Before you go

No public body gives a route, a distance or a time for this hill. By our map it is about 7.2 km (4½ miles) there and back with about 1,050 metres of climb: about 4 to 5 hours, more with stops, in poor weather or under snow. The Lower Falls car park is the Highland Council's, with composting toilets. Steven Fallon says there is a charge to park. OpenStreetMap marks a two-hour limit, which the council does not publish, and this walk takes longer: check the signs.

Check the mountain forecast, and carry a map and compass: visibility can change markedly with the cloud level, Munro Magic warns. The Lochaber Mountain Rescue Team answers more than 150 call-outs a year. One day's report from the Lochaber avalanche service found it far windier on the ridge, at about 700 metres, than on the summit. In mist go back north-west down the way you came, and keep off the other ridges to the north: they are steep and craggy and should be avoided. If the cloud comes down, the wind rises or anyone is tiring, turn back.

Under snow this is a winter mountain, needing winter gear and the skill to use it. The Scottish Avalanche Information Service's Lochaber forecast centres on Ben Nevis and the Aonach Mor range and does not name the Mamores, but the risk is here all the same. Phone signal is often intermittent.

After the walk

Many walkers climb Sgurr a' Mhaim as the first of the Ring of Steall, a long round of four Munros by the Steall gorge that takes the Devil's Ridge. That is a harder, much longer day. This walk keeps to the summit and comes back the way it went.

The walk online, with its film and map:
hiddenscotland.com/walks/sgurr-a-mhaim-by-its-north-west-shoulder

It starts at the Lower Falls car park in Glen Nevis, about 7 km up the road from Fort William, NN 145 683.

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.

HIDDEN SCOTLAND

A MUNRO WALK UP

Sgurr a' Mhaim



A HIDDEN SCOTLAND WALK

By its north-west shoulder

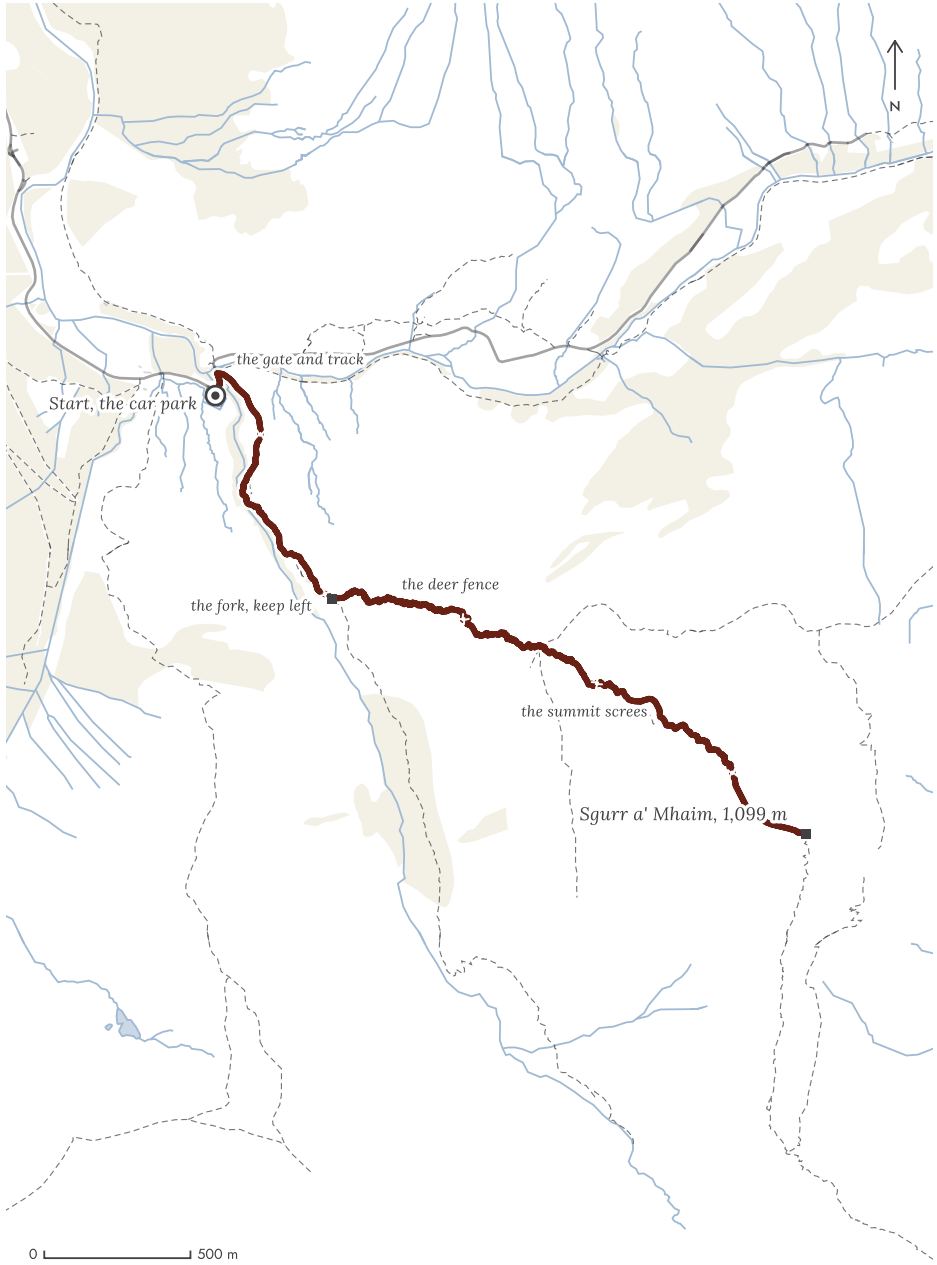
Sgurr a' Mhaim is 1,099 metres, one of the higher Munros of the Mamores, above Glen Nevis. This is its usual way from the road: the long north-west shoulder from the Lower Falls, straight and steep on a rough, loose path, through the quartzite screes to the summit, and back the same way. It is a steep, stony 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 walk up the road towards the bridges and cross the first. Before the second bridge, over the Water of Nevis, go through the gate on the right. Follow a track, then a rough path south-east above Coire a' Mhusgain. Stalking can take place in the area: follow any signs. After about 1 km, and about 230 metres up, the path splits. Take the left fork, east: the right-hand path goes on into Coire a' Mhusgain.

The path goes through a gate in a deer fence and strikes straight up the north-west shoulder. It is rough and loose, and it hardly lets up. The steepest part, about 2 km out, rises about 50 metres in every 100, with a crag close beside the path. At about 900 metres, about 2.9 km out, it meets the pale quartzite screes and zigzags up through them to the summit crest. The screes are strength sapping near the top, and very soft and loose on the way down.

The summit, 1,099 metres, has a large, untidy cairn. South of it the Devil's Ridge is a narrow, exposed crest with Grade 1 scrambling, dangerous when icy, with steep drops on both sides. It is never the way: this walk turns back at the summit. Scrambling can be the most dangerous of mountain activities. Come down the way you came, slowly, because the descent is steep and loose and hard on the knees.



Up Sgurr a' Mhaim by its north-west shoulder and back the same way: about 4 to 5 hours.

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