

18 LOCH HOURN to LOCH CLUANIE

This whole leg of 13 miles can be completed in one day. Cluanie Inn can provide accommodation at the end. Those who wish to spend some time visiting Prince Charles' Stone may prefer to break the journey in Glen Shiel. Unfortunately, there is no accommodation available close by. It is necessary to walk or drive five miles down the glen to Shiel Bridge to find guest houses and hotels.

The Hiding Place near Kinloch Hourn

Landranger Map: 33
OS Maps Centra Grid Reference: NG 990 100

It is probable that Charles and his friends spent the day on the lower slopes of Sgurr a' Mhaoraich at the entrance to Coire Sgoireadail. Here, the long steep hillside has many hollows, some of which fit very well the description of the place where Charles and his friends rested. It overlooks Kinloch Hourn, the likely site of the two army camps, that Glenaladale and Glenpean observed, as they emerged from their hollow.

Kinloch Hourn to Glen Shiel

Landranger Map: 33
OS Maps Central Grid Reference: NG 990 100

The route begins at the west end of Loch Shubh, a mile along the road east of Kinloch Hourn. It heads north along a path climbing up to Coire Sgoireadail. After half a mile, the path approaches the stream, and climbs gently for about two miles, before rising steeply to Bealach Coire Sgoireadail. It is

then necessary to contour left, and climb to Bealach Dubh Leac.

The way ahead begins with a steep descent into Coire Mhalagain. In winter, the slope is covered with steep hard snow. Lower down, a path follows the Allt Mhalagain all the way to the River Shiel.

Distance: 6 miles (10 km)
Height of ascent: 2310 feet (700 m)
Naismith time: 3 hours 10 mins

The Resting Place in Glen Shiel

Landranger Map: 33
OS Maps Central Grid Reference: NG 010 140

The spot where Charles friends spent the long hot day, is on the north side of Glen Shiel, a few hundred feet up from the road bridge over the Allt Mhalagain. From the river, the overhanging stone can be located by eye at the top of the prominent diagonal channel, that slopes upwards from right to left about three hundred feet up the scree shoot.

The fugitives would have reached it by wading across the River Shiel near the junction with Allt Mhalagain. As the river flows quite fast at this point, most walkers will prefer to use the bridge a mile down stream at Achnangart. From the other side of the bridge, the walk back to Prince Charles' Stone is through open fields by the river. Achnangart is the likely site of the village visited by Glenaladale and Young Borrodale, who must have walked through these same fields after retrieving the stolen gold. On approaching Mhalagain Bridge, it is necessary to strike diagonally up the hillside. Prince Charles' Stone is easily

found about three hundred feet up the scree shoot. Nowadays, the rock is marked with a cairn on the top.

Distance: 2 miles (3 km)

Height of ascent: 330 feet (100 m)

Naismith time: 46 mins

Glen Shiel to Loch Cluanie

Landranger Map: 33

OS Maps Central Grid References: NG 010 140, NH 060 140

From Mhalagain Bridge, the route is along Glen Shiel to the west end of Loch Cluanie. It goes through some of the most dramatic and impressive scenery in the whole of Scotland.

‘We passed through Glen Shiel, with prodigious mountains on each side. We saw where the battle was in the year 1719. Mr Johnson owned he was now in a scene of as wild nature as he could see.’

(James Boswell,

Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides)

Fortunately, it is not necessary to walk along much of the modern metalled road. Instead, it is possible to follow three sections of the old military road. Although it was not constructed until some years after the Jacobite Rebellion, the military road is likely to have followed the track that was used in Charles’ time

The first section begins at Mhalagain Bridge, and passes through a forestry plantation. Unfortunately, this plantation is surrounded by a very high fence, that prevents access to the military road here. Instead, it is necessary to walk along the river bank behind the plantation. The route begins at the main road, and follows Allt Mhalagain to the River Shiel. From this junction, the likely place where Glenaladale mislaid the purse, the route follows a path to

the right by the side of the Shiel. At the east end of the plantation, it is possible to pick up the old military road. It looks like a cart track, but there are stretches, so overgrown, that the road cannot be traced at all. Eventually, the military road joins the main road just before the site of the Battle of Glen Shiel. Along this stretch, the present main road is about thirty yards away, up the steep hillside on the right. For much of the way, the modern road is actually hidden from view, and the noise of the river drowns that of the traffic. The walk is through a time capsule. It follows Glen Shiel exactly as Charles would have seen it.

The second section of military road begins a quarter of a mile further up the glen (NG 999 134), just after a waterfall and a road-sign giving notice of a parking place further up the glen. From a clearing on the left-hand side, the path can be traced through the trees as a terrace cut in the hillside. The trees have been planted across it in various stretches. There are sections that are no more than a narrow footpath or line of weakness through the trees. However, it is certainly possible to keep in contact with it, until it joins the main road after about a mile.

From here, the best way is to cross the river using the rickety bridge, a few hundred yards up the main road. The river is then followed upstream to a point where it emerges from a modern tunnel cut into the rock. After crossing the river here, it is necessary to walk a little way along the main road to the third main forestry plantation on the left.

The final stretch of military road begins about fifty yards up from the main road inside the fence at a gap in the young trees (NH 039 117). This stretch is much easier to follow than that in the previous plantation. For most of the way, it looks like a cart track. After a mile, it emerges from the trees, and leads almost to Cluanie Inn.

In conclusion, the thought of walking along Glen Shiel would normally be dominated by the unpleasant prospect of trudging along the modern metalled road, with traffic speeding past in both directions. However, the route described here avoids contact with the traffic for almost the whole

way. It also passes interesting places that might otherwise be overlooked. Overall, it is a most enjoyable excursion.

Distance: 7.5 miles (12 km)

Height of ascent: 560 feet (170 m)

Naismith time: 2 hours 41 min

Gaelic Place Name Details

<i>Name</i>	<i>Pronunciation</i>	<i>Translation</i>
Bealach Dubh Leac	byalakh doo lyek	pass of the black slab
Coire Sgoireadail	kora sgor-a-dal	corrie of the field on the hillside
Coire Mhalagain	kora valagin	corrie of Malagan
Sgurr a' Mhaoraich	sgurr a voor-ich	peak of the shell fish shape