

3:6 Invermoriston to Drumnadrochit

Map panels 3 and 4 (inside back cover)

Distance 14.5 miles 23.3 km

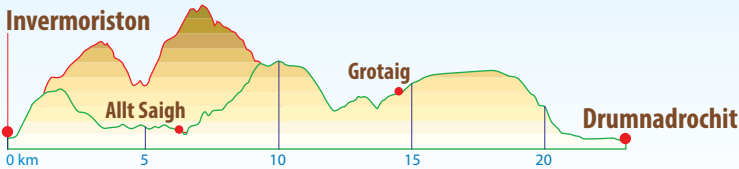
Terrain main Way is on forest tracks whereas High Route is on a narrow constructed path; after Grotai, minor road and roadside path for 3 miles/5 km, with final section on pavement beside the A82

Grade after a steep climb out of Invermoriston, the main Way is largely moderate; the High Route climbs higher and drops markedly before reaching its highest point at 422 m, then descends steeply; after Grotai, mainly gradual

Food and drink Invermoriston, café at the Grotai pottery, Drumnadrochit

Side-trips Urquhart Castle, Loch Ness Visitor Centres (two), Loch Ness cruises (various)

Summary a choice of routes above Loch Ness, with much better views from the more strenuous High Route; easy going on a minor road leads to the descent into Drumnadrochit



- On the north side of the river, face the Glenmoriston Arms Hotel and turn left for 50 m towards the Clog and Craft shop. Turn right up the lane opposite, which climbs steeply in zigzags.
- The climb rises to 170 m (560 feet) within about a mile. At the top, the main Way turns right (east), whereas the High Route heads further uphill: see page 57.
- The main Way crosses a burn, the Allt Coinneag, then loses half the height you have just attained. You drop down to a forest road which levels off at about 85 m (280 feet), and starts to enjoy good views over the water.



- A blue post marks a splendid drystone cave which was built in Victorian times by a gamekeeper as shelter for a woman who had to walk regularly from Alltsigh to Invermoriston and back to do washing for the local estate.
- For the next 2 miles (3 km), the forest road runs parallel to the A82, mostly some 30-50 m above it, all the way to the Allt Saigh. On the far side of the bridge, to reach the youth hostel (with bus stop outside), turn right to descend to the main road.
- To continue the Way, keep ahead on the forest road for a further 5 miles (8 km) to Grotaiag. The route climbs to about 300 m (1000 ft), and is joined from the left by the High Route.
- Afterwards the Way undulates, descending as low as 120 m (400 ft) in Ruskich Wood, mainly on forest road but with a short section on path.
- A final small climb through oakwood and grazing fields takes you to Grotaiag at about 180 m (590 ft), where there's a car park and picnic table.
- At the minor road here, the Way turns right but you may wish to divert left to the café at the pottery. It opens daily for light refreshments, and can provide breakfasts and dinners if booked ahead: tel 01456 450 217, www.lochnessclayworks.com.
- From here, keen hillwalkers may wish to climb Meall Fuar-mhonaidh: see page 31. Pronounced (roughly) *fur-vanie*, its distinctive rounded summit is a landmark for miles around.
- Otherwise, follow the minor road north-east for another 3 miles (5 km) across the plateau. Walkers can use the roadside paths where available: the first leads away from the car park, the second is about a mile further on. There are good views of Loch Ness to the south-west and Ben Wyvis to the north across fields and moorland.
- In the midst of a conifer plantation, turn left off the road to descend through Clunebeg Wood to the River Coiltie, then continue along a gravel road to meet the A82.
- To divert to Urquhart Castle, cross the road directly to a roadside footpath. This runs parallel to the A82 and leads to the Castle car park. Excluding time at the castle (see page 60), allow about one hour return to walk this detour, less to cycle it.
- Otherwise, turn left at the A82 and cross the river at Lewiston (Borlum bridge). To continue the Way, follow the roadside path to reach Drumnadrochit.
- The Way passes close to Urquhart Bay Wood, an ancient wet woodland around the estuaries of the Rivers Enrick and Coiltie, a Site of Special Scientific Interest. You can easily divert to explore this on foot: at the crossroads near Borlum bridge, turn right (east) down the road to Old Kilmore cemetery and go through a gate beside its entrance. The Woodland Trust's paths are waymarked. In 2014 the River Coiltie was still not bridged, and it may not be safe or possible to reach the shore of Loch Ness.

