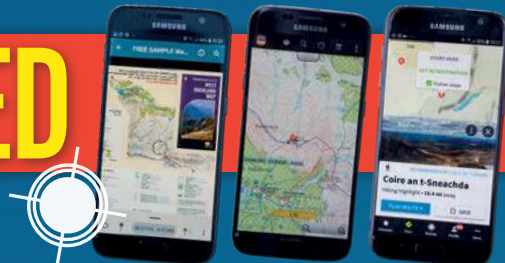


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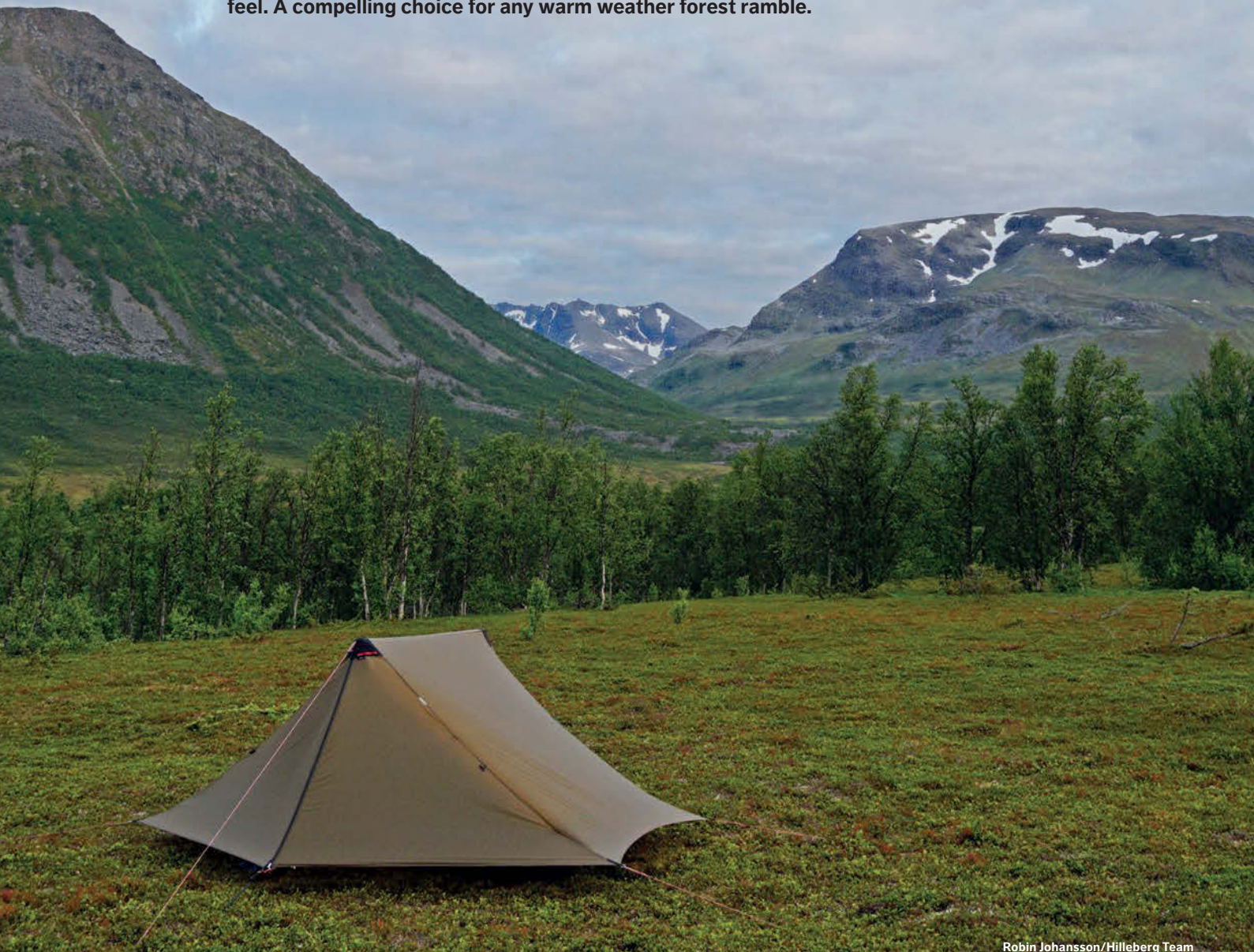
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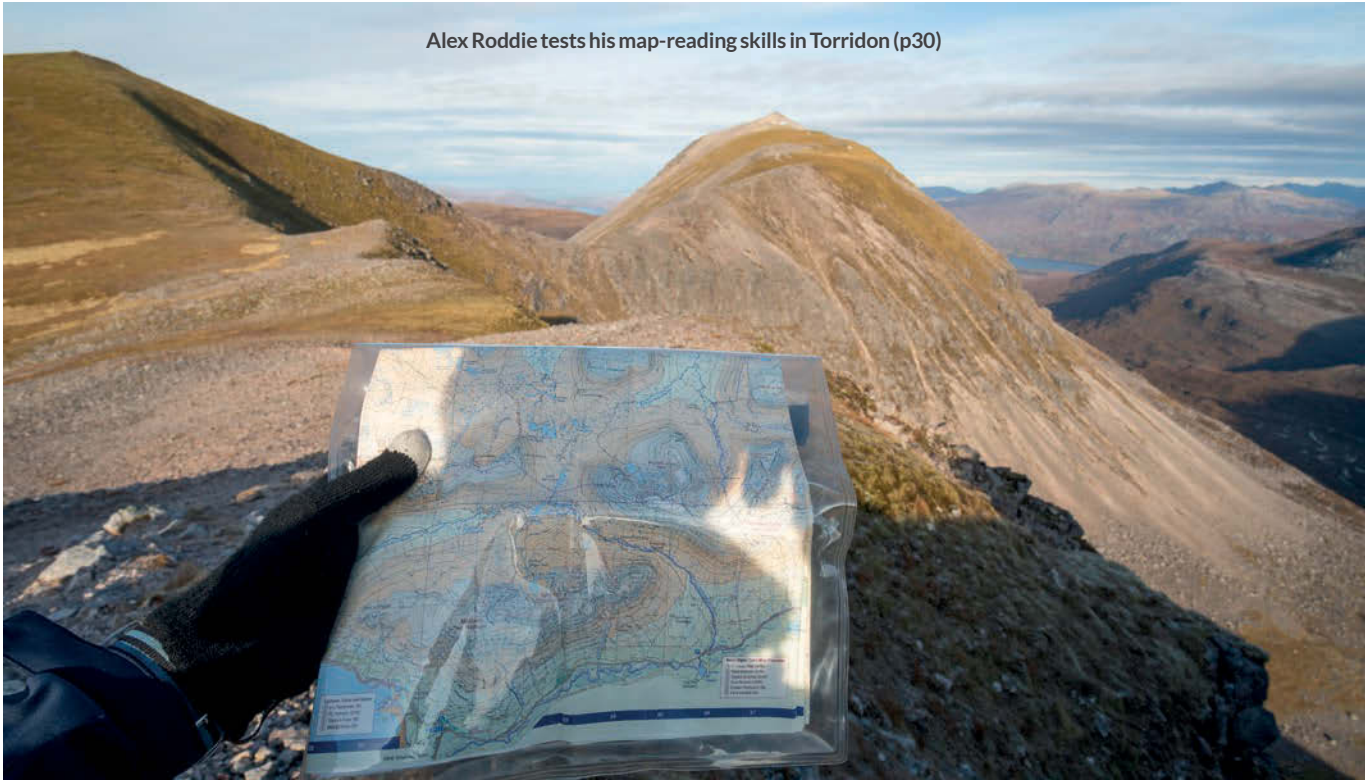
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# WELCOME

Alex Roddie tests his map-reading skills in Torridon (p30)

Photo credit: Alex Roddie



## *Back to the Future*



THERE IS A kind of awe in imagining future technology; looking ahead and contemplating the things scientific advancement will someday enable us to do (assuming we survive that long). But sometimes I have the reverse feeling; a wonder at what human beings achieved with

the supposedly 'primitive' means at their disposal in the past.

We all know, for example, that ancient seafarers used the position of the sun to help navigate across the oceans. But what about when it was cloudy? A millennia ago, Vikings sailed and settled for thousands of miles across the expanses of the Arctic and North Atlantic, and reached as far as North America. Their legends mention mysterious 'solar stones', or sunstones; objects which enabled them to locate the sun even on overcast days. It is now widely thought these were pieces of Iceland spar: a clear, colourless 'crystal' which depolarises light and creates two images of everything. The brightness of these two images matches up when aligned directly with the sun, meaning you can use it to deduce its position on a cloudy day.

When I imagine a Viking peering into a crystal of clear rock in some high Arctic sea, I feel the same awe as when I read about the colonisation of the Pacific; how people traversed continent-sized distances across the ocean to far-flung dots of land in canoes by 'reading' wave patterns, or navigated using the 'underwater lightning' created by glowing microorganisms. Who needs science fiction when the real past is so extraordinary?

To navigate in the hills and mountains today, a plethora of mind-bogglingly advanced digital tools are literally at our

fingertips. You probably have a cutting-edge satellite navigation device within arms' reach as you read this – your smartphone – and it's hardly surprising that the experience of finding our way around in the high places is increasingly influenced by digital methods. Like all tools, these can be used well, or they can be used poorly – depending on the person wielding them.

Alex Roddie, feeling his own 'traditional' map and compass skills becoming a little rusty, headed off into Torridon for a salutary lesson on coping without the crutch of GPS (p30). But as the skills advice in the second part of Alex's feature (p36) and Chris Townsend's review of mapping apps (p64) both demonstrate, shunning digital techniques altogether can be just as dangerous as over-relying on them; the more options we have at our disposal – both 'old' and 'new' – the safer we are (sadly, Viking sunstones don't feature anywhere – perhaps that's one for a future issue...)

Finally, a note on the tragic crisis happening around us. At the time of writing, lockdown restrictions are still in full force, but some imminent loosening looks likely. Whatever happens, the process of getting back into the outdoors could be complicated; read Hanna Lindon's article on p12 to learn more about why.

In the weeks between when I write this and when you will read it, things may well have moved on significantly; but in the meantime we will be continuing to update [www.tgomagazine.co.uk](http://www.tgomagazine.co.uk) with the latest changes, and what they mean for outdoor fans, as they happen.

Carey Davies, Editor

 @carey\_davies

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**"The starfield was so densely crowded in the clear night sky that constellations disappeared."**

Carey Davies in the High Sierra, p56



## On the cover

SUIparum fugia cus, sus  
moluptatae dolor acima volor



Photo credit: Alamy/xxxx



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Jim Perrin pays homage to the majestic Staffordshire gritstone escarpment that is The Roaches

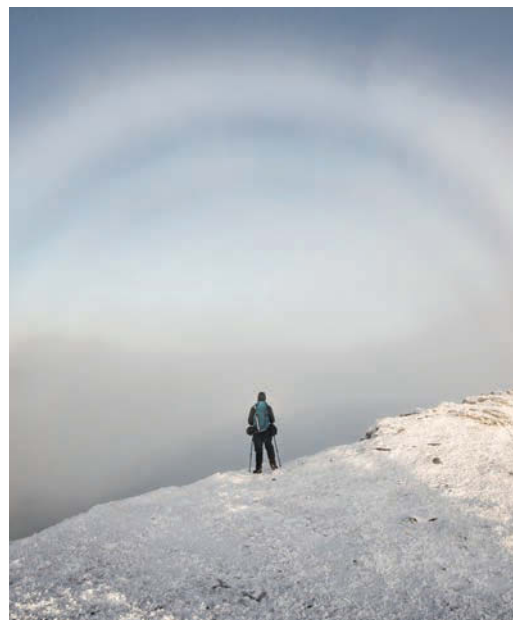


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Terry Abraham recounts how his deep love of the Lakes helped him through his darkest hour

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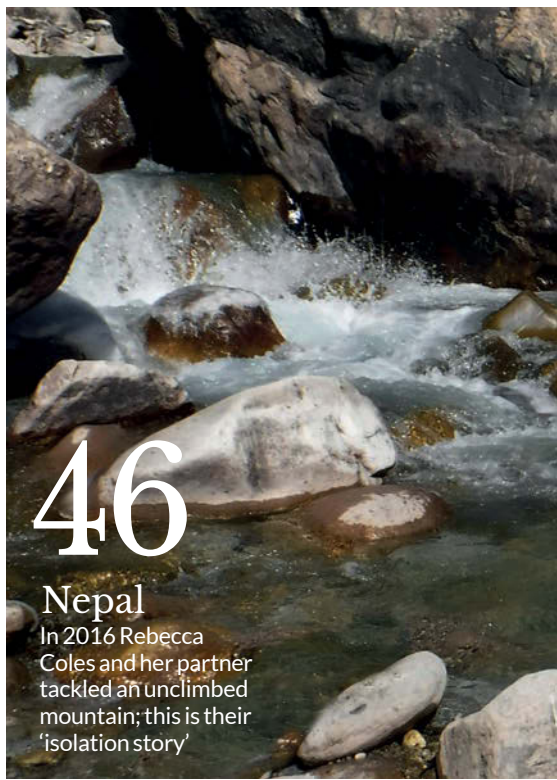
Alex Roddie hits the wild north west of Scotland to test his navigation skills



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### Nepal

In 2016 Rebecca Coles and her partner tackled an unclimbed mountain; this is their 'isolation story'





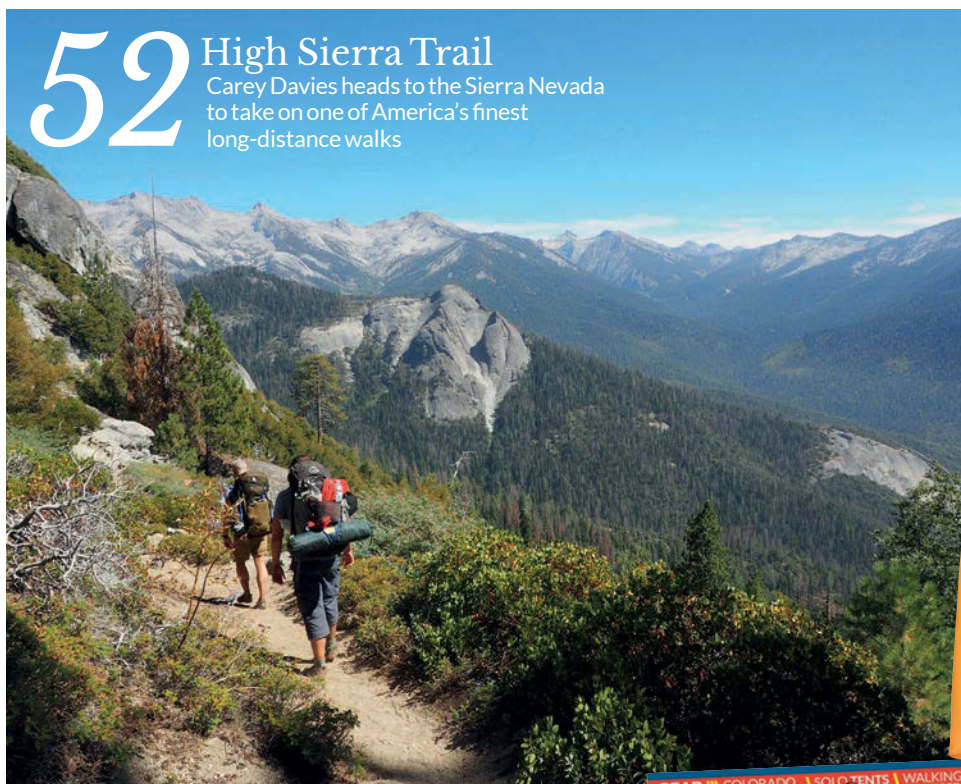


**“I watched, spellbound, as a Brocken spectre formed, vanished and reformed again...”**

Alex Roddie in Torridon, p34

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Carey Davies heads to the Sierra Nevada to take on one of America's finest long-distance walks



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# CONTRIBUTORS & CONTACTS

## Terry Abraham

Up until recently, filmmaker Terry was busy filming *Life of a Mountain: Helvellyn* – the third in his hit Lake District mountain trilogy. Then the lockdown kicked in. The premiere was set for May and now all screenings at cinemas have been postponed; but it has afforded him the opportunity to hone the documentary whilst enjoying the odd walk up his local fells in the Eden Valley. He has also been busy with other projects, including his debut book *Life on the Mountains*, which is out now. See our exclusive extract on p38.



## Rebecca Coles

Expedition leader, Mountaineering Instructor and writer Rebecca has been contemplating expeditions past while she has spent the lockdown in north Wales. In 2016, she made her ninth trip to Nepal, and her most adventurous yet, to tackle a fantastic pyramid-shaped mountain that had never been climbed before. Using skills she learned from Scottish winter mountaineering and Alpine climbing, she and her partner aimed to ascend a remote 6000m peak in Far-Western Nepal. Read her account on p46.



## Alex Roddie

Regular contributor Alex has been spending lockdown in the Lincolnshire Wolds, dreaming of the mountains but finding renewed joy in the sights and sounds of local wildlife returning to the landscape. Before COVID-19 hit, he completed a splendid multi-day tour of the Cairngorms. Other trips over the winter included a Munro-bagging foray to Torridon. He was looking forward to completing his first TGO Challenge in 2020, and – if restrictions allow – is hoping to have a bash at his planned route later in the year.



## Hanna Lindon

Outdoor writer Hanna took over as TGO's Online Editor earlier this year and is currently heading up our coverage of how the coronavirus crisis is impacting the outdoor world. This month she investigates what a sensible return to the mountains might look like (p12). Despite missing the hills and trying to juggle the various demands of work, two small children and a blind golden retriever, she's been enjoying lockdown's clean air, clear skies and community spirit. On p25, she asks if going back to 'normal' is as good as it sounds.



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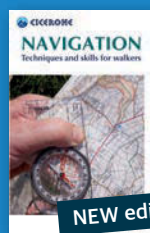
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## Cressbrook Dale, Peak District

"This was my fourth trip in a month to Cressbrook Dale with the goal of photographing the early purple orchids that thrive here.

"The orchids favour dry grassland areas and carpet the hillside here between mid May and early June. The domed limestone outcrop in the distance is St Peter's Stone, a well-known Peak District landmark; its name is rumoured to come from its apparent similarity to the domed shape of St Peter's Basilica in Rome.

"Cressbrook Dale is one of the famous limestone Dales making up the White Peak area of the national park. With its origins in the Carboniferous period, 300 million years ago, its karst landscape is formed by the dissolution of soluble limestone rocks, formed under tropical seas, and is characterised by natural underground drainage systems with sinkholes and caves."

Photo by Alan Novelli  
[alannovelli.co.uk](http://alannovelli.co.uk)



# ALMANAC

JUNE

*in the hills*

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## Echoes of Rum

*Justine Ritchie*

WHEN IT COMES to mountain photography, we are often bombarded with details – it can be difficult to determine just where to look or know what, exactly, draws your eye. Justine Ritchie's alternative abstract approach strips the hills down and reminds us of their essence. "Multiple exposure" images help capture more of an intimidating landscape's complexity by integrating and reconciling the differing elements like light, colour, contours, tonality, mood and moment," Justine explains.

Bewitched by the Rum Cuillin as seen from the shores of Eigg, Justine aims to embody the spirit of the landscape. "This is a scene of layered light and receding ridge lines, but it is also an illustration of the geology and history that has been folded into those layers.

"Focusing on these different outlines and overlaying the shots in a staggered sequence as opposed to taking a single shot meant the oranges and russets of the sunset were overlaid onto the outlines that would normally appear as a black silhouette. I chose to take a series of handheld camera multiple exposures to create this more minimalist abstract interpretation."

See more of Justine's work at [justineritchie.com](http://justineritchie.com) and on Instagram: @justine.ritchie

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## NEWS

# How will we go back to the outdoors?

*From avoiding a 'mad rush' to the hills to developing PPE that works for mountain rescuers, returning to the outdoors when lockdown lifts could be complicated.*

*Hanna Lindon speaks to some of the organisations wrestling with the challenges – and possible solutions*

The weekend before Britain's lockdown measures were first announced, beauty spots all over the country were swamped by an influx of visitors. With indoor activities either out of limits or deemed too hazardous, people were doing what probably seemed sensible at the time: looking for their recreational kicks in the great outdoors.

That was back in March. At the time of writing, the UK government is under pressure to release a lockdown 'escape plan' with daily deaths still in triple figures – so how exactly will that work? And how will it work in relation to the outdoors?

"It's going to be really complex," says Heather Morning, Mountain Safety Advisor at Mountaineering Scotland. "We all started out assuming we were looking at perhaps three weeks of shutdown before we were all back in the hills again. Now, without a vaccine in place – which doesn't look to be any time soon – it's hard to see how we are going to return to anything like normality."

## Outdoors before indoors

Last week, mooted plans for an "incremental" return to normal life, Scotland's First Minister Nicola Sturgeon hinted that outdoor activities could be permitted sooner than indoor pursuits. Her comments caused both excitement and consternation in the outdoors community.

"It makes sense, because potentially you can socially distance in the outdoors if you approach it in the right way – particularly in Scotland," says Damon Powell, Chair of Scottish Mountain Rescue. "We would be delighted if it's deemed safe for people to be back in the hills, but it does present quite a



*"Providing mountain rescue teams with the right support, equipment and advice will be crucial in any reopening of the outdoors."*

few challenges for us.

"My great concern is that 'the outdoors' will open up before any other sporting facility and that it will then be boom time – not just for the people waiting to get out there but potentially for everybody else as well. If we get a whole stack of people with no skill set, there's a risk that the number of rescues goes through the roof."

To complicate things further, it's likely that the advice for when and where people can enjoy the outdoors will differ across Britain. The Welsh First Minister, for instance, has said he is ready to move the country out of lockdown earlier than the rest of the UK. This could present further challenges for mountain rescue teams.

"If the Welsh plan has a different

timeline, let alone different conditions, then that's going to be a big problem," says Mike Margeson, Operations Director at Mountain Rescue England & Wales. "They need to be planning collectively and not giving out mixed messages to the public."

## The threat to mountain rescue

If there is a mass return to the outdoors, mountain rescue teams will be on the front line. This is a concern for volunteers, who are attempting to adapt tried-and-tested approaches to an unfamiliar new world.

"We're asking teams to operate in an environment that they haven't trained for because we can't regroup to train at the moment," says Damon. "You can't maintain social distancing in a rescue."

Photo credit: Shutterstock





[left] Typical sunny day foot traffic on Snowdon's Pyg / Miner's Track [above] The summit of Snowdon on a May Bank Holiday; many organisations are worried about a 'mad rush' to outdoor honeypots

emphasise that telling people what they can and can't do isn't part of their remit – but it's clear that providing rescue teams with the right support, equipment and advice will be crucial in any reopening of the outdoors.

#### Outdoor super-spreaders?

There are other issues to be overcome when the outdoors opens again to walkers.

"The two big challenges that emerged at the start of the crisis were people maintaining physical distancing, particularly in popular beauty spots, and the threat of people spreading the virus in vulnerable rural areas," says Tom Platt, Director of Advocacy and Engagement at the Ramblers. "These are likely to remain the key challenges to people returning to the outdoors."

Concerns among remote communities that 'super-spreader' walkers will place them in jeopardy have led to discouraging signs, confrontations and even full-on fights.

"We have to be mindful of the reaction from local communities," says Stuart Younie, CEO of Mountaineering Scotland. "They were really concerned about lots of people coming to their area increasing the risk of transmission and putting pressure on the infrastructure, so we have to be careful and respectful about how we phase our return to the outdoors, possibly as a staged approach."

#### What's the solution?

The key preoccupation for most outdoor organisations is avoiding a 'mad rush' for the hills when lockdown restrictions begin to ease. Several sources – including the Lake District National Park, Scottish Mountain Rescue, and Mountain Rescue England and Wales – told *The Great*

*Outdoors* that they are already collaborating on a cross-industry basis to come up with answers to this problem.

"Conversations are currently ongoing with outdoor sports in Scotland – and I understand also in England and Wales – and a phased or staged approach based on an evaluation of risk is under discussion in Scotland," added Stuart.

Scottish Mountain Rescue is working in conjunction with Scotland's National Outdoor Training Centre, Glenmore Lodge, on how people might plan a post-lockdown day. And some possible solutions were also mooted. "We're hoping that the government will put in place a staged process for lifting the lockdown," said Mike. "One possibility could be that people will initially be restricted to travelling within their own region, which might help limit the numbers at popular honeypots."

Devising a plan for how the outdoors can safely reopen is a major challenge. Perhaps the biggest hurdle, though, is communicating this plan to the public.

"We've already seen how hard it is to communicate clear and consistent messages during the lockdown, and this will become even more challenging should there be a phased lifting of restrictions," says Tom. "What's important going forward is that the government provides very clear guidance to both walkers and land managers about what they can and cannot do."

*UPDATE: Just as this edition went to press, the Prime Minister announced that driving for exercise and "unlimited outdoor exercise" in England was permitted. Visit our website at [www.tgomagazine.co.uk](http://www.tgomagazine.co.uk) for the latest coverage and updates.*

"The other challenge is that the personal protective equipment [PPE] out there is designed for a clinical environment rather than an outdoor environment. If you try to do anything physical in a mask you basically can't breathe, so the effectiveness of it in the hills isn't great. Gloves tend to split, and aprons are a non-starter."

Waterproofs and goggles have been mooted as a PPE substitute, he says, but decontaminating kit can be a three-to-four-day process. And there are other risks involved as well – both to mountain rescue teams and to the walkers who call on them.

"Every team has fewer people on their call-out list because of people ill or self-isolating," says Mike. We have no air ambulances because they've been stood down or they're needed for other things, so in the cases where we would previously have been able to get air assistance we're looking at a much longer carry. There are also some things – such as CPR – that we just won't be able to do."

Mountain Rescue leaders are keen to





Kirstie Smith: "We are extremely grateful to have so much open space close to our homes"

## “Stories FROM LOCKDOWN”

Over the last couple of months, we've been sharing unusual, inspirational and remarkable lockdown experiences from hikers across Britain and beyond on our website. Here are three of the highlights...

### *“Our mountains are free of human presence”*

What has it been like living in one of the mountainous regions we're all yearning to get to?

**Kirstie Smith** reports from Arran

ARRAN IS A POPULAR tourist destination, with almost half of the island made up of second homes – which, come Easter, are usually all full. Add to that hotels, B&Bs, campsites and extra day-trippers, and normally the island goes from a quiet local population to hosting thousands of extra visitors enjoying our stunning trails, beaches and mountains with local businesses thriving.

But this spring, our mountains are free of human presence and the villages and roads are eerily quiet.

This year has hit us hard, like it has



Photo credit: Kirstie Smith

many other places all over the country; and, although many island businesses have been impacted, people understand the seriousness of the outbreak and the extra pressures on our limited emergency services. Everything we know and are used to has just had to be put on hold. Ferry services have been reduced and you can only travel to and from the island now with a valid 'essential' reason.

Local folk who escape to the mountains at the weekends still get to stare at their beauty from afar, and the general consensus is that we are extremely grateful to have views and so much open space close to our homes to get our daily exercise in. I'm still finding it a struggle to get my head around having this on my doorstep when others are stuck in cities. I feel very privileged. I'm appreciating living here more than ever.



## *"My nomadic existence was now considered illegal"*

Wild camping nomad **Stuart Shipp** describes how lockdown threatened to make his lifestyle illegal – until a timely message from a friend saved the day

I'M A VAGABOND, navigating my way around and between the mountains of the UK. Travel is my life. I camp when I'm on my own and I stay in 'regular' accommodation when guiding groups.

When the first social distancing measures were introduced on March 19, I was in Glasgow, having just taken a group for some snowy fun in the Highlands. I decided to stay in Scotland. I was going to go remote. After all, getting away from people and self-isolating is what I do best! I had two weeks' worth of freeze-dried food, gas canisters and a stove. I had my trusty tent and sleeping bag. I was good to go!

When I found out about the full lockdown I was camping north of Glen Avon in the Cairngorms and, for the first time in a very long time, I was lost. Not lost in the landscape, but in my head. I had just been told that my



Stuart Shipp: "I was lost in the landscape, and in my head"

Photo credit: Stuart Shipp

nomadic existence, the one I've lived for the past four years, was not acceptable – in fact it could be considered illegal.

I collected my kit and headed back to my minibus in the vain hope that a plan would simply come to me. As I approached the minibus I received a message from my good friend, Ewan, who resides in Inveralligin, a small hamlet just beyond Torridon.

Ewan and his wife Claire are currently working overseas and their home – usually let to holidayers – was now empty. They kindly offered it to me to isolate within.

My friends would tell you that I am a rather stubborn person who would usually turn down any offer of help; but on this occasion, with nowhere else to go, I thanked them and made my way to the west coast.

Now I have the mighty Beinn Alligin peering down at me from the front of the house, and the high tide kisses the drystone wall at the far end of the garden. Otters have been playing in the stream, red deer roam the gardens, and the local seal keeps me amused with his intrigue. Frankly, I couldn't be 'locked down' in a much better place.

## *"I turned the kitchen into a bird hide"*

He might be locked down in a top-floor city flat, but **Mark Connelly** has found an incredible way of bringing the outdoors indoors

AS SOMEONE who is used to spending at least one or two days a week wandering the countryside, hiking or looking for photo opportunities, I initially found this lockdown situation incredibly difficult.

I love photography, wildlife and hillwalking, and I try to combine them all as much as life allows – so the first week of isolation in my flat was a particularly tough challenge mentally.

Eventually, I thought about setting up my camera in the kitchen to shoot the birds that were coming to a fat ball feeder I had hung out of the window a couple of weeks before. This involved turning the kitchen into a bird hide using some wildlife photography gear, but also having to improvise using things lying around at home. I used a coat hanger and string to hang the feeder from while the window was open, and a tin of paint holding an ornamental piece of driftwood



as a perch to photograph the birds on.

Despite being in a top floor tenement flat in the east end of Glasgow – with a local park being my sole green space for daily walks – I'm managing to keep my spirits up due to the daily antics of the robins, which are now coming into the kitchen to hop all over the sink and taps, and the blue tits chasing the robins, which are almost twice their size!

I'm obviously missing the mountains, forests and lochs here in Scotland, but



A bluebird captured from Mark's kitchen bird hide

I've managed to bring a little bit of the outdoors to me – and that's good enough for now until we can roam free once again.

■ Mark posts regular updates from his kitchen bird hide on Instagram: @markgoeswild



Read more lockdown stories at [www.tgomagazine.co.uk](http://www.tgomagazine.co.uk).



# Readers' page

Share your views, your experiences and your favourite photos [tgo.ed@kelsey.co.uk](mailto:tgo.ed@kelsey.co.uk)

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Please include a phone number and postal address.  
Letters may be edited for clarity or to fit the space available.

## No right or wrong ways to enjoy the outdoors

I found much of interest in the Spring 2020 edition of The Great Outdoors – thank you!

Mountains were my passion for 30 years. In the 1970s I climbed nearly all the Lake District's higher hills – frequently many times over; often, and happily, alone. Then in the eighties and nineties I reached the tops of more than half the Munros.

Sarah Jane Douglas' writing ("Healing Hills", p32) resonates strongly with me, when she says: "When I first started out hillwalking my lack of experience and ability matched the lack of confidence I had in my own self, but as my physical fitness and skills gradually improved ... so did my mental strength." That is a lovely article; very moving.



## Outdoor spirit

Wonderful message in the opening comments from the editor ('Why we need the outdoor spirit') in TGO May. I read it having been working from home in lockdown for last seven weeks. It nearly made me cry – in a happy sort of way.

I have already been following the advice about watching out for spring flowers. That philosophy is obviously in outdoor people's DNA. Keep up the good work.

**Ian Medcalf**

**Note from the editor:** Ian also shared this montage of spring imagery taken near his home in Wales. Thanks for the kind words and the lovely imagery, Ian.



Harter Fell was the first ever hill I climbed on my own, after I was introduced to hillwalking in the Lakes, all those years ago, by kind friends. I chose the straight up and down route from Cockley Beck, not the much longer round described in your "Wild Walks" article - and found to my delight that it was well within both my physical abilities and my technical skills. What an achievement that felt! And what glorious long days in the hills it led on to...

But as for Crib Goch ("Escape", p8), I had only one encounter with it, a few years after that adventure up Harter Fell. I did make it but with good reason, I've never been more scared in my life. It taught me a number of lessons, but fortunately by then I'd had enough good experiences that it didn't put me off going back to the hills – so long as I kept within my abilities!

I also feel somewhat aghast your article "Top 10 Walks for Beginners" includes the Munro of Buachaille Etive Mor as a recommendation for someone's first-ever hill climb [Alan Rowan writes about this in the context of taking new walkers out with an experienced group – Ed].

These memories may seem a bit disjointed, but I think what I'm trying to say is this – please don't assume that everyone who gets into the mountains is super-fit or macho. Plenty of us get just as much pleasure and sense of achievement by doing things that others might think trivial. There are no right or wrong ways – just so many ways to enjoy long (and short) days in the hills!

Thank you for your excellent magazine. We look forward to it dropping on the door mat, bringing back such happy memories of times gone by.

**Nicki Baker**

## Your adventures

Lockdown measures are still in force as we write, but recalling past adventures has helped to keep our outdoor spirits kindled. On the back of our lead feature in the May issue, where a host of outdoor fanatics recalled their best wild camping experiences, we asked for your own memories of your best night in the great outdoors.

**@SimonAllen**

**Photo:** "Waking up to a golden sunrise wild camping opposite Kilchurn castle in the depths of Scotland!"



**@Cal\_james95:** "Probably this one, pitched just beneath Great Gable on the four passes route."



**@Beard\_on\_a\_bike:** "I would have to say riding up to Dartmoor and spending the night under the clear sky. This was taken at sunset back in 2018. It's great to have this 40 miles from my doorstep when you just need to get away for a night and reset."

## Social media

We love to hear what you've been up to in the hills. You can share your photographs with us on our Facebook page and on Twitter using

**@TGOmagazine.**

We're also on

Instagram – so

tag your shots

with **#TGO**

**#TheGreatOutdoors**

and we'll share them!





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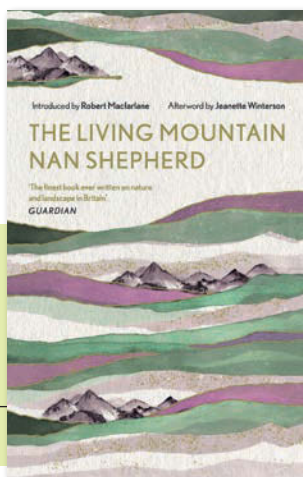
# The Great Outdoors Book club

All this indoor time is a good opportunity to delve into the world of outdoor and adventure literature. So every issue, while lockdown lasts, we'll be getting a small group of readers together – led by **Hanna Lindon** – to virtually discuss a good read

Book  
OF THE  
MONTH

## The Living Mountain

by Nan Shepherd Canongate, £14.99



**The Living Mountain is notoriously difficult to categorise. How would you describe it?**

**PAUL:** I thought it was magical. I'd come across quotes from it in the Robert Macfarlane books I've read recently, but those really didn't do the book justice. I was a bit disappointed by the introduction, but by the time I got into it I couldn't put it down. It's completely timeless, both in the way it's written and in the way time seemed to stand still while I was reading it.

**KATHY:** The introduction was a little slow – but after that it's spellbinding. I found it enchanting, because it's not just about getting to the top of a mountain, which a lot of the traditional adventure books are. She [Shepherd] manages to untangle the mountain experience and pick out particular themes, which she then goes into with so much depth. She has an amazing ability to describe things. You could see all the plants she was describing in such immense detail.

**SUE:** It's more a love letter to the Cairngorms than anything else. A lot of outdoor writing is from a male perspective and Robert Macfarlane has described her [Shepherd] of having a much more emotional reaction to the mountains as if that's a female thing, which I don't necessarily agree with. But it's a reaction born out of many years' knowledge. People touch a summit cairn, tick it off and off they rush, but they haven't been with a mountain through the seasons. She's paid

it attention over a long period of time and got to know it very intimately. I don't know if her perspective is different from a man who had thoughts as deeply about the experience...

**PAUL:** As a man, I didn't necessarily feel I was reading a 'female' book. From descriptions of her skipping in the lower parts of the Cairngorms to the horrors of what could happen in whiteout, it ran all the gamut of human emotion.

