

05 The Ardverikie Estate

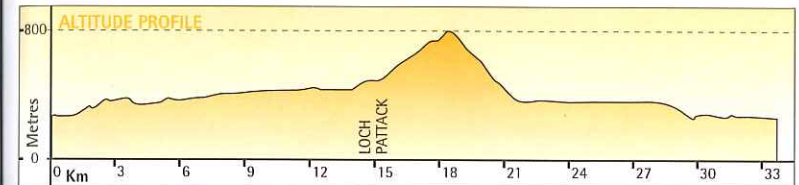
34km

Introduction

The magnificent Ardverikie House, on the banks of Loch Laggan, is instantly recognisable as the estate house used in the BBC's Monarch of the Glen television series. It dates from the 1870s and was a favourite destination of Queen Victoria. This is a ride that takes you deep into one of Scotland's oldest deer forests and along the banks of Loch Laggan, whose shores form the country's largest freshwater beach. It is a ride of two halves, the first climbing steadily to Loch Pattack, before the steep ascent to the north east ridge of Beinn a Chlachair. The second half descends to Lochan na h-Earba and Loch Laggan. The scenery is spectacular and the terrain diverse on this wonderful wilderness journey.

The Ride

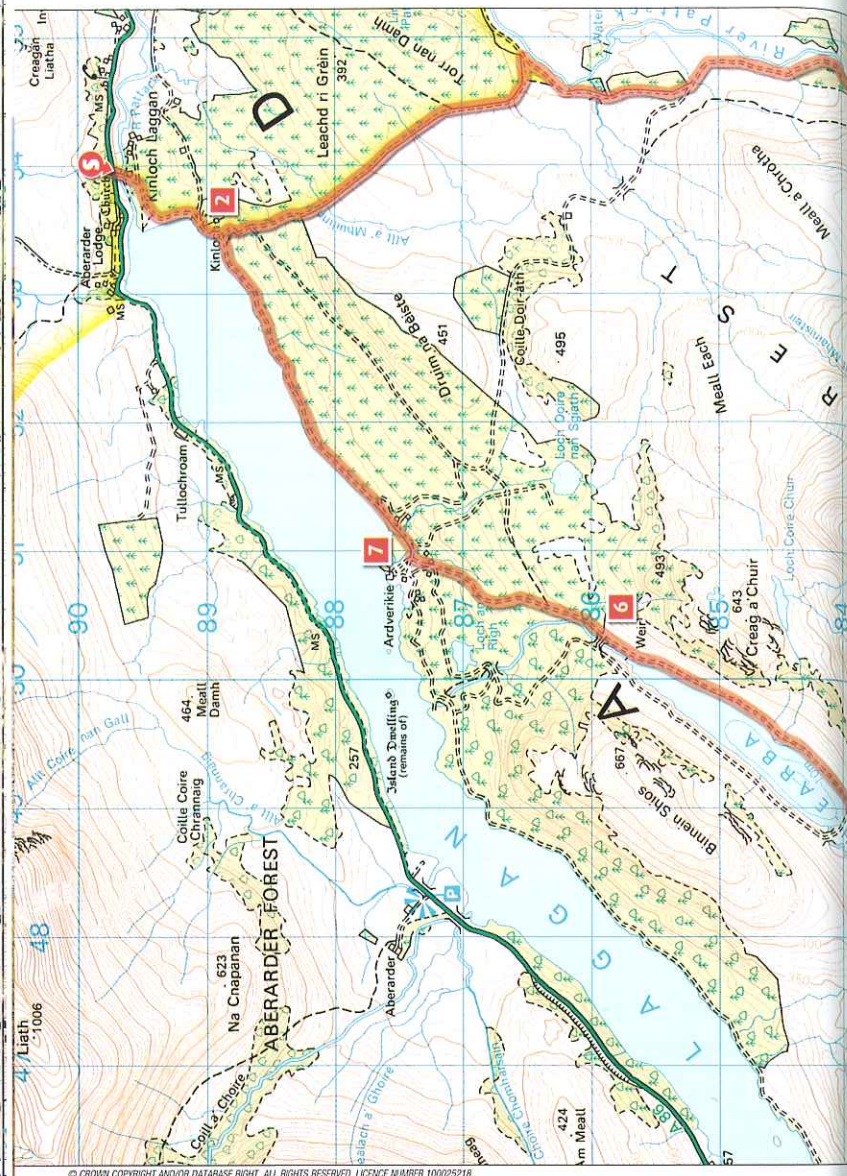
The spectacular baronial style gatehouse at the eastern end of Loch Laggan gives an idea of the grandeur of the main Ardverikie House at the very beginning of the ride. From the gatehouse a good track leads to the River Pattack and climbs gently upstream past waterfalls and woodland. Nearing Loch Pattack the views towards Ben Alder are outstanding. From the loch, the real climbing begins with a tough ascent to the high point of the route above Loch a Bhealaich Leamhain. The climbing is instantly rewarded with the fantastic descent to Lochan na h-Earba. From the Lochan, gentle tracks along the shore lead to Ardverikie House and some sandy riding on the beach at Loch Laggan.