High Route

- After the steep zigzag climb out of Invermoriston, the High Route diverges: where the main route swings right, instead follow the narrow path uphill through the trees.
- The path climbs beside an old stone wall, then swings eastward, still climbing, to emerge above the tree line, offering fine open views to the north and west.
- Within 0.6 miles (1 km), there's a steepish descent on path and stone steps to the Allt Coinneag, which you cross by footbridge. This leads to an easy section on a charming constructed path through birch woodland.
- The path meets a forest road at a T-junction: turn left and follow it for 0.6 miles (1 km). It narrows to a constructed path, still climbing, through recently felled forest.
- After some zigzags you reach a circular timber viewpoint which invites you to pause and enjoy the distant mountains that it frames: in the photo below, the circle frames the group of Munros just north of Loch Cluanie, some 25 miles (40 km) away just south of west. Further south, to the left of the circle are Gleouraich and Spidean Mialach, two Munros above Loch Quoich, still further away.
- Afterwards the path continues to climb, levels out and descends to meet a forest road: turn left and follow the road as it swings across a bridge over the Allt Saigh. This stream drops steeply to reach Loch Ness 240 m below, near Loch Ness Youth Hostel.

*Viewpoint framing the
Munros above Loch Cluanie*



- The forest road undulates gently for about 0.6 miles (1 km), then narrows to a constructed path that climbs to a deer fence and follows alongside. Soon it reaches a whimsical timber bridge over the next stream, the Allt Rhuighe Bhachain.