**It was written in the 1940s – did you find the writing had dated at all?**

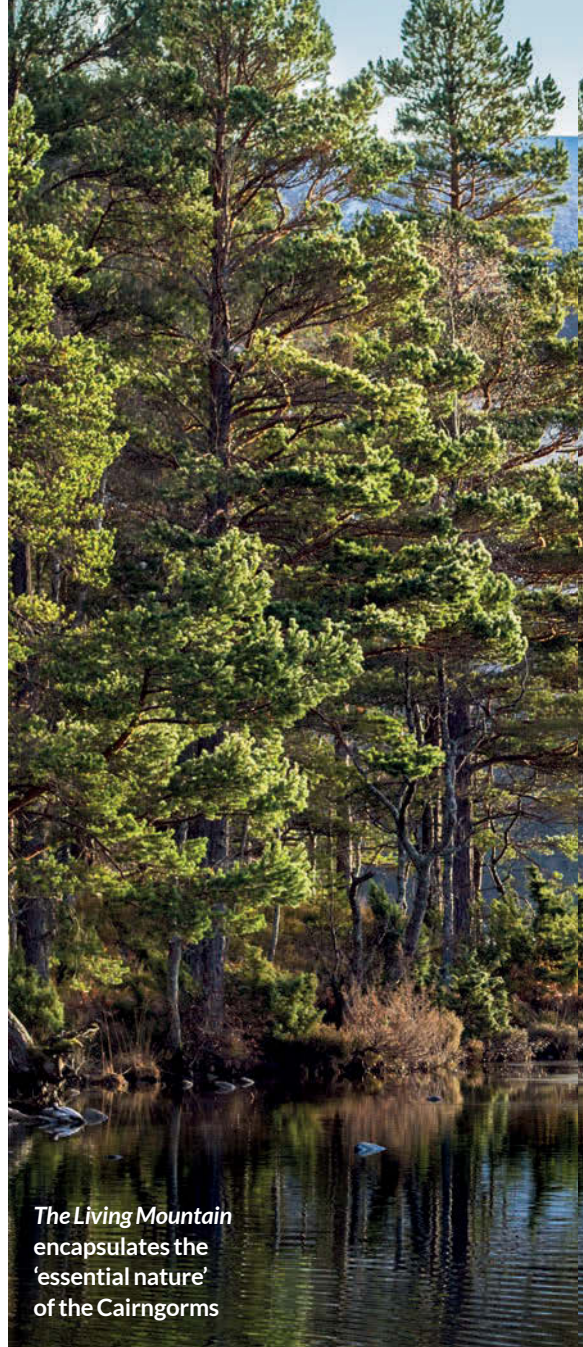
**KATHY:** Not at all. I really loved her use of language. Some of her words might not be necessarily used now. But the mountain has changed very little from the way she's described it.

**PAUL:** I found the chapter on man brought me slightly out of time. The theme of people moving away from the mountains is still very relevant, but there was a lot on the lifestyles of the crofters too.

**Did lockdown change the reading experience for you?**

**KATHY:** It was wonderful to read it in lockdown. For me it just let me touch base again with the hills in a very different way. It was quite therapeutic!

**SUE:** Yes, there's something quite wonderful about going back and visiting your own memories, the walks you've done and places you've been.



*The Living Mountain encapsulates the 'essential nature' of the Cairngorms*

I just lost myself in it for a day.

**PAUL:** We've not been in lockdown here in Denmark, but I certainly miss the mountains in a very flat country – and so when she talks about going back over those walks in her mind's eye I thought that was lovely. It brought back the adventures we had in the Cairngorms when I was at Aberdeen University. Now our life can slow to the pace that Shepherd is asking us to have when we read this – the pace she has when in the mountains.

**SUE:** When she talks about walking through the heather – and the pollen and the smell of that – I could smell it. It was very vivid, very real. Reading about walking through a mountain stream, the force of the water against your legs, that brought

Photo credit: Shutterstock





**NEXT MONTH** *We'll be reading Outpost by Dan Richards. If you'd like to join the debate then email [hannalindon@hotmail.com](mailto:hannalindon@hotmail.com). We'll pick three readers to receive a free copy of the book and take part in an online discussion to be published in the July issue.*

back memories of my own walks. And the observation – being still in a place and just listening and watching – that's something we can really identify with in lockdown.

**Which parts of the book resonated most with you?**

**PAUL:** All of it – more and more so as the picture of the mountain grew. It wasn't resonating because it was the Cairngorms, it was resonating because of the way she was enjoying what she was seeing and seeing it at a much deeper level than you would normally. It doesn't matter what walks in the outdoors I'm doing, I can always aspire to have that level of observation. The book is slow-paced, but it's a book about slowing you down. It's very interesting how she says at the very beginning that in geological time it's a blink

of the eye that man has been in the Cairngorms – the juxtaposition is that we're so insignificant in the life of the mountain but the mountains are so significant to us.

**SUE:** Right at the end she pulls it all together and says that each time you go to the mountains you see more. I had a moment the second time I did the Coast to Coast coming down Kidsty Pike and there was a footbridge over the stream and six of us walking together on that particular day. We all lay back in the grass and for me it was one of those really profound moments of connecting to the natural world. You can't manufacture those moments; they come upon you when you're in nature. That really resonated with me, that idea of a connection to the universe.

**MEET THIS MONTH'S PANEL**



**KATHY**  
LINLITHGOW



**PAUL**  
COPENHAGEN



**SUE**  
WEST SUSSEX



# Fighting for the future

## *The outdoor brand on a mission to 'wipe out' fossil fuels*

Since its founding in 2008, French outdoor brand Picture Organic has already caused waves with its striking designs and environmental ethos. Now it's heading into a new decade with even bigger ambitions.

Some people might let the collapse of the global economy put them off starting a bold new company. But for close friends Julien, Jeremy and Vincent, it was the perfect place to start. In the wreckage of 2008's market collapse, they set out with an optimistic and bold mission for a future founded on something different.

"We created Picture Organic to inspire an eco-responsible lifestyle through our passion for snowsports. We wanted to develop tomorrow's products to actively contribute to the fight against climate change today," says one of the founders, Julien.

Picture Organic are 'insurgents', aiming to challenge the existing practices of the outdoor and clothing industry.

The textile industry is responsible for 8% of worldwide carbon emissions, but every one of Picture Organic's products is made from recycled, organic or bio-sourced material; and the aim of global sustainable development is woven into each stage of the production process, from the field where the organic cotton is grown to the factory where the products are made. Unlike many outdoor brands, Picture Organic is transparent about how its clothing is produced.

Heading into 2020, the company has its sights set high, aiming to expand from the world of snowsports to become an environmental brand that appeals to all outdoor enthusiasts who care about the future of the planet. The concept of 'bio-sourcing' will be an integral part of its new outerwear for next winter.

Picture Organic's aim is nothing less than to help create a world where fossil fuels are a thing of the past. That idea between friends has grown into an adventure we can all take part in.





**DID YOU KNOW?**

The Bone Caves, a short drive from Lochinver, are famous for the huge number of ancient animal bones found within them. They also contain the only evidence for the presence of polar bears in Scotland.

**STAY HERE BUDGET:****Achmelvich Beach Youth Hostel**

This SYHA hostel netted silver in the accommodation category of last year's TGO Awards, thanks to its sublime location. A short drive north of Lochinver, it overlooks what one of readers described as "the best beach this side of Heaven". [hostellingscotland.org.uk](http://hostellingscotland.org.uk)

**MID: Davar**

This small, friendly B&B is run by keen hillwalkers. The breakfasts are based around locally sourced ingredients, so you can enjoy sampling everything from salmon smoked in the village to fresh eggs laid locally.

[davar-lochinver.co.uk](http://davar-lochinver.co.uk)

**SPLURGE: Inver Lodge Hotel**

Push the boat out with a stay at Inver Lodge, which has a range of sizeable, en suite rooms along with an award-winning restaurant. Set high on the rocky hillside above Lochinver, it boasts stunning views over the sea.

[inverlodge.com](http://inverlodge.com)

**EAT HERE****Lochinver Larder**

The prospect of tucking into one of Lochinver Larder's melt-in-the-mouth homemade pies will keep you going as you tramp back out of the Assynt wilderness. There's a takeaway menu as well, so you can stock up on a day's worth of goodies for the hill. [piesbypost.co.uk](http://piesbypost.co.uk)

**Peet's Restaurant**

Peet's puts a strong emphasis on good-value, locally sourced produce. Try the seafood selection – including lobster, crab, langoustine and prawns – all of which are landed at the nearby harbour. The coastal setting means you can enjoy sunset views while you dine.

[peetsrestaurant.com](http://peetsrestaurant.com)

**DRINK HERE****The Wayfarers' Bar**

This snug bar at the Culag Hotel stocks over 100 single malt Scotch whiskies along with a good selection of beers, wines and liqueurs.

[culaghotel.co.uk](http://culaghotel.co.uk)

Lochinver and the unmistakable 'pillar' of Suilven



# LOCHINVER

Lochinver is a place of superlatives, surrounded by glorious beaches, marvellous mountains and views to write home about. It's also the perfect base for exploring Assynt (when lockdown lifts and it's safe to do so, of course!)

IF YOU MAKE IT to this isolated spot on Scotland's north-west coast, eschewing the marginally more accessible attractions of Ullapool, then rich rewards await. Lochinver is the gateway to Assynt: a bleakly beautiful landscape peppered with iconic peaks. It perches photogenically between sea and wilderness, overlooked by the fantastic sugarloaf shape of Suilven. But don't be deceived by the low Munro count in this part of Scotland – Suilven isn't the only sub-3000ft mountain in the area worth scaling. The triple-peaked Quinag is within easy striking distance, as is small-yet-mighty Stac Pollaidh. These magnificent, charismatic 'wee' peaks put the larger Munros near them to shame.

Lochinver itself is a welcoming, easy-going place with a thriving fishing port and a strong local community. It's home to a busy fish market, a thriving pottery and numerous bars, restaurants and guesthouses. A stroll around the harbour yields views to warm a hillwalker's cockles, with Suilven, Canisp and Quinag all visible on the horizon. Take a rest day or two to explore the surrounding coastline, which hides some of Scotland's most exotic-looking beaches, all white sands and turquoise waters (although taking a dip will quickly dispel any illusion of the tropics).

## WALK HERE

**1. SUILVEN**

Possibly the most famous sub-Munro-height Scottish peak, Suilven is within walking distance (pretty much) of Lochinver. That said, most cheat and start from the Lochinver-Glenanisp Lodge road. The wild landscape makes this 20km (12.5-mile) circuit a top day out.

**2. ELPHIN TO LOCHINVER**

This 21km (13 mile) linear walk from the crofting township of Elphin to Lochinver is a perfect intro to Assynt's mind-boggling landscapes. A rough path between the two villages eases the navigational difficulties, leaving you free to concentrate on the ever-changing views of Suilven. From Lochinver you can bus it back to the start with a change in Ullapool.





## Routes that are perfect for movie buffs to explore

Maybe it's just us, but leaping up to exclaim "I've been there!" when spotting familiar locations on the big screen is one of life's little joys. No? Well, visiting these places is still well worth your time. Last year, major international productions shot and produced in the UK contributed a whopping £3.4bn to the economy. Here are 10 places to check out that have made top film locations...

### 1. CALANAIS STANDING STONES, WESTERN ISLES

OK, so Disney Pixar's animated adventure *Brave* wasn't exactly filmed here (for obvious reasons!) but these 5000-year-old standing stones on the Isle of Lewis served as inspiration for the eerie forest settings. Parking at the visitor centre makes for a gentle stroll to the stones, while you can extend your walk to visit some of the smaller Calanais structures by following the path to the right of the main circle. The site can get busy, so be wary of peak times in the summer.

### 2. HENRHYD FALLS, BRECON BEACONS

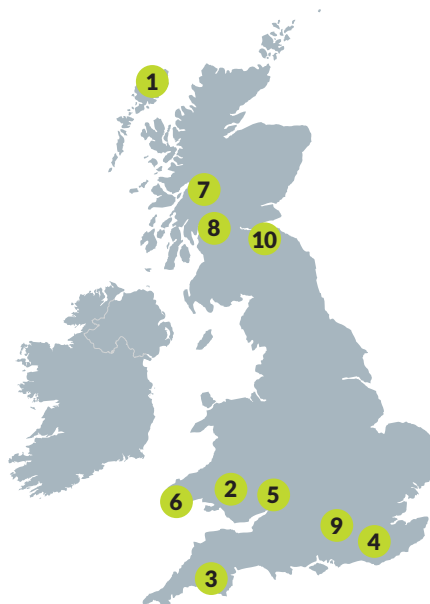
Wales' tallest waterfall served as the iconic Batcave in *The Dark Knight Rises*. Walkers can experience the moment of magic captured on film by peering behind that curtain of crashing water – you'll find a vibrant, glittering space to explore. The nearby Nant Lech river valley is also worth a visit.

### 3. DARTMOOR NATIONAL PARK, DEVON

The moors of Dartmoor National Park are featured in abundance throughout 2011's *War Horse*. Notable areas featured in the film include Ringmoor Down near Sheepstor, the scenic Hexworthy Bridge and the striking Combeston Tor. The Grade II-listed Ditsworthy Warren House was also a prominent setting in the film and can be reached from Gutter Tor.

### 4. ASHDOWN FOREST, E. SUSSEX

The author AA Milne was profoundly inspired



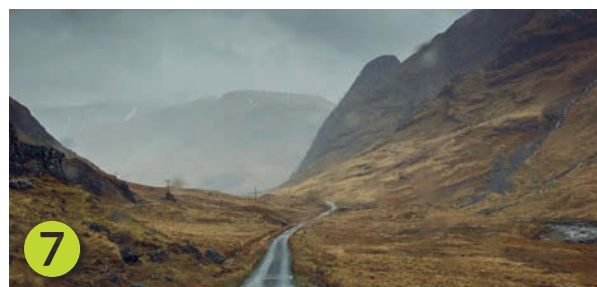
by Ashdown Forest, so it was a given it would be featured in the biopic *Goodbye Christopher Robin*. There are plenty of 'Winnie the Pooh' walks available if you want the immersive experience, from the 14 mile 'Clumps Walk' to the playful 1.5 mile Gills Lap route that takes you to some of the sites home to Pooh's adventures. Head to [ashdownforest.org](http://ashdownforest.org) and take your pick of the 13 suggested trails.

### 5. FOREST OF DEAN, GLOUCESTERSHIRE

The lush Puzzlewood located in the Forest of Dean was used to film the climatic fight scene in *Star Wars: The Force Awakens*. There are fun family trails to follow and intriguing caves to explore. A local car park makes for easy access, and if you want to extend your walk through the forest you should head towards the Cannop Ponds. Lightsabers optional.

### 6. FRESHWATER WEST, PEMBROKESHIRE

This wild yet somewhat peaceful shore was the setting for one of the more heart-breaking scenes (no spoilers!) in *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows: Part 1*. There are plenty of National Trust paths to follow,



some taking you beyond the beach towards the wildflower-scattered fields further inland. You can also spot an old, rustic shack that was once used as a seaweed-drying hut on the foreshore.

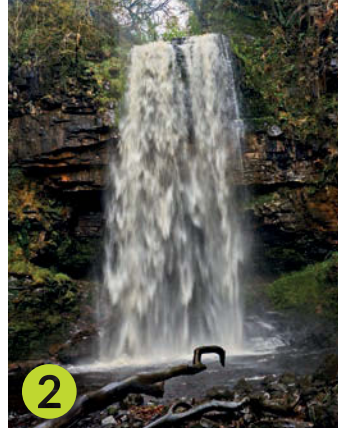
### 7. GLEN ETIVE, ARGYLL AND BUTE

The vast open spaces surrounded by stark and impressive mountains made for an exciting setting during the finale of the Bond movie *Skyfall*. Following the A82 to Glen Etive makes it easy to spot the sweeping shots featured in the film, but if you want a real feel for the area then tackling Ben Cruachan or exploring the eerie Rannoch Moor is recommended. The impressive Loch Etive is not to be missed either.





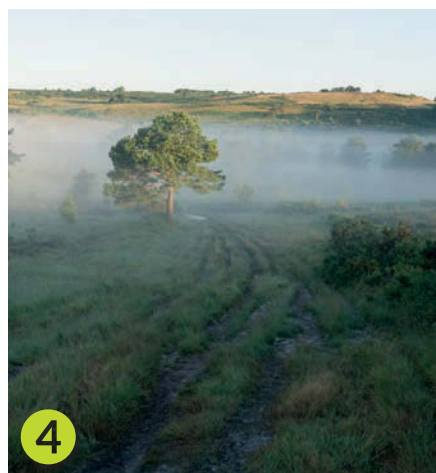
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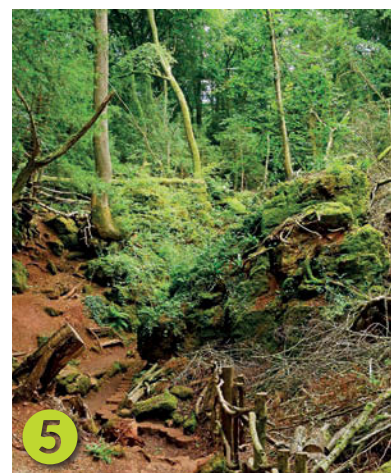
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10

## 8. DEVIL'S PULPIT, STIRLINGSHIRE

Here's one for the kids: the Devil's Pulpit gorge features in a few 'blink and you'll miss it' scenes in *Detective Pikachu*. There are some places to park near the site, but there have been issues with crowding in the past so please be respectful when choosing where to leave your car if driving. Heading through the woods and following the rushing sounds of the water below will eventually lead you to the stone staircase down to the striking red bank. Just make sure no one is looking for Pokémon at the same time – the descent is steep and usually slippery.

## 9. HAWLEY WOODS, HAMPSHIRE

Marvel's *Avengers: Age of Ultron* burst onto the screen with an engrossing fight scene, the backdrop being Hampshire's very own Hawley Woods. Thankfully, you can explore in peace now that it's strictly a villain-free zone. Hawley Lake offers a pleasant circular route, or you can head through Hawley for a walk beside Blackwater River.

## 10. ROSLIN CHAPEL, MIDLOTHIAN

Many scenes in *The Da Vinci Code* were shot in the spectacular interior of Roslin Chapel,

the 550-year-old preserved structure an apt setting for mysterious adventures. With the chapel under renovation during the time of filming a model was used for external shots, so be sure and visit to see the building in its proper glory. Make a day of your trip by heading right from the chapel car park towards Roslin Glen for a woodland walk. The ruinous Roslin Castle is also within walking distance.



More ideas at  
[tgomagazine.co.uk](http://tgomagazine.co.uk)





COMMENT

by Roger Smith

# The world of the wood

With loftier aims off the cards, Roger Smith's walks from his doorstep have led him to discover a magical place that he had overlooked for 20 years

IT TAKES US about five minutes to get to the wood from our house. A short walk along a quiet cul-de-sac, a flight of steps leading down and we are there. It's almost another world.

The wood is actually a deep river valley with a lively stream at its heart, tumbling over rocks and small falls as it flashes along. From end to end the valley is about six kilometres. It is within a country park, but all the visitor facilities are at the end that is furthest away from our house.

So we tend to go in the other direction. Despite living in the same house for over 20 years, we are only now discovering the wonderful network of paths in the wood. Our focus has generally been on places much further away; this truly delightful place, which we have come to treasure in the present lockdown situation, was criminally ignored.

We are putting that to rights now. Granted the privilege of an hour's exercise each day, we take it gladly. A short discussion (left or right?) decides our direction and off we go. The paths are generally excellent and the wood is surprisingly little used given the number of houses close by. In an hour's walk our average, I would say, is half a dozen other folk, so maintaining social distance is not a problem.

Going to the same place on a regular basis like this brings a myriad of rewards. As I write this in late April, the amount of leaf cover is growing at an exponential rate. When we started about a month ago you could see the river quite easily from the top path (which is where we prefer to walk). Now the leaf cover is closing the view off, and within a couple of weeks the river will be something heard but rarely seen.

We have taken great pleasure in watching the beautiful woodland plants grow and bloom before our eyes. The gorgeous little white wood anemone is a star of the show; but there are many others including speedwell and primroses. In a short while the bluebells will be out, giving us something to look forward to.

We have harvested wild garlic, which grows in great profusion on the steep sides of the valley. Taken home, it has enhanced soups and stews and there is plenty more to be gathered when we feel like it. My wife is threatening to investigate the mushrooms



Wood anemones – one of the 'stars of the show' in April woodland

but I am a little wary of this; I don't trust myself to make the sort of judgements that would have come instinctively to earlier generations.

It is noticeable how quiet it is in the wood. With virtually no traffic noise, the birds have the arena to themselves and they are making the most of it! A family of buzzards have moved in, and a regular commotion means the resident rooks are objecting noisily.

We have been blessed with a run of incredibly gorgeous days with hardly a cloud in the sky. On such days it would be gruelling to be totally confined to barracks, and the wood is both a joy in itself and a much-appreciated safety valve. We both realise how very lucky we are to have this place so near, and we need little encouragement to pull on our boots, pick up the walking poles and set off down the steps into what has become both familiar

and yet magical at the same time.

I hope many TGO readers will be doing the same, perhaps discovering places nearby, as we have, which have been ignored in the past for what seemed more rewarding and perhaps loftier aims. Those do not concern us now. We are both classed as 'vulnerable', which makes our daily communion with nature all the more special. I can honestly say that it feels like a true benefit to my health, both physical and mental.

At some point the weather will turn and we shall see what the wood holds for us then. For now, it's time to make our small daily pilgrimage again, from which we will return refreshed and ready to cope with the rest of the day. Wish me luck as I, a total technodummy, am going to be grappling with Zoom to try to set up video calls with my daughters and grandchildren. That would be another blessing.

Photo: Carey Davies





HANNA LINDON

One benefit of the lockdown  
has been a dramatic  
reduction in air pollution

# I don't want to go back to 'normal' after lockdown ends – do you?

According to a new poll, fewer than 9 in 10 Britons want to return to their pre-lockdown lives. Hillwalker Hanna Lindon asks what the 'new normal' might look like

MY GUT REACTION to the government's lockdown announcement was shamefully self-entitled. What – no trips to the mountains? No pub walks? No prospect of getting any work done without a tiny person dropping cereal into the crevices of my laptop, demanding I dress up as a bug-eyed Disney princess or singing in my ear? And again – no trips to the mountains?

I knew it was necessary; I knew that there were horrors taking place behind closed hospital doors that justified pretty much any compromise on my part – but that didn't make the idea of a near future spent indoors any more attractive.

Then, over the next few days, I began slowly to notice the things that weren't there.

First it was the planes: the contrail scars bleeding across the sky and the distant roar of flight traffic heading in and out of Gatwick Airport. After that it was the rumble of tyres from the nearby A road. At rush hour, the noise from the land and the noise from the air often blends together into a brown soup of background sound that follows me round the fields on dog walks. Suddenly it was gone. So was the dirty pollution haze on the horizon. I could breathe more easily on runs. The air felt cleaner.

After a week, I realised that I was

grieving more for the transitory nature of this fresher, stiller, slower world than I was for the adventures and relationships that I'd had to put on hold.

Recent figures show that air pollution in the UK has plummeted since the country went into lockdown. Some cities have seen nitrogen dioxide levels fall up to 60% on the same period last year – a drop so dramatic that befuddled machines used to monitor toxicity are registering the new readings as faulty. Chronic noise pollution – linked to stress and a long list of physical ailments – has tailed off as well. Seismic noise caused by human activity is down by a third in some areas of Europe. "Because of the lack of or reduction in noise pollution," wildlife sound expert Chris Watson recently told the *i* newspaper, "we're hearing the world like people heard it decades ago."

Animals are slowly moving into the vacuum left by human absence. Thailand has recorded the largest number of leatherback sea turtle nests in two decades. Wild boar were recently spotted in the centre of Barcelona and mountain goats have been entertaining the residents of Llandudno with their parkour-style antics.

Weirdly, given the fact that we're all supposed to be distancing physically, many people also seem to be experiencing

a growing sense of social connection. In a recent YouGov survey, 40% of respondents said they felt a stronger sense of community in their local area since social distancing measures were introduced and 39% said they'd been in touch more with family and friends.

According to the same poll, only 9% want life to return to normal when lockdown ends.

It's a divisive topic. 'Normal' is a world where air pollution has a daily death toll that dwarfs that of coronavirus, where we can't hear the birds above the traffic noise, and where we're so busy travelling to far-flung corners of the Earth that we can't appreciate the beauty on our own doorsteps. On the other hand, it's also a world where many of us have steady jobs – a world where we can hug our friends and make a bolt for the hills whenever there's a gap in our schedules.

Can those two worlds be reconciled? There's a glimmer of hope from the city of Amsterdam, which is formally embracing a new economic model to rebuild itself in a post Covid-19 world. At the centre of 'doughnut economics' is the idea that economic activity should meet the core needs of all, but within the means of the planet. It's an enticing picture of a new normality. I hope it works.





Wild camping  
above Loch Etive

Photo: Sue Oxley and Ali Ogden

## A home from home

*Backpacking tents have to be suited to you – and often they become like old friends. TGO Challenge coordinators Sue Oxley and Ali Ogden look back at some of the shelters they've carried over the years*

TENTS ARE a bit like dogs: they come in all shapes, sizes, weights, costs and characters. People have many reasons for having them; they need to perform well; and the two of you need to be compatible. What suits one person will not necessarily suit another.

We should say from the outset that we love camping. We like that you can put your tent on your back, walk into the middle of nowhere, set up home for the night then enjoy the scenery and wildlife you can see from your door. We don't even mind if it rains; the feeling of being cocooned inside a tent listening to rain pattering on the tent roof is oddly comforting.

Tents have changed dramatically during Sue's long association with The Great Outdoors Challenge, going back to 1982. As she recalls: "My first Challenge saw me and my partner sharing a Vango Force 10, which can best be described as a small cottage: heavy to carry but you knew that it would stand up to anything."

When Sue came to do a solo and rather hilly Challenge in 1985, she says: "I was struggling to think what sort of tent I should buy when a friend offered me the use of her 'bivvy-tent'. This was a cylindrical affair with a reinforced ground-sheeted floor, a short pole to hold the entrance up and a single guy rope. Extra stuff had to be kept in a bin bag outside. Cooking had to be done outside – whatever the weather!"

Over the years we have both used several tents with varying degrees of success. Sue tried a tarp in 1999, but sold it

immediately afterwards to a fisherman! However, many Challengers nowadays swear by them. If you want advice on tents, then you can do no better than attend the impromptu exhibition that appears on the playing field in Tarfside during the second week of the Challenge, where there is a huge variety of lightweight tents to be found. When Sue wanted to replace an old Salewa Micra, it was at the time when the Hilleberg Akto was in its ascendancy and no-one on the site said a word against it, so she bought one. Likewise, Ali swapped her Terra Nova Solar 1 for a Laser Competition by the same company after seeing an array of them on the playing field.

This Akto completed multiple Challenges and dozens of long distance trails. It camped high and low and in every season. It also completed Land's End to John o' Groats 20 years after Ali's much cherished Phoenix Phreeranger did the same. It has shared some hairy nights, including one with Ali in her Laser between Glen Lochay and Glen Lyon when the gusting wind sounded like an express train, but both tents resolutely stayed put. Again, in the wind funnel that is the unofficial campsite under the Kylesku Bridge en route to Cape Wrath, both this Akto and the one belonging to walking friend David Albon remained firmly gripped to the ground.

For some, the tent is simply something you just have to use if you want to do something specific; just look at the array of pop-up tents you can buy for festivals. But

the demands of backpacking mean you really do have to pick the one that is the most compatible for you. Ali, needing to retire her elderly Laser, tried out a Tarptent Notch on an expedition to the Affric hills with Sue. It is a good tent but it simply was not right for her so she changed to a Hilleberg Enan, essentially a similar design to her previous old friend, which immediately felt like home.

There will always be a degree of compromise in any tent choice; there is no such thing as a 'perfect' shelter. But we will continue going out into the hills with our tents, enjoying the freedom of it for as long as we can carry the load: which is thankfully a lot lighter than it was 40 years ago!

■ The TGO Challenge is an annual self-supported backpacking walk across Scotland with 350 participants. Find out more about how to enter the 2021 event at [www.tgochallenge.co.uk](http://www.tgochallenge.co.uk)



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# THE ROACHES

Green knights, great climbers and elusive marsupials: Jim Perrin delves into the legends around this mighty gritstone escarpment

THERE IS SOMETHING endlessly fascinating about The Roaches. This was one of the very first places, 60 years ago, that I tied on to a rope and climbed rock. I hold that memory very dear. But there's so much more than simply rock-climbing about this majestic ridge. Since this is primarily a series of hills, let's think of The Roaches as one. At 505m (1657ft), its high point is only a metre lower than Shutlingsloe four miles to the north, and we've already included that in this series. What does it matter that it's only minutes from a road (albeit a very minor one), when its texture, its atmosphere, is so inexhaustibly rich? And its summit, between the Cheshire Plain and the rolling land of the southern Peak, is a real one, with a tremendous sense of space and height and rockiness. Here's Paddy Monkhouse with his impression from the classic 1932 book on Peakland walking, *On Foot in The Peak*: "At Roach End, a lane crosses the ridge, which at once begins to rise. Ten minutes brings you out on the level again, but on another plane. The mild rocks which have flanked the path so far have dipped beneath you. Instead you are among huge tors of fantastically sculptured rocks, of the 'salt-cellar' shape, deep black, rather smooth in texture for grit. It is a handy place to be caught in a shower of rain, for the wind has whittled out many cavities with projecting eaves, which afford shelter and some comfort."

It's said that from the OS pillar near the northern end of the ridge you can see as far east as Lincoln Cathedral and as far west as Snowdon. In these crystal blue-sky days of lockdown you probably can, though I don't remember ever having seen anything clearly farther away than the very recognisable bulk of Arenig Fawr 60 miles to the west.

What I have seen on frequent occasions over 60 years are the wallabies. When I was a young climber in the early 1960s, you'd often bump into them as you played on the boulders beneath the Upper Tier. They were tolerant of human presence, and would hop away unalarmed after regarding you with soft, deer-like eyes. I've not seen them in that location for decades, and rumour had it that the hard winters of the 1980s had wiped them out, but a few seem to have survived in the quieter woods on the Black Brook side of Back Forest and around Ludchurch. Lucky, quiet people still encounter them there now and again, and photographic evidence surfaces. When we talk of The Roaches, really we're talking of an area as much about its dominant hill, and that area stretches from Upper Hulme just off the Leek-Buxton road to Gradbach on the River Dane. It's a region full of romantic and legendary association and interesting features. There are many – myself included – who would argue passionately that the climbing on its scatter of fine crags and

outcrops is the best to be had anywhere.

That's the general view held by devotees of rock-climbing's gritstone sub-cult, into which I was early initiated and still bear the scarred knuckles that are proof of belonging. Gritstone's a rough, outcropping sandstone that rims the northern moors, but for the northern climber it's more akin to a religious mystery. At The Roaches in 1951 began the defining partnership of post-war British climbing, between Joe Brown and Don Whillans. Here are many of their notable test-pieces: The Sloth, Matinee, The

Mincer, Delstree etc. So many weekends of my youth I spent here, sloping away from the rocks at dusk to sleep among the hay of an isolated barn at the back of Hen Cloud by Well Farm. But to consider The Roaches as a hill – how do you get to it and what's the best line of ascent?

I have a strong preference here, and it's for a circular 12-mile excursion from the west, starting at Danebridge, climbing up to the Hanging Stone that featured on the covers of my first two books of

essays, and following the moorland ridge to Roach End, from which, as my old Guardian mentor Paddy Monkhouse tells, it's only 10 minutes to the OS pillar. Add a further 15 of sauntering and you come to the Doxy Pool, where you may be fortunate enough to encounter a mermaid of legend (or even reality – I've a hardy friend who made a habit of camping here by herself every Christmas Eve and bathing naked in its peaty waters at Christmas dawn).

Beyond this gloopy puddle the path curves round beneath the main crag to descend the lower tier by steps to Rock Hall Cottage – dank and gloomy, built into the cliff, once a gamekeeper's cottage, now the BMC's Don Whillans Memorial Hut. From there it's a short step down to the road and an excellent café on its farther side. I'll leave you to find your own way back to Danebridge, but make sure you take the long traversing path through the woods from Bearstone Rock and branch off it to find the top of Ludchurch's marvellous cleft, which scholars have identified as site of the Green Chapel in the middle English alliterative masterpiece *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*. When you've emerged from that mossy cleft you've a blissful mile or so of downriver walking to Danebridge and its excellent pub. This is hill landscape as good as it gets in England.

**"This craggy whaleback ridge, which dominates the borders of Staffordshire north of Leek, resembles a miniature range of mountains more closely than anything else in the district."**

Eric Byne & Geoff Sutton, *High Peak* (1966)

**MAP:** ORDNANCE SURVEY OL 24 THE WHITE PEAK.  
**FURTHER READING:** PATRICK MONKHOUSE, *ON FOOT IN THE PEAK* (1932), ERIC BYNE & GEOFF SUTTON, *HIGH PEAK* (1966).  
**FACILITIES:** EXCELLENT CAFÉ ON THE LOWER SIDE OF THE ROAD BELOW THE ROACHES – AN OUTDOOR FAVOURITE!







# BACK TO BASICS

Last autumn, *Alex Roddie* felt he was getting a little too comfortable with GPS navigation. So he took to the spectacular mountains of Torridon, armed only with a map and compass, to see how he got on...

PHOTOS: JAMES RODDIE AND ALEX RODDIE

HOW GOOD is your navigation? For the last few years I've almost exclusively used digital techniques in the mountains. I'd always carry a paper map and compass as backup, but the convenience of ViewRanger on my phone or a dedicated GPS invariably won the day. I'd become one of those walkers I used to look down on, peering at a screen instead of navigating with map and compass. Had my skills become rusty? If the proverbial hit the fan, would I still be able to navigate 'traditionally'?

When I headed up to the Highlands for some early winter Munro-bagging with my brother James, I decided to use map and compass alone to guide us up and down our chosen hills. I won't say that the result was a wake-up call, but there were certainly a few surprises.

## AN EARLY START

"We need to set alarms for four if we want to be on the ridge for sunrise," James had said the night before. James is a nature photographer who laughs in the face of early starts. I'd just endured a hellish train journey up from England and was feeling a lot less eager, but after seeing the amazing forecast my enthusiasm grew.

Torridon has fascinated me for years, but for various reasons I had never climbed a single hill there. I had, however, hiked the Cape Wrath Trail twice, and had come to regard the wild stretch of country round the back of Beinn Eighe to be the best section of the trail. Beinn Eighe's complex corries and soaring summits proved an irresistible temptation. James had done the route taking in both

Munros several times, so with at least one of us knowing where we were going I decided that it would be a good choice for my reintroduction to traditional navigation.

We arrived at the car park in Glen Torridon in the dark. The faintest glimmer of twilight illuminated the eastern horizon as we geared up, breath pluming in our torch beams. James pointed uphill. "It's a steep slog, but it gets you up high quickly." He wasn't joking. The walk-in warmed us up in no time; I can't say it did the same for my night-nav skills, though, as the path was obvious and the only direction was up.

By the time we reached the broad shoulder between Stuc Coire an Laoigh and Spidean Coire nan Clach, golden light was flooding the landscape, picking out every pinnacle and buttress on nearby Liathach. We'd made it to our viewpoint in time for a sunrise of stunning clarity. After taking photos, pausing just long enough for the chill to bite, we continued uphill to the first Munro. Spidean Coire nan Clach is a sneaky one: a glance at the OS map might fool you into thinking that the trig point marked 972 metres (3188 feet) is the summit, but the true Munro lies north-east along a rocky ridge, and is higher at 993m (3257 feet) (Harvey's British Mountain Map of Torridon makes this slightly more obvious). I felt pleased at my map-reading skills for noticing this. In poor visibility it would be easy to assume you'd reached the Munro at the trig point.

