

Route(s)	Fionn Bheinn
Elevation(s) (ft/m)	<b>Fionn Bheinn</b> (3,061ft/ 933m)
Date(s)	June 26 2018
Partner(s)	Solo
Elevation gain/loss (ft/m)	2,602ft/ 793m
Distance (miles)	6.5 miles/10.48km
Total time (hours/mins)	3h 30m
Equipment	Trekking poles, snacks and water! Sunscreen!
Weather Forecast	Partly sunny
Weather Actuality	Started sunny and clouds blew in towards the afternoon. Pleasant temperatures though.
Flora/Fauna	N/A
Wildlife	Sheep, grouse, and frogs!
Starting Point/Trailhead	Auchnasheen Station
Grade/Rating	Walking (Road, turned to track, turned to cross country)
Accommodations	N/A
Tourist Attractions	N/A
Motto for the day	N/A

Day 1	
<b>Daily 1 Distance</b>	6.5 miles/10.48km
<b>Daily 1 Elevation</b>	2,602ft/ 793m
<b>Day 1 Daily Time</b>	3h 30m
Rise and Shine	7.30am
Depart House	8.45am
Leave car	12.30pm
Summit of Fionn Bheinn	2.30pm
Arrive car	4.00pm
<b>The Story</b>	

*Sun o'clock!* Time to head to the hills! With a great extended forecast, it looked to be a good time to head a little further afield and take advantage of the time and spend a few nights abroad. I bounced around on quite a few locations but ended up deciding to head towards Kinlochewe. It'd help me get some of the more northerly summits down. That being said, I probably should have done a little more research, any really, on the peaks before I came. I only just now learned that one of the ridges I was looking at on a map is one of the 'greatest mountaineering challenges in Scotland' or something along those lines. I think I've heard that before, but still a surprise!

Today though, I got a late start. *Perhaps that just means normal now.* I left the house in Dunblane just a little after Kyle left for work. I loaded up all my baggage, put on some tunes, and headed north! The A9 and I are quite well acquainted these days. I didn't get an overabundance of good sleep the night before. Shocker. That, coupled with the delightfully warm car, made me want to curl back up and go to sleep. *But alas! It was mission time.* It took me just over three and a half hours to reach Auchnasheen. I was using the brilliant feature on the WalkHighlands website which links directly to directions for parking. In this case, the parking was at the wee train stop. I parked, changed out of my tank top into a lightweight long sleeve shirt because the sun was scorching already, grabbed my pack, and headed out.

Between the GPS and a half-loaded image from MunroMaps I was easily able to find the start to the trail. Essentially, from the parking lot back track to the main A835 road, cross the street, continue west for 20-30 yards to where a side road branches off and there is a wooden gate for walkers. Go through that and follow the road up until where it ends. Which is a ways! I was quite chuffed with how nice it was to walk on a solid, wide road. It was like being on a trail and being able to move at a relatively decent pace. I came across a handful of sheep, most of which skedaddled away from me. But I did find it interesting that four were laying right on the path. It was so hot that I was hoping they wouldn't bother themselves with getting up, but they did eventually decide to move away from me.

The gravel road ended as the road began to level out in an upper plateau between two summits. It was here that I stopped to put on my gaiters. I'd avoided it up to this point because it was too warm to be wrapping non-breathable black fabric around my legs, but alas, I could see I'd be in more grassy terrain and thought it'd help protect the lower half of my legs. I was hoping to get a little color on my legs, so, in order to compensate, I tucked my shorts up into my underwear, so I was basically walking in short-underwear. This way I maximized the skin exposed to the tanning force of the sun. From this abrupt end I stepped up and into the grass and followed along the river briefly. After about ten yards or so, the berm dipped, and it was easy to walk across to the other side. From there, I found it difficult to locate any type of footpath or track, so I just harried off in the general direction of the summit. It is clear that there are times in the year, probably most, that this area is saturated and a real bog. Fortunately for me, it was quite mild this day. There were some wet spots, and my tennis shoes weren't really a match for a couple missteps, but my feet weren't saturated either. *That my friends, is an actual win here.* The luck held, and I stumbled across the footpath again. It's actually a fairly solid path, faint in a few spots, but if you can stick with it, I found it helpful. I was lucky to come across it because there was no indication from below that it was there, and I could rarely find any signs of it while looking up. I simply had to follow along as I went and occasionally stop and look around.

