

Route(s)	Beinn Tulaichean and Cruach Ardrain		
Elevation(s) (ft/m)	Beinn Tulaichean (3,104ft /946m) Cruach Ardrain (3,432ft /1046m)		
Date(s)	October 28 2018		
Partner(s)	Kyle Finnegan Dave H. Mary G. Kirsty O.	Jim H. Andy W. Laura B. John M.	Peter W. Stuart C.
Elevation gain/loss (ft/m)	+/- 3,454ft/ 1053m		
Distance (miles/km)	7.93 miles/ 12.76km		
Total time (hours/mins)	5h 50m		
Equipment	Trekking poles, snacks and water! <i>Actually bothered to pack a sandwich!</i>		
Weather Forecast	Sun!		
Weather Actuality	Blue skies, almost no wind. A wee bit chilly when stopped but just about perfect!		
Flora/Fauna	N/A		
Wildlife	A few deer in the road... <i>get excited!</i>		
Starting Point/Trailhead	Inverlochlarig, Balquiddher		
Trail Conditions	Short walk along a paved road, then a 'choose your own adventure' up the grassy hillside. Boggy in some sections but with patches of moderate stable ground. Between summits there is a clear, defined and compact path. From the bealach, the path down to the valley is less defined but the 'just go down' principle works.		
Grade/Rating	Walking		
Accommodations	N/A		
Tourist Attractions	Mhor84 Cafe		
Motto for the day	N/A		

Day 1	
Daily 1 Distance	7.93 miles/ 12.76km
Daily 1 Elevation	+/- 3,454ft/ 1053m
Day 1 Daily Time	5h 50m
Rise and Shine	6:30am
Depart Home	7:15am
Arrive Inverlochlarig	8:30am
Depart Car	9:30am
Beinn Tulaichean	12:50pm
Cruach Ardrain	2:05pm
Arrive Car	4:30pm
Mhor84 Cafe	5:00pm
The Story	

After a lovely urban Saturday, Kyle and I sat down to look at the forecast for Sunday, which had seemed promising all week! It was still looking to be just about perfect – sunny, dry and almost no wind. With that in consideration, we hopped on the MeetUp site to see if anyone had any trips of interest going the next day. Lo and behold, there was a trip via The Travelling Dangleburys group and they were heading towards two summits I'd been looking at recently but hadn't done. *Sold!!* We signed up. Very last minute! To be honest, I was half expecting to hit some alert that told us we were too close to the activity to be able to register. But Fortuna was shining on us and we were, in fact, able to register. That only left us to cobble together some sandwiches and snacks and put them in our perpetually packed packs. The amount of effort is staggering!



Because it was daylight savings time and we were 'falling back', we managed an extra hour of sleep and I felt delightfully ready to go that morning. A rarity to be sure. Standard operating procedures were in place except for this morning Kyle went out to start the car ten minutes before we were going to leave so that it could defrost. A sure sign that the seasons are changing. Kyle loaded up the car, I acted as the official DJ and away we went. It took us just over an hour to get out to Inverlochlarig. The last five miles are on single track road and wind around quite a bit. I was starting to

feel the roller coaster curves but was mostly able to distract myself with the gorgeous scenery. The sun was shining in beams between the mountains and hitting the north side of the loch we were driving along and lighting up all the trees golden and orange. It was stunning. It made me want to get out and walk in a scarf, with a hot cocoa in hand. It had that 'seasonal bliss' quality to it. This walk was going to be fun, but probably less of that contemplative peacefulness. After several miles we reached a very distinct fork in the road. Between the roads was a parking location with a shelter. We could see three people standing about but the GPS was telling us to continue over a mile down the road. We turned down the road and then Kyle stopped the car and postulated that we should probably ask those three people if they were part of the MeetUp group. Fortunate that we did, as they were it! And we got one of the last proper parking spaces. *It was filling up quick!*

We milled about putting boots and gaiters on as others slowly arrived. The weather was shaping up to be glorious and it was nice to be getting out to meet people. Even though Kyle and I have settled much more easily here in Scotland, we still struggle, some days, with feeling very isolated. It has been easier to meet people in Scotland, and we are applying lessons learned from the last move to this one to help transition. But, some days it is nice to be a part of a group! And today was just such a day. David approached us, introduced himself and asked a little about our background. I could tell he was trying to get a sense of our experience. I can understand that. Just to clear up any concerns I told him if we proved to be too slow or problematic he could leave us and we had all the knowledge and equipment to get by on our own. That seemed to reassure him and that was that!

