Before you go

No public body gives a distance or a time for the whole way. By our map it is about 5.3 km (3¼ miles) there and back with about 270 metres of climb, and it takes about 2 to 3 hours, more with stops, in poor weather or under snow. Under snow it is a winter mountain: go only with winter gear, an ice axe and crampons and the skill to use them. The Scottish Avalanche Information Service names the Cairnwell and Glas Maol ranges in its Southern Cairngorms area: read that forecast.

Check the mountain forecast. Wear sturdy footwear and carry waterproof and warm layers, water and food. Carry a map and compass and know how to use them: the ski centre asks walkers to have a backup means of navigation at all times. In the ski season the hill is a working ski area. Keep outside the snow fences and managed areas, never walk up a tow line, running or not, and ask the hill staff or ski patrol if unsure. In winter the centre works its runs at any hour, with steel winching cables on many of them: watch for its warning signs and for vehicles on the slopes. No dogs but search and rescue dogs on the managed areas, and dogs close and under control. Walking can be dangerous, the centre says, and all walkers must take responsibility for their own safety. From 1 September to 15 February the estate steps up its deer management, with no stalking on Sundays: follow its signs at the main access points.

The Glenshee Snowsports Centre's car park is on the A93 at the Cairnwell Pass, sat nav AB35 5XU: free for the first 50 minutes or with a chairlift ticket, then £4 for the day, the centre's page says. The centre has toilets and washrooms by its buildings, across the road from the car park. The A93 has snow gates at the Spittal of Glenshee and at Braemar.

After the walk

The Cairnwell, about 2 km to the south, and Carn a' Gheoidh, about 3.5 km to the south-west, are Munros too, and many walkers climb all three in one round: this walk keeps to Carn Aosda. A steeper, rougher track climbs more directly beside the Carn Aosda T-bar, and some guides go up or down that way: this walk keeps to the gentler tracks.

The walk online, with its film and map:
hiddenscotland.com/walks/carn-aosda-from-the-glenshee-ski-centre

It starts at the Glenshee ski centre car park on the A93 at the Cairnwell Pass, NO 139 780.

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.

