

Peak(s)	Ben Klibreck
Elevation(s) (ft/m)	3,156ft / 962m
Date(s)	July 7 2017 (Friday)
Partner(s)	Solo
Elevation gain/loss (ft/m)	+/- 2,971ft/ 905.56m
Distance (miles)	9.05miles/ 14.56km
Total time (hours/mins)	5 hours 24 minutes
Equipment	Trekking poles
Weather Forecast	Precipitation in the early morning, fog and then just cloudy
Weather Actuality	Misted in the morning a little but the clouds hung around low for a little longer than expected (making it seem foggy/low visibility) – misted some on Klibreck in the afternoon but cloud level rose and generally okay
Flora/Fauna	N/A
Wildlife	Sheep!
Accommodations	Slept on the side of the road near Althnaharra
Tourist Attractions	N/A

Day 1	
Drive time	45 minutes from Ben Hope Parking to Ben Klibreck Parking near stone bridge
Daily Distance	9.05miles/ 14.56km
Daily Elevation	+/- 2,971ft/ 905.56m
Daily Time	5 hours 24 minutes
Lunch	11.45am
Depart Car	11.58pm
Ben Klibreck Summit	2.48pm
Arrive Car	5.22pm
The Story	



Unidentified, yet very beautiful, flower en route upwards.

It took me about 45 minutes to drive over from the Ben Hope Parking area to where I thought the trail started for Klibreck. I gauged this based off some information I'd read online and looking at the mountain to see a faint trail that looked to descend to about this area. And with that surefire knowledge I pulled off into the 'pull out' across the road from it. I slammed back a protein shake in about three sips, ate a banana and started on a remaining thing of crisps. As I was working through my lunch-on-the-go I gave Kyle a call and asked him to weigh in. Klibreck or not? Eventually we decided that if I had the time, which I did especially given that it doesn't get dark 'til way late that I could give it a go. I generally knew that was the way to go about it but at the same time didn't relish pulling out my boots from the back and kitting up again. Despite that reticence I seemed to be able to pull my gear together quickly and was on the move not long after arriving.

The approach was wet across the grassland area. I was able to dance around some of the nastier looking sections but had to do a few leaps with pole assists to make some jumps. One was a close call as my foot squelched into it a little. But, again, thankful for the tall gaiters! From the road, it's a slow gain across the boggy lowland up to a gentle looking slope. It was this hill with the general show of foot traffic from a distance that alerted me to it probably being a 'path' up Klibreck. Once on the hill there were threads that were easy to follow but not a strict path or trail per se. I had seen a giant cairn on the ridge from the road and so generally just aimed for that. It was on this hill that I noticed the first of numerous 'fissures' I saw in the boggy or moist areas on this route. It appeared that terrain had worn away or fractured away to reveal really dark soil. I believe some of it was peat (but perhaps not all). It gave the terrain an interesting and unique look in my mind. Although at one point in my head while navigating through a series of these channels and fissures that were deep and boggy in some spots I also thought it had the feel of Mordor about it. *Just have a flair for the dramatic what can I say! In the land of Mordor...*

I had to stop for breathers several times up this first hill and started to wonder what I'd bitten off for an afternoon snack. I knew I could do it. But dang I felt I was really crawling. I wondered briefly what the GPS tracks would show. Probably not a stellar performance. I encountered some sheep high up on this first hill and they stopped their grass munching to briefly watch me continue slowly uphill. *Hunh. Hillwalking must be something of a spectator sport for sheep. Wonder how I was stacking up?* I reached the first cairn, followed shortly thereafter by another cairn tower, to mark the top of this hill. Once on the hill I looked around for a clearer path. Ridges tend to funnel people together and create more defined trails. But I wasn't finding one immediately. So, my eyes turned to the terrain ahead of me to look for a general imprint on the terrain to guide my direction. I saw the path ahead and knew where to aim. I also said a silent thanks that there was visibility on this route because it'd have been more of a bear to navigate in the clouds. I headed down the ridge a few hundred feet to get to another low spot

