Before you go

No public body gives a distance or a time for the whole way. By our map it is about 6 km (4 miles) there and back with about 610 metres of climb, and it takes about 3 to 4 hours, more with stops, in poor weather or under snow. Under snow Creag Leacach is a winter mountain: winter routes with ice and snow can be extremely challenging and dangerous, one guide warns, and the crests then need careful navigation. The Scottish Avalanche Information Service names the Cairnwell and Glas Maol ranges in its Southern Cairngorms area: read that forecast before you go.

Check the mountain forecast: the Mountain Weather Information Service's Southeastern Highlands forecast and its Cairngorms one both cover this ground. Carry a map and compass and know how to use them, and never rely on a phone or GPS alone, Tayside Mountain Rescue Team warns. Deer stalking can take place all year, the park authority says, most of all in October for stags and in January and early February for hinds: find out before you go.

The Glenshee ski area, with its tows and snow fences, is about 2 km to the north, off this walk. In the ski season keep outside its snow fences and managed areas, never walk up a tow line, running or not, and watch for steel winching cables. No dogs are allowed on its runs and tows.

The councils work snow gates on the A93 at the Spittal of Glenshee and at Braemar, and in winter snow may block the road over the pass: check the road first. The car park is on the east side of the A93, about a mile south of the ski centre, free and with room for about 30 cars by our map, and a second car park is about 100 metres away. No toilets are published here: the nearest are at the ski centre.

After the walk

Glas Maol, a Munro about 2.5 km to the north-east, stands at the far end of the ridge. Many walkers go on to it, and some climb Creag Leacach from the ski centre over Glas Maol. This walk keeps to Creag Leacach and comes back the way it went.

The walk online, with its film and map:
hiddenscotland.com/walks/creag-leacach-from-the-devils-elbow

It starts at the car park south of the Devil's Elbow, on the east side of the A93, NO 139 756.

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

Creag Leacach



A HIDDEN SCOTLAND WALK

From the Devil's Elbow

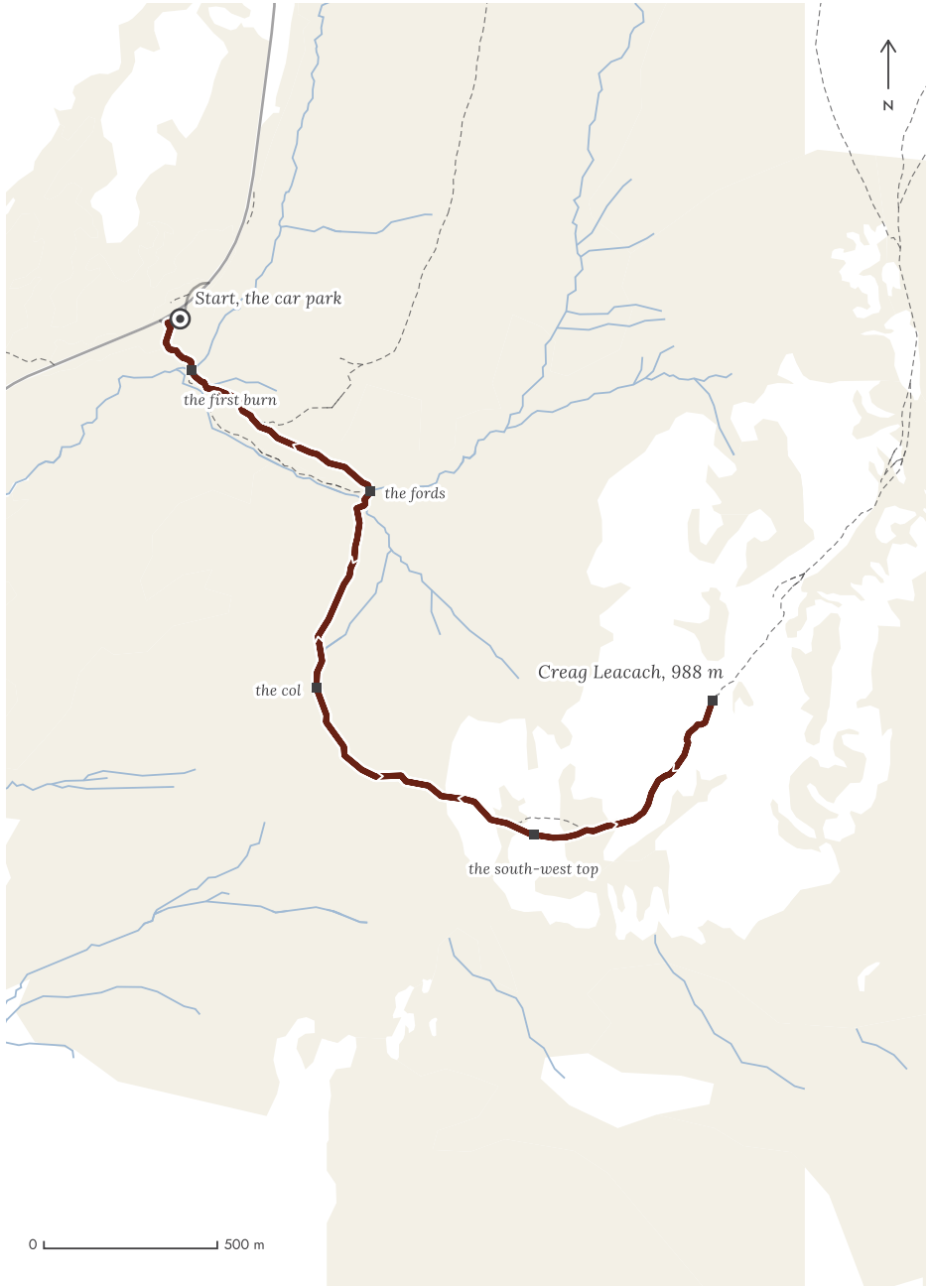
Creag Leacach is 988 metres, a hill on the east side of the A93 in Glenshee that looks down over the Devil's Elbow, its crest a field of broken stone and boulders. This is its usual way on its own: across the burns below Meall Gorm, up the western shoulder over the south-west top and along the crest to the summit, and back the same way. It is a short Munro, but mist and winter come in fast: for hillwalkers who can find their way with a map and compass.

words // Hidden Scotland

The path drops east from the car park into a small gully and crosses its burn, with no bridge, then runs east above the Allt Coire a' Bhathaich. One guide warns that it is badly eroded in places: take care not to slip down the bank into the burn. About 480 metres out, keep right at the fork, above the burn. About 880 metres out the path fords the Allt Coire a' Bhathaich and a side stream, with no bridge, and about 1.4 km out one more. Streams can rise markedly in one day, Munro Magic warns: if a crossing looks unsafe, turn back.

From the col below the south-west top, about 1.5 km out, the path turns east up the steep western shoulder, rocky from about 2 km out, over the south-west top and along the crest to the summit, a field of broken stone and boulders. The stones are slabby and broken and can easily trap an ankle, one guide warns: there is plenty to trip over. The flanks are steep and rocky, with drops east into Glen Brighty.

An old drystone wall, with a line of old fence posts, runs along the crest to the summit cairn, 988 metres up. The crests are fairly featureless, and the Grampian plateau is a place where you can go wrong: in mist the wall is the guide, and without a compass you can get lost. The wall runs on north-east to Glas Maol, not back: come back south-west along it, and leave it at the south-west top for the path down the shoulder. If the cloud comes down, the wind rises or anyone is tiring, turn back by the way you came.



Up Creag Leacach from the Devil's Elbow and back the same way: about 3 to 4 hours.

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