

Peak(s)	Seana Bhraigh, Eididh Nan Clach Geala, Meall Nan Ceapraichean, Cona'Mheall, Beinn Dearg
Elevation(s) (ft/m)	Seana Bhragh (3,038ft/926m), Eididh (3,041ft/927m) Meall Nan Ceapraichean (3,2015ft/977m) Con'Mheall (3,209ft/978m) Beinn Dearg (3,556ft/1084m)
Date(s)	July 10 th 2017 (Monday)
Partner(s)	Solo
Elevation gain/loss (ft/m)	+/- 7,410ft / 2,259m
Distance (miles)	21.6 miles / 34.76km
Total time (hours/mins)	13 hours
Equipment	Trekking poles (carried helmet)
Weather Forecast	Overcast, generally dry.
Weather Actuality	High level clouds resulting in good visibility for miles. Generally cloudy with the occasional spot of blue sky. Later in the day gray clouds rolled in and it tried to mist once or twice but not hard and visibility was not impaired. Generally dry. Light breeze throughout the day, stronger higher.
Flora/Fauna	Not an abundance of flowers but occasional sprouts of colors (yellow, purple etc.)
Wildlife	Herds of deer, a ptarmigan, a mouse, and two pine martens playing!
Starting Point/Trailhead	Inverlael Parking
Trail Conditions	Trail up to the passes reasonable, but occasionally difficult to follow in some grassy areas. In the alpine between the peaks it's frequently a 'choose your own adventure' linking up with game and people trails as available.
Grade/Rating	Class 2 (US)/ Grade 1 – walking (UK)
Accommodations	Backseat of the Ford
Tourist Attractions	N/A
Motto for the day	"If you're bleeding before noon you know you're having fun!"

Day 1	
Drive time	Slept at the trailhead (about an hour south of Inchnadamph or 12 minutes south of Ullapool)
Daily Distance	21.6 miles/34.76km
Daily Elevation	+/- 7,410ft / 2,259m
Daily Time	13 hours
Depart Car	6.00am
Seana Bhraigh	10.10am

Eididh Nan Clach Geala	12.15pm
Meall Nan Ceapraichean	1.45pm
Cona'Mheall	2.45pm
Beinn Dearg	4.00pm
Arrive Car	7.00pm

The Story

I ended up in Ullapool after Conival and Ben More Assynt in search of food. Since it was a Sunday I arrived and headed for the local store which was a Tesco next to the free parking located in town. I grabbed a bag and went in search of food. I ended up getting some bread, salsa, cheese and a can of beans. *The staples.* Then I put on my “Mary Jane” shoes. *You know. To dress up my scrubby attire a little bit.* And I wondered into town in search of the local eateries; preferably one with wifi. I poked around the town a little bit and came across an open little mercantile store and tried to see if they had any of the OS maps available. They did not but recommended I try the bookshop right next door. They did indeed have the OS maps, so I bit the bullet and bought one. It was becoming a little more difficult to navigate without a map and since I anticipated doing a few on this map I thought it might be worth the purchase. *And boy did it come in handy later!* The store owner was nice, I kept unfolding the OS map and then my Munro map to see if it was the one I wanted. *Generally making a small scene. It comes so naturally!* And it was this store manager who told me about The Caledgh Place which is a restaurant just down the street that has wifi. *YES!* I grabbed my map and dashed off towards The Caledgh Place, scanned their menu and found a couple vegetarian options. *Deal!* I went in and tried to get a seat and the staff was not very helpful it took me going to the hotel reception, then back to the restaurant and finding a new member of staff for them to tell me they stopped serving food between six and seven. It was a few minutes past six. *Great.* And that I'd have to make a reservation at the reception. *Okay.* So that's what the first girl was talking about with the ‘reception’. I popped over and they were able to get me in at seven. It probably worked out for the best because I grabbed the wifi password off the wall and sat just across the street using the wifi briefly and chatting with Kyle. When I did make it back, I scarfed down the table bread, the burger and my fries. I practically cleaned the dishes. I'd toyed with staying at a hostel in town but opted to just drive out to the parking area near the trail start, both for the savings factor and convenience in the morning.