A MUNRO WALK UP

Carn Aosda



A HIDDEN SCOTLAND WALK

From the Glenshee ski centre

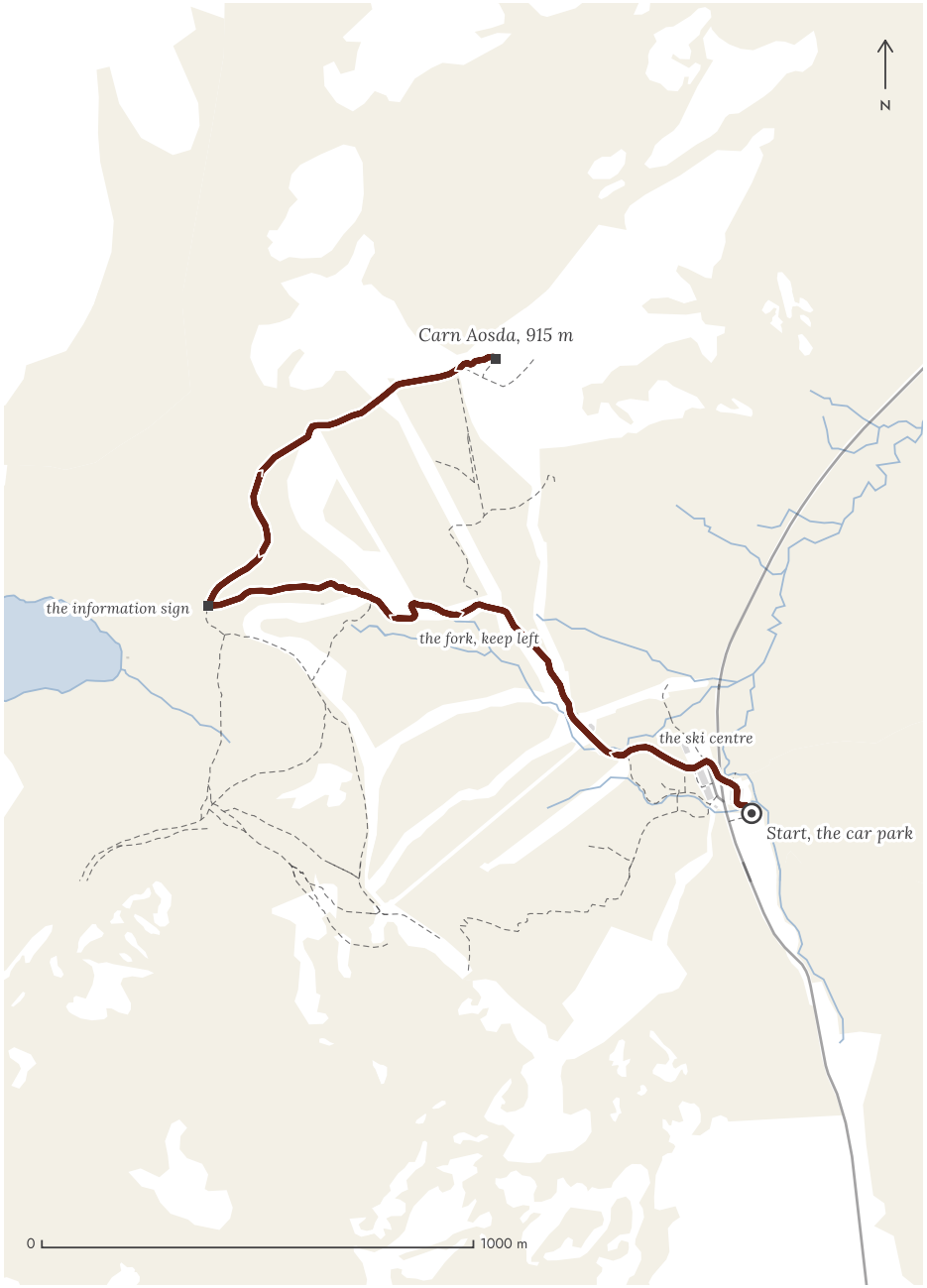
Carn Aosda is 915 metres, a Munro beside the A93 at the Glenshee ski centre in the Cairngorms National Park, with ski tows on its slopes and a cairn on its top. This is its way on its own: across the road and up the ski area's tracks to the col above Loch Vrotachan, then north-east onto the crest and over stones to the cairn, and back. It is a short Munro, but still a mountain, where mist and winter come in fast: for hillwalkers who can find their way with a map and compass.

words // Hidden Scotland

From the car park cross the A93 with care to the back of the ski centre's buildings and take the bulldozed track west behind them. It crosses a burn on a small bridge and climbs past the tows and the Cairnwell Café, open only in the ski season, with snow fences close beside it. By our map it crosses the lines of two ski tows: keep outside the snow fences and off every tow line. About 900 metres out the track forks. Keep left, along the side of the hill, for the col between Carn Aosda and The Cairnwell. The right fork is the steep, direct track to Carn Aosda: this walk keeps to the gentler way.

The track reaches the col above Loch Vrotachan about 1.6 km out, by a moorland information sign. Turn sharp right, back north-east, onto the track towards Carn Aosda; the track ahead goes on to The Cairnwell. In mist this is the junction to find again on the way down. The track climbs past the top of Butchart's T-bar and through a gate in a fence where it crosses the line of another tow, about 2.35 km out. Then it rises gently above the tows, beside the snow fences, onto the crest, about 2.5 km out.

On the crest the steep, direct track comes in from the right: note this junction, so as not to take the steep track down by mistake. A path of about 100 metres over stones and scree leads east to the summit, where a small cairn of pale boulders marks the top. Go down the way you came, turning sharp left at the information sign on the col for the ski centre. In mist the tracks, fences and lift lines run every way: if the cloud comes down, turn back by the way you came.



Up Carn Aosda from the Glenshee ski centre and back the same way: about 2 to 3 hours.

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