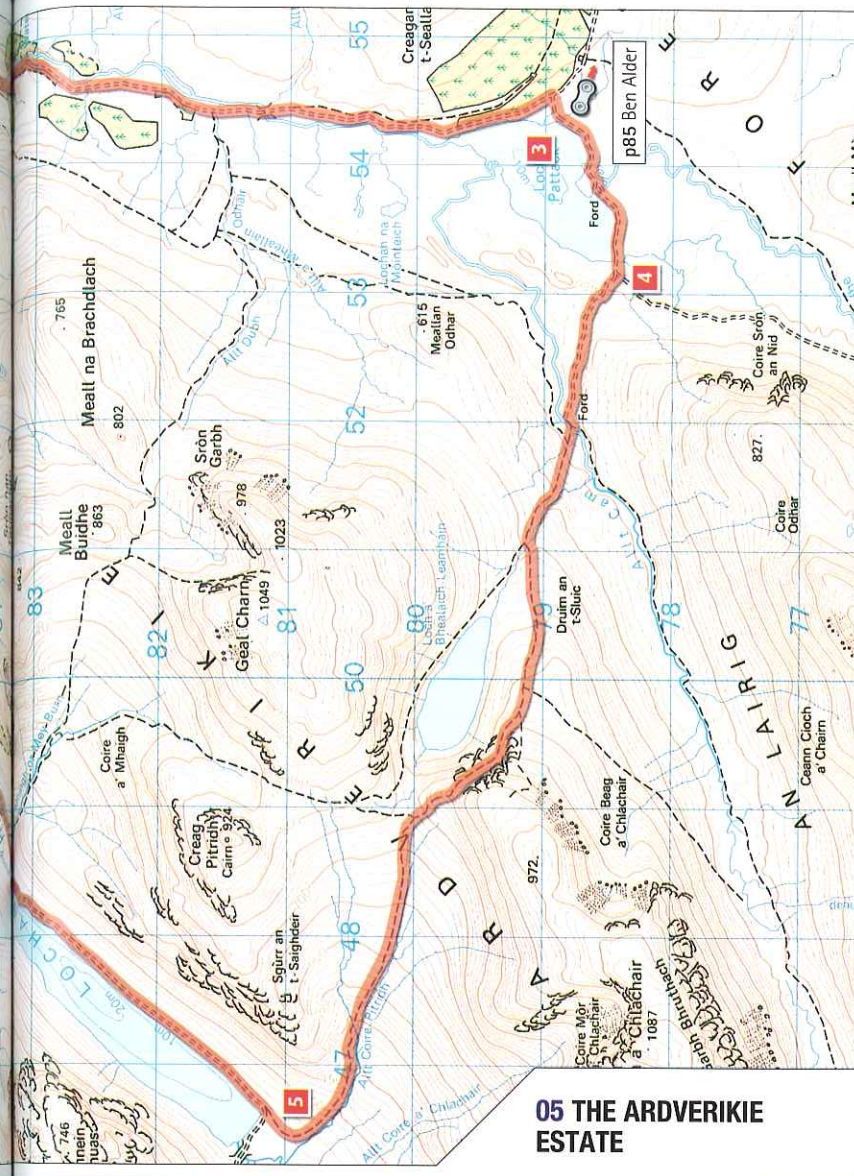
THE ARDVERIKIE ESTATE

GRADE: ▲

TOTAL DISTANCE: 34KM » TOTAL ASCENT: 850M » TIME: 3-5 HOURS » START: ARDVERIKIE ESTATE GATE HOUSE
 START GRID REF: NN 539897 » SATNAV: KINLOCH LAGGAN » OS MAP: LANDRANGER 42 » CONTACT: ARDVERIKIE