It is only about a ten to twelve minute drive south to the Inverlael parking turnoff (located on the west side of the A835). As I was pulling in a car was pulling out. I was pretty sure this was where I wanted to be; all maps and signs seemed to indicate it would be, but nothing was explicit, and there was a turn off a half a kilometer back that was a possibility too. I rolled down my window to ask the guy if this was the correct spot. Unfortunately, I couldn't pronounce any of the mountains which made it difficult to ask if I was in the right spot!! Not that it seemed to matter... the guy just looked at me and said 'Yah. But you should be warned it's an eleven-hour day. If you want more information talk to those ladies.' He then gestured to a car with two women and pulled out. *Geez. Traumatized much by your eleven-hour day?* The women were a lot more helpful as they were waiting on two of their partners to come out. Although, in hindsight, they were also very serious about it. But they at least pointed me in the direction of the stile to get onto the forest road that lead up to the trail.

I set about getting everything as packed and sorted as possible so I could get up and ‘go’. For a while it looked like I was going to be the only one at the car park overnight which sounded lovely but alas, ‘twas not meant to be and a gentleman rolled up in a camper van. *Show off.* I got in the car, in my sleeping bag

and tried to fall asleep but it was still so light out, and I occasionally find it hard to sleep the night before a long day. I was able to sporadically text Kyle when the service came in and out, and so I texted with him a little before falling asleep quite late. I was surprised I managed to fall asleep actually, but I know that I had because I dreamed and was awoken to the sound of my alarm at five in the morning. *Ugh.*

Sleep. Just want more sleep in my warm sleeping bag. I could tell the air temperature had gotten cooler than it had been the day before. I definitely didn't feel like getting out of my warm sleeping bag now! So instead I reached for the cooler, grabbed the jar of Nutella and had three pieces of bread and Nutella to get me started. I pulled on my clothes and started getting ready, albeit slowly. I was still dragging a little bit. I decided that I'd rather take my slightly heavier, but more comfortable, Osprey Kestrel pack for the day (it has a rain cover and pockets on the front for easier access). That meant I had to pull all the gear out of my Flash pack and resort it into the Kestrel, but overall I was pleased I'd done it. Now, properly attired and kitted out, I was ready to go. I let Kyle know via text I was headed out, but when I went to mark the car on the GPS I realized it was showing me as way north near Assynt. *Wrong!* I tried to turn it on and off again but it was showing a question mark and still near Assynt. I called Kyle and asked him for suggestions. He wasn't sure, but suggested it couldn't find satellites. *How is that possible if I have cell reception?!* I decided to get going and fiddle with it as I went along. I was sure glad I'd bought the map at this point, because the old forest service roads had quite a few turn offs. Nothing dramatic, but enough that it'd be possible to make a wrong turn. With the map and general sight of the ridge, I was able to navigate myself to the correct trail and get going. The GPS switched to showing me at the Inverlael parking area now. So getting closer but still not correct. I had my iPod going while I walked up the ridge. I don't listen to music as a general rule, but it was nice this morning as there weren't any real objective hazards around, and it kept me in a rhythm and allowed me to space out a little bit.