## A TWILIGHT DESCENT

After admiring the expansive views down into the lochan- ➤

[right] Climbing Beinn Eighe - with map to hand







# Mountain navigation

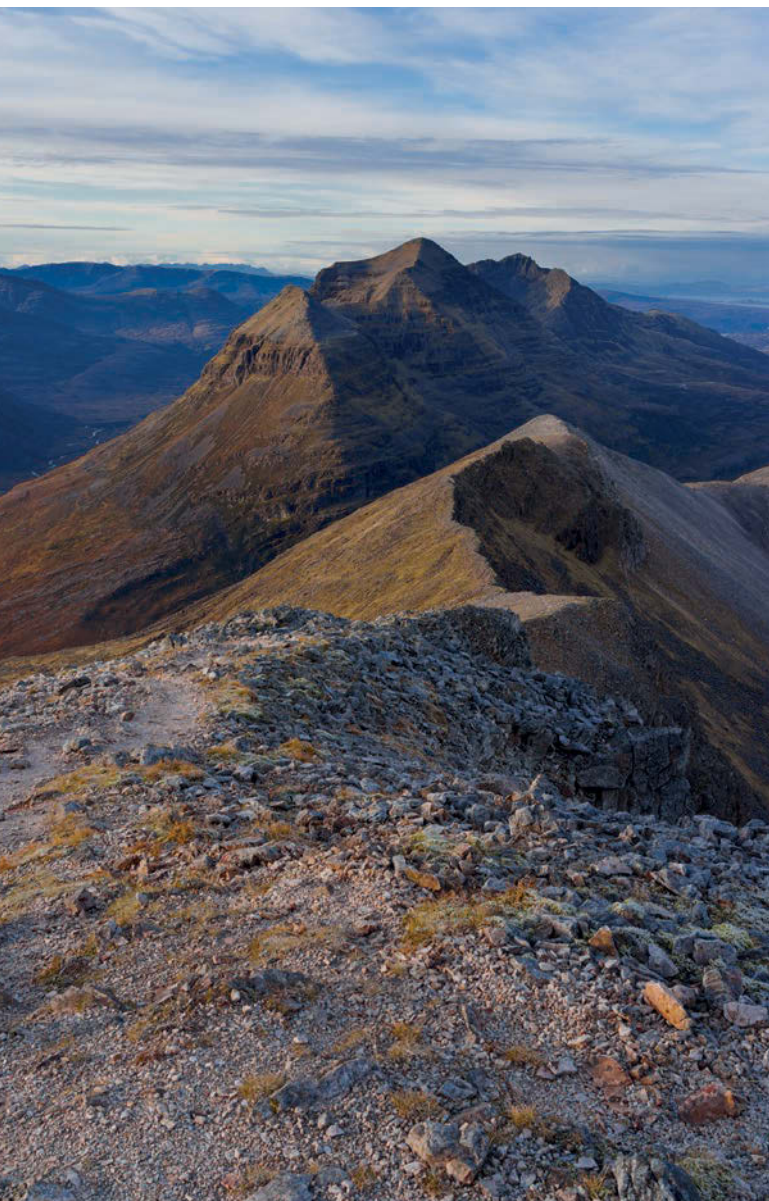
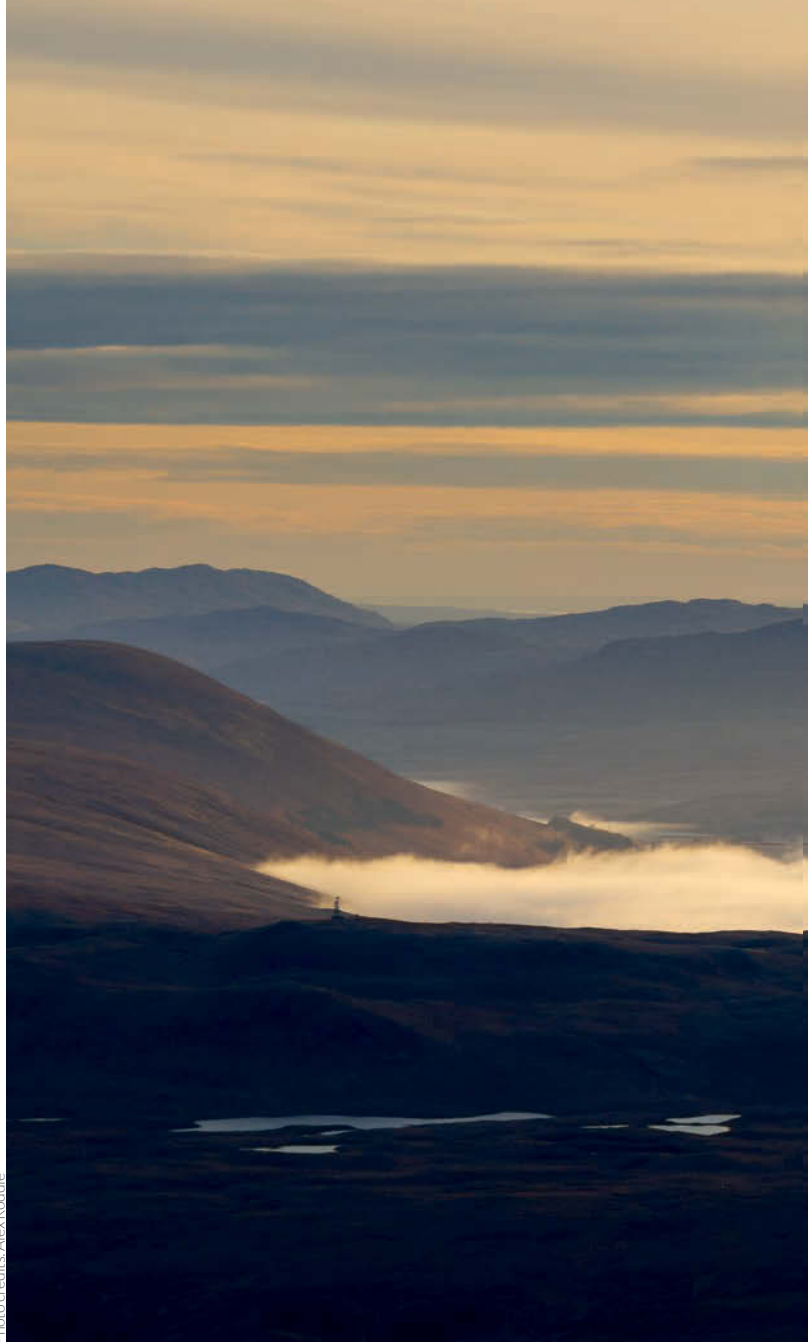


Photo credit: Alex Roddie



[above left] View to Liathach from Beinn Eighe [above right] Distant views from the summit ridge  
[below] Fogbow from the summit of Slioch



Photo credit: Alex Roddie





speckled hollow of Coire Ruadh-staca, we retraced our steps back to the trig point and continued along the sweeping ridge towards the second Munro, Ruadh-stac Mor. Conditions could hardly have been clearer, so this was no real test; but I made an effort to tick off terrain features and keep track of our relative position – something I can be guilty of neglecting when using GPS. The stony plateau of Ruadh-stac Mor, when we reached it, rewarded us with even better views than the first Munro. Far below us to the north-east, I could make out the spot where, months earlier, I'd enjoyed a great wild camp with Chris Townsend while hiking through on my second Cape Wrath Trail.

The descent into Coire Mhic Fhearchair took us past the famous Triple Buttress – an improbably steep complex of crags looming over the blue mirror of the loch below. The descent was obvious enough at first, down an eroded scree chute, but the path soon fizzled out. James knew the way, but humoured me by keeping quiet. Time to consult the map. Ordnance Survey showed no path at all; Harvey showed a path on the east side of the loch. I decided to head directly downhill to the near end of the loch, then contour around the eastern shore. After a rough few hundred metres of frozen bogs, tiny lochans and rocky terraces, we made

it to the water's edge and there, sure enough, we found a path again. From the loch's outflow the map showed an easy track all the way back to the road in Glen Torridon.

### **"I THINK IT'S THIS WAY"**

For the next day, our aim was Slioch. This isolated peak commands a dramatic position above Loch Maree and the regenerating pinewoods of Coille na Glas-leitire. The ascent began after crossing a rickety bridge over the Abhainn an Ehasaigh, where the path split into several forks; time for me to start navigating again.

We were joined by James' partner, Nicole. This time we didn't have the safety net of prior knowledge. "I think it's this way," I said, pointing along a fork through bushy heather. The ground soon levelled out, and we entered an area of semi-frozen bogs where deer tracks branched off in all directions. James was less sure. "I'm getting the feeling we should be over there."

We stopped to scrutinise the map. I was convinced we were going the right way, although I urged the others to keep questioning my decisions. In the end we kept going on the course I'd set, towards a small bealach west of Meall Each. After a while we met another path coming in from ➡





[above] A view over Loch Maree through swirling mist – blink and you'll miss it

the right – I'd been out by perhaps 100 metres. Above, the snowline crowning Slioch's ramparts had been retreating in the warm sunshine, but a biting wind found us as soon as we stopped for some lunch. From the broad bowl of Coire na Sleaghaich we could see only a little snow remaining on the mountain's upper slopes. The path became vague, but it was easy to follow the burn uphill until a much clearer path slanted down from a higher lochan west of us. An eagle flapped lazily overhead.

### CHASING SPECTRES

Above the lochan, we climbed steep broken ground dusted with snow and rime ice. Cloud soon blew in on the freezing wind, transforming the landscape from benign autumnal hill to a winter mountain with teeth. I watched, spellbound, as a Brocken spectre formed, vanished and reformed again to my right, a vast ragged halo projected in the blue sky above it. We all looked, enthralled. The character of the walk had changed so suddenly.

With the clag down and the path masked by snow, it was time for some compass work. I navigated to the first false summit – which took longer to reach than I expected – and

then across a plateau to the second at 980 metres (3215 feet), where we found a trig point. "Is this the top?" James said. Nicole asked to look at the map, and confirmed that the true summit, at 981 metres (3218 feet), was about 100 metres due north. Brocken spectres and their fogbows kept us company as we battled through spindrift and deepening wind chill. The true summit, marked by a cairn, offered tantalising glimpses down the Atlantic Wall and across Loch Maree, one of the finest views in the Highlands.

We'd spent so long enjoying the atmospheric conditions that darkness overtook us on the descent. There's a particular feeling that comes from being high on a mountain when it's getting dark – reverence, perhaps, mixed with excitement and just a tinge of alarm. How would my recovering nav skills cope with a benightment? The steep, vague section through boggy terrain beneath Meall Each looked very different on the way down and in the dark; we were glad we'd first tackled it in daylight. We didn't need the compass again, but sustained attention and a few discussions about the right way saw us safely back to the bridge and the long, flat path back to the car. The moon smiled down at us out of a clear sky. Slioch had given us





Photo credit: Alex Roddie

views, Brocken spectres and a few navigational teasers as part of the bargain. What more could you ask from a day out in the Scottish hills?

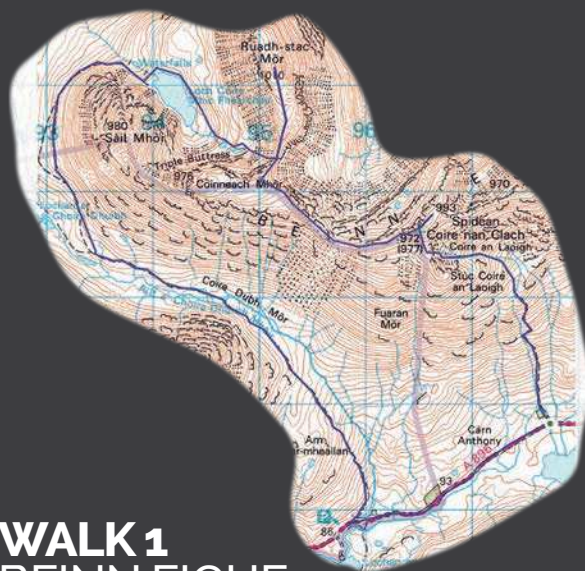
## USE IT OR LOSE IT

Digital navigation has come on a long way, and is now very effective if you use the right gear and have the right skills. But my reintroduction to traditional map-and-compass work was an eye-opener. I'd forgotten how much more engaged with the landscape you are when you don't have an electronic sidekick watching out for you. Rather than thinking a problem through for yourself it's easier just to hit that 'position fix' button. We've all done it, haven't we?

Relying solely on my instincts again felt like a step into the unknown – and I did make a few small errors. In less forgiving circumstances, small errors can snowball. I won't stop using GPS or smartphone mapping apps, because tech can add a useful perspective, but I will say this: map-and-compass skills remain absolutely fundamental. You can't navigate safely by GPS without this underlying know-how.

Besides, all tech can fail (yes, even map and compass, but that's a different conversation). Your safety depends on you being able to navigate confidently and accurately even if a battery dies in the cold or you smash a screen on a rock. 📱

## ABOUT ALEX'S ROUTES



### WALK 1 BEINN EIGHE

**START/FINISH** Car park in Glen Torridon **GR: NG979578**

**Distance:** 17.4km/10.8 miles

**Ascent:** 1215m/3986ft

**Time:** 7-9 hours (summer conditions)

**Munros:** Spidean Coire nan Clach (993m), Ruadh-stac Mor (1010m)

Fhearchair could present an avalanche risk. The stream crossing in this corrie is often challenging in spate.

**Route notes:** A challenging mountain walk with some steep, rough ground, and a few steps of basic ungraded scrambling. Under snow the descent into Coire Mhic

**Maps:** OS Explorer 433 (Torridon – Beinn Eighe & Liathach); Harvey British Mountain Map Torridon & Fisherfield

### WALK 2 SLIOCH

**START/FINISH** Car park near Kinlochewe **GR: NH038623**

**Distance:** 18.3km/11.4 miles

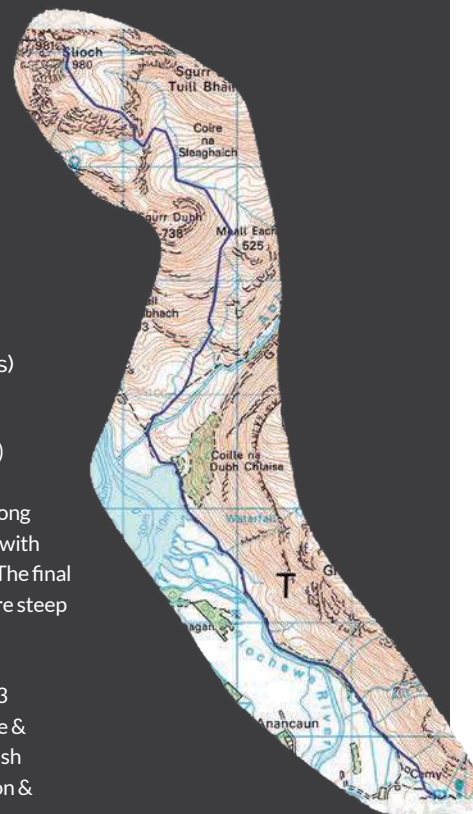
**Ascent:** 1111m/3645ft

**Time:** 7-9 hours (summer conditions)

**Munros:** Slioch (981m)

**Route notes:** This is a long walk, often boggy, and with vague paths in places. The final few hundred metres are steep and rocky.

**Maps:** OS Explorer 433 (Torridon – Beinn Eighe & Liathach); Harvey British Mountain Map Torridon & Fisherfield



Map credits: OS Maps



# Mountain navigation





# HOW TO GET THE MOST OUT OF DIGITAL NAVIGATION

The story on the previous pages highlights some of the pitfalls of over-relying on GPS. But digital tools, used properly, are an important weapon in your arsenal when it comes to navigating safely. Here, Alex Roddie gives some tips for how to get the most out of them.

THERE'S A COMMON belief that digital navigation is inherently less safe than traditional techniques, but it isn't about completely replacing your hard-won skills – it's about giving yourself options. While map and compass remain the bedrock of mountain nav, there are plenty of supplementary systems available these days if you're willing to embrace a little tech.

When used with care and skill, digital tech can enhance your hill experience, adding convenience and shouldering some of the navigational burden. And if you already have a smartphone then you don't need to buy a specialist GPS.

## THE BASICS

Smartphone GPS doesn't rely on a phone signal – you can get an accurate fix even in the middle of Knoydart! This makes a smartphone an excellent GPS navigator when mountain-proofed, used sensibly, and equipped with the right apps.

Things can, however, go wrong, and I recommend never relying completely on digital tools. Carry a paper map and compass with you, so if you're mainly navigating digitally, you'll have a reliable system to fall back on, and in the worst weather you'll want to use map and compass anyway. Even waterproof phones are tricky to use when the screen is wet or if you're wearing thick gloves.

And if you mainly use digital tools, take a day every now and again to practise your trad skills. Being able to read a map and orient yourself in the landscape are fundamental to all forms of mountain navigation.

## MOUNTAIN-PROOFING YOUR SMARTPHONE

Many newer phones are water-resistant and will survive the odd spill into a burn or bog. If yours isn't, consider investing in a waterproof case (at a pinch, a sandwich bag will do). A dropped phone may shatter unless protected with a tough case; look for a shock-resistant design, and add a tempered-glass screen protector.

Power signal is kryptonite for your phone battery, so keep the device in airplane mode at all times unless you want to make a call or text. Battery life plummets in low temperatures too. Stash your phone in an inner jacket pocket if it's cold, and avoid filming video as this will dramatically impact battery life. You

could consider carrying an old handset, with a PAYG SIM, switched off in your pack for emergencies.

In the most extreme conditions, a dedicated GPS device can be easier to use. However, they're expensive and less connected, and in most conditions you'll be better off using the phone you already own.

## SMARTPHONE APPS

Navigation apps must be able to work offline and offer detailed topographic maps (in the UK that means Ordnance Survey mapping). Never try to navigate on the hill with Google Maps! A good app will support route planning (and import/export of GPX files), basic navigation, and recording a track showing where you've walked. However, I don't recommend recording

tracks as this drains power far more quickly. Apps like ViewRanger allow 'single fix' GPS mode, meaning GPS is only activated when you want to check your location – the rest of the time you're just using the app as a digital map.

Read about the latest walking mapping apps, and their strengths and weaknesses, in Chris Townsend's full review on p64.

*“Never try to navigate on the hill with Google Maps!”*

## PRINTABLE MAPPING

Printing your own maps is the best of both worlds. Services like OS Maps allow you to plot routes on your phone or computer, then print out customised scale maps, which you can laminate or keep in a waterproof map case for hill use. You can use these maps in conjunction with the same plotted route on your phone. On long-distance hikes this can save significant weight and bulk in your pack. I've used home-printed mapping for most of my recent big walks.

## GPS WATCHES

Are you looking to take digital navigation to the next level? Outdoor GPS watches (from Garmin, Suunto, Casio etc.) offer multi-day battery life, a wealth of stats, and handy features such as an always-on altimeter. They're better than your smartphone for recording a GPS track too. Some even provide mapping on your wrist. You can plot routes on your phone and then send them directly to the watch – great for long-distance backpacking.



# MOUNTAIN BATTLES

For *Terry Abraham*, making the third film in his *Life of a Mountain* trilogy – *Helvellyn* – has involved overcoming some of his hardest personal struggles. But the mountain landscapes of England – and in particular his beloved Lake District – remain an endless source of inspiration

PHOTOGRAPHY: TERRY ABRAHAM







# LIFE ON THE MOUNTAINS



[previous page] Terry takes it all in on Ingleborough [below] Dawn light hits the tops of the Helvellyn massif

OVER THE PAST DECADE, my *Life of a Mountain* film series has dominated my life for long periods. In 2016, after I finished the second in this series, on Blencathra, I chose to take a ten-month break, partly to work on other projects, but mostly to recover from the intensity of production.

My recuperation, however, was to meet an abrupt end. I'd been out mountain biking, exploring farmers' tracks and little-used bridleways in the Eden Valley. As night fell I made my way out of Bolton and was speeding down towards the River Eden when a bank of fog appeared. I know the road – it's got a couple of hairpins before you reach the bridge – and I'd started to slow; but the fog suddenly diffused the light from my bike lamps, virtually blinding me. "Bugger, that's not good," I thought, as I braked hard, then hit the verge, then flew like an arrow into the roadside drystone wall. Because I'd only popped out for a short ride, I'm ashamed to admit I wasn't wearing a helmet.

My memory of coming off the bike – and the rock wall shining

white in the beam of my headtorch as I flew towards it – is vivid. I remember the moment of impact – a shockwave through my head, into my neck and down the rest of my body; I remember a deafening crack in my eardrums; and I remember thinking: "This is it; I'm a gonner."

## A WALK IN THE DARK

When I came to I was lying face-down on the ground, mouth full of leaves and verge-dirt.

The first thing I did was try to move my toes – I was certain I'd broken my neck – and I felt them wriggle. I stood up slowly. A few moments later I felt a warm sensation moving down my scalp, then blood started pouring down my face. I rang Sue, my wife, immediately: she was seven minutes away while an ambulance was ten or fifteen. She got me to hospital in Penrith. I was rushed straight in, at which point my memory fades again. I was kept in overnight, Sue a constant at my bedside.





Sue only told me afterwards that the doctors had said things were touch and go; not only were my injuries serious, but I was also in a state of extreme shock. The Penrith nurses stitched me back together. Sue took photos to show what a mess the accident had made of me, and what an idiot I'd been for not wearing a helmet. I was allowed home with a warning that I was likely to have severe concussion.

It was the first time I'd experienced concussion. You know when you walk into a room and think: "What did I come in here for?" I got that constantly. Not only was I confused; I also hated being stuck at home. I felt like a caged animal, desperate to get out. But my memory was shattered. I remembered almost nothing from the month before the accident and had to rely on others to tell me what I'd been up to.

As my days of healing became weeks, I fell into a deep depression. It wasn't a constant presence; instead it visited on certain days. It peaked one winter's evening when Sue was away

**"Before my bike accident I'd never experienced anything as profound and unsettling as the subsequent depression."**

with work down south and I was home alone. I was sat by the fire when I suddenly felt an urge to walk out of the door, climb Cross Fell in the snowy dark and never come back.

It was no idle thought; I got as far as the front door, but my cat wouldn't leave me alone. She kept miaowing and looking up at me, as though she knew something was wrong. I began crying like a baby, talking to the cat to the house, to myself, repeating the same words: "I don't know why, I don't know why..."





# LIFE ON THE MOUNTAINS

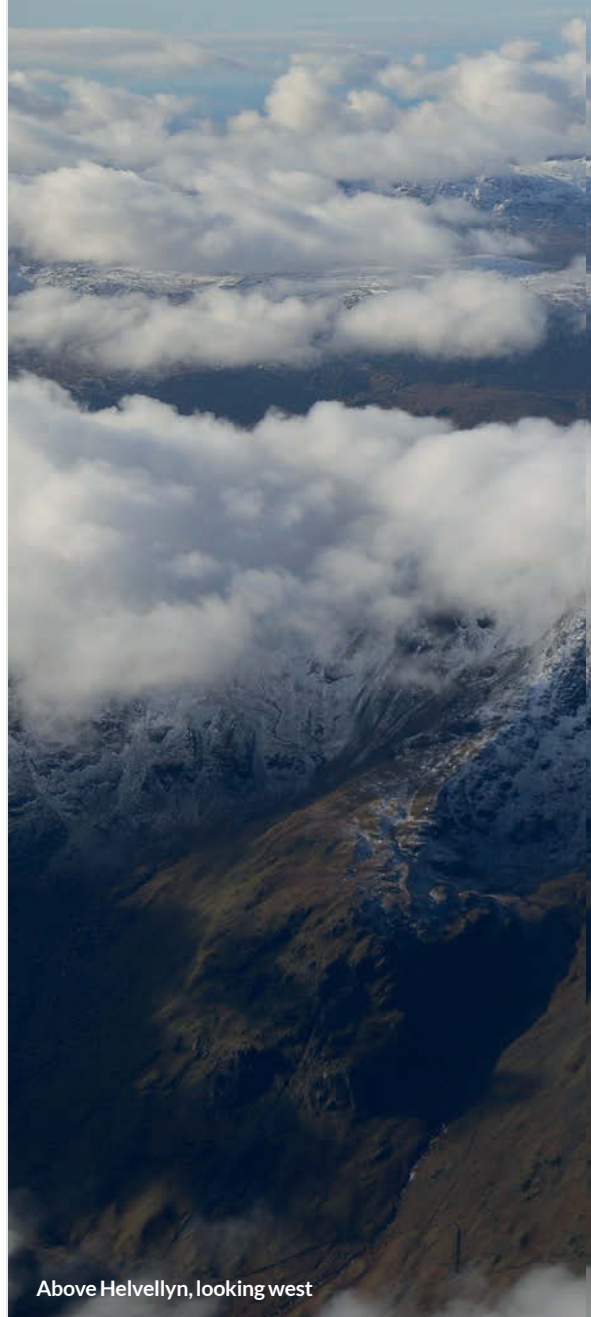
## THE RECOVERY

In time I snapped out of it and sent Sue a message. She rang back within a minute and insisted I make an appointment with the doctor. When I saw him he offered me medication, which I declined, despite his warning that depressive episodes could continue for six months or more. “You need to be active,” I was told. “Get those happy hormones going by spending time outdoors.” Because of my injuries and the problem with my memory, no-one except the doctor wanted me to go out. But sod them; I did. My friend Dan Richards was a tower of strength during those days. He would come to the house and take me on the fell in the snow, looking at red squirrels, spotting birds of prey.

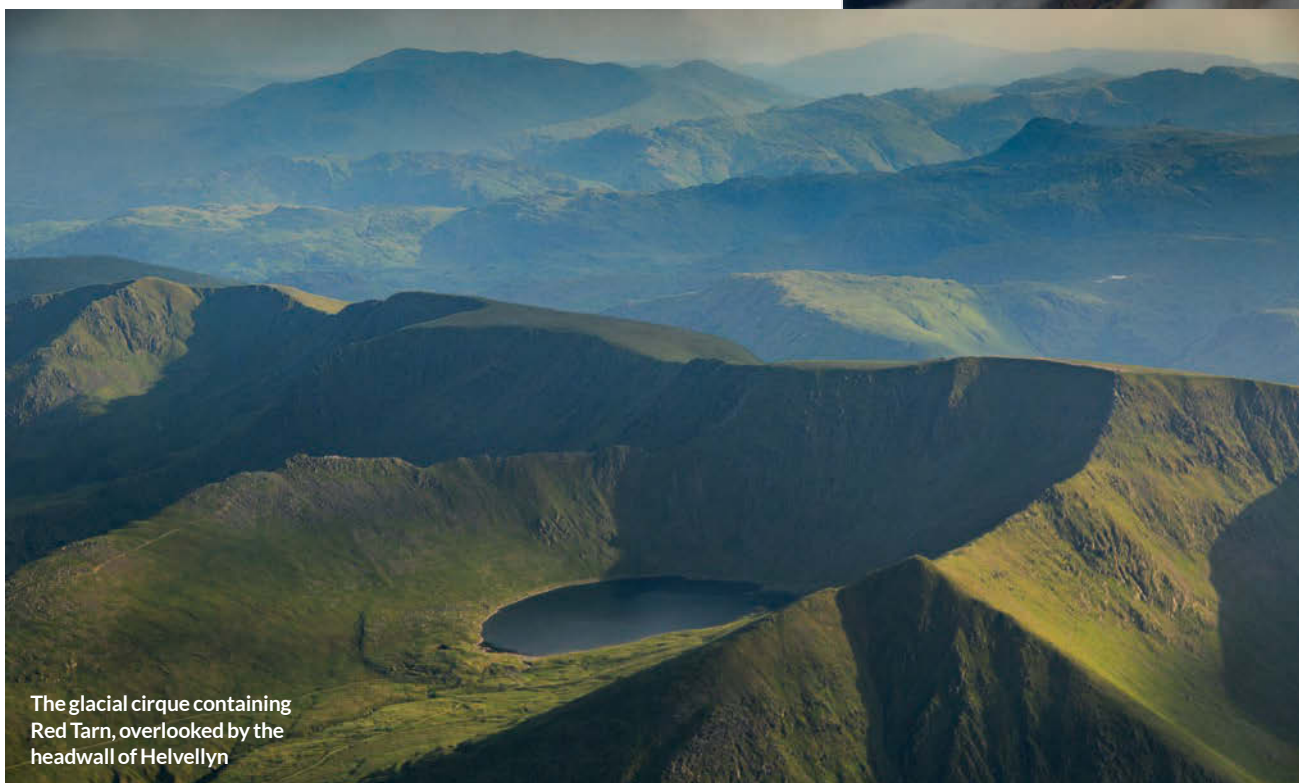
One afternoon we went up Hallin Fell and I was snapping away with the camera, gazing across Ullswater to Helvellyn, when I realised I’d been away for too long; it was time to start on my third and final film.



A red squirrel seeks food



Above Helvellyn, looking west



The glacial cirque containing Red Tarn, overlooked by the headwall of Helvellyn





An inquisitive young stag in Martindale


The urge came on suddenly, and it felt uncanny, because it was an earlier health scare that had kicked my arse into gear before Scafell Pike. Even so, it took a while to get back into the flow. Some months later I was in the Dockray Hall pub in Penrith when the bar lady, Sandra, came over to me: “So you’re back, then?” Her words took me by surprise. “The sparkle’s back in your eyes,” she added.

I asked what she meant. “You were a nightmare, Terry,” she replied. “Constantly asking the same things over and over. I could see in your eyes that you weren’t there. Now you’re back. I can see it.”

### ALL THE TIME IN THE WORLD

In making *Helvellyn*, as with *Scafell*, I haven’t let anyone rush me. I’ve done what I wanted to do, how and when I wanted to do it. *Blencathra*, produced in just 14 months, was too hurried; I could not – and would not – fit *Helvellyn* into a similar time frame.

Part of that was down to my slowly recovering health: I didn’t want to risk burnout. But mostly I wanted to nail a range of new, ambitious ideas – big sequences, smaller, more intimate scenes, and concepts I’d not been able to pin down in the past. Shooting would require a full two years.

A project of that scale could easily have become a disjointed mess, but I’ve put a lot of graft into *Helvellyn* and – unlike with 





its predecessors – have planned every detail. There’s purpose to every scene and a link to the scene that follows; nothing is thrown in for the sake of it and everything is interwoven. A section on the future of farming leads into a discussion about conservation, which in turn leads into the area’s cultural heritage, which leads into another subject, and so on.

Threaded into this narrative are a number of overarching messages. One of them is about the impact of our recreational activities on the landscape. Walking, cycling, climbing, kayaking, swimming; they may appear harmless, but they have consequences, affecting ecology, soil fertility, water quality and more.

Most of all I wanted *Helvellyn* to capture my love of wild places.

### AN UNEXPECTED WILD SWIM

Ever since my cycling accident, Sue has kept a close eye on me. But she can’t be with me all the time; and in spring 2019, more than a year after the accident, I demonstrated that her caution was justified.

I was in the upper reaches of Aira Force, below Gowbarrow Fell

above Ullswater. It was dawn and there was no-one else around. I was there to capture shots of the frozen waterfall using a GoPro fastened to a pole so that I could stick it underwater. I had my camera set up, the sun was breaking through the trees and I was enjoying the solitude when the next thing I knew I’d slipped and fallen 18 feet over rocks into the bowl of the waterfall.

I’ll never forget being under the water and seeing my expensive iPhone – which I’d only just upgraded – trapped on a rock as the currents tried to wash it downstream. “I’m not losing that!” I thought, grabbing it, and jumping out of the water, hoping the phone was waterproof. At least the GoPro was. My clothes, however, were definitely not. I clambered onto the rocks in near-freezing conditions, soaked to the bone, stripped off and hung my clothes on branches in an effort to dry them.

It was only when my core temperature rose and I stopped shivering that I considered my situation: there I was, naked, above one of Lakeland’s busiest tourist honeypots.

Thankfully I was in the quieter, higher reaches of the falls; and, by the time visitors appeared my clothes were almost dry. I quickly



**"I considered my situation: there I was, naked and shivering, above one of Lakeland's busiest tourist honeypots."**

anxiety and bulimia. I was inspired by how the fells have helped him face those challenges, and how he now shares his message with millions of young people. He's attempted Everest twice, and he has climbed all the highest points in the 100 counties of the UK – covering 4,782 miles on foot, by bicycle and kayak.

There's a crag – Lad Crag, just south of Helvellyn's summit – where I often camp. It's a quiet little spot, and you can get water from a nearby spring, Brownrigg Well, which flows all year round. Ravens reside on Lad Crag and the crags below into Nethermost Cove, and it's wonderful to sit by the cliff edge, at the porch of my tent, watching them swoop around, talking to each other, chasing, dancing in the air. Even on a summer's evening when it's still light at half nine, there's no one else around. When the queues on Striding Edge have gone home and the air is still, you can hear a pin drop from my perch on Lad Crag.

I always feel better out on the fells, as opposed to being in a town or city. On my first visit to Lakeland, seeing rays of 'God light' shining on Windermere prompted me to think that the world would be a better place if we could bring the world's leaders to wild places.

As a species we come from a very different environment to the one so many live and work in today. Perhaps being outdoors benefits our mental wellbeing and happiness so much because it's a reminder of where we came from. ▲

Summer dawn seen  
from Sheffield Pike

pulled on my torn jeans and jacket. But the shock was already sinking in. My arm was bruised and grazed, and the pain was agonising – even after necking paracetamol from my first aid kit. That afternoon my arm began to shake and I headed back to Penrith for a beer. Sue was livid. It was only then that she revealed how serious my cycling injuries had been a year earlier.

### MENTAL MOUNTAINS

You see people from all backgrounds on the fells, each with their own reason for being there, whether it's fitness, hill bagging, adrenaline, soul searching, companionship or nature. Many of us, however, tend to forget about mental health – how being outdoors can be of immense psychological benefit.

Before my bike accident I'd never experienced anything as profound and unsettling as the subsequent depression. A specific sequence in the film looks at the positive effects of being outdoors. It features ambassadors from different mental health organisations, including Alex Staniforth, who has been affected by depression,



### TERRY ABRAHAM - LIFE ON THE MOUNTAINS

In the early days of 2012, reeling from a health scare and redundancy, a 35-year-old Midlands backpacker with a love of cinema, wild places and Lakeland pitched his tent on Scafell Pike and set up a budget camcorder. It was the start of a journey that has seen Terry Abraham battle blizzards, near-death falls, bitter cold and intense loneliness to make a trilogy of films that have been seen by millions and become the benchmark of Lake District cinematography. This feature is an edited extract from the new book *Terry Abraham - Life on the Mountains*, which tells his remarkable story.

Buy the book: [www.inspiredbylakeland.co.uk/terry-abraham-life-on-the-mountains](http://www.inspiredbylakeland.co.uk/terry-abraham-life-on-the-mountains)





The sun setting  
during the descent



# EXTREME ISOLATION

To tackle a previously unclimbed peak in Nepal, mountaineer **Rebecca Coles** spent two weeks cut off from the outside world with her partner. Here she tells the story of the expedition, and reflects on what it taught her

PHOTOGRAPHY: REBECCA COLES

BACK IN THE AUTUMN of 2016 my partner and I found ourselves on a single-prop plane weaving between the foothills of the Himalayas, bumping down on the tiny airstrip of Simikot in Far-Western Nepal. Simon and I and the eight other passengers disembarked. Breathless with the altitude, we shouldered our kit bags heaped on the runway and lugged them up the steps to the tiny airport waiting room.

To reach Simikot had taken two flights from Kathmandu; the only other way of reaching this small Himalayan town was a two-week trek. Our reason for coming here was to attempt to climb a peak we believed had not been climbed before.

To a mountaineer, making a first ascent is always attractive. We got a tip-off about this peak from mountaineer Mick Fowler in a chance conversation; he had passed it on his way to climb Gave Ding. He later emailed a picture of a beautiful snowy, pyramidal peak reaching over 6000 metres (19,685 feet) – we were smitten.

Simikot was a dusty town of higgledy-piggledy houses. Mules were tied up outside shops trading basic supplies, baskets piled high with tomatoes, potatoes, radishes and leafy greens on their verandas. The sound of shrieking children, their bare feet slapping on the sun-baked ground, mingled with distorted music played too loud for the sound system. We settled into a local teahouse and discussed our plans with the well-connected owner, who set

about organising logistics as we drank litres of tea.

## ONLY THE MOUNTAINS FOR COMPANY

Unclimbed mountains come in several varieties: really, really hard; very remote; or a combination of the two. We knew this mountain was remote, but it was impossible to tell from the two photos and the Google Earth imagery I'd studied how difficult it would be.

Heading into the unknown was exciting on some levels but it also came with anxiety. I'd been to remote areas before, sometimes for up to three months, but it transpired that this trip would be exceptional on many accounts. The only other team member was my partner – both climbing partner and fiancé – and we were about to spend an extended period of time together, not only in the confinement of a two-person tent, but also without any contact with outside world. What would we learn about each other, and ourselves, from living so closely together?

