

Route(s)	Spidean Coire nan Clach and Ruadh-stac Mor (Beinn Eighe Traverse)
Elevation(s) (ft/m)	<b>Spidean Coire nan Clach</b> (3,258ft /993m) <b>Ruadh-stac Mor</b> (3,314ft /1010m)
Date(s)	June 28 2018
Partner(s)	Solo <i>Except for that guy Garry!</i>
Elevation gain/loss (ft/m)	+3,817 -3,883ft/+1163 -1184 m
Distance (miles/km)	9.93 miles/15.98 km
Total time (hours/mins)	6h 30m
Equipment	Trekking poles, snacks and water (3L today)! Sunscreen!
Weather Forecast	Sunny upper 20sC
Weather Actuality	Sunny and hot! Upper 20Cs. <i>A definite heat shimmer was seen! Hot!</i>
Flora/Fauna	N/A
Wildlife	More frogs, clegs and delights!
Starting Point/Trailhead	Beinn Eighe parking lot just North of A896 (West of Loch Clair) <i>Starts near the only cluster of trees in the area!</i>
Grade/Rating	Walking (Spidean summit had a couple moves that I used my hands on but it appeared to have a more walkable route)
Accommodations	Torridon Youth Hostel
Tourist Attractions	Kinlochewe – The Whistle Stop Café (and community art shop)
Motto for the day	N/A <i>Probably should have been something like “Don’t mind the zip ties!”</i>

Day 1	
<b>Daily 1 Distance</b>	9.93 miles/15.98 km
<b>Daily 1 Elevation</b>	+3,817 -3,883ft/+1163 -1184 m
<b>Day 1 Daily Time</b>	6h 30m
Rise and Shine	<del>6.30am</del> 8.00am
Depart Hostel	9.20am
Leave car	9.50am
Summit of Spidean Coire	11.55am
Summit of Ruadh-stoc Mor	1.20pm
Arrive car	4.20pm

### The Story

The night prior at the hostel was an interesting one. An ambulance rolled up to help a little kid who’d fallen in the parking lot and hurt himself. A party of four had split up and were slowly trickling in, but one person wasn’t back by 9.30pm, and there was a debate on when the appropriate time to call mountain rescue was. *You know... your average hostel experience really.* I was sun kissed and sleepy and had a room to myself, so I crawled into bed at a reasonable time. That did not mean that I wanted to get up at a reasonable time. In fact, I woke up around 6.30am and thought that I should get up, and then decided not to. I hit the snooze button and went back to sleep until around 8.00am, when I decided enough was enough, and I managed to shame myself into rolling out of bed. I packed up my bags, made myself some breakfast, loaded up the car, and was on the road by around 9.20am. It took me a minute

to get Wi-Fi service (even though I was literally standing right next to the box) and load up the driving directions. It was only an eleven-minute drive. It was generally easy to pinpoint the trailhead. There was a gravel pull out to a parking space, and near it was a little cluster of trees, and a sign post for area information. I hopped out and started to put on my boots, and that is when I noticed my band-aid (kitchen injury) was coming off. Naturally, I yelled over to a guy in a green camper van and asked if he had any 'plasters'. He handed me a first aid kit and told me to take what I needed. What a trooper! But, because the clegs were out in force again, I tried to get ready as fast as possible. I locked the car and started out for the trail. An older gent briefly stopped me and asked where I was going. He gave me a look over and told me I was young and fit, or something to that effect, and I should be able to manage.

*Okay! Solid endorsement! Good pep talk coach!*

I tried to get going at a quick pace, due to the bugs. I figured if I could get a little higher I might be able to shake the worst of them. To a degree, that was an effective approach. That being said, it did not stop them all together. It was a slow, steady, and hot climb up from the cars. There was fair access to water on the ascent, so I periodically stopped to dip my hat and shirt. I dunked my shirt entirely twice and continued to splash large amounts of water on my person, while water was available. I'd say water was available up to about 750m. This surprised me somewhat, considering that I saw almost no patches of snow in the whole area, so it must be a natural spring of sorts. *Nifty! And convenient.*

