Before you go

No public body gives a distance or a time for this walk. By our map it is about 11.5 km (7 miles) there and back with about 1,000 metres of climb, counting the climb back over Beinn Ghlas, and it takes about 5 to 6 hours, more with stops, in poor weather or under snow. Under snow it is a winter mountain: frozen snow and icy steps can last into May, and the ridge and the bealach need crampons and an ice axe. No avalanche forecast covers Ben Lawers: the Scottish Avalanche Information Service forecasts six other areas, which is no sign there is no risk here.

Check the mountain forecast, and under snow the snow and avalanche conditions too. Conditions on the hills are often much colder and windier than down by the loch. Wear good walking boots and carry warm, waterproof clothing, plenty of food and drink, and a torch in case the day runs long. Carry a map and compass and know how to use them, and do not rely only on a phone or GPS. If you have not been trained to use them in poor visibility, plan to turn back early by a safe route. Leave word with someone of where you are going and when you will be back.

The car park is on the minor road that leaves the A827 about five miles east of Killin and climbs over to Glen Lyon. By our map the road is one lane wide, with few places to pass, so take care on it. The car park is pay and display, and free for the Trust's members: ask the Trust about the charge on 01567 820988. On fine weekends it is often full by 9am. There are no toilets at the start, so plan for Killin or Kenmore. Keep dogs under control: local farmers graze the Trust's hill ground.

After the walk

Paths run on from the summit to the other Munros of the range: they are not this walk. In 1878 twenty men built a great cairn on the top to lift it above 4,000 feet. The cairn has gone, and the Ordnance Survey never counted it.

The walk online, with its film and map:
hiddenscotland.com/walks/ben-lawers-over-beinn-ghlas

It starts at the National Trust for Scotland's car park on the Ben Lawers nature reserve, across the road from the path, NN 608 376.

In an emergency, dial 999 and ask for the police, and give a grid reference if you can: the Ordnance Survey's OS Locate app gives one from your phone.

