

The Mack Walks: Short Walks in Scotland Under 10 km

Braemar-Creag Choinnich Circuit (Aberdeenshire)

Route Summary

An invigorating climb through mature pines to the summit of Creag Choinnich, overlooking Braemar, is rewarded by a fine array of mountain views. The route then drops lower to encircle the hill, while still offering some enchanting outlooks, particularly of the upper Dee Valley.

Duration: 3 hours.



Route Overview

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Transport/Parking: Regular Stagecoach bus service along Deeside to Braemar. Check timetables. Free parking at the Braemar Mews and Balnellan Road car-parks near the start/end of the walk.

Length: 6.840 km / 4.28 mi

Height Gain: 383 meter. **Height Loss:** 383 meter.

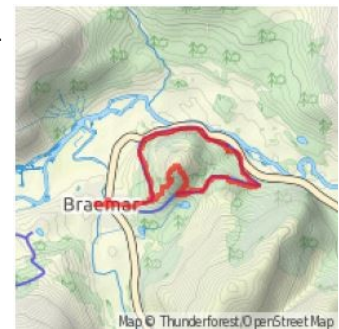
Max Height: 524 meter. **Min Height:** 335 meter.

Surface: Moderate. Mostly on a waymarked and well maintained trail. The steep descent from the summit on a rough path between Waypoints 6 and 7 may be avoided by re-tracing your steps on the main summit path instead.

Child Friendly: Yes, if children are used to walks of this distance and overall ascent. **Difficulty:** Medium.

Dog Friendly: Yes, on lead on public roads and near farm animals.

Refreshments: Options in Braemar. We can recommend The Bothy cafe on Invercauld Road where there are fine views of the Clunie Water gorge.



Description

A walk in mature pine woods, with a vigorous initial section ascending to the summit of Creag Choinnich. At 538 m, it is one of the more modest hills surrounding Braemar. Nonetheless, the views from the top are fabulous – both near and far. In the northern aspect, Ben Avon, with its line of rugged granite tors dominates. To the south east, the pointed tip of majestic Lochnagar draws the eye, whilst to the south and west the river valleys of the Clunie and the Dee offer mesmerising mountain vistas. On the steep slopes of Creag Choinnich an annual hill race is run that reputedly dates back to 1064 when King Malcolm II set up a race to choose the fastest man to deliver his despatches. In Victorian times the hill race was included in the Braemar Highland Games, until a horrified Queen Victoria witnessed her ghillie spitting blood after winning the 1850 race. The event was suspended, and only resumed in the 21stC. Braemar sits on the eastern side of the Cairngorm National Park, the largest National Park in the UK, with 9 nature reserves, a diverse range of special natural environments, and a vast sub-arctic mountain plateau. In winter, the village of Braemar is one of the coldest settlements in the UK, and is also renown for the great variations in temperature in one day. For example, on the 30th September 2015, the maximum temperature was 24.0 °C and the minimum was -1.3 °C! Although remote, the Braemar area was a strategically important crossing point on the Elsick Mounth, an ancient trackway used by Picts and Romans. It was also an important place for the early kings of Scotland, with Kindrochit Castle first established as a wooden defensive structure and royal hunting lodge there in the 11thC. The 14thC remains of the later stone-built castle can be visited in Braemar village centre after the walk. Our route also passes close to Braemar Castle, constructed in 1628. It figured prominently in the 17thC and 18thC Jacobite uprisings, being attacked and burned in 1689. In 1715 the Earl of Mar travelled from London to launch the next Jacobite rebellion there. After 1745, the ruined castle was re-built as a Hanoverian garrison.



Waypoints

(1) Start walk at info boards - Braemar Mews

(57.00582; -3.40074)

We suggest that you start the walk from the large information boards outside the Braemar Mews shopping centre on Mar Road. Facing the Fife Arms Hotel across the road, turn right and walk up the pavement towards the bridge over the Clunie Water.



(2) Right at Balnellan Road - butchers shop

(57.00580; -3.39883)

In just over 100 m, before you arrive at the bridge over the Clunie Water, go right up Balnellan Road (there is a butchers shop on the corner). Very quickly, veer left across the car-park, passing the public toilets on your right. Walk up the pedestrian ramp onto the pavement for the A93 Glenshee Road. (127 m)



(3) Cross A93 Glenshee Road and right - up Hillside Road

(57.00593; -3.39779)

In 110 m, after arriving at the A93 Glenshee Road, facing St Margaret's Church, cross the road with care and go left to immediately arrive at the walks signpost at the junction with Hillside Road. Turn right to go up Hillside Road towards Creag Choinnich hill, passing between houses. (240 m)



(4) Through large gate and uphill - signed Creag Choinnich

(57.00550; -3.39295)

In 300 m, veer left off Hillside Road to go through a high pedestrian gate into the pine trees at the base of Creag Choinnich hill. There are 2 information boards to check out. When you are ready, take the path going uphill ahead of you, signposted for Creag Choinnich. There is now a fairly steep climb in the pine wood to the summit for about 1 km. (540 m)



(5) Summit of Creag Choinnich

(57.01040; -3.38360)

In about 1 km you will have arrived the summit of Creag Choinnich where there are wonderful views in all directions. (1.5 km)



(6) Leave Creag Choinnich summit by narrow SE path

(57.01030; -3.38325)

