Before you go

No public body gives a way up, a distance or a time for this hill. By our map it is about 7 km (4¼ miles) there and back with about 910 metres of climb, and it takes about 3.5 to 4.5 hours, more with stops, in poor weather or under snow. Under snow it is a winter mountain: cornices form on every eastern and northern edge of the ridge and can last well into spring, and snow banks and hard ice call for an ice axe and crampons. No avalanche forecast covers this hill, which does not mean there is no risk.

Check the mountain forecast. Conditions on the hills can be very different from those at the roadside and can change quickly, and mobile coverage is poor in places, Kintail Mountain Rescue Team says. Carry a map and compass and know how to use them: the ridges round the summit are hard to read in cloud, and in mist the way off the ridge is the small cairn. Corrielair Estate stalks the land west of the ridge from mid-September to 20 October, not on Sundays; the way straight up from the A87 and down the same way is always fine, Heading for the Scottish Hills says.

The parking place is on the south side of the A87, a fast trunk road, and the first and last part of the walk is along its verge and across it, so take the same care at the end of the day on tired legs. No source read gives a parking charge or lists toilets at the start, so plan for none. Scottish Citylink's coaches stop at the Cluanie Inn, about 1.5 km west by our map: check times with Citylink.

After the walk

Mullach Fraoch-choire, along the ridge to the north, is the hill most walkers add to this one, and Sgurr nan Conbhairean and Sail Chaorainn stand across the bealach to the east. This walk keeps to A' Chraileag and comes back the way it went, because the ridge north has hands-on ground.

The walk online, with its film and map:
hiddenscotland.com/walks/a-chraileag-from-loch-cluanie

It starts at the parking place on the south side of the A87 at the west end of Loch Cluanie, NH 091 120.

In an emergency, call 999 or 112 and ask for Police and Mountain Rescue, Mountaineering Scotland says, and give your location as exactly as you can, ideally a six-figure grid reference and a named feature. Do not rely only on a phone or GPS.

HIDDEN SCOTLAND

A MUNRO WALK UP

A' Chraileag



A HIDDEN SCOTLAND WALK

From Loch Cluanie

A' Chraileag is 1,120 metres, the highest hill round Loch Cluanie, on the north side of the A87 on the road to Skye. This is its usual way on its own: a very steep, wet and slippery path up the shoulder of the south ridge, then north along the ridge to the summit, and back the same way. It is short for a Munro but steep, with a fast road at the start and cloud that comes in fast: for hillwalkers who can find their way with a map and compass.

words // Hidden Scotland

From the parking place walk about 85 metres east along the A87 and cross to the track on the north side. The A87 here is a trunk road with a 60 mph limit, no pavement and no lighting: keep well in to the verge, cross with great care, and keep children and dogs close. About 50 metres up the track a path leaves it on the right, by a small cairn. It crosses a small burn with no bridge on our map, which can rise markedly in a day after rain.

The path then climbs very steeply north-east up the shoulder of the south ridge, about 550 metres in its first 1.4 km, about 1 in 2.5 by one walker's count. Walkers call it steep, wet and slippery, and one extremely slippery; it is rough and almost pathless in places. Take it slowly and keep to the line of the path. At about 1.3 km out and 750 metres up it reaches the ridge and turns left, north, at a small cairn. Note it: on the way down, this is where you leave the ridge.

A clear path follows the broad ridge north, then north-west, along the edge of a steep drop into the corrie: keep back from the edge. Crags lie near the summit, and a huge cairn stands on top. Turn back here. The ridge north to Stob Coire na Craileig and Mullach Fraoch-choire has hands-on, clambery ground and an arête with steep drops, and is never the way back. Go down the way you came: at the small cairn turn right, south-west, down the shoulder, then left down the track and across the A87.



Up A' Chraileag from Loch Cluanie and back the same way: about 3.5 to 4.5 hours.

Map data © OpenStreetMap contributors

Fold here, the cover outwards