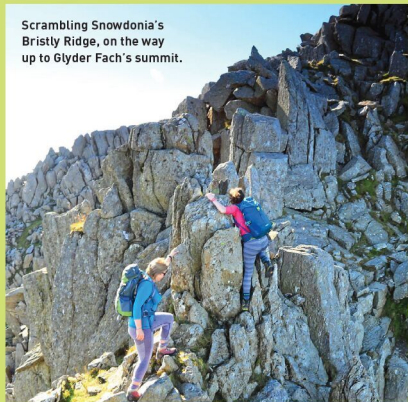
HOW TO PREP

Find a thorough route description and read it through beforehand, making a note of any significant navigational points (like the aforementioned gully). Then get an early night and an early start if you want to experience the ridge in relative solitude. If you haven't tackled a scramble like this before, nearby Moel Siabod provides a good Grade 0.5 introduction.

WORTH IT FOR

A thrilling climb through pinnacles and gullies to Glyder Fach's thornily crowned summit and heart-ticking views across Eryri from the top.

Scrambling Snowdonia's Bristly Ridge, on the way up to Glyder Fach's summit.



TOM BALLEE

10 TIPS FOR CANOE CAMPING

Canoe camping involves a totally different mindset to travelling by foot, thanks to the ability to take your creature comforts with you, and allows you to access hidden bays, secluded islands and quieter shores. Here's what you need to know.

HOW TO GET STARTED

The most important thing you'll need are some basic skills in manoeuvring the craft. If you haven't paddled before, this most likely means you'll need some expert tuition covering paddle strokes, rescue skills and capsize drills. We strongly recommend not paddling alone, so you'll probably want to take a buddy along too.

SKILLED UP AND READY?

Here are ten things you need to know when planning a canoe camp adventure...

1 Check the weather forecast and water levels before setting off. Canoes are quite dramatically affected by wind direction and strength. We strongly recommend having a Plan A and a Plan B.

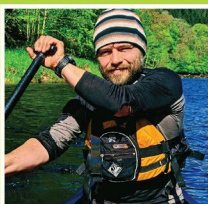
2 We would really recommend synthetic sleeping bags over down, as these handle the potentially damp conditions much more effectively.

3 Specialist paddling clothing just isn't





OUR EXPERT



Tom Sargeant is a mountain leader, rock-climbing instructor, canoe coach, sailing instructor and the founder of North Star Adventure, which runs skills weekends to teach you the skills to plan and undertake your own canoe journeys. Check out northstaradventure.co.uk/expeditions



needed when starting out. We always recommend people dress in pretty much the same clothing they'd wear on the hill for the given environment and weather conditions.

4 Canoes allow a few more luxuries to be taken along. Perhaps sneak a bottle of wine into your pack or maybe a folding chair for extra comfort in camp.

5 Dry-bags are much easier to pack into awkward spaces (keep an eye out in Aldi for

some bargains!). Make sure these are securely fastened to your canoe, so you don't lose anything in the event of a capsizing.

6 We love our Kelly Kettles for boiling water for endless cups of tea. These are specially designed to burn whatever scraps of twigs, cones or dry grass you find around you.

7 We take our raised fire-pit to ensure we leave no trace on our

wild camps.

Take some dry kindling with you to help get your fire started.

8 No-one likes talking about it, but if you get caught short, wild toilets should be dug using a trowel. Dig at least 15cm deep and 30m away from the nearest water course, path or building. Of course, this isn't always possible, so bagging it and binning it is the safe and responsible option.

9 Tarps are fantastic pieces of kit that can keep a group sheltered from the elements. Learn how to improvise poles with your canoe and paddles where there are no trees to suspend one from.

10 Finally, our top tip is to always tie your canoe up at the end of the day or drag it well away from the waterline. Water levels can dramatically change overnight and you do not want to find yourself stranded the next morning!

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GEAR

NEW RELEASES | TESTS | EXPERT ADVICE

8 pairs of
**MOUNTAIN-READY
SHOES** go
head to head
p76

BEST BIVVIES
for hill-top
wild camps this
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p75

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top-scoring
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DAYPACKS**
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SET YOURSELF UP FOR **SUMMER**

NEW INOV-8 BOOTS - WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW P66 | BEST SUMMER DAYPACKS P68
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Insider

THE LATEST INNOVATIONS IN OUTDOOR KIT

The second coming

inov-8s new 'V2' ROCLITE hiking footwear includes an updated version of the PRO G 400 – a boot with which we 'have previous'. But what are the updates, and how has the boot been improved?

Back in 2020 we tested the inov-8 ROCKLITE PRO G 400 GTX (a catchy name, but from here on in we'll simply call it the PRO G 400) on a tough trek between Bethesda and Capel Curig in Eryri. The route took us up onto and across the entire Glyderau mountain range, covered 24km and featured, in no particular order, off-path heather bashing, rough scree slopes, abrasive boulder fields, and soft, soggy bog. Quite a test.

The PRO G 400 performed well. It was light, comfy, super grippy, and entirely waterproof. However, on some of the rougher ground we had concerns about the robustness of the upper. Or rather, the lack of it. The boots felt slightly vulnerable when wading through heather or scuffing down scree and, although we loved the comfort they offered, we'd have been reluctant to expose them to similar terrain again.

Fast-forward nearly three years to now, and a new PRO G 400 has made an appearance – the V2 or 'Version 2' boot.

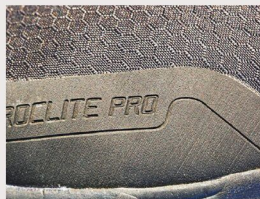
This next generation boot has built on the superb foundations laid by the original, but with some significant updates that inov-8 tells us elevate its performance above that of its predecessor and address some of that boot's weaker points. We've only worn these boots for a few months, but the early signs are good. The PRO G 400 V2 has lost none of its comfort, is still just as lightweight and nimble, yet feels tougher and better able to handle the rougher side of the mountains. So, let's take a look at the key features.



5 THINGS YOU NEED TO KNOW

■ MORE DURABLE UPPER

Our only real concern with the PRO G 400 has been addressed with the V2 boot. The upper now features a tighter weave, which not only makes it 40% stronger but also offers better protection to the Gore-Tex XCR (Extended Comfort Range) membrane underneath.



■ EXTRA PROTECTION

The toe bumper at the front of the boot has been slightly extended, providing extra protection to both the upper and your feet within it. A flexible rockplate protects the underfoot from sharp objects or debris without seeming to reduce flexibility or feel.

■ IMPROVED COMFORT

The original PRO G 400 was already incredibly comfortable, but by introducing a superior wraparound heel-lock system, paired with a heel-cupped footbed and a Lycra padded ankle cuff, Inov-8 has upped comfort levels even further, and increased support and stability.



■ ENERGY BOOST

The new POWERFLOW midsole serves two important purposes. Firstly, the cushioning enhances comfort on a range of terrains, enabling your feet to gobble up the miles. Secondly, the foam delivers energy return with every stride, making life easier on your legs.



■ GRAPHENE GRIP

Like much of Inov-8's award-winning range of footwear, the new V2 boot continues to make use of graphene – the world's strongest material. The graphene-infused rubber outsole features 6mm lugs for grip and will last many more miles than non-graphene alternatives.

SERIOUS STUFF

INOV-8 ROCLITE

PRO G 400 GTX V2

■ PRICE £210

■ MEN'S SIZES 6-14

(including half-sizes from 6-12)

■ WOMEN'S SIZES 4-8.5

(including half sizes)

■ WEIGHT 400g per boot

(average across the size range)

TRAIL
VERDICT

Perhaps too similar to the original boot to be called 'new', but 'improved' they very much are, and where it really matters too.

MAGIC MATERIALS

More cutting edge fabrics in outdoor gear

Titanium

This super-futuristic material was first discovered way back in 1791. In Cornwall. Super strong, remarkably lightweight and corrosion resistant, it is an obvious choice for use in outdoor gear, and it has been adopted for use in all kinds of things, including tent pegs, cookware, and, of course, the humble Spork.

Light My Fire
Spork
Titanium
£20



Dyneema

Dyneema Composite Fabric was originally created for yachting and performance sailing, but its high strength, low weight characteristics have now found favour with the lightweight backpacking community. It can be found in tents, tarps, rucksacks and climbing equipment.

Ferrino Backpack
Instinct 30+5
£220



Aerogel

Made from a range of materials (silica being the most common), aerogels are highly insulating, due to their ability to nullify heat loss through convection or conduction. NASA has used aerogels as an insulator in space suits and its Mars Rover, and they're also being used by brands such as PrimaLoft to create insulation for gloves, footwear and clothing. Outdoor Research Men's GTX Aerogel Gloves £125



SIX OF THE BEST

Summer daypacks

For stashing snacks, spare layers and the other essentials needed for long summer hill days, a **20-30 LITRE DAYPACK** is the perfect companion. Here are our top picks...

WORDS & PHOTOGRAPHY **MATT JONES & ELLIE CLEWLOW**

It's hard to be unhappy when you're out in the hills, the sun is shining and there's not a cloud in the sky. Unless you're struggling uphill with an uncomfortable pack of course, feeling the straps cutting into your shoulders, the belt digging into your hips and an unpleasant sticky patch slowly spreading across your back. But it would be a shame to let such discomfort ruin an otherwise perfect summer hill day. Which is why we've picked out our top six daypacks for warm weather walking, tried and tested in sunny (well, mostly) Snowdonia. Designed to carry 20-30 litres of kit, which ought to be ample capacity for a full dawn-to-dusk adventure, these daypacks are all about optimum carrying comfort, walker-friendly features and easy, breezy airflow to stop you getting hot and sweaty – even when the mercury soars. ▶

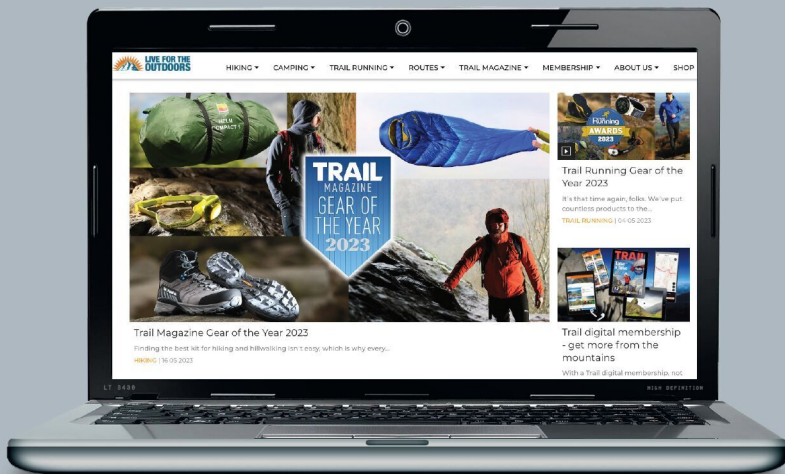
YOUR TESTERS

**Matt Jones & Ellie Clewlow**

are Eryri (Snowdonia)-based outdoor writers and photographers with a passion for adventure, from walking long-distance trails to climbing mountains.



TRAIL DIGITAL



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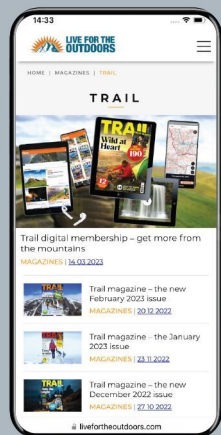
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Lowepro AirZone Active 25 £100

This is a classic mid-size daypack with a top drawcord closure and a simple but practical single-buckle lid. It features Lowepro's newly reworked AirZone LT back system, with a lightweight suspended mesh back panel and a curved perimeter wire frame. This provides a good balance of load-carrying ability and back ventilation, ideal for lugging a full day's hillwalking gear on warm summer days. The harness also promotes plenty of airflow, with cut-outs on the shoulder straps and hip fins to stop you from getting too sweaty.

The pack has an internal hydration sleeve that can take a 3-litre water bladder, plus stretch mesh side pockets that will fit 1-litre water bottles. Spacious zipped hipbelt pockets give you easy access to snacks or essentials too, and you can slip a map or guidebook in the side-entry zipped front pocket. The lid also has inner and outer zipped pockets, with a

handy key clip. There's also a pull-out raincover, trekking pole attachments and buckled side compression straps.

The pack is well-made from hardwearing ripstop fabric, which is 50% recycled and finished with an eco-friendly, PFC-free durable water-repellent (DWR) finish.

IF WE'RE BEING FUSSY

Though it's marketed as a unisex pack, Ellie found the contours of the shoulder straps less comfortable than the other daypacks on test. It also lacks a front stretch pocket.

- **WEIGHT** 950g
- **VOLUME** 25 litres
- **SIZES** One size (18in back length)

Verdict

Practical, well-built and good value. The ventilated shoulder straps, hipbelt and suspended mesh back panel are very effective on hot hill days.



"Ideal for lugging a full day's hiking gear on warm summer days"

Vaude Neyland 24 £130



"An intelligently and sustainably designed pack"



German brand Vaude tends to fly under the radar a little in the UK but deserves to get more attention. The kit is intelligently and sustainably designed – this pack is made from bluesign-approved, partly recycled fabrics and is also climate neutral.

It's a practical design with a secure double-buckle lid and top drawcord closure. There's a top lid pocket containing a secondary mesh pocket with a plastic key clip. The comfortable back system consists of a structured foam panel covered with lightweight mesh. This provides a little ventilation and good stability.

Shoulder straps are nicely contoured, while generous hip fins ensure good weight transfer. An internal plastic frame sheet offers some load-carrying support too. It flexes as you move, which is good for scrambling, though at the expense of carrying ability. Then again, it isn't designed for heavy loads. This one's fine up to 8kg.

The main compartment is roomy, with a separate

hydration sleeve. You also get a pull-out raincover, trekking pole loop and side compression straps. We particularly liked the deep side pockets, which will take a 1-litre water bottle but have lower panels made from tough fabric that is unlikely to snag or tear. The hipbelt pocket is also great, as it's wide enough to take a modern smartphone (or a big bag of Jelly Babies...)

IF WE'RE BEING FUSSY

It lacks a front stretch pocket for quickly stashing extra layers. There's no inner lid pocket and only one hipbelt pocket. It's heavier than we'd expect, given its smaller capacity and simpler design too.

- **WEIGHT** 1100g
- **VOLUME** 24 litres
- **SIZES** One size (18in back length)

Verdict

A comfy, stable pack for summer hikes or easier scrambles, with an effective design and top eco credentials.

TRAIL Walk & Stay

The Essential Guide on where to walk and stay in Britain

Falmouth, Cornwall

Hotel Meudon



Contact: 01326 250541 www.meudon.co.uk

Nearest walk: Meudon walk, 6 miles circular walk, easy to moderate.

www.falriver.co.uk/see-and-do/walks/meudon-walk

Accommodation: Treatment suite, restaurant, bar, 9 acres of subtropical gardens, Wi-Fi, dog friendly, own beach/Bream Cove, self-catering cottage, access to the South West Coast Path.

Mullion, Cornwall

Polurrian on the Lizard Hotel



Contact: 01326 240421 www.polurrianhotel.com

Nearest walk: South West Coast Path, National trail walk - Mullion & Poldhu 4.6 miles (7.4km)

Moderate - Mostly easy cliff-top walking, with some steep-sided valleys and inland paths.

www.southwestcoastpath.org.uk/walksdb/133/

Accommodation: Health club, Spa, 2 pools, gym, outdoor tennis court, restaurant, bar, outdoor kids play area, Wi-Fi, dog friendly, own beach/Polurrian Cove, 6 luxury self-catering villas, access to the South West Coast Path.

Truro, Cornwall

Higher Trewithen Holiday Cottages



Contact: 01209 860614 bookings@trewithen.com
www.trewithen.com

Accommodation: A collection of seven beautiful, fully furnished holiday properties in the stunning Cornish countryside. Retired racehorses, rare breed animals and a children's playground are just a few of the attractions on the farm, which is surrounded public footpaths. They're family run and eco-conscious, with a focus on providing a relaxing, peaceful holiday experience for all guests. Dogs are very welcome. Come relax & unwind in the Cornish countryside.

Lake District, Cumbria

The Shepherds Arms



Contact: 01946 861249 info@shepherdsarms.com
www.shepherdsarms.com

Nearest walk: The Wainwright Coast to Coast route and Ennerdale valley are right on the doorstep as are iconic fells.

Accommodation: An award-winning, friendly village inn ideal for exploring Ennerdale, a remote and tranquil place to escape the crowds. 8 comfortable bedrooms include twin and doubles, all en-suite, TV, hot drinks, toiletries and Wi-Fi.

Cockermouth, Cumbria

Cragg Farm Camping Pods, Eaglesfield



Contact: 07833 363490

catherine.mattinson@btinternet.com

Nearest walk: There are many low level and high level walks to suit all abilities. The Lakes Loweswater, Crummock and Buttermere are just a 15 minute drive away. Grasmoo & Grisedale Pike ranges, Red Pike, High Stile & High Crag to name but a few. Great Gable being just a step further.

