

# Day Walks in Fort William & Glen Coe

20 routes in the  
Scottish Highlands



**Helen & Paul Webster**



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**VP** First published in 2021 by Vertebrate Publishing.

Vertebrate Publishing, Omega Court, 352 Cemetery Road,  
Sheffield S11 8FT, United Kingdom.

[www.v-publishing.co.uk](http://www.v-publishing.co.uk)

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A CIP catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

ISBN 978-1-912560-64-6

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Front cover: Loch Leven and Loch Linnhe from the Pap of Glencoe (route 2).

Back cover: Corran (route 14).

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Design by Nathan Ryder, production by Cameron Bonser.

[www.v-publishing.co.uk](http://www.v-publishing.co.uk)

Printed and bound in China.

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\*Shortcut available



LOOKING ACROSS THE CORRAN NARROWS FROM DRUIM NA SGRÌODAIN

## Introduction

For many people, the journey north on the A82 from Tyndrum for the first time is a memorable experience. The road climbs and climbs, then emerges on the vast, almost flat, watery expanse of Rannoch Moor. Continuing across this emptiness, the great pyramidal peak of Buachaille Etive Mòr comes into view, contrasting starkly and acting as a sentinel for Glen Coe. The road then descends into Scotland's most dramatic glen, hemmed between the towering walls of the Three Sisters and the jagged ridge of the Aonach Eagach. This is a landscape with a grandeur beyond anything to the south.

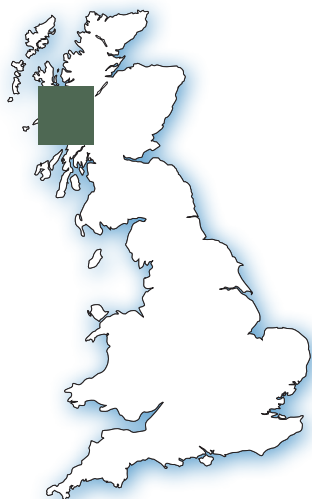
Emerging from Glen Coe the beautiful shores of Loch Leven are reached, extending right up to Kinlochleven at the foot of the Mamores. Beyond is Loch Linnhe, where the sea penetrates far inland, culminating at Fort William, the largest town in the West Highlands. Ben Nevis – the highest summit of them all – towers beyond, while beautiful Glen Nevis winds for miles into the mountains, a gateway to the stunning waterfall An Steall. To the north, the Road to the Isles leads to the dramatic monument at Glenfinnan, en route to a wonderful coast of sandy beaches and rocky bays.

It's no wonder that the region has called itself the Outdoor Capital of the UK. This is a walkers' wonderland par excellence. Here are imposing mountains with dramatic, airy ridges and precipitous crags; slender, winding sea lochs; atmospheric, brooding glens; towering waterfalls, and a convoluted, rocky coastline with deserted villages and a hidden history. This is a place whose secrets are best discovered by those on foot.

Be properly prepared though. This is an unforgiving landscape – the paths are rugged, sometimes boggy and sometimes nonexistent; the ascents can be demanding and arduous, while the weather is often wild. For those who treat this landscape with the respect that it deserves, the rewards are immense.

## Helen & Paul Webster





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**Day Walks** in  
**Fort William & Glen Coe**  
 Area Map & Route Finder

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# SECTION 1

## Glen Coe & Glen Etive

*Probably the most famous and possibly the most dramatic of all Scottish glens, Glen Coe's overpowering landscape is a perfect match for its dark history. It was here that the notorious massacre took place, with Campbell guests murdering their MacDonald hosts on government orders. To hillwalkers this is a true Mecca, epitomised by the great pyramid of Buachaille Etive Mòr, the guardian standing sentinel at the entrance to the glen, contrasting so starkly with the flatness of Rannoch Moor.*

*Just to the south, Glen Etive is much more secluded, threaded only by a slender ribbon of tarmac to the head of its namesake sea loch, rather than the thundering traffic through its neighbour. It is flanked by its own impressive mountain ranges, dominated by the great bulk of Ben Starav.*





LOOKING DOWN GLEN ETIVE FROM BUACHAILLE ETIVE BEAG





THE BEEHIVE CAIRN, GLEN COE

## 01 The Two Lairigs

15km/9.3miles

Link two historic passes on this circuit passing between some of the giants of Glen Coe.

