

Route(s)	
Elevation(s) (ft/m)	Geal-charn (3,009ft/917m) A'Mharconaich (3,199ft/975m)
Date(s)	November 13 2018
Partner(s)	Kirsty O.
Elevation gain/loss (ft/m)	+/- 2,377 ft / 724m
Distance (miles/km)	7.33 miles/ 11.8km
Total time (hours/mins)	3h 45m
Equipment	Whatever was left in previous pack with special attention on finding a headlamp last minute!
Weather Forecast	Reasonable – mostly dry! <i>Didn't have time to check the mountain specific forecast!</i>
Weather Actuality	Misted a little bit to start but was generally dry. Sun started to peak out of the clouds several times. Moderate wind. <i>Typical.</i>
Flora/Fauna	N/A
Wildlife	Hares! <i>Quite a few! Must have been a little colony. Changing to white fur!</i>
Starting Point/Trailhead	Balsporran Cottage off the A9
Trail Conditions	Initial trail gravel and solid. Once on the ascent of the NE side of Geal-charn it became quite wet. The high route was grass and rock so pretty consolidated/dry. Coming off the shoulder of A'Mharconaich became increasingly wet until we were hopping between bog spots down low.
Grade/Rating	Walking
Accommodations	N/A
Tourist Attractions	N/A
Motto for the day	N/A

Day 1	
Daily 1 Distance	+/- 2,377 ft / 724m
Daily 1 Elevation	7.33 miles/ 11.8km
Day 1 Daily Time	3h 45m
Rise and Shine	<i>9:00am</i>
Depart Home	10:20am
Arrive ****	11:50am
Depart Car	12:05pm
Geal-charn	1:20pm
A'Mharconaich	2:35pm
Arrive Car	3:50pm
The Story	

Tuesday morning started slow. When I did crawl out of the warmth of my bed to search for food, the morning was well underway, which is, partially, what made it more acceptable in my mind to eat the leftover macaroni covered in ketchup in place of a breakfast. I was just starting to eat when my phone buzzed and I saw a message from Kirsty saying she was in Dunblane and would be ready to go shortly. I monetarily drew a blank! We were going to go hillwalking on Thursday... *Crap!! What day is it?! It cannot be Thursday! No. It was definitely Tuesday.* I sent a tentatively confused message back saying I thought we were meeting on Thursday. Poor Kirsty must have been in for a surprise! But I shot her back a message saying to give me twenty minutes or so and I could be ready-ish to go. And, thus began the mad dash around the flat trying to find clean outdoor kit, a headlamp and the essentials. I had been meaning to switch my smaller 'summer' pack for a more 'winterized' version with a few more layers and essentials. But since that hadn't happened, I grabbed my still semi-packed smaller one. I wasn't sure if I had a headlamp, excuse me 'head torch', so I absolutely ravaged Kyle's bag until I found his, and then I nicked it...with a mental reminder to tell him or put it back! What a surprise that'd be if he needed it! Last but not least, I wanted to grab the twenty I had lying about somewhere. Pro tip, when in the UK, carry cash. Lots of places are cash only and it's a real rub to find that out when you don't have cash. Plus having cash on hand makes it easier to split costs or chip in. But of course, I couldn't find the money. I sent Kyle a frantic text asking, bordering on accusing, him of taking it. He told me he hadn't. *Where could it have possibly gone since the ten hours I'd set it on the counter?!* I continued to ravage the place until I found it and then ran out the door. Kirsty was waiting in the parking lot. I hopped in her car and away we went! As she drove north I sent Kyle a message with our destination – just in case. Occasionally, I exercise some caution and prudence. Well, that all got me up and moving unexpectedly. A pleasant surprise none-the-less.

I felt a mess in the car though. I'd grabbed my massive battery pack and was charging the GPS off of it and was sewing my mittens back together as Kirsty drove. After that was all settled, I looked over the Munro guide in the car, just to get a general feel for what we were doing. I knew it was going to be on the shorter side and near the A9, so no big fuss. We rolled up, I unplugged the GPS and hoped it had enough charge! Put myself together and away we went. We parked near Balsporran Cottage (B and B) and walked past the white façade of the B and B to cross over some train tracks, and then we followed the vehicle tracks up. Those quickly forked and branched, so I had to pull out the GPS and figure out which one was correct. In the end, we ended up following the road until we hit the first intersection and then we followed the road left. At the second intersection we veered right uphill.

At this point it was a general thread of a path uphill, and it was wet! We bounced around trying to stay on the least boggy sections,



for whatever good it did, until we eventually made it high enough that the terrain became rockier and the “marshiness” subsided a bit. There is a large pile of cairns we encountered first, but the true top is little further up in an east-south-east direction. We stopped and had a nibble with our backs against the cairn wall. The breeze was relatively strong, but with the wall as a break it wasn’t too bad. As we packed up our kit to keep going, I handed the GPS to Kirsty to see if she wanted to try and play with it. I gave her a couple, very general pointers, and let her head off while I nipped off on the barren landscape for a “party separation”. *Seriously! Am I the only person that pees in the outdoors here?!* I caught her up not too far down the southern side of the hill and we followed the trail to a low point between the summits and where a road had come up from the valley. We briefly walked along the road in a southerly direction before taking a left to follow a faint trail uphill towards A’Mharconaich. There appeared to be lots of little faint paths that had broken off to head uphill. Pretty standard going here. Semi wet, semi grass, becoming increasingly rockier with elevation. The trail did become a little more evident once on the ridge though.

The sun was getting low in the sky. *Let’s face it. We did not get an early start!* But I have to say, the inner being who revels in all things wild was eyeing the further two summits, along the ridge, with longing. I ever so briefly mentioned something about a trail continuing along to the other summits, but Kirsty didn’t seem too interested and I didn’t want to come off as too crazy. *Too soon.* The sun was golden in the sky. That color that lets you know it’s starting its descent, and with no compelling reason to really stick around, we tagged the summit and walked off down the northern arm. It is an easy descent but muddy. In hindsight, I think I’d have back tracked back to the bealach and then followed the road down. But really, one half dozen or the other I suppose. It did get a little more interesting when we intersected the river on the south side. For one minute, I thought we were going to have to wade across. It looked



doable, if not a little tricky, and with an unknown depth. *Ha! I was nearly excited about this added challenge! Bonus round!* But then, we realized we wouldn’t have to take off our boots as we could follow the faint path, of the others I’m sure, who walked to the train tracks and then crossed the water on that bridge. Alas! From there we jaunted back past the B and B, which now had free roaming chickens all over the place. To the car, loaded up our kit and headed to Pitlochry for a quick coffee and then away home!

Lessons Learned

Surprise hillwalks are a good thing!

Asking for cream with tea is odd. Apparently it is just ‘milk’ in Scotland.