Our journey from Simikot into the mountains began with a long, multi-day trek helped by a local man and his two mules. The route initially passed through outlying villages, where rooftops buzzed with activity. Women with babies strapped to their backs were drying produce for the bitter winter months to come. The track led into a deep gorge where a river rumbled far below, often completely out of sight.

*“There is an anxiety in being so isolated, so far away from help if even a minor accident happens.”*

Beneath the sprawling canopies of walnut trees, groups of men eagerly gathered the fallen nuggets of fruit. This trail was well maintained; not for trekkers, but for these local traders heading over high passes to Tibet. Our two mule loads of supplies and equipment were embarrassing compared to the small packs they carried.

We asked locals what they called the peak. It was so striking, we were sure the yak herders who frequented the valley in the summer had a name for it. They told us it was called Lasarmula.

We had carefully calculated supplies in order to bring exactly, and only, what we would need. We had a small amount





Trekking in with the peak now in our sights

of high-altitude dehydrated food from the UK, and sourced all other food in Kathmandu and Simikot. But anticipating what was needed and where to source it had not completely gone to plan. The thought of both a tea and toilet roll shortage led to a few words of blame being exchanged, but with a quick stock-take and some rethinking, we found some solutions.

We made our way to the base of the mountain with relative ease; no difficult river crossings nor boulder-strewn valleys. Our man with the mules left us, to return two weeks later. Now we only had the mountains for company.

### FINDING AN ASCENT ROUTE

We set about organising a base camp, acclimatising, and exploring the area. We had uninterrupted time to pursue whatever we wished, but it wasn't without its hardships. The approach valley was on the north and east side of the mountain. Long shadows were cast over the camp long before night, freezing the stream hard next to our camp and forcing us to wear all our clothing. It slowly melted the next morning, going from an icy trickle to a babbling brook by lunchtime, when we could lounge in shorts and T-shirt next to the tent.

We forded icy rivers and clambered over scree to reach the base of the glacier. Steep slopes led to a flat outwash plain in a hanging valley, beyond which was a tongue of dirty ice. The ease with which we managed to access the edge of the glacier surprised us; glacial retreat from climate change has left some approaches to mountains a gauntlet of unstable moraine. By finding a route onto the glacier we had unlocked the gateway to the mountain.

A common purpose brings people together. It may seem obvious on an expedition what the purpose is, something that doesn't even need to be discussed; but





the assumption that everyone has the same motivation can lead to misunderstanding and diversion. Some people may be on a trip to summit; some to experience a place; others to commemorate a loved one or fundraise for a charity; whilst some people just want to hang out and have a laugh. It's good to have a common purpose but an expedition can still go well even if team members have different reasons for being there, as long as others understand and respect those reasons. Common purpose forms the roots which bind a team together; but understanding is the soil which nourishes it.

After acclimatising and spending an incredibly cold night at 5500 metres (28,208 feet), where temperatures touched  $-30^{\circ}\text{C}$ , we had explored the approaches to the two ridge lines on the mountain. Snow conditions were far from ideal; we'd flailed through a seemingly bottomless dry powder on the glacier. A weather report of high winds drove us back to base camp.

### ISOLATION ANXIETY

The ceaseless blue sky made the summits look deceptively calm; but wisps of spindrift, picking up the gales streaming across them, gave it away. After a couple

of days, however, the weather settled. We had to make our move now. Back on the glacier, though, the snow conditions had not improved. With altitude the deep snow became ever more energy-sapping, like trying to run in a bad dream, and the col we were heading towards never seemed to get closer. "This is futile!" Simon exclaimed. "Let's head back down."

There are different types of strength. Physical strength in the mountains is often valued over other kinds of strength. But mental strength is what keeps teams going. We all have different abilities, and what makes a team successful is







[above] Looking up the north face of the peak. The route we took is on the left of the picture

harnessing each person's strengths and just as importantly valuing their different contributions. "Shall we keep going until it gets dark?" I replied. "See how far we get."

As dusk crept towards us, we were forced to make camp. We had hoped to have reached the col but instead we found ourselves digging a small platform on the side of the slope to pitch our tent. Not being as high as planned meant that we had a mammoth task the next day if we were going to reach the summit.

In the small hours the following morning, using our hands like paddles to climb the soft snow, we gained the col. The sun's rays hit the east ridge, which stretched in a sinuous line to the summit. Conditions improved on the ridge, scoured from the previous day's wind, but the sun's warmth was both a blessing and a curse, warming

our chilled bodies but softening the snow.

Being alone in the mountains is often written from a viewpoint of calm and wonder, sometimes of terror if an accident happens, but little is spoken of the inbetween; the general anxiety of being so isolated, so far away from help if even a minor accident happens. There is day-to-day stress over decision-making, and constantly thinking about how to avoid things going wrong. Some of the biggest arguments I've seen in the mountains have erupted over different attitudes to risk. I've seen good climbers on easy terrain paralysed by the consequence of a fall, whilst others seem oblivious to an accident in these remote and unforgiving lands compared to when on a familiar hike across the likes of the Carneddau.

As the ridge narrowed, becoming

precipitous on both sides, the grip of this anxiety felt crushing. The only protection was the snow arête itself. If either one of us slipped, the other would only be able to save our team of two if they could react quickly enough, with bravery and trust, by jumping off the other side of the ridge. The rope would cheese-wire through the snow, leaving both of us dangling in a precarious position, but ultimately saving us from falling to our deaths.

## RETURNING TO THE 'REAL WORLD'

In the end, we reached the summit safely; but we couldn't linger long. There was no relief yet, as it was late in the day, the clock was against us, and we knew we still had to make a long descent.

We descended in a calm dusk as



## PLANNING A FIRST ASCENT

We gave the route we climbed on 'Lasarmula' in this feature the alpine grade of AD+. The skills required were glacial travel, roped moving together and some pitches of climbing. There was an abseil on descent.

It is often thought there are few unclimbed mountains left in the world, and the ones that are left are really hard. But this isn't true. Many peaks in the 5000-6000 metre range, some of which are not technically difficult at all, have not yet seen an ascent. This is often due to factors like remoteness, being situated in areas of political unrest, or being in a nation where there is not a culture of mountaineering amongst the local population.

As access to areas waxes and wanes with the socio-politics of a region, the opportunity to climb these mountains opens and closes. Kashmir, Sikkim and former Soviet countries such as Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan are good examples of places where there are lots of unclimbed mountains, as is Tibet, although it is still notoriously difficult to get the correct permissions here. Remote areas such as parts of Nepal and lower but no less challenging peaks in Alaska, Greenland and (the eye-wateringly expensive) Antarctica are also places where a large amount of peaks remain unclimbed.

*Here are some things to consider when thinking about whether to try and climb an unclimbed peak:*

**Research:** Expedition reports can indicate what might not have been climbed before; but it is possible that multiple 'first ascents' are made of some peaks.

**Skills and knowledge within the team:** What skills will you need? Do you currently have these skills? Are you simply rusty, or do you need to learn from scratch?

**Permissions:** This includes the possibility of needing visas and permission to visit an area, as well as a permit to climb a peak. These all need to be researched, organised in advance and generally involve parting with some cash.

**Logistics:** This can be easier than you expect, even in very remote areas. Have a clear idea from prior research, which can be sourced from backpackers or previous expeditions. Travel, where to buy supplies and communications infrastructure are all important.

**Budget:** Insurance can be very expensive for remote areas, so begin here when working out the cost of a trip, following this by adding up the cost of travel and permits. One of the most affordable places is Kyrgyzstan as there is very little red tape and logistical support is low-cost.

**Medical and rescue:** What form would this take? In what timescale? What are the local and national medical facilities like? Knowing this information informs what medical kit and knowledge is required within a team and the risk being undertaken.

**Funding:** If a mountain is unclimbed then you may be eligible to apply for some funding. In the UK the BMC, the Alpine Club and the Mount Everest Foundation are some of the biggest funding bodies, but there are also many smaller ones. Grants from these awards will not fund an entire trip but they can make a big contribution.



alpenglow from the setting sun lit up the surrounding mountains. It was dark by the time we reached our tiny tent, perched on its platform. The following day we stumbled into base camp, and the day after that, with great relief, we saw our man and his two mules appear from the valley.

After a big expedition, the long walk-out is a time to reflect. The trees in the gorge were shedding their leaves and the advancement of winter could be felt. Thoughts of fresh starts and change are often at the forefront of the mind, but this is not the time to act on these thoughts. The clarity from returning home is needed before life decisions are acted upon.

Re-emergence into the real world can be a strange and disorienting process. The initial feeling may not be one of rejuvenation but instead of exhaustion and being a little bit broken. I often find myself planning a big day in the hills too

soon, only to be frustrated with how hard I find it, my body screaming out for rest and recuperation.

When isolated for long periods, the expectation is that home will have changed in our absence. It can be with a mixture of surprise, disappointment and relief that we find no change at all: the structure of what we left behind, and people's worries and concerns, are the same as before.

It can be deflating initially; there is something inside us that wants change. But with time we notice that there is a difference: a realisation that it is not the people and physical structures around us that have changed, but ourselves. We have new outlooks, we appreciate new things, and we have a feeling we are stronger than before. And when unexpected situations arise in the future, we are more able to cope with what life throws at us. 🟩





# THE WILD

PHOTOGRAPHS: **CAREY DAVIES**

WITH OUR FIRST few steps on the High Sierra Trail, into the dappled sun of a mountainous pine forest, it was remarkable how simple everything suddenly seemed.

It had taken months of planning and preparation, a big chunk of money, hours of painstaking packing and 5,000 miles of travel to get here. But after all that stress and hassle, everything was abruptly pared down to a very simple task: follow the metre-wide

path in front of us. The clamour of the world fell away completely, giving way to the rhythm of our footsteps, a drizzle of forest birdsong, and a feeling of enormous American stillness that seemed to envelop everything. It was a euphoric moment.

From our starting point here at Crescent Meadow, amid the spectacular groves of pine and giant sequoia (including General Sherman, the world's 'biggest' tree), this

path was going to take us on a winding route into the uppermost reaches of the fabled Sierra Nevada: land of the Gold Rush, the giant tree and the glacier-sculpted granite dome; the world of golden eagles, black bears, mountain lions, glacial lakes, sprawling pine forests and wildflower meadows captured in John Muir's rhapsodic writing. We would climb over mountain passes and trek through canyons, then



# WEST

Carey Davies heads to the Sierra Nevada to walk one of the great trails of the United States - and discovers a landscape tougher than it looks



climb the summit of the highest mountain in the contiguous United States, before finally descending to the other side of the Sierra Nevada itself. It would take us most of a week, and we had everything we needed on our backs.


At that moment, setting out from Crescent Meadow, with my body fresh and the pack light on my back, I imagined the week ahead would carry on in this

state of weightless bliss. Needless to say, the reality would turn out to be very different.

## A WIDE-EYED BEGINNING

The High Sierra Trail can be seen as a counterpart to the more famous John Muir Trail, often thought of as one of the world's greatest trails of its length. In terms of mountain geography, the High Sierra Trail is no less impressive; indeed,

by some people's estimate – including this magazine's backpacking legend, Chris Townsend – it actually has the edge, with its forest sections providing more variety. But the big advantage of the High Sierra Trail is that it only takes six to 10 days; well within an average mortal's annual leave allowance.

Although the Sierra Trail runs through high, wild country, it is also a feat of human engineering. Started in 1928, 



it was the first Sierra trail designed solely for recreation, and its builders tackled sheer cliff faces, high mountain passes and avalanche chutes to construct a route that racks up around 13,800 feet (4200 metres) of elevation gain over its 72-mile length. In other words, it's not an easy stroll.

I had persuaded two old friends, Jamie and Chris, to join me. Thanks to its associations with John Muir and the presence of the Yosemite Valley (and, perhaps, the general cultural aura surrounding anything with a 'pioneer' whiff about it), the Sierra Nevada might be America's most celebrated mountain range. It seemed like it would be a glorious place to go backpacking, and it had tugged on my imagination for at least a decade. I also had the impression it was always sunny, and I imagined this could only be a Good Thing. My friends didn't necessarily share this sense of personal pilgrimage, but here we all were anyway, walking off wide-eyed into the wild together as the sun beat down.

We started out in the shadow of neck-craning lodgepole pines and giant sequoias, but intermittent breaks in the trees soon revealed a huge valley of pristine blue-green pine forest, dotted with granite domes, and the spectacular white peaks of the Great Western Divide in the distance. The heat was ferocious, but the shade of the forest provided welcome respite. Chipmunks hastily abandoned their huge, half-eaten pine cones as we approached along the path, and the occasional bird call and the white noise of waterfalls – from which we were soon drinking thirstily – only accentuated the silence.

After 12 miles or so, we spent that night at Bearpaw Meadows, the first of a series of minimal, virtually invisible campsites we would use. Campfires were permitted, so we made one; despite the day's heat, the temperature would drop well into the single figures overnight. The firelight danced up the tall pines surrounding us, and the Milky Way glittered brightly above the canopy.

The next morning I was using a standpipe close to our tents when I heard a loud rustling. I looked up, toothbrush in mouth, to see a black bear and her two cubs nosing through the meadow next to me. A few bad encounters with the Scottish midge are the worst I have come to natural terror, so for me it was an exhilarating, pulse-quickenning sight. But for seasoned American hikers, these kinds of encounters are much more routine; there's a healthy population of black bears in the Sierra Nevada, and they pose minimal risk, only ever becoming aggressive if



accustomed to human food, which strict regulations prevent.

A man in a nearby tent popped his head out to see what was going on. "There's a bear and her cubs over there," I said, breathlessly. "Cool," he said, in a polite but uninterested way, then drew his head back inside his tent.

## NOT FEELING GREAT

It was over the course of the following day that the wheels of my plan started to wobble.

We had walked around five miles in the morning heat, steadily gaining height and losing shade as we did so. At the sight of Hamilton Lakes, my heart melted; smooth shelves of granite sloped into an expanse of emerald water surrounded by domes and spires, including a mighty granite formation known as Angel Wings – exactly the sort of thing you can imagine Alex Honnold soloing up, or John Muir perching pensively on top of with a pipe. It was exactly the

kind of place I had imagined arriving at over my years of Sierra dreaming. I swam out into the cool, blue-green heart of the lake, feeling the sort of freedom only these moments of mountain bliss provide.

In passing, Jamie had mentioned something about not feeling great, but I mentally waved it away. I was having too much fun.

After a while in and around the lake, we set off to take on the long climb over the Great Western Divide through Kaweah Gap. The tree cover thinned, and the full power of the early afternoon sun bore down on us; windless, dry, relentless heat. Even so, I stomped ahead enthusiastically, but as we climbed, the truth became increasingly hard to ignore: Jamie was having a Bad Time.

Multiple marathon-runner beanpole Jamie was by far the fittest of the three of us, but started complaining, to use the





[previous spread] The mountains of the Great Western Divide reflected in Moraine Lake; [above] Setting off from Crescent Meadow, with the mountains of the Great Western Divide in the distance

medical parlance, of “feeling like shit”. Gathering in the shade of a solitary tree, we discussed the possible culprits: altitude sickness (we were at around 10,500 feet / 3200 metres), or heat exhaustion of some kind. We pushed a little further, slower this time, but the nausea, tiredness and general malaise persisted. Eventually he looked up at the climb ahead: “I just don’t have it in me”. There was only one sensible choice: we walked back down the switchbacks to return to the shore of the lake.

In retrospect, a night by Hamilton Lakes should have been our original plan. We pitched our tents, and with some rest and shade, Jamie came around. Then we had several spectacular hours to spend by the lakeshore. More swimming followed, plus a chat with another camper which revealed that a lone male hiker had a run-in with a

mountain lion a couple of days ago on the stretch of trail we had just walked. “It was coming straight towards him. He had to throw rocks and get pretty mean to scare it off.”

As the afternoon turned into evening, the pale peaks and domes soaked up the colours of the setting sun: vivid yellow, fiery orange and, finally, a lingering band of ember-red alpenglow. At night we laid on the ground in our down jackets and laughed and joked as we looked up into a starfield so densely crowded it made the constellations disappear.

### “I CAN’T HANDLE ANOTHER DAY LIKE THAT”

The next morning we got up earlier to beat the heat for a second attempt of the climb. Happily, this seemed to work; Jamie

made it up to the Kaweah Gap without any problems, and on the way we marvelled at some of the most architecturally impressive sections of the trail. Under the ice-striped north wall of Eagle Scout Peak, we stopped for a swim in the turquoise (and electrifyingly cold) waters of Precipice Lake, then descended from the rocky heights into the prairie and scattered pine forests of the Big Arroyo valley. We rested for a while by a creek then pushed on, over-optimistically, through the heat of the afternoon. We eventually made it to Moraine Lake, arriving to see sunset-coloured mountains mirrored perfectly in the flawless surface of the water.

My feet were painfully blistered from the sand and sweat, and I was sunburnt, tired and sore, but my spirits were still high; the spectacular landscape which





# HIGH SIERRA TRAIL

had continued to unfold before us over the course of the day continued to both match and wildly surpass my hopes. But the hot afternoon had taken its toll on Jamie, and that night in camp, it became clear his morale had collapsed. “I can’t handle another day like that,” he said blankly.

It was a three-day walk back to the start of the walk, and we had at least three days ahead. There were no escape routes. Jamie’s only options were to press on or go back – but ahead lay the daunting prospect of Mount Whitney. Most of the ascent on the High Sierra Trail is loaded towards the

end of the walk; if anything, the days ahead were going to be longer, tougher, hotter and higher. As we went back to our tents, it was obvious where his thoughts were leaning.

I tried to nod in an understanding way while being internally wracked at the options this would leave: either we would keep the group together and all walk back with Jamie to Crescent Meadows, or split somehow, with me carrying on to complete the walk, and at least one of us journeying alone, depending on what the three pieces of the puzzle decided to do. A fitful night followed where I wrestled with the dilemma and wondered if I had been selfish in dragging my friends here.

The next morning, as we sat on logs boiling water in the orange light of the dawn, it seemed Jamie’s resolve to go back had hardened overnight. Then, just as we were about to make a final decision on what to do next, another hiker, who had walked the trail last year and was now repeating it with his friend and daughter, wandered over for a chat. We explained the situation. “Hey, you’ll be fine,” he said to Jamie, waving away his concerns with reassuring Californian breeziness. “That last day was the hardest on the whole trail. Mount Whitney’s hard but it’s nothing like that.”

I had my (silent) doubts, but Jamie appeared to be convinced. And so the three of us went on.





## HEAT AND HANDGUNS

We descended 2000 feet into the kiln of Kern Canyon; the lowest altitude on the hike, and the hottest temperatures (30C+). Our salvation came in the form of the ice-cold streams that we encountered every few miles. Even in late summer, in a year when drought and wildfires blighted California, water seemed to be abundant. Even so, it was a hard, and - given Jamie's apparent susceptibility to the heat - even nervewracking slog. On most of the big mountain walks I have done, heat has never been persistent or strong enough to tip into 'hazard' territory. Here it definitely was, and as hikers accustomed to northern climes, 📍

*“The clamour of the world fell away completely, giving way to the rhythm of our footsteps, a drizzle of forest birdsong, and a feeling of enormous American stillness”*



The expansive vally of the Big Arroyo River



# HIGH SIERRA TRAIL

Jamie takes a short, electrifyingly cold swim in Precipice Lake; [right] The High Sierra, as seen from near the summit of Mount Whitney

*"I swam out into the cool, blue-green heart of the lake, feeling the sort of freedom only these moments of mountain bliss provide."*







it was something of a learning curve.

We camped amid the pine groves of Junction Meadow. By now we had learned the hard way that a 'normal' start time would mean us walking through the intolerable heat of the afternoon, which was especially hellish for Jamie, so we got up at 4am to get a head start on the sun for the 12 mile walk (and 2500 feet climb) up to Guitar Lake. We finally reached our home for the night around midday. On the way we saw a bear cub perched in a tree, and stopped for a while to marvel at the exquisitely beautiful Timberline Lake.

Tomorrow's aim, Mount Whitney, loomed several thousand feet above us as we whiled away the afternoon, shielding food from fearless marmots. We were now in a – literally – heavily policed conservation zone. At one point a ranger appeared from nowhere to reprimand us for camping too close to the lake. He seemed like a laconic Edward Abbey type so I made a slightly risky quip about the gun in his holster (god bless America!) and he joked about pulling it on us for our camping transgression. We laughed a bit too loudly. I asked if there was any important news from the outside world. "Not really", he shrugged. "Our president's still a disgusting, embarrassing asshole."

Squalls of rain blew through in the night but we crawled out of our tents at 3am to clear skies. The Milky Way was a dazzling bridge of light vaulting above the jagged black outlines of the mountains. We set off up the long sequence of switchbacks, climbing through a world of bare rock

by the light of a headtorch with the cold universe shining above us. Eventually we reached the saddle in pre-dawn light and joined the route leading up to Mount Whitney's summit – its equivalent of the 'tourist path'. After a week of hardly seeing anyone, the human traffic on the trail was surreal. Jamie and Chris opted to descend from here, while I pushed on to the summit.

A little while later, I was stood on top of Mount Whitney not long after the first rays of sunlight had fallen on it. To the east, the Sierra plunged down like a giant tidal wave into the arid Owens Valley, where there were signs of the civilisation we had seen and heard nothing of for almost a week. To the west, where we had come from, rows of mountain ranges receded into the distance, rays of light striking their tops. At 14,494 feet (4417 metres), this was about as high as the summit of the Matterhorn – a pretty good place to watch a sunrise. This landscape had been a lot harder than it looked; and I reflected on the hard and important lesson that just because the sun shines, it doesn't mean the mountains don't bite. Far from it.

Several hours later, after eight miles of knee-smashing descent via an endless series of switchbacks, I staggered into Whitney Portal, sat down on a café bench with Chris and Jamie, and ate the best cheeseburger of my life. Things I had yearned for over the last week were close to hand: mobile signal, a shower, beer, further cheeseburgers, and sleep. But instead of exultation, the thought of returning to 'normal' life was bittersweet. ■

## HIGH SIERRA TRAIL

### *What you need to know*

The High Sierra Trail follows an arduous, improbable and unfailingly spectacular route across the southern Sierra Nevada in California. It is 72 miles (116 miles) long with around 4200 metres (13,779 feet) of ascent and descent. It should only be attempted by people with a high level of hiking fitness and experience of backpacking in remote country.

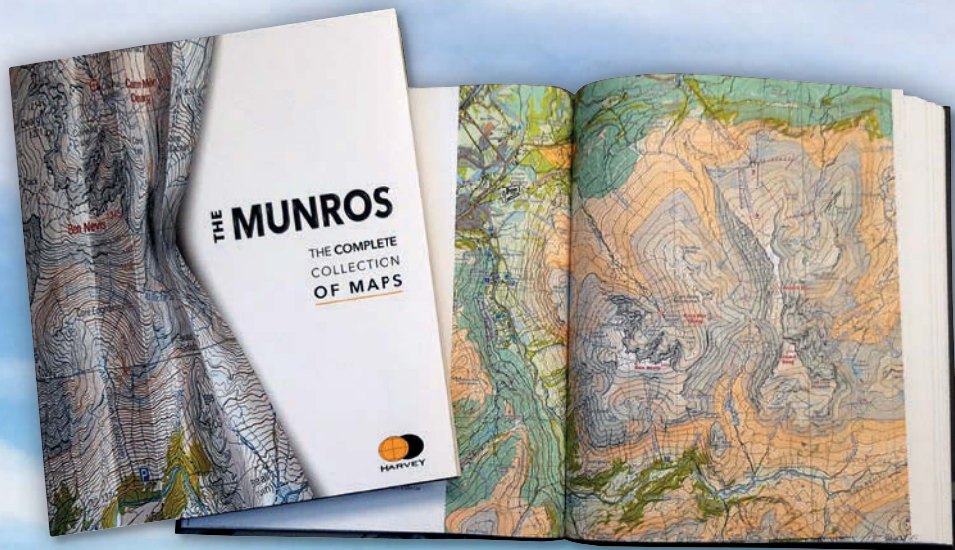
The High Sierra Trail takes between five and 10 days to complete. For most hikers, around seven to eight days is a good balance of challenge and enjoyment. We completed it in six, but it did feel like something of an endurance trial. Sequoia National Park is an assiduously preserved 'wilderness', so along the route there is no phone signal, no options for resupply, and no escape route except back the way you came or push ahead to the end. All food, shelter and equipment must be carried with you.

The National Park is currently closed due to coronavirus, and being able to walk the High Sierra Trail this year is extremely unlikely. In 'ordinary' times, between late May and late September only 40 permits a day are issued for the trail. Outside of these times, a permit is still required, though the quota system is not in place. Three-quarters of the available daily permits can be reserved from 1 March each year at [nps.gov/seki](https://www.nps.gov/seki); the rest are issued on a 'first come, first served' basis. Early booking is recommended. Carrying a bear canister is also necessary.

Zebulon Wallace's book, *Plan & Go: High Sierra Trail* (Sandiburg Press, £9.95), is a really useful and comprehensive guide.



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Mapping and navigation apps  
*Chris Townsend*

# GEAR

News from the world of outdoor kit, and product reviews from the UK's most experienced gear-testing team



Ultralight waterproofs  
*Chris Townsend*

## Spektrum unveils new 'sustainable' sunglasses

Swedish brand Spektrum has launched a collection of sunglasses using sustainably sourced materials from renewable, plant-based sources. The Grilamid material used for the frames is made from castor oil and is light, durable and flexible. The lenses offer the highest level of protection against harmful rays and



have a hydrophobic coating to repel water. For comfort the sunglasses have adjustable temple tips, non-slip rubber arms and exchangeable rubber nose pads. There are four styles and prices start at £85. [spektrumsports.com/en](http://spektrumsports.com/en)

## Gear News

### Nikwax finds solution to extend lifespan of PPE supply

Nikwax has created a new process for laundering PPE masks and gowns so they can be re-used rather than being thrown away, as now. This increases the supply of PPE and has environmental benefits. PPE Extension maintains the physical and water-repellent properties needed to stop disease transmission. Existing hot

washing methods disable disposable PPE by degrading its physical structure and destroying water repellency, which is key to ensuring PPE forms an effective barrier against infection from bodily fluids.

*Nikwax has published its full work, methods and arguments here: [tinyurl.com/yalmrc7t](http://tinyurl.com/yalmrc7t)*



### Keen turning shoes into 'everyday' face masks

Keen Footwear is making non-surgical face masks from upcycled material originally sourced for shoes. The Harvest Masks have a four-way stretch for comfort, and are washable and reusable. Erik Burbank, Keen Chief

Brand Officer, says "We are supporting public health institution recommendations regarding the use of cloth face coverings, by making comfortable masks that people feel good about wearing every day in public." [keenfootwear.com](http://keenfootwear.com)

### New eco-friendly collection from Tilley

Hiking hat-makers Tilley have produced a new collection of hats for the summer that are environmentally friendly. They're made from recycled organic cotton or hemp. There are three models: Airflo Recycled, Airflo Organic and Tilley Hemp. The Airflo hats have a polyester mesh strip built into the crown to allow hot air to escape. Like all Tilley hats, these styles have double neck cords, removable foam in the crown, and a durable water-repellent finish. Prices from £75. [tilley.com](http://tilley.com)



### Oboz releases new version of 'Firebrand' shoes

Montana-based Oboz's Firebrand II shoes are available in waterproof and non-waterproof models. They're made from leather and mesh and have a moulded O Fit Insole, dual density EVA midsole for cushioning, a nylon shank for support, and a chunky Oboz Sawtooth outsole. The new Women's Firebrand II B-Dry is constructed with a women's-specific EVA midsole for comfort and protection. Prices are £125 for the men's and women's Firebrand II B-Dry, and £120 for the Firebrand II. [obozfootwear.com](http://obozfootwear.com)



# Mapping and nav

The world of digital navigation is expanding all the time.

Chris Townsend takes a detailed look at 10 diverse apps to help you plan routes and find your way in the hills.

**M**APPING AND ROUTE APPS have proliferated in recent years with the rise in popularity of smartphones. With mapping apps, you can find your position via GPS and plan and record routes. Some apps allow you to identify features or watch 3D flyovers as well. Here I'm looking at apps designed principally for use with smartphones. There are of course standalone GPS units from the likes of SatMap and Garmin that offer the same mapping and features.

Apps that run on desktop and laptop computers are excellent for planning, and you can print sheets for specific routes. I've been doing the latter for many years, especially on long walks like the TGO Challenge, where it saves weight. One time my OS Landranger printouts weighed 111g compared to 498g for the maps. Of course, the printouts covered much smaller areas than the full maps; however, I had full coverage on my smartphone to use if I wandered off the printed map.

One advantage of digital maps, both on desktop and smartphone, is being able to zoom in and out, for more detail or for an overview of an area. When planning routes I often do this frequently.

Route apps offer pre-planned routes to follow and often have the option of adding your own. Some are also proper mapping maps as well, equipped with Ordnance Survey maps, but many only have basic maps and should be used in conjunction with other mapping. For outdoor use the mapping needs to be top-quality – e.g. Ordnance Survey or Harvey. Street Maps, Google Maps and the like are not adequate.

Many apps also offer mapping for other countries. I've used app maps for long walks in various parts of the USA and in the Alps. Again, these need to be large scale topographic maps.

There are apps for Windows, Android, iOS and macOS. Many have versions for all four, but some are specific to particular operating systems. As seems the case with all digital stuff (my camera has more options

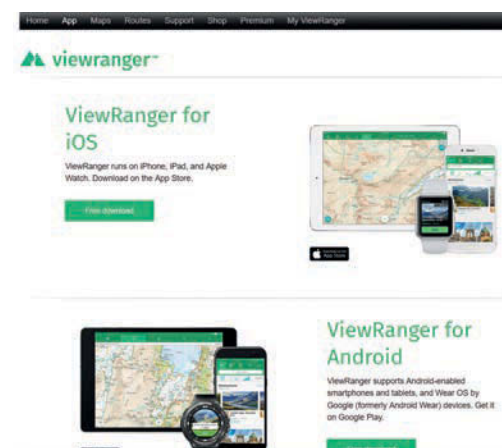
than I know what to do with, never mind my smartphone) these apps are complex with a plethora of features. Time is needed to learn what they can do, and which features are most useful. There isn't the space here to cover all the aspects of each product so I've concentrated on those I think are of most use to hillwalkers, namely position location, recording routes, plotting routes, route information, printing maps, and share options (so you can share your location). If you use a GPS unit some apps will allow you to import and export GPX files.

Most apps are free but only come with basic mapping, if any. Pricing for maps is complicated as most companies offer many options. Subscriptions are the best value for money and a way to ensure your maps are regularly updated. Buying just the maps you want outright may be initially cheaper, but you don't get updates and it can get expensive if you need many maps.

It is often argued that smartphones aren't suitable for use in the hills, that they can fail, that batteries run out, or that they may not be able to get a signal. The latter is based on a misconception. If you've downloaded the maps to your phone a phone connection isn't needed. GPS will show your location. Indeed, it's best to turn the phone signal off to save battery power.

I've been using a smartphone for navigation for over a decade and have yet to have a serious problem. I carry a battery charger, so I don't run out of power, and I keep the smartphone in a protective case. Of course, if you only have one navigation option and it has problems there can be difficulties. That applies to printed maps and physical compasses too. Maps can blow away; compasses can break or fail. Whether you prefer to use a printed map and compass or a smartphone it's wise to carry the other as a backup. I always do. Mapping apps usually have a digital compass. Whilst this is good for general directions it doesn't replace a physical compass.

Most of the apps offer free trials.



★★★★★  
**ViewRanger**

✓ easy to use, Skyline augmented reality, BuddyBeacon, worldwide maps

✗ BuddyBeacon requires a data connection, no print option

**Platforms:** iOS, Android  
**Maps:** OS Explorer & Landranger, Harvey Superwalker & British Mountain  
**Offline:** Yes  
**Features:** Skyline augmented reality, track recording and sharing, 3D Flyovers, BuddyBeacon, compass  
[viewranger.com](http://viewranger.com)

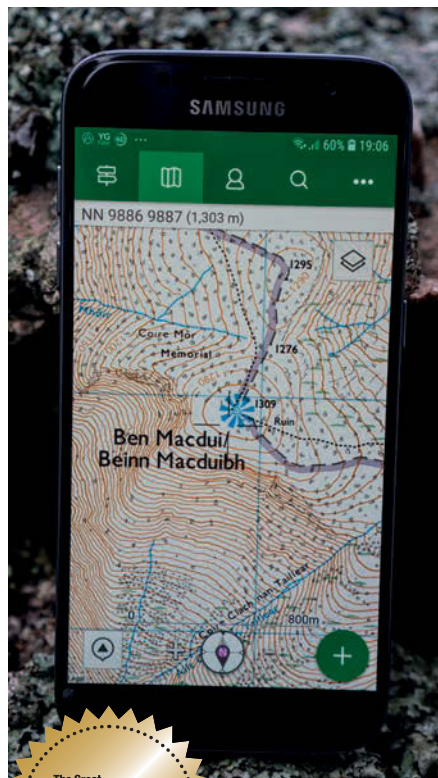
**COSTS**  
Premium (all features, all OS maps) £4.99 a month or £24.99 a year; OS Landranger Regions £7.99 each; OS Great Britain Landranger £90; OS Explorer from £7.99 to £34.99; Harvey British Mountain Maps from £15.90 to £40; Harvey Superwalker from £7.99 to £29.99

ViewRanger is a well-established mapping app for smartphones and one that I know well, having been using it for over ten years, both in the UK and in the USA and the Alps. Mostly I've used it to find my location and for navigation. You can't download maps to a laptop or desktop computer, but it is easy to plan routes on the ViewRanger website and then download them to your smartphone. You can also see and download routes created by others for any area by entering a location or postcode. I did this for the GR5 through the Alps. There are thousands of routes on the website. You can't print from the web maps though.

A good extra feature of ViewRanger is



# Navigation apps



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the BuddyBeacon, which allows you to share your real-time location with friends and family. It's PIN-protected so only those you choose can see the information. However, you do require a data connection so it's not usable everywhere.

ViewRanger also has an augmented reality tool called Skyline. With this you can use your phone's camera to identify peaks, lakes and more. ViewRanger says it knows the location of more than 9 million points on 80% of the Earth except the polar regions. This is a fascinating and useful feature, naming features in the landscape. You can even use it to guide you along a route. And of course, you can take a photo with the features named on it. Another fun feature to play with is Flyover in 3D which allows you to pan and zoom around routes.

ViewRanger is well-designed and easy to use, both on and offline. It's an essential part of my outdoor kit.

*NOTE: How well apps run depends in part on the hardware. I tried the Windows and Android apps on a Windows 10 PC and a Samsung Galaxy S7 Android smartphone. Both are quite old and not that powerful. The apps ran fast enough for me, though. I have described apps that only run on iOS and macOS but I have not tested these as I don't have the hardware, so I have not rated them. Windows and Android apps may perform differently depending on your hardware.*



OS Maps for all of Great Britain anytime, anywhere.



**OS Maps Premium**

✓ easy to use, Augmented Reality Viewer, print option, use codes from paper maps

✗ only OS maps

**Platforms:** Windows, iOS, Android

**Maps:** OS Explorer, OS Landranger

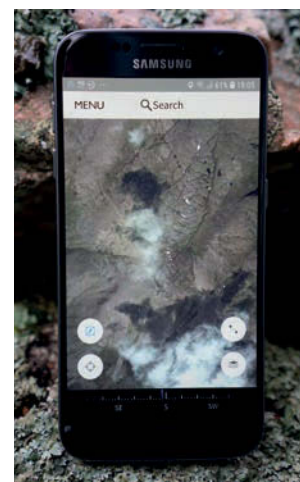
**Features:** track recording, augmented reality, aerial 3D

**Offline:** yes  
[ordnancesurvey.co.uk](http://ordnancesurvey.co.uk)

## COSTS

1-month auto renewal £2.99; 12 months auto renewal £23.99; 1-year subscription £29.99

On a smartphone the OS Maps app works just the same as ViewRanger. Download the maps and use GPS to find your location. You can record routes on a smartphone and plan routes on all platforms or else find pre-planned routes. The last two are best and most easily done on a large computer screen. There's an augmented reality option,

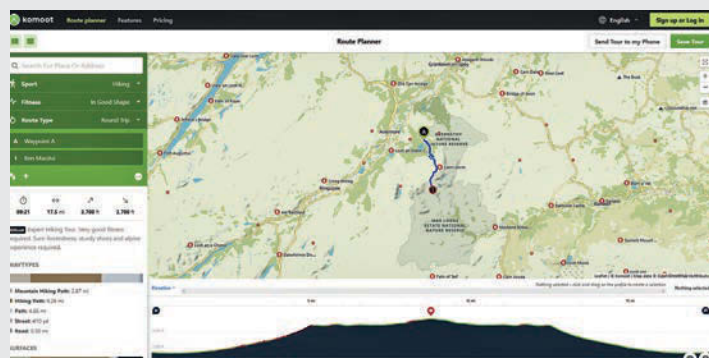


AR Viewer, that allows you to identify features in the landscape for the smartphone app and an aerial 3D option on the website.