on the ridge that was riddled with bogs and large fissures. It was reminiscent of a crevasse field; trying to weave through and around them as necessary and taking exponentially longer than being able to walk in a simple straight line. *Squeeelech! It's been two peaks and I'm over bogs already!* I made it through the boggy low section but before I could even contemplate a happy dance, anticipating the hillside to be drier I found that it wasn't much better! It was just as saturated. *How had this happened?! It wasn't that wet yesterday evening!* Well. I was already in it. No turning around now. So, I just squelched my way through and prayed that the Gortex on my boots and gaiters would be enough for such a formidable amount of saturation. So, I worked my way up this second hill on the ridge and about three quarters of the way up the (2,200ft) the track cuts a traverse northward towards Klibreck. I think this was one of my favorite parts of this mountain. It's a beautiful traverse that's more defined and slightly less weight. It allowed me to pick up my pace and feel a bit more like I was 'flying' through the mountains. That feeling of freedom and release that I so relish. It also felt more efficient than going all the way up this second larger hill only to lose the elevation on the far side. In that regard, I was thankful incredibly for that.

The traverse gave me a momentary reprieve as well. It wasn't really up or downhill, simply a traverse



Photographic proof I was on the mountain and a 'trying not to crap out' selfie! It's a very flattering portrait.

and a chance to catch my breath along the way. After moving so slowly on the previous sections I felt like I was making up a little bit of time. I had some reception so shot off a few messages to Kyle. I'd like to believe it was because I was 'keeping him informed' but I will not deny there were a couple venting ones. *I mean! Kyle did help talk me into doing it today!* As I made my way along the traverse I noticed that the footprints I'd seen in several places below were more frequent and pronounced. Someone had been on the trail and I had a feeling they were on the trail in front of me. But, it was possible that they'd gone up and over or were headed somewhere else. In some ways, it was nice to feel like there was someone else up here but in another way almost disappointing I didn't have the mountain to myself! But at the moment it certainly felt like I did. Along the way I looked at the time and then looked at the summit and in my head roughed out an hour as my guess. Or at least that was my hope! The traverse over went well and I found myself at the base of the last hill to the summit. It was marked by a rocky

start. I stopped here to throw some food back my gullet because I could feel myself flaggin' a little bit and I'd realized I'd only had a liter of water so far today (if that!) and I needed to get some more water down. It was during this short five minute break or so that I noticed two people emerging from the cloud that covered the top of the mountain. I watched them for a moment then grabbed the cereal container and started walking. *No need to stay too long! I'm on a mission after all! Summit, inn, dinner!* It wasn't as rocky as I'd originally thought and was easy to navigate through. In fact, I think it actually made the route a little more interesting. It was shortly above the rocky section in the scree and dirt above that I encountered the couple descending. I briefly spoke with them but we didn't talk too long. *Mission!* I

noticed that on this last section of uphill my leg started to cramp. I could feel it when I extended it fully to push on the uphill. I ignored it for the most part. *Like you do*. But then I noticed that the other leg was starting to twinge to a lesser degree. *Well crap*. Last thing I need is to have my muscles seize at just about the furthest point from the car. I stopped occasionally to stretch out the muscles and tried to go a little easier on them. Though they weren't getting out of this summit now! Luckily, I'd thrown back some food and water not long ago and I figured once that kicked in the muscles should hopefully relax a bit. Or if not, they'd at least not cramp up the same way on the downhill! *Mountain glasses! Like rose colored glasses but with a darker humor to them!* Still it was odd as I couldn't think of another time my muscles had cramped up. A couple more short stretches punctuated with checking the GPS and then I was there! In a cloud. *Again*. A summit selfie and a few messages later and I was happy to note that the clouds appeared to be dissipating a little. In fact, I even got a few views across the valley to the east momentarily. It was stunning. The green all around just makes me happy. Even if it is dotted with poop sheep. I did let slip that in a message to my family that I was in Scotland on a mountain by myself. *Oops!*



Luckily for me, it wasn't followed up on to keenly. *Phew! Dodged that one!* Oh. And it took me one hour and twenty minutes from the traverse. Not too bad for my mountain math.

