Before you go

No public body gives a distance or a time for the whole way. By our map it is about 6.3 km (4 miles) there and back with about 870 metres of climb, and it takes about 4 to 5 hours, more with stops, in poor weather or under snow. Under snow Tom na Gruagaich is a winter mountain: the steep corrie and the summit cliffs then need winter gear and the skill to use it. The Scottish Avalanche Information Service forecasts for Torridon, but its area centres on Beinn Eighe and Liathach and does not name Beinn Alligin: no name does not mean no risk.

Check the mountain forecast: the Mountain Weather Information Service's Northwest Highlands forecast covers Torridon. Carry a map and compass and know how to use them: Munro Magic says the way needs map reading and the ability to navigate with a compass, and that visibility can change markedly with the cloud level. The Torridon Mountain Rescue Team says its rescues can be among the most technically demanding in Scotland. Stalking can take place even where no notice is posted, so follow any signs. Thunderstorms can come in fast: one walker was struck down by lightning below the Horns of Alligin on a day with no thunder forecast.

The car park is on the south side of the road, just west of the bridge, almost 3 miles from Torridon village, with room for about 20 cars by our map. Steven Fallon says it struggles to cope with walkers' cars in summer, so come early. No toilets are published here: Fasaig, the village of Torridon and Kinlochewe have public toilets. Phone signal in the Highlands is often intermittent.

After the walk

The ridge north leads to Sgurr Mor and round over the Horns of Alligin, a different, harder undertaking that many walkers make. This walk keeps to Tom na Gruagaich and comes back the way it went.

The walk online, with its film and map:
hiddenscotland.com/walks/tom-na-gruagaich-by-coire-nan-laogh

It starts at the car park by the stone bridge over the Abhainn Coire Mhic Nobuil, on the south side of the road, NG 869 576.

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. Phone signal is often patchy: to be able to text 999, register first by texting the word register to 999.

HIDDEN SCOTLAND

A MUNRO WALK UP

Tom na Gruagaich



A HIDDEN SCOTLAND WALK

By Coire nan Laogh

Tom na Gruagaich is 922 metres, the lower of Beinn Alligin's two Munros, above the north side of Loch Torridon. This is its usual way: from the car park by the Coire Mhic Nobuil bridge across the moor and up the narrow corrie of Coire nan Laogh to the summit, and back the same way. It is a steep, rough 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 road and take the path on the west side of the bridge, north-north-west across the moor. After wet weather it can be peaty and muddy, Steven Fallon warns. About 700 metres out it crosses a high deer fence by a stile, then climbs over heather and short rocky steps. About 1.8 km out, about 450 metres up, the path meets the Alltan Glas and turns up into Coire nan Laogh.

The corrie path climbs the east side of the burn in zigzags, worn and loose, and soon steepens: about 40 to 45 metres of climb in every 100. About 2.8 km out it crosses the burn, with no bridge. Stream levels can rise markedly in one day, Munro Magic warns: if the crossing looks unsafe, turn back. Above it a small cairn marks the col, about 3 km out. Turn sharp right, east, for the last few strides to the trig point, on rock on the edge of cliffs that plunge into Toll a' Mhadaidh Mor. Keep well back from the edge, above all in wind or mist.

The slopes are terraces of red sandstone worn round, which makes hand and footholds difficult, with steep ground and crags on and near the way up. Coming down is slow, and one walker found it really hard on the knees. The ridge on to Sgurr Mor and the Horns is a narrow rocky crest with scrambling and exposure, and the Horns are a Grade 1 scramble: this walk stops here. In mist go back to the cairn on the col and down the corrie, never on along the ridge or out to Na Fasreidhnean. If the cloud comes down, the wind rises or anyone is tiring, turn back by the way you came.



Up Tom na Gruagaich by Coire nan Laogh and back the same way: about 4 to 5 hours.

Map data © OpenStreetMap contributors

Fold here, the cover outwards