Before you go

No public body gives a distance or a time for the whole way. By our map it is about 5 km (3 miles) there and back with about 790 metres of climb, and it takes about 3 to 4 hours, more with stops, in poor weather or under snow. Under snow it is a winter mountain, and no avalanche forecast covers it: go only with winter gear and the experience to use it.

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. Conditions on the hills can be very different from those at the roadside and can change quickly, Kintail Mountain Rescue Team warns. Mobile coverage is poor in places and one walker found no signal on the hill, so do not rely on a phone. One walker met low cloud above about 800 metres: if the cloud comes down, the wind rises or anyone is tiring, turn back by the way you came. The National Trust for Scotland, which manages Saileag, lists no stalking issues, but Corrielair Estate stalks the land south and east of the ridge from mid-September to 20 October, with no stalking on Sundays: check the Heading for the Scottish Hills tables before you go east along the ridge.

The car park is rough, on the north side of the A87 about 11 km south-east of Shiel Bridge, and by our map it is free. If it is full there is a lay-by about 400 metres west. No source lists toilets, so plan for none.

After the walk

Sgurr na Ciste Duibhe, the most easterly of the Five Sisters, is up the same path west of the bealach, and Sgurr a' Bhealaich Dheirg and Aonach Meadhoin lie east along the ridge: this walk keeps to Saileag. One guide calls the ridge east of here a very serious undertaking in anything but dry summer conditions.

The walk online, with its film and map:
hiddenscotland.com/walks/saileag-from-glen-shiel-by-the-bealach-an-lapain

It starts at the rough car park on the north side of the A87 in Glen Shiel, NH 009 135.

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

Saileag



A HIDDEN SCOTLAND WALK

From Glen Shiel

Saileag is 956 metres, a Munro on the north side of Glen Shiel in Kintail, just east of the Five Sisters across the Bealach an Lapain. This is its usual way on its own: a steep, eroded path from the A87 to the bealach, then the grassy ridge east to the summit, and back the same way. It is a short Munro, but a steep one, where cloud comes in fast: for hillwalkers who can find their way with a map and compass.

words // Hidden Scotland

From the car park walk 74 metres west along the A87 to the foot of the path, just behind a chevron road sign. The A87 here is a fast trunk road with no pavement and no lighting: keep well in to the verge, in single file, and keep children and dogs close. The path climbs north beside the forest fence. By our map it fords four small burns between about 400 and 700 metres out, with no bridge. Streams can rise markedly in a day after rain, MunroMagic warns: if they are running high, turn back.

Above the burns the path crosses round the top of the plantation and turns uphill. It climbs very steeply, about 540 metres in under 1.5 km to the Bealach an Lapain: one walker gives a gradient of 1 in 2. Guides find the path badly eroded, wet, slippery and rocky. Take it slowly and keep to the path. A small cairn marks the top. The ridge path west climbs to the Five Sisters: turn right, east, for Saileag. In mist the cairn is the place to find again on the way down.

A path climbs the grassy ridge east, about 900 metres on and 230 metres higher, to the cairn. There are crags near the summit and the north-west face is steep and craggy: keep to the ridge path, away from the north side. Go down the way you came. At the cairn in the bealach turn left, south, down the path to the road: the path straight on climbs to the Five Sisters. Then walk the 74 metres east along the verge of the A87.



Up Saileag from Glen Shiel and back the same way: about 3 to 4 hours.

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