

Route(s)	Derry Cairngorm
Elevation(s) (ft/m)	<b>Derry Cairngorm</b> (3,789ft /1155m)
Date(s)	August 30 2018
Partner(s)	Dave H. Rosalind
Elevation gain/loss (ft/m)	+/- 2,847ft / 868m
Distance (miles/km)	13.1 miles/ 21.08 km
Total time (hours/mins)	5h 50m
Equipment	Trekking poles, snacks and water (3L today)! Sunscreen!
Weather Forecast	Partly cloudy, partly sunny. Summit temperature between 0-1C.
Weather Actuality	Partly cloudy, partly sunny. The summit had a slight and chilly breeze.
Flora/Fauna	N/A
Wildlife	<i>Nada!</i>
Starting Point/Trailhead	Linn of Dee Car Park
Grade/Rating	Walking. <i>Except that one off-piste moment of proper friction slab work.</i>
Accommodations	N/A
Tourist Attractions	N/A
Motto for the day	N/A

Day 1	
<b>Daily 1 Distance</b>	13.1 miles/ 21.08 km
<b>Daily 1 Elevation</b>	+/- 2,847ft / 868m
<b>Day 1 Daily Time</b>	5h 50m
Rise and Shine	6.45am
Depart Home	7.45am
Leave car	10.00am
Summit Derry Cairngorm	Est. 1.00pm
Arrive car	3.45pm
Braemar coffee shop	4.20pm
The Story	

Just as I was getting ready to depart Croatia I got a message from Dave asking about getting out later in the week. Once I got back to Scotland and had a chance to look at the weather. *You know, to make an informed decision!* I dropped him a line. I was in and Thursday worked for me. Not long thereafter I got added to a WhatsApp group chat titled Derry Cairngorm. *What was happening?* Turns out Dave had been talking to Rosalind who was interested in getting out as well so now we had a group chat going. *Most excellent. The more the merrier.* The plan was set that we'd meet in Dunblane at 7.45am and head north from there. Dave, like the trooper he is, offered to drive. But as soon as he found out I was getting car sick, like the traitorous scallywag he is, he began to speed up the car on the curves and bumps. I'll be honest there was a rough moment or two in there where I felt quite unwell. Bit of rolled down window and the focus of a ninja meant I didn't vomit in the back seat. *You're welcome everyone!*

We make it to the start at the car park at Linn of Dee. As Dave went off to pay for parking Rosalind and I put our boots on and got our kit in order. Apparently, Dave was already ready as he just moseyed about a bit. We walked from the car park along the wide gravel and dirt road that appeared to be popular for

runners and bikers as well. Dave and Rosalind had graciously agreed not to take bikes as I don't have one and wasn't keen on renting one for the day. *Miles are miles!* It was 3.5 miles, according to Dave, from the car to the end of the bike-able path for Derry Cairngorm which he estimated to be about an hour. That seemed like a good clip, but doable, and in fact, was what we managed. On the way Dave pointed out the general sites, waved off in the direction of the bothy, and explained about the rescue shed, outhouse and old lodge building. I was a bit enamored of the old lodge; Derry Lodge. It's been left abandoned and the windows are all boarded up, but it has a real charm to it. The location is stunning, and the stone work of the building belongs there. It is quite large as well, so I could just imagine soft light spilling out from the windows on a warm summer night or during a winter snow storm. *I know, I know. Call me a romantic!*



From the rescue storage building we continued roughly northward across a bridge. We followed the clear path as it worked its way upwards, through a small copse of trees. The path was well defined and easy to follow. A couple hundred meters of elevation gain and we came across a slabby rock section on our left (east-ish). The path ran under it, and then worked its way up to the side. But, as we were approaching, we talked about how it looked feasible and then I said the words there is no

return from – I dared Dave to do it! I'm not sure if he even paused to think before heading over to the base of the slab and going for it. He made good progress up and I felt a bit bad for daring him to do something I wasn't going to do. Matter of honor? Pride? I'm not sure, but I had to follow! *Plus, it looked fun.* I asked Roz if she'd carry my poles up around the side, and like a trooper she agreed. I headed off towards the slab and started up. The rock was grippy, so it was pretty good going to start, but then I got a little higher and the hand holds, crimpy as they were lower, became a little scarier, and it was a bit more reliant on good friction footwork and balance. *Hmm... was this a bad idea?* Dave had topped out at this point and was taking pictures of me. *Good, good. Let's get this all on camera just in case!* I did manage to find a good combination of moves to get through the middle section and pull myself up to the top. It had to have been a good 30 feet or so. After that little bit of excitement, we all reconvened and began the trudge uphill once more.



Dave had given us a short brief on what to expect, and it went something like, “You go uphill for a bit, then it flattens out, then you go uphill again, and then it flattens out again, then you go uphill...”. *Solid pep talk.* In actuality though, the time did seem to go pretty fast. I was expecting the suffer quotient to be a little higher considering how long it’d been since I’d been out, and I really don’t exercise much at all! I was pleasantly surprised that it all felt very good! The last bit of uphill before the summit felt

like the real slog, but once we made it to the top, we came across a younger uni-aged couple sitting on the summit. Roz and I walked up a little behind Dave and he was already chatting them up. He turned to Roz and congratulated her on the summit and then turned back to talking to the two kids. Roz and I looked at each other and shared a little snicker before digging out our sandwiches!

