

Route(s)	Stob a'Choire Odhair and Stob Ghabhar
Elevation(s) (ft/m)	<b>Stob a'Choire Odhair</b> (3,100ft / 945m) <b>Stob Ghabhar</b> (3,576ft / 1090m)
Date(s)	October 18 2018
Partner(s)	Dave Howat
Elevation gain/loss (ft/m)	+/- 3,898ft / 1188m
Distance (miles/km)	10.3 miles/ 16.58km
Total time (hours/mins)	6h 25m
Equipment	Trekking poles, snacks and water!
Weather Forecast	Partly cloudy. Gray, but dry.
Weather Actuality	Cloudy on the summits but clear below the cloud line. Just a bit dismally gray.
Flora/Fauna	N/A
Wildlife	Swans and deer! <i>And whatever other animal noises Dave identified on our sound safari!</i>
Starting Point/Trailhead	Victoria Bridge
Grade/Rating	Walking
Accommodations	N/A
Tourist Attractions	Good Food in Tyndrum
Motto for the day	N/A

Day 1	
<b>Daily 1 Distance</b>	10.3 miles/ 16.58km
<b>Daily 1 Elevation</b>	+/- 3,898ft / 1188m
<b>Day 1 Daily Time</b>	6h 25m
Rise and Shine	Est. 6.30am
Depart Home	7.15am
Arrive Good Food, Tyndrum	8.30am
Arrive Victoria Bridge	8.50am
Depart Car	9.05am
Summit Stob a'Choire Odhair	11.15am
Summit Stob Ghabhar	1.05pm
Arrive Car	3.25pm
<b>The Story</b>	

This was my first trip getting back out with someone besides Kyle, after being sick. A cold with an absolutely lingering cough. And, I knew I was going to be slow, and that is always an embarrassing prospect. Not to meet your own standards in front of others. But, it was time to get out, and Dave had been forewarned and was accepting of the situation. Dave sent me a message saying we should meet at Tyndrum at 8.30am. *Hold the phone! Take backs!* That meant I was going to have to be out the door just after 7am. Kyle was flying out that morning for a work conference down near Birmingham, so at least I'd be in good company in the wee hours. I put about as little effort into packing as is imaginable. I was relying on the fact that I believed at some point the essentials had made it into my backpack, and I had no intention of giving up easily. And, that would come back prove interesting – but not strictly detrimental. I crawled out of bed, got dressed and hopped in the car. I did my pre-spider flight check,

turned on my music and headed out on the now very familiar A84 road towards Tyndrum. The drive started in that pre-dawn gray and the colors slowly brought the countryside to life. It is a drive that I had previously been relatively ambivalent about, but this morning, driving through the hills, as the sun rose, felt very peaceful.



Today, I beat Dave by a few minutes. *But only a few!* As I was rummaging around in the car trying to get myself put together, he pulled up right next to me and suggested a coffee. I've really enjoyed how leisurely and relaxed all the outings with Dave have felt. Always time for a coffee, no mad rush, just a happy-go-lucky, go-with-the-flow approach. It's been good to go with someone who has that approach, as I've been trying to change my method from the strictly militant peak-bagging mind that I had, at one time, used to great effect. Regardless, we ended up in Good Food for a warm drink. As I was looking over the tea options, I noticed one called 'Flower of Scotland'. *Haha, what in the world?!* I asked Dave if he knew what that was, and he looked at me and just said, "Probably a thistle." *Yikes. If I only had a brain!* Well, 'flower of Scotland' sounds exotic and tempting enough to give it a go. Too bad they were out. *Boo!* Disappointed to miss out trying something new, I settled for a chai instead. Dave opted to try a veggie sausage in a roll, despite his complaints about vegetarians who still want sausages! It was pretty good. I'd do it again! We munched while Dave drove to the start at Victoria Bridge. As we were winding our way to the final destination, on a single-track road, we passed several people walking with larger packs. Dave told me that it was part of the Highland Way walk. *Hunh. Learn something new every day!*

We rocked up to the start, parked, and went to put on kit. That was when I'd noticed I had grabbed Kyle's gaiters. Annoying, but not the end of the world. They'd just be a bit loose. I fastened them on and went to grab my gloves and realized after I'd laundered our gloves from the weekend, I'd accidentally paired two right gloves. *Mary and Joseph!! Bit of a hot mess here!* Fortunately, the gloves are liners, so I could just flip one over and wear it upside down on the other hand. That, and I carry spare warmer gloves in my bag anyways. Good thing I was raised with the 'always be prepared', Boy Scouts of America motto drilled into me, because I seem to depend on it enough! Besides looking a bit of a mess, no real fuss.