The ridge was fairly straight forward and it was the only trail in the area. There were a few spaces where it was difficult to follow through the bogs or grassy sections, but overall, I was able to stay on it without a problem. I followed the trail upward past a chain of lochs then onto an alpine plain of sorts. As I got just above the chain of lochs the trail became too difficult for me to follow. I generally knew which direction I wanted to go, but the GPS wasn't working, still, and the map wasn't quite detailed enough to give me precious directions. I edged northwards to get a better view of the path over. I knew that it'd be probable that a trail would form on the ridge over because it was a natural choke point for travelers. And such was the case. I could see a path along the ridge heading north towards Seana Bhraigh and a second lesser summit. I'd edged over and encountered a cliffy section, so I could either go back and upwards a bit, then drop down along the ridge, or I could go down and then back up to get to the low point on the ridge. I opted to go down. I encountered some footprints down lower, so at least I knew I wasn't the only one to go this direction; not that I was worried. I crossed a grassy and wet section as I made my way to the low point on the ridge. From there, I connected up with a trail that was easy to follow on the ridge and partway up the mountain, but then petered out in the boggy and rocky sections. There were a lot of holes covered by grass in this section; some real body jarring holes if you went in. I had to keep my eyes carefully trained on where my feet were going in some sections. In the absence of a trail, I opted to edge my way west/northwest to traverse under this false summit and over towards Seana Bhraigh. I did eventually pick up another trail that worked its way over to Seana Bhraigh, which was most welcome, as I felt like I was really struggling this morning. I felt slow, winded and generally just tired, like I wasn't strictly on my A-game. *How was I going to do four more peaks?!* On my way up to the summit I noticed a heard of about thirty deer on the hillside. It was amazing and beautiful! I didn't know they roamed in such large herds! I reached the summit at 10.10am, promptly shed my pack and reached

into my bag for my windbreaker and food! I was really hungry and had a hunch it was playing into my body feeling so sluggish. *I mean.. being out of shape was probably a big factor too but I wanted to believe food was going to cure this!* I inhaled half a sandwich and got down a protein shake before I even had a chance to taste the flavor! It was strawberry, or at least that's what the package told me. I snapped a few pictures and then prepared to get going again. I didn't want to linger too long as I did want to see how many peaks I could get done, and if I got them done timely, I could even have dinner and a sleep in Ullapool. Now that's motivating!



The descent went quickly and well. I followed my footsteps essentially back to the lowest point where I'd edged around the steep 'cliff' section. From there, I diverted and made a rising traverse towards the easterly arm, coming up to the north side of Eididh Nan Clach Geala. I kept seeing deer all over, and even came across a mom and young baby deer! Essentially, I followed this path all the way to a low point between Eididh and a lower point to the north. Apparently I started to get a bloody nose. I didn't

notice till I went to shoot a 'snot rocket' and clear my breathing passages that blood sprayed out instead of snot. *Nice! A bloody nose before noon. That's when you know you're having fun! Let the party get started!* It wasn't a gusher, so I just kept walking. Plus, a little blood makes me feel like I'm trying. It had mostly stopped by the time I reached the low point between Eididh and a point just to the north. What hadn't stopped was the incessant chirping of a bird that I swear had followed me. And suddenly, I had this very odd primal reaction to this bird. In this weird moment, it seemed that if I ate that bird that it wouldn't be going against being pescatarian. I have no idea where that came from. I've been pescatarian for two years and yet all the sudden I felt like I was seriously contemplating eating this bird. And at the same time, I was smelling BBQ. *What was happening?!* Kyle often jokes about how I'm wild. He even texted me recently, calling me his little 'wolf cub' because I tend to have some borderline animalistic tendencies that seem to be inherent to me. It was genuinely odd. I shook it off, but the odd factor stayed with me and made me ponder for the day.

I veered southerly and ascended the final slope towards the summit of Eididh, where I'd spotted someone from below. When I reached the summit, just about two hours after leaving Seana Bhraig, I pulled out a bag of crisps and sat down to join the gent already sitting and eating his own crisps. I recognized his jacket and he recognized me from Conival the day before. He was from Sheffield and only had four Munros left. Wow! I shot off a couple updates to Kyle and then grabbed my kit and headed off. Essentially, I stayed along the ridges and followed the natural lines of the hills. As I was coming off the south side, I ran into another gentleman coming up. We briefly chatted, and he pointed out the best way to ascend the slope on the far side of the gap.



