Before you go

No public body gives a distance or a time for this walk. By our map it is about 16.5 km (10 miles) there and back with about 770 metres of climb, and takes about 6 to 7 hours, more with stops, in poor weather or under snow: leave plenty of daylight for the way down. Under snow it is a winter mountain, and the plateau is treacherous then: it needs an ice axe, crampons and the skill to use them. Snow often lingers into late spring, in winter cornices can reach well out beyond the edge of the plateau, and the National Park Authority warns of extreme winter temperatures and unpredictable weather.

Call in at the Ranger Base at the car park and fill in Cairngorm Mountain's digital route card. Check the mountain forecast, and under snow the Northern and the Southern Cairngorms avalanche forecasts. 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. Leave word of where you are going and when you will be back. Keep a dog close: the plateau is home to ptarmigan and dotterel.

The ski road runs from Aviemore past Loch Morlich to the car park, beside the funicular railway's Base Station, where there are toilets. In 2026 it is free for 45 minutes, then £3.50 for up to 8 hours or £5.50 for up to 18, free with a Blue Badge and in the snowsports season. The Aviemore Adventurer 30 bus runs to Cairngorm Mountain seven days a week.

After the walk

Go back the way you came: north from the summit by the cairns towards Lochan Buidhe, round the west side of Cairn Lochan and down the ridge. The ground to the west and south of the summit drops steeply to the Lairig Ghru.

The walk online, with its film and map:
hiddenscotland.com/walks/ben-macdui-from-coire-cas

It starts at the Coire Cas car park at Cairngorm Mountain, at the top of the ski road from Aviemore past Loch Morlich, NH 989 062.

In an emergency, call 999 and ask for the police, who will arrange mountain rescue. Give a grid reference if you can, who is hurt and how, and your phone number.

A MUNRO WALK UP

Ben Macdui



A HIDDEN SCOTLAND WALK

By the Miadan Ridge

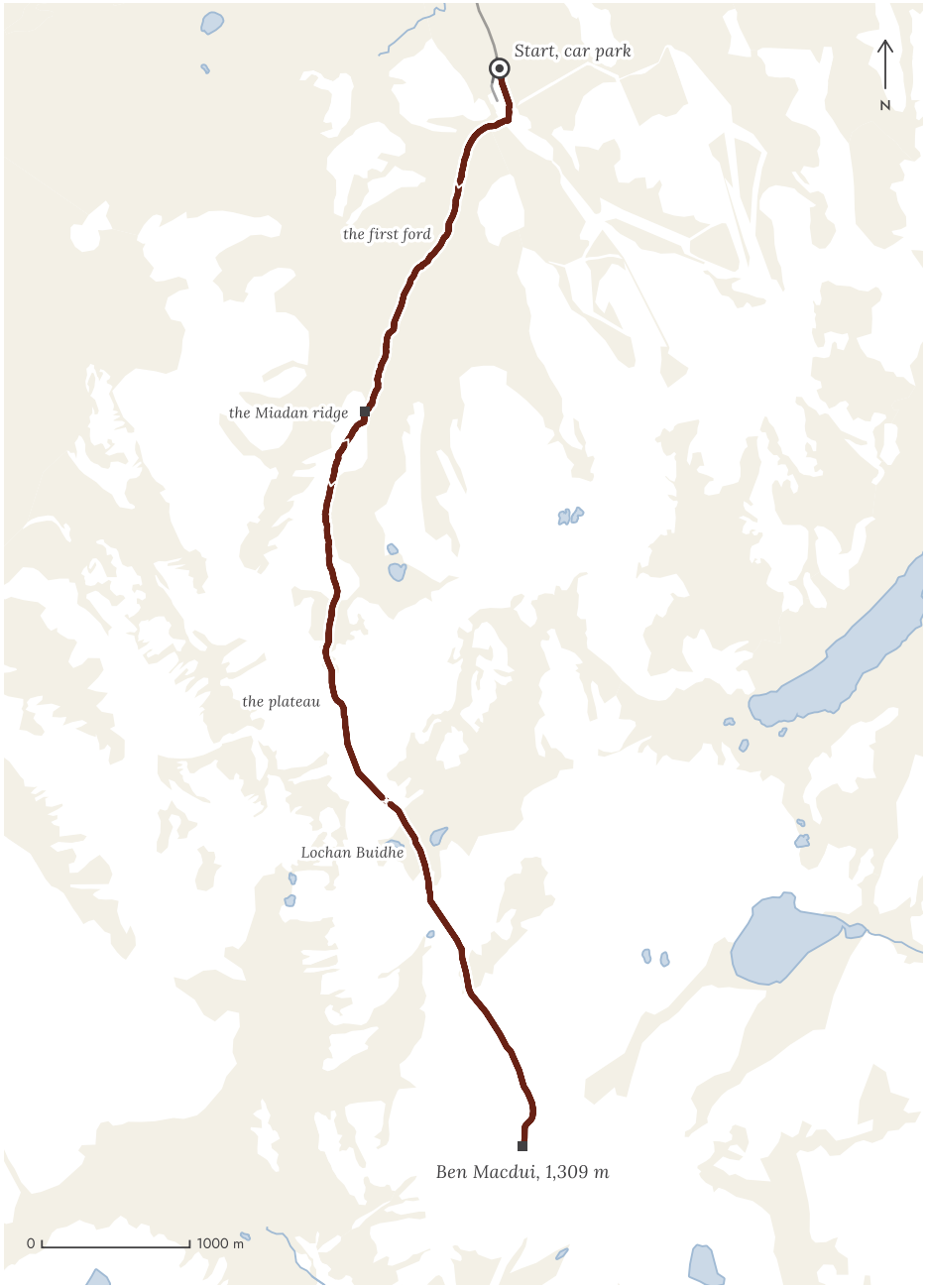
Ben Macdui, 1,309 metres, is the second highest mountain in Britain, on the Cairngorm plateau. This is the usual way up from the Coire Cas car park: west on the Northern Corries Path, up the Miadan ridge onto the plateau and across it to the summit, and back the same way. The plateau is open ground where navigation in mist is the danger: a day for walkers who can find their way with a map and compass.

words // Hidden Scotland

The Northern Corries Path runs west below the cliffs of the northern corries, Coire an t-Sneachda and Coire an Lochain. Where it forks, keep to the lower, wider path. By our map it fords the Allt Coire an t-Sneachda about 1.3 km out and the Allt Coire an Lochain about 2.7 km out, with a smaller burn between. After heavy rain or snowmelt the burns can run high: turn back if a crossing looks unsafe.

Just past the second ford the path climbs the broad ridge of Miadan Creag an Leth-choin, about 200 metres in a kilometre, with Coire an Lochain falling away on the left. Above it the ground levels off and can be boggy, and the path runs south round Cairn Lochan, above slopes that drop steeply to the Lairig Ghru. Out on the hill there are no waymarks or signposts, and paths can be hard to follow. In cloud the plateau has few features to steer by.

Beyond Lochan Buidhe the path grows faint as it climbs a boulder field, with a line of cairns to guide you, and a last steep pull reaches the broad top. In a white-out the plateau becomes featureless, and without a compass and the skill to walk on a bearing it is all too possible to walk off the edge of a cliff above the Northern Corries. If the cloud comes down, the wind rises or anyone is tiring, turn back the way you came, and in mist take a bearing off the top.



Up Ben Macdui by the Miadan ridge and back the same way: about 6 to 7 hours.

Map data © OpenStreetMap contributors

Ben Macdui

Fold here, the cover outwards