

3.5 Lochgoilhead to Inveruglas

Map Panel 3

Distance 15 miles/24 km

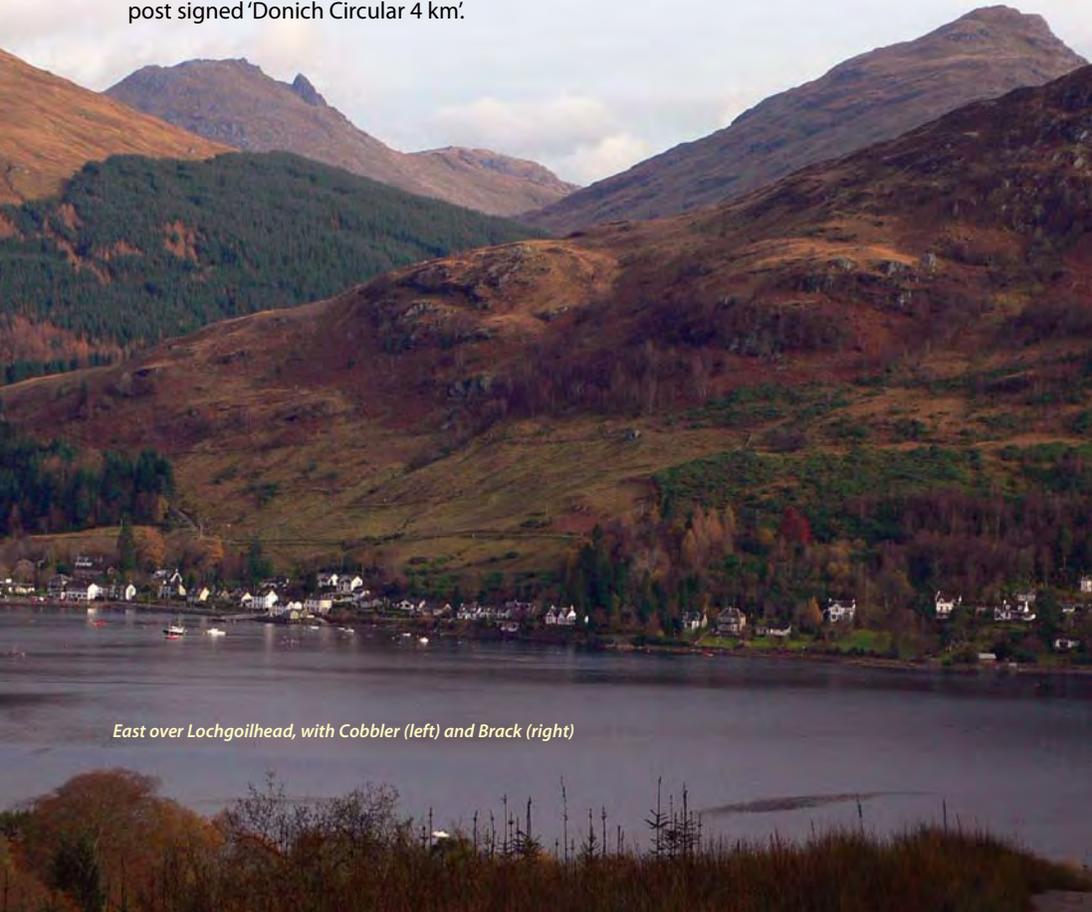
Terrain quiet road, then farm and forest tracks, followed by rough ground with final 5 km of forest track and road

Grade strenuous climb to 500 m (1640 ft), followed by steep descent at first on path, then forest road; two further lesser ascents

Food and drink Lochgoilhead (hotels, shops), Arrochar (hotels, pubs, shops), Inveruglas (café at jetty)

Summary stiff climb to the pass rewarded by great views in clear weather; after scenic Loch Long, Glen Loin leads to Loch Lomond

- From the village centre, head east up the road signed for the public toilets, just left of the Post Office and shop. Continue to its end, then along a path through the trees.
- Emerging from the trees, cross a stile gate and continue uphill to an electricity pole. Turn left, then take the uphill of two vehicle tracks through another stile gate with post signed 'Donich Circular 4 km'.



East over Lochgoilhead, with Cobbler (left) and Brack (right)

- Follow the stony road (with Lochgoilhead Arboretum to its left) uphill for 1 km through a gate and stile. Afterwards continue for 400 m, and cross a footbridge.
- Bear right as marked by the post 'Coilessan Hill Walk'. This forges uphill, steeply at first, soon reaching a huge boulder: see the photograph on page 20.
- Turn right up the wide, steep ride just after the boulder. Keep to the right of the burn, following the rough traces of a boggy path.
- The path deteriorates but continues uphill, past a junction marked 'Glen Croe'. Near the top of the ride, the Way veers right over boggy ground to a stile in the fence.



