

3.5 Lochgoilhead to Inveruglas



Distance 14.6 miles 23.4 km

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

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)

Summary stiff climb to the pass is rewarded by great views in clear weather; after scenic Loch Long, pleasant walk through Glen Loin leads to journey's end at Loch Lomond




- From Lochgoilhead 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 take a path through the trees.
- Emerging from the trees, go through a gate and continue uphill to another gate with a post signed 'Donich Circular 4 km'.
- Follow the stony road (with Lochgoilhead Arboretum to its left) uphill for 1 km through a gate. 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 at mile 43.6. Keep to the right of the burn, following the rough traces of a boggy path.

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





- 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 gate in the fence.
- From this point the Way heads generally easterly across 1.4 km of open hill to the cairn shown below. This is at mile 44.6 (grid ref 234 019), which is just beyond the Way's highest point at 500 m/1640 ft: see map page 55.
- Occasional white posts lead to the cairn that marks the pass, but some are broken and the path is ill-defined, especially at first. The cairn is to the left, diagonally uphill from the gate. Ignore the summit to your right.
-  In poor visibility, you must rely on map and compass: from the gate, follow a bearing of 70° for 600 m to a marker post raised on a mound; then follow 87° for 550 m to the cairn; finally follow 99° for 230 m to the gate. (These magnetic bearings were valid in 2024.)
- In clear conditions, simply go through the gate and follow the white markers which lead across a shallow basin (with a small lochan on its left) to the cairn shown below. At this altitude, the snow in this photograph is unusual, even in mid-winter.
- There may be spectacular views ahead to the Luss Hills, with Ben Lomond beyond. Behind are good views to Beinn Bheula (see the photo opposite), whilst to the left is the Brack.
- From the cairn, continue downhill for about 250 m across the hillside to enter the forest at a gate at mile 44.8. If in doubt, look north-east from the cairn for a fence and simply follow its line downhill to the gate.

