Before you go

No public body gives a distance or a time for this walk. By our map it is about 7.4 km (4½ miles) there and back with about 900 metres of climb, and takes about 4 to 5 hours, more with stops, in poor weather or under snow. The road in is single-track, with no toilets, shops or fuel for miles and no bus. A storm once washed out bridges on it, one walker reports, so check before a long drive.

Check the mountain forecast: it is often much colder and windier on the hills than in the strath. Wear good boots and carry warm, waterproof clothing, plenty of food and drink and a torch. Carry a map and compass and know how to use them, and do not rely only on a phone or GPS. Deer stalking can take place at any time of year: the first three weeks of October are the busiest, and hinds are stalked from 21 October to 15 February. Check before you go and follow any signs. Leave word of where you are going.

Under snow Ben Hope is a winter mountain, and the days are short. Snow has fallen here as late as May. It needs winter skills, an ice axe and crampons that fit a rigid boot: micro spikes are not made for steeper ground. A white-out can come even on a sunny day. No avalanche forecast covers Ben Hope, which does not mean there is no risk.

After the walk

Go back the way you came: south along the ridge, down the steep, eroded flank to the levelling, and down beside the Allt a' Mhuiseil to the road. The rocky stretch below the summit and the steep path beside the burn need as much care going down as coming up.

The walk online, with its film and map:
hiddenscotland.com/walks/ben-hope-from-strath-more

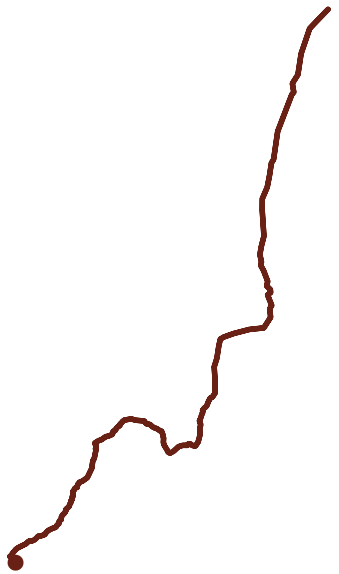
It starts at the parking at Muiseal, on the single-track Strathmore road in Strath More, south of Loch Hope, NC 462 476.

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. Mobile signal can be poor: register first by texting the word register to 999, so that you can text for help where a call will not connect. Do not rely only on a phone or GPS.

HIDDEN SCOTLAND

A MUNRO WALK UP

Ben Hope



A HIDDEN SCOTLAND WALK

From Strath More

Ben Hope, 927 metres, is Scotland's most northerly Munro, rising above Strath More in Sutherland. The usual way up starts at Muiseal on the single-track Strathmore road, climbs a steep path beside the Allt a' Mhuiseil, then goes north up the broad south flank and the south ridge to the summit, and back the same way. The path is steep and eroded, the ground wet in places, and near the top it climbs rocky ground above the crags of the west face.

words // Hidden Scotland

From the parking at Muiseal, by a barn and a sign reading Way up Ben Hope, the path crosses a field and climbs at once, rough and very steep, up the south side of the Allt a' Mhuiseil, past its waterfalls and pools. The ground beside the burn is rocky: take care here. The path zigzags up through small crags and over boggy ground, in places a muddy quagmire, and crosses small burns four times, with no bridges. They can rise fast after rain: if they run high, do not cross. At about 450 metres, half way up, the slope eases for a while.

Above the levelling the path turns north up the broad south flank onto the south ridge. Between about 500 and 750 metres it is a badly eroded slog. All the way up, the west side falls away on your left, very steep, with two tiers of crags, the higher one forming the edge of the ridge. Above the false summit the path climbs steep, rocky ground close above them. One guide calls it a mild scramble and another a rockier, more technical section, and neither gives a grade: you may need your hands. Keep to the path and well back from the edge.

The summit has a trig point inside a low wall of stones. The north ridge beyond is very steep and rocky, with a difficult, very exposed rock step, a rock climb of Very Difficult grade. It is never the way down: this walk turns back at the summit, and the path on north does not lead back to the road. The stony top needs careful navigation in poor visibility, and there are no waymarks or signposts: take a bearing south before you leave the summit, and if the cloud comes down or anyone is tiring, turn back.



Up Ben Hope by the south ridge and back the same way: about 4 to 5 hours.

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