I was able to descend off of Eididh to a loch in the gap, and then, from there, I made a rising traverse up a grass ramp (which started just off of the loch). There was a bit of a footpath that was clearer down lower, and I eventually lost the path as I gained. The grassy ramp was a great line, and I was thankful the gent had pointed it out. Towards the end of the grassy ramp, I turned and cut directly up to gain the more level arm, and travelled it, as it slowly gained over scree and rocks towards the summit of Meall Nan Ceapraichean. There was one false summit marked by a cairn. But as I travelled south, along the ridge, I crossed over a large white scar (white quartz) situated just to the north of the summit. It was actually quite beautiful. From afar, I wondered if it was a remnant piece of snow or ice, however unlikely that seemed. Shortly after crossing that scar, I arrived at the summit. I didn't really stop... I just marked the summit and kept moving. I didn't want to lose my momentum. However, I was running low on water, and figured I'd have to stop and pump some water before I ascend Cona'Mheall, which looked to be dry and rocky. So, I descended towards the lochs which rested between this trifecta of peaks. I skirted around to the north, and what I found was a stagnant pond. I wasn't too thrilled. I'd rather pump clear, moving water if possible, but when I weighed that against running out of water period, I opted to pump this stagnant water. I pulled out my little filter and went to assemble it, but found that the output hose was missing. *Really now?* At least the input and filter piece were there. If I could hold the output piece directly above the opening on my Platypus 1L water bottle, it could work. So, that is what I did. I tried to steady my feet on the mushy soil around the pond, while balancing the bottle and filter in one hand, and pumping with the other. I can't say it was efficient, but it got the job done. *And bonus, the water didn't smell like pond scum!*

As it was trying to sprinkle a little, I took my pack cover out. Even though almost everything was in a dry bag, why push my luck? I went up and over a small knoll and down the eastern side to the low point, just west of Cona'Mheall. There was a track, easily identified from above, which I aimed for. I was able to follow it almost the whole way to the summit, although I will not say that it was easy to follow the whole way. The scree seemed mostly stable though, so it made for good going; like stepping stones. Just as I was reaching the summit, I ran into a couple coming off. I'd seen this couple two summits back, and estimated they were forty minutes or so ahead of me and I had been following them since. *Ah ha!* I'd finally caught the mysterious couple. I was so excited, albeit for no explicable reason, to meet them that I gave them a happy hello and noted I'd seen them ahead of me for a good part of the day. To which the older gent said something to the effect of, "What's wrong with you? You're young you should be going faster than us!". *Oh, reeeeally? How about that heaping helping of judgement!* We didn't talk all that long. I sat on the summit and I'd meant to only eat half a sandwich and save my bag of crisps for the last summit. Spread out the food a little more. But, quite literally, before I knew what had happened, both the sandwich and crisps were gone! But I was feeling this summit. The views were great, and I was watching the sun dance along the valley floor. It looked rugged with waterfalls and wandering rivers.

With that beautiful sight, and a desire to have a minute, I sat down with my back to the summit cairn. I marked the summit and then pulled out my phone to send Kyle a message. It seemed that cell reception was partially available on the summits, but once I moved from the summit it was dropped. So, I tried to alert him to my progress in case of an emergency...and because it felt nice to hear from him. Done and done! I was starting to feel the day, but the last summit was on the way back towards the trail – strategically planned to make it more tempting.



I descended the same way I'd ascended, but at the low point where the trail was most obvious, I veered more southerly and followed where I'd seen the couple heading upward at an angle, to intersect a stone fence running down the north side of Beinn Dearg. There was a rough boot path that I occasionally lost, but generally stayed close to. Aim for the lowest part of the fence if in doubt. There is a path that runs alongside the west side of this wall. I hopped along this path and started making my way upwards. I

could also tell I was gaining on the older couple. *Slow hunk? We'll see about that.* I followed the wall for the most part, up to where it reaches a corner, which was mostly knocked down. I clambered over a few of the fallen wall stones and then made my way up the remaining gradual hill to the summit cairn. It was generally rocky from the beginning of the wall all the way up to the corner section, and then mixed smaller flatter rocks with grass the remaining part up to the summit. Gray clouds had started to roll in again, and I was conserving water a little bit to see if I could make it down without taping into the filtered pond water. *Flirt with dehydration or succumb and drink the filtered pond water?! Lord it's nice to have choices!* It was another quick summit. Enough time to visit with the older couple, have them take a summit photo for me, mark the summit with the GPS, shoot a message to Kyle, and start the descent.