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

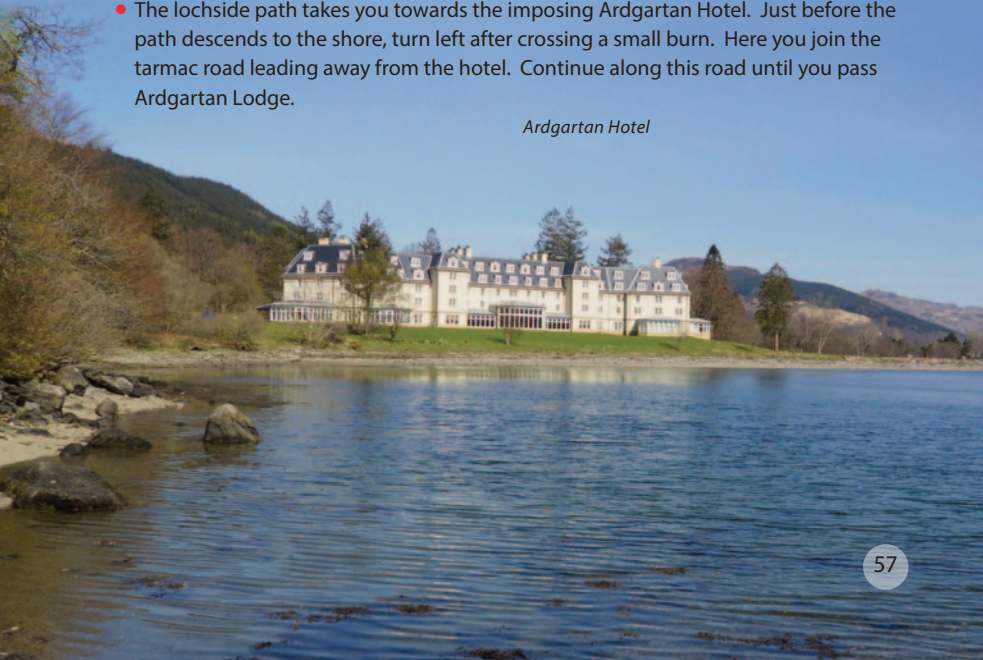




West across the frozen lochan toward Beinn Bheula

- After crossing the fence, take the 4x4 track steeply downhill through the forest, and bear right down the forest road at mile 45.2.
- Descend the forest road and bear right again at another fork (mile 45.7). Continue down for a further 400 m to cross the Coilessan Burn by wood and metal bridge at mile 46.
- Continue to descend for a further 700 m to a T-junction. Turn hard left for 200 m, re-crossing the burn and passing through the forestry barrier onto a tarmac road with a small car park on your left.
- Follow this quiet public road for about a mile, passing March Cottage on the right. After a further 400 m, bear right down a small path that descends to the shore of Loch Long at mile 47.8.
- The lochside path takes you towards the imposing Ardgartan Hotel. Just before the path descends to the shore, turn left after crossing a small burn. Here you join the tarmac road leading away from the hotel. Continue along this road until you pass Ardgartan Lodge.

Ardgartan Hotel



- Follow the Way past a broken bridge to the Ardgartan picnic site at mile 48.7. Located beside the Croe Water, this is a popular stop for walkers, cyclists and motorists. The information boards in the car park provide maps, and there are picnic benches and public toilets.
- With the Croe Water on your right, take the short woodland path to exit the picnic site. There is a bus stop about 30 m away. Cross the busy A83 with care to reach a cycleway.
- The cycleway climbs steadily to join an old forestry track. Views across Loch Long to Ben Reoch start to appear between the trees to your right.
- The track joins a forest road and continues north-east. At mile 50.5 pass a radio mast on your right. The Cobbler ascent turns left here: see page 59.
- Continue for 100 m and, at a bench, bear right down the steep path that descends to the loch-side in zigzags.
- At the bottom, cross the A83 and turn left towards Arrochar through the Succoth car park. For 350 m, follow the path that runs parallel to the road to reach a gap in the wall where you turn left: skip to page 62.
- For the facilities of Arrochar, follow the A83 pavement into the village centre. Or, if you have to end your walk at Arrochar, refer to the foot of page 60.



Arrochar from the head of Loch Long

East across Loch Long towards Ben Lomond



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).



Over Loch Long from beside the Cobbler's summit

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 Way (see page 58, bullet 4), adding this climb 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.

South from the Cobbler ascent by its east corrie



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 Way. Turn left towards the communications mast, then fork right uphill, just in front of it.

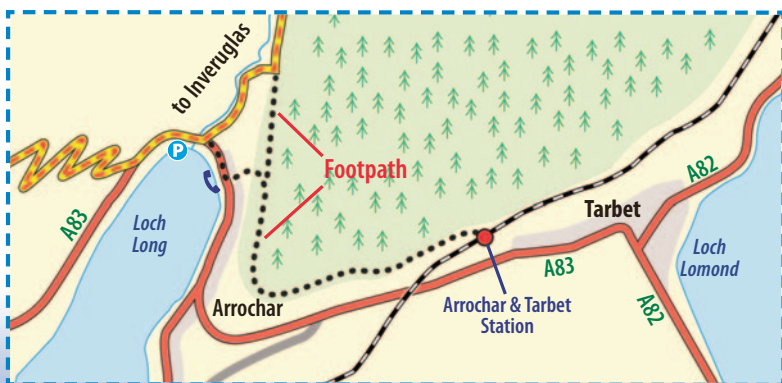
Climb steadily by the zigzags to reach the Buttermilk Burn just above its small intake dam. This is the nearly-halfway point, and now you can see your goal with its three rugged peaks.

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).

Reaching the summit requires rock-climbing skills to 'thread the needle' and scramble along a narrow, exposed ledge. In wet conditions, this is downright dangerous. Most walkers settle for the superb panorama from just below, overlooking Lochs Long and Lomond, the Firth of Clyde and its islands.

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.



The Cobbler from the Arrochar to Tarbet path

