

21 STRATHGLASS to LOCH ARKAIG

The whole leg is over 30 miles long. It is best done in stages, with overnight stops in Glen Moriston and Glen Garry. In Glen Moriston, bed-and-breakfast accommodation is available on the Ceannacroc estate. In Glen Garry, there are hotels and guest houses at Tomdoun, as well as the very comfortable bunk house just across the river at Garrygualach.

The only contemporary account of this part of Charles' route to Glen Moriston says that he reached his destination in four hours. There are two routes short enough to be completed in this time. Both go through Tomich to Hilton Lodge (NH 286 246).

Cannich to Hilton Lodge

Landranger Maps: 26, 25

OS Maps Central Grid Reference:

NH 330 280

The way is along the metalled road running south-west out of Cannich village. After a mile, it passes the white house at Comar, which, according to tradition, Charles is supposed to have visited. At Fasnakyle power station, there is a junction from which the road to Tomich turns sharp left, crosses the bridge over the River Glass, and then turns right immediately. The road then leads directly to Tomich, two miles along a valley, and through delightful woodland.

The next stage goes three miles further down the valley. There is a junction at the far end of Tomich village. The left-hand fork is taken to Balcladaich. There, the road divides again, with the left-hand fork leading, after two miles, to Hilton Lodge, an impressive white house by the side of a lochan.

Hilton Lodge to Glen Moriston

One possible continuation is via Coire Dho. The other is via Loch na Beinne Baine.

It is not known which of the two Charles used. The only contemporary account describes his journey 'through an unfrequented road to the Braes of Glen Moriston'.

This statement therefore favours the Coire Dho route, because the route by Loch na Beinne Baine was a well used drovers' road.

via Coire Dho

Landranger Maps: 25, 34

OS Maps Central Grid References:

NH 240 220, NH 240 180, NH 210 150

From Hilton Lodge, the route continues along the road for a further five miles to Cougie (NH 240 210). The track to Coire Dho begins on the left, immediately after the first of two bridges that are crossed on approaching Cougie. Initially, this track goes south-west following Allt Riabhach through a forestry plantation, and continues for a further two miles over open countryside to the junction with Allt a' Chomhlain (NH 218 190). At this point, it is necessary to leave the track for a gentle climb up Allt a' Chomhlain. The route continues along the wide flat valley on the eastern side of Mealan Odhar. There is no path round the many flooded peat hags. On the descent to Coire Dho, the way bears due south in order to reach the bridge over the River Dho (NH 216 126). On the southern bank, a cart track leads down to Ceannacroc.

Distance: 17 miles (27 km)

Height of ascent: 1320 feet (400 m)

Naismith time: 6 hours 28 mins

via Loch na Beinne Baine

Landranger Maps: 25, 34

OS Maps Central Grid References:

NH 290 210, NH 260 130

On the south side of the road at Hilton Lodge, a signpost marks the beginning of the path to Glen Moriston. Initially, the route follows a wide track through the forest. At a junction a few hundred yards from the road, it is necessary to take the right fork. After a mile and a half, the track emerges from the forest on to open bare moorland, where it follows a line of pylons all the way to Glen Moriston. At the crest of the ridge is Loch na Beinne Baine, a wild and desolate stretch of water set in a hollow.

Since Charles was aiming for Glen Loyne, he would not have gone straight down to Glen Moriston from Loch na Beinne Baine. Instead, he would have taken a south-westerly line direct to Glen Loyne. This route crosses wild desolate moorland very rarely visited by hillwalkers. The descent should continue all the way to Ceannacroc, where there are bridges across the Doe and the Moriston.

Distance: 18 miles (29 km)

Height of ascent: 1720 feet (520 m)

Naismith time: 6 hours 40 mins

Glen Moriston to Glen Garry

Landranger Map: 34

OS Maps Central Grid Reference:

NH 170 180

This stage of Charles' route is recorded as being along Glen Loyne. The building of a dam across one end of Loch Loyne now makes Glen Loyne very different from what it was in 1746. Whereas Charles probably walked along the stream at the foot of Glen Loyne, this route is now unavailable.

From Ceannacroc, the route is westwards along the A887 to the junction with the A87. Next, it goes for a just over mile along the A87. Once passed the plantations, the route descends to the dam, and follows the eastern shore of Loch Loyne for about four miles. This is a splendid stretch, through open country and forestry plantations, with fine views across the

loch. For the first mile or so, the main road is only a quarter of a mile to the left. Busy as the traffic is, its noise does not intrude.

After about four miles, the route emerges into a large clearing containing Lochan Bad an Losgainn. On the far side of the clearing are the remains of, what used to be, the main road from Glen Garry to Cluanie. This road is followed into Glen Garry near Tomdoun. Since the Garry was in great spate when Charles crossed it, he may have been led to the narrowest part of the river, about a mile or so further west. There is now a bridge at this point. Nowadays, it is much more convenient to use the ferry from Tomdoun to Garrygualach. The ferry may be summoned by using the public telephone box just a few hundred yards west of the hotel.

Distance: 8 miles (13 km)

Height of ascent: 400 feet (120 m)

Naismith time: 2 hours 48 mins

Glen Garry to Loch Arkaig

Landranger Map: 34

OS Maps Central Grid References:

NH 160 980, 160 920

From Garrygualach, the route follows a path through a plantation along the valley of Allt Garaidh Gualach. Once in the open moorland, the path is difficult to find in places. It is therefore wise to follow the right-hand bank of this stream. Eventually, the stream forks, and a rickety bridge is crossed to a path up the slopes of Meall Tarsuinn. From the summit, the route descends south-east to a bealach, and then climbs Meall Coire nan Saobhaidh.

The next stage is due east to the Bealach Choir' a Ghuirein between Meall Coire nan Saobhaidh and Meall na h-Eilde. Here, the route turns south-west over of peat hags to a narrow valley leading to Achnasaul.

Distance: 8 miles (13 km)

Height of ascent: 2740 feet (830 m)

Naismith time: 3 hours 59 mins

Gaelic Place Name Details

<i>Name</i>	<i>Pronunciation</i>	<i>Translation</i>
Allt Riabhach	alt ree-a-vakh	brindled stream
Allt a' Chomlain	alt a khomlin	stream of the duel
Allt Garaidh Gualach	alt garry goo-alakh	stream of the curving wall (dyke)
Bealach Choir' a Ghuirein	byalakh khor a gurin	pass of the corrie of the brooding birds
Coire Dho	kora gho	singed or scorched corrie
Loch na Beinne Baine	lokh na ben-yeh ban-yeh	lake of the white mountain
Meall Coire nan Saobhaidh	myowl kora nan serv-ee	hill of the corrie of the foxes' dens
Meall na h-Eilde	myowl na h-eld-eh	hill of the hind
Meall Tarsuinn	myowl tarsin	cross hill
Meallan Odhar	myowlan oh-ar	dun mountain