 ESTATE OFFICE TEL: 01528 544 300 » CAFE: BASECAMP CAFÉ, WOLFRAX TEL: 01528 544 786



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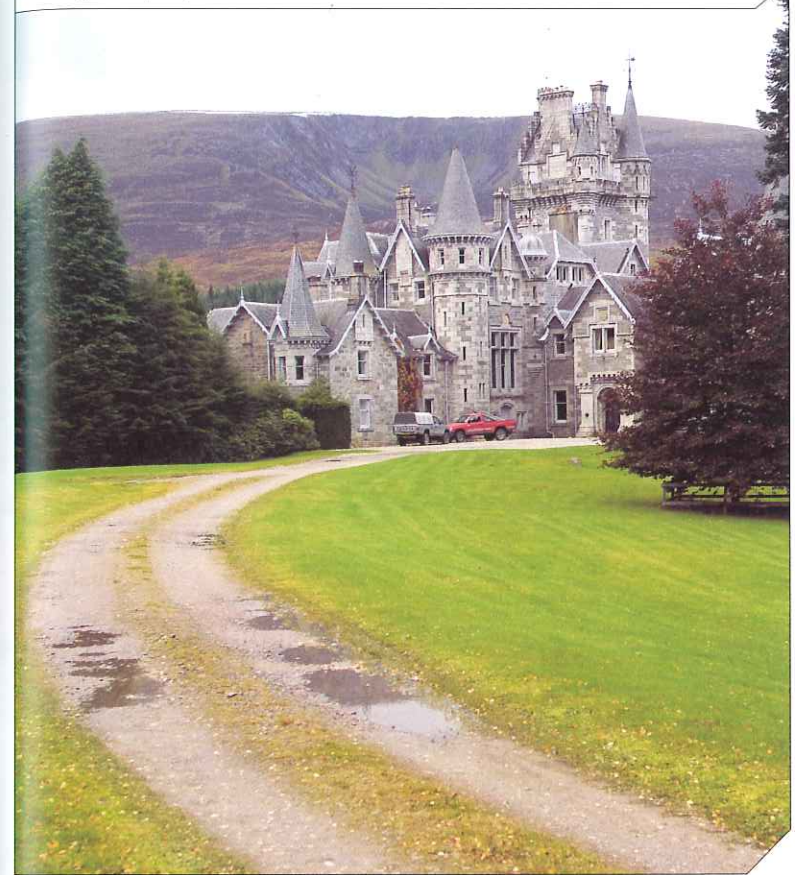
05 THE ARDVERIKIE ESTATE