A MUNRO WALK UP

Ben Lawers



A HIDDEN SCOTLAND WALK

Over Beinn Ghlas

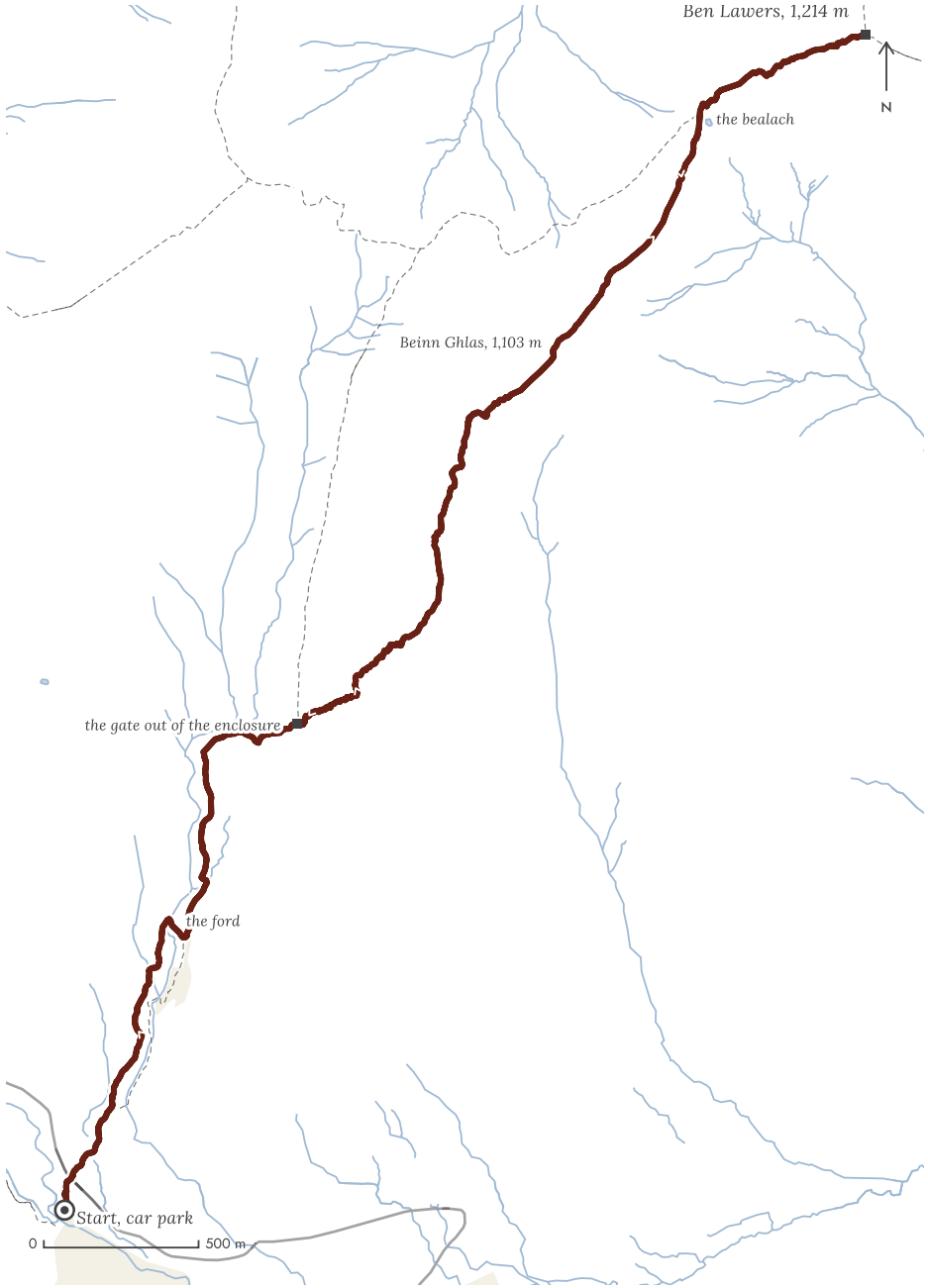
Ben Lawers rises above Loch Tay to 1,214 metres, the highest in Tayside, the National Trust for Scotland says. This is the usual way up, from the Trust's car park: through a fenced enclosure and up the zigzag path to the top of Beinn Ghlas, then down to the bealach and up the steep, rocky last climb to the summit, and back the same way. The last climb is loose and eroded, and there are no waymarks on the hill: a day for walkers who can find their way with a map and compass.

words // Hidden Scotland

The path starts across the road from the car park and runs north over a boardwalk. It climbs beside the Edramucky Burn into a fenced enclosure. By our map it fords the burn about a kilometre up, and after heavy rain the crossing can run high: turn back if it looks unsafe. The mountain plants are fragile, the Trust says, so keep to the path. Leave the enclosure by its gate and keep right at the junction just beyond it. The path north-west under Beinn Ghlas is the way many walkers come down.

Here the climb begins in earnest, on the zigzag path the Trust built up the south-west ridge of Beinn Ghlas to control erosion. Crags fall away on the left, and the last stretch below the top is rocky: in cloud keep to the path, away from the edge. From the top the path drops about 100 metres to the bealach, then climbs about 210 metres to the summit, by our map. That last climb is the steepest of the day, on loose, eroded ground: one guide calls it more scrambling than walking where the surface has worn away. Take it slowly going up, and with more care coming down.

The bealach is the place to decide. If the cloud is coming down, the wind is rising or anyone is tiring, turn back. Go home the way you came, over Beinn Ghlas again. Many walkers take the path round the north-west side of Beinn Ghlas instead; in winter it can be treacherously icy, one guide warns.



Up Ben Lawers over Beinn Ghlas and back the same way: about 5 to 6 hours.

Map data © OpenStreetMap contributors