As I descended, I kept my eyes out for the trail that was supposed to come up between Beinn Dearg and Meall Nan Ceapraichean. I spied it coming up directly to the western side of the loch, and it was marked with a couple of cairns. I hopped off in that direction and began the descent via trail. *Ah the bliss of a trail!* Somehow the older couple got to where I could see them again. *Negative. They were not going to pass me now that the 'gauntlet of slow' had been thrown down!* And they didn't, despite the day started to catch up with me, and I had started to feel a bit sick and nauseated. I attributed the nausea to hunger, probably a little bit of exertion, and dehydration as well. Whenever I felt that sensation getting strong, I'd throw a few peanuts back to help try and stave off the effects.

The trail felt like it went on far longer than I thought it would. Kyle estimated two hours from the summit of Beinn Dearg, I told him I thought it'd be more like three. Turns out it was almost three on the nose. My feet had been moist, if not wet, for the better part of the day and the pounding was starting to

make them feel like hamburger. I plugged in my earbuds and focused on ignoring that pain. My mantra was now: car, food, hostel, shower! About a mile and a half from the car I felt quite nauseated and didn't even want to put any peanuts in my mouth. I drank the majority of my remaining non-pond water and just tried to push through. I wasn't in any danger, at least to my mind, but I knew this probably could have been avoided. That said, it wasn't enough to stop me, and it felt good to push hard. It felt like I was back in the Cascades pushing long days. It hurt, but it had the comfortable feeling of familiarity. My body remembered it. Two people had bikes stashed at the top of the forest road. *Ohh.. that sounded dreamy. But no time to focus on that! Downward!* But, maybe not having a bike was a blessing too, because on the way down I saw the cutest little-bitty mouse. It was adorable. It melted my heart a little bit. And then, another half mile or so down the road, I was surprised when two pine martens came tumbling out of the brush and tussled with each other not far from me before dipping back into the undergrowth. I grabbed my camera hoping I'd see them again, but I didn't.

I reached the car at around seven in the evening. I quickly hopped into the back seat and promptly pulled out the chips, cheese and salsa. I realized, after some monkey like movements, I couldn't get the chip into the smaller salsa jar, and too impatient to wait around, I just started pouring salsa on the chip and cheese. I'm pretty sure the guy in the camper van just to the side was watching me. *Whatever. Enjoy the show! Because up next, I'm going to strip out of my sweat soaked clothes!* I was able to roll into Ullapool, get situated in a hostel, put on a cute little denim Patagonia dress (*to take the edge off the crazy look*), and head down to Seaforth Restaurant for a salmon dinner. *Mmmm.* I took that plate down! The girl next to me left half her salmon unfinished, and I almost offered to eat it for her. Heathen. After dinner I came back to the hostel, showered, and played about with my computer, briefly, before succumbing to the delights of a bed. And that, is all she wrote