Accommodation: Three luxury pods on a working farm on the edge of the Lake District. Fully equipped with kitchen, shower room and double beds. Complete with under floor heating. Sorry no pets.

Hartland, Devon

Pattard Holiday Cottages



Contact: 01237 441311

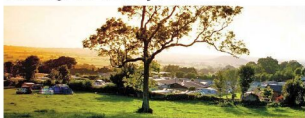
www.pattard.co.uk

Nearest walk: Pattard is in an area of outstanding natural beauty where you can explore the North Devon Coast between Hartland and Hartland Point. Walking routes are available straight from the doorstep and a stroll away is the South West Coastal Path.

Accommodation: The cottages are well equipped and dog friendly. There are 3 pubs within a 10 minute walk.

Cheddar, Somerset

Bucklegrove Holiday Park



Contact: 01749 870 261

www.bucklegrove.co.uk

Nearest walk: The Strawberry line -

www.thestrawberrylines.org.uk

Accommodation: Lodges - hot tub lodges - camping cabins - touring and camping - seasonal pitches.

Exmoor, Somerset

Woodcombe Lodges & Cottages



Contact: 01643 702789

woodcombelodges@outlook.com

www.woodcombelodges.co.uk

Nearest walk: South West Coastal Path, Coleridge way, Two Moors way. Prepared walks from our door.

Accommodation: 6 self catering lodges and 2 cottages set in 3 acre gardens on a quiet country lane, on the edge of the Exmoor National Park. Within 1 mile of shops, pubs, beach & seafont. Free Wi-Fi, disabled access and dog friendly.

Fort William, Highland, Scotland

Snowgoose Mountain Centre & Blacksmiths Bunkhouse



Contact: 01397 772467

www.accommodation-fortwilliam.co.uk

Nearest walk: Ben Nevis, West Highland Way, Great Glen Trail - as well as numerous local Munros & low-level walks, all of varying levels. Ben Nevis 5 miles away.

Accommodation: Self-catering apartments & Bunkhouse in convenient village location at end of Caledonian Canal, drying room, mountain biking at Nevis Range, Loch side location, on West Highland train line - Hogwarts Express passes the door. Good local café, bar, grocery shop.

Isle Of Skye, Scotland

The Inn at Àird a' Bhàisair



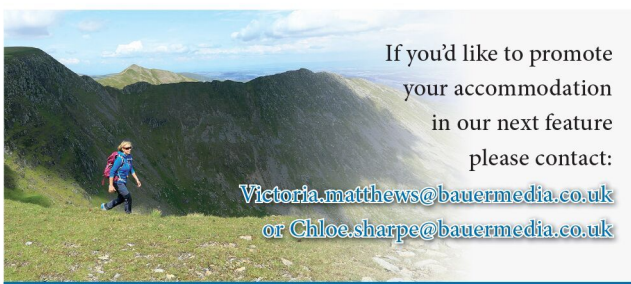
Contact: 01471 844223

bookings@airdabhaisair.co.uk

www.the-inn-at-aird-abhaisair.co.uk

Nearest walk: Armadale hill and woodland.

Accommodation: The Inn at Àird a' Bhàisair is situated in the south of Skye, overlooking the Sound of Sleat and within walking distance of the Mallaig-Armadale ferry.



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please contact:

Victoria.matthews@bauermedia.co.uk
or Chloe.sharpe@bauermedia.co.uk

Deuter Futura 29 EL £135

Deuter's comprehensive Futura series includes this EL ('extended length') version, which has a 20in back length designed for hikers who are 6ft plus. However, there are also standard length 27-litre and women's-specific 25-litre versions if you want the same top-loading zippered design but don't need the extra inches.

All are capable hillwalking daypacks that borrow some features from the brand's bigger gear-haulers. This includes the Aircomfort suspended mesh back system, which delivers superb airflow – in fact it was the best on test, outperforming Lowe Alpine's AirZone and Osprey's Airspeed systems. On breezy days it's like a wind tunnel, which is fantastic for warm-weather walking. The hipbelt is also extremely well-padded, ensuring excellent load transfer and a comfortable carry.

The pack offers stretchy front, side and hipbelt pockets, plus a deep zipped front pocket with three internal compartments and a key clip. This gets around the

traditional drawback of top-loading zippered daypacks, which is the lack of a lid for stashing smaller items. There's a raincover in the base, plus trekking pole loops, dual side compression straps and an internal sleeve for a water bladder.

IF WE'RE BEING FUSSY

It's the heaviest pack here, though it carries well. The rigidity and curvature of the back panel means it intrudes a little on the main compartment, making packing slightly awkward.

- WEIGHT 1400g
- VOLUME 29 litres
- SIZES Men's Futura 27 (Standard) or Futura 29 EL (Extended length), women's Futura 25 SL

Verdict

Class-leading back ventilation and great carrying comfort. If you're over 6ft, go for this 29 EL – otherwise, look at the Futura 27, or the Futura 25 SL for women.



"Comfy & capable, with a well ventilated back system"



"Will appeal to fast-moving hillwalkers looking for a large and roomy daypack"

Mammut Lithium 30 £140

In terms of carrying capacity, this is the biggest pack on test, but it's also one of the lightest here. This impressive volume-to-weight ratio will appeal to fast-moving hillwalkers looking for a roomy daypack. And committed ultralighters might even get enough kit in here for an overnight wild camp.

Load-carrying rigidity comes from an internal U-shaped wire frame, while the back panel is made from ridged foam with a central air channel, overlaid with superfine mesh. The harness is nicely contoured, though shoulder straps and hip fins aren't as well-padded as some rivals. It still carries well though.

The pack also has some unusual and well thought-out features. The hipbelt has one open stretch mesh pocket and one zipped pocket, with a nifty fold-out pouch for stashing a smartphone. Stretch mesh side pockets aren't the deepest but will just about take a 1-litre bottle. Under the single-buckle

lid, the hydration-compatible main compartment has a drawcord closure that doubles as top compression. There's also a large top lid pocket and a useful mesh inner lid pocket with a key clip.

You also get a pull-out raincover, dual side compression straps, two attachment loops for poles or ice axes, a front shove pocket and a zipped side-entry pocket for maps or guidebooks.

IF WE'RE BEING FUSSY

It's a shame that it only comes in one back length, though there is a dedicated women's version too. The straps and hipbelt aren't as well-padded as some.

- WEIGHT 920g
- VOLUME 30 litres
- SIZES Men's and women's

Verdict

A great choice for weight-conscious walkers in need of a versatile and spacious daypack.

Patagonia Altvia 28L £140

This pack is light, tough and spacious, with plenty of carrying capacity for a full day's hiking. It's a frameless design – the only load-bearing structure is the ridged foam back panel. This is a great weightsaver, though it comes at the slight cost of carrying comfort when fully laden. But for lightweight adventures, it's a solid pack.

The materials feel very durable, and it's made from recycled nylon and polyester, with a PFC-free water-repellent finish. Onboard storage includes twin zipped hipbelt pockets, a zipped top pocket with a key clip, two side pockets and a front shove pocket. You also get an inner security pocket, a hydration sleeve, trekking pole loops, side compression cords and a raincover stowed in the base.

That's an impressive array of features. But the most unusual design element is a wide mouth opening that makes loading and rummaging easy, especially compared to most

zipped daypacks. When you pull the drawcord, the top of the pack folds over like a lid and then fastens with a buckle for a secure seal. It takes a little getting used to compared to a conventional lid, but we soon came to appreciate its upsides.

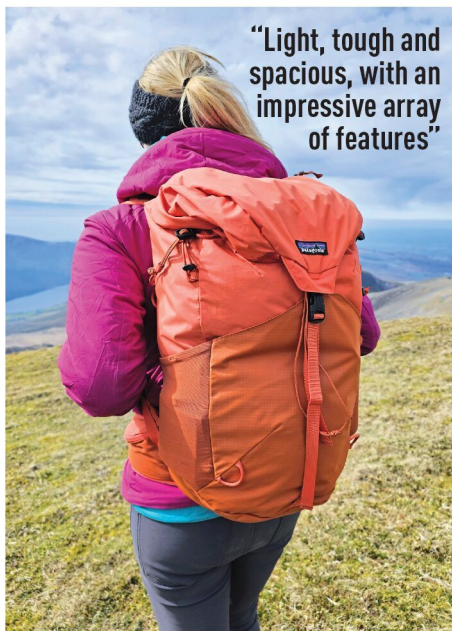
IF WE'RE BEING FUSSY

The simplistic back panel and lightly padded harness mean it doesn't carry as well or as comfortably as the other packs here.

- WEIGHT 770g
- VOLUME 28 litres
- SIZES S (16in back length), M (19in back length), L (21in back length)

Verdict

A lightweight, low-profile daypack with practical pockets and an unusual top closure, which takes some getting used to but makes for an efficient, fast-access design.



“Light, tough and spacious, with an impressive array of features”

Osprey Sirrus 26 £155

“A capable load-carrier with great ventilation on hot hill days”



TRAIL
MAGAZINE
BEST IN
TEST

The men's Stratos and women's Sirrus packs are hillwalking favourites that vie with the Talon and Tempest packs as some of the bestselling all-rounders in the Osprey range. Ellie has had a Tempest for years, so was keen to try the Sirrus for comparison.

The main differences are that the Sirrus feels a bit tougher and has a suspended mesh back system for superior ventilation. It's also fully adjustable to suit different lengths, whereas the Talon and Tempest only come in two fixed back lengths respectively. Downsides? The Stratos and Sirrus are a little heavier. But thanks to a full perimeter wire frame and a plush, contoured harness and hipbelt, they carry extremely well, whilst also delivering good airflow to stave off stickiness on hot and humid hill days.

As you'd expect from Osprey, they're also well-featured, with front, side and hipbelt pockets, as well as inner and outer lid pockets. The front shove pocket is made from abrasion-resistant fabric rather than flimsy mesh and is accessed via a centre zip.

The pack is also fully kitted out with a hydration sleeve, trekking pole loop, pull-out raincover and dual side compression straps. You get plenty of other attachment points too, including Osprey's 'stow on the go' loop for temporarily holding your trekking poles.

IF WE'RE BEING FUSSY

Though we didn't find this a problem, some users have commented that the plastic panels of the back length adjustment system can dig into your shoulders. The design does mean that the lid of the pack sits quite high too.

- WEIGHT 1250g
- VOLUME 30 litres
- SIZES Men's (Stratos 26) or women's (Sirrus 26), both with adjustable back lengths

Verdict

A very capable, fully featured day pack that offers a wide range of back length adjustment and has an excellent ventilated back panel to keep you cool.

OUR FAVOURITE FIVE

Bivvy bags

This simple shelter offers protection from the elements, married with a lightweight and compact pack size, but there's a bewildering variety of options to choose from. Here are our five favourites to help you out.



Outdoor Research Helium Bivy **£225**

For those wanting the comfort of a poled bivvy but without the extra weight, the Helium Bivy is perfect. Despite having a pole that lifts the upper fabric away from the face, it weighs only 448g. Plus, on occasions where you want to go even lighter or the ground conditions mean pegging out the pole isn't feasible, the Helium can be used pole-less, and this takes the weight down to around 400g. This is thanks to the Pertex fabric with Diamond Fuse technology, which makes the current Helium Bivy 14% lighter than the previous model.

BEST FOR Versatility at a manageable weight

Rab Ridge Raider Bivi **£350**

This is a regular feature in any of our bivvy round-ups, and with good cause. Freestanding and less claustrophobic than a typical bivvy thanks to its hooped main pole and micro upright pole at the foot, it's made from Pertex Shield Air fabric, which is both waterproof and breathable, keeping you dry and reducing condensation. It's not as compact and lightweight (or as low priced) as a bivvy bag, nor as roomy and liveable as a tent, but it



offers an excellent compromise between the two, opening up a world of overnight adventure opportunities.

BEST FOR More comfortable, less claustrophobic bivvyng

Robens Mountain Bivvy **£95**

The problem with bivvyng is that the best nights for it are often the most popular with the insect population. Bivvy bags that can't be zipped up offer an open invitation to



an all-you-can-eat buffet to any passing midges and mozzies. In addition to being waterproof and breathable, easily accessible (thanks to the two-way L-shaped zip) and remarkably spacious, the Mountain Bivvy places an insect-proof mesh panel over the face, allowing you to enjoy the sweet scent of the evening or the dance of the constellations without risking your skin.

BEST FOR Simple bivvyng with greater protection

Snugpak Stratosphere **£204**

The thing that puts many people off bivvyng is the claustrophobic nature of sleeping in what is essentially a waterproof body-bag. The Snugpak Stratosphere dismisses those concerns with two short criss-crossing aluminium poles which lift the fabric above the face. There is a trade-off though. The addition of the poles (and the pegs to pitch it out, although these are optional) means this bivvy weighs just over a kilogram and its pack size can't compete with pole-less bags. However, it does make for a more pleasant place to sleep.

BEST FOR A less body-bag-like bivvyng experience



Alpkit Hunka **£55**

The Hunka (and its big brother the £70 Hunka XL) is about as simple as a bivvy gets. There's no zip, no poles, and no mesh – just a waterproof and breathable 2.5-layer ripstop nylon bag. This basic approach makes the Hunka light (under 400g) and excellent value, but it does have limitations. Because it can't be sealed completely it's best saved for fine weather nights (or combined with a tarp) and evenings devoid of midges or mozzies. It's ideal for use in booties to protect your sleeping bag from the damp and grime often found within.

BEST FOR Budget bivvyng or bootying



Best walking shoes

Sturdy high-ankled boots or trainer-like walking shoes – which are best in the mountains? It's a fierce debate, but if you're looking for all-day comfort and a fast 'n' light approach, maybe it's time for some **MINIMALIST HIKING SHOES**.

WALKING SHOES VS TRAIL RUNNING TRAINERS

There is huge variety in hiking footwear now. A current trend is to wear modern trail running trainers for hiking – they can be light, fast and grippy with excellent energy return, thanks to cutting-edge tech. Alternatively you can go for shoes specifically designed for hiking, which tend to be slightly heavier and less cushioned but with better stability, protection and durability.

UPPER

The upper is the exterior material of a walking shoe. Leather uppers (nubuck or suede) are generally stronger and firmer. Synthetic uppers are less durable, but will be comfier and lighter, with enhanced flex and breathability.

FIT

Everyone's feet are shaped differently, and what fits comfortably for you might be blister-inducing for someone else. Fit is therefore absolutely critical. Your best bet is to try for size in a shop, ideally with a skilled footwear fitter. Aim for a secure, comfy fit, without excessive compression or pinching. Space in the toe box for your toes to splay and the right volume at the forefoot are important.

One of shoes is than boot in weight protect consider you. All per i



HEEL COUNTER

This is the stiffened cup that encloses the heel, providing protection and support. A firm heel counter helps to lock the foot in place and offers additional stability.

ANKLE CUFF

Unlike boots, walking shoes have a low cuff around the ankle. Some will be cut a little higher than others, helping to prevent water, mud and debris from entering the shoe, but all walking shoes generally prioritise comfort and flex over ankle support and protection.

INSOLE

For enhanced comfort and stability, you might prefer to switch out the shoe's supplied insole for a higher quality, specialist insole instead.

MIDSOLE

The midsole – usually made from EVA or PU foam rubber – provides cushioning and stability, and its design will affect how rigid and energetic a shoe feels underfoot. Oversized and mega-cushioned midsoles are currently popular, providing a very springy, forward-propelling sensation as you walk.

OUTSOLE

The outsole provides traction via a tread pattern of rubber cleats and lugs. Different rubber compounds are employed – softer compounds offer better grip, but harder compounds will last longer. In general, deep and widely-spaced lugs will provide improved grip and won't get clogged with mud.

NOTE: ALL WEIGHTS STATED ARE PER SHOE

YOUR TESTERS



James Forrest

A prolific peak bagger and wild camper who's climbed hundreds of mountains in the UK and abroad, James gives his gear a serious thrashing on every trip.

WEIGHT

the advantages of that they're lighter. But a reduction can mean a loss of support, so what's important to weights quoted are individual shoe.

LACING

A good lacing system – usually via eyelets and hooks – will run smoothly and enable precise adjustment to your foot shape.

TONGUE

A padded tongue will provide improved comfort, while a gusseted or bellows tongue – which is fully attached to the uppers – will provide better protection from water and debris.

TOE BUMPER

A toe bumper provides additional durability and protection for the front of the foot, particularly on rocky ground.

WATERPROOF LINER

A waterproof-breathable membrane liner will help keep your feet dry. This is often Gore-Tex, or a brand's proprietary technology. But do you really need a waterproof shoe? In spring and summer, a non-waterproof shoe will be far more breathable, quick-drying and ventilated – an approach favoured by many experienced hillwalkers.



Keen WK400 £135

- + Amazingly cushioned, superb energy return, lovely 'ride' to each step
- Outlandish design, will polarise opinion, better suited to lower level and flatter terrain, outsole not suitable for more rugged and technical ground

This new-for-2023 shoe polarises opinion. Some hikers adore it, others despise it – as evidenced by online reviews of both adulation and derision. While fans wax lyrical ("by far the best walking shoe ever", "a completely refreshing experience" and "energising and transformative"), critics are scathing ("ugly with an uncomfortable arch", "such a strange fit" and "like walking in high heels"). This is, therefore, the shoe version of Marmite – you'll either love it or hate it, and the only way to find out is to give it a go.