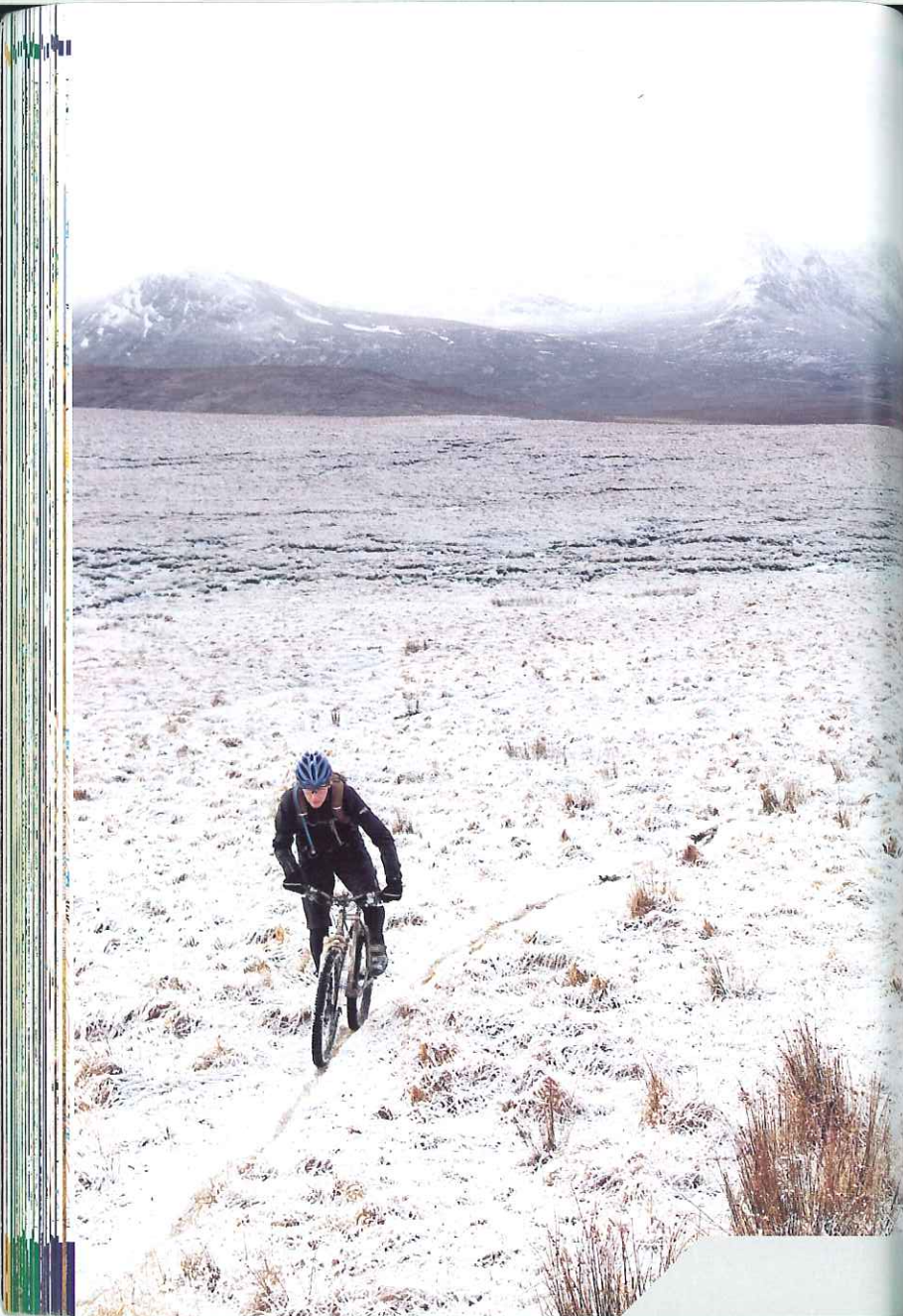
Directions – The Ardverikie Estate

- 1** The nearest official parking area to the start point is approximately 3km east on the A86 (Grid Ref: NN 566903). However, on the road there are several lay-bys closer to the start where a car can be parked, as well as the old filling station around 1km to the west. Cross the River Pattack using the bridge at the Ardverikie Estate gatehouse and follow this track towards Loch Laggan for just over 1km.
- 2** Turn L at the track junction and follow the well-surfaced Landrover track along the edge of the woods towards the River Pattack. Follow the river upstream towards Loch Pattack. At the northern end of the Loch pass the two gateposts that stand alone and continue to the track junction approximately 800m further on.
- 3** Turn R at the junction and follow the track along the south shore of Loch Pattack. The track can be submerged if the loch is high and it may be more sensible to use the suspension bridge to cross the Allt a Chaoil-reidhe as it empties into the loch, rather than attempting to ride through the river.
- 4** At the junction at the western end of the loch carry on west, ignoring a track to the left (south). Ford the Allt Cam after 1.3km (plenty of stepping stones) and begin serious climbing for 3.25 km above the south side of Loch a Bhealaich Leamhain. This is a serious ascent and involves some hike-a-bike. The view from the high point on the east ridge of Beinn a Chlachair is quite spectacular though, and the singletrack descent down to Lochan na h-Earba is ample reward.