- From this point the Way heads easterly across 1.5 km of open hill to the cairn shown below. This is at GR 234 019, just beyond the Way's highest point. Although white marker posts lead to the cairn, they are widely spaced and the path is ill-defined.



- In poor visibility, use your map and compass: from the stile, follow 72° for 600 m to a marker post raised on a mound; then follow 89° for 550 m to the cairn; finally follow 101° for 230 m to the stile-gate. (These magnetic bearings were valid in 2009.)
- In clear conditions, simply cross the stile and follow the white markers which lead across a shallow basin (with a small lochan on its left) to the cairn shown below. There may be spectacular views ahead to the Luss Hills, with Ben Lomond beyond. Behind you are good views to Beinn Bheula (see the top of page 50), whilst to the left is the Brack (below, at left).

North-east from the cairn, with Ben Lomond distant at the right





West from the summit cairn, toward Beinn Bheula

- From the cairn, continue downhill for about 250 m across the hillside to enter the forest at a gate and stile. If in doubt, look north-east from the cairn for a fence and simply follow its line downhill to the gate-stile.
- After crossing the fence, take the quad bike track steeply downhill through the forest, and bear right down the forest road.
- After a further 850 m, bear right again at the fork. Continue downhill for 450 m to cross the Coileissan Burn by concrete bridge.
- Continue downhill for a further 650 m to a T-junction. Turn hard left for 200 m, re-crossing the burn and passing through the forestry barrier on to a tarmac road.
- Follow this quiet, but public, road for 1.5 km. Look out for March Cottage on the right, and after a further 400 m, bear right down a small path that descends to the shore of Loch Long.
- The lochside path passes to the right of the Ardgartan C&C Club campsite. After 300 m, cross the remains of a bridge. Once across the burn, turn left upstream.

Ardgartan Visitor Centre



Ardgartan Visitor Centre

This centre, in the heart of Argyll Forest Park, is run by the Forestry Commission. Its car park has display

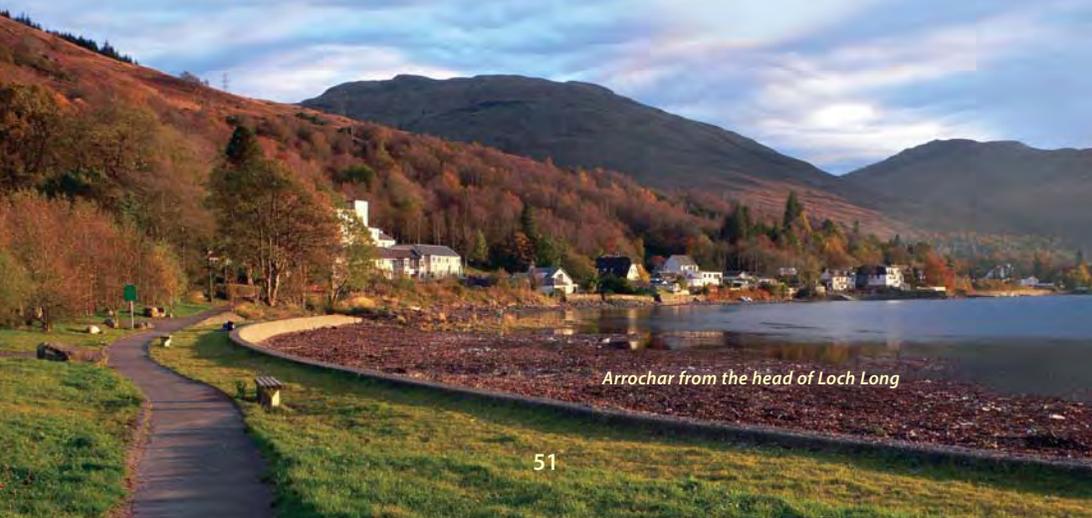
boards showing footpaths, cycle tracks and picnic areas. Inside are displays and live cameras trained on birds and bats in local nests. Its golden eagle watch is very popular, with images downloaded every 24 hours. It sells books and maps and offers leaflets on local walks, along Croe Water, high into Glen Croe and along the shore of Loch Long. The centre has a coffee lounge with snacks and toilets, and is open 10.00-17.00 from March to October (tel 01301 702 432).



