

Route(s)	Stob Dearg via North Buttress and Stob na Broige (Buachaille Etive Mor)
Elevation(s) (ft/m)	Stob Dearg (3,350ft/1021m) Stob na Broige (3,136ft/956m)
Date(s)	September 15 2019
Partner(s)	Kyle Finnegan <i>aka Tech Ops and Twinkle-Toes</i>
Elevation gain/loss (ft/m)	+/- 3,811ft / 1162m
Distance (miles/km)	8.52 miles/ 13.71km
Total time (hours/mins)	10h 45m
Equipment	Climbing rack (BD cams 2x 2s, 2x 1s, 2x 0.75s, 1x 0.5, 1x 0.25x and set of Metolious nuts, chockpick, 10x runners, reverse and assorted lockers), 60m 9mm rope, helmets, rock shoes Notes: Did not wear our rock shoes. Climbed in walking boots complete with gaiter accessories.
Weather Forecast	Possible precip in the morning clearing towards the afternoon with winds up to 25kmp.
Weather Actuality	Felt a couple sprinkles but mainly dry and clearing in the afternoon. Occasional light gust while on route but mainly a calm day.
Flora/Fauna	Not really so much...
Wildlife	<i>A stunning raven! Magically beautiful!</i>
Starting Point/Trailhead	Grid reference NN221 563 (Right in front of the small white building)
Trail Conditions	Easy path to follow from the parking although we did miss the turn off for the North Buttress so went a little cross country. The route was fairly clear and had lots of options to pick and choose your own adventure. From summit to summit and back to the car the trail was very clear.
Objective Hazards	Falling rocks I suppose but generally a solid route.
Grade/Rating	UK – Grade 1/ 2. US – Class 4 with sections of Class 5 up to about 5.4/5.5 (<i>my own estimation</i>). Minimal exposure as it pitch, scramble, pitch style.
Accommodations	N/A
Tourist Attractions	N/A
Motto for the day	<i>I'm not sure if we did the right thing or the wrong thing, but we definitely did a thing!</i>

Day 1	
Daily 1 Distance	+/- 3,811ft / 1162m
Daily 1 Elevation	8.52 miles/ 13.71km
Day 1 Daily Time	10h – <i>No land speed records broken.</i>
Rise and Shine	5:50am
Depart Home	6:15am
Depart Car	8:30am
Stob Dearg	1:40pm
Stob na Broige	3:50pm
Arrive Car	6:30pm

The Story



The weather just hadn't seemed to cooperate for us of late. And when it did, we had other things on. So, when we saw a marginally good-looking forecast, which is about as good as it often gets, we decided to jump on and it and give the North Buttress of Stob Dearg a go. It was supposed to be a scramble with some pitches of rock mixed in and we were excited to dust off our kit and do something a little more challenging than a hillwalk. We packed up, left the house and decided to grab a quick brekkie buttie at Good Food in Tyndrum. Full and ready to take advantage of the day, we finished the last bit of driving out towards the Glencoe area. It didn't take us long to park and get kitted up. It was a bit chilly, so I ended up starting off in my puffy. *Geez it isn't even technically autumn yet...* Of course, we hadn't even got going when Kyle told me he had to stop for a 'party separation' as we say in Washington. He wanted to see if the little white building had a toilet and I told him he couldn't just knock on a door and ask to use the toilet so that is precisely what he did. Turns out it is a hostel of sorts and he was about to get himself sorted out. I took advantage of the facilities while we were there too and chatted with a few other gents who were getting ready to set out. Kyle told them we were doing Curved Ridge... *Uhh what?... We are doing the North Buttress... we talked about this last night and just moments ago.* I then told the guys we were doing the North Buttress and Kyle was confused. *Great. That, ladies and gentlemen, is called dysfunctional teamwork!* Either way, they were in the same direction, so we could get ourselves re-sorted on the way over and also sort out the GPS which was having trouble locking in on our position. But that happens sometimes and didn't really fuss me that much. We decided to go for the North Buttress this time and save Curved Ridge for another day, but with that said, we missed the turn off for the North Buttress and ended up going just past the

two large boulders above us. So, we just decided to cut cross-country and head uphill and intersect the ridge around that point. It was wet but it went fine.



As we ascended, I started thinking that the route might still be residually wet from the rain the day prior. And then I felt a few rain drops on me and could see the rain marks on the rocks around me. I was getting a bit nervous and kept looking out over the landscape to check the wind direction and see what the clouds looked like. They were dark grey off in the distance and seemed like they could be moving in our direction. *Bugger.* I really wasn't too keen to do my first lead in ages in the wet, but que sera sera I suppose. Interestingly, Kyle was the one who thought we should push on regardless. Was that because he was keen on the route or he wasn't the one who was going to lead it? From below I snapped a few pictures of the route for a reference point if I needed it later and then kept shuffling upwards. My body was loving it. I told Kyle there was this indescribable feeling that I used to get in the States when I was out in the hills – it was like all my senses were awake and focused on the same thing, the route, the mountain, the goal and it makes me feel so alive; so at home and right. As we started to ascend, I had that wash over me. It was calming and beautiful all at once, like being welcomed home after a long time away. The sweet relief of being able to breath clearer.

