

## **Proposed Route for East Highland trail (north section)**

### **Inverness to BlairAtholl**

#### **OS Maps**

1. OS Explorer 416 - Inverness, Loch Ness & Culloden
2. OS Landranger 27 – Nairn & Forbes
3. OS Landranger 36 – Grantown & Aviemore
4. OS Landranger 43 - Braemar & Blair Atholl

#### **Map 1 - Inverness to the Findhorn River**

Exit Inverness train station through the main entrance. Turn left and cross the road via the traffic signals and into the shopping area through a narrow lane. At the end of the lane turn left again and head up a steep path to an area of Inverness called Crown. You should pass the academy school on your left and carry on until you arrive at a Y junction. Take the road to your right. Follow this until you come across a small church with a small unusual square steeple. Here turn left and follow the signs for Hilton. After half a mile or so you should pass Hilton Primary School on your right, which has a wonderful adventure playground containing a cow, a pig and an ostrich. Continue on this road until you arrive at a large roundabout. Go straight on here and on your right you will see a green sign directing you up a small tarmac lane to General Wades Military Road. Take this road and climb steadily for one and a half miles until the road converts into a path. There is another green sign here giving a brief explanation of General Wades Military Road. In late July and August delicious wild Scottish raspberries are to be had on either side of the road. If it is a clear day stop at the high voltage pylon and look back towards Inverness to take in the magnificent view of the Kessock Bridge, Moray Firth and the Banrock hills. The path steadily climbs for another two miles or so. If it has rained heavily, parts of this path turn into a small stream. At the top of the climb you are in the heart of Dundavie Woods. There is a path to the left up some steps, but do not take this path, follow the path straight on for about half a mile and you will exit the woods. Here you will cross a narrow tarmac road. In front of you is a metal barred gate. Go through the gate. Do not take the rickety stile next to it, as this is just an entry to the paddock. The path here is quite overgrown, but passible. After 200 metres bear left into Fallie Village. A bit of junk-yard, however you might pass a lovely old grey Fergi tractor parked outside the shed on your right. Soon you will see a bridge on your right (Bridge of Faille). Take this over the river Nairn and up the tarmac road to the B851. At the junction take a right and first left. This track leads to the second part of GWMR. However be careful, as it is the beginning of an entry track into the Mid Laigs Sound Gravel Pit, and large lorries thunder up it creating danger and dust for about a quarter of a mile. Off this take the first track left leading to a wood ahead. This track shadows the A9 for about 3 miles through the wood. At the end of the track go straight ahead and cross a small burn and through the firebreak. Do not follow the track sharp left or right at this point. As you exit the wood over a deer fence, the path enters moorland for approx. 1 mile. This is very

boggy in wet weather and many slight detours may have to be made. The path takes you to Lynemore House and when you arrive here it changes back into a forest track. Follow this down towards the village of Moy. It bears right then under the A9 and the main railway to Inverness. This track brings you to the B9154 which cuts through Moy, a small village with homesteads spread widely along this road. Turn right and walk along this road for approx. 100 - 200 metres. Here you will find a road to the left leading to a white church. Take this road then immediately turn right along the old B9154 which runs along Lock Moy through a small wood. This eventually takes you to the Old School House and here you take a sharp left following the track along the edge of the wood for about half a mile until you arrive at Tullochdury House and here you enter the woods once more. The track splits two ways – take the one on your right past an old wooden shed on your left. If you are quiet you might catch the sight of the odd red squirrel here. After about 400 metres the track exits the wood to open farmland. To the left the land climbs up to moorland and with luck you might twitch a Red Kite or six soaring over the rolling hills. This track takes you through another small wood and down onto a small tarmac road. Turn left here and follow the road for about one and a half miles to Ruthven House. At the house the road returns to track and ghosts the Findhorn River – famous for its salmon fishing so watch out for the 4X4's! This after another mile and a half you will arrive at a ropeway to cross the river. Unfortunately if this is locked you will have to ford the river!