The weather, which had been quite hot up to this point, had started to cool, thanks in large part to a slight breeze. But, along with that breeze, clouds started to roll in. They were high and were not menacing, but I was still a little surprised to see them. The forecast was everything lovely and this was quickly becoming an overcast sky. There's not much to tell about this section. I continued to work my way uphill following the trail as far as I could. I eventually lost it and made my way cross-country. It is generally more difficult walking through unpredictably undulating grassy terrain, but because it was a little drier than I imagine it normally is, the purchase proved sound, and it was fairly easy going. *That or my standards have just lowered so much that it seemed fine!* I worked uphill to intersect with the ridge, because that is always where the tracks are. I intersected it, and voila a trail of sorts! As I let my feet mindlessly follow it upwards, I was startled out of my musings by a grouse that started making noises and running around. *Neither subtle or stealthy...* In a relatively short distance I saw three; a female, a male and then one off in the distance I couldn't identify. They must have been the guardians of the summit because immediately after that, I was on top. And it was a gorgeous view. I like the more varied terrain in this part of Scotland. It calls to me a little more. And from this point I could see all sorts of fun ridges, high lochs, valleys and quite possibly the ocean! It was stunning, and I had it all to myself. I dropped my sweaty backpack, pulled up a rock and sat with my back to the concrete summit trig. It was marvelous.



I sent Kyle a text letting him know where I was, and then due to some confusion over where I'd be sleeping that night, car vs. a hostel, we had a quick call. Then I grabbed my bag and headed off downhill. I followed the track a little way further along the ridge, to see if there was a trail that way, but I didn't see one. So, I quickly cut downhill and aimed for the area I last remembered encountering the track. *Bingo! Direct hit!* I was just generally walking in the direction I remembered it and literally hit right on it. The trail-sniffer still works apparently! From there, I was able to pick up the pace a little bit more since the track made it a little easier going. Just before I intersected the gravel road, two grouse screeched from right beside me and fluttered away. I swore so loud I nearly surprised myself! It was so outrageous I literally had to laugh. I'd been startled by frogs earlier and now grouse? *What else should I expect to pop out at me?* Once on the gravel road, I promptly ripped off my gaiters in the name of sunbathing, and continued on my way. It was a quick and straight forward descent, and I was quickly back at the car.

Once there, I lost no time in wiping myself down with some wipes I conveniently found under a car seat, and changed my clothes. Halfway through the least seductive strip the area had ever seen, I noticed someone come out of the train stop. I can't be certain, but I think I got 'a look'; the 'move along you dirty tramp' look. *Ah well.* I tried to stay as covered as I could, and be fairly decent about it, but I suppose if you aren't used to outdoorsy people stripping in their cars, it might seem a bit wild. It did not, however, deter me from completing my change of clothes. Once changed, I grabbed the cooler full of snacks and a water bottle, and stretched out on the backseat with my legs propped up on the driver seat. A very casual repose just in time for the tour bus full of German people who pulled up to see! *Phw! Glad the show finished five minutes earlier! Yiiikes!*

The parking at the train stop was actually a lovely space. If it'd been later, and I was ready to settle for the night, it would have made a brilliant spot. There were toilets at the train station, and picnic benches on a little grassy spot, but it was too early to just 'stop' for the day. I might as well drive a little closer to the next objective and scope out the local offerings. I stopped at the Post Office in Kinlochewe, which offered some general food supplies, OS maps and fuel, but didn't see anything that called to me. I dropped Kyle a text and told him I'd head towards Torridon. I was hoping there'd be more out that way and I might be able to find a spot of Wi-Fi to look up the route information. Once I turned south from Kinlochewe, it turned into a one-way track. That is how you know you're starting to get deep – into the heart of Scotland a little more. I made it to Torridon and the General Store/Café had just closed, so I made my way back to the hostel. I had to go to the bathroom and Wi-Fi sounded really helpful, so I decided to spend the night after all. My guilt over spending money to stay in a hostel, instead of sleeping in the car, had me texting a confession to Kyle before I'd even seen my room. Guilt aside, it was nice to cook in the kitchen, use the Wi-Fi, look up route information, visit with people and take a shower. I haven't crawled into the bed yet, but I imagine that'll be delightful too.

As I'm sitting in the Torridon Hostel common area looking out the windows I can see that the skies have cleared. I imagine the stars will be out in force tonight.



