

Ben Lawers



At 3984 feet, **Ben Lawers** is the highest mountain in the southern part of the Scottish Highlands. It lies to the north side of Loch Tay, and is the highest point of a long ridge that includes seven Munros. Ben Lawers was long thought to be over 4,000 feet, however in 1870's accurate measurement showed it to be some 17 feet short, prompting a group of locals to build a large cairn in the hope of bringing the summit above the "magic" figure. The cairn is no longer there, and in any case the Ordnance Survey ignored it, being an artificial structure.

The Ben Lawers National Nature Reserve encompasses nine mountains within the southern slopes of the Ben Lawers and Tarmachan ranges, seven of which are Munros. It is a hugely significant place for botanists, being renowned for its rare and endangered species of arctic-alpine flora. The area is also home to a variety of wildlife including red deer, ptarmigan, black grouse and ravens.

This is a fairly easy climb as far as Munros are concerned as we start from a car park at just over 1300 feet (OSR: NN608377). This is reached by taking a minor road (signposted) off the A827 Aberfeldy to Killin road, about five miles north east of Killin. The route also takes us over Beinn Ghlas (3618ft), so we bag two for the price of one.

Exit the car park, cross the road and follow the trail which gently climbs through a fenced area which protects the ground cover from sheep.

Continue towards the foot of Ben Lawers' southern ridge. Keep right at the first path junction after which the climbing begins in earnest. The path, generally excellent, climbs easily in zigzags with no problems at all. As height is gained the view south across Loch Tay is superb.

The next section is steeper, but you soon reach the summit of Beinn Ghlas from where the route ahead is in view. Away to your left are some crags and an equally spectacular view north towards Glen Lyon. There is a descent here to a col before a steeper ascent up Ben Lawers itself. The path is excellent and the climb hardly noticeable as you head upwards to the summit, where you'll be rewarded with magnificent views of Ben Lomond and Glencoe to the west, and the Cairngorms to the north.

The simplest return is by reversing the route, or you can turn right at the col, and follow the path across the northwestern flank of Beinn Ghlas that will return you to the fenced off area and back to the car park.

As with all hill climbs, try to pick a clear day, as low cloud will obliterate your view.

Remember the safety precautions and the equipment required for mountain walks are as essential here as on the more isolated ones - weather conditions can change quickly, so check the forecast before you leave, take good care and always be well prepared.

Willie