## **Map 2 Findhorn River to Carrbridge/Dochan Woods**

On the south side of the Findhorn River the track continues to follow the path of the river. After about 2 miles Ballachroden Lodge (shooting and fishing) appears on the left. Carry on along the track for another mile until you come to two semi-derelict farm buildings, one on either side of the track. Take the first track on the right past these buildings up into the moorland. (The tracks across the moors are well kept (for shooting purposes) and easy to follow. However, the easy nature of these to the foot may make you walk too fast up some of the steep short climbs; so take it easy.) The track climbs steeply out of the valley then follows the contours of the hills for about a mile. Take the first track right, across 'Carn na Squabaich' and down to the first shooting hut. This hut looks very similar to a pigeon fancier's coop. Nice spot for lunch however next to Allt an t Slugain Mhoir (burn). Here the track forks. Take the track to the right and in front of you a long straight climb emerges past Carn a Gharbh-ghlaic to your left. The track then descends into another valley and to a red shooting hut. Do not take the track that leads to the hut, walk past and on crossing a burn take the next track right. You might spot more Red Kites here as well as many grouse, Painted Lays and Meadow Pipits. After about 400 metres you cross the burn once more. Take the track to the left up the hill towards Leac an Dainh. Half way up the hill the track turns sharp left and down to another burn. In front of you is a small cone-shaped stony hill. The track curves behind the summit of this hill then straightens out once more past Cnapen a Chore Odhair Bhy up to your left. The track then continues to climb steadily to the highest point across the moors, the craggy Creagnah-lolaire. At the top of the climb there is another shooting hut up to the right. The track then takes a windy descent for about a mile. Here you come to a T-junction.

Take the left track and after another 400 metres take a further left. You should soon pass a green shooting hut with village cricket pavilion overtones on your left. After another 400 metres or so take a right and follow the track down the shallow valley to Auchterteang Farmhouse. Go through the farm and continue to follow the now concrete track until it joins the B9007 to Forres. Here turn right and walk along the road through the snow gate to the junction with the A938. At the junction turn right and take the road, keeping to the verge into Carrbridge. Be careful on certain sections of this road as the verge disappears at times. In the heart of the village take the B9153 over the Dulnain River. To your right you will see the ruined old stone bridge from which the village name is derived. Follow the path along this road for just a mile or so until you see a way- sign directing you to the Boat of Garten through Dochan Woods.

### **Map 3 Dochan Woods to Lairig Ghru (Cairngorms)**

Follow this path through Dochan Woods until you reach a five bar steel gate. Pass through this gate and onto the derelict Dochan Farm about 400 metres ahead. Here take a right turn down the hill to Chapelton where the track changes into a tarmac road. Follow this road until you reach the A95 to Avimore. Cross this busy road carefully to the brightly coloured Eco School, then follow the cycle track to the Boat of Garten which runs parallel to the road. About half way to the Boat of Garten there is a path to your right into the woods. Take this path and follow it through the pine trees until you reach a forest track. Take a right and follow the track for about a mile keeping a look out for red squirrel and pine martins along the way. Here you meet another track and to your left you will see the Strathspey Steam Railway Line. Follow the track to your left under the railway line; here you might even see a steam locomotive puffing smoke into the woods. The path now joins the Speyside Way. This shadows the railway line for a couple of miles, passing back under it through a stone tunnel just before entering into the outskirts of Avimore. Take any route though the town, but do stop for provisions and a coffee. I recommend the all day breakfast bun and coffee in the Blue Café (Café Bleu). After a well earned rest, continue past the railway station and follow the signs/path to Rothiemurchus Spey Bridge Park . This leads you to the B970 to Coylumbridge. Turn left and follow this road for about one and a half miles to the campsite at the edge of the Rothiemurchus Forrest. Just before the campsite there is a forest track to the right signposted to Lairig Ghru. Take this track through the woods and up into the Cairngorms. The path has been upgraded and is easy to follow through the forest to the steel constructed Cairngorm Club footbridge. Cross this bridge over the river Am Beanaidh and take a right following the path along the valley. Watch out for mountain bikers without bells! This is a single track path that winds its way up through the forest as the valley falls steeply away to your right. As you climb higher the path becomes more technically difficult, so a sturdy stick is a good companion. It is quite a steep climb, but because of the difficulty of the path there is a tendency not to rush, so it is not as lung busting as it could be. The path is well walked and easy to follow, but as you exit the forest the path becomes more and more rocky, so care should be taken at all times. You are

now entering Lairig Ghru. Take time here to look back towards Avimore, as the views on a clear day are wonderful.