The good news is we absolutely loved it. Initially we found the shoes felt very peculiar, with an unexpected 'hump' of material underneath the foot arch and heel – but we soon got used to it, and it's precisely this underfoot curve geometry (known as Keen. Curve technology) that makes the WK400 so special. It gives you awesome forward momentum with a smooth, rolling feel to each step, and delivers superb cushioning and a high-energy return – it really is like nothing we've walked in before.

In theory, this approach is designed for lower-level, flatter terrain, but we wore the WK400 up Yewbarrow's scrambly Great Door ascent and loved it. You might have despised it though, of course. Who knows?

- MEN'S SIZES 6-14
- WOMEN'S SIZES 2.5-9
- VERSIONS Waterproof and leather versions due in autumn
- WEIGHT 372g (men's 8.5)

Verdict

A revolutionary shoe with a curved and super-cushioned design for a smooth, forward-propelling ride – but it will polarise opinion.

Features	★★★★☆
Construction	★★★★★
Comfort	★★★★★
Performance	★★★★★
Value	★★★★★
OVERALL SCORE	84%

Obzo Sawtooth X Low Waterproof £145

- + Hefty design, protection, stability, rigidity
- Very heavy, too chunky and clunky, lack of cushioning

If you like your walking shoes burly, bombproof and hard as nails, the Sawtooth X might be the shoe for you – it's muscular, chunky, protective and firm with a traditional look and build.

The downsides of this approach are rather plentiful. The Obzo Sawtooth X is very heavy – it's the heaviest on test by some margin and each shoe is 217g heavier than the Arc'teryx Norvan LD3, for example – and in-use it can feel rather laboured and unwieldy. It also requires a bit more breaking-in, doesn't feel as comfy as lighter models, and isn't best-suited to day after day of big mileage hikes.

On the flipside, however, there are lots of positives for those who favour sturdier footwear. The Sawtooth X will last far longer than more minimalist shoes, and it's tougher, more protective and offers enhanced stability, support and rigidity. Waterproofing comes from Obzo's in-house B-Dry membrane technology. The upper is made from a mix of oiled nubuck leather and a cordura fabric mesh, and the Trail Tread outsole feels very solid, with an aggressive lug layout. You also get a foot-hugging and super-strong heel cup, a wraparound toe rand, and standard style lacing made from recycled materials.

- MEN'S SIZES 7-13
- WOMEN'S SIZES 4-8.5
- VERSIONS Waterproof, non-waterproof, regular, wide
- WEIGHT 485g (men's 8.5)

Verdict

A well-built, brawny shoe with a protective design and waterproof liner – but it's very chunky and heavy.

Features	★★★★☆
Construction	★★★★★
Comfort	★★★★★
Performance	★★★★★
Value	★★★★★
OVERALL SCORE	76%



Arc'teryx Norvan LD3 £150

- + Ultralight, cushioned, comfortable, first-rate design
- Cushioning won't suit all tastes, only 4mm lugs, too light for some

Another trail running trainer that hits all the right notes as a hiking shoe, the Norvan LD3 is ultra-light, grippy, comfortable and supportive – a lovely balancing act between competing priorities.

Other than the outrageously springy Keen WK400, it's the second most cushioned shoe in our round-up, with its InFused midsole providing active rebound, good shock absorption and plush cushioning. Yet the Norvan LD3 isn't so highly-stacked and squidgy that you lose your sense of connection to and feel for the trail.

It's easily the lightest shoe on test too (at 268g it's 46g lighter per shoe than the Scarpa Ribelle Run, the second lightest), meaning you feel somewhat weightless and free on-trail. The upper is made from a soft and flexible mesh, ensuring the shoe is air-permeable and quick-drying, while more durable upper inserts, a wraparound rand, stiffened toe cap and well-designed heel cup add all the toughness you need for gnarly terrain.

The ankle cuff is soft and forgiving, and the tongue is connected to a stretchy sock-like inner for a comfy fit. The Vibram outsole is sticky and we particularly loved the way the wide toe box allows your toes to splay – something that's crucial for avoiding blisters on long-distance walks.

- MEN'S SIZES 3.5-12.5
- WOMEN'S SIZES 3-8.5
- VERSIONS GTX, non-GTX
- WEIGHT 268g (men's 8.5)

Verdict

A top-notch trail shoe striking a balance between weight, support, comfort and grip – but some will want more protection and rigidity.

Features	★★★★☆
Construction	★★★★★
Comfort	★★★★★
Performance	★★★★★
Value	★★★★★
OVERALL SCORE	92%

Scarpa Ribelle Run £155

- + Breathability, responsiveness, precision
- Not the most cushioned, not the comfiest, fit won't suit everyone

The Ribelle Run is a technical trail running shoe, but it works just as well for hiking. It is light, grippy, responsive and comfy – and performs solidly in most areas, as one would expect with a reputable brand like Scarpa.

The fit is true to size, if not slightly on the precise side, with a wraparound design that holds the foot nicely and feels both technical and protective (but not quite as comfy as some others). The minimalist upper features Scarpa's 'sock fit' construction, consisting of a breathable mesh bootie, heat-sealed overlays for added durability, a stretchy integrated gaiter that seals around the ankle, and an effective speed lacing system.

An EVA band that wraps the shoe from the stabilised heel counter to the toe bumper adds a touch of strength to the design. Scarpa's Presa midsole isn't super-bouncy or cushioned, but instead prioritises good underfoot feedback, feel and precision. That said, there's enough cushion and energy in this shoe to still feel light, fast and nimble on the trail.

The Presa Supergum outsole has 4mm deep, widely spaced lugs, which deliver good traction over mixed terrain – although they perform better on rock and hard-packed trails than mud or grass. At 314g per shoe, the Ribelle Run is the second lightest shoe on test.

- MEN'S SIZES 6.5-13
- WOMEN'S SIZES 3.5-8
- VERSIONS GTX, non-GTX
- WEIGHT 314g (men's 9)

Verdict

A technical, lightweight and precise trail running shoe that works well for hiking – but it isn't the comfiest on test.

Features	★★★★☆
Construction	★★★★★
Comfort	★★★★★
Performance	★★★★★
Value	★★★★★
OVERALL SCORE	80%

inov-8 Roctile G 315 GTX V2 £155

- + Excellent grip, quality design, Gore-Tex liner
- Not the most plush cushioning

Lake District-based brand inov-8 is much-loved amongst the fell-running community for its super-grippy trail shoes, but it also makes specialist hiking footwear with similarly impressive outsole traction.

The Roctile G 315 GTX V2 – a second generation, 2023 update to one of the brand's bestsellers – probably offers the stickiest, grippiest outsole in our round-up, thanks to the 6mm-deep, aggressively-patterned, chevron-like lugs. These rubber compounds are infused with graphene – a type of carbon billed as the world's strong material – to deliver what inov-8 claims is "the ultimate in tough grip".

In our test hikes it certainly hit the spot. The shoe's synthetic upper feels pretty tough and underneath it is a Gore-Tex liner to keep your feet dry. The midsole features inov-8's Powerflow Max foam and its Meta-Plate shank. Cushioning is moderate but not plush (for max cushioning see inov-8's Ultra G 280 or TrailFly G 270 V2), but the plus side is an excellent balance between stability, protection and energy return.

The G 315 feels fast, light and agile, yet you can still feel the trail underfoot and trust in this shoe's support on rocky, technical ground. Comfort levels are pretty high and all-round performance is impressive.

- MEN'S SIZES 6-14
- WOMEN'S SIZES 3.5-8.5
- VERSIONS GTX only
- WEIGHT 319g (men's 8.5)

Verdict

A good all-rounder with particularly impressive outsole traction – but it might not suit everyone.

Features	★★★★★
Construction	★★★★★
Comfort	★★★★★
Performance	★★★★★
Value	★★★★★
OVERALL SCORE	88%



Meindl Respond GTX £160

- + Strong, protective, stable, Gore-Tex waterproofing
- Heavy, chunky, outsole could be more aggressive

Reviewing this traditional, chunky, leather and waterproof walking shoe side-by-side to the high-tech, ultralight, synthetic and breathable Arc'teryx Norvan LD3 is like comparing apples and pears, and evidences the sheer variety in design and style of outdoor footwear these days. The two approaches are poles apart, but clearly there is a market for both – with some walkers favouring protection, durability and structure and other enticed by minimalism, comfort and flex.

If you're in the former camp, the Meindl Respond GTX is a good bet. It's one of Meindl's best-selling shoes in the UK and has a 4.5 out of 5 rating on Cotswold Outdoor from almost 1300 reviews. The upper is made from a mix of velour leather and mesh, waterproofing is via a Gore-Tex lining, the rubber toe cap is strong, and the heel cup stabilises the foot securely.

The Contragrip Trail outsole has an interesting design – the lugs aren't particularly deep or pronounced, but overall traction seemed fine in our test walks. The midsole ensures a relatively firm construction, with higher levels of lateral and torsional rigidity than lightweight trail shoes, and the overall build is quite beefy. Some will find all of this reassuringly tough and sturdy, others will find it way too clunky and cumbersome.

- MEN'S SIZES 6-12
- WOMEN'S SIZES 3.5-8
- VERSIONS GTX only
- WEIGHT 412g (men's 8.5)

Verdict

An old-school walking shoe with a strong, protective, stable and waterproof design – but it's heavy.

Features	★★★★☆
Construction	★★★★★
Comfort	★★★★★
Performance	★★★★★
Value	★★★★★
OVERALL SCORE	76%

On Cloudventure Waterproof £160

- + Stylish, quality construction, clever design
- Slightly stiff, requires breaking-in, outsole channels can clog with debris

With the Cloudventure Waterproof, Swiss brand On has engineered a shoe with a unique, eye-catching outsole. Hollow pods, known as 'clouds', create a deeply-ridged wave of thick, aggressive lugs separated by mini channels, forming a crinkly profile. This so-called CloudTec has a dual purpose: the 'clouds' compress on impact to improve cushioning, and then become firmer for an 'explosive' take-off on your next step.

Primarily designed as a trail running shoe, the tech works just as well for hillwalking: the multiple grip patterns of the Missiongrip outsole provide good traction over mixed terrain and all-round performance is impressive, with a nice balance between protection, comfort, cushioning, rebound and lightness.

Waterproofing is via On's proprietary membrane technology, which worked fine in our tests, but more time is needed to comment on its long-term effectiveness. The fit is slightly tighter and narrower than some other pairs, and we'd describe the construction as a trail running trainer strengthened with a bit of extra armour.

The rubberised toe box and heel counter are firm and protective, the upper is durable and the midsole and rock plate provide rigidity and stability.

- MEN'S SIZES 6.5-13.5
- WOMEN'S SIZES 3-9
- VERSIONS Waterproof, non-waterproof
- WEIGHT 345g (men's 8.5)

Verdict

A seriously cool-looking trail shoe that's grippy, rugged and waterproof – but it might not tick all of your boxes.

Features	★★★★☆
Construction	★★★★★
Comfort	★★★★★
Performance	★★★★★
Value	★★★★★
OVERALL SCORE	80%



Danner Trail 2650 Campo £180

- + Long-term comfort, all-round performance, proven design
- Most expensive shoe on test

Named after the 2650-mile Pacific Crest Trail, this shoe is excellent for big mileage day hikes and long-distance, multi-day walks. It's good-looking, faultlessly comfy, adequately protective and – for a walking shoe – generously-springy underfoot. It's also lightweight (330g), thanks to fabric mesh uppers with a central leather panel and thin overlays for added durability.

The midsole is EVA foam rubber, stiffened with a TPU Trailguard shank for a little more stability and protection underfoot. The outsole is definitely built for the trail, with a Vibram 460 Megagrip compound and sharply angled lugs for enhanced traction. In our test hikes around the Lake District, we were impressed by the outsole grip (although it's better suited to dry, hard-packed US trails than the UK's muddy bogfests), the cosy fit of the stretchy sock-like tongue, and the flex of the supple leather and textile upper.

There's no waterproofing in the shoe we tested, but this meant our feet didn't over-heat or get too clammy – and Danner do make a Gore-Tex version for hikers who want waterproofing.

All in all, this shoe achieves a delicate balancing act, striking a near-perfect sweet spot between the two styles of ultralight trail running trainers and more traditional walking shoes. Anyone fancy a 2650-mile hike?

- MEN'S SIZES US 7-14
- WOMEN'S SIZES US 5-11
- VERSIONS Medium, wide, GTX, non-GTX
- WEIGHT 330g (men's 8.5)

Verdict

An excellent all-round hiking shoe striking a nice balance between comfort, support, cushioning and protection – but it's expensive.

Features	★★★★★
Construction	★★★★★
Comfort	★★★★★
Performance	★★★★★
Value	★★★★★
OVERALL SCORE	88%

Used & abused

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A whisker from perfection

Klättermusen Nal Hooded Windbreaker Jacket **£189**

I've always struggled with temperature regulation. I hate being cold, but always get hot when hiking. This lightweight soft shell/windbreaker from Klättermusen looked like it could be a solution. And so it proved to be. On a day in the far north of Scotland during which I both had to shelter from the hail and got home with sunburn, the Nal was the perfect jacket. I put it on at the start and never took it off, only slinging a hard shell over the top when I stopped to break. It kept out the worst of the wind, shrugged off the hail (although it's not waterproof) and was breathable enough that I never overheated and needed to take it off. Better still, the off-set zipper meant I never caught my beard in it! The perfect layer? Ooh, so close. I have one gripe: the elasticated cuffs are too snug to be pulled or rolled up – something I'd have like to be able to do during the warmer ascents of the day.

Verdict A great jacket that is so tantalisingly close to perfect for me that the one small flaw irks.

USED BY Ben Weeks, Trail gear editor

USED FOR 1 month



For mini alpinists

Deuter Climber **£65**



I'm quite shocked by how much my seven-year-old enjoys climbing mountains, and even more so by how willing he is to carry his own stuff while he's doing it. So I decided to strike while the iron's hot and get him a proper little pack. The Climber is a shrunken version of Deuter's popular Guide rucksack, with plenty of impressive features including the Alpine back system, gear loops, padded and adjustable shoulder straps, a zipped lid pocket, stretchy side pockets, an internal valuables pocket, and it's fully compatible with hydration bladders. Most importantly though, he was really excited by having a 'proper pack' and it motivated him to carry all of his snacks and extra layers on a couple of recent hillwalks in the Lakes. Which is a big win for parents. My lad's quite tall for his age (around 130cm) and I was worried the Climber might be a bit big for him, but it fits well and should be in his size range for many years to come.

Verdict Possibly too much pack for a first-time hillwalker, but a great investment if your kids are really to take on proper mountains.

USED BY Oli Reed, Trail editor

USED FOR One great weekend of fell walking

So much more than a watch...



Garmin Fenix 7S Sapphire Solar Edition £690

In all honesty, I don't want to tell you about this watch. It's not that I don't love it. I really do. But it forces me to reveal two guilty secrets. The first is the cost. Because unless you're one of those watch fans who has a stash of Rolex's, then nearly £700 is a LOT of money for a watch. If you shop around it is possible to pick one up for around £110 cheaper, but still! Second, I'm pretty sure that I'm using a very small fraction of its functionality. I get the feeling that this watch is smarter than me, but the functions I do use are very useful indeed. On the hill, I can pick up a grid ref to check my location at the click of a button. The touchscreen allows me to easily scroll through menus to access navigation, activity tracking, health, sleep, music, phone messages etc. It all links with a Garmin app that syncs the data and allows you to scrutinise maps and data to your heart's desire. And even without much opportunity for solar charging this spring, I've only needed to plug it in every 10 days or so – a huge improvement on the Apple watch, which needs charging every day.

Verdict Smart watch, training companion, navigator, thing of beauty. I can't imagine being without it now...

USED BY Jenna Maryniak, Trail deputy editor
USED FOR 6 months



Light feet = easier mountains

AKU Trekker Lite III GTX Boots £200

It's not often a bit of gear changes your life. I think I've entered that realm. I've found a boot that is both light (relatively speaking) and supportive around the ankles. The AKU Trekker Lite are mostly fabric with a high rand of Nubuck leather. This gives them a toughness that's proving to be just that. A high ankle cuff and lots of padding, combined with a lacing system that perfectly tightens, means that I'm struggling to find fault with these boots. What's more, with my advancing years, I'm now looking to shed every ounce I can. These are now my go-to 3-season boots for the easier mountains in my life.

Verdict Why and how did I never find these years ago?

Moral of the story is; try gear that's out of your norm...

