



The Loch an Eilein Centre, by the car park

Before you go

About 5 km, or just over 3 miles: an hour to an hour and a half's walking, or about two hours with stops. The paths are low and level, waymarked, and shared with cyclists, runners and the odd horse rider. They can be muddy or icy, so wear sturdy shoes.

Park at the estate's car park at the end of the Loch an Eilein road, signed from the B970 by Inverdrue: £2 a person or £5 a car at the time of writing. The road's narrow bridge does not suit motorhomes or caravans, and no bus runs to the loch.

Keep dogs at heel or on a short lead: birds nest on the ground here, above all from April to August. No fires or barbecues.

After the walk

The gallery at the car park has sold coffee and ice cream from early April to the end of October, so check before counting on it, and bring a flask in winter. For lunch, the Barn at Rothiemurchus, about 3 km back towards Aviemore, is open every day from 9.30am to 4.30pm, with soup and cake by a wood-burning stove.



The walk online, with its photographs and map:
hiddenscotland.com/walks/the-loch-an-eilein-circular-in-rothiemurchus

It starts at Loch an Eilein car park, NH 897 085.

In an emergency, call 999 or 112 and ask for the police.

A WALK ROUND

Loch an Eilein



A HIDDEN SCOTLAND WALK

The Loch an Eilein circular

A level loop through the old Caledonian pinewood of Rothiemurchus, just south of Aviemore. The ruin of a castle stands on a small island close to the shore, and keeps coming back into view between pines that are, in places, more than three hundred years old.

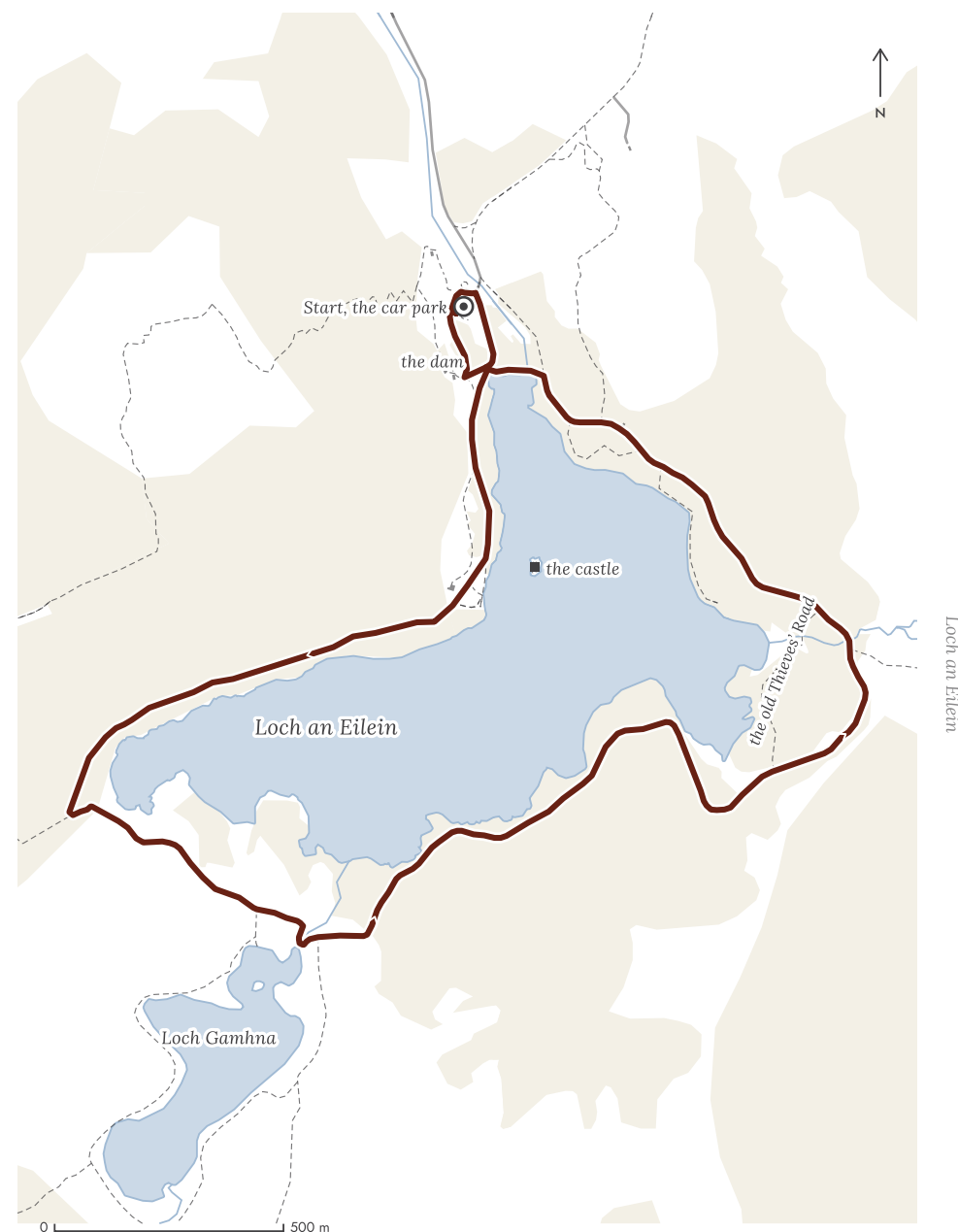
words & photography // Hidden Scotland

The walk starts and finishes at the Rothiemurchus estate's car park at the north end of the loch. Beside it stands the Loch an Eilein Centre, a white-washed old cottage turned gallery, with toilets close by. The car park attendant can help you spot crested tits, which live in these pines with red squirrels and Scottish crossbills.

Follow the path along the west shore, and after about 650 metres you come opposite the castle on its island. The story goes that the Wolf of Badenoch, a son of King Robert, built a tower house here as a hunting lodge in the 1380s. It sheltered people from raiders on the

Thieves' Road, and when Jacobites attacked it in 1690, one account has the laird's wife, Grizel Mor, casting musket balls for its defenders. On the shore here, look for the monument to General Rice, who drowned while skating.

The path rounds the broad south end of the loch and comes back up the east shore, on the line of the old Thieves' Road. At the north end, a dam and sluice built in the 1700s to float timber down to the Spey raised the loch and hid the zigzag causeway said to have reached the island. From there the path comes back round to the car park.



The loop, anticlockwise from the car park: about 5 km, or just over 3 miles.

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