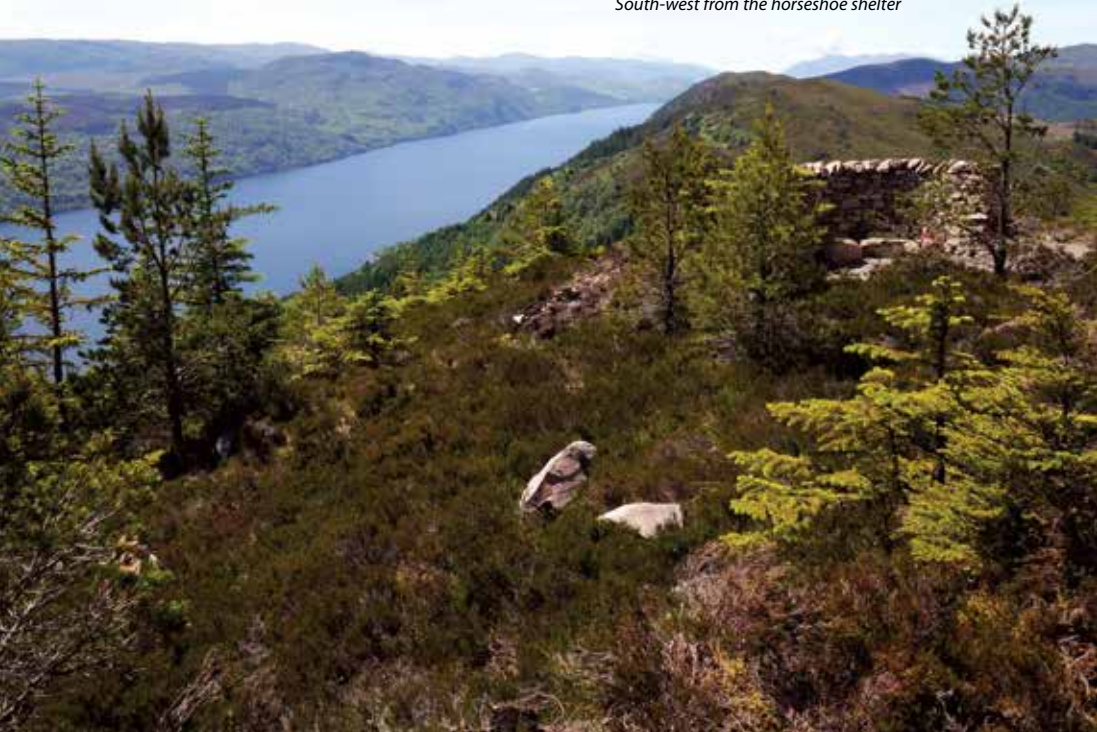
Bridge across the Allt Rhuighe Bhachain

- Over the next 800 m, the path climbs high on the shoulder of Craig Dhearg and is steep, in places very steep.
- At its highest point (422 m/1385 ft), there's a splendid horseshoe stone shelter, with the best view yet, not only over the loch but also, on a clear day, for over 40 miles (64 km) to Ben Nevis's north face, with Aonach Mor in front. Behind the shoulder of the nearby hill to the right are the Munros above Loch Lochy (about 30 miles/48 km away).

- Soon after the shelter comes the inevitable long descent. The first section is steep in places, but soon leads to another viewpoint over Loch Ness. The S-shaped stone shelter has back-to-back benches, with shelter from any wind direction.

- A further 0.6 miles (1 km) beyond this shelter, you reach the T-junction with the main Way, where you turn left. Resume directions from page 56 bullet 3.

South-west from the horseshoe shelter



Drumnadrochit

Drumnadrochit is known locally as 'Drum'. Combined with neighbouring Lewiston, its population is about 1800. It hosts various visitor attractions and has a good network of local woodland paths, including Balmacaan and Craigmorie Woodlands. Ask at the Visitor Information Centre for a descriptive leaflet. It is open year-round but with restricted opening hours from October to Easter: tel 01456 459 086.

The Loch Ness Centre is a 5-star attraction housed in the Victorian building which was the original Drumnadrochit Hotel. It offers an open-minded approach to the evidence of 'monster' sightings, and its seven themed areas use multimedia to present findings from research and exploration. It's open daily year-round (telephone 01456 450 573). The project also supports an informative website www.lochness.com.

Nearby, Nessieland also has an exhibition and is open daily: www.nessieland.co.uk. Various cruises on Loch Ness are offered from Drum: ask at the Visitor Information Centre (details above).



Loch Ness Centre

Drumnadrochit from the west



Urquhart Castle

Urquhart (pronounced **Urkhurt**) enjoys a majestic situation, commanding fine views along Loch Ness in both directions. It was built around 1250 on the site of an Iron Age fort, for Alan Durward, Lord of Urquhart and son-in-law of King Alexander II. The castle was taken from the English by William Wallace, but Edward I's soldiers recaptured it after a long siege in 1303.

The castle was seized in 1395 by Donald Macdonald, Lord of the Isles, and was besieged, raided and changed hands many times in the 14th to 16th centuries, notably in the Great Raid of 1545. The then owners opposed the Jacobites in 1689, and it was partly blown up by government troops in 1692 to prevent its occupation by surviving rebels. Sadly it was never repaired and much of its stone, timber and lead was plundered as building material.

Many of the present buildings date from the 17th century onward, although earlier parts also survive. The castle was used as a fortress and a residence for over 400 years. Its best-preserved part is the five-storey tower house built in the 16th century by Sir John Grant and known as the Grant Tower.

The castle is very popular, and a routine stop for tourist buses. To enjoy it without the crowds, time your visit carefully, preferably for early morning on a weekday. See page 56 bullet 10 for directions for reaching the castle directly from the Way.



Urquhart Castle and Visitor Centre

The castle and its modern visitor centre are managed by Historic Scotland: www.historic-scotland.gov.uk. The theatre shows a short video on its history, and there are also a shop, museum and café. Admission charge (£7.90 per adult in 2014) applies even to café. Open daily year-round (shorter hours in winter), telephone 01456 450 551.

Urquhart Castle