From below it looked like the route really went straight up the middle of the rock 'face' following a series of large cracks and chimneys. *Fine, fine.* I had my sights on a line that I was pretty sure we could make irrespective of whatever else anyone else said or what the actual route was. We did intersect the boot-path after a hundred



meters or so of vertical gain and followed it up to the base of the first rock section. One of the gents we had briefly spoke with earlier told us there were three rock pitches and the first chimney was the hardest. *You know what I think is the hardest? Trying to figure out what people mean by a chimney! I swear it is not standardized!* Per usual, we weren't exactly sure where the route went and hadn't sweated it too much, but it seemed obvious that the path ended at the base of a rocky section that looked on the cusp of a scramble and a climb, so to be safe we roped up but left our boots on. The first 'pitch' went fine. I placed a few pieces of pro and then made an anchor to belay Kyle up. It seemed that we were the first people on the route for the day, but as I was climbing another group approached and started to immediately follow Kyle up. After that first pitch there was a short walkable section to the beginning of another 'pitch' of sorts. I eyed it and was trying to decide if we should go straight up it or if the path slightly to the climbers right around the face was the better way to go. The two guys who had followed us up thought it went slightly to the right and when I

walked around the corner it was clear that it was easier that way. Almost more of a scramble. I pondered the situation a little and then opted to go around the corner. As I was standing on the path looking up Kyle was pulling the one piece I had placed and getting ready to come over to me. That is when he yelled over he had untied. *What the actual hell?* With the eyes of the other two climbers on us, I was a bit embarrassed to have to be going back to the basics and telling Kyle don't ever untie. Now, we were not in any kind of a dangerous position, but it was just as a best practice type of rule. We did get ourselves sorted though and I scramble/climbed up a short section that spit us out into a longer section of scrambling. To be honest, this would be a great place to practice efficiency and simul-climbing because it was a longer section of Class 4 before we hit the next rock 'pitch'. This one looked fun!

This felt like the most difficult pitch, but I'd still say that on a Yosemite Decimal System (YDS) rating scale for alpine rock, I would put it around a 5.4/5.5 (trying to factor in that I am weaker and more out of shape!). It was definitely more in-line with a basic level climb. There was good pro-placement for the most part. I stuck largely with cams as they placed quickly and easily. It was while I was on this section that a group of three guys came up who were solo-ing the route and climbed over our ropes and around us a bit. The first guy was a bit close on the one tougher section, but in general we were able to stay out of each other's way. When I got up to the top of this 'pitch', which ended after a short mossy and green section, I built an anchor and belayed Kyle up. While I



was belaying him the first solo-er sat a meter or so above me and started smoking while he waited for the other two to come up. *Charming*. He was nice enough, as were his friends, and we exchanged a few words as the last two caught up with the first and continued on. Kyle scampered up without issue after them. From here on it was essentially a scramble. I'd say it ranged from Class 3 to Class 4 and was straight forward. Just keep going up! We did end up skirting a little around to climber's left (east) as we worked our way up. Once we crested the last little bit up to the summit of Stob Dearg we came across a couple of guys checking out the different routes. One asked us about a different route. I told him where I thought it was but that we had come up a different route. We walked the last little bit over to the summit, dropped our bags and pulled out some snacks and a drink. As we had a short break, we visited with the two families who had brought their young girls up. I love seeing families out and about!

But the showstopper on this summit was the raven that was hovering about one the drafts and landed not far from us. It was absolutely gorgeous! It was large with lovely black feathers that shined blue in the sunlight. I think I want a raven. I want them to be free and in their natural element more, but their natural intelligence and playfulness is easy to love. The pictures we took didn't do it justice, but it was magnificent. While admiring the bird Kyle and I debated following the path over to Stob na Broige. The family warned us that it is further than it looked. We checked our watches and figured we had the time, and the weather was good enough that we would head that way and see how we felt. Once we reached the turn off at the col to the southwest of the summit of Stob Dearg we debated. It seemed so easy to follow the turn off and head down, but we pulled ourselves together and decided that we would take advantage of being here. We followed the path over to Stob na Broige. As we approached the summit the temperature started to drop. A quick bite and some photos had us



cool enough to get moving again. We ran into another couple while on the summit of Stob na Broige and crossed paths a couple of times until we reached the river in the valley. At that point we just walked out and visited with them. I admired the fact that the gal remained in a huge parka the whole way from the summit to the road! I was stripping layers off by the time we got to the turnoff on the ridge. The descent from the ridge had some scree sections and slabby smearing sections but was easy enough to follow. Once at the base of the valley we had to cross over a river, but if you were careful you could hop stones to get across mostly dry. From there on out the path was clear. As we neared the road, we could see a helicopter across the way hovering over Aonach Eagach. Looked like a sunset rescue was taking place. *Peace be with them.*

Once we intercepted the road, we walked alongside it for a short distance to get back to the cars. Always a dodgy prospect! Walking on a road without much of a shoulder, around twists and turns, where cars are going 60mph... at dusk! But, we made it! Once at the car, we stripped and changed into our courtesy clothes. *You know, the ones that help keep the funk down in the car ride!* Then it was simply a matter of driving off into the sunset towards home! All in all, a great down and out!!