From a PC you can print map sheets as long as you have an internet connection. If you have a big enough printer you can print to A3 size.

For UK only use with OS maps this app is fine, especially if you want to print maps as well as have them on your smartphone. There are no other map options though so if you go abroad you'll need another app. You can't buy individual maps either. However, if you buy a paper map it comes with a code so you can download a digital map. This is a one-off and you don't get other features.





**Komoot**

✓ planning

✗ maps not OS/Harvey standard

**Platforms:** Android, iOS

**Maps:** basic

**Features:** routes

**Offline:** yes

[komoot.com](http://komoot.com)

## COSTS

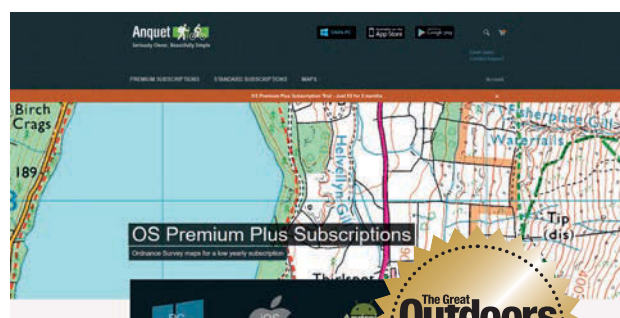
single region £3.99; region bundle £8.99; The World, £29.99

Komoot is a planning tool for cycling and walking. It's packed with masses of routes that can be downloaded and then followed on the map on your phone. The maps are fine for road cycling and just about ok for off-road walking. For hillwalking where navigation is crucial Komoot is better thought of as a digital guidebook rather than digital mapping; and just as with most printed guidebooks, you need a detailed map to go with it. When you zoom in on a map more detail does appear, including contour lines, but it's still not OS standard. The maps are inexpensive though.

There are masses of routes and you can enter your activity – hiking, mountaineering, various types of cycling, your fitness from couch potato to Pro. Put in start and finish points, and Komoot will come up with a route. I looked for one from Glenmore to Ben Macdui and back and Komoot came up with a sensible option and said it was an "Expert Hiking Tour. Very good fitness required. Sure-footedness, sturdy shoes and alpine experience required," which sounds reasonable. It also gave a very precise time – 9:21 – a distance of 17.5 miles and an ascent of 3700 feet. Routes are customisable and you can enter in options you'd like to see on the map – everything from restaurants to mountain passes.

Komoot also has turn-by-turn voice navigation. I think this would drive me crazy! However, it does seem more designed for cyclists and runner than walkers as on the website it says "when you're hurtling downhill you don't want to fumble for your phone to know where to go".

If you like footpath guidebooks, then Komoot may well suit you.



**Anquet Outdoor Map Navigator**

✓ fast, print option, offline desktop app

✗ only UK maps

**Platforms:** Windows, iOS, Android, macOS

**Maps:** OS Landranger & Explorer, Harvey Superwalker, Harvey British Mountain

**Features:** track recording, offline desktop maps

(Premium Plus), GPX-compatible

**Offline:** yes

[anquet.com](http://anquet.com)

## COSTS

£3.99 for iPhone & Android apps; free for Windows; OS Premium £24 auto annual renewal, £30 for one year; Premium Plus £32 auto annual renewal, £40 for one year; Harvey Superwalker £15.50 each; Harvey British Mountain £24.95 each

Launched back in 2001 offering maps on CD, Anquet was one of the first companies selling digital mapping. Since it began it has moved with the technology and now offers subscriptions for downloads to smartphones and computers, providing a service rather than a one-off sale.

When I last tried Anquet 10 years ago one-off downloads had just begun and CD mapping was still available. It worked well then and it still does. Downloading the app to both PC and smartphone was fast. The maps downloaded and opened quickly on the latter, but were slow on my ageing PC.

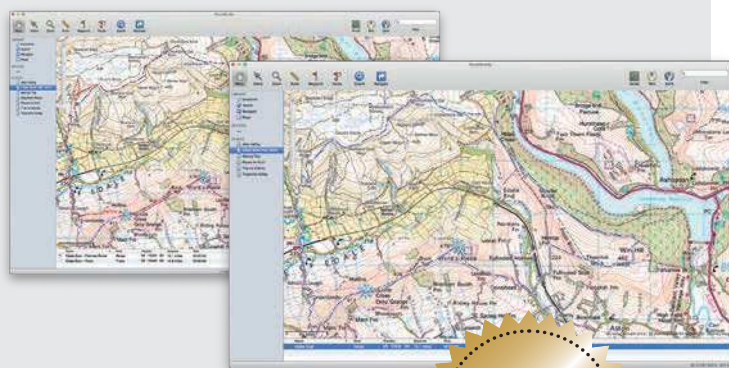
An excellent feature with the OS Premium Plus subscription is the option of downloading the app and maps to your desktop computer for planning routes and printing. I find this more versatile and faster than using a web browser. It's much easier to plot a route on a large screen than a small one so this is a very useful feature. Routes can then be synchronised with your smartphone or printed out.

There's no 3D or augmented reality feature. Anquet says it is concentrating on "getting more done with simpler interfaces" and a third version of OMN will be launched later this year, available to current subscribers. I don't miss 3D, but I do find augmented reality useful for identifying distant features. It's not essential though. You can record tracks and waypoints and sync them the desktop.

I found Anquet OMN easy to learn and powerful. As a combined smartphone and desktop app it's excellent.







★★★★★  
**RouteBuddy**

The Great  
**Outdoors**  
**BEST  
BUY**  
for desktop

✓ route planning, printing,  
merging OS and Harvey maps

✗ no Android version

**Platforms:** Windows, macOS, iOS

**Maps:** OS Explorer & Landranger, Harvey Superwalker, British Mountain & Summit, USA, France, Norway, Sweden, New Zealand maps

**Features:** route planning, map stitching,  
printing, track planning and recording

**Offline:** yes  
[routebuddy.com](http://routebuddy.com)

#### **COSTS**

OS 1:50,000 £6.99 per sheet, OS 1:25,000 £8.99 to £9.99;  
Harvey British Mountain £19.99 to £34.99, Harvey Superwalker  
£13.99 to £47.99, Harvey Summit £6.99; OS Great Britain  
1:25,000 £279, OS Great Britain 1:50,000 £99.99; TGO  
Challenge complete area 1:50,000 £19.99, 1:25,000 £99.99

The RouteBuddy app comes in two forms: RouteBuddy Desktop Map Software for Windows, and macOS and RouteBuddy Atlas for iPhones. Sadly, there is no Android version. This is a shame as RouteBuddy is one of the best desktop mapping programs I've used. It's powerful and fairly complex but quite easy to learn. Maps can be downloaded to your desktop for studying and planning and drawing routes. This gives you far more options than web mapping.

Plotting routes, even long ones, is easy. I've planned several TGO Challenges on RouteBuddy, printing out A4 route maps to carry with me. You can also drag and drop route files from a GPS, from friends or from websites. Routes you plot or record give elevation, ascent, descent and more (useful for the TGO Challenge route form – no need to count grid squares or contour lines).

RouteBuddy has a unique feature that I love. It can seamlessly stitch together OS 1:50,000 and 1:25,000 maps and Harvey maps. I've used both OS scales and Harvey maps for TGO Challenge routes. RouteBuddy connects them so well that the scale becomes the same, but you have all the extra details when it's the 1:25,000 map and all the features when it's a Harvey map. Satellite and road maps can be layered too.

I only have one problem with RouteBuddy. There's no app for Android so I can't have it on my smartphone. Otherwise my only minor complaint is that it's easy to lose many hours planning routes and enjoying the maps.



★★★★★  
**Memory-Map**

✓ CDs

✗ no updates

**Platforms:** Windows, macOS, iOS

**Maps:** OS Explorer & Landranger, Harvey Superwalker, British Mountain & Summit, USA, France, Norway, Sweden, New Zealand maps

**Features:** route planning, map stitching,  
printing, track planning and recording

**Offline:** yes  
[routebuddy.com](http://routebuddy.com)

#### **COSTS**

OS Explorer Great Britain £150, OS Landranger Great Britain £60, OS Explorer and Landranger £195, IGN France 1:25,000 £150, IGN France 1:100,000 £50

Memory-Map was one of the first to offer digital mapping software 20 years ago and it still supplies its maps on CDs, which is great for anyone who prefers an actual physical object rather than a download. Once you've bought the maps, they're yours. There's no subscription to keep up. The disadvantage is that there are no updates. If you want the latest version you have to buy another CD. The CDs come with a licence for five devices so you could run them on desktop and smartphone and have three as backups.

Once downloaded to your desktop or smartphone the maps work much the same as others. You can create and manage routes, tracks and waypoints. There's a relief shading tool for Windows that shows up the shape of the terrain. Routes can be transferred between desktop and smartphone. On the latter GPS can show your position as with other phone apps. From the desktop you can print maps and route cards. Tracks of walks can be recorded and the tracklogs also show speed and distance covered. There's a 3D option too.

Memory-Map also sells other navigation-related items, including waterproof paper for printing maps on.

I used Memory-Map CDs a fair bit before downloads came along. They still work fine, and just buying a CD with maps is simple.



**OS Locate - know where you are.**



Make the most of your adventures in the great outdoors with OS Locate. Used alongside your Ordnance Survey map, OS Locate is a fast and highly accurate means of pinpointing your exact location on the map, anywhere in Great Britain. If you have lost your bearings or simply would like a little reassurance, OS Locate is the ideal companion for all enthusiasts of the great outdoors.

The app converts GPS location readings from your mobile phone to Ordnance Survey National Grid references, enabling you to determine precisely where you are on an Ordnance Survey map. No mobile signal? No problem; OS Locate does not require a mobile signal to function – the inbuilt GPS system can be relied upon, even in the most remote areas.

Simply download the app and switch on your device's location services (Settings > Privacy > Location services for iOS devices. Settings > Location for Android devices).

OS Locate is packed with additional features. The 'Share' button allows you to connect with friends and family via messaging and social media – let them know where you are, how your adventure is progressing and what time you will be home. Use the handy digital compass to take your bearings – always ensuring you are on the right track. For those who are keen to learn more about maps and navigation, the 'About' button hosts a wealth of information including hints and tips and a guide to map reading. In addition, you will find simple yet comprehensive guides on how to use eastings and northings.

**OS Locate - know where you are.**

OS Locate is a complementary tool for Ordnance Survey paper maps. You should always have an Ordnance Survey paper map and baseplate compass when exploring the great outdoors.

 Click here to download OS Locate for FREE from iTunes  
 Click here to download OS Locate for FREE from Google Play store

More information

**The Great Outdoors BEST BUY**  
for location-finding

★★★★★  
**OS Locate**

✓ simple

✗ nothing

**Platforms:** iOS, Android

**Map:** no

**Features:** grid reference, digital compass, share button

**Offline:** yes

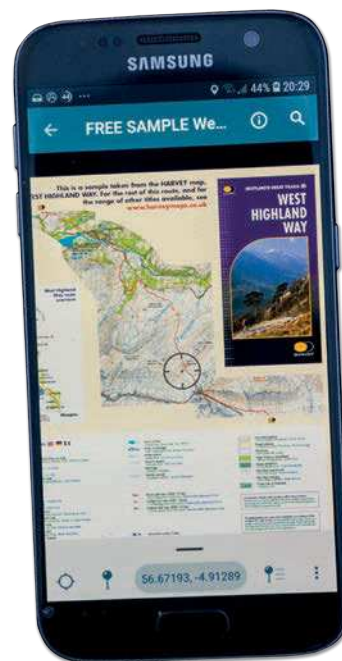
[ordnancesurvey.co.uk/shop/os-locate](http://ordnancesurvey.co.uk/shop/os-locate)

**COSTS**

Free

OS Locate is a simple free app that gives you a grid reference and a compass bearing. You can link it to downloaded OS maps but as your position is shown on those anyway I don't see much point. However, it's an excellent app to use with paper maps. If you're not sure where you are, click – and there's a grid reference. Now you can have the same on a smartphone. This used to be all GPS units did before they gained mapping and lots of bells and whistles. There's a digital Silva compass too, which you can use to take bearings, using two fingers to turn the bezel, though it's easier with the real thing. If you have a phone connection your position can be shared via email or social media.

I think this is an excellent app and worth having even if you only use printed maps and compass for navigation, especially as it's free.



★★★★★  
**Avenza**

✓ worldwide maps

✗ no OS maps, no PC or web option, no print option

**Platforms:** iOS, Android

**Maps:** Harvey British Mountain & Harvey Trail

**Features:** track recording

**Offline:** yes

[avenzamaps.com](http://avenzamaps.com)

**COSTS**

£20.99+

Avenza is a Canadian company that offers a vast range of worldwide maps (almost a million, it says on the website). However, the only UK maps are Harvey British Mountain and Harvey Trail. It's a smartphone-only app with no option for viewing maps on a big screen or printing them out. The only feature is track recording.

I searched for maps walkers might be interested in and found Mount Everest 1:80,000, various National Geographic Trails Illustrated Maps for US areas like Yosemite, and some European trails like the Haute Route in the Alps, 1:50,000 Norway, 1:50,000 some regions of the Alps. Most of the maps are small-scale ones though, great for overviews and general travel but not for walking.

As a simple app with no extra features like augmented reality, 3D flyovers or routes, Avenza is quite appealing. If the Harvey maps cover the areas you want it's fine for UK use, though you can't add areas outside Harvey mapping. If it covers areas you're going abroad, it could be a good option.



# Available for other devices

Chris also looked into these products but could not test them because he uses an Android phone.



Only  
available  
on iOS



## UK Map App

✓ [not tested]

✗ [not tested]

**Platforms:** iOS  
**Maps:** OS Explorer and Landranger  
**Features:** 3D, GPX file downloads  
**Offline:** yes  
[ukmapapp.com](http://ukmapapp.com)

### COSTS

£7.99

This is an app for iPads and iPhones only. The website says there may be an Android version eventually. The app isn't free but it comes with OS Open Data maps including 1:25,000 ones, downloaded in 5km squares. These look perfectly usable for navigation. Free OS data doesn't include footpaths, so UK Map App has superimposed ones from openstreetmap.org and warns that "coverage is not yet complete and varies from place to place". Standard OS 1:25,000 maps are available to buy in three large areas or 400 small ones; 1:50,000 maps in 32 regions. For 1:50,000 maps updates are free. They aren't for 1:25,000. The maps can be viewed in 3D.

UK Map App also has GPX file downloads covering the Munros, Corbetts, Wainwrights, and all 19,282 British peaks. These are generated from *The Database of British and Irish Hills*. You can import and export files from other websites and apps too.

I haven't assigned this a rating because I have an Android phone and wasn't able to test it myself.



## Outdoors GPS

✓ [not tested]

✗ [not tested]

**Platforms:** iOS  
**Maps:** OS 1:50,000 & 1:25,000, every country in the world  
**Features:** route planning, record routes  
**Offline:** yes  
[outdoorsgps.com](http://outdoorsgps.com)

### COSTS

£9.99 per map

Outdoor GPS is an app for iPhones and iPads that has maps for every country in the world as well as OS maps for the UK. This could be useful for international travellers with iPhones. It works like other apps, using the phone's GPS signal to show your location. It records routes and you can view current speed, average speed, distance, altitude, time elapsed and more. On the website there's a section called Outdoors Route Builder where you can create routes, share routes and download routes to your phone - there are over 100,000.

Designed for both walking and cycling, Outdoors GPS looks a useful app, especially if you like route options or travel widely. And have an iPhone or iPad.

I haven't assigned this a rating because I have an Android phone and wasn't able to test it myself.



# TAKE THREE

## ULTRALIGHT WATERPROOF JACKETS

These superlight jackets are perfect for warm, summery weather, when heavier waterproofs are overkill. **Chris Townsend** puts a trio to the test



EVEN IN WARM, sunny weather, waterproofs should always be considered essential. Rain can sweep in very quickly and temperatures can drop with it. Getting wet isn't a good idea. But outside of winter conditions, big tough blizzard-proof garments aren't needed, and lightweight waterproofs are often fine. They weigh less and take up much less space in your rucksack (where hopefully they'll spend most of their time) than winter ones, making them especially good for backpacking.

The three jackets reviewed here all

weigh less than 300 grams but are all fully waterproof. They're not just lightweight but truly ultralight. To keep the weight down fabrics are thin and features minimal. They're not as tough as heavier garments of course and I wouldn't choose them for scrambling or bushwhacking, but for most hillwalking and backpacking they're fine. They won't last as long as heavier garments either and are best not worn all the time; only when it's raining.

Because they're designed for warmer conditions lightweight waterproofs often have a slim fit so they're not baggy when

worn over just a base layer. If you want to wear one over a warm top as well, you might need a size larger than usual.

The three garments reviewed are made from different fabrics. Breathability varies from moderate to good. Pay more and it improves. None of them will stay dry inside when you're stomping up a hill in the rain though. There's just less condensation in the more breathable fabrics.

All three garments have taped seams. All the garments are quite short. None have pit zips.



## 1

**Weight:** 265g (size L)  
**Materials:** 2.5-layer recycled polyester/microporous membrane  
**Hood:** front adjustment cords  
**Front closure:** waterproof YKK AquaGuard zip with inner flap  
**Pockets:** 2 zipped hand  
**Cuffs:** Velcro  
**Sizes:** men XS-CCL, women 8-16  
[finisterre.com](http://finisterre.com)

## FINISTERRE RAINBIRD

£110

Finisterre's latest waterproof jacket is made from recycled polyester and has a PFC durable water-resistant treatment. When worn out the Rainbird can be recycled too.

The fabric has a slight stretch, so the jacket moves with you. It's incredibly soft for a waterproof, feeling more like a light softshell. It has a minimum of panels, which keeps the weight and number of seams down.

The toothed front zip is surprisingly chunky. It's water-resistant and is backed up by an inner flap with a rain gutter and a wide strip of double fabric. There's a microfibre collar guard at the top of the zip.

The hood is a simple one with no peak. It does have front drawcords (my preference) and can be cinched down close to the head and face for good protection. The pockets have zips with flaps over them and are quite roomy, though the bottom of them is cut off by a hipbelt. All zips have long pullers. The back is slightly extended. A drawcord in the hem has cordlocks. The adjustable cuffs allow ventilation.

The Rainbird is very comfy. Finisterre says the



The Great  
Outdoors  
Best Value

RECOMMENDED

fabric has a breathability of 10,000. This is on the low side, so condensation build-up is quicker than on much more expensive garments even though Finisterre says the 'microporous inner film wicks moisture away the harder you work' (it does, to some extent). However, for a jacket at this price it's reasonable. And the price is very low, making the Rainbird excellent value for money.

## 2

**Weight:** 150g (size M)  
**Materials:** 2.5-layer stretch Pertex Shield, 10,000mm hydrostatic head  
**Hood:** rear drawcord, semi-stiff peak  
**Front closure:** water-resistant zip, inner flap  
**Pockets:** 2 zipped hand, 1 inner mesh  
**Cuffs:** semi-elasticated  
**Sizes:** men S-XXL, women XS-XL  
[marmot.de/en](http://marmot.de/en)

## MARMOT BANTAMWEIGHT

£270

This is an astonishingly light jacket – “the lightest fully-featured rain jacket we’ve ever made” says Marmot. The fabric is well-proven Pertex Shield and it's so thin you can almost see through it. It's quite soft, with a slight rustle. Despite the thinness it is waterproof. Breathability is moderate.

There's a light water-resistant coil zip backed by an inner flap. I haven't had any leakage here. Two huge front pockets easily take maps. The zips sit above a hipbelt though the very bottom of the pocket bags is cut off. The pockets zips are also water-resistant and have a narrow flap. The pockets are mostly mesh and can act as vents if open. Inside is another mesh pocket big enough for a phone or GPS unit and into which the jacket can be stuffed.

Under the arms are tiny laser-drilled holes for ventilation. I guess these could leak in heavy driving rain, but I haven't had any problems. The cuffs have short sections of elasticsation. They are fairly narrow but don't close fully round my wrists so there is some airflow. The back of the jacket is slightly extended and there's an adjustable hem drawcord.

The hood has a lightly stiffened peak that doesn't



The Great  
Outdoors  
Best for Weight

RECOMMENDED

give much extra protection. There's a drawcord closure at the back. Tightened up, the hood is fine for keeping the rain off and allows side vision.

The Bantamweight is expensive, but the cost is comparable to similar-weight jackets. You're paying for what you don't get: more weight. For lightweight backpacking and long-distance walking the Bantamweight would be an excellent choice.



# 3

## MOUNTAIN HARDWEAR EXPOSURE 2

£315

The Great  
**Outdoors**  
Best for  
Breathability  
**BEST BUY**

**Weight:** 270g (size L)  
**Materials:** 2-layer  
Gore-Tex Paclite Plus  
**Hood:** rear drawcord,  
semi-stiff peak  
**Front closure:** PU-  
coated, water-resistant  
**Pockets:** 2 hand,  
1 zipped chest  
**Cuffs:** Velcro  
**Sizes:** men S-XXL,  
women XS-XL  
[mountainhardwear.eu](http://mountainhardwear.eu)

Paclite Plus is a new version of Paclite with a two-layer, unlined construction. Gore-Tex says that a new abrasion-resistant treatment of the inner surface makes a lining unnecessary. This results in a lightweight fabric that is very breathable, as I've found. The fabric is quite soft and rustles slightly.

The Exposure 2 has a water-resistant zip with no protective flaps, other than at the top as a chin protector. This is unusual and, I think, quite bold. So far, though, I've had no leaks. The phone-sized chest pocket also has an unprotected water-resistant zip, but the inside is Paclite Plus so even if it leaks no moisture will enter the inside of the jacket. The jacket can be packed into this pocket. The lower pocket zips aren't water-resistant, but they're protected by flaps. These pockets are roomy. The bottoms are cut off by a hipbelt but they're still usable. They're made of mesh and so provide ventilation when left open.

The hood is big but cinches down well with the rear drawcord. The peak isn't very stiff but does protect the forehead. Side vision is good. The adjustable cuffs are wide, which is good for ventilation. The hem is slightly dropped at the back and has an adjustable drawcord.



The Exposure 2 is a comfortable jacket with good breathability. It feels quite substantial for a jacket this light and should cope with everything but the worst winter weather. It is expensive but you do get what you pay for.

Also available  
ON THE MARKET

## Other light waterproofs to consider



1 Montane Atomic Jacket

£110 340g

[montane.co.uk](http://montane.co.uk)



2 Berghaus Hyper 100 Shell

£250 97g

[berghaus.com](http://berghaus.com)



3 Outdoor Research Interstellar

£300 310g

[outdoorresearch.com](http://outdoorresearch.com)



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# Wild WALKS

7 varied routes in Scotland, England and Wales



Bluebells and Grasmere, route 5

Photo: © Alex Roddie

## CONTRIBUTORS



Alan Rowan



Roger Butler



Geoff Holland



Vivienne Crow



Alex Roddie



Paul Richardson



Andrew Galloway

## Our walks this month

**1 West Highlands** Meall Blair

**2 Inner Hebrides** Colonsay

**3 Northumberland** Broadstruther & Carey Burn

**4 North Pennines** Thack Moor & Black Fell

**5 Lake District** Loughrigg Fell

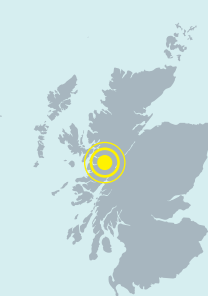
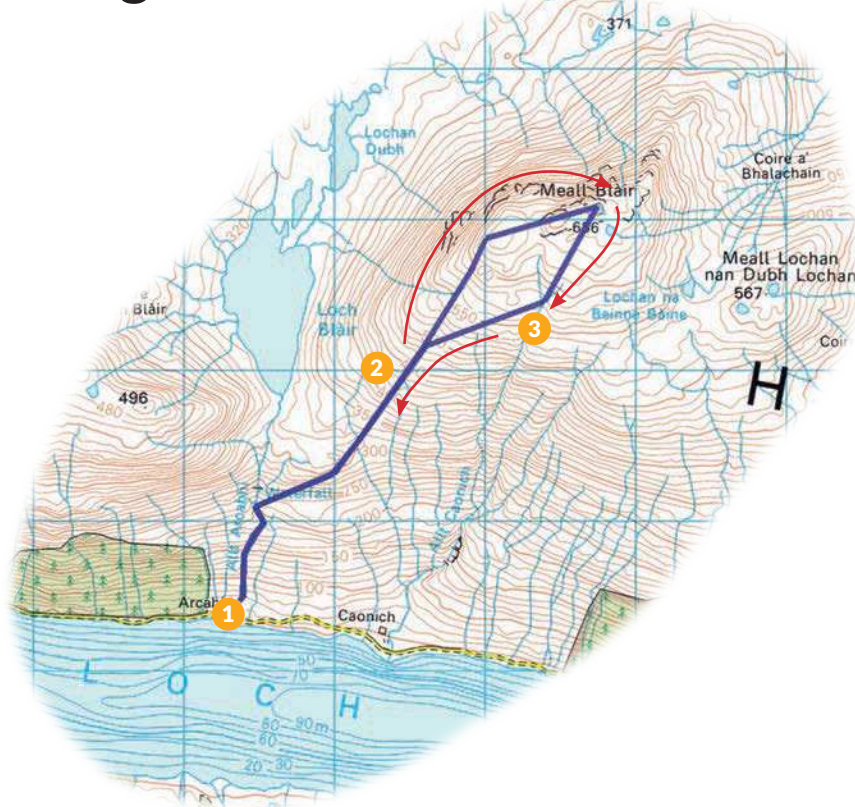
**6 Peak District** Kinder Scout & Grindsbrook Clough

**7 Gwynedd** Llanfrothen





## Meall Blair West Highlands SCOTLAND



### Alan Rowan enjoys a remote Graham

THE HEAD of Loch Arkhaig is the start of many epic walks: the Sgurr na Ciche Munros, a passage into Knoydart, and a back door to the Corryhully peaks. But tucked along its northern shores are some fine Corbetts and Grahams with appealing characters of their own.

Meall Blair is a lovely hill for a short evening stroll. I had been heading north-west after an early start on Buachaille Etive Mor, and wanted to make the most of the remains of the day and catch a late spring sunset.

It meant a diversion, and when that diversion is along the roller coaster single-track road that runs the length of Loch Arkhaig, it makes you think twice. In ➡

#### 1 Start/Finish

Allt Arcabhi

GR: NN052923

From the start (which is about 13km W along the single-track Loch Arkhaig road), head N on a new hydro track heading up towards Loch Blair.

passing two minor tops before gaining the summit, which has a decent cairn and a trig pillar.

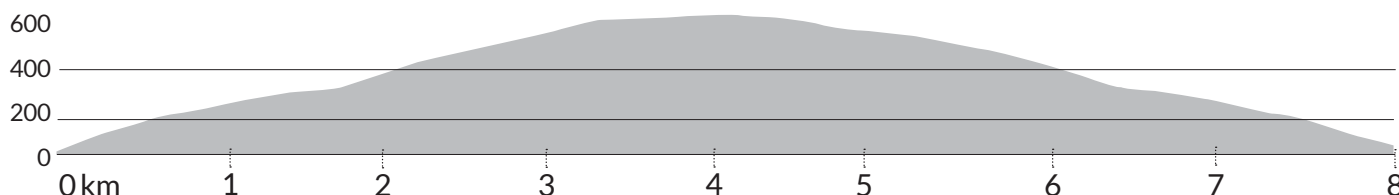
#### 3

To vary the descent, drop S at first then SE to pick up the ascent route. It's a fast and easy run back down to the start.

#### 2

After about 1km you reach a waterfall and the loch comes into view. Slant right and keep rising NE over easy ground,

### Gradient profile Metres above sea level







the end, the prospect of a stroll above the loch in the beautiful evening light proved too much of a temptation to turn my back on.

Meall Blair is the furthest west of three Grahams on the north side of the loch. It can be paired with its eastern neighbour Sgurr Choinnich, but that would have added too much time, distance and boggy ground for my liking.

It's also a hill where the hardest navigation could be finding the right starting point. Recent hydro works mean any coherence between map and reality are sketchy at best, and I convinced myself I was in the wrong place and then overshot at the second pass.

After wasting some 20 minutes, I found myself back at the first option, and took a

new track up to the right of the Allt Arcabhi, which made for fast progress.

Any concerns that I still hadn't got it right were allayed when Loch Blair came into view at the top of the first ascent, a slash of blue, ringed by gentle slopes and verdant grasses with silently weeping streams squeezing out.

The grass slopes ahead were easy but the heat was intense, and the summit remained elusive amongst the undulating terrain. As I crested the final approach, a long line of deer were trotting along the horizon in formation, startled by my unexpected arrival. Then, all of a sudden, there was the cairn and trig point, sitting in the middle of spattering of tiny lochans and outcrops. The ascent had taken less than

an hour and a half.

The views were sublime: the Corryhully and Arkaig Munros standing in retreating shades of blue above the head of the loch, and off to the east the unmistakable scimitar form of Ben Nevis and its arête.

I was a solitary figure in a solitary spot, and it seemed rude to rush off. The descent was a fast run down over soft terraces and shades, the late sunlight turning the waters of the loch a shimmering silver, and the seemingly endless swathes of bog cotton swaying like miniature candy floss in perfect harmony.

Even the road out seemed benign, the water of the loch gradually darkening, the slopes along its banks silhouetted. A mellow end to a worthwhile diversion. 📍

**[Captions clockwise from top]**  
The view east from the summit of Meith Bheinn; Lonely Loch Beoraid from the descent through the trees; The lochan just before the final climb

### Further information

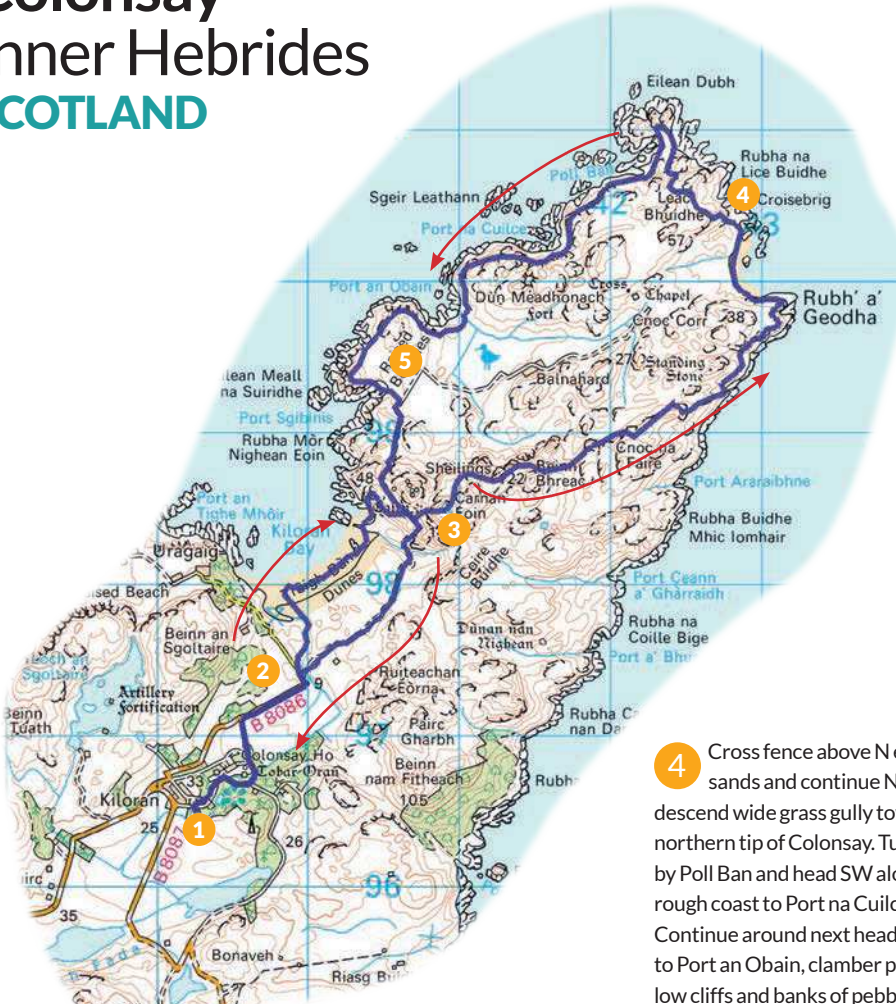
**Maps:** OS 1:50,000 Landranger sheet 33 (Loch Alsh, Glen Shiel & Loch Hourn)

**Transport:** None to the start

**Information:** Fort William TIC (01397 701801); [lochaber.com](http://lochaber.com)



# Colonsay Inner Hebrides SCOTLAND



## 1 Start/Finish Backpacker's Lodge GR: NR392963

Turn R from the lodge track and follow track through woods at rear of Colonsay House. Fork L after 600m and then take fenced path by side of tennis court. Turn L at lane, go round sharp bend and walk through gateposts on R.

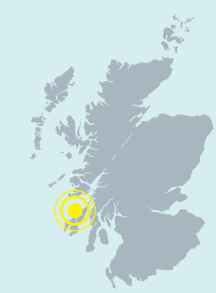
## 2 Follow stream across machair to Kiloran Bay and turn R to walk over sands to Port

Easdail. Explore caves at far end of bay, cut uphill to cross track and continue NE to top of Carnan Eoin.

## 3 Walk N from large summit cairn for 200m and then veer E along crest of Beinn Bhreac. Keep ahead over pathless moor as the cliffs begin to dip and continue out to the east coast – where you may spot an otter. Turn L and pick a route around the heads of several gullies. Follow coast to cross fence to Balnahard Bay (Traigh Ban).

## 4 Cross fence above N end of sands and continue N to descend wide grass gully towards northern tip of Colonsay. Turn S by Poll Ban and head SW along rough coast to Port na Cuilce. Continue around next headland to Port an Obain, clamber past low cliffs and banks of pebbles and, now over grass, reach rugged promontory at Meall na Suiridhe.

## 5 Descend to cross Port Sgibinis (look for the old lazy beds – and the sculpted whale) and head SE to gate at track. Turn R, with glorious views over Kiloran Bay; after 1km track drops steeply to cross gate by stream. Continue ahead on track at rear of dunes (or re-cross the sands) and meet lane after 1km. Retrace steps back to hostel.



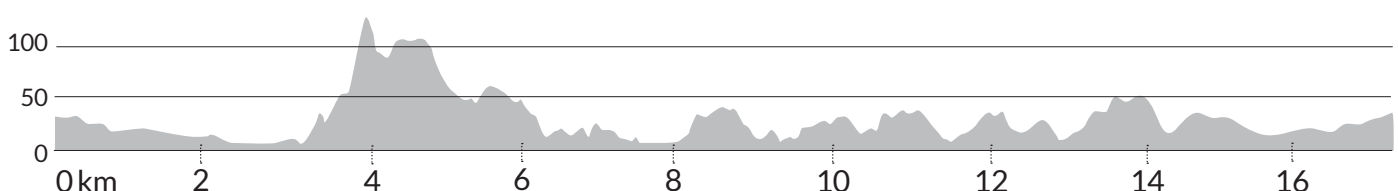
## Roger Butler finds cuckoos and corncrakes on Colonsay

I HAD BEEN WOKEN by a cuckoo before 5am. Sunshine was streaming through a gap in the curtains and a salty breeze carried the faint rumble of crashing waves and the perfumed scent of elder and hawthorn. Rough moorland rose to the south and framed the view towards three inter-connected freshwater lochs. The cuckoo might have been my morning alarm call but it was only a few short hours since I'd finally dozed off to the grating call of a rare corncrake. A single bird can deliver 20,000 repetitive rasps in one night – no wonder its Latin name is *Crex crex*!

It didn't take long to



## Gradient profile Metres above sea level







pack an improvised lunch and wander off down a mossy woodland track. Colonsay is the remotest of the main islands in the Inner Hebrides and I soon discovered that it packs an astonishing variety of wild scenery into its twenty square miles: a ragged coastline with high cliffs and headlands; rolling heather moorland with a sprinkling of reedy lochs; extensive open machair, tall sand dunes and beaches that will take your breath away.