USED BY Tom Bailey, Trail photographer
USED FOR 3 months



Goodbye cheap socks

Bridgedale Hike Midweight Merino Performance £23

I used to think walking socks were much of a muchness, and didn't really pay attention to the ones I chose before pulling on my boots for a long hike. That was until I wore these Bridgedale socks recently during a great walk around the Grasmere fells in the Lake District. I didn't realise my feet could feel so cushioned and supported by a pair of socks, nor did I realise you weren't supposed to be able to feel the inside of your boots and the terrain you were trekking over! I won't go back to wearing just any socks on hillwalks now, because a good pair really makes a difference.

Verdict I'll never wear cheap Donny trainer socks from Sports Direct ever again!

USED BY Gemma Hogg, Trail contributor
USED FOR 6 months



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LIVE FOR THE OUTDOORS

FROM THE MAKERS OF **TRAIL** MAGAZINE

TRAIL 100

THE UK'S ULTIMATE MOUNTAIN BUCKET LIST

Hand-picked by the experts at Trail magazine, the Trail 100 is our definitive collection of the 100 UK peaks every hillwalker should climb in their lifetime.

Helm Crag
 Height: 681m
 Country: England
 Region: Lake District

Place Fell
 Height: 657m
 Country: England
 Region: Lake District

Merrick
 Height: 843m
 Country: Scotland
 Region: Galloway

Yr Aran
 Height: 926m
 Country: Wales
 Region: Snowdonia

Sca Fell
 Height: 944m
 Country: England
 Region: Lake District

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The
Cantilever Stone
on Glyder Fach's
scrambly slopes.
Try it for size on
p103



5 ROCKY SCRAMBLING ROUTES **P87** | ULTIMATE WALKING WEEKENDS **P97** & **P101**
GLYNDWR'S WAY LONG-DISTANCE TRAIL **P105** | ULTIMATE GUIDE TO PILLAR ROCK **P110**

IN ASSOCIATION WITH



Where to walk this month...

EXPERT GUIDES TO BRITAIN'S BEST MOUNTAIN ROUTES



Jamie Rooke

Is a Mountain Leader and Rock Climbing Instructor in Snowdonia.



Sarah Ryan

Trait writer, and a former resident of the Central Highlands.



Alex Kendall

Professional mountain leader, living and working under Snowdon's shadow.



Vivienne Crow

Award-winning writer Viv's worked on over 20 walking guides.



Ronald Turnbull

Creator of a whopping 33 guidebooks and 18 unique coast-to-coasts.

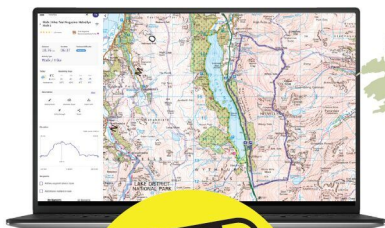
SUSTAINABLE STEPS

Look for our **Tread Lightly** logo throughout the routes section for tips on how to lessen your environmental impact.



ALWAYS CARRY A MAP!

Trait routes are written as guides, but for detailed mountain navigation you must carry a printed to-scale map. All of our routes come with recommended maps at a variety of scales.



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Trait digital members get one-click access to interactive maps and detailed online guides for every route published in the magazine. Plus, all digital members and print subscribers get **HALF PRICE** digital access to Ordnance Survey maps for the whole of Great Britain via the online OS Maps service. Full details on **PAGE 28**

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MOUNTAIN SAFETY

Walking in the UK mountains can be dangerous, with rough terrain, exposure and changeable weather. Always check weather forecasts and make sure you have suitable clothing and navigation tools. Ice axes and crampons are essential for walking in snow and ice – as are the knowledge and skills to use them.

USEFUL RESOURCES

Met Office Mountain Weather Forecast: metoffice.gov.uk
Mountain Weather Information Service: mwis.org.uk
Avalanche forecasts: sais.gov.uk
Mountain Rescue: Call 999, ask for police, then Mountain Rescue
Skills courses: mountain-training.org

We take all reasonable steps to ensure Trail routes are safe and correctly described. However, all outdoor activities involve a degree of risk. The publishers accept no responsibility for any errors or omissions, or for any injuries or accidents that occur while following these routes.

DIFFICULTY	HARD
DISTANCE	14KM
TIME	7 HOURS
TOTAL ASCENT	800M



Bryn Cader Faner, the Bronze Age cairn.

JAMIE ROOKE

Northern Rhinogydd

If you're up for a proper workout, try this rocky and scrambly route in **Snowdonia's** northern Rhinogydd.

There is practically no such thing as a wilderness (an area left uncultivated or inhabited by humans) left in the UK, but the Rhinogydd is about as close as you're going to get in the Welsh mountains. The sheep-munched bareness has escaped much of the mountain landscape and it is characterised by a rough covering of heather and bilberry, interspersed with gritty boulder-strewn rock shelves and miniature crags. Once you step off the already thin tracks, you're in for a rough ride!

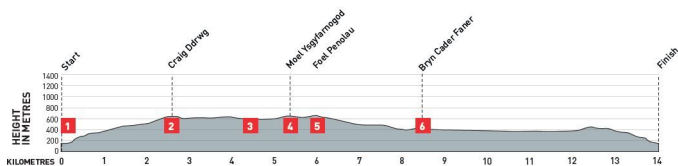
This route leads you up and over the northern part of the range, from Clip to Moel Ysgafarnagod and Foel Penolau, returning via a visit to the famous ring cairn of Bryn Cader Faner, which is worth the trip in itself, and a peculiar characteristic of the tops is the number of short but steep rock barriers you have to move through to get between the summits. They can be intimidating but fun, once you find the hidden little breaks that allow passage, and the rock is grit-like and grippy, even in the rain. **JAMIE ROOKE.**

IS IT FOR ME?

FITNESS Tough going. You definitely have to work that little bit harder than usual.

TERRAIN Very rough and rocky, with the majority of the route off-path and on open ground or with faint tracks.

NAVIGATION In poor visibility, it's very easy to go awry with the navigation. Even on a good day, you'll need good route-finding skills through the scrambly sections.



1 Eryri (Snowdonia)

WILD & RUGGED CIRCUIT

In association with
 Ordnance Survey

1 SH645314 From the campsite entrance, head right for about 100m to a barn. Go through the wooden gate next to the barn and head north uphill, up the obvious rib of rock, eventually meeting another track that leads rightward to a stile. Follow the track north-east up the hillside, passing a rectangular ruin next to a stream and on to a dilapidated stile, with a small but steep slope on its left. 50m after this stile turn left and climb steeply uphill to Bwlch Gwylim. On reaching the level ground, swing left on a faint track and pick your way up, through an obvious pile of rocks. A rock barrier blocks the way. A break in the rock to the left leads to the summit of Clip, around 200m south-west.

2 SH653327 You now go across the ridge connecting Clip to Moel Ysgyfarnogod. Return to Bwlch Gwylim and keep right as you head towards Craig Ddrwg. The summit is approached via a notch on the right (south-west) as you approach. From the summit, a tricky ramp of rock descends northward and meets a track to Llyn Corn Ystwc. As you near the llyn, the track leads to a shelf of high ground above its north-western side. From the shelf, curve slightly left (north) to an awkward descent through a stepped chimney of rock, which leads to a wall. Cross the wall 5m to the left and pick up a faint track to the high ground where another awkward descent, about 50m north-west of the summit, leads to Llyn Du.

3 SH657339 Pass Llyn Du on its right (eastern) side to pick up

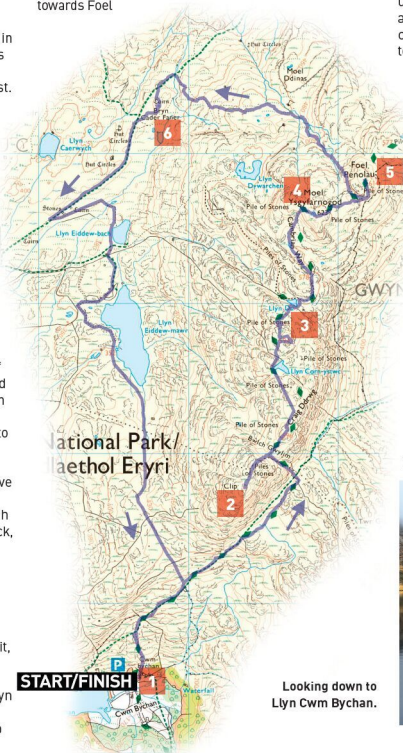
the old quarry track and follow this right, avoiding a barrier of rock. It leads you past an old, fenced off and dangerous mine, where the track reduces and becomes less obvious as it leads you into the cwm on the southern slopes of Moel Ysgyfarnogod. Follow the track north-west, past a small pool, where it almost disappears completely then cuts to the north-east and exits below the summit of Moel Ysgyfarnogod. Continue on to the summit.

4 SH658345 Descend east to cross the open ground towards Foel

Penolau, keeping right, until you meet a wall. Pass about 50m from where the corner of it butts right up to the slope and then climb north to the summit. The summit area is a large platform, split in two, with the south-western side being difficult to access without scrambling.

5 SH661348 Retrace your steps to the wall on the south and descend north-west. A group of streams converge south of Moel Ddinas and lead to a farmer's vehicle track that runs west. Follow this until you reach an obvious fork near a gorse hill and a stream. Keep left to join the Taith Arduwy. After

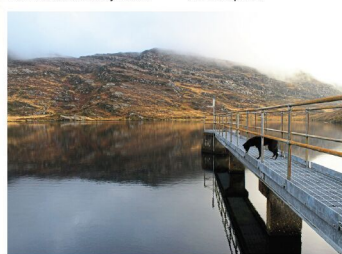
Resting for a moment high above Llyn Eiddew Mawr.



Looking down to Llyn Cwm Bychan.

crossing the stream, keep left again to head south-west. Bryn Cader Fanner lies about 200m south of the fork (on left).

6 SH648353 Take the left-hand fork 150m south-west of the cairn to stay on the track for 850m, where another track cuts back north-east to take you to Llyn Eiddew Bach and then to Llyn Eiddew Mawr. From the southern end of the llyn, a thin track runs southward and climbs gently uphill, crossing an old wall with a boulder to meet a stream. Continue alongside the stream until you reach level ground and a wall with a stile. Cross and continue south-east until you return to the rectangular ruin next to the stream. Turn right and retrace your steps back to the campsite.



GET THERE

A train to Harlech could work with a long walk/cycle or taxi to the campsite. Driving is otherwise easiest.

EAT & DRINK

Harlech Fish & Chip Shop is a good shout. Or the Harlech Tandoori!

STAY OVER

Would recommend camping at Cwm Bychan Campsite, where the route starts and ends. There are also plenty of comfortable options in Harlech.

BEST MAP

Harvey British Mountain Map Snowdonia South De Eryri 1:40K



DIFFICULTY	HARD
DISTANCE	16KM
TIME	6½ HOURS
TOTAL ASCENT	1226M
PEAK BAGGER STATS	
WAINWRIGHTS	3



Dale Head via Fleetwith

Buttermere and the High Stile range from Fleetwith Edge.

VIVIENNE CROW

Step on to a divine **Lakeland** ridge that ascends directly from the valley floor to the heavenly heights.

Fleetwith Edge is one of the most photographed features in the Lake District, and yet most people with pictures of it in their collections won't be able to name it – and even fewer will have climbed it. Look at just about any image of Buttermere though and you will see, reaching heavenward from its south-eastern shores, this perfectly symmetrical ridge.

Ascending this sublime shoulder to the summit of Fleetwith Pike is pure joy. A series of rocky steps is broken by easier, grassy interludes, allowing plenty of opportunity to get your breath back and enjoy the superb

views to the left, right and back down towards the lake.

From the summit cairn, the route continues over Fleetwith Pike before plummeting to Honister Pass. The rollercoaster ride then continues with a climb to Dale Head – a summit that enjoys some of the most far-reaching outlooks in this part of the Lakes, including the Isle of Man on a clear day. Imbibe more of those views on the high and undulating ridge that then leads to Robinson before descending, with your hunger for the hills temporarily sated, back into the more mundane world. **VIVIENNE CROW**



IS IT FOR ME?

FITNESS Good hill fitness needed for a long, undulating day.

TERRAIN Mostly on open fell with a combination of grass, heather and boggy ground, as well as sections on Fleetwith Edge that may require hands on rock.

NAVIGATION Mostly straightforward, although the trails on Fleetwith Pike are indistinct and the paths across Buttermere Moss have a tendency to vanish in the mire.

2 Lake District

ROCKY RIDGE, HIGH FELS

1 NY173169 Leaving the car park, turn right along the B5289 and right again along a track between the buildings. About 230m beyond the last building, go through the pedestrian gate on the right, soon descending on bare rock. When another trail later drops right, keep left, soon walking beside Buttermere. Follow the shore path until you're forced on to the asphalt. Continue in the same direction.

2 NY195149 About 150m beyond Gatesgarth Farm – and just after a cottage – turn right along a rough track. Immediately strike off left along an easy-to-miss path. This soon zigzags its way up the northern flank of Fleetwith Edge. The ridge path proper starts from the top of Low Raven Crag, where you're treated to views across to the High Stile range, taking in Hay Stacks and Buttermere too. The ensuing climb starts on grass, but rocky obstacles become more frequent higher up.

3 NY205141 From the cairned top of Fleetwith Edge, follow a path roughly east. After 320m, bear left at two forks, coming away from the main path but staying on the more exposed northern edge of the high ground. From the prominent rocks of Black Star, continue along the northern edge for now, soon passing above quarry workings.

4 NY212140 Join a clearer path from the right. As you do so, ignore another branch to the right, which crosses a makeshift bridge. Bear left at a fork, later joining the quarry road 70m east of a huge spoil heap. Turn

left and walk along the road for about 150m. Just before it bends left, drop right on to a path heading to the remains of the old tramway's Drum House 180m to the south.

5 NY215134 Step up on to the old tramway and turn left. Turn right on rejoining the quarry road. Leave the Honister Slate Mine via the vehicle entrance and turn right along the B5289 for 80m. Drawing level with the western end of the hostel,

climb north, with a fence on your left at first.

6 NY223153 Dale Head's summit is marked by a large cairn – a place to linger and drink in the views. To the north, you can look down the U-shaped dale with Skiddaw perfectly framed beyond the far end. From the top, the ridge path heads west-north-west. The route briefly splits on two occasions, but the braids quickly reunite.

7 NY214157 As the path begins climbing from the quarry road, ignore a trail peeling off right. After another climb, the path veers away from the fence for the pull to Robinson's summit,



High Stile, centre, and Red Pike, right, as seen from Robinson.

marked by a small cairn on some rocks.

8 NY201168 To descend, head north for about 90m. A path drops west, veering south-west. From the base of the slope, the route cuts across flat, boggy Buttermere Moss – initially west-north-west. After a very boggy dip, it climbs again. Ignore a faint trail on the right but, in another 140m, bear right (north-west) at an easy-to-miss, soggy fork.

9 NY188171 Join a path from the left on

the high (and dry) ground of High Snockrigg – on the moss's western edge. A few strides further on, follow the main path round a sharp left bend, ignoring the narrower trail heading north-east. This old peat road descends west-south-west at first, but zigzags further down the fell. The magnificent north-facing corries of the High Stile range dominate the scene

as you descend. At the road, turn left and then fork right just above the church. Follow the road back down into Buttermere village. The lane leading into the car park is on the left before the Bridge Hotel.

GET THERE

Walk starts from the Lake District pay & display car park in Buttermere village, served in summer by bus 77/77A from Keswick.

EAT & DRINK

There are several good pubs and cafés in this tiny village, including the Bridge Hotel.

STAY OVER

Buttermere has B&B accommodation, a campsite and a YHA hostel.

BEST MAPS

- OS Explorer OL4 (1:25k)
- OS Landranger 89 (1:50k)
- Harvey Superwalker XT25 Lake District North (1:25k)



DIFFICULTY	MEDIUM
DISTANCE	9.1KM
TIME	4 HOURS
TOTAL ASCENT	701M
PEAK BAGGER STATS	
MUNROS	1



Goat Track

The desolate landscape of Coire an t-Sneachda.

SARAH RYAN

An afternoon is all you need for this **Cairngorm** scramble up Stob Coire an t-Sneachda and onto the vast plateau.

I hadn't set out to climb this when I did. I just had a few hours before a long drive home, and wanted one last sight of the stark Northern Corries, one last taste of that granite-tinted air. What I found was even better. There, snaking up behind the scattered pools of Coire an t-Sneachda, was a thin little rake: the Goat Track.

This climber's descent path can, in better weather, make a quick and fun way up onto the plateau. In little more than a couple of hours, you go from the giant, thronged Cairn Gorm car park to the edge of one of

Scotland's starkest landscapes. To one side, the escarpment plummets away to the glimmering pools, suddenly very distant, below. To the other, is the seemingly endless plateau.

Not that far away is the head of one of the highest hills in the country. Beautiful, dark, desolate Coire an t-Sneachda is worth a visit in itself but this little scramble, in a landscape where scrambles and short walks are few, makes it even better. Beware of rock fall though – especially after heavy weather – and be vigilant for climbers above and below. SARAH RYAN

IS IT FOR ME?

FITNESS It's short, so stamina isn't an issue, but agility and confidence are a must on the scramble.