- 5** Pick up the Landrover track along the eastern shore of Lochan a h-Earba. The new road which has been built along the loch makes for good going as the old road, which can still be seen closer to the waters edge, was very prone to flooding.
- 6** At the bridge just past the head of the loch, continue SA for about 1.7km towards Ardverikie House.
- 7** Turn R and follow the track along the sandy shores of Loch Laggan and back to the Ardverikie gatehouse.

A weekend away

This route runs very close to route no 6, Ben Alder (page 85). Loading up a bike trailer with food and camping gear and riding in to Culra bothy (NN 523762) from either Dalwhinnie (15.5km) or Kinloch Laggan (16.5km) means you can ride both routes over a weekend, with a fantastic overnight bothy stop.





06 Ben Alder

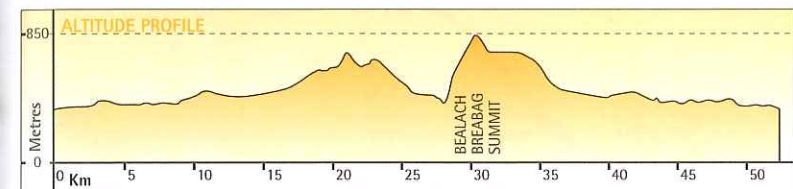
53km

Introduction

A fantastic big-mountain day, in the heart of the Highlands. The village of Dalwhinnie, just off the A9, is famous for its whisky. The distillery, which dates from 1897, is open for tours and is definitely worth a look if you've any energy left at the end of a long day in the saddle. The ride departs from the village railway station, climbing to around 850 metres while circumnavigating the remote mountain of Ben Alder. The views from the high point of the route are simply breathtaking, and the terrain is some of the most enjoyable in Scotland. As well as fast flowing singletrack, there are cosy bothies, beautiful lochs and spectacular mountains all around. A tough, remote and testing day, but an incredible mountain bike ride.

