Before you go

No public body gives a route, a distance or a time for this walk. By our map it is about 9 km (5½ miles) there and back with about 1,000 metres of climb, and it takes about 4 to 5 hours, more with stops, in poor weather or under snow. Under snow it is a winter mountain, and its craggy north face holds snow well into summer. No avalanche forecast covers it, which does not mean there is no risk, and one guide calls the ridge no place for the inexperienced in winter. Go then only with winter gear and the experience to use it.

Check the mountain forecast: the Mountain Weather Information Service's and the Met Office's Northwest Highlands forecasts cover these hills. Conditions on the hills can be very different from those at the roadside and can change quickly, Kintail Mountain Rescue Team warns, and mobile coverage is poor in places. Carry a map and compass and know how to use them, with warm, waterproof clothing, food and drink. In mist the ridge and its tops can be hard to read, and one guide calls this ridge a very serious undertaking in anything but dry summer conditions. If the cloud comes down, the wind rises or anyone is tiring, turn back by the way you came.

Corrielair Estate stalks deer on this side of the ridge from mid-September to 20 October, with no stalking on Sundays. The Heading for the Scottish Hills tables name a way onto the ridge from further west as always fine, but not the direct way from the Cluanie Inn: in those weeks, phone the estate on 07775 818207 before you go. The car park opposite the inn is marked for customers only on our map, so park in the lay-by. No source lists toilets for walkers, so plan for none. Our map marks a bus stop by the inn: check with Scottish Citylink before you rely on a bus.

After the walk

Many walkers climb Aonach Meadhoin in a longer day along the ridge to the west, over Sgurr a' Bhealaich Dheirg and Saileag, or with Ciste Dhubh to the north: this walk keeps to Aonach Meadhoin, there and back. From the Cluanie Inn its summit is hidden behind Sgurr an Fhuarail, Wikipedia says.

The walk online, with its film and map:
hiddenscotland.com/walks/aonach-meadhoin-from-the-cluanie-inn

It starts at the lay-by on the north side of the A87, about 300 metres west of the Cluanie Inn, NH 073 115.

In an emergency, call 999 or 112 and ask for Police and Mountain Rescue, Mountaineering Scotland says, and give a six-figure grid reference and a named feature if you can. To text 999 where a call will not connect, register first by texting register to 999.