TERRAIN Well maintained path to start which peters out in the corrie. Then loose, rocky ground up the headwall with mild exposure.

NAVIGATION Straightforward, becoming trickier in the corrie. Good route-finding on steep ground useful. Cloud makes the plateau confusing and intimidating.



3 Cairngorms

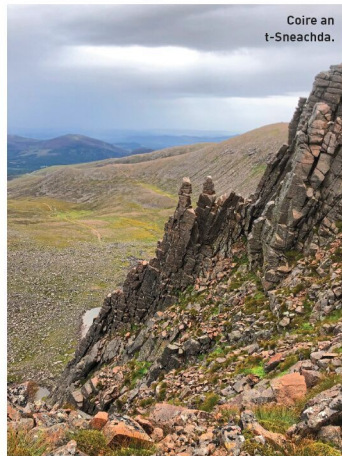
SHORT & SHARP SCRAMBLE

1 NH989060 Walk up the car park to the stone-fronted building housing the Information Centre and ticket station. Outside the Day Lodge, past a blue and green sculpture, turn right onto a broad gravelled track that leads over a stream, then passes a small building and ski tows. Another path soon joins from downhill. Continue ahead on this well-maintained gravel path through thick heather moorland. Notice the characteristic pink of the Cairngorm granite underfoot. After 500m look out for a path branching uphill to the left.

2 NH986057 Just past the crest of the spur, a flagged stone path leads off uphill left. Don't miss this! Continuing ahead will take you into the neighbouring Coire an Lochain. Follow the path on a rising traverse up the broad spur of Flacall a' Choire Chais with the domed tops of the northern hills coming into view ahead of you and the gleaming waters of Loch Morlich behind. In season, look out for cloudberry and dwarf cornel flowers in the heath. After 900m, descend towards the bright young waters of the Allt Coire an t-Sneachda.

3 NH987047 Before the stream, the path forks, with one branch crossing the stream and another following it south higher and deeper into the corrie. Take the latter. As you climb, the ground becomes rockier and more sparse and the dramatic, shadowy corrie walls come within sight. They look impenetrable – but they aren't. After about 580m the path crosses the nascent stream to continue ahead with the water on your left. Continue to climb until you crest a low rise to enter the rock littered bowl of the corrie with its collected pools.

4 NH993032 This is a lovely place for a break and a good vantage point to scout out the next section of the path cutting left to right across the lower, grassy scree slopes. Pass between the two main pools to pick up the bottom of the



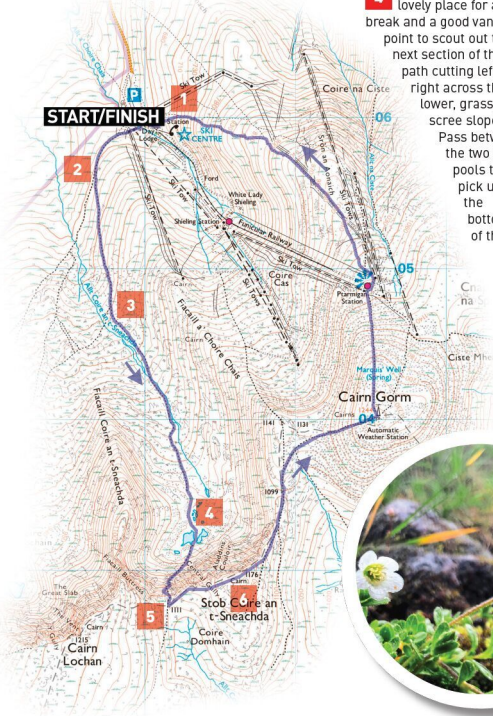
gravelled path behind the largest of the pools. Here, for the first 40m climb, it's fairly clear and the ascent gentle. After the 950m contour, it becomes much more loose with the ground to your right steepening away. In places, it flows with water, in others it is cloaked with moss. The rake passes alongside the main buttresses with route finding mainly clear but use of your hands becomes increasingly unavoidable.

trajectory upwards to emerge on the bouldery expanse of the plateau. Turn immediately left to traverse above the cliffs with their blocky turrets and great sloping slabs to the cairn atop Stob Coire an t-Sneachda.

6 NH96029 Past the cairn keep handrailing the edge, dropping into a shallow gully and then cutting right across the top of Coire Raibeirt. This part can be very difficult in cloud and may require the use of a compass. Climb the broad head of the hill north-of-east to Cairngorm's unglamorous summit. From here, take the highway due north and downhill to the Ptarmigan café, passing it on the right to pick up the path along Windy Ridge. The path passes to the left of ski tows, bending gradually west. About halfway down, after 1.4km, take the left fork following it downhill and back to the car park.

5 NH991028 After the 1050m contour, the path stops traversing and heads more directly upwards on a loose route

through boulder outcrops with the turrets of the upper headwall coming within sight. In places it branches and rejoins but keep a faintly zigzagging



GET THERE

Starts from the giant Coire Cas car park. A semi-regular bus (37/X37) calls from Aviemore where there is also a railway station.

EAT & DRINK

In order of altitude: Ptarmigan café 1080m up on Cairn Gorm; Cairn Gorm café at Coire Cas; Pine Marten Bar and Scrán. Good, basic grub.

STAY OVER

Van park up at Coire na Ciste car park (£10 p/n); four-star Cairngorm Lodge Youth Hostel; Glenmore Caravan and Campsite by Loch Morlich.

BEST MAPS

- OS Explorer OL57 (1:25k)
- OS Landranger 36 (1:50k)
- Harvey British Mountain Map Cairngorms & Lochnagar (1:40k)



DIFFICULTY	HARD
SCRAMBLE	GRADE 1
DISTANCE	19KM
TIME	10 HOURS
TOTAL ASCENT	1600M
PEAK BAGGER STATS	
CORBETTS	2



Cir Mhor and Goat Fell.

JAMIE ROOKE

Glen Sannox

Does this route in **Scotland** offer one of the best mountain days in the UK?

The Isle of Arran is one of the best places in Scotland. If you know, you know. If you didn't know, now you do! Now, with that bold claim out of the way, here comes another: The Glen Sannox horseshoe is one of the best mountain days in Britain – definitely a contender for the best day I've had out in the mountains.

Make no mistake, though, it's a biggy. The terrain is hard going at times and it will drain you. There are ridges, scrambling, scrambling over ridges, difficult route-finding, sea views, dramatic mountain views and, if you're lucky,

you might even catch an eagle viewing you. Every angle you view this route from while you're on it is quite simply awesome, and it's only the scale of the day that actually keeps you moving!

Back to the island itself – stay an extra day or two. Enjoy it. Swim in the sea and eat as the sun goes down. I shared dinner with Gwen, Iris, a mouse and a robin – it was simply the best trip to the mountains ever. Go. Fall in love with the place. **JAMIE ROOKE**

IS IT FOR ME?

FITNESS Extremely tough day.

TERRAIN Difficult. Grade 1 scrambling, exposed ridges, steep loose ground. Some moorland.

NAVIGATION All the big navigation – mountain to mountain – is fairly straightforward, but there are some very difficult route-finding choices at the micro level.



4 Isle of Arran

BIG MOUNTAIN DAY

1 NS015454 Follow the path past the cemetery until a river cuts directly through the it. Handrail! It uphill on its right-hand side to reach the high ground. You'll probably get drawn to the right about halfway up, onto a track that disappears. Once you lose this track, push uphill to the high ground to regain the true path that leads you to the slopes of Cloch na h-Oighe and a closing traverse that crosses an awkward slab.

2 NR999443 The track loses definition as it rounds the nose of the mountain and slabs appear on your left. Scramble up the slabby ground, moving leftward immediately to find the easiest and safest ground. The scrambling is soon over and a good track leads to the summit.

3 NR999439 Descend awkwardly from the summit, down to the ridge below, for exposed but easy scrambling along its crest or a bypass path down on its right-hand side. The ridge broadens out to become a steady walk to north Goatfell. As you approach north Goatfell, keep an eye out for the split in the track and take the rightward fork that leads up to the summit.

4 NR989423 Descend west down the ridge. The initial section is very tricky, starting off quite loose then leading to a steep and awkward slab. Take care in the wet. It's best to bypass the pinnacle immediately after this on its left. The ascent of Cir Mhor looks impossible as you approach but is easy to follow with a good path pretty much all the way. There are some eroded sections. As you reach the towering pinnacles, curve rightward around them, to the summit.

5 NR972431 Descend around the rim of the northern cliffs of the summit, through rocky awkward terrain, and pick up the track to

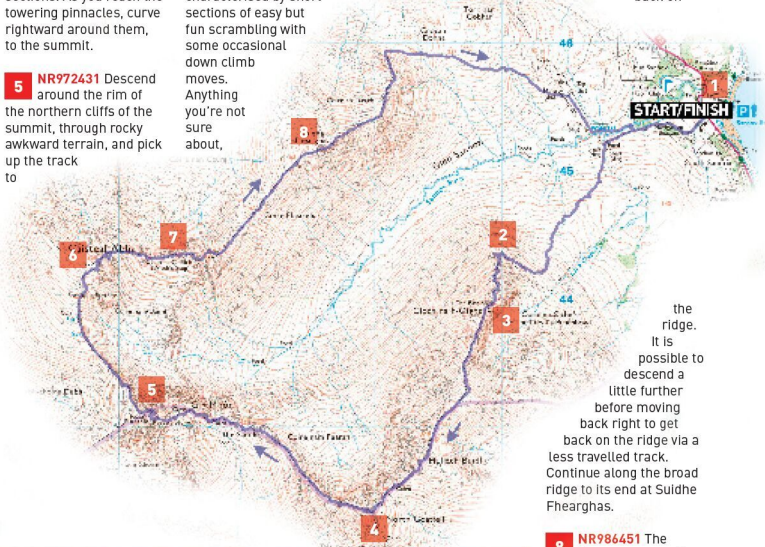
Castell Albheill and the last big climb of the day. The view back from here is especially impressive. The summit area is made up of 'stacked' blocky pinnacles. To gain the true summit of the mountain, the easiest option ascends the eastern pinnacle via a path around its left side.

6 NR969443 From the Castell, head down to the east ridge which is characterised by short sections of easy but fun scrambling with some occasional down climb moves. Anything you're not sure about,

just avoid it by going around its right. At **NH975443** a large pinnacle offers some very tricky scrambling. Just bypass it.

7 NR976443 The Witches Step. It's steep, technical and intimidating. You'll need to be comfortable downclimbing Grade 1 scrambling, with the route-finding skills to

match. As you start to descend, keep more to the left, then slightly zigzag through the easiest terrain to finish with a very tricky move at the bottom, again on the left. In the tight bealach between the rock, descend left to pick up the steep and path into the gully for about 25m where a tricky move on the right wall leads to yet more scrambling along a steep path to get you back on



the ridge. It is possible to descend a little further before moving back right to get back on the ridge via a less travelled track. Continue along the broad ridge to its end at Suidhe Fhearghas.



Up on Suidhe Fhearghas, with Cir Mhor in the distance.

TOM BAILEY

8 NR986451 The descent starts off easy enough but soon becomes loose and difficult to follow as it swings to the north. It feels like it's leading you away from the finish but eventually levels off. At about the 350m contour, a faint track leaves the steps and cuts east near Cnocan Donna then descends south-east to an old quarry track and the river. Cross the bridge and regain the track to the cemetery and finish.

GET THERE

Route starts/ends in Sannox. There is a good public transport network around the island, and it's possible to travel across on foot.

EAT & DRINK

Have a picnic by the sea, of course! The Corrie Hotel just down the road is good for a pint and some food if you're too tired.

STAY OVER

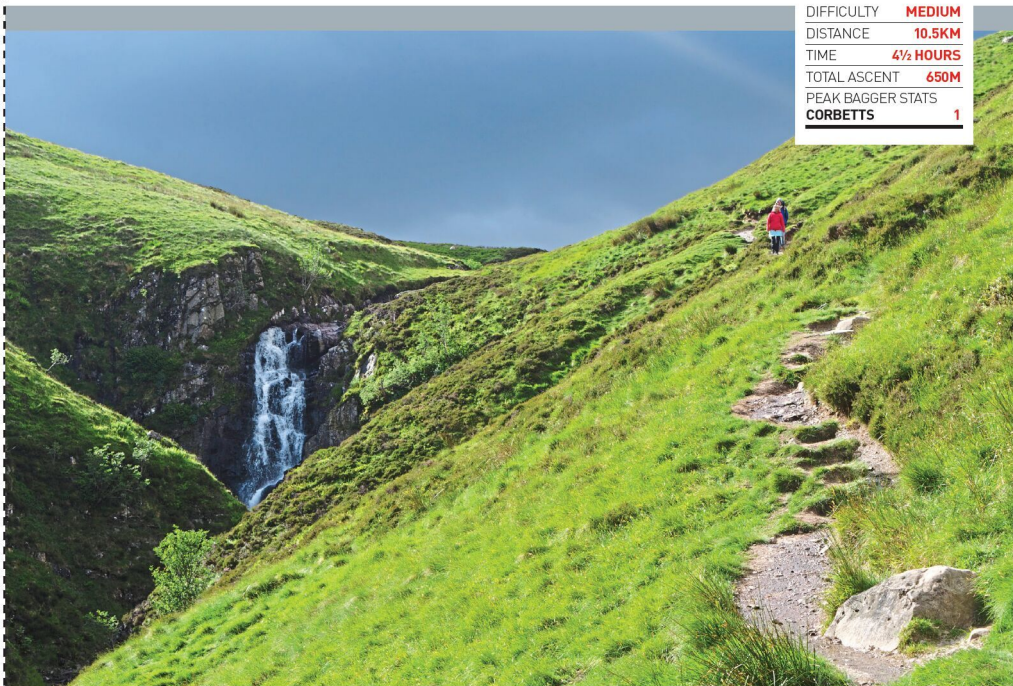
There are a few good spots for responsible camping near the sea at Sannox, with a public toilet at the car park.

BEST MAP

■ Harvey Superwalker XT25
 Isle of Arran (1:25k)



DIFFICULTY	MEDIUM
DISTANCE	10.5KM
TIME	4½ HOURS
TOTAL ASCENT	650M
PEAK BAGGER STATS	
CORBETTS	1



White Coomb

Walking above
Grey Mare's Tail.

RONALD TURNBULL

A small scramble in the **Southern Uplands** could also be a primer in the Scots language.

In the Southern Uplands, a scramble of any sort comes as a surprise. The greywacke bedrock just ain't built for it. But here on White Coomb, the word 'Linn' could be a clue. Well it could be if you were unusually clued up on Scots hill lingo – or, indeed, the works of our national poet Robert Burns. 'He spak o' loupin in a Linn' – poor Duncan Grey considered leaping into a rocky-walled, steep-sided, romantic little ravine. Trouble was, White Coomb was a bit of a trek across from Ayrshire back in the 18th century.

Midlaw's a very little linn. But romantic it certainly is, with its tumbling burn, its little

waterfalls, and its wild flowers of bladder campion and lady's mantle. And the scramble at its top end may be a mere 10m, but it involves sidling around a pool, some nice big handholds reached through a layer of luxuriant mosses, and a wiggle out along a little stream. A wee gem indeed.

But, turning our feet to bigger things, the day in the Southern Uplands also involves the ascent of White Coomb, southern Scotland's fourth-highest hill; its highest body of water, Loch Skeen; and the UK's sixth-tallest waterfall, the particularly impressive Grey Mare's Tail. RONALD TURNBULL

IS IT FOR ME?

FITNESS Not too strenuous, with a high car park and good paths.

TERRAIN Paths and gentle grassy hilltops; rough grassland into Midlaw Linn [Grade 1, easy in the grade]; brief steep section on descent; crossing of Midlaw Burn difficult if in spate.

NAVIGATION Fairly straightforward, fences to follow on the higher ground, care needed leaving White Coomb summit.



5 Southern Uplands

SMALL SCRAMBLE

1 NT185145 From the car park left (west) of the stream, an out-and-back path runs up into the gorge entrance for as good a view of the waterfall as you're going to get, about 400m away. Return and cross a footbridge to the path slanting up right then at once back left. It slants up the steep



Loch Skeen.



Waterfall above Grey Mare's Tail.

slope high above Tail Burn, to arrive above the top of the waterfall.

2 NT182150 The path now runs above the Tail Burn, to arrive with exhilarating suddenness at the outflow of Loch Skeen. Mid Craig and Lochcraig Head are impressive across the water. Cross the outflow for a small path alongside the loch around its southern corner. The path then heads directly for the foot of Mid Craig's south-east spur rising ahead. At the foot of this spur a boulder (**NT170160**) is the point to turn off left for Midlaw Linn. Head along the slope foot, keeping level, on grass avoiding heather patches. Soon the linn is seen ahead.

3 NT163161 Cross a fence at the linn foot. Head up in the linn to the two small waterfalls at its head. Skirt to right of the final pool, then go up mossy rocks with good holds to left of the right-hand waterfall. Exit along the

5 NT153153 Turn back east, slanting down to join a fence and broken wall. Follow the fence down across the wide and almost flat saddle and up the gentle slope towards White Coomb. Just before the fence corner cross a stile on the left. Continue to the fence corner and turn half right, south, on a faint path to White Coomb's small summit cairn.