The Ride

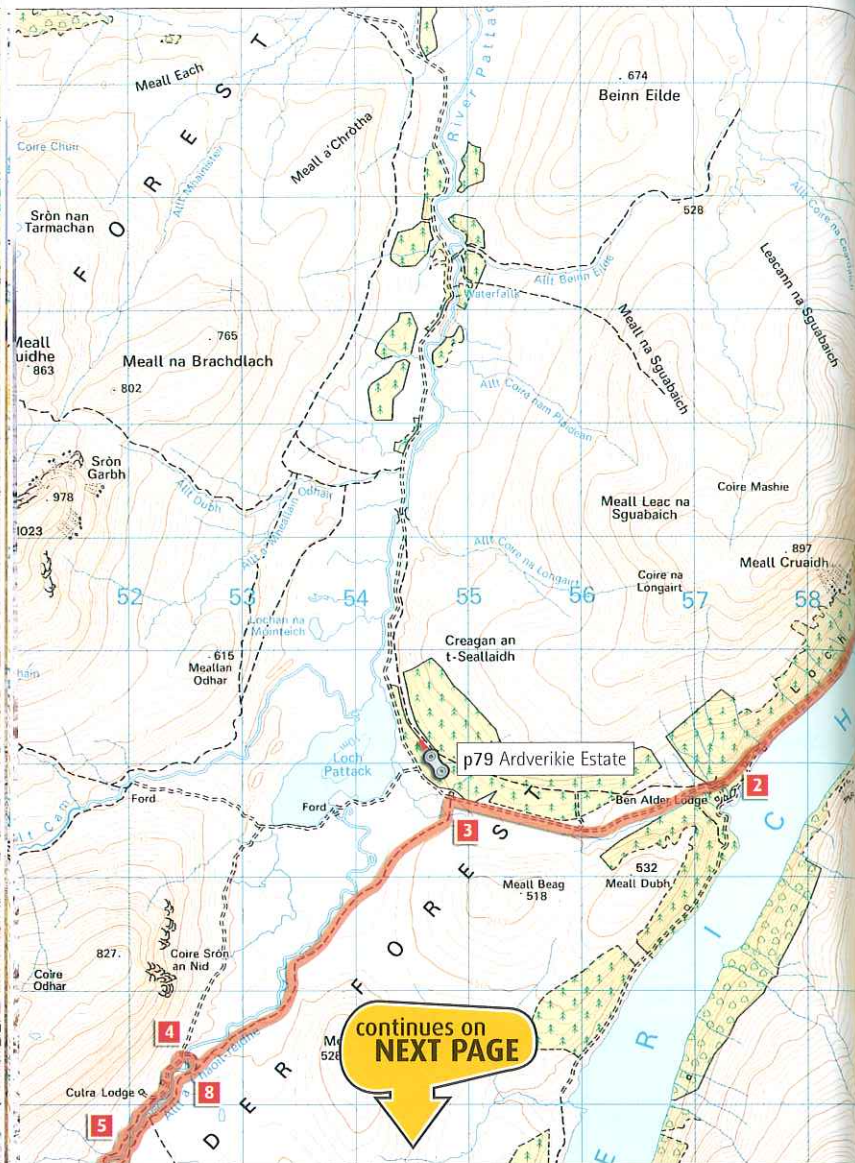
From Dalwhinnie the ride follows the bank of Loch Erich into the mountains. A grassy trail leads to Culra bothy, before superb singletrack climbs into the Bealach Dubh. A short push gives access to the summit of the pass and wonderful views west to Strath Ossian. A fast, fun descent leads to the Bealach Cumhann. The path is narrow in places, leaving little margin for error if you overcook any of the turns at speed! The descent heads towards another bothy, the supposedly haunted Ben Alder Cottage. To avoid any supernatural encounters the route avoids the bothy with the toughest part of the day – a hike-a-bike section to the Bealach Breabag. It's well worth the effort for the fantastic technical descent back down to Culra. Then it's a simple matter of retracing the route back to Dalwhinnie.