A82 beehive cairn » Allt Lairig Eilde crossing » Lairig Eilde summit » Woodland gate above Glen Etive » Deer fence » Lairig Gartain summit » A82 » Telford's Road » Glen Coe » A82 beehive cairn

### Start

Car park on the south side of the A82, opposite a beehive-shaped memorial cairn and a short distance above The Study. GR: NN 188562.

### The Walk

The two lairigs are historic passes through the mountains between Glen Coe and Glen Etive. This walk combines both to make a circuit right around Buachaille Etive Beag – it's one of the few longer walks in the area that doesn't climb a mountain.

It starts by leaving Glen Coe to head south on a good path through the Lairig Eilde, whose name translates from the Gaelic as the 'pass of the hinds'. Once used as a coffin route, today it provides a secluded hike between the slopes of Buachaille Etive Beag and Bidean Nam Bian (the Three Sisters) on either side. During the initial climb the Allt Lairig Eilde is crossed on stepping stones. This is usually possible with dry feet although, like other crossings on this route, it may be impassable in spate.

Once over the high point of the pass the path becomes wetter as it descends towards Glen Etive. A fenced area of regenerating trees and scrub provides pause for thought on how this landscape might look if grazed more sustainably.

After crossing the burn the steep climb up to the second pass, the Lairig Gartain, begins; the name means the 'pass of the ticks' – you have been warned! The route is rough and boggy, but the views back down the length of the glen towards Loch Etive are ample reward. Eventually the sizable cairn marking the summit of the pass is reached.

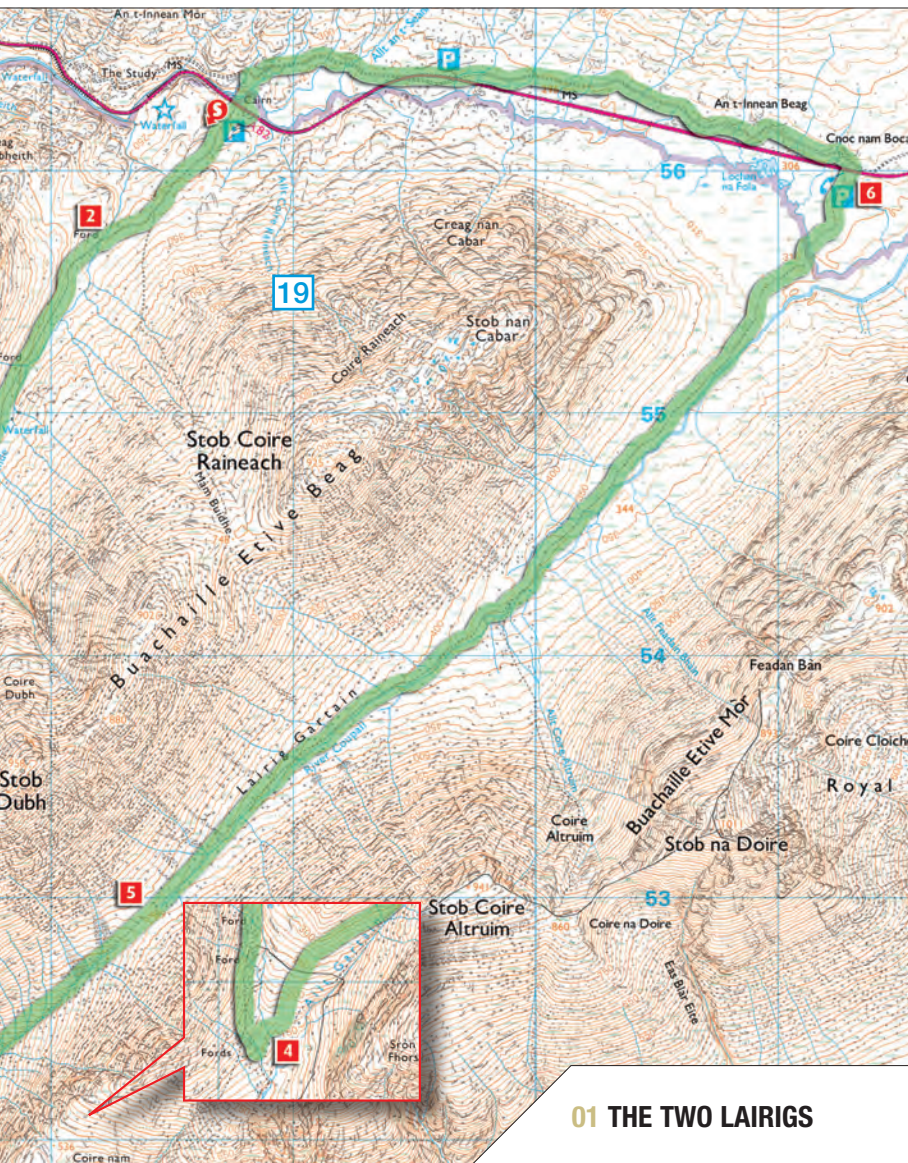
From here the route descends the glen of the River Coupall to head back into Glen Coe. After crossing the modern A82, it picks up the remains of Thomas Telford's road through the glen, itself a replacement for the military road built to help subdue the Highlands after the Jacobite rebellions. Now a very wet and boggy path, it soon leads back to the beehive-shaped cairn opposite the start.