The skies were still gray as we walked across a bridge, turned near a lovely stone house and followed an estate road out to an old utility looking shed, and then, turning right, towards the hills. Initially, we had to dance around some boggy and muddy sections, but the higher we ascended the better it generally became. We could hear some grunting sounds on the hills and Dave, being the local expert, told me it was the male bucks 'chuffing'. According to him, it is the time of the year for fighting and mating. He then went on to tell me someone had been mauled by a buck here. *That's...Unfortunate...* And yet, I was not worried. We slowly made our way uphill, and just after a short stream crossing, we turned off the main trail to follow one that had branched off heading straight uphill towards Stob a'Choire Odhair. Part way up, we could see a couple other people down near the muddy start. *Ah! So we were not going to be*

*all alone!* At around 850 meters we entered the soup, and the path became a little rockier. I will say, for whatever reason, this section seemed to drag on... for me. In that uncomfortable and childish, 'Are we there yet?', kind of way! Heavens above, we did finally find the summit cairn and confirmed it via GPS. Hallelujah!

I moved over to the trig point so I could mark it with my GPS, and as I dropped my pack to pull out some sport beans and water, I noticed something shiny on the ground between some stones. I looked a little closer and realized it was a saint charm that looked to belong on a necklace. Dave came over and picked it up, trying to find out which saint it was. It remained undetermined, but I did see a 'Made in Italy' stamped on the back! *Ah, Italy, home of so many saints!* Interesting find though. Quick double check to make sure my St. Bernard pendant was still there, and away we went! The clouds were obscuring any real view of the route, but we generally followed a combination of Dave's past knowledge of the route, the ridge down, and the occasional check on the GPS, just to make sure we weren't haring off in the complete wrong direction. *All systems were a go.* We descended down the rocky terrain towards the bealach. I slipped on a wet section of rock and went straight down onto my back. Luckily though, the pack cushioned my fall and that was the only point of impact!! Comeback kid that I am, I was able to hop right back up and keep



moving! *Boom!* Dave slipped around a bit too, it wasn't just me, but no falls as spectacularly as that one straight to the back. We hit the bealach and immediately began to ascend the trail west towards Stob Ghabhar. The path is straight forward and easy to follow, for the most part. There is a rocky section where it fades a little, but I found it intuitive enough. *But, then again, I am a trail-sniffer!* As we ascended, Dave told me that there was a fun little ridge on the way to the second summit and it was considered the Little Aonach Eagach. *Oooh...* A ridge scramble would be just the thing! As we got closer, he warned me not to get too excited... *haha, too late!* It was, indeed, a very short section that might be considered a bit rougher than a trail. I remain unconvinced. But, the fact that it was rocky and uneven was enough to peak my interest and get me excited about it! The remaining bit, over to the summit, was entirely uneventful! *No more surprise 'ridges'!*

Once at the trig, we briefly stopped to sit down and have a snack, but it was a bit windy and not at all the inviting type of weather that makes you want to stick around. And, if one did stick around, it'd probably require another layer or jacket, and that seemed like too much work! It often seems easier to keep moving! Plus, it isn't like there were any views today! We joked about sending Roz a picture, to show her what she was missing while she was in Spain for her birthday, alas, I think she had the right of it! We descended back down the moderate ridge and up a short incline before the trail, marked by a small cairn, forked, and one section began to work its way southeast back down towards the main trail. It was a bit of a muddy descent, and both Dave and I slipped a couple times on the way down. I did eventually succumb and land in the mud, but fortunately I wasn't completely coated, just the sides of my pants. As we followed the path on the right side of the river and past a waterfall, we could

occasionally hear animal grunts again. I told Dave his stanky foot smell must equate to a mating call and it was getting the deer all riled up! Alas, we didn't see any up close. Before regaining the main trail, we had to hop across a small river and then back up a short way. But alas, this put us back on the muddier section of trail. *Mud, mud, mud!!!* From here, the descent was relatively quick and painless. We did see a few more deer lower down, but they were drama free encounters.

We arrived back at Victoria Bridge parking area to find that, in our absence, the space had absolutely filled up with cars. Interesting, since we'd only seen two other people in the distance today. *Where had everyone else gone to?* From there, it was a quick trip back to Tyndrum and then an hour drive home for me. *Success!*

## Lessons Learned

Always pack spares... because I'll probably need them at some point!

I left this 'til way late to write and I'm already forgetting details – aka, write it all down sooner! Or... I'm lazy!