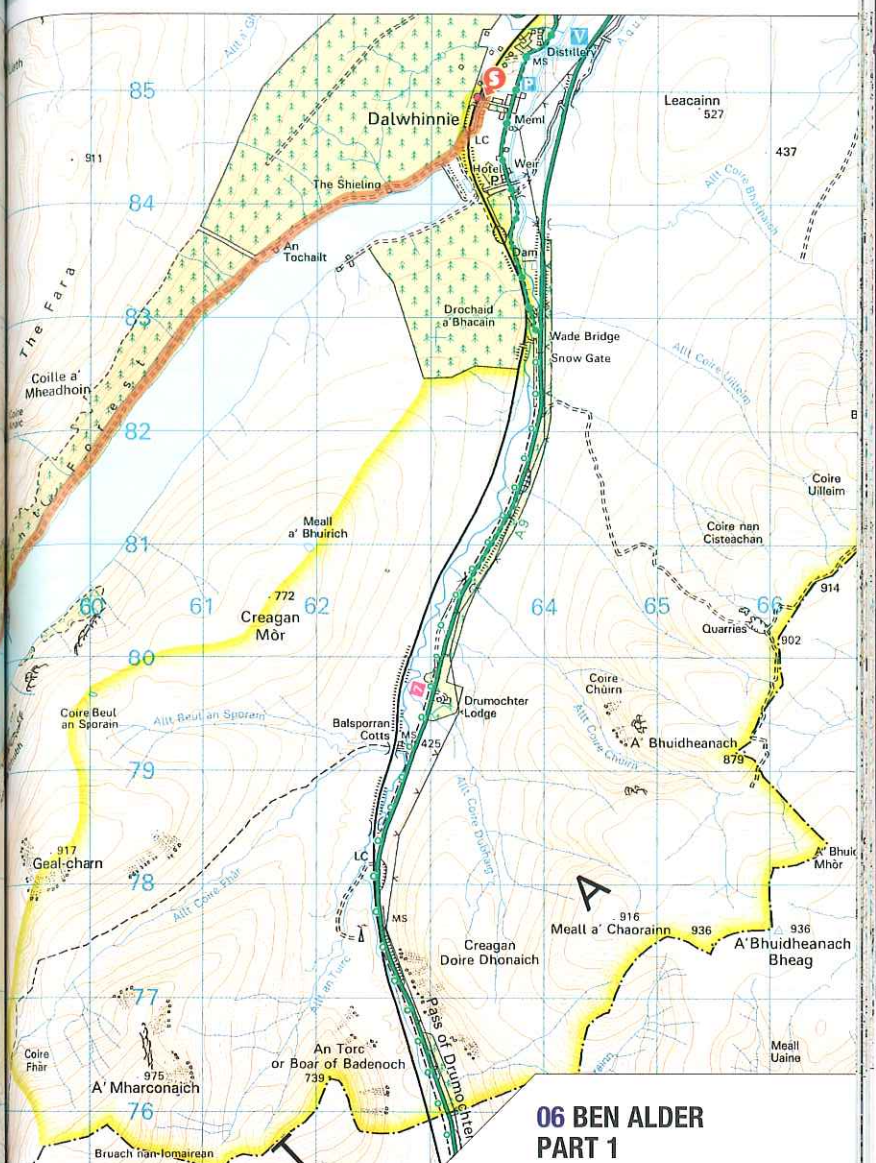
BEN ALDER

GRADE: ▲

DISTANCE: 53KM » TOTAL ASCENT: 1350M » TIME: 6-8 HOURS » START/FINISH: DALWHINNIE RAILWAY STATION
 START GRID REF: NN 634849 » SATNAV: PH19 1AB » OS MAP: LANDRANGER 42 » CONTACT: BEN ALDER ESTATE
 OFFICE TEL: 01528 522 253 » PUB/CAFÉ: THE INN, DALWHINNIE TEL: 01528 522 257 DALWHINNIE DISTILLERY VISITOR
 CENTRE TEL: 01528 522 208