I turned around and started the descent. My creaky knees were hurting again. Both of them were sharp. It felt more skeletal than muscular which was a bit worrisome. It happened after the Edale traverse but I'd have to really stretch and try to take some ibuprofen later to mitigate it a little bit. Too early in this trip,

and my life in particular, to be having these issues! The trip back was mostly uneventful and followed the same track back. The traverse felt good going back and the boggy descent off of the larger second hill went fine and I even managed to navigate through the boggy fissures a little better this time.

Probably because I actually paid attention to the cairns a little more (not that they were foolproof... more like guidelines). Just after this and looking up at what now looked like a lot of elevation gain to get

Gorgeous view eastward on the descent. Some of the 'fissures' I was observing are visible.

up the first small hill I decided to stop, have an extended potty

break and a snack. Not in that order though. Seems I was in good company though because there was sheep shit everywhere anyways! It was a miracle that after this short break but it looked like the hill was smaller. And then I took five steps uphill and it felt huge again! *Haha! So much for that!*

Even with the stop it did go pretty well on the way back down the last hill and across the bog zone. I had in my mind that I wanted to be to the car by 6pm and eating no later than 7pm. But I got to the car at 5.20pm! By this point I was dreaming of a veggie burger or a flank of salmon. *Geez. The UK has made me soft!* But it was not meant to be. I pulled into The Crask Inn. Walked in and asked if they were serving

food and they told me they could make me a sandwich and soup but dinner wasn't until well later. I asked what was for dinner and the woman said she wasn't sure yet. *Okaaay*. I weighed the options in my head. I could try to drive up north to the Althnaharra Hotel but they stopped serving around 6 or 6.30pm if I remembered correctly and it was in the wrong direction. I could try driving south but there wasn't a lot for about 16 miles until Lairg and I wasn't sure what there'd be for food there. And if I tried to drive all the way to the next set of peaks an Inchnadamph it'd be an hour drive with no guarantee of food there either. And with that assessment my dreams of a larger dinner died. Soup and sandwich it was. But it was kind of nice to sit in the quiet pub. Literally, it was a small room and two friends of the couple running it were there visiting. So, they were talking and serving drinks to their friends and I just pulled up a cozy spot near the furnace (they were burning coal and peat) and chatted with them while I ate the soup and sandwich. It was quite cool seeing the big bin of peat chunks. And the woman who helped run the place with her husband explained they burn coal, wood and peat. Whatever is available or appropriate at the time. She also told me that this pub was the most isolated pub in the UK. The most remote was somewhere else. *How is that distinction made? Hunh*. Afterwards I debated whether I'd to try and crash in the car outside of the pub or make my way to Inchnadamph. I went back and forth battling between being tired and just wanting to be still or being able to sleep in more the next morning. The latter won out. I made my way an hour and twenty minutes over to the next 'town'. I lost reception partway but Kyle indicated there was a hostel and it didn't seem to pricey. I went back and forth on whether to stay or not but there was no cell reception and I figured a bed to stretch out my knees (instead of sleeping cramped) would probably be helpful. And so, it was. I was able to get some WhatsApp messages off to Kyle, despite the internet's crawling speed. I even managed to read a little, shower, brush my teeth and changed into pajamas before I absolutely passed out. It was an amazing decision to stay at the hostel!

Lessons Learned
1. Bogs can be on hills. Not strictly relegated to flat areas... New motto. "Never underestimate a bog!"
2. You can't count on dinner at an inn!
3.



Looking up from the pull off at the base of the south side of Klibreck's ridge.



From the first hill or 'bump' along this ridge southern side ridge.



