Before you go

No public body gives a route, a distance or a time for this hill. By our map it is about 10 km (6 miles) there and back with about 1,300 metres of climb, and it takes about 6 to 7 hours, more with stops, in poor weather or under snow. This is a serious, complex mountain, its summit hidden behind high cliffs and buttresses. Four people died in an avalanche on its north side in January 2013, and in 2024 a father and son were fatally injured near Stob Coire nan Lochan.

In mist the ridges are hard to read and the drops are close: Walking Britain warns of many precipitous drops close to the path, worse on the way back. Check the mountain forecast, and carry a map and compass and know how to use them. Visibility can change markedly with the cloud, and a path alone may get you lost. If the cloud comes down, the wind rises or anyone is tiring, turn back by the way you came.

Under snow Bidean is a winter mountain, renowned for accidents. Slab avalanches have run in Coire nan Lochan, in 2014 and 2016, and on steep, craggy ground even a minor one is likely to have very serious consequences. Snow can lie on the ridges well into summer. Check the Glencoe avalanche forecast: before its full winter service, no forecast does not mean no risk. Go then only with winter gear and the experience to use it.

The car park is the main tourist viewpoint and can be full as early as 8am. The A82 is a fast trunk road, 60 mph and unlit, often called one of the most dangerous in Scotland: the path leaves from inside the car park, so the walk never crosses it. Keep children and dogs close. No source lists toilets, so plan for none. The National Trust for Scotland's reserve asks for no campfires.

After the walk

Most walkers take Bidean with Stob Coire Sgreamhach, its other Munro, and come down the Lost Valley. This walk keeps to Bidean and comes back the way it went. Heading for the Scottish Hills lists no stalking issues on the Trust's land north of the ridge.

The walk online, with its film and map:
hiddenscotland.com/walks/bidean-nam-bian-from-the-three-sisters-by-coire-nan-lochan

It starts at the Three Sisters car park on the south side of the A82 in Glen Coe, NN 170 568.

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. Signal is often patchy: register first to text 999.