The trail from the car up to the summit is clear. There are essentially no turn offs or variations until the last 'bowl', where you can choose to continue on the well beaten and obvious trail straight up to a cairn on a ridge, and from that cairn veer right up to the trig, and then follow a rocky scramble to the true summit. Or, it appeared, there was a fainter option that kicked straight up to the true summit by way of a scree-ish looking path. I think it is rather one-half dozen or the other. By the time I hit the cairn on the ridge I was a hot, sweaty mess and felt myself starting to slow down a little. I hit the trig and saw the 'white rock pile' the older gent had mentioned in the car park and indicated was the true summit. He told me I couldn't miss or mistake it. Turns out, he was correct. I was kind of excited to see it. Any type of scrambling is exciting these days. I only had to use my hands a few times, but it felt solid to get hands on warm rock. I touched the summit and then turned around and headed for a shady corner I'd passed on the way up. Shade was just too delicious of a treat to pass up at this time. I dropped my pack, pulled out my phone, shot Kyle a whereabouts text and then had a snack. As I was quietly sitting in my shady corner, I noticed someone come up and bend over to breathe near the trig point. It was obvious they hadn't seen me, and just as clear that they were feeling the exertion. Having been in that position not fifteen minutes ago, I let out a soft giggle. As soon as the sound crossed my lips I realized how creepy it must have come across to the stranger who thought he was alone! A disembodied giggle. *Yikes!* To try and rectify that scenario, I shouted over a little hello and the gent walked over to sit down in the shade and introduce himself. He said his name was Garry, and we briefly got chatting on your standard polite mountain introductory topics. All he had was a small hip pack, and I was wondering where all his water was. He told me he had a CapriSun® in each pocket, one in his hand, and a couple in the "bum bag". I had 3 liters of water, a filter, and water tablets in my pack. Just hearing he had so little made me slightly incredulous! *But... then again, I've historically been on the paranoid side with water...* If his water choices gave me pause, I'm pretty sure the look I got when I said I didn't know about the route meant that he couldn't believe how unprepared I was, in that regard! *Hey! We're both making different choices on the same journey! Variety is the spice of life after all.*



I shared some of my Sports Beans® with him and he off handedly mentioned something about running with him. It was tempting, but with boots and a pack on, I figured I'd just stick with my quick clipped walk and see where that took me. Garry took off along the ridge and I followed shortly after. I saw a number of other people on this section between summits. Overall, the trail was a walk; clear and easy to follow along the ridge. The ridge mostly consisted of rocky scree terrain. It did, however, have a 'green' point along the way. It was at the base of this green point that the trail forked. One trail went up, and the other traversed around to the right. I opted to traverse under it, on a well-worn trail. *Easy-peasy, lemon-squeezy.* I felt a little guilty for not taking on the challenge of the extra elevation gain. Bit of a slacker. But, at the same time, I just couldn't be bothered. I'd seen Garry disappear over the top. Five CapriSuns and look at him go! Good on 'im!

The traverse spit me out not far from the gulley that I'd descend to get to the loch later. It was marked with a small cairn, and the upper section had a reddish hue to the rock. It was very clear that this was the standard descent route. I filed that information away for later and breezed past. The slope up to the summit of Ruadh-stac Mor was very gradual and punctuated by grassy and rocky sections. The track was generally easy to follow, but I did lose it briefly in a rocky section. That being said, with any visibility or navigational skills, it'd still be easy to find. *Otherwise, just go up!!* A rock pile marks the summit. I rolled up right as another gentleman had his camera out and was taking pictures. I asked if he wanted to be in a picture and he indicated he wasn't interested, but that he'd take a picture of me. *Okey dokey!* With all of the summit selfies I've taken, I thought I might as well take advantage of an actual 'good' shot of me. *Or at least the possibility of one... never know what someone's photographic skills are like!* I had anticipated sitting for a while to enjoy the top, and to take in some hydration, but this gent and I got chatting, and I figured I might as well walk with him for some time. *Good chance to brush up on my rusty social skills!* We chatted for a while and he gave me some ideas for clubs in the area, then he talked a little about his time on the West Coast and in Alaska. It was a pleasant way to descend back to the top of the gulley; or the 'dirty gulley' as I was referring to it in my head. On first glance, it looked like it might be an actual bear. I could see that it was compact and rocky, with smaller pieces of scree on top of that. *Easy to slip and slide on...* But, as I was eyeing the descent, I noticed movement below. The gent looked like Garry, so I whistled, and he turned around. I was pretty sure it was, so, what the heck, I yelled his name. *And I just whistled at a stranger!!* We briefly carried on a part hand signal and part yelling conversation before he continued his descent and I said a good bye to my unnamed acquaintance and started down the gulley. I stayed to the right side on the solid rock, which had fractured at angles that made it like following steps. I thought it went remarkably smoother than it had looked on first glance. The lower part had unavoidable scree, but overall, I was able to move quite quickly. *The loch was in my sights!*