- Follow blue marker posts to re-cross the burn over a wooden bridge. Turn left up the tarmac road which runs beside the Croe Water, passing Ardgartan Lodge.
- Turn right across the timber bridge, then immediately left, following red and blue markers towards Ardgartan Visitor Centre.
- To continue the Way direct to Arrochar, bear right (yellow marker) up the cycle track and cross the busy A83. This junction is about 300 m short of the Visitor Centre, which is well worth a visit when open: see the panel above. Afterwards, retrace your steps to the yellow marker to resume the Way.
- The cycleway climbs steadily to join an old forestry track. Views across Loch Long to Ben Reoch appear between the trees to your right.
- The track joins a forest road and continues north-east, about 2 km from Ardgartan passing a radio mast on your right. The Cobbler ascent turns left here: see page 53.
- Continue for 100 m and bear right down the steep path that zigzags to the loch-side.
- To continue the Way to Inveruglas, skip to page 54. For the shops and facilities of Arrochar, follow the A83 pavement for 400 m into the village centre. Or, if you have to terminate your walk at Arrochar, refer to the foot of page 53.



North-west down the cycleway above Ardgartan



Arrochar from the head of Loch Long

Arrochar

Arrochar sits at the head of Loch Long, a long thin finger of the Clyde estuary. The A83 runs through the village, and is the gateway to both Cowal and Kintyre. Only a couple of miles to its east lies Tarbet on the fresh water of Loch Lomond, with its modern road and rail connections to Glasgow and the north.

The narrow valley joining the two lochs has been of strategic importance since Viking times. It was short enough to be a portage route for boats, and in 1263 the Viking raiders hauled their long-ships across it to Tarbet, to raid the shores of Loch Lomond.

Arrochar is surrounded by spectacular mountains including four Munros (mountains over 3000 feet/914 m) that attract many walkers and climbers. Known affectionately as the Arrochar Alps, this group also contains the Cobbler – a magnet for climbers year-round. Its special place in Scottish rock climbing was celebrated by the formation in 1863 of the Cobbler Club, Scotland's first climbing group.

The Cobbler falls just short of Munro height, but its craggy summit and magnificent views more than compensate. Officially 'Ben Arthur', it has long been better known by its nickname, and was referred to thus by William and Dorothy Wordsworth (1803). The image is of a cobbler (north and central peaks) hunched over his wife (southern peak).

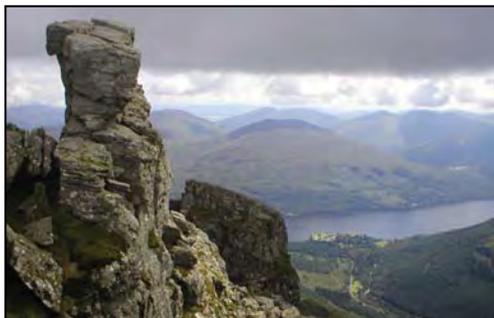
Climbing the Cobbler (2890 ft /881 m)

Allow 4-6 hours for this 8-mile round trip from sea level. Give yourself time to enjoy the summit views and a margin of daylight for safety: it's a strenuous climb with some tricky terrain. In low cloud or bad weather, don't attempt it unless you are experienced and properly equipped for the conditions. Although you could begin your ascent direct from the Cowal Way (see page 51), tagging this climb on to section 3.5 would make for a very long and challenging day, strictly for the energetic climber with plenty of daylight in hand and confident of good conditions.

East toward Ben Lomond from the Cobbler



From the car park west of Arrochar (see map below), cross the A83 to the timber vehicle barrier and follow the sign 'Ben Narnain and Cobbler'. A well-made path zigzags uphill to a forestry road, part of the Cowal Way. Turn left towards the communications mast, then fork right uphill, just in front of it.



Over Loch Long from beside the Cobbler's summit

Climb steadily by the zigzags to reach the Buttermilk Burn just above its small intake dam. This is the nearly-halfway point, and now you can see your goal with its three rugged peaks.

Follow the clear path upstream to the two huge Narnain Boulders, prominent glacial remnants. About 300 m above them, turn left at the path junction toward the East Corrie. Cross the stream and take the steep, rugged path to the col between central and north peaks. From here, the north peak (up right) is an easy scramble, or you can turn up left to the gravel dome beside the central peak (the summit).

Attaining the summit requires rock-climbing skills to 'thread the needle' and scramble along a narrow, exposed ledge: see photograph above. In wet conditions, this is down-right dangerous. Most walkers settle for the superb panorama from just below, looking over Lochs Long and Lomond, the Firth of Clyde and the islands of Bute and Arran.

Away from Arrochar

You can leave Arrochar by Citylink bus, or, if you prefer the train, take the pleasant woodland walk that contours the lower slopes of Cruaich Tairbeart above the road. Go up the steps by the village phone box, and at the T-junction turn right to follow the Cruaich Tairbeart yellow markers through birch and oak woodland. Within 1.5 km you reach a well-marked junction, where you bear right down a short path to the station: access to the platform is via the tunnel.