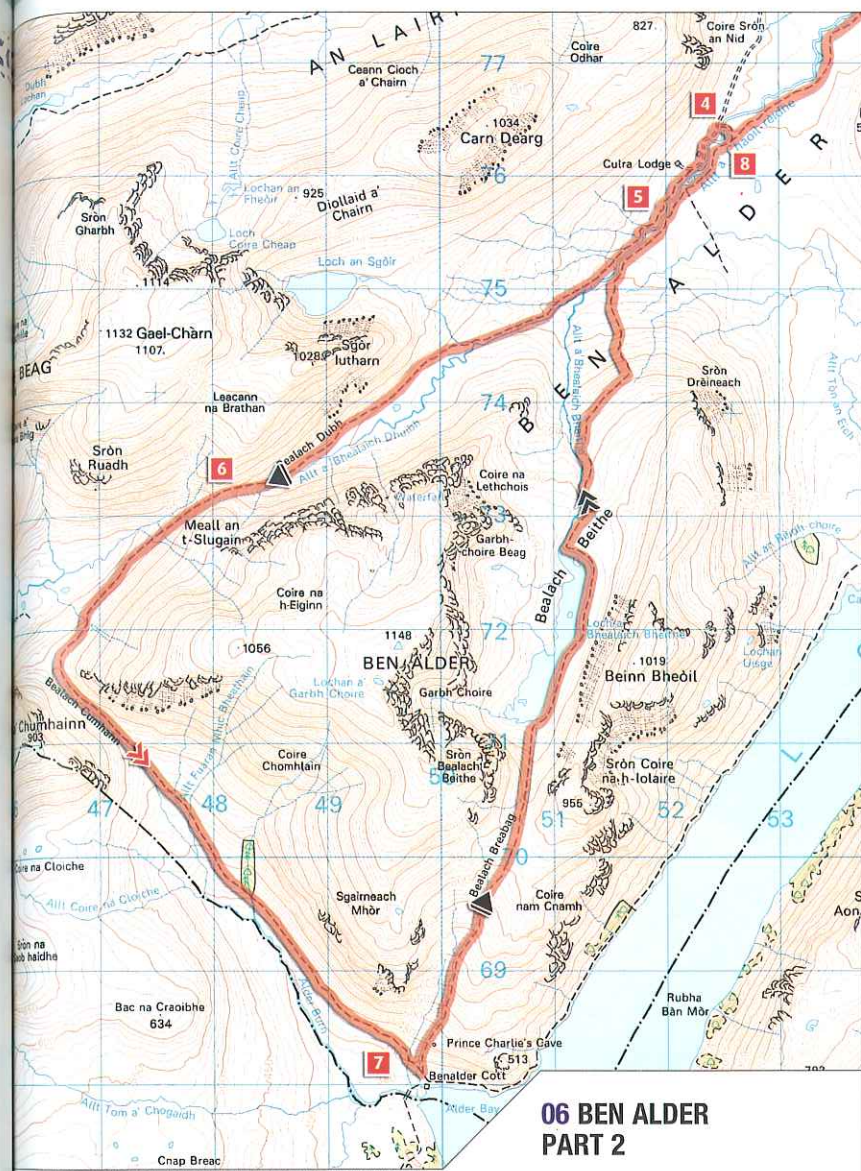
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**06 BEN ALDER
PART 1**

Directions – Ben Alder

- 1** From Dalwhinnie railway station, use the level crossing at the southern end of the station to cross the tracks. Follow the Ben Alder Estate's access road along the side of Loch Erich, south west towards Ben Alder Lodge.
- 2** At the fork, take the track to the R, which passes around the side of the main house in the direction of Loch Pattack.
- 3** After 3km, turn L onto a grassy vehicle track. This crosses open ground initially, then follows the south bank of the Allt a Chaoil-Reidhe.
- 4** Cross the rickety suspension bridge and turn L towards Culra bothy. This is an excellently appointed bothy and makes for a good spot to take a break.
- 5** Turn L onto the singletrack trail that branches off the main track and follows the river just upstream from the bothy. (Note: there are a number of stone drainage channels across the track. Make sure your bunnyhopping skills are honed, or risk pinch punctures.) The final 300m to the summit of the pass is very steep, loose and a carry is necessary.
- 6** On a clear day the view from the top of the pass to the west is quite stunning with Loch Ossian (see page 55 for Loch Ossian route) and the jagged peaks of the Mamores clearly visible. If the visibility is poor, the trail directly ahead may hold more interest. The gradient encourages high speeds and with the narrow track cut into the steep hillside, precise lines are needed to avoid going off the edge and down the slope! From the top of the pass, the descent drops around 450m towards Ben Alder Cottage, with only one small counter climb into the Bealach Cumhann along its 7km length.
- 7** Turn L up the steep singletrack climb that begins around 150m before Ben Alder Cottage. This is the toughest part of the day and involves a 2km hike-a-bike (with 450m ascent) to the summit of the Bealach Breabag. It's around an hour of hard work but its worth it when you see the trail which opens out below you – a 7km singletrack plummet through the Bealach Beithe, past the enormous Loch and back towards Culra. This is possibly one of the best descents in the country!
- 8** From the rickety bridge crossed earlier in the day, retrace the same route back towards Ben Alder Lodge and Dalwhinnie.



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