I entreated Kyle to help me find a bit of hidden shrubbery, so I could have a wee before leaving. But it seemed it was all just plain sight of the cars or in a bog. Dave apologized when he told me there were no toilets nearby. How absolutely sweet of him to be concerned on my behalf. *But really, I wasn't expecting one! I'm practically feral in that sometimes I prefer that freedom to a spider infested, dilapidated box!* Everyone seemed to arrive in good time, and with a word we were off. I don't know if it is because I haven't been out with a large group in so long, but I was shocked at the quickness of the departure! I was planning on some introductions and some basic guidelines or first aid comments... or something! But no. It was a quick 'here we are and go!' I was scrambling to get my pack on and go!



We briefly headed down a road and crossed a river, following farm roads before heading cross-country uphill. There isn't really a path per se, just head uphill! We could see a couple of people well above us, and from behind, two hill runners came up and passed us. The traffic would indicate we are heading the correct way. In all candor though, it was simple to head for the spine of the mountain and just head up, but I don't think there were really any 'wrong' ways, or sections that'd prove insurmountable from this side. A perfect 'choose your own adventure'. We worked our way upward with a few short stops to regroup and grab water. During one of the earlier stops someone asked if anyone had a tissue. I said that Kyle had some in his pack, but since her nose was runny, I suggested she just blow her nose to the side. I tried to say it a little nicer than just the colloquial 'snot rocket'. She must have picked up on what I was saying though, because she looked at me and said, 'That isn't very lady-like'. I was simply speaking out of practicality. But, I suppose that is an interesting consideration. Kyle, ever the gentleman, gave her a tissue. *Guess I'm truly just a mountain troll at heart!*



It was fun visiting with people on the ascent. Such a departure from being just Kyle and myself, or even solo. It was energizing to be around other people, en masse, in the hills. It wasn't long before we were on the top of Beinn Tulaichean. We stopped for group photos and general one-off shots as well as a bit to eat. It was such a leisurely enjoyable pace. *It felt like a picnic!* A gent named Peter offered me some of the small cherry tomatoes he brought along and they were delicious! But that was the end of the vegetarian options! Him and Kyle got talking about pork pies, haggis and whisky thereafter.

From the top of Beinn Tulaichean there is a well-established track that connects over to Cruach Ardrain. There was frost on the north side, in sections, and it was a little slippery in one or two spots, but overall easy going. We did pass more people on this section. It was such a glorious day it'd nearly be a crime not to be out enjoying it. There was a bit more frost on the top of Cruach Ardrain. We crested what I thought would be the top, but it was a 'false summit' of sorts and we had to descend a short step before gaining the final summit.

Kyle reminded me that the new boots he was giving a test run for a company had rubbed a bit wrong and left him with blisters. I pulled out our first aid kit and handed him some band-aids and medical tape. We had just enough time to get him all taped up and re-laced, grab a drink and then away we went! We descended back to the bealach between the summits to a faint junction marked by a small stone pile (one might be able to call it a cairn). We then followed a faint path back down to the road in the valley. There was quite a bit of slipping happening on the descent though. I nearly bought it twice. Dave definitely went down at least once! No injuries to report though. Just laughs. We traded tales from our own lives and generally kept with good company. As we walked back along the gravel road Dave told me about some interesting reading he'd been doing, and we did touch on cultural differences and socio-political happenings in the world. It was a pleasant conversation. But, as we neared the cars, Brexit came up and other people did weigh in and the conversation took a decidedly more... emotional turn. Fortunately, we were all able to side-step that as we were just about back to the cars! *Phw!*

There was talk of stopping to grab a coffee at a café on the way out, but I hadn't brought any clothes to change into and didn't really want to go into a cute little café smelling. Kyle and I thought perhaps we wouldn't go, but somehow, and I point the finger at Kyle, we got roped into it. It was my turn to drive though, so I hopped behind the wheel and drove us to Mhor84 Café. In the end, I'm really glad we went. Such delightful company and a lovely warm cup of tea sets just about anything to rights!



Lessons Learned

The driver is less likely to get car sick!

Just pack spare clothes... coffee stops are popular, and I dislike bringing the funk indoors!