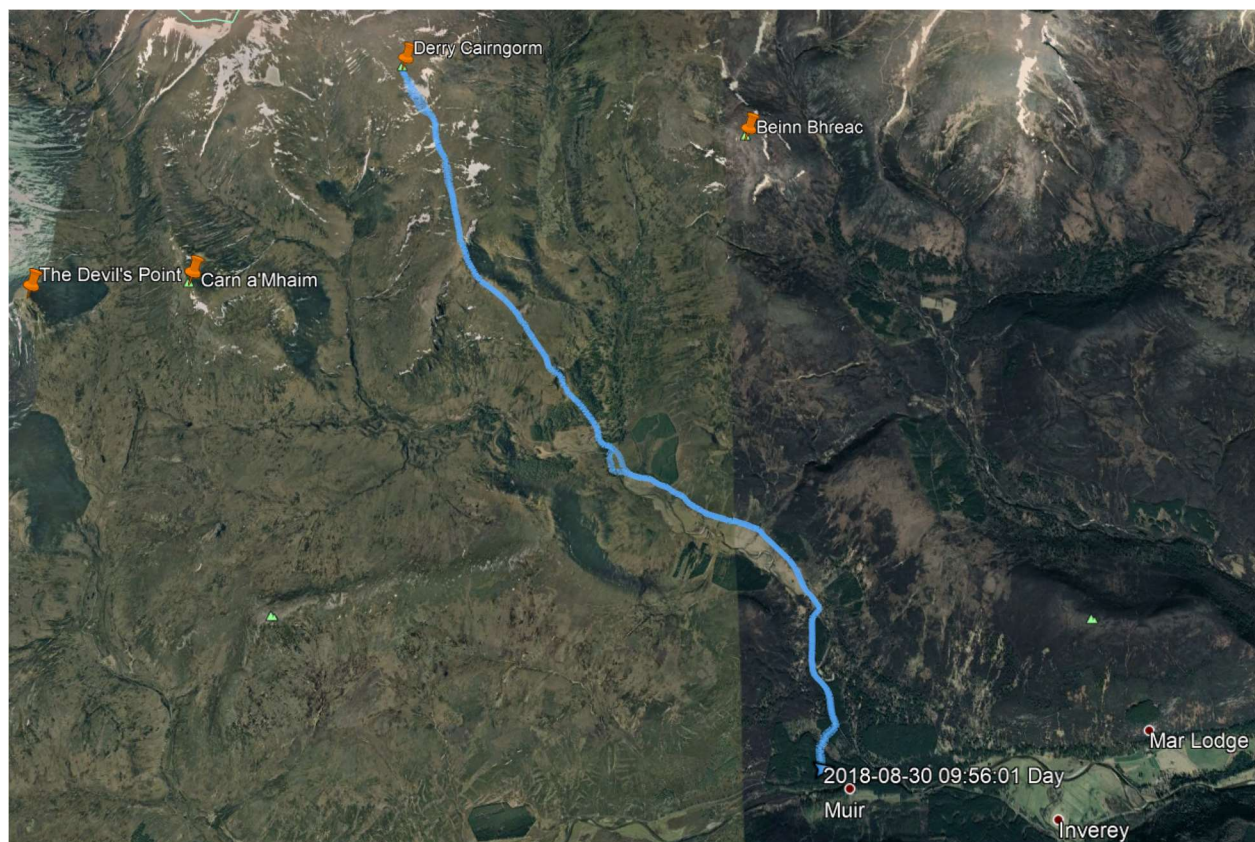
When the debate started on whether the first (south) cairn pile or the second (north) pile was higher, Dave was of the opinion that people had been adding stones to the first pile and made it artificially higher. I pulled out my GPS to solve this pressing question. But where to measure it? Unscientifically, but because it was more easily discerned, I placed the GPS on the top rock. It came out that the first pile was one meter higher. *So, Dave’s theory might hold water!* But, in all seriousness the piles weren’t that far apart.



Just sitting on the summit, the slight breeze kicked up and the temperature seemed to be a bit chilly. I eventually had to pull out a jacket and kept it on as we started off downhill. The descent was quick and easy! Not much to report there. We on and off crossed paths with the two kids from uni, and as it turns out they were going to have to walk back to Braemar to try to catch a bus back to Aberdeen. Once they caught us on the 3.5 miles walk out, and stayed with us for a while, I told



Dave that they were probably hoping for a lift back to Braemar! Sure enough, not long after we got to the car the two popped out of the woods and Dave asked them if they needed a ride back. The young girl looked like she had been approaching to ask just that thing, and was relieved it was being offered. It didn't take long for us all to pile in the car and drive into Braemar. We stopped in town to drop off the duo and grab the traditional post-trip coffee. It seemed like a fun town and I'd like to get back and have more of a poke around. Alas, all too soon it was time to get back on the road. I wasn't relishing the idea of the curvy roads at high speeds again but somehow it seemed to go a bit better this time. *Hallelujah*. All said and done, another pleasant trip out!



## Lessons Learned

*Nothing too powerful this go!*