A narrow path crept through damp pasture and met the island road. My pace quickened as I reached the start of the sandy track to Balnahard. Dainty flowers decorated the short grass and a peat-stained stream ran out to the mile-long Kiloran Bay. Some say this is the most beautiful beach in Scotland, and I danced across wriggling

rivulets to the caves at the north end of the strand.

The climb to Carnan Eoin – the highest point on Colonsay – was rewarded with views to Mull, the Paps of Jura and a few mainland Munros. A bumpy cliff-girt escarpment trailed east with grandstand views of the island's empty northern quarter. Occasional lonely ruins were hints at past lives: almost a thousand people used to live here, but today's residents number little more than a hundred.

I reached the east coast near Cnoc a' Charragh and ploughed north through deep heather to Rubh' a' Geodha. The glorious sweep of Balnahard Bay, backed by marram and machair, now lay straight ahead. At the far end of the sands, beyond Leac Bhuidhe, a wedge of moorland and a swathe of sandy salt

marsh provided access to the island's northernmost point.

The west coast meant further rough walking as low cliffs guarded the remnants of ancient forts and dropped into a series of wide pebbly inlets. Port Sgibinis came with a fringe of sand, and part of the adjacent raised beach had been sculpted into the outline of a huge whale. I added a couple of pebbles to the fluke and speculated how long it would be before the cetacean is declared fully complete. The track below Beinn Bheag twisted sharply downhill and soon turned to sand as it wove across the dunes at the back of Kiloran Bay. Another cuckoo was calling and it made me wonder whether the Viking chieftain who was once buried here in his upturned galley had ever been woken by Colonsay's vocal summer visitors. 📍

[Captions clockwise from top]  
View north across Kiloran Bay towards Carnan Eoin, the highest point on Colonsay;  
A panoramic view of Kiloran Bay from the top of Carnan Eoin, with extensive dunes and machair rolling east behind the beach; View looking north-west from Kiloran Bay as a heavy shower passes offshore

## Further information

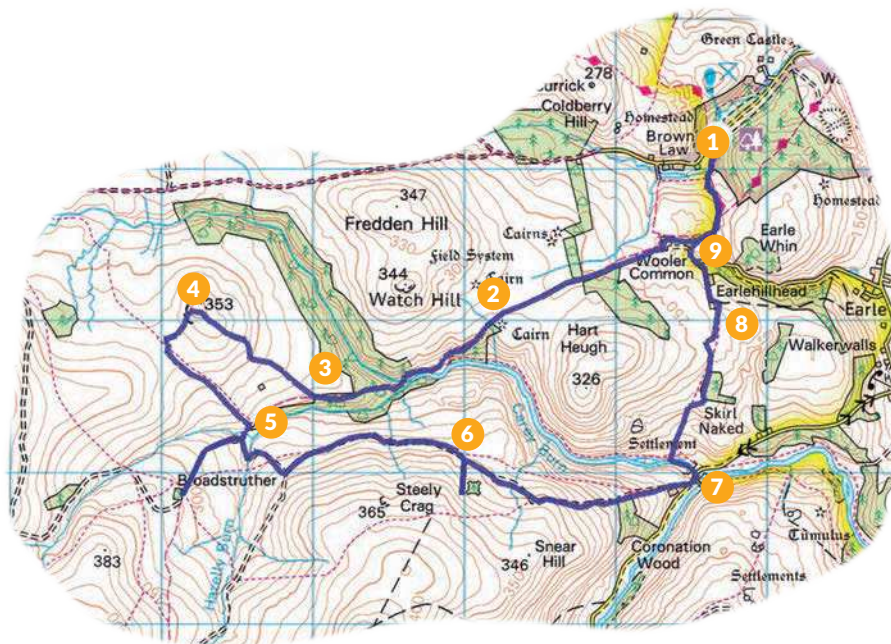
**Maps:** OS 1:25,000  
Explorer sheet 354  
(Colonsay & Oronsay)

**Transport:** Caledonian  
Macbrayne ferry from  
Oban to Colonsay – see [calmac.co.uk](http://calmac.co.uk) for up-to-date timetables.  
Flights are also available  
([hebrideanair.co.uk](http://hebrideanair.co.uk)) and cycle  
hire is available on the island

**Information:** [colonsay.org.uk](http://colonsay.org.uk), plus plenty of helpful  
knowledge on the island



# Broadstruther & Carey Burn Northumberland **ENGLAND**



## Geoff Holland battles a muscular, chilling wind

IT WAS a toe-tingling 2°C when I stepped out into the morning air close to the Humbleton Burn, the barely-risen sun obscured by the mature conifers on nearby Kenterdale Hill. A bone-chilling wind raced towards Wooler like a petrol-head on speed. With not a soul about, I fastened my boots, pulled on my cosy wool beanie and set out on the narrow, burn-hugging path towards Wooler Common.

The sun was soon beginning to fan out across the vast copper-coloured moor, the gently rising track littered with glimmering rain pools. In the distance, Broadhope Hill climbed towards the cloud-capped ➔

### 1 Start/Finish

**Car park, Humbleton Burn Picnic Area, Wooler Common**

**GR: NT976272**

At road bridge turn L signed St Cuthbert's Way. After stile follow rising path, eventually bearing R. Stay R of cottage then cross stile L immediately after. At track turn R.

2 Take L path and go through gate. Keep R at burn. Cross bridge L and follow rising path.

3 Leave path R, heading generally NW and aiming always for highest point.

4 Leave crags SW to join path heading SE. At path junction head through gate half-L to bridge over Broadstruthers Burn. Follow path L to track. Turn R to Broadstruther and back again.

5 Follow track to ford. Cross bridge slightly upstream. Turn L on track and then L again at junction.

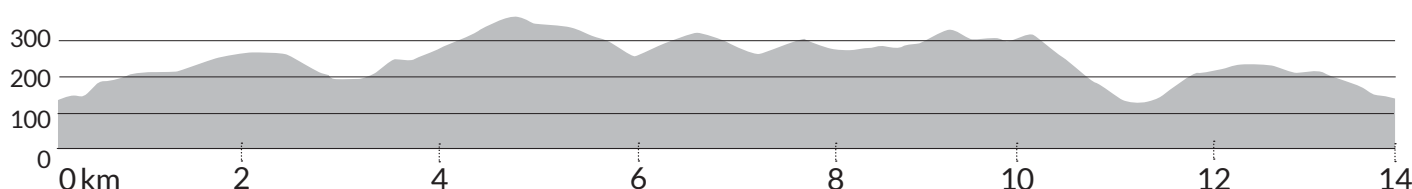
6 At gate turn R uphill to fine copse then return to gate. Continue R.

7 Immediately after road bridge turn L through gate, continuing to wall end. Turn R uphill, passing single ash tree and bare ruins.

8 At fence junction turn L through gate, keeping R of shed to join road downhill. Keep L at junction.

9 Go through gate to rejoin outward route R.

## Gradient profile Metres above sea level







Cheviot while ahead lay the sharp, grass-carpeted descent across the southern flanks of crag-topped Watch Hill. I watched my footing on the slippery surface.

On I went past the confluence of two exuberant burns, conifers rapidly giving way to rough grasslands, and then a sudden change in direction. Leaving the clear path behind, I picked my way over trackless terrain, weaving through large stretches of body-wrenching tussocks, interspersed with patches of energy-sapping heather, my mind focused on reaching a cluster of fine crags lying to the east of Commonburn House.

It was tough going. I reached the first small crag followed quickly by the main rocky

group, encircled by a carpet of rich green grass. Standing at a modest 1158 feet above sea level and exposed to the full force of the wind, these crags are not named on the OS map – but a group of local runners has unofficially named them ‘Kenny’s Crags’ in honour of one member turning 50.

Pushed and pulled in all directions by the capricious wind, this was no place to linger, so down I went, a boot-soaking hint of a path leading me back to the bridleway I had left 45 minutes earlier. I was now within sight of Broadstruther, an isolated cottage now used as a pit stop by grouse shooting parties, and an opportunity for some respite from the wind. I took full advantage.


A trio of sandwiches later


and I was crossing the Hazelly Burn, heading towards the distant Harthope Valley on a firm hillside-contouring track with the wind at my back. I positively flew along, Watch Hill over to my left, and then, as I rounded a bend in the track, the scree-littered slopes of Hart Heugh tumbling down to the Carey Burn. All of a sudden, a handsome hare ran out in front of me and headed downhill.


Superb views to the lower Harthope Valley opened up as I dropped to the bridge over the Carey Burn, with the lonely cottage of Skirl Naked just visible in the shadows. I had one last spot I wanted to visit: the ruins of the cottage of Switcherdown and the adjacent weather-worn single ash tree. Leaving the valley, I did so. 📍

[Captions clockwise from top] Track to Hellpath; Unnamed crags (aka Kenny’s Crags); The view from Snear Hill to Harthope Valley

### Further information

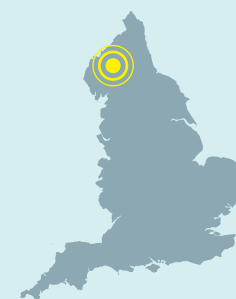
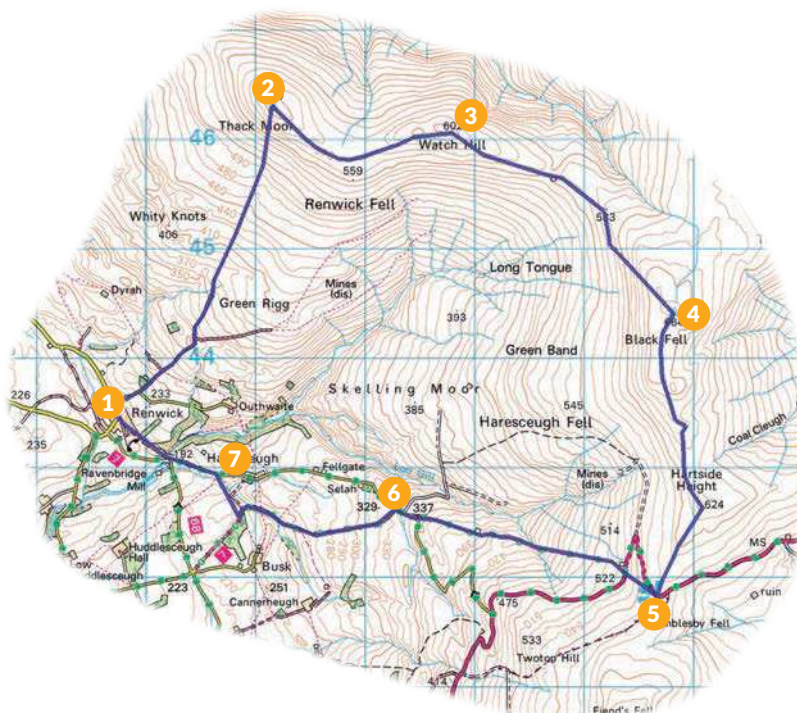
 **Maps:** OS 1:25,000 Explorer sheet OL16 (The Cheviot Hills)

 **Transport:** None to the start

 **Information:** Wooler TIC (01668 282123) and [northumberlandnationalpark.org.uk](http://northumberlandnationalpark.org.uk)



# Thack Moor & Black Fell North Pennines **ENGLAND**



## Vivienne Crow greet the spring on the Pennines tops

IT'S HARD to beat the North Pennines in early spring. After the silence of the winter, these normally sombre hills are bouncing back to vibrant life. As I follow a walled track up from the East Fellside village of Renwick, small flocks of lapwings whirl and dive in the air above while curlews call from the distance. Occasionally, I see writhings in the muddy puddles on the path but, by the time I reach them, all signs of life have vanished. I try creeping up on them but it's no use; frogs are very sensitive to vibrations and my 'silent' footsteps probably feel like those of an elephant to them. As I stop to peer into the murky depths of one pool, ➡

### 1 **Start/Finish** **All Saints' Church,** **Renwick**

**GR: NY596436**

There is room for a few cars in front of the church, but please do not use this parking area if there is a service due. Walk SE from church and immediately turn left along lane. When it bends R, keep L, on rough track. Keep L at later fork. Path narrows at it climbs.

2 From trig pillar on Thack Moor, walk SE – beside wall at first. Cross stile in fence to join broader path up to a curriek (cairn or shelter) on Watch Hill.

3 About 165m beyond the curriek, leave path by bearing R, soon crossing ladder stile. Follow path ESE for 750m. Just before it swings L, strike off SE, aiming for ruins. Cross ladder stile, walk ESE, keeping L of ruins. Cross gap in tumbledown wall and veer SE, following wall uphill.

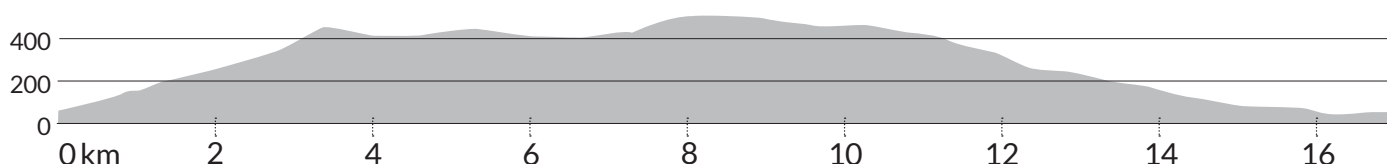
4 Cross stile next to trig pillar on Black Fell and turn R, beside fence and then wall. About 1.8km beyond trig pillar, cross stile on R to continue downhill beside fence on L. Nearing A686, veer slightly R to find a kissing gate.

5 Turn R along road and L along track after car park. Re-cross A686 and follow bridleway opposite.

6 Go R at minor road and then L along track for 1.6km. Soon after ford and bend, go through gate on R. Follow Kiln Beck, crossing it after 180m. After stile, head diagonally up field to large metal gate.

7 Turn L along road. After Raven Bridge, take ROW heading NW. Beyond farm gate, follow track to sealed lane. Bear L. Keep straight ahead at road junction to return to church.

## Gradient profile Metres above sea level







a snipe suddenly, and noisily, flies out of a ditch nearby, sending my heart racing.

I quickly reach the trig pillar on Thack Moor, the climb so gradual that it's barely noticeable. This summit was promoted to the status of 'mountain' in 2013 when surveyors John Barnard, Graham Jackson and Myrddyn Phillips found it to be 0.65m higher than previously thought, pushing it just above the metric equivalent of the magic 2000ft mark.


As I look into the lonely heart of the North Pennines, my spirits soar. The Pennines don't inspire me in the same way that the Lake District fells do – let's face it, they're nowhere near as aesthetically

pleasing – but their sense of space and expansiveness is uplifting, especially after a long, grey winter. I head south-east towards Watch Hill.

Wouldn't it be great to keep walking across these lonely tops, over Cross Fell and beyond? I'm close to the northern end of a chain of hills that continues all the way to the Peak District – more than 150km to the south as the crow flies; considerably more if the Crow's walking. The long days of summer stretch on ahead, just like the Pennines... It's an appealing idea!


The stone construction on Watch Hill is marked on maps as a *currick* (a local word for a cairn or shelter), this one bearing an inscribed


stone marked 'Lowthian 1865'. Further on, I pass above the ruins of a shepherd's hut. These hills may be bereft of humans today, but the mark of mankind is never far away.


My day on the hills reaches its high point on the 664m Black Fell, where a lone golden plover eyes me suspiciously and then wanders off. It's all downhill now, past the burned-out remains of the old Hartside café and down to the farmland at the foot of the escarpment. I consider following a minor road back to Renwick, but opt instead for a series of old tracks and field paths. A wise choice: I end my day in the company of hares and melodious meadow pipits. Spring has definitely arrived. 

**[Captions clockwise from top]**  
The walled fields of the Eden Valley lead right up to the base of the North Pennines; Looking south to a moody Cross Fell; Black Fell is the highest point on the walk

## Further information

 **Maps:** OS 1:25,000 Explorer sheets OL5 (English Lakes, North-eastern area) and OL31 (North Pennines): both are required

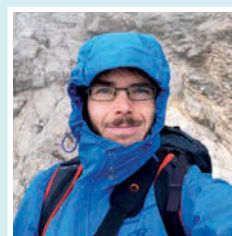
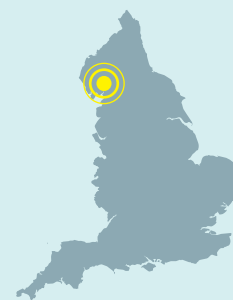
 **Transport:** None to the start

 **Information:** Penrith TIC (01768 867466); [northpennines.org.uk](http://northpennines.org.uk)



# Loughrigg Fell

## Lake District **ENGLAND**



### Alex Roddie gets hot and bothered on a mini-mountain

**‘OF THE LESSER HEIGHTS** of Lakeland,’ Wainwright wrote in *The Central Fells*, ‘Loughrigg Fell is pre-eminent.’ It’s hard to disagree. I was determined to ignore Lakeland’s lesser heights during my early explorations of the Lake District, but in recent years my appreciation for these lower hills has grown. In addition to being small and perfectly formed, they have some (perhaps obvious) practical advantages: they don’t take long to climb, and they require less effort than the bigger peaks. Perfect for a late start on a blisteringly hot day during a spring heatwave. ➔

#### 1 Start/Finish

##### Rydal

**GR: NY365062**

(Limited parking near church)  
Walk back along the road to the bridge, then turn right and follow a clear track beside the river, soon entering woodland.

#### 2

The path climbs slightly and visits Rydal Cave (a disused quarry) before continuing the gently rising traverse towards Loughrigg Terrace.

#### 3

Begin climbing steeply from the end of Loughrigg Terrace on a good path with excellent views.

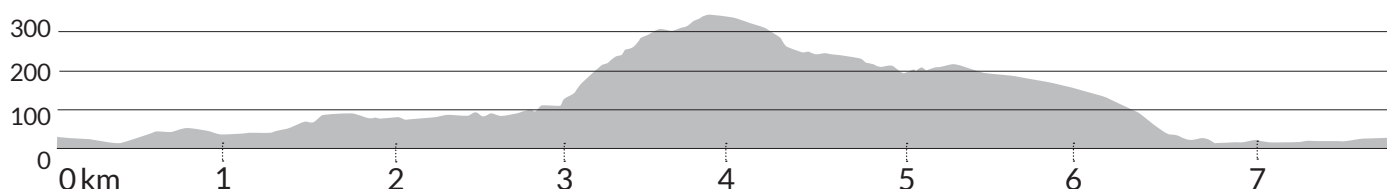
#### 4

Reach the summit of Loughrigg Fell (335m). Descend E, then turn S before entering a broad depression, avoiding paths descending N or climbing E.

#### 5

Join a path between steep slopes and a stone wall. Follow for about 1km before reaching the road; follow this beside river back to Rydal.

### Gradient profile Metres above sea level







A few days after our wedding, Hannah and I were on a 'mini-moon' in the Lake District – a short camping trip prior to our real honeymoon in Scotland later in the year. We were based in Rydal, and didn't manage to drag ourselves out of the tent until after 10 o'clock. When I unfolded the map, Hannah pointed at the obvious hill on the other side of Rydal Water. "Loughrigg Fell. That looks easy to walk to. What's it like?"

The Rothay was running low and sluggish as we set out along the track to Loughrigg Terrace through shady woodlands where bluebells provided splashes of colour. Soon we found the colossal entrance of Rydal Cave, and stepping into the darkness

felt like stepping out of an oven into a fridge – but we couldn't stay in there forever. Loughrigg beckoned. Plenty of other walkers were out enjoying the early dose of summer, and on such a compact mountain it felt like a surprisingly social affair. Every walker we met was full of smiles. Despite hillwalking's undeserved reputation as a middle-aged pastime, most of the people we met were in young family groups.

Onward to the summit. The walk had felt gentle up until this point, but the pull up from the end of Loughrigg Terrace was a bit abrupt in the midday heat, and neither of us minded taking a couple of rests to admire the view. The summit was all about

shimmering heat haze and gulps from water bottles. I was glad we'd decided to leave the Langdale giants alone until cooler conditions returned.

The descent soon took us into a big area of lumpy ground and lime-green bracken fiddleheads bursting up through the bleached straw of the previous autumn. Sheep tracks spread in all directions, but I wanted to head for the track descending east of Loughrigg past Fox Ghyll. The sun beat down. Both of us were glad to be in the shade of the trees again for a while.

Back at the campsite, it was all we could do to head for the tearoom and order lemonade and ice cream. Loughrigg had been a good call. 📍

**[Captions clockwise from top]**  
A respite from the sun in the woods; Bluebells and Grasmere; Even hotter down here!

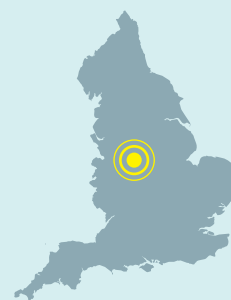
## Further information

**Maps:** OS 1:25,000 Explorer sheet OL7 (English Lakes – South-eastern area); OS 1:50,000 Landranger sheet 90 (Penrith & Keswick); Harvey 1:40,000 British Mountain Map (Lake District)

**Transport:** Stagecoach bus 555 (Lancaster-Keswick) runs regularly between Ambleside and Rydal: [stagecoachbus.com](http://stagecoachbus.com)

**Information:** Ambleside TIC, 01539 468135, or [visitcumbria.com/amb/ambleside](http://visitcumbria.com/amb/ambleside)



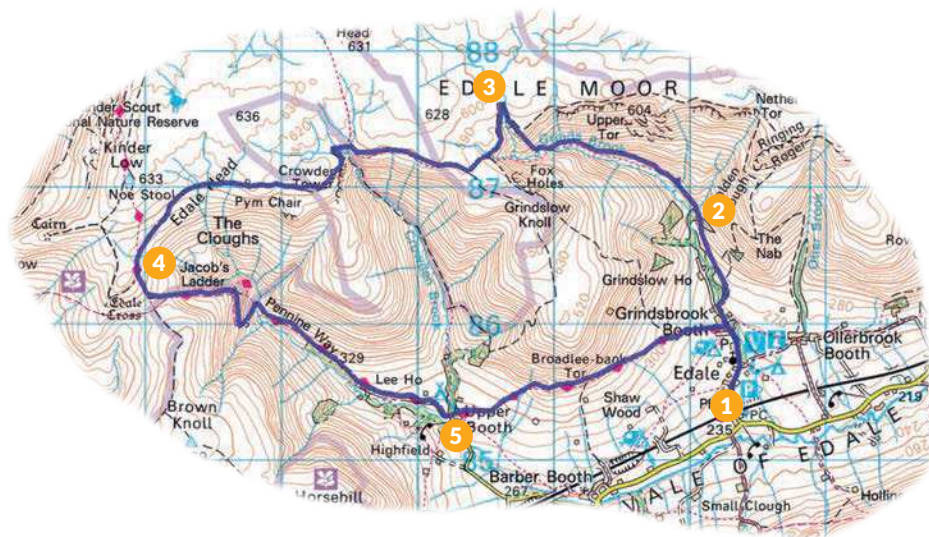


## Paul Richardson accidentally discovers a new way onto Kinder

IF THERE'S A PROBLEM with the Peak District village of Edale as a start point for a day walk, it's that you are spoilt for choice. It's the only problem I can think of. Today, with my son Luke, I was heading up Grindsbrook Clough to join the track that skirts the southern edge of Kinder Scout before returning to Edale on the Pennine Way.

The scenic splendour of Grindsbrook Clough becomes immediately obvious on leaving the village. The lush mix of heather, ferns and grass stretched away ahead, and we made good progress on the firm path that runs parallel with the brook.

As the track veers



### 1 Start/Finish Edale village

GR: SK123854

From the railway station or car park head N through the village and at the end of the road take the path R, leading through woodland. Cross the footbridge and stay on the main path as it leads through fields then woods ahead of Grindsbrook Clough.

2 Cross footbridge over Grinds Brook and follow the line of the valley as it slowly veers L through Grindsbrook Clough.

Near the head of the valley you have a choice. The ghyll to the L is the easier climb to the edge of the Kinder plateau above, or you could take the route to the R, which is a slightly more challenging scramble to the top.

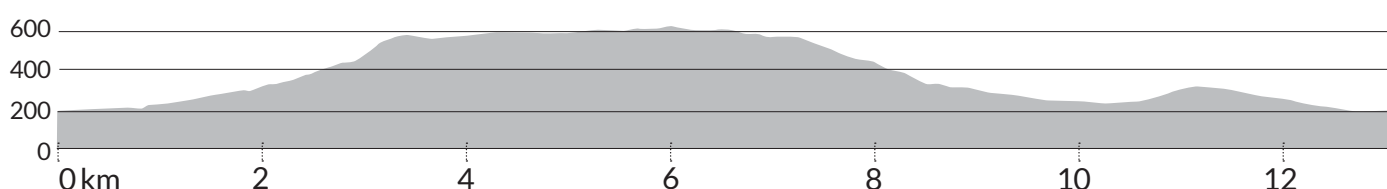
3 If you take the R-hand route, you will need to turn L on the track at the top, which leads to the top of the other route up. From the W end of Grindsbrook Clough follow the track W as it leads around the southern edge of Kinder Scout. Continue W past

Crowden Tower, Pym Chair and Noe Stool before veering gently L downhill to meet the Pennine Way (PW).

4 Turn L onto the PW and follow it E through the valley leading to Upper Booth.

5 At Upper Booth, turn L through the farm, then take the second path R, signed for the Pennine Way, which leads directly back to Edale. At the road turn R to return to the station or car park.

## Gradient profile Metres above sea level







steadily left, the picture postcard feel is replaced with a more rugged beauty, and we were slowed down more by the rock clambering than by the incline. But who wants to rush through a valley like this?

We'd both walked through Grindsbrook Clough before, but not in this direction, and as we got higher and nearer to the edge of Kinder Scout, we agreed that the going seemed noticeably tougher than we remembered. This feeling got stronger the higher we got, until we were harbouring serious doubts about having been here before. Then it clicked. I hadn't realised there were two tracks up to the top, and I'd inadvertently taken us on the right-hand route without noticing the left-hand

track. However, the scrambling was enjoyable and not too difficult, so we carried on and soon made it to the southern lip of Kinder Scout.

The scrambling route had highlighted a reversal in the father-son relationship. At one point, Luke went ahead and waited to give a helping hand to his old dad. Not only did I not mind – I was genuinely grateful. I suppose these things are inevitable.

Passing the rocky outcrop of Crowden Tower, which stands sentry over the ghyll of Crowden Clough as it cuts steeply through the hillside below towards Upper Booth, we were soon heading through the scattering of wild-shaped rocks at Wool Packs.

Just after Edale Head, we

made an attempt to visit the highest point of Kinder Scout (it is marked simply by a height of 636m – only 3m more than the trig point at Kinder Low) in the middle of a peat bog. After about 10 minutes of getting nowhere fast, we reluctantly turned back.

Dropping down to meet the Pennine Way seemed easy compared to this rough terrain, and we sauntered steadily eastwards through Upper Booth, then kept with the Pennine Way as it skirted Broadlee-Bank Tor before cutting through fields to deliver us back to Edale. We didn't make it to the very top of Kinder Scout, but we'd found a new route (albeit accidentally!) and had another great day in these magnificent hills. 📍

[Captions clockwise from top]  
The start of the path along Grindsbrook Clough; The top of Grindsbrook Clough; Waterfall at the base of Jacob's Ladder

### Further information

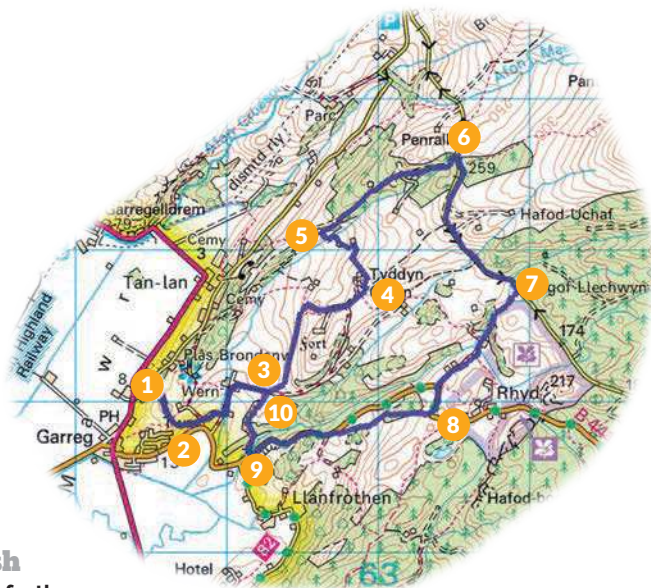
**Maps:** OS 1:25,000 Explorer sheet OL1 (The Peak District, Dark Peak area); Harvey 1:25,000 Superwalker, Peak District Central

**Transport:** Regular train service between Sheffield and Manchester via the Hope Valley [thetrainline.com](http://thetrainline.com)

**Information:** Moorland Visitor Centre, Edale (01433 670207)



# Llanfrothen Gwynedd WALES



## 1 Start/Finish

Parking in Llanfrothen is limited. The best place to leave your car is the car park at Plas Brondanw, however there is a charge here.

GR: SH614421

From the car park at Plas Brondanw walk SE through woodland, passing through ornate iron gates, for 200m to the Outlook Tower.

2 Continue SE to the corner of the field, where there is a choice of two footpaths. Take the path heading E for 350m then head N along a quiet lane to the house at Y Wern.

3 Pass through the farmyard and follow the lane for 200m to a footpath sign pointing across open meadow towards Moel Dinas. Follow this path for 600m to where two paths diverge. Take the path on the right (heading

W) for 500m to the farmhouse at Tyddyn Gwyn.

4 Pass through the farmyard, following the path NW for 600m to Gareg-fawr. Note: from the ridge north of Gareg-fawr there are stunning views of the mountains of Eifonydd (Moel-ddu, Moel Hebog, the Nantlle Ridge).

5 A track leads NE through forest for 1.1km to meet the narrow mountain road from Croesor. From here there are splendid views of the Moelwyn mountains.

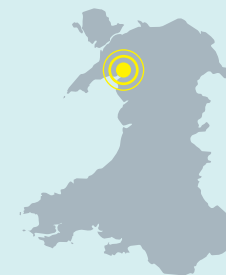
6 Follow the road SE for 1.5km to the house at Ogof Llechwyn.

7 Take the footpath SW for 800m, crossing the River Rhyd by footbridge to arrive at a chicane in the B4410 minor road.

8 After walking 200m S on the road, take the footpath due W for 600m to where it meets the same road. Follow the road SW for 500m to an abandoned chapel where a footpath heads N through woodland.

9 Follow the footpath N for 400m to again meet the lane east of Y Wern.

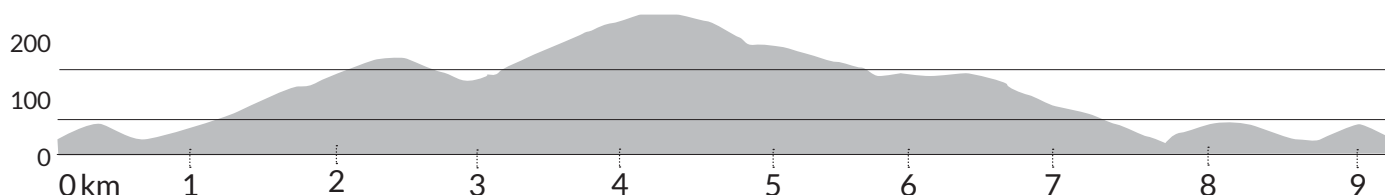
10 Now retrace steps 1 & 2 above, along lanes past Y Wern to the Outlook Tower and back to the car park at Plas Brondanw.



## Andrew Galloway unlocks the secrets of Llanfrothen

IN THE EARLY HOURS of 10 December 1951, the architect Clough Williams-Ellis and his wife, Amabel, were woken by the pungent smell of smoke. Rushing to the ground floor, Williams-Ellis discovered his beloved Welsh terrier, Pennant, lying dead at the door of the family library, the room beyond engulfed in flames. The blaze having consumed the household's only telephone, a messenger was sent to the village to alert the fire brigade at Porthmadog, some 10km away. When the operator finally put the call through to the on-duty fire officer, the messenger was informed that his appeal ➔

## Gradient profile Metres above sea level







for help had not been needed. Fed on bone-dry 16th Century timber floors, panels and partitions, and fanned by a ferocious gale, the flames had quickly engulfed the entire building and were clearly visible against the night sky, even from Porthmadog fire station.


Despite the attendance of five fire engines and the heroic efforts of their crews, by morning light it was evident that the fire had consumed nearly everything of the 17th Century four-storey central block of Plas Brondanw, the Williams-Ellises' ancestral home. The timber-framed roof having collapsed, little but the exterior stone walls remained standing, and these alone by virtue of the Jacobean architects who had built them a metre thick.

The restoration of Plas

Brondanw was no simple task, not least because of post-war rationing. Construction materials were both in short supply and subject to strict cost limits. Nonetheless, Williams-Ellis, practical and principled as ever, was able to scrape together an assemblage of second-hand artefacts, including dressed stone, roofing tiles, antique timber doors, stone mantelpieces, and other fixtures and fittings. He added more from his own reserves held at Portmeirion, the Italianate village located on the Penrhyndeudraeth peninsula, which he conceived and built during the inter-war period. A nationwide shortage of steel joists was overcome by the use of old tramway rails recovered from long abandoned slate quarries located where the Plas Brondanw estate extended into


the Moelwyn Mountains.


The restoration of Plas Brondanw took two years to complete and is commemorated in stone in the shape of a flaming urn, positioned high above an artificial cascade located in the woods to the south of the property. From this viewpoint the eye is drawn beyond the topiary avenues and pollarded symmetry of the gardens to the alluvial salt flats of Traeth Mawr, about which the andesite spires of the Welsh mountains gather on all sides in majestic splendour.


Following his death in 1978, Clough Williams-Ellis was cremated. His ashes were added to the chamber of a marine rocket, which on New Year's Eve 1998 was shot into the night sky, high above the Glaslyn estuary to the south of the village of Portmeirion. 