I passed a couple ascending. They were moving quite slow, and even a minute or two in their presence was clear enough indication that one or both were very uncomfortable on the terrain. But, that was in their hands. My feet were moving, of their own volition, to the cool waters of the loch. I was practically skipping along. I did have to briefly pause at a rocky, mini-boulder section. I couldn't quite see the track, but careful looking identified a cairn. But really, it is not difficult terrain, so if in doubt, just descend to the loch and stay on the right side. The trail is there! I did pause numerous times take pictures. The small pockets of water hidden along the way were so clear and beautiful. But, as soon as I stopped I'd have horseflies land all over me. *Mental pictures it is!!* As I approached the end of the loch, I saw Garry sitting in the water. I yelled over to see if he'd mind if I joined him. *I mean, maybe it was a party for one?* He laughed and told me it wasn't his loch. *Sounded like an invitation.* I made quick work of walking over, dropping

my pack and taking off my boots. I was just about to rip off my shirt, when I figured I'd better ask on that too. Sometimes my mountain alter ego which has a limited understanding of personal space, and my urban sensibilities get jumbled. But, asking seemed the courteous thing to do in this instance; a little urban nicety. I got the go ahead, and less than sixty seconds later I was in that deliciously cool loch. I was expecting to be a little more 'shocked' by the water temperature. To experience that initial gasp as the body has to adjust to the temperature. Nope! I just sat down in the water and enjoyed the refreshing sensations. I toyed with swimming out a little further, but overall was happy just to cool off. *The mission was accomplished just as easily sitting as it was swimming after all!* Garry swam off a little into the loch and mentioned something about being careful about plane crash pieces. *What was that?!* It was so unexpected, bordering on crazy, that it registered as having to be a joke. I laughed. But, then I nervously looked around a little, and sure enough I wasn't ten feet from a small piece of riveted metal. When I looked back over at Garry he had on his shoes. *That was information I could have used before I got in barefoot!!* He then mentioned something about loch eels or something. *Well! At this point, why not? I had been wrong about the plane pieces! My ignorance swings between dangerous and amusing!* A quick lay back to let my hair get wet, and I started working my way back to shore. Next to the piece of plane was a piece of broken bottle. *What the actual hell? Any other objective hazards to be found?!* It did not take me long to get out and resituated, and while I did, I noticed a bigger piece of plane not far from where I'd dropped my pack. *How'd I miss that before?* And then more pieces of silver glittering just under the water's surface. *Well. That's a new one. I think I literally just swam in a plane crash.*



I was still chuckling about the absurdity of it all. I love it when little things like that happen. Garry and I walked to the far end of the loch together and I asked if he was going to get running again, and he said he wasn't planning to, so we started down. We managed to keep up a fair pace, and a steady stream of conversation, on our descent. We only stopped a couple of times to dunk our shirts or grab a little water. I hadn't drunk much, so I was happy to share. *Plus, it was just too hot to be miserly about it!* I had a bit of an internal

laugh when we stopped at a river to dunk our shirts and we both headed off to take a pee. *Ah. Mountain friends already!* There has always seemed to be something very personal about that action. Something you don't do with all your city friends. *Haha!* Its silly, but it doesn't take away from the validity! The trail on the descent was straight forward and easy to follow. It led straight back to a parking lot. Garry said he'd give me a lift a mile up the road to where I parked my car. Plus, he had CapriSuns in a cooler in the car! Excellent planning on his part! He started to clear out a space for me in the car to sit, and, as I was finishing the drink, he came around laughing and said "look what I just found", and in his hand were four black zip ties! *Haha really? The absurdity levels!* I burst out laughing! We'd just been talking about his sketchy hitchhiking experience that morning, which I had dubbed "The Polish Encounter", and he had me in stitches with it. Either way, I still took the ride back up the road! *Judge if you want! I was having too much fun!*

Once at my car, I quickly changed into some sandals, hopped in the driver seat and pulled out after Garry. We'd talked about grabbing a bite to eat in Kinlochewe. We took a brief spin around the one horse town and didn't see any obvious fish and chip shops, so instead we settled on The Whistle Stop Café, which turned out to be a really great little eatery with local artwork displayed inside. As we were reading the menu, Garry referenced a note on the bottom that said you could bring your own beer into the restaurant, so he said to order him the salmon and he'd go grab drinks down at the local shop. The server came over and I ordered two salmon and then she told me they were out, saw Garry leaving the restaurant and ran out to yell at him that the salmon was out. He, apparently, yelled back that he'd have whatever I was having. *Haha...what?! I quite literally just met him, now I'm picking out meals?* Well, he mentioned fish and chips earlier, and that was what he was going to get. I, on the other hand, was going to get a salad. *Guess I cannot follow instructions!* As soon as I made that order, she asked me how he took his peas! *Haha... I got nothing!* The whole meal was a lark! Full of laughs! It was a truly great and memorable day out!



## Lessons Learned

Scottish translation: Cleg = horsefly.

Look before you strip and get in a loch!

*Zip ties on the front seat aren't automatic disqualifiers from catching a lift with someone!*