A MUNRO WALK UP

Aonach Meadhoin



A HIDDEN SCOTLAND WALK

From the Cluanie Inn

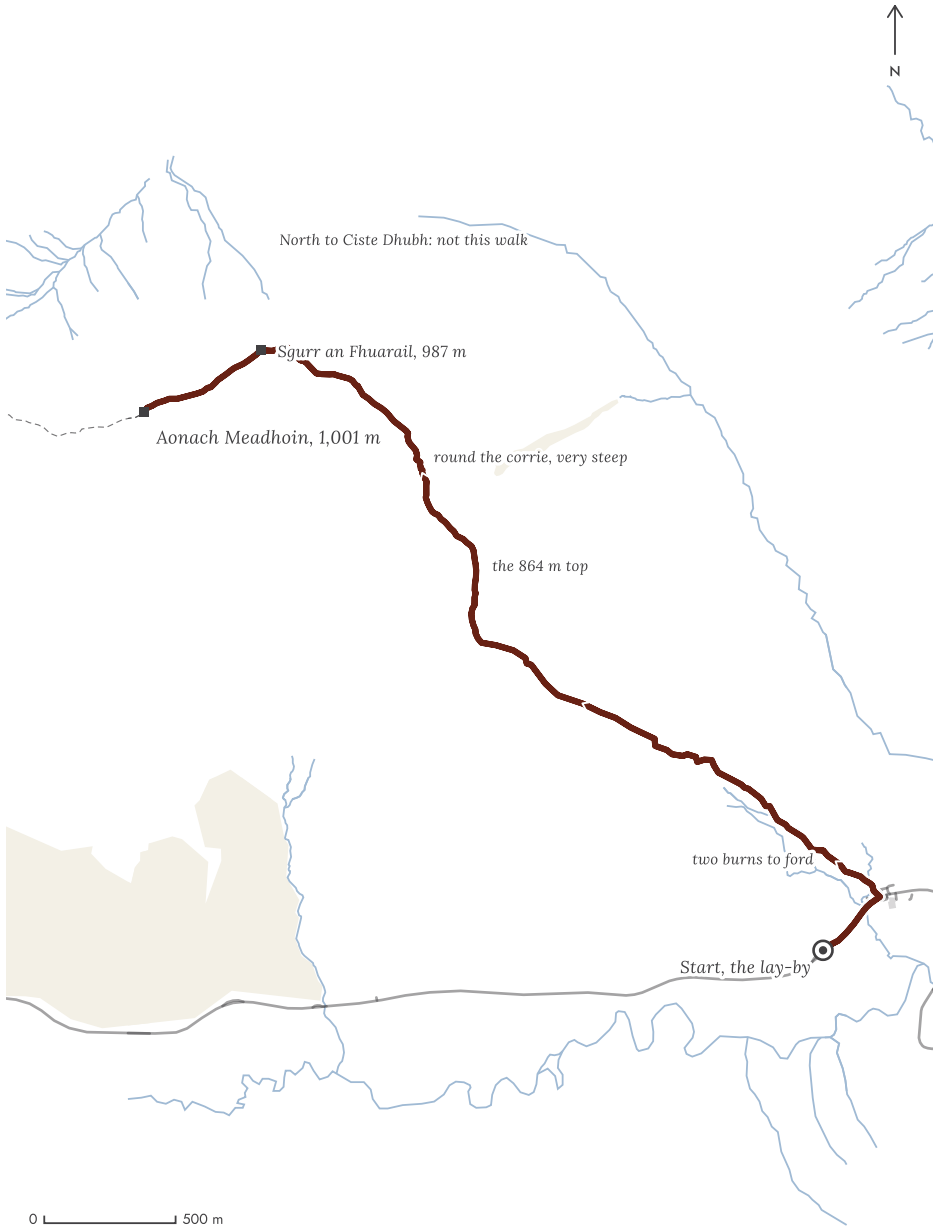
Aonach Meadhoin, 1,001 metres, stands at the east end of the ridge on the north side of Glen Shiel in Kintail. This is its usual way up on its own: from the Cluanie Inn on the A87, up the long south-east ridge over Sgurr an Fhuarail, the hill's own top, to the summit, and back the same way. The ridge is steep near the top, narrow in places, and quick to fill with cloud: a day for hillwalkers who can find their way with a map and compass.

words // Hidden Scotland

From the lay-by walk about 230 metres north-east along the A87 to the foot of the path, opposite the inn. By our map the A87 here is a trunk road with a 60 mph limit, no pavement and no lighting: keep well in to the verge, in single file, and keep children and dogs close. The path crosses boggy ground and by our map fords two small burns near the foot, with no bridge. They are small, but streams can rise markedly in a day after rain, MunroMagic warns.

The path climbs the steep grass of the south-east ridge in long humps, very wet in places low down: about 620 metres of rise in its first 2.2 km by our map, to a top of 864 metres. Beyond it the ridge dips, then turns round the head of a hanging corrie. Here it is very steep, and one walker found the path fading out. Take it slowly, and in cloud check your line with the map and compass. The ridge leads on to Sgurr an Fhuarail, 987 metres, the hill's own top. Here a spur runs north to Ciste Dhubh: not this walk. On the way down in mist, this is the turn to get right.

From Sgurr an Fhuarail the path keeps a little below the crest, down to a wide col and up a steeper rise to the broad summit, 1,001 metres, with a large cairn. MunroMagic lists narrow ridges with exposure, crags and steep slopes among the hazards here, and the north face is steep and craggy: keep to the path and back from the edge. Paths leave the summit south and west: neither is this walk. Go back the way you came, on the south-east ridge at Sgurr an Fhuarail, with care on the steep ground above the corrie, and take the same care on the A87's verge on tired legs.



Up Aonach Meadhoin by its south-east ridge and back the same way: about 4 to 5 hours.

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