#### THE TWO LAIRIGS

**DISTANCE:** 15KM/9.3MILES » **TOTAL ASCENT:** 573M/1,880FT » **START GR:** NN 188562 » **TIME:** ALLOW 5.5 HOURS  
**SATNAV:** PH49 4HY » **MAP:** OS EXPLORER 384, GLEN COE & GLEN ETIVE, 1:25,000 » **REFRESHMENTS:** KINGSHOUSE HOTEL, GLEN COE, OR CAFE AT GLENCOE MOUNTAIN RESORT » **NAVIGATION:** STRAIGHTFORWARD BUT VERY REMOTE; RIVER CROSSING MAY BE IMPASSABLE AFTER HEAVY RAIN OR IN SPATE CONDITIONS.







## 01 THE TWO LAIRIGS

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## Directions – The Two Lairigs



- 5** From the car park **take the signposted path** towards the Lairig Eilde. At a fork **keep right** and soon the path slopes down and fords the Allt Lairig Eilde. This is usually a straightforward crossing on stepping stones; however, water levels can rise quickly and after very wet weather it may not be possible to cross. If this is the case turn back as there are similar crossings further on.
- 2** **Climb gently** on the clear path and after 1.7km **cross the stream** again. Continue up the southern side of the glen to eventually reach the summit of the Lairig Eilde.
- 3** The path now **descends, steeply in places**, with good views down to Glen Etive ahead. When a fenced enclosure is reached **stay on the path** to aim slightly right and **go through a gate** into the young woodland. At a path junction, just before two large fence posts, **turn left down steps**. At another junction **turn left** again and follow the path to the burn.
- 4** **Cross the water** and head along the very boggy path up the slope opposite. **Climb steeply** and **go through a kissing gate** after which the conditions underfoot improve as the route heads into the Lairig Gartain.
- 5** The summit of the pass – 489m above sea level – is marked by cairn. From here the route **descends gently**, staying on the north side of the River Coupall, following the wide glen hemmed in between the mountains of Buachaille Etive Mòr (meaning the 'big herdsman') and Buachaille Etive Beag (the 'small herdsman').
- 6** Eventually the path reaches the main road at a layby with a footpath sign. **Cross the busy A82** and take an indistinct path opposite. This quickly **swings left** and follows the line of Telford's Road through Glen Coe. These days this part of the 'road' is a spongy mass of bog myrtle and heather. Just before an old stone bridge is reached **turn left** to leave the old road and follow a path towards the beehive-shaped cairn. **Cross the road** to return to the start.