A MUNRO WALK UP

Bidean nam Bian



A HIDDEN SCOTLAND WALK

From the Three Sisters

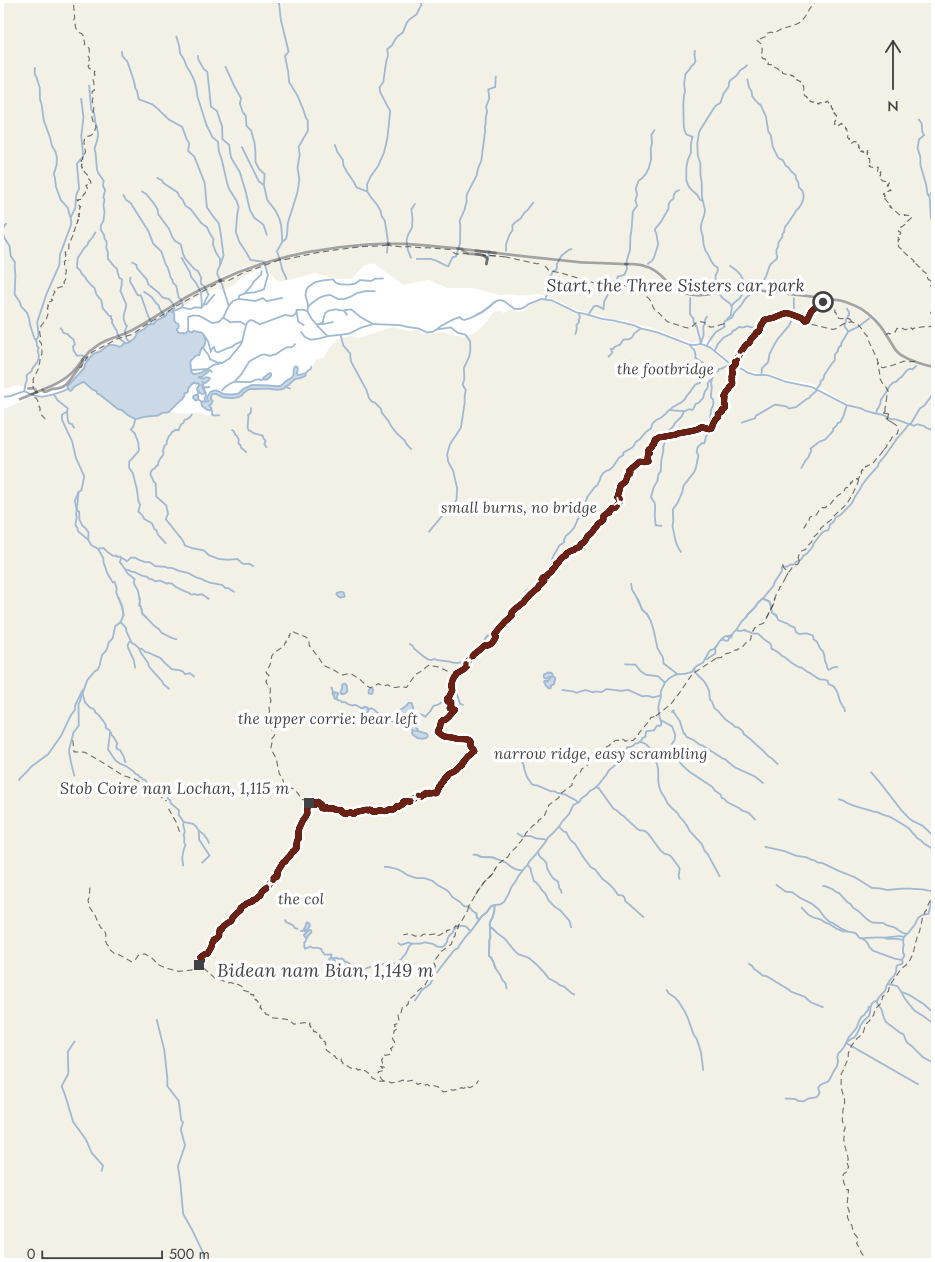
Bidean nam Bian is 1,149 metres, the highest point in Argyll, hidden behind the Three Sisters on the south side of Glen Coe. This is its usual way, up Coire nan Lochan and back. It is a serious mountain day, with some easy scrambling and close drops on narrow ridges: for experienced hillwalkers with a head for heights who can find their way with a map and compass.

words // Hidden Scotland

From the car park a path drops to the old road, then west and down to the River Coe, fording a small burn with no bridge: if it is too full to cross safely, turn back. A footbridge crosses the river. The path climbs south-west into Coire nan Lochan: rocky, steep in places, with slabs and minor scrambling near the stream. It fords four more small burns with no bridge. Streams here can rise markedly in a day: if any is too full to cross safely, turn back.

In the upper corrie, leave the scree ahead and bear left, east, up a fainter path over grass and scree, where a mild scramble can be expected. A faint path north-east along Geàrr Aonach heads for the Zig-Zags, a graded rock scramble: keep off it. Then go west up the narrow north-east ridge of Stob Coire nan Lochan, over bare rock and boulders with some easy scrambling: hands are needed now and then, and the drops are close. The short climb onto the top is the most exposed part, and by the Pinnacle or South Buttress there is a tricky scramble over an oversized boulder, worse under snow. Keep back from the corrie's edge.

From the top the ridge drops steeply to a col and climbs steeply to the summit, the path below the complex crest on the east side. From the summit cairn narrow paths go north-west to Stob Coire nam Beith and south-east to Stob Coire Sgreamhach, with some scrambling: neither is this walk. Go back north-east, the way you came, over Stob Coire nan Lochan. Coming off its top the path can be hard to find at first, weaving through rocky outcrops. The way down needs as much care as the way up.



Up Bidean nam Bian from the Three Sisters and back the same way: about 6 to 7 hours.

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