6 NT163151 Head north-east on a faint path, soon with the east ridge over Rough Craigs seen below. The path joins a broken wall and runs to left of it. At Rough Craigs (650m contour) the ridge steepens. The path here is rebuilt with stone steps, zigzagging down left then back again. Below the steep section, rejoin the broken wall on your right and follow it downhill on a peaty path to its left.

right-hand stream to open slopes. Head up north-east, crossing the fence at its corner post, to the summit of Mid Craig, with crag drops ahead and great views over Loch Skeen.

4 NT163164 A path continues north-west down very gentle slope to the wide, flat saddle behind. Head up the slope ahead onto the wide, flat ridge at its top. Turn left, beside a fence, over the imperceptible hump of Donald's Cleuch Head to the fence junction on Firthhope Rigg. Cross a stile on the right, then recross a second stile, to reach the fence corner and Firthhope's summit cairn.

7 NT173151 The wall and path rise slightly onto the heathery hump of Upper Tarnberry. Before reaching its top the path and old wall turn down left, east, to reach Tail Burn. Cross to the path on the other side, and turn back down it to the car park.

GET THERE

Small and scenic A708 road from Moffat or Selkirk. No public transport.

EAT & DRINK

Café at St Mary's Loch and Gordon Arms, both on road to Selkirk. Cafés in Moffat, or bar meal at the Star Hotel – officially the narrowest in the world!



STAY OVER

Hotels Moffat, Selkirk, or Gordon Arms 18km towards Selkirk.

BEST MAPS

- OS Explorer 330 (1:25k)
- OS Landranger 79 (1:50k)



Safely over the 'bad step'
on Sharp Edge.



Scrambling Saddleback

Settle into Threlkeld for a weekend on the **Lake District** hill with two names and four separate scrambles.

Blencathra or Saddleback? It's the hill that's so good they named it twice. From the front it's Blencathra, with the classic scramble ridgeline of Hall's Fell. It is Grade 1, but the easy end of the grade. The rocky steps are short, with plentiful ledges. Most of the way there's a little path winding its way up.

Seen from the side we have Saddleback, with another classic scramble up Sharp Edge. Here the ridgeline is rock. The drops and empty air are right at your elbow, either

exciting or unsettling depending on how you feel about drops and empty air. And the awkward moment is a step across the top of one of those empty spaces.

But the scrambling doesn't stop there. The ridge of Bannerdale Crag isn't even Grade 1, but it's a scramble of a different sort: wild and shaggy among the heather stalks. While the ascent of Blease Gill isn't actually scrambling at all – but it's not walking either. Let's just call it exploration.

RONALD TURNBULL

ROUTE 6
Sharp Edge
ROUTE 7
Bleaze Gill
ROUTE 8
Bannerdale Crag

RONALD TURNBULL



GET THERE

Take A66 In from the motorway at Penrith. Buses X4/X5 from Penrith station.

EAT & DRINK

Two pubs in Threlkeld, the Horse & Farrier is more upmarket than the Sally Arms. Also try the Mill Inn at Mungrisdale.

STAY OVER

Bunkhouse at White Horse Inn in Scales, YHA and hotels in nearby Keswick, Blakebeck Camping Barn near Mungrisdale.

BEST MAPS

- OS Explorer OL5 (1:25k)
- OS Landranger 90 (1:50k)



6 Lake District

CLASSIC SCRAMBLING RIDGE

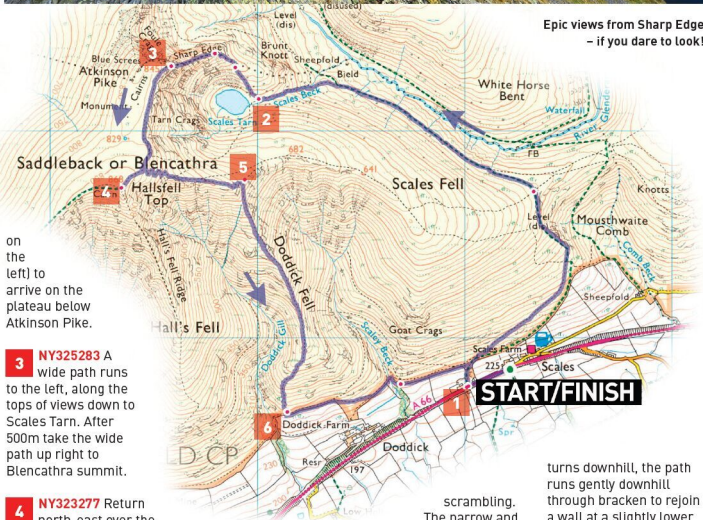


DIFFICULTY **HARD**
SCRAMBLE **GRADE 1**
DISTANCE **8KM**
TIME **4½ HOURS**
TOTAL ASCENT **650M**
PEAK BAGGER STATS
WAINWRIGHTS **1**
TRAIL 100S **1**

Sharp Edge

1 **NY342268** Follow the A66 pavement towards Keswick for 300m. At a couple of houses a path leads up onto open fell. Take the path slanting up to the right, passing high above White Horse Inn. The path heads along the brink of Mouthwaite Comb, to the foot of the Scales Fell ridge. The ridgeline has an up-and-down path. Go straight across that, onto a contouring path above River Glenderamackin. After 1km the path turns left uphill beside Scales Beck to the outflow of Scale Tarn.

2 **NY330281** Take the wide path up right, to the foot of the jagged ridge of Sharp Edge. The best way now is to follow the rocky crest, on clean rock with good holds (gritty paths on the right-hand flank are less secure). After passing to the right of a little tower, there's an awkward step down across a gap. Then the ridge steepens as a slabby wall. A few steps down right gives a groove line running upwards. At its top, keep directly uphill on firm, easier rocks (rather than gritty paths



Epic views from Sharp Edge – if you dare to look!

on the left) to arrive on the plateau below Atkinson Pike.

3 **NY325283 A** wide path runs to the left, along the tops of views down to Scales Tarn. After 500m take the wide path up right to Blencathra summit.

4 **NY323277** Return north-east over the plateau edge, and continue down well built zigzags onto the Scales Fell ridge. Keep to the right of the path for vertiginous views down into Doddick Gill. The path goes down a second set of zigzags, and at the foot of these a small path turns down to the right over the steep edge.

5 **NY329277** The path, small stony and rather loose, slants down steep grass to join the crest of Doddick Fell. This ridge is fairly narrow, with views into the chasms on either side. It's slightly rocky underfoot, but without any actual

scrambling. The narrow and enjoyable ridge extends down to the 450m contour. As the ridge widens the main path wanders down south-west. Finally it steepens down to the wall at the fell foot above pastures.

6 **NY331266** Turn left on the path above the wall. Where the wall

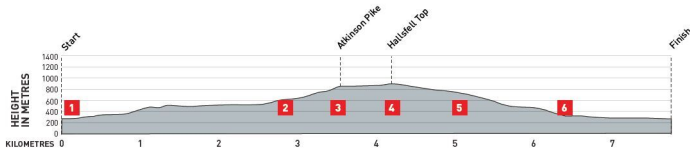
turns downhill, the path runs gently downhill through bracken to rejoin a wall at a slightly lower level. Then it dips to cross Scales Beck, with two rather steep, scramly descents on clean, well worn rock which would be Grade 1 in a more mountain context. The path continues above the fell wall. After 400m, drop right to the gate down to A66 or keep ahead for the White Horse Inn.

IS IT FOR ME?

FITNESS Not seriously strenuous – the scrambling doesn't require arm strength.

TERRAIN Hill paths. Grade 1 scrambling (hard in the grade), with some seriously exposed moves above drops.

NAVIGATION Paths are clear and easy to follow.



Blease Gill & Hall's Fell

DIFFICULTY	MEDIUM
SCRAMBLE	GRADE 1
DISTANCE	6.5KM
TIME	4½ HOURS
TOTAL ASCENT	700M
PEAK BAGGER STATS	
WAINWRIGHTS	1
TRAIL 100S	1

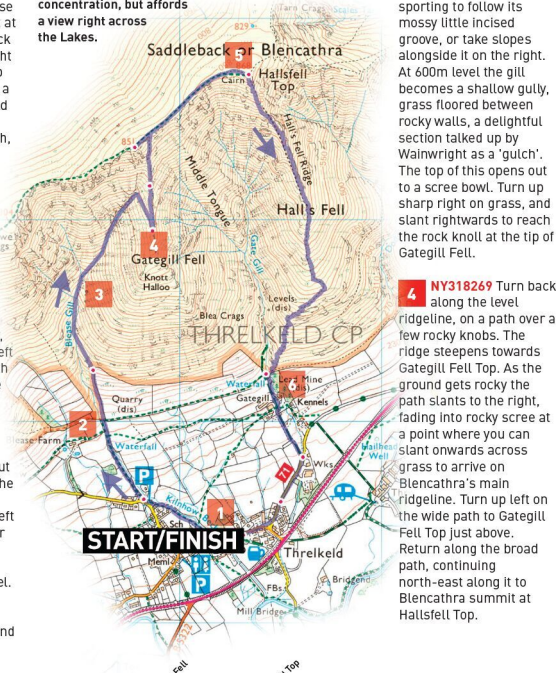


1 NY322254 Head west from the Horse & Farrier and turn right at a path signpost to a track beside houses. Fork right up a path which runs up beside Kilnow Beck to a car park above Threlkeld (NY318255). Take an uphill track past a bench, which becomes a path alongside the wooded beck. After a footbridge and some small waterfalls the path emerges at the foot of the open fell, with the hollow of Blease Gill running in ahead.

2 NY316260 To the right of the hollow, take the path rising to left of a wall. Where the path bends right towards the spur crest keep ahead, contouring above the stream across steep, rough ground, with bracken at first. Once out of the bracken drop to the stream and follow its banks, crossing to the left hand slopes for grassier going, then rejoin the stream to reach the confluence at 480m level.

3 NY315267 Follow the small right-hand

A descent down Hall's Fell requires concentration, but affords a view right across the Lakes.

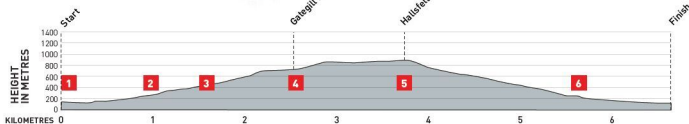


stream up north-east. It's sporting to follow its mossy little incised groove, or take slopes alongside it on the right. At 600m level the gill becomes a shallow gully, grass floored between rocky walls, a delightful section talked up as a 'gulch'. The top of this opens out to a scree bowl. Turn up sharp right on grass, and slant rightwards to reach the rock knoll at the tip of Gategill Fell.

4 NY318269 Turn back along the level ridgeline, on a path over a few rocky knobs. The ridge steepens towards Gategill Fell Top. As the ground gets rocky the path stants to the right, fading into rocky scree at a point where you can slant onwards across grass to arrive on Blencathra's main ridgeline. Turn up left on Blencathra's main ridgeline. Turn up left on the wide path to Gategill Fell Top just above. Return along the broad path, continuing north-east along it to Blencathra summit at Hallsfell Top.

5 NY323277 At your toes, the rocky Hall's Fell descends straight towards the valley floor. Follow it down, keeping close to the crest on easy scrambling (Grade 1 even in descent) and short sections of path. At 600m level the scrambling's all over. The ridge runs level, to its steep end. The steep and rather stony path descends to the fell wall above Threlkeld, beside the exit of Gate Gill.

6 NY324262 Cross the stream and take a path downhill to the right of its small gorge. It runs down through Gategill farm to meet a lane, with Threlkeld a short way down to the right.



IS IT FOR ME?

FITNESS Fairly arduous because of all the scrambling ground.

TERRAIN Rough hill ground. Scramble descent Grade 1 (easy in the grade but taken in descent), crest is fairly exposed at one point.

NAVIGATION Needs care in pathless Blease Gill.

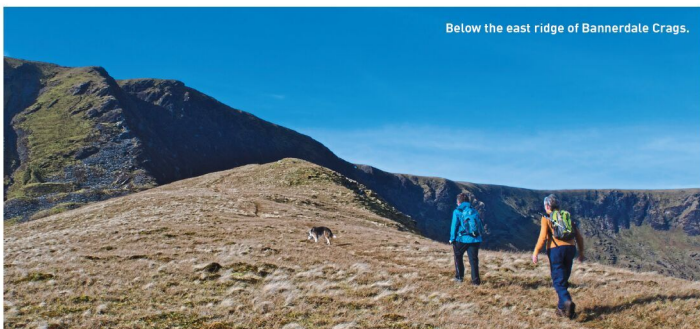
8 Lake District

SCRAMBLY RIDGELINE

DIFFICULTY **MEDIUM**
 DISTANCE **13KM**
 TIME **5½ HOURS**
 TOTAL ASCENT **800M**
 PEAK BAGGER STATS
WAINWRIGHTS 3
TRAIL 100S 1



Bannerdale Crags



Below the east ridge of Bannerdale Crags.

1 NY363302 Cross a footbridge to Mill Inn, then turn right over the river. Pass the road junction to a residential track on the left. This emerges onto open moor, becoming an engineered slab way across wet ground. The slabbed track bends left into Bannerdale, dipping to cross a stream (Bullfell Beck).

2 NY356302 Here leave the tempting trackway, for a rough path running upstream along the bank of River Glederamackin. Straight after the next stream crossing (Bannerdale Beck) bear up right on a grass path, which runs up the ridgeline towards Bannerdale Crags rearing intimidating and mountain-like ahead. After a steepish start, the ridge levels off, to the

foot of the steep east spur of the hill.

3 NY339291 The small path zigzags up on slatey stones, just left of the true crest, soon passing the ruin of an old mine building. It continues just left of the crest,

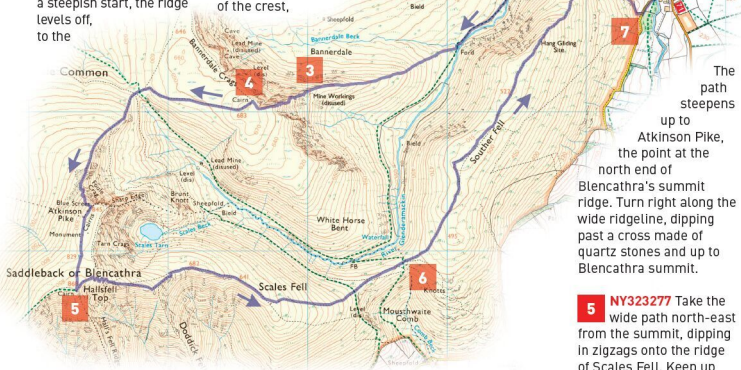
vestigial cairn at the true summit.

6 NY347279 Follow grass path up the spur to Souther Fell. As it eases off and levels, you can bear left to a nice non-summit cairn, then turn up right to an uncaired summit. Keep north-east over the second and main summit, also uncaired. The path ahead drops down a pleasant spur, gradually steepening. With the village hall seen directly below (has your car been broken into or stolen?) the path descends a few rocky metres where it's eroded down to the bedrock.

7 NY361300 Below this, don't keep downhill but take the clearer path slanting down to the right. It then contours around to join the little Scales road just above a gate. Turn left down through the gate, and as the lane descends to the River Glederamackin take a gate with footpath signpost on the right. Head upstream under trees to a small footbridge. Cross into a field, turn left to a small gate, and bear up right to join the main Mungrisdale lane. Follow it left to the village hall.

5 NY323277 Take the wide path north-east from the summit, dipping in zigzags onto the ridge of Scales Fell. Keep up right for the views down into Doddick Gill, then rejoin the path down a second set of zigzags. As the grassy ridge bends round south-east, fork left, east, on the path down to the narrow saddle south-west of Souther Fell.

4 NY335290 After the summit the path bends slightly right, descending gently to the pass at the head of the Glederamackin valley. A path runs up the ridgeline ahead, soon with steep drops to the left and views of Sharp Edge opposite.



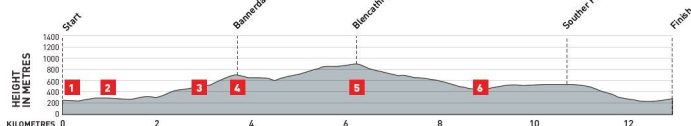
IS IT FOR ME?

FITNESS A moderately strenuous day, with the ascent in three separate stages.

TERRAIN Hill paths, and a rough, steep, scrambly ridgeline.

NAVIGATION Paths are generally clear, but need care at Scales Fell and coming off Souther Fell.

with a short scrambly bit where it's eroded down to bare rock. Then the spur relevels, to the sudden arrival at the summit plateau. Follow the plateau edge to the right for 50m to a cairn. Turn in from the plateau edge on a faint grass path to the



Looking down into Cwm Glas from the start of the descent of the Gyrn Las ridge.



Welsh rock odyssey

Join us on a 3-day scrambling journey through **Snowdonia**, staying on Grade 1 terrain, choosing alternative routes to the classics.

