

27 GLEN SPEAN to LOCH NAN UAMH

This final leg is 55 miles long. For most people, it will require three to four days. Hotel or bed-and-breakfast accommodation is available in the Great Glen, Achnacarry, Glen Finnan, and at various places by Loch nan Uamh.

Glen Spean to Glen Roy

Landranger Map: 42, 41

*OS Maps Central Grid References:
NN 380 860, NN 320 860*

The route begins a few yards to the west of the cottage on the north side of the main road at Moy (NN 420 826). It climbs by the side of the Moy Burn into a narrow corrie with steep high walls on both sides. After a mile, it opens out into a wide amphitheatre. This is undoubtedly the place where Charles slept, and where the shooting contest took place.

The easiest exit from the amphitheatre is to climb the slopes on its east side. Once on the plateau of Creag Meaghaidh, the route climbs north-west to the summit. In mist, it is important to know that the summit cairn is quite small, and that a few yards to the north-west there is a much bigger cairn intended to mark the edge of steep cliffs.

The route now descends west-south-west to the narrow Bealach a Bharnish. Here, it turns north, following the left bank of the stream down into peaty heathery moorland. At the confluence with Uisge nam Fichead, where Charles was forced to rest, the route strikes due west over boggy ground. After two miles, it reaches the remote Loch Sguadaig. Passing by the northern shore of the loch, the route continues on the right-hand bank of the stream. A prominent feature dead ahead is the shoulder of Leana Mhòr, the next objective. Therefore,

it is advisable to maintain a constant contour, instead of losing height by the stream. After crossing Allt Feith Bhrunachain, the way continues up the slope of Leana Mhòr. Thereafter, the walk down into Glen Roy is easy. A useful landmark, in choosing the line of descent, is the ruined cottage of Achavady across the glen.

The River Roy has gouged a deep chasm out of the bottom of the glen. From the western slopes of Leana Mhòr, the river is hidden from view by trees lining the chasm for most of its length. The problems in crossing the river straight over to Achavady are therefore not obvious, until after having clambered down through these trees.

The river is wide, fast, and deep in many places. It is possible to wade safely, but the crossing point has to be chosen very carefully. When the river is in spate, it may be necessary to walk a considerable distance upstream, before any crossing is possible.

Distance: 12.5 miles (20 km)

Height of ascent: 3200 feet (970 m)

Naismith time: 5 hours 37 mins

Glen Roy to Glen Gloy

Landranger Map: 41

*OS Maps Central Grid Reference:
NN 250 860*

Directly opposite the ruin at Achavady, a path follows the right bank of a stream. After an initial steep climb, the path levels off, and enters the wide flat-bottomed valley of Caol Lairig, the place where Cluny had his stash of meal. Directly in front, is the entrance to Coire Ionndrainn (NN 865 270), which, after a mile, climbs to a high moorland ridge. The effort of toiling up to the ridge is well rewarded by a

distant view of Loch Arkaig in the west.

There is no path from the ridge down to Glen Gloy. However, it is possible to descend almost anywhere, and walk along the track at the bottom of Glen Gloy.

Distance: 5 miles (8 km)

Height of ascent: 1450 feet (440 m)

Naismith time: 2 hours 20 mins

Glen Gloy to Achnacarry

Landranger Map: 41

OS Maps Central Grid Reference:

NN 210 860

This route is exactly the reverse of that used for the corresponding stage, when walking from Loch Arkaig to Loch Laggan. It begins about half a mile down Glen Gloy from the A82, two hundred yards east of a wooden bridge. Here, a stone-filled runnel cuts off to the south, and climbs up to a track that is followed through the forest for about a mile to join the A82 at Rathliesbeag. A stretch of Wade's road then passes through a field on the east side of the A82. Just across the road, the AA telephone box marks the start of some more old military road. For about a mile and half, it crosses boggy terrain, and continues through woods to the B8004. There is no alternative but to follow this metalled road to Gairlochy. After crossing the River Lochy, the route turns sharp right, and follows the road as far as the sign pointing along the private road to Achnacarry castle.

Distance: 9 miles (13 km)

Height of ascent: 170 feet (50 m)

Naismith time: 2 hours 41 mins

Achnacarry to Glen Finnan

Landranger Maps: 41, 40

OS Maps Central Grid References:

NN 130 890, NN 090 890, NN 010 890,

NM 920 850

Beyond the castle, the private road continues to Loch Arkaig. The route then follows the track

westwards along the southern shore to Invermallie.