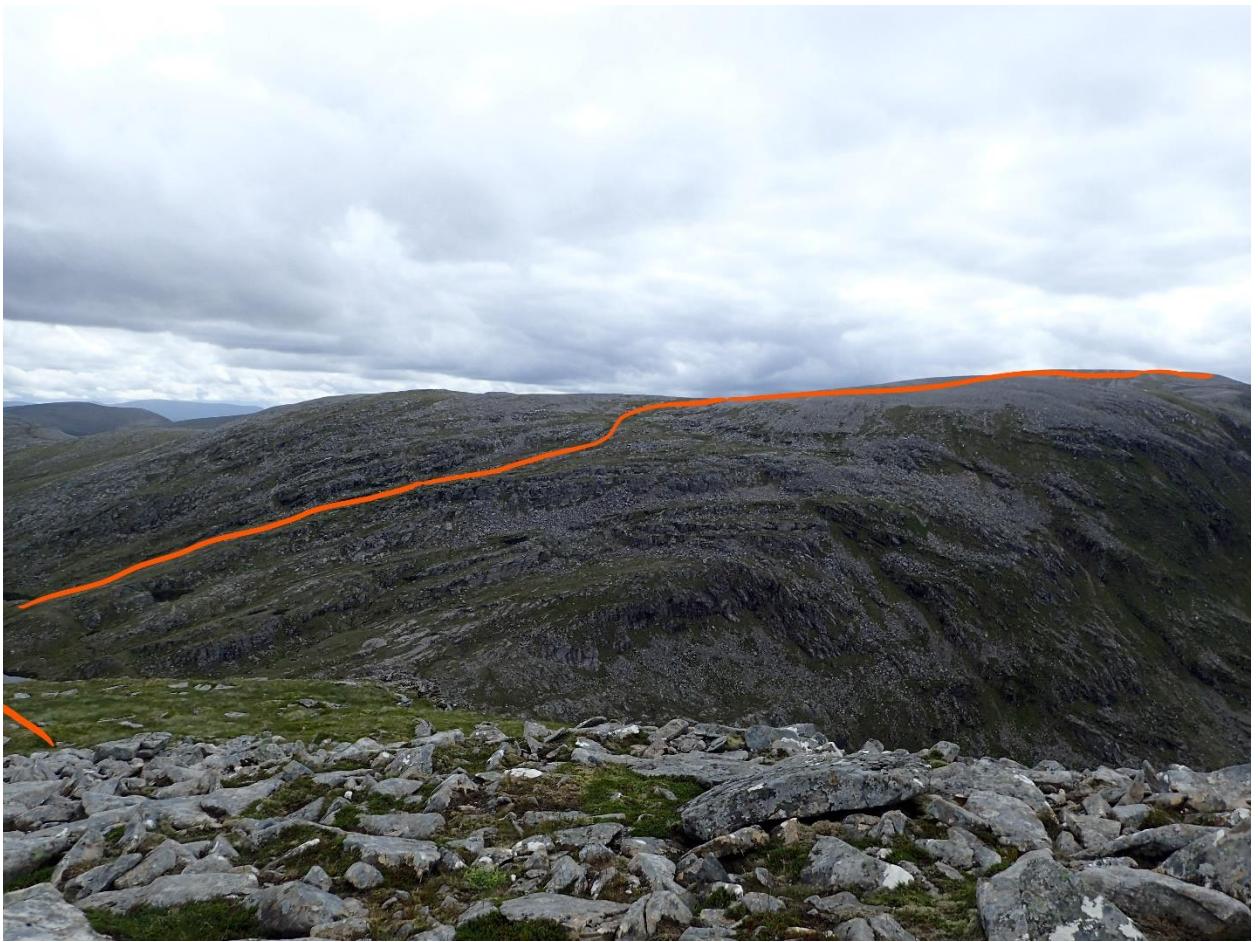
Lessons Learned
1. Deer are not struggling in the Highlands!
2. Something out there was leaving giant poops! I cannot imagine that human or deer could make that scat. Sasquatch? It remains an unsolved mystery.
3.



Looking back towards Seanna Bhraigh.