A journey through the mountains of Eryri is always enough to get the blood racing, but this 3-day weekend adventure adds another element of excitement – the prospect of linking up five excellent Grade 1 scrambles, lesser trod routes up famous peaks. Day 1 up the relatively famous Llech Ddu Spur takes you over the Carneddau, before two weaving gullies through immense crags on day 2 see you summit Tryfan and Glyder Fach. Day 3 is of course Yr Wyddfa (Snowdon), but via ridges you might see no-one else on. This weekend is a chance to see well known peaks by different routes, practice your scrambling navigation, and have a proper journey. **ALEX KENDALL**

ROUTE 9
Carneddau
ROUTE 10
Glyderau
ROUTE 11
Yr Wyddfa (Snowdon)

ALEX KENDALL



GET THERE

Trains to Bangor, then buses. The start and end points have bus connections, but check the timetable. Local taxi service available.

EAT & DRINK

Cafés on route in Idwal Cottage and Pen y Pass. Bus links to Capel Curig, Bethesda and Llanberis for evening meals.

STAY OVER

YHAs at the end of each day, as well as bus links to villages with the full range of accommodation. Campsites in the Ogwen Valley. Or wild camp!

BEST MAPS

- OS Explorer OL17 (1:25k)
- OS Landranger 115 (1:50k)
- Harvey British Mountain Map Snowdonia North (1:40k)



9 Eryri (Snowdonia)

MULTI-DAY SCRAMBLING



DIFFICULTY **HARD**
 SCRAMBLE **GRADE 1**
 DISTANCE **14KM**
 TIME **6-7 HOURS**
 TOTAL ASCENT **960M**
 PEAK BAGGER STATS
WELSH 3000S 2

Carneddau crossing

DAY 1

1 SH624666 From the war memorial on the main road in Bethesda, head north uphill through a variety of paths or minor roads to reach Gerlan, a village that connects directly with Bethesda. Follow the road to the end, just after a bridge crossing the Afon Llafar. Take the left-hand option at a track junction and then cross a stile to head up through a field. Cross the stile on the left at the top of the field and continue in the same direction, over a ford. The path now continues gently rising into Cwm Pen-llafar, which narrows ahead.

2 SH652651 The valley narrows as the slopes of Carnedd Dafydd close in on the right. The path is scrappy and there appears to be several options, but continue on the lowest option, which

runs parallel to and above the Afon Llafar. Avoid the path options that try and take you up Mynydd Du. This valley path becomes more defined, and ends after approximately one mile at the spectacular head of the valley. Ahead are the dark crags of Ysgolion Duon and to their right is the triangular buttress of Grib Lem, your next step.

3 SH665637 The scramble does not tackle the lowest buttress, so first head right into Cwmglas Bach and follow the stream that leads due south and upwards, in a screen-covered wide gully. As the initial buttress on your left now recedes, it is bisected by a grassy ramp with a worn path up it. Follow this path to the crest, which is where the Llech Ddu Spur scramble (Grade 1) begins. Continue up the crest of the ridge, tackling

4 SH662630 From the majestic viewpoint summit of Carnedd Dafydd, follow the broad path south-west which descends and then rises to the summit of Pen yr Ole Wen (1978m). From here the slopes and crags



Llyn Ogwen and Y Garn, with Cwm Idwal and the Devil's Kitchen.

north side of Llyn Ogwen to reach YHA Idwal Cottage and buses routes to Bethesda and Bangor. To do this, follow the white posts and gradually get closer to the lake. The alternative is to follow the track ahead a few hundred metres to the road where there is parking, and a campsite.

START

drop away towards the Ogwen Valley. From this summit, take the path that follows the east ridge down towards Afon Lloer. There are a few rock steps and a short scrambling chimney near the bottom, but the path is easy to follow.

The broad ridge path from Carnedd Dafydd to Pen yr Ole Wen.



IS IT FOR ME?

FITNESS Moderate – days are not long but uphill are steep.

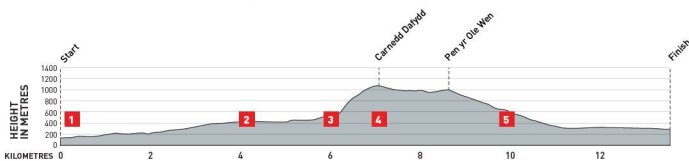
TERRAIN Scrambles are steep and rocky, with some vegetation; otherwise mountain paths.

NAVIGATION

Paths are easy, but scrambles require careful route-finding with descriptions. Get a scrambling guide for more detail.

difficulties or passing them at your will. The scrambling is in a fantastic position with plenty of options, and will lead you up to the plateau of the Carneddau, where a few hundred metres walk south-west takes you to the summit of Carnedd Dafydd (1044m).

5 SH666618 The path turns south on reaching the Afon Lloer, heading directly towards the Ogwen Valley. When close to the valley floor, you reach a stile near the farm at Taly Llyn Ogwen. From here there are two options for the night. Turn right (west) to join the path leading around the



DIFFICULTY	HARD
SCRAMBLING	GRADE 1
DISTANCE	8.5KM
TIME	6-7 HOURS
TOTAL ASCENT	1010M

Glyderau gully explorer

DAY 2

6 SH668605 Today's route is a continuation of day 1, but starting from the lay-by at the base of Tryfan Bach, near the rock of Tryfan Bach, close to Gwern Gof Uchaf campsite. Go through the gate at the western end of the large lay-by on the south side, and follow the track ahead until level with the campsite. Go through a gate, then turn right onto a path which leads to the right-hand side of Tryfan Bach. At Tryfan Bach the path steepens; follow it uphill past rock outcrops until you reach a fence. Turn right at the fence and follow the path up as it steepens and passes through what feels like a short gully, with rock walls on both sides. At the very top of this, as the path levels and there is a small cairn, turn left onto a faint path.

This eventually turns into the Heather Terrace, the way of accessing the scrambles and climbs on Tryfan's east face.

7 SH667599 Continue along the Heather Terrace, which slowly rises. You will need to keep concentrating to make sure you have the right route, and the one you are aiming for is Little and North Gullies (Grade 1). The first main gully you come to is Bastow Gully, then shortly after is Nor' Nor' Gully, followed by Green Gully. Then you will pass a buttress with distinctive vertical grooves running down it, before reaching North Gully, which can be identified by the large wedged block that gives the appearance of a cave. The next gully

along is Little Gully, which is relatively shallow compared to the others but is where the scramble starts.

8 SH665593 Follow the groove of Little Gully up, sticking to the easiest line over rocky steps; the line is straightforward but a harder section can be bypassed on the right. At the top of Little Gully, which

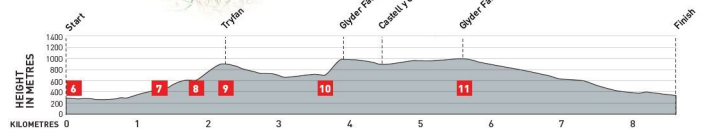
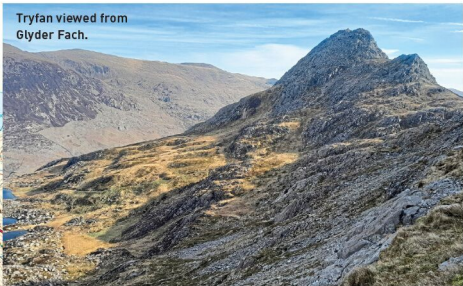
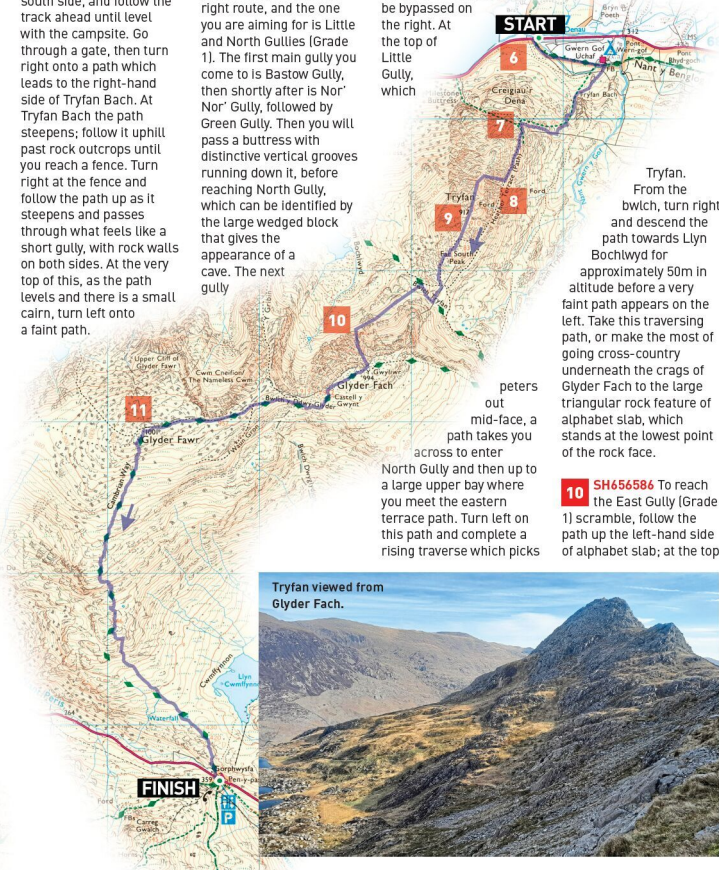
its way through a few rocky steps to take you right to the summit of Tryfan (917m).

9 SH664593 From the summit of Tryfan, descend the path that heads down the south ridge towards Bwlch

PEAK BAGGER STATS
WELSH 3000S **3**

of the slab, ignore the gully above and take an exposed traversing path to the right around the buttress until you reach the next gully. This is East Gully; head up the gully, past some lovely rock features and monumental surroundings. As the gully peters out and the scrambling ends, head left and pick your own way up the rocks that form a rib directly to the summit plateau of Glyder Fach. After exploring the summit, continue west over boulders and paths to the summit of the neighbouring peak, Glyder Fawr, passing and possibly scrambling up Castell y Gwynn on the way. Alternative option – if you want a bigger day, a nice link-up would be to descend Y Gribin (Grade 1) and then reascend Senior's Ridge (Grade 1) to return back to the summit of Glyder Fawr.

11 SH642579 Head south from the summit, firstly over boulders from where the path at first is difficult to pick up. The path descends towards the Llanberis Pass, and as the ground steepens ahead turns south-east to descend a broad ridge, taking you directly down to Pen Y Pass, where you will either have booked rooms at the YHA or can take the bus to Llanberis.



IS IT FOR ME?

FITNESS Moderate – days are not long but uphill are steep.

TERRAIN Scrambles are steep and rocky, with some vegetation; otherwise mountain paths.

NAVIGATION Paths are easy, but scrambles require careful route-finding with descriptions. Get a scrambling guide for more detail.

11 Eryri (Snowdonia)

MULTI-DAY SCRAMBLING



DIFFICULTY **HARD**
 SCRAMBLING **GRADE 1**
 DISTANCE **10KM**
 TIME **5-6 HOURS**
 TOTAL ASCENT **900M**
 PEAK BAGGER STATS
WELSH 3000S 2

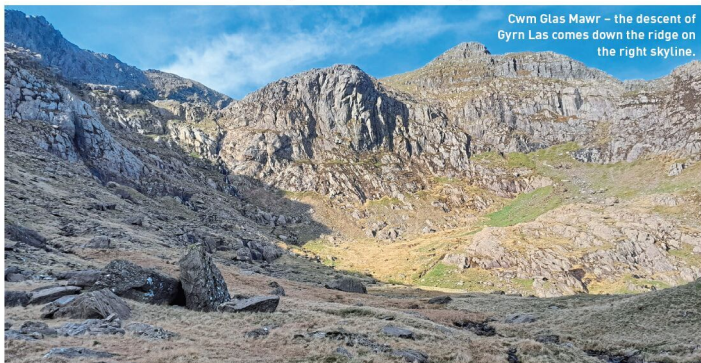
Snowdon's quiet edges

DAY 3

12 SH647556 Back at YHA Pen-y-Pass, follow the Snowdon Miners' Track, past Llyn Teryn, over the Llyn Llydaw causeway, and then as it ascends to just before reaching Glaslyn. On the left, the distinctive rocky ridge of Cribau rises up towards the bwlch between Y Llwiwed and Snowdon.

13 SH619545 Cross the Afon Glaslyn and ascend the ridge of Cribau (Grade 1). The situation is spectacular and the scrambling is extremely easy to follow; aim to stay roughly on the crest of the ridge all the way to Bwlch y Saethau. As the ridge flattens and the rock ends, there are two options. Either turn right to continue up the east ridge, or descend slightly to turn right onto the Watkin Path. Either way, you will soon find yourself on the summit of Snowdon (1085m).

14 SH609543 From the summit of Snowdon, follow the path north. On reaching the junction with the fingerpost, continue ahead and ascend the slope to the summit of Garnedd Ugain (1065m). Leave the summit heading roughly north, over a grassy hillside,



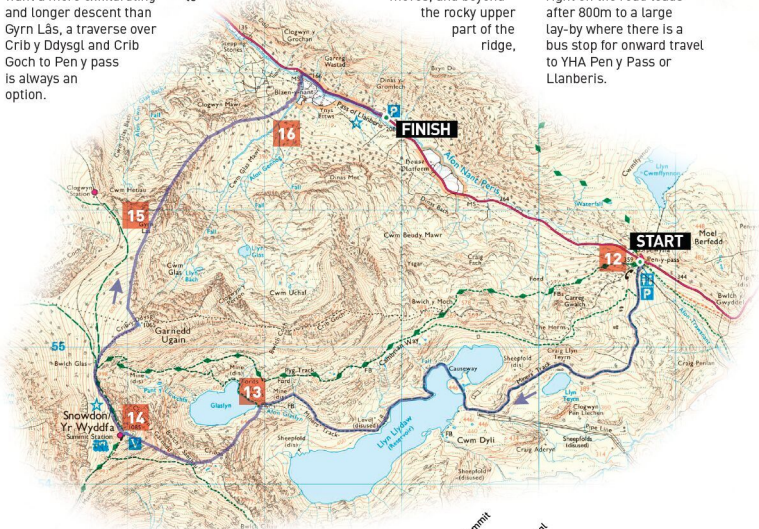
where the drop on the right gives you a fine view down over Cwm Glas and Crib y Ddsgyl. The grassy spur of Gyrn Lás is visible ahead, to the right of the Llanberis path and railway line beneath. Alternative option – if you want a more exhilarating and longer descent than Gyrn Lás, a traverse over Crib y Ddysgl and Crib Goch to Pen y pass is always an option.

15 SH611559 The descent of Gyrn Lás (Grade 1) is very straightforward for a graded scramble and is mostly a walk down into a secluded valley punctuated by rock steps for you to

descend. Keep an eye out for the path, which is sometimes faint. If the ground appears too steep ahead, the path has probably gone left (from the descender's point of view). The scrambling is never more than a few moves, and beyond the rocky upper part of the ridge,

the path becomes clear and leads you down to a stile across a wall above Blaen y Nant.

16 SH620566 Cross the stile and follow the path down to a track and then the road. Turning right on the road leads after 800m to a large lay-by where there is a bus stop for onward travel to YHA Pen y Pass or Llanberis.



IS IT FOR ME?

FITNESS Moderate – days are not long but uphill are steep.

TERRAIN Scrambles are steep and rocky, with some vegetation; otherwise mountain paths.

NAVIGATION

Paths are easy, but scrambles require careful route-finding with descriptions. Get a scrambling guide for more detail.

Glyndwr's Way passes Lyn Clywedog Reservoir in the shadow of Pumlumon Fawr, near Llanidloes.



HOW TO WALK

Glyndwr's Way

STEPHEN DOREY / ALAMY

Head into the heart of Wales for one of the quietest National Trails. **Paddy Dillon**, the author of the Cicerone guidebook *Walking Glyndwr's Way*, takes us through it.


Glyndwr's Way is named after the remarkable late-medieval Welsh leader Owain Glyndwr, and is one of three National Trails in Wales. It links at either end – Knighton and Welshpool – with the Offa's Dyke Path, and it makes sense to include two days along the Offa's Dyke Path to create a circular route.

The trail is an exploration of the green heart of Wales, chasing the shadow of an inspirational warrior and statesman. Glyndwr's Way is one of the quietest National Trails, exploring sparsely populated countryside, featuring a succession of hills and valleys largely used

for sheep-rearing. The route meanders around, with frequent twists and turns, ascents and descents, so that the scenery changes continually. Some of the higher parts feature open moorlands or forestry plantations. There are a handful of towns along the way, with a scattering of small villages and abundant small farms.

It takes some walkers a long time before they point their feet towards mid-Wales, but once they do so, they always return to experience more of its quiet, understated charm. Glyndwr's Way (days 1-9) sits squarely in mid-Wales, extending almost from the Welsh-English border to the coast, a total of 217km (135 miles).