**[Captions clockwise from top]**  
Cnicht from Llanfrothen;  
The Lookout Tower, Plas  
Brondanw Estate; Cnicht  
from Plas Brondanw

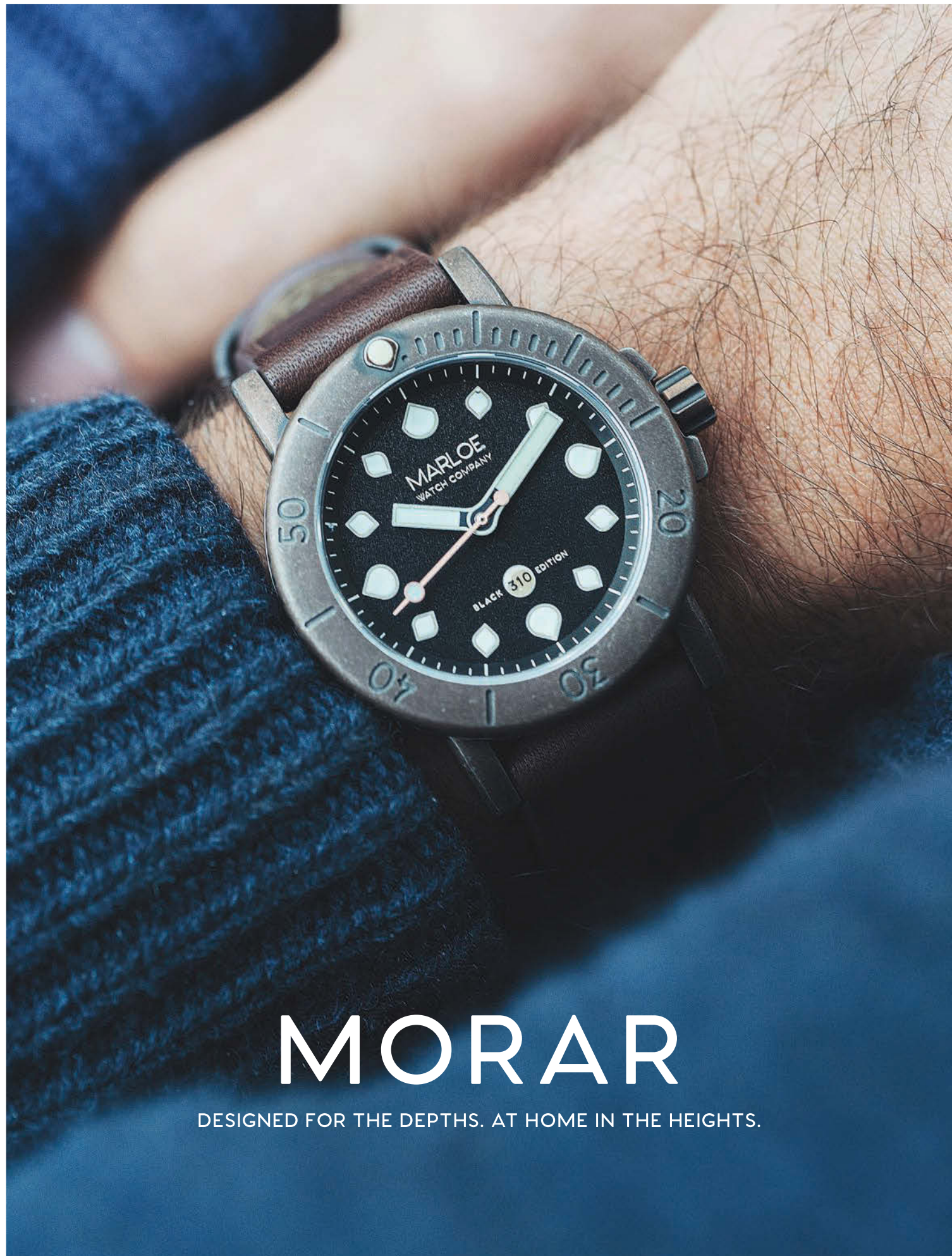
## Further information

 **Maps:** OS 1:25,000  
Explorer sheet OL18  
(Harlech, Porthmadog & Y Bala)

 **Transport:** None to  
the start

 **Information:** Porthmadog  
TIC, 01766 512981,  
[plasbrondanw.com](http://plasbrondanw.com), [snowdonia.gov.wales/home](http://snowdonia.gov.wales/home)





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# READERS' PHOTOS

## *'wildlife'*



Hare near Gislingham, Suffolk Photo: Chris Wellstead



Mother and child at Nepal's Swayambhunath Stupa Photo: Michael Henley



A hungry puffin on the Farne Islands Photo: Michael Henley



Ptarmigan on Carn Chuinneag Photo: John Owen

In our readers' photography series, we invite you to send in your best pictures on a specific theme. Next is 'summer' by 01.06.20.

Next month: *'summer'*

Send your pics to [tgo.ed@kelsey.co.uk](mailto:tgo.ed@kelsey.co.uk)  
or The Editor, The Great Outdoors, Kelsey Publishing Ltd,  
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# THE FLEX CAPACITOR: BUILT FOR THE SHORT HAUL, OR THE LONG HAUL



Developed to meet the needs of one of the world's leading backpackers, the Flex Capacitor adapts to any distance. But what it makes it so flexible?

A few years ago, the lightweight backpacker and long-distance walker Andrew Skurka began working with Sierra Designs to develop his ideal backpack.

Having pushed the limits of light and fast backpacking with achievements like his 6,875 mile Great Western Loop and 7,778 mile Sea-to-Sea route, Andrew wanted a comfortable, easy to use, lightweight and durable pack which solved issues he'd been having on his long-distance challenges. He needed a pack that would cope in all conditions: wet, dry, hot and cold. Back ventilation was important, and durability was paramount. So together we worked with him to build the first 40 - 60L Flex Capacitor.

Word of this new design has spread through the backpacking world. The Flex Capacitor was the pack which Chris Townsend, one of Britain's most prolific long-distance walkers, chose to take with him on his 400 mile walk across the Colorado Rockies.

## Expandable and adaptable

We say the Flex Capacitor is "Built for the short haul, or the long haul", but what does that

actually mean? What sets the Flex Capacitor apart from other backpacks, and why is it right for you?

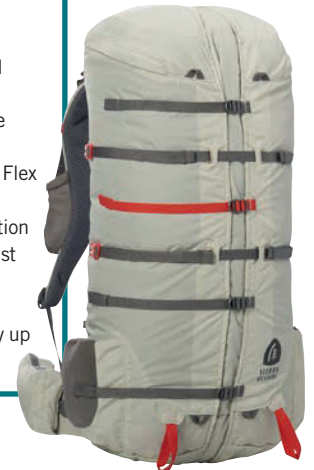
The key, as the name suggests, is flexibility. On big walks you need something that's going to fit. Covering long distances means what you carry is going to change. You'll eat your food, change what you're wearing, and if you pitch and hike then you won't be carrying your gear. The solution? To have a pack with an adjustable size that could be cinched down to keep your kit locked in place.

Andrew chose to use a light but tough 100D (denier) Nylon-Poly Ripstop for the body and an upgraded 420D Nylon Oxford for the critical contact points. This mix of fabric proves toughness when you need it, while also remaining lightweight.

Andrew moves fast over varying terrains, so he challenged the designers to make his pack work anatomically. We partnered with DAC and used tent pole tech to create our "Y" Flex Suspension. This system sits at the waistbelt and follows your spine and shoulder blades. This allows the frame to rotate with your body, which eliminates rubs and chaffing at your waist and

## The Flex Capacitor: Vital statistics

- 1.1kg - 1.19kg weight
- Three expandable sizes, 25-40L, 40-60L & 60-70L
- Three prices £150, £165, £185
- Two torso lengths and two articulated waist belt sizes (that can be changed)
- Lightweight DAC "Y" Flex Suspension.
- Stash pockets, hydration pockets, large zip waist pockets for even the largest phones
- Will comfortably carry up to 30lb/14kg



lower back. That's something you benefit from whether you're out for a few hours or weeks.

## Put to the test

Andrew took it out, put it to the test... and he loved it!

For 2020 we've upgraded our original 40 - 60L pack. We increased the waist pocket sizes so GPS, phones, cameras and snacks are all at hand. We added an extra hydration pocket on the shoulder, and we've launched the 25 - 40L version for day walks and short overnights, and the 60 - 75L for expeditions.

The Flex Capacitor will withstand the elements but for extra confidence in European conditions we've launched the 92g Flex Rain Cover, so we've definitely got you covered on the likes of the TGO Challenge.

Ask your local speciality outdoor shop to fit you with a new Flex Capacitor and follow us on social media to hear what's coming next.



To find our more contact: [EUSales@SierraDesigns.com](mailto:EUSales@SierraDesigns.com)

[SierraDesigns.eu](https://SierraDesigns.eu)





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Photo: The North Face

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## PRODUCT

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## CREDITS

**Editors:** Ellie Anstice, Jeremy Stevens & Luke Scrine

**Styling & Direction:** David Whitlow

**Production & Design:** Life Advertising, Liverpool



## NEW SUMMER CATALOGUES



## NATIONWIDE SHOPS

**AVIEMORE** 9-10 Grampian Road, PH22 1RH

**BRISTOL** 160 Whiteladies Road, BS8 2XZ

**CAMBRIDGE** Unit 45A, 1st Floor Lion Yard, CB2 3ET

**CASTLEFORD LEEDS** Xscape Yorkshire, WF10 4TA

**CHELMSFORD** 106-108 Bond Street, CM1 1GH

**CHESTER** 35 Bridge Street Row, CH1 1NW

**FORT WILLIAM** Belford Road, PH33 6BT

**GLASGOW BRAEHEAD** intu Braehead, PA4 8XQ

**LIVERPOOL** 73 Bold Street, L1 4EZ

**MANCHESTER** 130 Deansgate, M3 2GQ

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**WESTFIELD STRATFORD** 138 The Street, E20 1EN



# *Adventure on the* **Isle of Mull**

by Simon Pitman



All photos: Toby Roney



**Simon Pitman**  
Fort William Store Manager

I always feel a sense of relief as soon as I start an adventure. Starting months before and building up, I get anxious about what kit I should take. What if my sleeping bag isn't warm enough? How many pairs of socks should I take? These questions haunt me, right up until the moment I'm committed to sticking with what I've got. For this trip that happened in Oban once I locked the car and rode my bike to the ferry. It was 7am on a cold November day, the sky was clear, and the warm glow of an autumn sunrise was on the horizon.

I was heading to Mull for three days of cycling and relaxing, and I was really looking forward to it. I'm a complete novice in the world of bike packing. I've spent many nights camping and many days hiking to new spots. But cycling around an island I haven't explored yet really appealed - I like the idea of covering reasonable distances, but slow enough to really take it in.





Mull is a really special place. If you haven't heard of it, it's an island off the west coast of Scotland and is a little smaller than Skye. I've been once before, but I've only been to Tobermory, which is the main town, and was the setting for the children's program Balamory.

For this trip, I explored the south side of the island. We arrived early at Craignure and started cycling south. The weather was sunny but bitterly cold, and I was pleased to get to the day's hill climb to warm up. The gradient was a gentle ascent to 200m and descended back to sea level. Once past this, it was the perfect opportunity to stop for lunch. I stopped in the most remote bus stop I've ever seen, to shelter from the wind. I reckon it's used more for that than getting a bus!

After fuelling up on cheese and oatcakes, I headed further south-west following the coastline to Bunnessan before heading south to a small beach. It was the best spot I've ever camped in! I love looking at a map finding something that looks good and heading there not knowing exactly how it'll turn out. It was a windy night and a calm morning; the sunrise was spectacular.

After a quick coffee, I packed up and followed my tracks back to the road. The wildlife was putting on a show that morning, the eagles soared overhead, and the seals bathed in the morning sun. I stopped in a local shop, to grab a cup of tea and ask about some of the birds I had seen that morning. It was great to chat with some locals and gain some knowledge and insight into this amazing place.

I made my way around the south side of Ben More, the island's only Munro. After another climb, I had a speedy descent down to the coast and cycled along some of the mightiest sea cliffs I've ever seen!

Cycling through Salen as the sun set, I stopped and grabbed some food and a beer for the night. I felt I'd earned it! The last section of the day was a gravel track to Tomsleibhe Bothy. It was dark, and a frost was starting to form that sparkled from my bike light.

Being tired, hungry and cold made it all the more pleasing to see the bothy hove into view. I got a fire going, had a hot dinner and enjoyed my beer. I think everybody should stay in a bothy at some point. It's a fantastic way to spend a night. The possibility of having it all to yourself, or sharing food and stories with strangers, is amazing.

The next day a frosty, grey morning greeted me, and after a short pedal back along the gravel, and a couple of miles east, I arrived at the ferry port. Tired but well-rested.



# CAMPING

Camping is good for the soul. Immersed in the outdoors with the stars overhead, it is the antithesis to our busy everyday lives, giving us a chance to take things at nature's pace. Away from the comforts of home, it is crucial that you have the right kit to keep you warm, comfortable and protected against the elements. When considering equipment for your next adventure, keep in mind where and when you're planning to visit; an early season alpine expedition versus an overnight trip in mild conditions will have rather different kit requirements! With a comprehensive camping range, we can help you make the informed decisions that mean you set off well equipped, with confidence.









# HOW TO CHOOSE YOUR TENT

With the right tent, finding your perfect pitch is easy. Whether it's wild camping on Dartmoor, sheltering from an alpine storm or a weekend with the family, the tent you choose will make all the difference. That's why we have selected our range from brands whose innovations lead the industry. The highest quality materials, advanced construction techniques and functional designs ensure our range of tents represent the very best in their category.

## CATEGORIES

Knowing which tent to choose can be tricky. To help you narrow down your choices, we split our range into three activity-based tiers. From there, you can hone in on the stats that are important to you. For each model, we include key features alongside the specifications; these give a more detailed view on what each one has to offer.

### Mountain Tents

Designed to cope with the harshest conditions imaginable these tents will let you sit out the fiercest of storms. Constructed from incredibly strong but lightweight materials, their designs will shrug off snow and strong winds that would destroy lesser tents. Ideal for mountaineering trips, enduring expedition life or travelling in tough conditions; tents in this category will provide you with the reliability you need.

### Backpacking Tents

Tents in this category will provide you with reliable, comfortable shelters when venturing off the beaten track. Using lightweight fabrics and innovative features, these tents combine attractive pack weights with useable space. A range of designs allow you to tailor the tent to your specific needs: from roomy designs with good internal space, dual entrances and generous vestibules; to lighter designs that cut back on features to keep weight to a minimum.

### Campsite Tents

With a focus on providing space and comfort for practical outdoor living, our range of campsite tents are perfectly suited to groups and family use. Easy to pitch designs with functional floor plans help maximise space, while durable materials can be relied upon to fend off bad weather. So, whether it's a short adventure with friends or summer camping with family, we've got the tent for you.



Photo: rickhaithcox.com





Photo: willcopestakemedia.com

## SPECIFICATIONS

### Capacity

This is the number of people the tent has been designed to accommodate. If you don't mind the extra weight, moving up to the next capacity (e.g. choosing a three-person tent for two of you) will give you more space to move about and increase your storage options.

### Weight

Wherever possible, we quote two weights – the maximum and minimum you can expect to carry. Max weight refers to the packed weight of the tent and includes all items that come with the tent. Minimum weight refers to the flysheet, inner tents and poles only.

### Pack Size

This is the size of the tent stuff sack. If you have to carry the tent in your pack, the smaller the number the better! If you're tight on space, a good tip is to use compression straps to reduce the volume further.

### Floorplan

Floorplans are an excellent way to gauge how much space you'll have when you're in your tent. We include measurements for both the sleeping areas and vestibules, so you can see the sleeping to storage ratios of each model. It's worth noting the headroom too. On many of the smaller, technical models, you'll only be able to sit or crouch; tents designed for campsite use let you stand and move more freely.





# MOUNTAIN TENTS



## The North Face VE 25

This expedition tent provides refuge to mountaineers and explorers pushing their limits in the harshest conditions. The classic geodesic design offers strength, stability and space for three, protecting against wind, rain and snow alike.

- PU/Silicone coated 40 denier nylon flysheet
- 9mm DAC poles
- Dual doors with poled front vestibule
- Fully taped nylon bathtub floor
- Flysheet window tested to -51°C

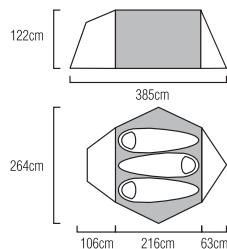
## VE 25 £699.99

Capacity: 3 person

Weight: 4.68kg/4.31kg (min)

Pack size: 61 x 23cm

Code 204564



THE  
NORTH  
FACE



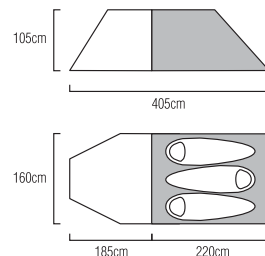
## MOUNTAIN TENTS

### Hilleberg Nammatj 3 GT

This versatile tent gives year-round performance suitable for mountaineering, backpacking and more. Made from top quality materials it offers maximum strength without a weight penalty. An extended vestibule increases space while the simultaneous pitch design makes daily use easy.

• **Special offer: free footprint worth £129.99!**

- Kerlon 1800 flysheet
- 10mm DAC Featherlite NSL poles
- Simultaneous flysheet and inner pitching
- Double guyline attachments for stability
- Large extended vestibule



**HILLEBERG**  
THE TENTMAKER

### Nammatj 2 £884.99

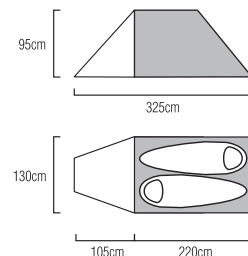
Capacity: 2 person  
Weight: 3.0kg/2.3kg (min)  
Pack size: 58 x 20cm  
Code 256202

### Hilleberg Nammatj 2

Constructed from exceptionally strong Kerlon 1800 this tent can handle everything from high altitude expeditions to backpacking trips with ease. With a superb strength to weight ratio, simultaneous pitch design and small pack size it's no wonder so many favour the Nammatj 2.

• **Special offer: free footprint worth £94.99!**

- Kerlon 1800 flysheet
- 10mm DAC Featherlite NSL poles
- Simultaneous flysheet and inner pitching
- Double guyline attachments for stability
- Vents allow controlled air circulation

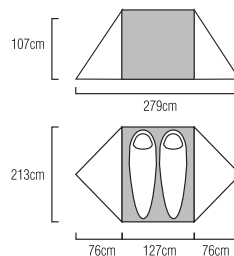


**HILLEBERG**  
THE TENTMAKER

### MSR Access 2

The ultimate shelter for all-season backpacking. The Access 2 features a DuraShield flysheet, robust Easton Syclyone poles and central frame support to fend off bad weather, while the inner canopy has limited mesh to reduce heat loss.

- 20 denier DuraShield nylon ripstop flysheet
- Easton Syclyone poles
- Robust central support frame
- Side entry vestibules
- Fully taped bathtub floor



### Access 2 £629.99

Capacity: 2 person  
Weight: 1.86kg/1.64kg (min)  
Pack size: 46 x 15cm  
Code 259022

**MSR**



# BACKPACKING TENTS



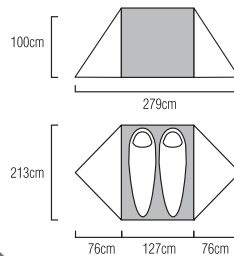
## MSR Hubba NX Tents

These ultralight, three-season backpacking tents have a unique pole configuration, maximising headroom for comfort. The freestanding designs are quick to pitch while the small pack sizes make them easy to carry.

- 20 denier DuraShield nylon ripstop flysheet
- DAC Featherlite NFL pole
- Side entry vestibules
- Large StayDry doors with rain gutters
- Mesh canopy and cross-ventilating flysheet

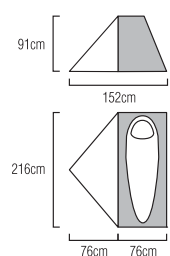
## Hubba Hubba NX £444.99

Capacity: 2 person  
Weight: 1.72kg/1.54kg (min)  
Pack size: 46 x 15cm  
Code 259001



## Hubba NX £384.99

Capacity: 1 person  
Weight: 1.29kg/1.12kg (min)  
Pack size: 46 x 15cm  
Code 259002





## BACKPACKING TENTS

### Hilleberg Nallo GT Tents

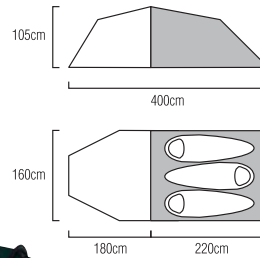
These tunnel tents make perfect partners on long-distance backpacking trips. Designed for all-season use, they're light, durable and easy to pitch. A favourite with globe-trotters, their extended porches mean cramped conditions will be a thing of the past.

• **Special offer: free footprint worth £129.99 and £94.99 respectively!**

- Kerlon 1200 flysheet
- 9mm DAC Featherlite NSL poles
- Simultaneous flysheet and inner pitching
- High bathtub floor
- Adjustable vents for air circulation

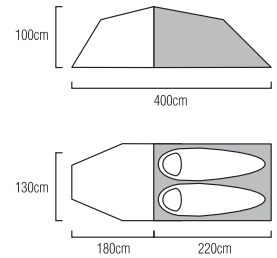
### Nallo 3 GT £1009.99

Capacity: 3 person  
Weight: 3.2kg/2.6kg (min)  
Pack size: 51 x 18cm  
Code 256210



### Nallo 2 GT £939.99

Capacity: 2 person  
Weight: 2.9kg/2.4kg (min)  
Pack size: 48 x 18cm  
Code 256211



**HILLEBERG**  
THE TENTMAKER

### Hilleberg Akto

For those who love to go it alone, the Akto makes no compromises. Made with Hilleberg's renowned quality construction and built for extended use, it's simple to pitch, provides good internal space and has a roomy vestibule.

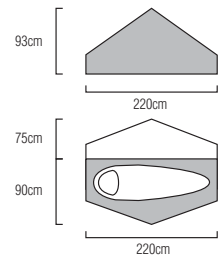
• **Special offer: free footprint worth £69.99!**

- Kerlon 1200 flysheet
- 9mm DAC Featherlite NSL poles
- Simultaneous flysheet and inner pitching
- Single door and vestibule
- Venting fabric at ends



### Akto £604.99

Capacity: 1 person  
Weight: 1.7kg/1.3kg (min)  
Pack size: 43 x 13cm  
Code 256215



**HILLEBERG**  
THE TENTMAKER

### MSR Elixir Tents

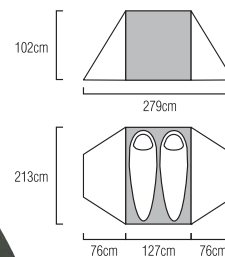
The Elixirs are backpacking tents at the top of their class. With easy-access StayDry doors, large vestibules and internal space optimised for living, they're ideal for multi-day use. Great value for money, they're supplied with footprints for enhanced durability.

• **Footprint included**

- 68 denier polyester ripstop flysheet
- 7000 aluminium series poles
- Large vestibules offer generous storage space
- Unique pole geometry optimises headroom
- Mesh and solid fabric panels

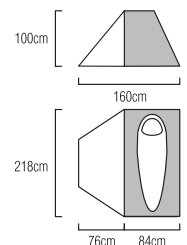
### Elixir 2 £264.99

Capacity: 2 person  
Weight: 2.77kg/2.24kg (min)  
Pack size: 51 x 17cm  
Code 259007



### Elixir 1 £214.99

Capacity: 1 person  
Weight: 2.16kg/1.78kg (min)  
Pack size: 48 x 15cm  
Code 259008



**MSR**





Photo: Big Agnes

### Big Agnes Copper Spur HV UL2

The brand of choice for ultralight enthusiasts, Big Agnes' Copper Spur makes it easy to see why. A superlight two-person backpacking tent, its stats belie the comfortable camping experience and three-season performance it provides.

- Silicone-treated double ripstop nylon flysheet
- DAC Featherlite NFL poles
- TipLok Tent Buckles speed up and simplify setup
- Side entry awning-style vestibules
- High-volume design provides ample living space



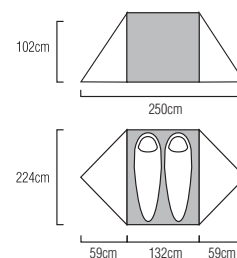
### Copper Spur HV UL2 £434.99

Capacity: 2 person

Weight: 1.42kg/1.22kg (min)

Pack size: 50 x 15cm

Code 646012



### Big Agnes Fly Creek HV UL2

Planning to camp off the beaten track this summer? Take the Fly Creek with you! A freestanding tent with ultralight endeavours at its heart, its clever construction maximises liveable space, to improve comfort and access without adding weight.

- Silicone-treated ripstop nylon flysheet
- DAC Featherlite NFL poles and Angle SF Hubs
- Steeper walls increase the usable inner space
- Single door and vestibule
- Reflective guylines and tent corner webbing



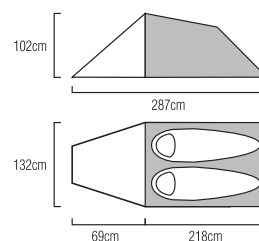
### Fly Creek HV UL2 £349.99

Capacity: 2 person

Weight: 1.05kg/0.88kg (min)

Pack size: 48 x 10cm

Code 646015





## BACKPACKING TENTS

### Big Agnes Blacktail 2

A tried and true shelter, this freestanding tent can be pitched on a range of terrains. Ideal for two, dual doors aid access and provide storage for both your kit. For the ultimate camping experience, remove the fly and stargaze from your sleeping bag.

- Polyester flysheet with PU coating
- Lightweight aluminium pole system
- Two doors and vestibules
- Interior mesh pockets aid organisation
- Vents help reduce condensation build-up



**Blacktail 2 £189.99**  
Capacity: 2 person  
Weight: 2.24kg/2.04kg (min)  
Pack size: 53 x 18cm  
Code 646017

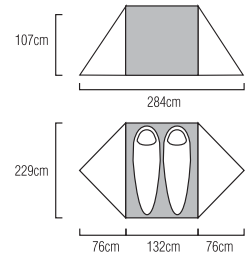


Photo: The North Face

### The North Face Eco Trail 2

For the Eco Trail's flysheet, floor and canopy, TNF chose 100% recycled polyester to deliver reliable performance while reducing landfill plastic. A tent that's straight-forward to pitch, it's spacious inside and has good airflow thanks to the high-low ventilation.

- 100% recycled polyester PU coated flysheet
- Recycled floor and canopy built to last
- DAC poles designed specifically for Eco Trail
- Increased peak height enhances living space
- High-low ventilation for breathability



**Eco Trail 2 £269.99**  
Capacity: 2 person  
Weight: 2.82kg/2.52kg (min)  
Pack size: 59 x 19cm  
Code 204562

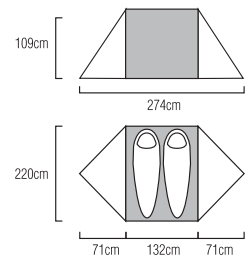






Photo: Mark Beaumont

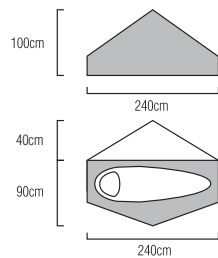
### Vango F10 Hydrogen Air

This superlight twin-skin tent boasts AirBeam technology. Designed for ultralight backpacking and bike touring, it has a central beam that can be inflated with a bike pump. A tiny pack size belies the practical space it provides for solo adventurers.

- ProTex 7D double silicone flysheet
- Ultralight AirBeam & carbon upright pole
- Schrader valve - bike pump compatible
- Simultaneous flysheet and inner pitching
- Single door and vestibule

### F10 Hydrogen Air £599.99

Capacity: 1 person  
Weight: 0.6kg/0.58kg (min)  
Pack size: 20 x 10cm  
Code 245027

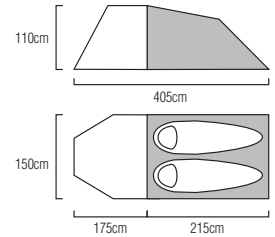




## Vango Knoydart 200

With a tunnel tent design, the Knoydart 200 offers an impressive internal space. Its extra-large porch with a riser groundsheet, window and venting comes into its own when you need to organise kit or weather out a storm.

- ProTex RS ripstop flysheet
- Yunan Eco Alloy poles
- Simultaneous flysheet and inner pitching
- Two doors and large vestibule
- Venturi Plus venting system



**Vango**

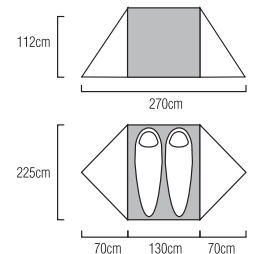
## Knoydart 200 £284.99

Capacity: 2 person  
Weight: 3.89kg/3.68kg (min)  
Pack size: 50 x 22cm  
Code 245020

## Vango Assynt 200

With an X-Pro construction and identical poles, the Assynt is lightweight, extremely strong and easy to pitch. Perfectly equipped for the demands of UK backpacking, twin entrances aid access and provide essential equipment storage.

- ProTex RS ripstop flysheet
- Yunan Eco Alloy poles
- X-Pro exoskeleton pole system
- Simultaneous flysheet and inner pitching
- Two doors and vestibules



**Vango**

## Assynt 200 £259.99

Capacity: 2 person  
Weight: 3.0kg/2.75kg (min)  
Pack size: 50 x 17cm  
Code 245029

## Vango Cairngorm Tents

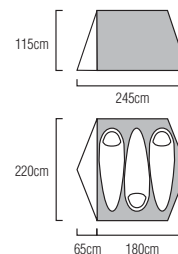
Designed for backpacking, the Cairngorm Tents balance durability, functionality and weather protection. Quick to pitch, the hybrid tunnel tent design maximises the inner space-to-weight ratio for improved camping comfort.

- ProTex RS ripstop flysheet
- Yunan Eco Alloy poles
- Simultaneous flysheet and inner pitching
- Two doors and vestibules
- Part-mesh inner door allows ventilation



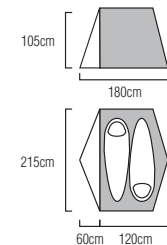
## Cairngorm 300 £179.99

Capacity: 3 person  
Weight: 2.6kg/2.39kg (min)  
Pack size: 47 x 15cm  
Code 245021



## Cairngorm 200 £154.99

Capacity: 2 person  
Weight: 2.2kg/1.99kg (min)  
Pack size: 47 x 15cm  
Code 245022



**Vango**



# CAMPSITE TENTS



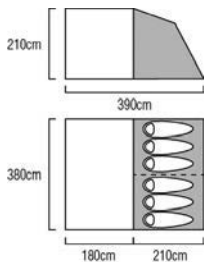
## Vango Hudson Tents

These family tents are ideal for weekend adventures. Easy to pitch, the pre-angled Powerflex poles help maximise the internal space for enhanced camp life comfort. A wide canopy over the front door helps extend the living area outdoors, to create a sheltered space perfect for alfresco dining.

- Sentinel Dura flysheet
- PowerFlex fibreglass poles
- Roomy queen-sized bedrooms
- Wide canopy provides shelter
- Front and rear storm anchors

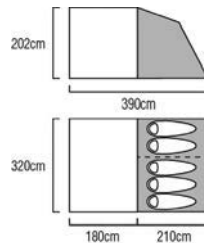
### Hudson 600 £449.99

Capacity: 6 person  
Weight: 17.80kg  
Pack size: 70 x 33cm  
Code 245133



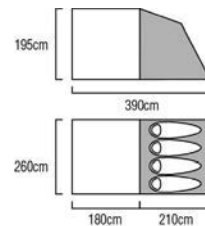
### Hudson 500 £399.99

Capacity: 5 person  
Weight: 15.95kg  
Pack size: 70 x 30cm  
Code 245134



### Hudson 400 £349.99

Capacity: 4 person  
Weight: 14.80kg  
Pack size: 70 x 28cm  
Code 245135







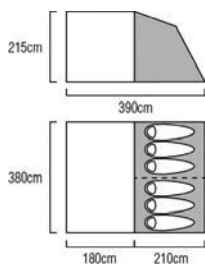
### Vango Amalfi Tents

The family-orientated Amalfi tents feature Vango's inflatable AirBeams instead of traditional poles, to help make camp set-up as quick and smooth as possible. The pre-angled AirBeams ensure optimal internal space, along with a generous vestibule and wide canopy porch that help maximise the living area for outstanding camping comfort.

- Sentinel Dura flysheet
- Vango AirBeam technology
- Pre-angled beams optimise internal space
- Roomy queen-sized bedrooms
- Wide canopy provides shelter

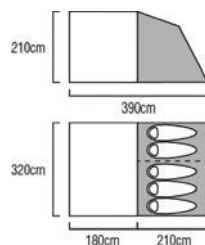
#### Amalfi 600 £649.99

Capacity: 6 person  
Weight: 19.10kg  
Pack size: 73 x 38cm  
Code 245130



#### Amalfi 500 £599.99

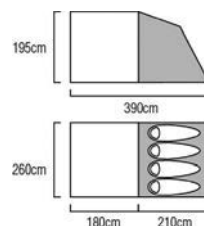
Capacity: 5 person  
Weight: 18.55kg  
Pack size: 70 x 40cm  
Code 245131



## CAMPSITE TENTS

#### Amalfi 400 £524.99

Capacity: 4 person  
Weight: 16.40kg  
Pack size: 70 x 38cm  
Code 245132



Vango revolutionised tent design and camping by using inflatable AirBeams in place of traditional poles for fast pitching in any environment. Whether you're camping with the kids or simply want to get your holiday off to a good start, an AirBeam tent makes setting up and dismantling a breeze. Their Amalfi series is no exception; easy to use, they can be pitched in just ten minutes!







Photo: Scott Rinckenberger

### MSR Habitude Tents

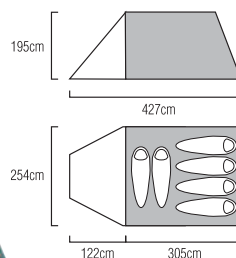
Holding up to family adventures, group trips and foul weather, MSR's Habitudes are the home bases you've been looking for. High ceilings, vertical sidewalls and spacious porches provide the liveable space required for comfortable camping in the great outdoors.

- 68 denier polyester ripstop flysheet
- 7000 series aluminium poles
- Colour coded pole clips aid pitching
- Large front vestibule
- High ceiling and vertical sidewalls



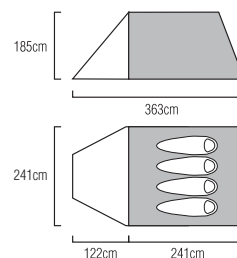
### Habitude 6 £609.99

Capacity: 6 person  
Weight: 6.35kg/6.08kg (min)  
Pack size: 58 x 25cm  
Code 259023



### Habitude 4 £519.99

Capacity: 4 person  
Weight: 5.72kg/5.44kg (min)  
Pack size: 58 x 23cm  
Code 259024



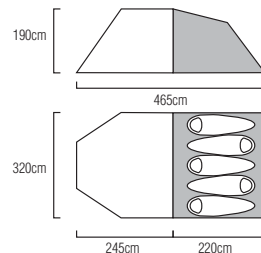


## CAMPSITE TENTS

### Vango Omega 500XL

The Omega 500XL tent is an outstanding choice for group camping. With a five-person capacity, plenty of storage space and a sleeping area that can be divided into two for enhanced privacy, it makes an excellent base for those summer holiday camping trips.

- ProTex 70 denier polyester flysheet
- PowerLite 7001-T6 alloy poles
- Simultaneous flysheet and inner pitching
- Front and side entry with dual doors
- Toggled inner divider creates separate sleeping area



**Vango**

### Beta 450XL £199.99

Capacity: 4 person

Weight: 7.90kg

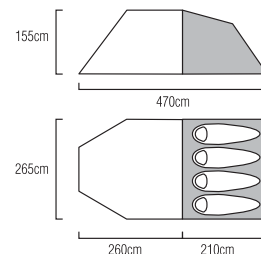
Pack size: 65 x 27cm

Code 245018

### Vango Beta 450XL

With a four-person capacity, the Beta 450XL has a roomy sleeping area and large porch to give plenty of space. With Vango's TBS II system and all-in-one pitching design, it's stable, reliable and easy to use.

- ProTex 70 denier polyester flysheet
- PowerFlex fibreglass poles
- Simultaneous flysheet and inner pitching
- Dual entry large vestibule with PVC windows
- Lights Out inner tent

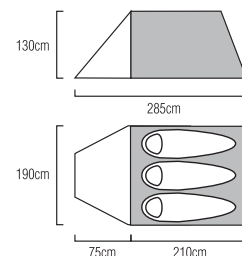


**Vango**

### Vango Alpha 300

The easy-to-pitch Alpha 300 offers superb value for money, making it a great choice for casual camping trips, festivals and more. Diamond Clear windows lighten the porch, while the lights out inner makes it easier to sleep in the mornings.

- ProTex 70 denier polyester flysheet
- PowerFlex fibreglass poles
- Inner first pitching for use without flysheet
- Large vestibule with PVC windows
- Lights Out inner tent



### Alpha 300 £99.99

Capacity: 3 person

Weight: 4.20kg

Pack size: 50 x 18cm

Code 245016

**Vango**





#### Nordisk Asgard 12.6

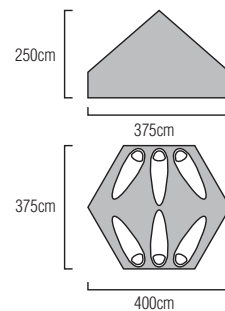
This spacious tent offers comfort and atmosphere for those looking to camp in style. Easy to pitch and with lots of room for furnishings, it makes the perfect base from which to explore all the outdoors has to offer.

- Technical Cotton fabric
- Adjustable steel pole
- Mesh door and ground-level windows for ventilation
- Zip-in floor – sold separately
- Fits one inner cabin for 2-3 people – sold separately



#### Asgard 12.6 £649.99

Capacity: 6 people  
Weight: 16kg  
Pack size: 114 x 37cm  
Code 643006



#### Asgard 12.6 Zip-In Floor £249.99

Code 643056

#### Asgard 12.6 Cabin £219.99

Code 643066

Image shows tent with additional floor



## CAMPSITE TENTS

### Nordisk Utgard 13.2

Offering a luxury camping experience, the Utgard is your home away from home. A great choice for social users, doors and windows at each end enable easy access, allow natural light in and provide excellent ventilation.

