



The mountain with its head in the clouds

Experiencing Ben Nevis



Scotland's landscape is scattered with Munros and mist-shrouded hills...

But Ben Nevis is the king of them all. In the north west Highlands, near the town of Fort William and part of the Grampian Mountain range, the famous peak attracts 125,000 walkers a year. Whether you're an avid ambler or you just love beautiful landscapes, bagging 'the Ben' is likely to feature near the top of your Scottish bucket list.

An ancient giant of the land, Ben Nevis was once a massive active volcano which exploded and collapsed inwards on itself millions of years ago. At the summit, there is evidence of an explosion in the form of light-coloured granite. The name itself has two translations from the ancient Gaelic language, meaning 'mountain with its head in the clouds', thanks to its iconic mist-shrouded peak, or it can also mean 'venomous mountain' – you can decide which translation you prefer after the climb!

Read on for an overview of walking routes up the mountain, or visit Walk Highlands for detailed maps, difficulty levels and walking advice.

Remember it's never 'easy' to bag a Scottish Munro or Corbett. You'll need a good amount of hillwalking experience, fitness, hill craft and navigation skills using a map and compass, before attempting any Scottish mountains, even more so in winter.

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Routes to the summit

There are two main walking routes up Ben Nevis. The Mountain Track (sometimes called the Tourist Track or the Pony Track) is used by most walkers, whilst the Carn Mor Dearg Arête route presents a more challenging climb for more experienced hikers.

Best route for: Beginners

The easiest route up the mountain, the track begins at the Glen Nevis Visitor Centre car park, at Achintee on the east side of Glen Nevis about 2 km from the town centre of Fort William, and approximately 20 m above sea level. The track starts with a steep climb to the 'halfway lochan', or Lochan Meall an t-Suidhe, and then the ascent features

snaking zig-zag paths up to the summit.

At the summit, there's a cairn that marks the highest point and your reward on a clear day will be the incredible 360° panoramic vistas which can stretch as far as Northern Ireland. From the top, see if you can point out other peaks including the Torridon hills, Ben Lomond and Morven at Caithness.

A unique feature of the summit is the Old Observatory, which was opened in 1883. It provided hourly meteorological data for almost 20 years, recording some of the UK's most useful information about mountain weather to date. It closed in 1904 and it now lies in ruin, but can be used for shelter in emergencies.

Carn Mor Dearg Arête



Best route for: Experienced hillwalkers

Carn Mor Dearg Arête is the mountain's other walking route, a challenging ridge climb which should only be attempted by experienced scramblers and physically-fit hill walkers. Though demanding, the route rewards walkers with the finest possible views of the mountain's North face. Starting from the North Face car park at Torlundy, the trail traverses not one but two Munros, the Carn Mor Dearg and Ben Nevis. It can also be reached by following the Mountain Track to the 'halfway lochan', then taking the left fork whilst the right fork continues along the Mountain Track. You'll pass the CIC Hut, a private shelter for mountaineers. A longer and more strenuous walk than the Mountain Track, this spectacular route can take between 10-11 hours with scrambles across boulders. It requires a good head for heights and careful navigation across the trickier exposed sections.

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Beyond hiking

There are many other incredible ways to experience Ben Nevis

Rock Climbing

A rock climber's paradise, the North Face of Ben Nevis has steep jagged cliff edges which are 600m high in places and perfect for rock climbing. There is a variety of routes to choose from, including the Ledge Route and Tower Ridge. Find a knowledgeable rock climbing or mountain guide to show you the best spots on the mountain, and read more about rock climbing experiences you can have on Ben Nevis.