It links with the Offa's Dyke Path (days 10 and 11) to bring walkers back to Knighton, an additional 47km (29 miles), and it links with the Wales Coast Path at its halfway point.

The route is entirely confined to the only inland county in Wales – Powys. This county was created in 1974 from three former inland counties – Montgomeryshire, Radnorshire and Brecknockshire. The only towns on Glyndwr's Way are Knighton, Llanidloes, Machynlleth and Welshpool, but there are also a dozen villages, most of which offer basic services. It's a lovely trail through quiet hills, forests and rolling countryside. 

KEY FACTS

START/ FINISH KNIGHTON (CIRCULAR WITH OFFA'S DYKE SECTION)

DISTANCE 264KM (164 MILES)

DURATION 11 DAYS

TOTAL ASCENT 7440M

REGION MID WALES

Looking south towards Pumlumon and Glaslyn, from Foel Fadian in the Cambrian Mountains.



DAVID ANGEL / ALAMY

FREESPIRITLANDSCAPES / ALAMY

Where will I stay?

There are several hotels, guesthouses and B&Bs in the towns along Glyndwr's Way, but these can become fully booked at busy times. In the smaller villages, there might only be a couple of lodgings, and if these are already full it could be half a day's walk to the next available place. The best approach is to have flexible dates for your trek, then start contacting places where you want to stay. If you reach an impasse at one point, then check whether an alternative day is free and rework the rest of your schedule. In some instances, there may be a bus service to a nearby place, or an off-route accommodation provider might be willing to offer a pick-up and drop-off service. There are walking holiday companies who can book all your accommodation and arrange baggage transfer. For a comprehensive and up-to-date list, go to nationaltrail.co.uk/en_GB/trails/glyndwrs-way

Can I camp?

There is a fairly good spread of campsites along the route. These occur almost at daily intervals, with some intermediate sites. Occasionally, a campsite might need to be pre-booked, or facilities might be quite basic, so it is worth checking these in advance. Wild camping opportunities are quite limited, as so

much of the countryside is agricultural/forested or rugged, boggy moorland. Anyone wishing to camp will should ask permission of the landowner, but in many cases it will be hard to find out who this is.

When should I walk it?

Glyndwr's Way could be walked at almost any time of year. Most walkers will aim for summertime in the hope of warm, sunny days and not too much rain. Bear in mind that some short stretches cross permanently boggy ground, and after prolonged rain some paths and tracks become quite muddy. It is well worth checking daily weather forecasts during your walk.

Is it waymarked?

Waymarking along Glyndwr's Way is often very good and nearly always more than adequate. Only rarely is it necessary to watch more carefully than usual for signposts and marker posts. However, it only needs one marker at a crucial turning to go missing and it could leave wayfarers floundering. So keep an eye on the map and the written route



Dylife Gorge, near Dylife in Powys. This amazing landscape is easily viewable from the back road to Machynllech from Llanidloes.

description. The standard National Trail acorn marker is used, but in almost every instance a two-legged red dragon symbol is also used. There is an optional ascent of Pumlumon Fawr after day 4 which is unwaymarked.

Where will I get food?

There are daily opportunities to pick up food and drink along Glyndwr's Way, but in some places there are plenty of options, while in other places there are very few. Opening times of pubs, restaurants, cafés and shops vary widely. Some accommodation providers offer evening meals and packed lunches, while others don't. If there is a chance that places will be closed, then you will need to buy supplies in advance and carry them for one or two stages. Full details of all pubs, restaurants, cafés and shops along Glyndwr's Way can be checked on the website nationaltrail.co.uk/en_GB/trails/glyndwrs-way

LONG-DISTANCE TRAILS

A short detour from Glyndwr's Way to Pumlumon Fawr leads to the source of the River Severn.



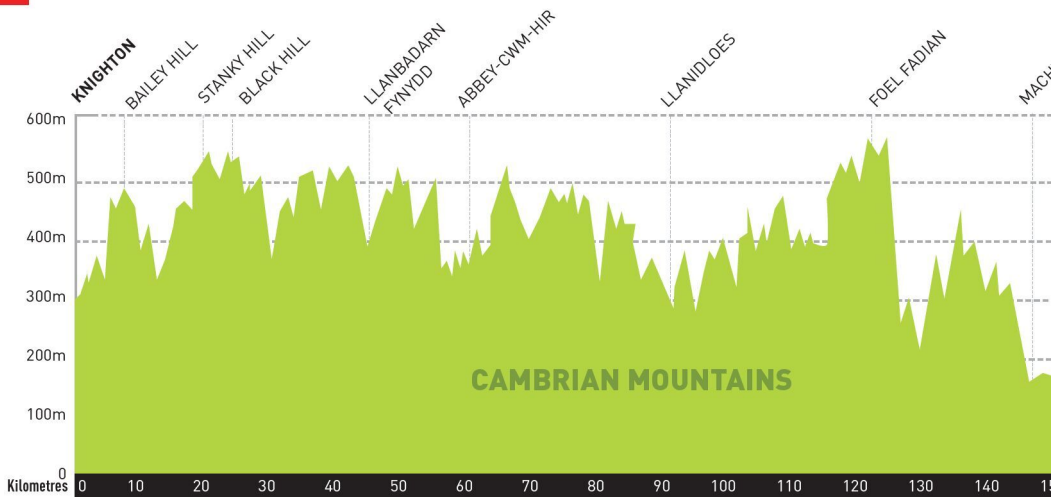
GLYNDWR'S WAY

THE WALK

The overwhelming impression of mid-Wales is of intensively sheep-grazed grassy hills, with rather unmemorable profiles, separated by verdant valleys and occasional moorlands. The landscape is surprisingly well settled and agricultural, with many farmsteads dotted around. However, there are only a handful of small towns and a few tiny villages, linked by a network of meandering minor roads, a small number of main roads, and even fewer railways.

Some poor-quality agricultural land has been turned over to forestry, and some forests are quite extensive. Plantations developed 50 years ago have often been harvested and replanted. Some windswept moorlands have caught the attention of 'wind farm' developers, and there are a handful of extensive upland sites featuring dozens of whirling wind turbines. As such developments have been banned in the Eryri (Snowdonia) and Bannau Brycheiniog (Brecon Beacons) National Parks, they have become concentrated in the hills of mid-Wales. The power companies have plans to expand, but there are considerable local lobbies against them.

In terms of wildlife, primarily, this is birdwatching country, and walkers with their eyes to the skies will be richly rewarded. Mid-Wales is often referred to as 'Kite Country'. Red kites were persecuted around Britain until they were left clinging for survival in one small part of mid-Wales. Given assistance in the form of feeding stations, as well as legal protection, they are now commonly seen quartering the skies, along with buzzards, hen harriers, merlins and peregrines. Towards the coast, near Machynlleth, ospreys can also be spotted in the summer. On elevated moorlands, watch for red grouse, curlew, snipe and hen harrier, along with smaller birds such as skylark, meadow pipit, ring ouzel, wheatear and whinchat. Moorland pools will attract a number of waders and wildfowl in the autumn and winter. Rivers may be frequented by the small, dark brown dipper.



CAMBRIAN MOUNTAINS

LONG-DISTANCE TRAILS



An aerial landscape of the lake near the Llyn Ctywedog Dam, Llanidloes.

GET THERE

BY RAIL: The terminal points of Glyndwr's Way (Knighton and Welshpool) are served by two railway lines fanning out from Shrewsbury, which is itself easily accessed from mainline rail services through Birmingham. tfw.wales

BY BUS: Bus services are patchy around the course of Glyndwr's Way, being fairly regular and frequent in and near towns, and completely absent in some other areas. Services such as these could prove useful, linking areas with little accommodation with areas offering more accommodation options.

JAMES DALE / ALAMY



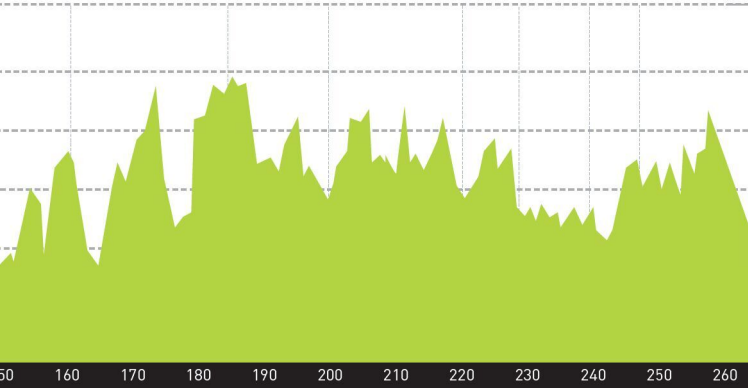
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11-DAY ITINERARY

1 Knighton to Felindre	15 miles (24km)
2 Felindre to Abbey-cwm-hir	15 miles (25km)
3 Abbey-cwm-hir to Llanidloes	15 miles (25km)
4 Llanidloes to Dylife	14 miles (23.5km)
5 Dylife to Machynlleth	14 miles (23.5km)
6 Machynlleth to Llanbrynmair	16 miles (25.5km)
7 Llanbrynmair to Llanwddyn	18 miles (29km)
8 Llanwddyn to Meifod	15 miles (24km)
9 Meifod to Welshpool	11 miles (17.5km)
10 Welshpool to Brompton Cross (Offa's Dyke Path)	14 miles (23km)
11 Brompton to Cross Knighton (Offa's Dyke Path)	15 miles (24km)

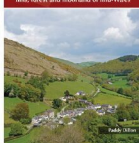
MACHYNLLETH
CEFN COCH
CERRIG Y TAN
LLANGADFAN
PONT LLOSEL
DOLANOG
PONTROBERT
BRONIARTH
HILL
WELSHPOOL



NOW GET THE GUIDEBOOK

MAKING GLYNDWR'S WAY

NATIONAL TRAIL through the rolling hills, forests and moorland of mid-Wales



If you're planning to walk Glyndwr's Way, order the excellent Cicerone guide by **PADDY DILLON** (new edition out this November). You get 1:50k Ordnance Survey

mapping of the route, plus a daily itinerary breaking down each section of the walk in great detail. **TRAIL** readers get a **20% DISCOUNT** using the code:

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COURTESY OF CICERONE

13.5KM	DISTANCE
1170M	ASCENT
GRADE 3	SCRAMBLE RATING

OUR EXPERT SAYS...

"You feel like you're climbing onto an island in the sky, from which your efforts are rewarded with amazing views and tumbling exposure."

Pillar Rock

A famous 'no-go' summit for hillwalkers who pass tantalisingly close by it on their way to the summit of Pillar, the monolithic Pillar Rock is nonetheless achievable, with a little help.

WORDS **BEN WEEKS**
PHOTOGRAPHY **BEN WINSTON**

MEET OUR LOCAL EXPERT



Based in Cumbria, Matt Le Voi is a Mountain Leader, Winter Mountain Leader, rock-climbing instructor, and founder and company director of

Lakeland Mountain Guides. Find out more about the services and events on offer at lakelandmountainguides.co.uk



BRITAIN'S GREATEST SCRAMBLES

Following in the footsteps (and handholds) of Lake District climbing pioneers.



Below Pillar Rock, with the pale 'Slab' clearly visible near the centre of the image.



Just about anybody who's ever written a route description on climbing Pillar, the big, broad-backed fell on the south side of Ennerdale, will have mentioned Pillar Rock. The words will mention how, beyond the northern edge of Pillar's expansive summit, Pillar Rock is a landmark monument that is impressive to observe but impossible to reach. And, in many ways, the description is correct. Getting onto Pillar Rock direct from Pillar's summit is impossible: a large crevice known as Jordan Gap separates the rock from the mountain. But that's not to say there's no way onto it...

Pillar Rock looks its best when viewed from the Ennerdale valley. From here, it's an obvious tower, distinct and separate from the mountain. It also doesn't look that tough. But as is so often the case in the mountains, the closer you get the more you realise that things weren't quite as straightforward as you thought. Pillar Rock is a prime example. From the valley it begs to be climbed, but once directly beneath its not inconsiderable bulk, the challenge is all too clear.

This is why, if you're keen to bag the Rock (and why wouldn't you be – it's incredible) you should enlist the support of one of those useful mountain guide types who are handy with a rope and all the shiny bits of metal that go with it in order to keep you safe. That's exactly what we did when we set out to climb it a few years ago, and we can't recommend the experience enough. And if you're wondering what an ascent of this most distinguished lump of Lakeland rock might look like, read on...



Belaying from the 'Notch'
on the Slab and Notch
routes up Pillar Rock.



BRITAIN'S GREATEST SCRAMBLES

1 The actual scrambling starts a long way up, so first you have to get there. The walk-in is substantial, but it's also among some of the finest mountain scenery in England. Whether you start in Buttermere and climb up and over Scarth Gap to reach Ennerdale (longish route), stroll up Mosedale from Wasdale Head (shorter route), or are fortunate enough to have spent the night in YHA Black Sall and started your day from there (shortest route), your first objective is Black Sall Pass – the saddle between Kirk Fell and Pillar. From here you'll head up and west over Looking Stead until you reach a cairn marking a path on the right that appears to descend towards Ennerdale. This is Pillar's 'High Level' route, and things are about to get spectacular.

2 Although 'just' a walkers' traverse path, the High Level route is one of the most magnificent paths in the Lake District. It descends at first, then contours across handsome fellsides, threading its way across several combs beneath towering crags and above the beauty of wild Ennerdale. Eventually it reaches Robinson's Cairn, a large and historic cairn (it's named on OS maps) built as a memorial to John Wilson Robinson, the pioneering rock climber and founding member of the Fell and Rock Climbing Club. A fitting landmark for this route, not least because the view of Pillar Rock from here is entire and awesome.

3 A path threads up the side of the large scree chute above Robinson's Cairn. You'll follow this up before cutting right onto another of Pillar's landmarks, the Shamrock Traverse. This cuts across a shelf of rock that, rather unhelpfully (particularly in the wet) slopes towards the drop on your right. Still, it's not too tricky, and a bit of rocky fun on the way to the scrambling. From the end of the traverse the paths winds up towards the summit of Pillar, passing by Pisgah. This lump is occasionally mistaken for the top of Pillar Rock (which is known as High Man), but Pisgah is reachable from Pillar, whereas the Rock is not. So, in order to get scrambling, you'll leave the main summit path and descend towards the gully beneath Jordan Gap – your guide will lead you down the best way.



Abseiling from the summit of Pillar Rock into Jordan Gap – a more direct option than downclimbing the route!

4 There's more than one way to climb Pillar Rock, but the most popular is the Slab and Notch route, and the Slab will be easily identifiable from the start of your climb. The ascent from here to the top is only about 50m, but from the get-go you're following in the footsteps of rock climbing pioneers. From the gully you'll head up a wall to the right and onto the slab. It's not quite as bare and featureless as the term 'slab' can sometimes suggest, and there are cracks and pockets for feet and hands. However, you're descending it at this point, and it can feel exposed.

5 From beyond the slab the climbing gets more vertical. A short rock step followed by a cracked wall lead up to the Notch – a gap in the arête. This is the trickiest part of the ascent and the bit that's likely to feel most like actual climbing. Imagine what this would have felt like in hobnail boots, tweed clothing, and with hemp

rope! From the notch you'll climb another broken wall on the arête to reach a ledge.

6 The top is not too far away now, so enjoy what remains of the climb. From the ledge you'll enter a gully and begin to ascend it on slabs. The gully narrows as it climbs, and before long you'll be popping out onto High Man, the summit of Pillar Rock. Wave to any walkers looking over from Pillar. You're allowed to feel smug.

7 Getting off the Rock can be tricky, but that's why you have a guide, right? You might abseil/be lowered into Jordan Gap, or you may downclimb, retracing your upwards journey back to the base of the gully below the gap. But before you continue your descent back to Buttermere, or Wasdale, or Ennerdale, we'd suggest (assuming that your guide doesn't object) making bagging the summit of Pillar itself part of the plan. After all, it'd be rude not to. **T**



Mam Tor

HOPE VALLEY PEAK DISTRICT

High point of the Peak District's Great Ridge and the Hope Valley's most iconic landmark, Mam Tor is a mountain on the move.



BEN WEEKS



CLIMB A STAR
OF THIS ISSUE P38

WALK IT

Getting to the 517m top of Mam Tor is easy – there's a car park at 422m and a good, stepped path from there to the summit. Getting the view shown on this photo is even easier – it was taken mere metres from a different car park at the road head near Blue John Cavern. Of course, if you want to make things a little more interesting and really earn your pub lunch or cream tea in Castleton, you can start from the village itself. Just follow the network of good footpaths across the dale-bottom fields towards Mam Tor's gravity-gripped eastern face. Alternatively, you can follow the old valley road, its solid tarmac face becoming increasingly cracked, fractured, and broken as it loops below the still shifting terra-not-so-firma of Mam Tor's crumbling facade.

THE FACTS

LOCATION At the head of the Hope Valley, just west of Castleton.
Grid ref **SK127836**

TERRAIN Good paths and nothing technical.

DIFFICULTY An easy stroll with limited opportunities to get into serious trouble.

THIS MONTH'S TOP CHALLENGERS



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