It is tempting to continue along the shore of the loch. However, this line quickly enters young forest, which is virtually impossible to penetrate. This route should not be attempted. Instead, the recommended way from Invermallie is to bear slightly left, and strike up the bracken to the summit of Mullach na Briobaig.

From here, there is a superb walk along the crest of wide ridge for four miles over Druim na Giubhsaich to the western shoulder of Mullach Coire nan Geur-oirean. The route then descends the north-western slopes to join Allt a Choire Screamaich, which is followed down into Gleann Camgharaidh. Two hundred yards upstream, a bridge crosses the river.

For a place so remote, Gleann Camgharaidh is remarkable for its lack of harshness. Indeed, it is almost lush and verdant, with a wide flat floor providing easy going underfoot. Two miles upstream, the route bears right, as the valley forks. At Lochan a' Chomhlain, two miles further on, the way lies sharp right and up a thousand feet of steep grass to the top of the ridge over to Gleann a' Chaorainn.

From the crest, the view to the left is dominated by the spectacular V-shape profile of Bealach a' Chaorainn. It is reached by a simple high-level traverse along the south side of Gleann a' Chaorainn. On the other side of the bealach, there is a good path down Glen Finnan to Corryhully.

Distance: 18 miles (29 km)

Height of ascent: 3400 feet (1030 m)

Naismith time: 7 hours 31 mins

Glen Finnan to Loch nan Uamh

Landranger Map: 40

OS Maps Central Grid References:

NM 920 850, NM 830 850, NM 760 850

The route now goes due west along a good track, following the ravine of Allt a' Chaolghlinne to its head. Here, there is a superb view westwards down the whole length of

Loch Beoraid. The next stage is a steep descent to Kinlochbeoraid, with its lonely cottage, which is locked normally. In the event of bad weather, an open outhouse can provide shelter. The next three miles, along the northern shore of the loch, end at the bridge over River Meoble, about four hundred yards downstream from Loch Beoraid.

The path now doubles back to the end of the loch, before turning right to climb steeply by the stream tumbling into Loch Beoraid from the west. From the top of the slope, the path descends to Loch Mama, and follows the northern shore for the whole of its length. The path then begins its winding descent to Loch nan Uamh.

There is no view of Loch nan Uamh until the last quarter of a mile, where the path suddenly turns right. At this point, it is natural to want to experience Charles' elation, by looking at Loch nan Uamh, as he would have seen it, and visualising the two ships in the loch. Unfortunately, the view of the near

end of the loch, where the ships were anchored, is completely blocked by a railway viaduct.

After descending to the loch, there is a walk of a mile or so westwards to the Prince's Cairn. By tradition, it marks the place where Charles said his farewells before leaving the shore for the ships in the loch.

Distance: 13 miles (20 km)

Height of ascent: 2210 feet (670 m)

Naismith time: 5 hours 7 mins

'The hills around, or rather mountains, are black and wild in an uncommon degree. I gazed upon them with much feeling. There was a rude grandeur that seemed like a conciousness of the royal enterprise, and a solemn dreariness as if a melancholy remembrance of its events had remained.'

(James Boswell,
Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides)

Gaelic Place Name Details

<i>Name</i>	<i>Pronunciation</i>	<i>Translation</i>
Allt a' Choire	alt a khora skreevich	stream of the Screamhaich abominable corrie
Allt a Chaol-Ghlinne	alt a khaol gleen-yeh	stream of the narrow valley
Bealach a' Bharnish	byalakh a varnish	pass at the top of the waterfall
Caol Lairig	kaol larrig	narrow hill pass
Coire Ionndrainn	kora yondrin	corrie of longing
Druim na Giubhsaich	drooim goo-sich	ridge of the pine forest
Gleann Camgharaidh	glyown cam-garay	valley of the crooked dyke
Leana Mhòr	ly-ana vohr	large meadow
Loch Mama	lokh mama	lake of the round hill
Loch Sguadaig	lokh sgoo-adag	lake of the squall (or little boat?)
Loch nan Uamh	lokh nan oo-av	lake of the caves
Lochan a' Chomlain	lokhan a khomlin	small lake of the duel
Mullach Coire nan	mulakh kora nan	summit of the corrie of
Geur-Oirean	ger-oran	the sharp edges
Uisge nam Fichead	oosge nam fik-ed	water of the twenty