When you are ready, take the narrow path going downhill ahead of you, away from the summit in a roughly SE direction. This path takes you down to join the main circular path around the base of Creag Choinnich. The path is steep in places and may be slippery after wet weather. If you prefer, you can re-trace your steps back to Waypoint 4 on the main summit path. At the base, facing Braemar, you then turn left to join the main circular path. This would add just over 1 km to the overall walk length. (1.5 km)



(7) Sharp left to join Circular Path

(57.00695; -3.38342)

After 500 m on the steep downhill path, take a sharp left turn to join the main circular path around Creag Choinnich. (2.0 km)



(8) Left for Lion's Face on Circular Path

(57.00727; -3.37818)

In 400 m, at a t-junction, go left on the signposted track for the Lion's Face. (2.4 km)



(9) Lion's Face rock wall

(57.00899; -3.37296)

In 400 m you will find yourself under the rocky cliff-face called the Lion's Face. You may see the rough features of a lion's face on the rock wall, although, apparently, it is best seen from a distance, across the glen. Now move on, continuing along the circular path. (2.8 km)



(10) Veer right then left to continue on Circular Path

(57.01079; -3.37009)

In 900 m, close to the main A93 Road, cross an access road for a quarry/yard, veering slightly to your right (towards the main road) to pick up the circular path again on your left. There are some fine views of the River Dee, Invercauld House, and the distant tors of Ben Avon on your right side as you proceed. (3.7 km)



(11) Through gate then left and uphill

(57.01335; -3.39038)

After 1.4 km, go through a high pedestrian gate and immediately turn left to take the fairly steep path (with steps) uphill on the edge of the pine wood. (5.1 km)



(12) Cromlins Viewpoint

(57.01082; -3.39056)

In 400 m, you will arrive at the Cromlins Viewpoint where there is an information board about the hills facing you and the surrounding natural environment. By the way, 'Cromlins' means 'crooked fields'. When you are ready, carry on taking the path which soon re-enters the pine wood at the base of Creag Choinnich. Follow the path until it meets the path you took earlier on your ascent to the summit of Creag Choinnich. Go downhill from there and re-trace your steps back into Braemar village. You may want to take a slightly different route back from the end of Hillside Road, We can recommend a visit to 'The Bothy' cafe on Invercauld Road where there are fine views of the gorge on the Clunie Water from the outside terraces. (5.5 km)



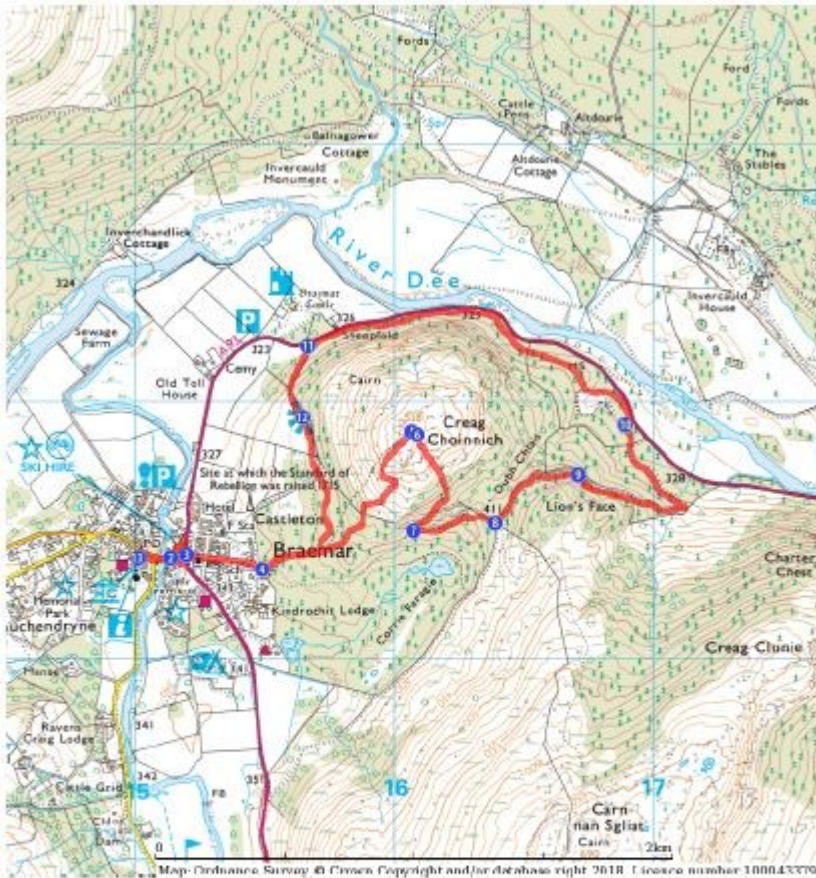
(13) Finish walk back in the centre of Braemar

(57.00582; -3.40086)

After 1.3 km, or so, from the Cromlins Viewpoint you will have arrived back at your start-point near the Braemar Mews shopping centre. (6.8 km)



Route Map



Links:

[Photos from walk](#)

[Download Route Guide](#) (PDF with illustrated Waypoints)

[Download GPX file](#) (GPS Exchange Format)

[Access Walk on OutdoorActive](#)

[Access Walk on OSMaps](#)

[Access Walk on AllTrails](#)

[Access Walk on Wikiloc](#)