#### **Map 4 Lairig Ghru to Glen Dee**

The path climbs steadily for just over 3 miles. Towards the head of the pass sections of the path become difficult to follow and are increasingly technical, as it crosses a number of granite rock falls which consist of a variety of rocks from pebbles to huge boulders. In mid-summer the midge are particularly vociferous and if there is no breeze through the pass stopping for any longer than a few minutes can become quite a painful and uncomfortable experience, especially if you have blue blood like myself. The valley sides become very steep towards the head of the pass with Cairn Lochan to your left and Sron na Lairrige to your right. It tops out at 835m or 2740 feet, which is higher than most mountains in England. The decent into Glen Dee is also technically difficult for the average walker. Just below the head of the pass the Pools of Dee (crystal clear) emerge and to your left water falls cascade off Ben Macdui, the highest peak in the Cairngorms at 1295m or 4249 feet. The difficult decent continues for another two miles or so into towards the beginning of Glen Dee, then eases, following the contours of the mountains to your left and the River Dee to your right. A further one and a half miles down this path you will pass Corroar Bothy up to your right snuggling in Coire Odhar below the Devil's Point. Here take the path that leads to the bothy, but do not cross the river. Instead, just before the river, take the path to the left which runs parallel to it. The ground becomes somewhat boggy here and you may have to take numerous small diversions from the path to circumnavigate the many streams and marshy areas. A further mile or so down the valley the Geusachen Burn enters the River Dee. If the sun is out and shining in the right direction the rock faces of this gorge-like valley reflect the sun's rays as if they were mirrors.

#### **Map 5 Glen Dee to Glen Tilt**

The path has now moved away from the river, but two miles further down the glen it begins to follow the course of the river once more. Here the Glen begins to open out and the River Dee widens, leaving the soaring towers of the Cairngorms behind. After another three miles the path brings you to White Bridge which crosses the River Dee. Just before the bridge are some wonderful waterfalls, the Chest of Dee. Take a moment to take in the magnificence of these falls and spot a heron or two. Cross the bridge and take the track to the right until you reach Geldie Burn. You will have to ford this stream as there is no bridge – plenty of stepping stones however. From here the path becomes a little undistinct. However you should be able to see the ruin of Bynack Lodge a mile or so in front of you, so head for that or follow the Bynack Burn which also takes you there. From the lodge the path is clear and follows the contours of the valley. There are many small streams to cross over the next two miles, but eventually the valley falls away into the steep sided gully of Allt Garbh Buidhe with Coire na creige high up to your right and Meall na Caillich Buidhe to your left. It is at this point that you leave the Cairngorms National Park and will encounter a plethora of sheep scampering

in all directions up the steep slopes of the gorge, as you walk through them. This footpath is quite narrow at times so be a little careful with your footwork. Common lizards are to be seen along this path. The gorge walk ends at the Falls of Tarf. Here there is an ornate 19<sup>th</sup> century footbridge over Tarf water. These waterfalls are particularly beautiful and the plunge pools are well worth a swim in the summer months. Walk over the bridge, but take time to read the dedication plaque which explains why the bridge was constructed; an interesting story. At the other side of the bridge the footpath changes back into a track, take this and descend down into Glen Tilt an a-typical example of a glacial melt cut valley. The valley is stunning and the river tilt boasts many wonderful rapids, a white water rafter's dream in high water.

### **Map 6 Glen Tilt to Blair Atholl**

Follow this track for 8 miles to the bridge at marble Lodge. Cross the bridge and continue to follow the track for another mile. Just before the path reaches Auchgobhal House there is a path signposted to the left. Take this path; it follows the contours of the valley and you will pass Gilberts Bridge in the valley below. The path then falls back down to the track. Rejoin the track here and follow it for another mile where it crosses the River Tilt into Blairuachar Wood. Watch out for Red Squirrel again here. Take the track through the wood until it exits at single track tarmac road. Take a left here over a stone bridge into Old Bridge of Tilt. At the next road junction take a right following the road along the course of the river for a mile or so until you meet the B8079. Take a right here over the steel road bridge and walk into Blair Atholl. You pass Blair Castle Estate campsite on your right. The railway station is about half a mile down this road on the left. The walk is complete.