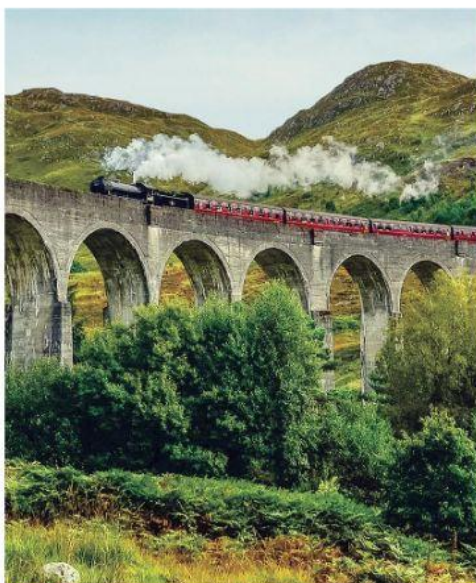
Mountain Gondola

You can also take in the sights aboard a Nevis Range mountain gondola ride. Drift effortlessly along the north face of the Aonach Mor, and enjoy awe-inspiring views of the Great Glen and Ben Nevis, and sometimes even the Inner Hebrides on clear days. The journey takes approximately 12 -15 minutes, and each gondola car can take up to six people.



The gondola cars are wheelchair accessible, and you can also bring your dog and take them for a walk along one of the mountain viewpoint trail.

Nearby attractions



which boasts a stunning hilltop location and can be reached by following the waymarked path from Glen Nevis.

- Visit the fascinating and free West Highland Museum in Fort William, and learn all about the north west Highlands Jacobite history, with medals, weapons and one of Bonnie Prince Charlie's silk waistcoats on display.
- Take the rail journey of a lifetime aboard the iconic Jacobite Steam Train, which departs from Fort William to Mallaig during the summer months along the West Highland Line. It travels over the magnificent Glenfinnan Viaduct which featured in the Harry Potter film series.

- Head to the Ben Nevis Distillery, one of Scotland's oldest distilleries established in 1825. A perfect souvenir for those who have completed the climb, take a tour of the distillery the following day and ease your weary muscles with a dram of single malt. The distillery is at Lochy Bridge, Fort William, around 7 minutes' drive away from Ben Nevis.

- Fort William and Lochaber is a region known as the 'Outdoor Capital of the UK' so there is a wide variety of adrenaline pumping activities on offer. Try gorge walking or canyoning with Vertical Descents, or get hooked on a new watersport such as white water funyakking and river rafting with Active Highs.

- In the winter, hone your ski or snowboard skills at the Nevis Range, or throughout the year try other exciting outdoor activities including mountain biking, tree-top adventures and paragliding.

- There are plenty of beautiful scenic walks in the Fort William area. Take a short stroll through the Nevis Gorge to admire the cascading Steall Falls, or wander along to the Iron Age Dun Deardail fort

Match the words to the references

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|---|------------------------------|
| 1. It has jagged cliff edges which are perfect for rock climbing. _____ | Nevis Gorge |
| 2. You can do mountain biking, tree-top adventures and paragliding. _____ | Mountain Track |
| 3. You get stunning views of the mountain's North face. _____ | Active Highs. |
| 4. It appears in the Harry Potter film series. _____ | Nevis Range mountain gondola |
| 5. It closed down in 1904. _____ | Ben Nevis Distillery |
| 6. Each car can take up to six people. _____ | CIC Hut |
| 7. It is at Lochy Bridge, Fort William. _____ | Walk Highlands |
| 8. You may admire the cascading Steall Falls. _____ | Ben Nevis |
| 9. You can see Bonnie Prince Charlie's silk waistcoats. _____ | Old Observatory |
| 10. You can experience funyakking and river rafting. _____ | Glenfinnan Viaduct |
| 11. It attracts 125,000 walkers a year. _____ | West Highland Museum |
| 12. It's a private shelter for mountaineers. _____ | Vertical Descents |
| 13. It begins at the Glen Nevis Visitor Centre car park. _____ | Carn Mor Dearg Arête |
| 14. You can get maps and walking advice. _____ | Nevis Range |
| 15. You can try gorge walking or canyoning. _____ | North Face of Ben Nevis |