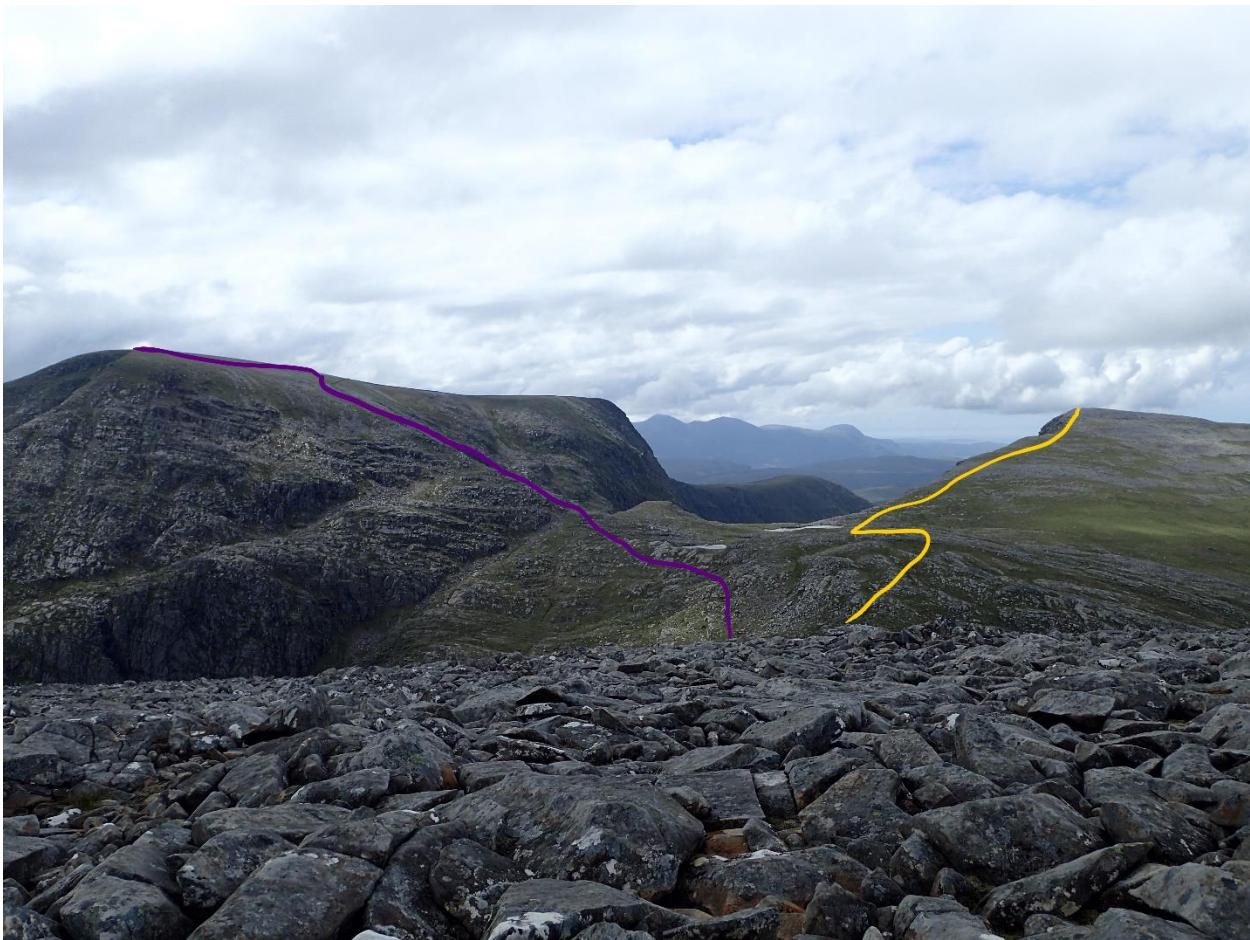
From the westerly arm heading up to the base of Eididh Nan Clach Geala's northern shoulder.



Looking just south of the summit of Eididh towards the south and the way up the northern shoulder of Meall Nan Ceapraichean. The grass ramp indicated had a boot path that was very helpful.



Showing the route up Cona'Mheall.



Yellow indicates the route off of Meall Nan Ceapraichean and the purple line indicates the route up Beinn Dearg.