- Technical Cotton fabric
- Adjustable centre steel poles
- Mesh door and ground-level windows for ventilation
- Zip-in floor – sold separately
- Fits two 2 person inner cabins – each sold separately

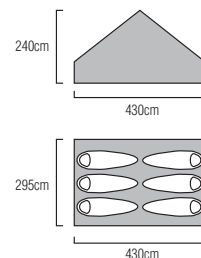


#### Utgard 13.2 £749.99

Capacity: 6 people  
Weight: 22.5kg  
Pack size: 124 x 35cm  
Code 643003



Image shows tent with additional floor



#### Utgard 13.2 Zip-In Floor £249.99

Code 643053

#### Utgard 13.2 Cabin £139.99

Code 643063

### Nordisk Ydun 5.5

The Ydun's classic silhouette has been favoured for good reason: easy to pitch, practical and adaptable, with access either end and a sewn-in floor, it offers a comfortable, ventilated camping space perfect for up to four people.

- Technical Cotton fabric
- Adjustable steel poles
- Mesh doors and ground-level windows for ventilation
- Comes with sewn-in floor
- Fits one inner cabin for 3 people – sold separately

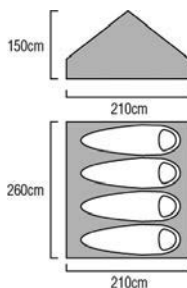


#### Ydun 5.5 £549.99

Capacity: 4 people  
Weight: 13kg  
Pack size: 62 x 27cm  
Code 643008



Image shows tent with additional cabin



#### Ydun 5.5 Cabin £164.99

Code 643068

### Nordisk Asgard 7.1

Let the good times roll with the Asgard 7.1; designed for those looking to get the most out of their camping experiences. From festival partying to relaxing at a favourite campsite, it delivers comfort and style to keep campers happy!

- Technical Cotton fabric
- Adjustable steel pole
- Mesh door and ground-level windows for ventilation
- Comes with sewn-in floor
- Fits one inner cabin for 2 people – sold separately

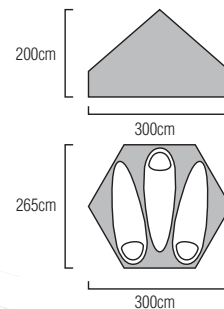


#### Asgard 7.1 £519.99

Capacity: 3 people  
Weight: 15.5kg  
Pack size: 97 x 30cm  
Code 643007



Image shows tent with additional cabin

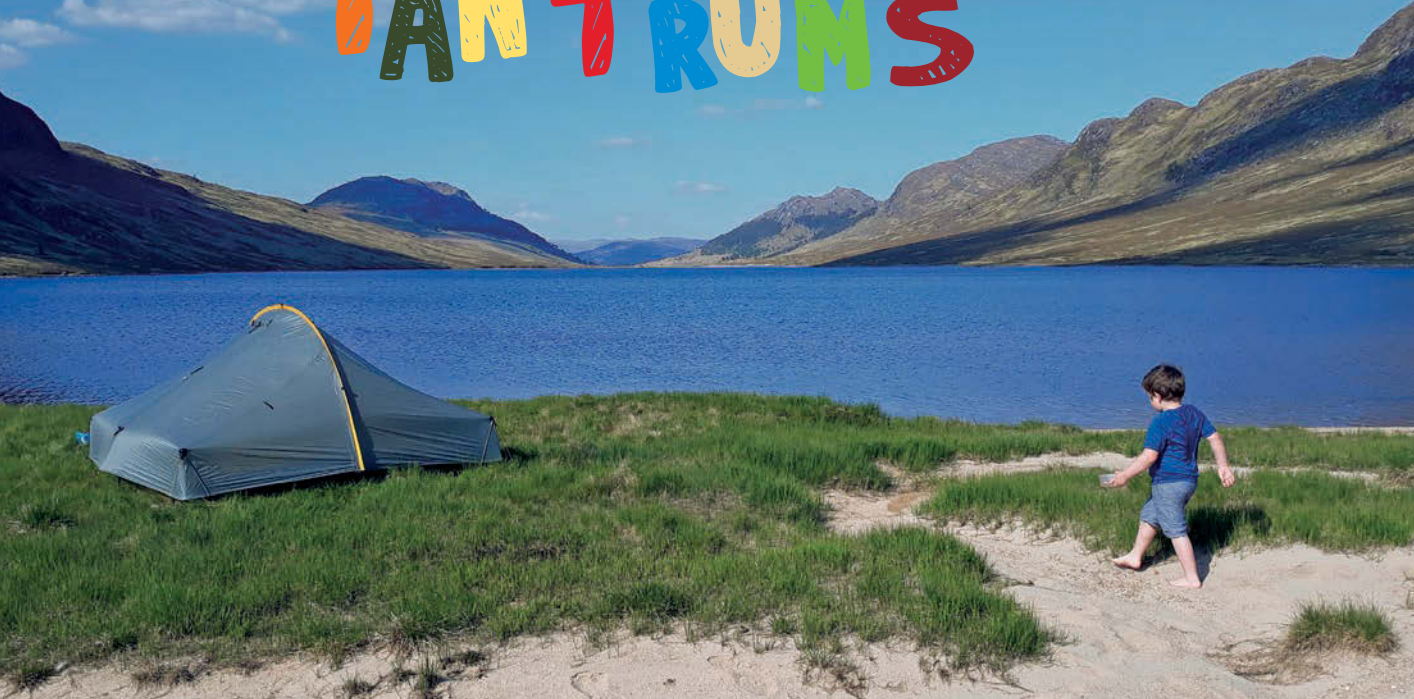


#### Asgard 7.1 Cabin £179.99

Code 643067



# TENTS & TANTRUMS



Wild camping can be an exciting but daunting idea. Imagine walking a whole day away from your car, then setting up your tent as the sun slowly drops below the horizon, looking forward to the stars coming out before repeating it all again tomorrow.

Now imagine that experience shared with babies or young children. The sense of excitement might turn to dread thinking about the extra equipment, the meltdowns and the heel dragging? It doesn't have to! We have found that family wild camping trips have been some of our most memorable adventures, from sleeping in a cave, to camping on deserted islands, winter camps and Munro summit camps.







**Here are some tips to make wild camping a great family adventure. Will you have tantrums? Probably, but meltdowns always seem easier in the great outdoors.**

**Start small and local:** It helps to go to somewhere you know for an easier first trip. An adventure doesn't need to cover huge distances so pick somewhere that is a short walk so children don't get too tired and you can bail out easily if it all goes wrong.

**Get your children involved:** Having your children help with planning, looking at maps, packing, picking snacks, leading you on the path and picking your camp spot all help to make them feel part of the adventure.

**Have alternative plans ready:** It doesn't always go to plan, so being flexible enough to change goals can turn a tantrum filled trip into a success by reducing distance, difficulty or main aim. A long mountain walk with a summit wild camp or a short walk along a stream looking for fish and splashing about are both fantastic fun!

**Take enough warm stuff:** Hopefully, your children will be running around lots to keep warm, but if they are pre-walkers, they can get cold fast. Make sure you dress them in at least a layer more than you and always have a hat, gloves, waterproofs and an extra layer to hand. It's not fair and may be dangerous to drag your children out in town coats when you have high tech mountain waterproofs.

**Pack light:** If you are carrying your child, you will already have a heavy pack, so it pays to pack light. You can buy fantastic lightweight equipment, but starting by asking 'do we really need this?' is a great way to save weight.

**Get a water filter:** A water filter gives reassurance that water from mountain streams will be safe. They weigh very little and save you carrying kilograms of water.

**Use walking poles:** If you are carrying your baby, use walking poles to give an extra safety net as well as reducing the strain on your knees.

**Start with good weather:** Spring is a great time for a first trip. You often get sunny, reasonably warm weather and no midges.

**Leave no trace:** If you packed it in, you can carry it out. Also, remember a trowel to bury poop.

**Have fun:** Make the goal of your adventure to have fun together. Take lots of photos and make great memories!

### **An Outdoors Family**

Keith and Stacey loved the outdoors long before they had children but worried that having young kids would stop them. Over the last 8 years, they have been learning how to get outside as a family, go on adventures together and make lasting memories. For more family adventures and inspiration follow them on Instagram:

**@anoutdoorsfamily**





# HOW TO CHOOSE YOUR SLEEPING BAG

From first-time campers where comfort is top-priority to seasoned backpackers looking to save every gram, our comprehensive sleeping bag range has your outdoor needs covered. To ensure your nights under the stars are memorable for all the right reasons, it is vital to choose a sleeping bag capable of keeping you warm in the conditions that you'll be experiencing.

To help you make this decision, we provide both our own season rating and the EN temperature ratings. Used in conjunction, they help highlight the conditions for which the bag was designed. If in doubt about what to choose, we suggest that you select the bag that provides more warmth than you may consider necessary.



Photo: Mountain Hardwear

## TEMPERATURE RATINGS

For each sleeping bag, we include the comfort, limit and extreme temperature rating: results gained from testing under the EN 13537 'Requirements for Sleeping Bags' European Standard. The standard enables reliable comparison between the different brands and bags. The test produces three temperature results, which relate to different user experiences:

- **Comfort Temperature** Based on a 'standard' adult woman having a comfortable night's sleep.
- **Limit Temperature** Based on the lowest temperature at which a 'standard' adult male is deemed to be able to have a comfortable night's sleep.
- **Extreme Temperature** A survival only rating for a 'standard' adult woman. At this temperature, there is a serious risk of hypothermia and other temperature related ailments.

### 3 season

-1°C -7°C -25°C

The two ratings that you should focus on are the **Comfort** and the **Limit** temperatures. Based on the assumption that women sleep colder, we would suggest that women (and anyone who feels the cold more) should focus on the **Comfort** temperature and men should focus on the **Limit** temperature. You want to make sure that this represents the lowest temperature that you expect to experience.

**NB:** The EN 13537 standard is not accurate for sleeping bags at the extreme ends of the weight and temperature spectrums. For these bags, the ratings supplied are based on the manufacturer's recommended sleep limit.



Photo: The North Face

## SEASON RATINGS

**One Season** These lightweight bags are suitable for use on the warm nights experienced during the summer.

**Two Season** Perfect for late spring to early autumn temperatures, these bags are aimed at those who like to camp during the warmer months of the year.

**Three Season** Designed for use from spring through to autumn, these versatile bags offer the comfort and warmth needed for cooler temperatures down to and just below freezing.

**Three+ Season** With the increased insulation necessary to cope with the potentially bitter temperatures of early spring and late autumn, these bags will also provide some users with enough warmth for year-round use.

**Four Season** Designed for use during the coldest months of the year, these winter bags will keep you comfortable in low temperatures and harsh conditions.

**Four+ Season** Specialist bags for high altitude mountaineering and use in the world's harshest environments.



Photo: Ben Matthews/Marmot





Photo: Ben Matthews/Marmot

### DOWN OR SYNTHETIC?

Once for ounce nothing insulates as effectively as down. Down-filled bags are very light, warm and compressible, and when cared for correctly will last for many years. Down is measured in fill power; which represents how much loft the down has. The higher the fill power, the better the warmth to weight ratio will be. However, without a hydrophobic treatment, down is susceptible to moisture - when wet its insulating capabilities will significantly drop.

Offering good performance at a lower price, synthetic insulation is light, durable and retains a much higher percentage of its insulating properties when wet. Modern materials and constructions enable synthetic sleeping bags to still achieve good warmth ratings, and with better water resistance than their down counterparts, they make excellent choices for adventures in damp conditions. Easier to care for, if you're camping with kids, they're the sensible choice!

### DON'T FORGET YOUR MAT

Sleeping bags should always be used with a sleeping mat. Protecting you from ground heat loss, and providing cushioning and support, they're the essential addition to your sleep system. For highlights of our range, see pages 36-38.



Photo: The North Face



# DOWN SLEEPING BAGS



## RAB NEUTRINO BAGS

The Neutrino series has been designed with lightweight mountain endeavours in mind. The plush 800 fill down has a hydrophobic treatment, for improved performance in damp conditions. Optimised for warmth, the trapezoidal baffle chambers help prevent down migration and eliminate cold spots to ensure outstanding sleeping comfort.

- 800 fill power hydrophobic goose down
- Trapezoidal baffle chambers eliminate cold spots
- Weight saving construction, stops down migration
- Close fitting neck baffles give extra warmth
- Tapered mummy shape with angled foot box

### Neutrino Pro 600 £439.99

Weight: 1026g

Max user height: 185cm

Code 212270

#### 3+ season

-5°C -12°C -32°C



**Rab**<sup>®</sup>  
THE MOUNTAIN  
PEOPLE

### Neutrino 400 £344.99

Weight: 775g

Max user height: 185cm

Code 212271

#### 3 season

-1°C -7°C -25°C



### Women's Neutrino 400 £344.99

Weight: 765g

Max user height: 170cm

Code 212272

#### 3 season

-1°C -7°C -25°C



### Neutrino 200 £249.99

Weight: 579g

Max user height: 185cm

Code 212273

#### 2 season

4°C -1°C -17°C





## RAB MYTHIC ULTRA BAGS

With the Mythic Ultras, Rab continues to push boundaries. Looking at ways to increase thermal efficiency, they developed TILT. The Thermo Ionic Lining Technology reflects heat to significantly increase warmth, while reducing the amount of down required. Achieving category-redefining warmth-to-weight ratios, these specialist pieces are perfect for those looking to save every gram.

- 900 fill power hydrophobic goose down
- Superlight Pertex Quantum 7 denier fabrics
- Heat reflecting Thermo Ionic Lining Technology
- Weight saving baffle construction
- Tapered mummy shape with angled foot box

**Mythic Ultra 360 £699.99**

**Weight:** 606g

**Max user height:** 185cm

Code 212266

**3 season**

**-2°C -8°C -27°C**

**Rab®**  
THE MOUNTAIN  
PEOPLE

**TILT** Thermo Ionic Lining Technology



**Mythic Ultra 180 £549.99**

**Weight:** 400g

**Max user height:** 185cm

Code 212267

**2 season**

**N/A 0°C N/A**



Photos: Matt Maynard

## RAB MYTHIC BAGS

Rab's Mythic bags pair superlative 900 fill water-resistant down with a highly thermal efficient construction. Chevron chambers stabilise the down, removing the risk of cold spots, while an ergonomic neck baffle seals in the heat. Delivering high warmth and low weight without sacrificing comfort, they're ideal for experienced mountain users.

- 900 fill power hydrophobic goose down
- Lightweight Pertex Quantum 10 denier fabrics
- Box wall construction with trapezoidal baffles
- Two-way zip allows upper and lower venting
- Tapered mummy shape with angled foot box

**Mythic 600 £519.99**

**Weight:** 885g

**Max user height:** 185cm

Code 212260

**3+ season**

**-5°C -12°C -32°C**

**Rab®**  
THE MOUNTAIN  
PEOPLE



**Mythic 400 £459.99**

**Weight:** 660g

**Max user height:** 185cm

Code 212262

**3 season**

**-1°C -6°C -24°C**



**Mythic 200 £369.99**

**Weight:** 475g

**Max user height:** 185cm

Code 212264

**2 season**

**6°C 1°C -13°C**





## DOWN SLEEPING BAGS



Photo: Dawn Kish

### MARMOT 650 DOWN BAGS

Providing a great balance of performance, comfort and warmth, Marmot's 650 Fill Power down bags are the go-to choice for mountain adventures. They're light and packable but provide a comfort orientated feature set that'll help you get a great night's sleep wherever you lay your head.

- 650 fill power duck down
- Down Defender improves water resistance
- Nautilus multi-baffle hood reduces heat loss
- Full length two-way zip with draught tube
- Anatomic wrap-around foot box for comfort

#### Never Summer Regular £299.99

Code 227121

#### Never Summer Long £319.99

Code 227120

#### Weight:

1450g/1515g (reg/long)

#### Max user height:

183cm/198cm (reg/long)

#### 4 season

-12°C -20°C -42°C



**Marmot**

#### Sawtooth Regular £239.99

Code 227123

#### Sawtooth Long £254.99

Code 227122

Weight: 1130g/1210g (reg/long)

Max user height: 183cm/198cm (reg/long)

#### 3+ season

-6°C -13°C -33°C



#### Women's Angel Fire £239.99

Weight: 1160g

Max user height: 168cm

Code 227125

#### 3+ season

-6°C -12°C -32°C



#### Always Summer Regular £179.99

Code 227127

#### Always Summer Long £194.99

Code 227126

Weight: 760g/850g (reg/long)

Max user height: 183cm/198cm (reg/long)

#### 2 season

6°C 1°C -14°C





# SYNTHETIC SLEEPING BAGS



## MOUNTAIN HARDWEAR LAMINA BAGS

The popular Lamina series offers optimal warmth and refined tailoring to maximise your sleeping comfort. The proven Thermal.Q synthetic insulation performs well across a range of conditions, with draught excluders and two-way venting zips enabling precise temperature regulation.

- Thermal.Q synthetic insulation
- Welded Lamina construction eliminates cold spots
- Tailored hood and draught collar seals in warmth
- Two-way zip with anti-snap for easy entry
- Contoured foot box maximises comfort

### Lamina Eco AF 30°F/-1°C £219.99

Made with recycled materials, filled with recycled Thermal.Q synthetic insulation and treated with a PFC-free CO Durable Water Repellent finish, the Lamina Eco AF is proof that sustainability and performance go hand in hand.

**Weight:** 870g

**Max user height:** 182cm

Code 294277

**3 season**

2°C -4°C -21°C



MOUNTAIN  
HARD  
WEAR



### Lamina 15°F/-9°C Regular £169.99

Code 294272

### Lamina 15°F/-9°C Long £179.99

Code 294271

**Weight:** 1380g/1475g (reg/long)

**Max user height:** 182cm/198cm (reg/long)

**3+ season**

-4°C -9°C -27°C



### Lamina Women's 30°F/-1°C £149.99

**Weight:** 995g

**Max user height:** 172cm

Code 294276

**3 season**

-1°C -7°C -24°C



### Lamina 30°F/-1°C Regular £149.99

Code 294275

### Lamina 30°F/-1°C Long £159.99

Code 294274

**Weight:** 985g/1050g (reg/long)

**Max user height:** 182cm/198cm (reg/long)

**3 season**

3°C -3°C -19°C







### THE NORTH FACE ECO TRAIL SYNTHETIC BAGS

Ideal for weekend adventures, the Eco Trail Synthetic sleeping bags give reliable camping performance with less cost to the planet. Filled with recycled synthetic insulation, they provide lightweight, compressible warmth; for protection, the recycled ripstop outers have PFC-free Durable Water Repellent finishes.

- Recycled polyester synthetic insulation
- Fitted hood and draught collar
- Wraparound J-zip enables venting
- Extended width in knees for comfort
- Vaulted foot box lets foot flex naturally

#### Eco Trail Synthetic 20 Reg £124.99

Code 204671

#### Eco Trail Synthetic 20 Long £134.99

Code 204670

**Weight:** 1756g/1959g (reg/long)

**Max user height:**

173cm/188cm (reg/long)

#### 3 season

-1°C -7°C -25°C



#### Eco Trail Synthetic 35 Reg £114.99

Code 204673

#### Eco Trail Synthetic 35 Long £124.99

Code 204672

**Weight:** 1106g/1246g (reg/long)

**Max user height:**

173cm/188cm (reg/long)

#### 2 season

8°C 2°C -10°C







### VANGO ULTRALITE PRO BAGS

Vango's Ultralite Pro bags utilise 4T synthetic insulation: warm, durable and reliable in damp conditions it has a patented channel structure for an improved warmth to weight ratio. Complemented with a practical feature set to enhance your camping experience, they're ideal for UK backpacking trips.

- 4T synthetic insulation is warm and durable
- TriLateral construction reduces cold spots
- Thermal Embrace System
- Insulated shoulder and zip baffles
- Arrow foot box lets feet rest naturally

**Ultralite Pro 300** £109.99  
**Weight:** 1350g  
**Max user height:** 190cm  
 Code 245080

**3 season**

**-1°C -6°C -24°C**



**Ultralite Pro 200** £99.99

**Weight:** 1100g  
**Max user height:** 190cm  
 Code 245081

**3 season**

**4°C -1°C -16°C**



**Ultralite Pro 100** £89.99

**Weight:** 900g  
**Max user height:** 190cm  
 Code 245082

**2 season**

**8°C 4°C -10°C**



**Kanto 250** £34.99

If you want simple but effective sleeping comfort at a great price, the Kanto 250 is ideal. The hollow fibre synthetic insulation is warm and durable, complemented by a Polair Snug lining that's soft against the skin and insulated baffles that block out the cold.

- Hollow fibre synthetic insulation
- Polair Snug Lining is soft next-to-skin
- Shaped hood with integrated head rest
- Insulated shoulder and zip baffles
- Two-way auto-lock zip with anti-catch piping

**Weight:** 1800g  
**Max user height:** 190cm  
 Code 245083

**2 season**

**5°C 0°C -15°C**





# TENT COMPARISON CHART

Knowing which tent to choose can be tricky. To help you narrow down your choices, we split our range into three activity-based tiers. From there, you can hone in on the stats that are important to you. For each model, we include key features alongside the specifications; these give a more detailed view on what each one has to offer.

## MOUNTAIN TENTS

Designed to cope with the harshest conditions imaginable these tents will let you sit out the fiercest of storms. Constructed from incredibly strong but lightweight materials, their designs will shrug off snow and strong winds that would destroy lesser tents. Ideal for mountaineering trips, enduring expedition life or travelling in tough conditions; tents in this category will provide you with the reliability you need.

## BACKPACKING TENTS

Tents in this category will provide you with reliable, comfortable shelters when venturing off the beaten track. Using lightweight fabrics and innovative features, these tents combine attractive pack weights with useable space. A range of designs allow you to tailor the tent to your specific needs: from roomy designs with good internal space, dual entrances and generous vestibules; to lighter designs that cut back on features to keep weight to a minimum.

## CAMPSITE TENTS

With a focus on providing space and comfort for practical outdoor living, our range of campsite tents are perfectly suited to groups and family use. Easy to pitch designs with functional floor plans help maximise space, while durable materials can be relied upon to fend off bad weather. So, whether it's a short adventure with friends or summer camping with family, we've got the tent for you.

## CAPACITY

This is the number of people the tent has been designed to accommodate. If you don't mind the extra weight, moving up to the next capacity (e.g. choosing a three-person tent for two of you) will give you more space.

## WEIGHT (Max/Min)

Maximum weight refers to the packed weight of the tent and includes all items that come with the tent. Minimum weight refers to the flysheet, inner tents and poles only.

## PACK SIZE

The size of the tent stuff sack. It is worth noting that the actual pack size can often be reduced by compression.

Category	Brand	Model	Capacity	Maximum Weight	Minimum Weight	Pack Size	Price
MOUNTAIN	Hilleberg	Nammatj 3 GT	3	4.10kg	3.40kg	51 x 20cm	£1,074.99
	The North Face	VE 25	3	4.68kg	4.31kg	61 x 23cm	£699.99
	Hilleberg	Nammatj 2	2	3.00kg	2.30kg	51 x 17cm	£884.99
	MSR	Access 2	2	1.86kg	1.64kg	46 x 15cm	£629.99
BACKPACKING	Hilleberg	Nallo 3 GT	3	3.20kg	2.60kg	51 x 18cm	£1,009.99
	Vango	Cairngorm 300	3	2.60kg	2.39kg	47 x 15cm	£179.99
	Hilleberg	Nallo 2 GT	2	2.90kg	2.40kg	48 x 18cm	£939.99
	MSR	Hubba Hubba NX	2	1.72kg	1.54kg	46 x 15cm	£444.99
	Big Agnes	Copper Spur HV UL2	2	1.42kg	1.22kg	50 x 15cm	£434.99
	Big Agnes	Fly Creek HV UL2	2	1.05kg	0.88kg	48 x 10cm	£349.99
	Vango	Knoydart 200	2	3.89kg	3.68kg	50 x 22cm	£284.99
	The North Face	Eco Trail 2	2	2.82kg	2.52kg	59 x 19cm	£269.99
	MSR	Elixir 2	2	2.77kg	2.24kg	51 x 17cm	£264.99
	Vango	Assynt 200	2	3.00kg	2.75kg	50 x 17cm	£259.99
	Big Agnes	Blacktail 2	2	2.24kg	2.04kg	53 x 18cm	£189.99
	Vango	Cairngorm 200	2	2.20kg	1.99kg	47 x 15cm	£154.99
	Hilleberg	Akto	1	1.70kg	1.30kg	43 x 13cm	£604.99
	Vango	F10 Hydrogen Air	1	0.60kg	0.58kg	20 x 10cm	£599.99
	MSR	Hubba NX	1	1.29kg	1.12kg	46 x 15cm	£384.99
	MSR	Elixir 1	1	2.16kg	1.78kg	48 x 15cm	£214.99
CAMPSITE	Nordisk	Utgard 13.2	6	22.50kg	N/A	124 x 35cm	£749.99
	Nordisk	Asgard 12.6	6	16.00kg	N/A	114 x 37cm	£649.99
	Vango	Amalfi 600	6	19.10kg	N/A	73 x 38cm	£649.99
	MSR	Habitude 6	6	6.35kg	6.08kg	58 x 25cm	£609.99
	Vango	Hudson 600	6	17.80kg	N/A	70 x 33cm	£449.99
	Vango	Amalfi 500	5	18.55kg	N/A	70 x 40cm	£599.99
	Vango	Hudson 500	5	15.95kg	N/A	70 x 30cm	£399.99
	Vango	Omega 500XL	5	7.95kg	7.01kg	59 x 29cm	£389.99
	Nordisk	Ydun 5.5	4	13.00kg	N/A	62 x 27cm	£549.99
	Vango	Amalfi 400	4	16.40kg	N/A	70 x 38cm	£524.99
	MSR	Habitude 4	4	5.72kg	5.44kg	58 x 23cm	£519.99
	Vango	Hudson 400	4	14.80kg	N/A	70 x 28cm	£349.99
	Vango	Beta 450XL	4	7.90kg	N/A	65 x 27cm	£199.99
	Nordisk	Asgard 7.1	3	15.50kg	N/A	97 x 30cm	£519.99
	Vango	Alpha 300	3	4.20kg	N/A	50 x 18cm	£99.99



# SLEEPING BAG COMPARISON CHART

From first-time campers where comfort is top-priority to seasoned backpackers looking to save every gram, our comprehensive sleeping bag range has your outdoor needs covered. To ensure your nights under the stars are memorable for all the right reasons, it is vital to choose a sleeping bag capable of keeping you warm in the conditions that you'll be experiencing.

## DOWN FILLING

Once for ounce nothing insulates as effectively as down. Down-filled bags are very light, warm and compressible, and when cared for correctly will last for many years. Down is measured in fill power; which represents how much loft the down has. The higher the fill power, the better the warmth to weight ratio will be. However, without a hydrophobic treatment, down is susceptible to moisture - when wet its insulating capabilities will significantly drop.

## SYNTHETIC FILLING

Offering good performance at a lower price, synthetic insulation is light, durable and retains a much higher percentage of its insulating properties when wet. Modern materials and constructions enable synthetic sleeping bags to still achieve good warmth ratings, and with better water resistance than their down counterparts, they make excellent choices for adventures in damp conditions. Easier to care for, if you're camping with kids, they're the sensible choice!

## TEMPERATURE RATINGS

For each sleeping bag, we include the comfort, limit and extreme temperature rating: results gained from testing under the EN 13537 'Requirements for Sleeping Bags' European Standard. The standard enables reliable comparison between the different brands and bags. The test produces three temperature results.

**Comfort Temperature** Based on a 'standard' adult woman having a comfortable night's sleep.

**Limit Temperature** Based on the lowest temperature at which a 'standard' adult male is deemed to be able to have a comfortable night's sleep.

**Extreme Temperature** A survival only rating. At this temperature, there is a serious risk of hypothermia.

The two ratings that you should focus on are the **Comfort** and the **Limit** temperatures. Based on the assumption that women sleep colder, we would suggest that women (and anyone who feels the cold more) should focus on the **Comfort** temperature and men should focus on the **Limit** temperature.

**NB:** The EN 13537 standard is not accurate for sleeping bags at the extreme ends of the weight and temperature spectrums. For these bags, we use the manufacturer's recommended sleep limit.

## SEASON RATINGS

**1 Season** These lightweight bags are suitable for use on the warm nights experienced during the summer.

**2 Season** Perfect for late spring to early autumn temperatures, these bags are aimed at those who like to camp during the warmer months of the year.

**3 Season** Designed for use from spring through to autumn, these versatile bags offer the comfort and warmth needed for cooler temperatures down to and just below freezing.

**3+ Season** With the increased insulation necessary to cope with the potentially bitter temperatures of early spring and late autumn, these bags will also provide some users with enough warmth for year-round use.

**4 Season** Designed for use during the coldest months of the year, these winter bags will keep you comfortable in low temperatures and harsh conditions.

**4+ Season** Specialist bags for mountaineering at high altitude and use in the world's harshest environments.

## WEIGHT

This is the weight of the bag (excluding the stuff sack).

## MAX HEIGHT

The maximum recommended user height for comfortable use of the bag.

Category	Brand	Model	Insulation	Temp Rating	Season	Weight	Max Height	Stuff Sack	Price
DOWN	Marmot	Never Summer Long	650 fill down	-12°C / -20°C / -42°C	4	1515g	198cm	46 x 22cm	£319.99
	Marmot	Never Summer Regular	650 fill down	-12°C / -20°C / -42°C	4	1450g	183cm	46 x 22cm	£299.99
	Rab	Mythic 600	900 fill down	-5°C / -12°C / -32°C	3+	885g	185cm	37 x 22cm	£519.99
	Rab	Neutrino Pro 600	800 fill down	-5°C / -12°C / -32°C	3+	1026g	185cm	37 x 22cm	£439.99
	Marmot	Sawtooth Long	650 fill down	-6°C / -13°C / -33°C	3+	1210g	198cm	41 x 19cm	£254.99
	Marmot	Sawtooth Regular	650 fill down	-6°C / -13°C / -33°C	3+	1130g	183cm	41 x 19cm	£239.99
	Rab	Mythic Ultra 360	900 fill down	-2°C / -8°C / -27°C	3	606g	185cm	36 x 18cm	£699.99
	Rab	Mythic 400	900 fill down	-1°C / -6°C / -24°C	3	660g	185cm	32 x 21cm	£459.99
	Rab	Neutrino 400	800 fill down	-1°C / -7°C / -25°C	3	775g	185cm	36 x 19cm	£344.99
	Rab	Women's Neutrino 400	800 fill down	-1°C / -7°C / -25°C	3	765g	170cm	37 x 19cm	£344.99
	Marmot	Women's Angel Fire	650 fill down	-6°C / -12°C / -32°C	3+	1160g	168cm	41 x 19cm	£239.99
	Rab	Mythic Ultra 180	900 fill down	0°C	2	400g	185cm	32 x 16cm	£349.99
	Rab	Mythic 200	900 fill down	6°C / 1°C / -13°C	2	475g	185cm	31 x 17cm	£369.99
	Rab	Neutrino 200	800 fill down	4°C / -1°C / -17°C	2	579g	185cm	31 x 17cm	£249.99
	Marmot	Always Summer Long	650 fill down	6°C / 1°C / -14°C	2	850g	198cm	36 x 18cm	£194.99
	Marmot	Always Summer Regular	650 fill down	6°C / 1°C / -14°C	2	760g	183cm	36 x 18cm	£179.99
SYNTHETIC	Mountain Hardwear	Lamina 15°F/-9°C Long	Thermal.Q	-4°C / -9°C / -27°C	3+	1475g	198cm	42 x 20cm	£179.99
	Mountain Hardwear	Lamina 15°F/-9°C Regular	Thermal.Q	-4°C / -9°C / -27°C	3+	1380g	182cm	42 x 20cm	£169.99
	Mountain Hardwear	Lamina Eco AF 30°F/-1°C	Recycled Thermal.Q	2°C / -4°C / -21°C	3	870g	182cm	34 x 18cm	£219.99
	Mountain Hardwear	Lamina 30°F/-1°C Long	Thermal.Q	3°C / -3°C / -19°C	3	1050g	198cm	34 x 18cm	£159.99
	Mountain Hardwear	Lamina 30°F/-1°C Regular	Thermal.Q	3°C / -3°C / -19°C	3	985g	182cm	34 x 18cm	£149.99
	Mountain Hardwear	Lamina Women's 30°F/-1°C	Thermal.Q	-1°C / -7°C / -24°C	3	995g	172cm	40 x 19cm	£149.99
	The North Face	Eco Trail Synthetic 20 Long	Recycled Polyester	-1°C / -7°C / -25°C	3	1959g	188cm	46 x 25cm	£134.99
	The North Face	Eco Trail Synthetic 20 Regular	Recycled Polyester	-1°C / -7°C / -25°C	3	1756g	173cm	46 x 25cm	£124.99
	Vango	Ultralite Pro 300	4T	-1°C / -6°C / -24°C	3	1350g	190cm	27 x 25cm	£109.99
	Vango	Ultralite Pro 200	4T	4°C / -1°C / -16°C	3	1100g	190cm	25 x 22cm	£99.99
	The North Face	Eco Trail Synthetic 35 Long	Recycled Polyester	8°C / 2°C / -10°C	2	1246g	188cm	38 x 22cm	£124.99
	The North Face	Eco Trail Synthetic 35 Regular	Recycled Polyester	8°C / 2°C / -10°C	2	1106g	173cm	38 x 22cm	£114.99
	Vango	Ultralite Pro 100	4T	8°C / 4°C / -10°C	2	900g	190cm	24 x 18cm	£89.99
	Vango	Kanto 250	Hollow Fibre	5°C / 0°C / -15°C	2	1800g	190cm	41 x 22cm	£34.99



# SLEEPING MATS

## THERMA-REST®

### NEOAIR MATS

For those counting every gram, the NeoAir mats are the answer. Made from light yet durable fabrics, their Triangular Core Matrix technology uses two stacked layers of baffles to create a stable sleeping surface while minimising heat loss. Deflating flat, their small pack sizes make them ideal for trips where space is limited.

#### NeoAir UberLite

Setting the standard for superlight comfort, the UberLite offers 6.4cm of cushioned support. Featuring a new WingLock Valve system, it maximises airflow for even quicker inflation.

#### Regular £189.99

Size: 51 x 183 x 6.4cm  
Pack Size: 15 x 9cm  
Weight: 250g  
R-Value: 2.3  
Code 230311



#### NeoAir XLite

On weight-conscious backpacking trips, the XLite is sure to impress. Light and compact, when inflated it offers impressive comfort, stability and support so you can sleep more soundly.

#### Large £194.99

Size: 64 x 196 x 6.4cm  
Pack size: 28 x 11cm  
Weight: 460g  
R-Value: 4.2  
Code 230316

#### Regular £169.99

Size: 51 x 183 x 6.4cm  
Pack size: 23 x 10cm  
Weight: 340g  
R-Value: 4.2  
Code 230317

#### Women's £169.99

Size: 51 x 168 x 6.4cm  
Pack size: 23 x 10cm  
Weight: 340g  
R-Value: 5.4  
Code 230319



#### NeoAir Venture

Ideal for camping trips, the Venture offers durable NeoAir comfort and a compact pack size. Stable and supportive, when it's time to leave the WingLock Valve system ensures quick and easy deflation.

#### Large £104.99

Size: 64 x 196 x 5cm  
Pack size: 33 x 18cm  
Weight: 740g  
R-Value: 2.2  
Code 230345

#### Regular £89.99

Size: 51 x 183 x 5cm  
Pack Size: 28 x 17cm  
Weight: 540g  
R-Value: 2.2  
Code 230346



#### WHAT IS R-VALUE?

R-value is a measure of thermal resistance; the higher the R-value, the more thermally resistant the material or structure is. In layman's terms, when it comes to choosing a camping mat, the higher the R-value, the warmer you'll be.



Photo: Sammy Spence



## SELF-INFLATING MATS

Therm-a-Rest designed the first self-inflating mat, and their products continue to impress today. With expanding foam cores that self-inflate and the ability to top up with extra air for personalised firmness, their mats provide reliable warmth and sleeping comfort in convenient, easy-to-use designs.

### ProLite Apex

The self-inflating Apex offers outstanding warmth without adding excess weight to your pack. For personalised sleeping comfort, once inflated top up with a few breaths to increase firmness.

#### Large £144.99

Size: 64 x 196 x 5cm  
Pack size: 33 x 18cm  
Weight: 850g  
R-Value: 3.8  
Code 230320

#### Regular £129.99

Size: 51 x 183 x 5cm  
Pack size: 28 x 17cm  
Weight: 630g  
R-Value: 3.8  
Code 230321

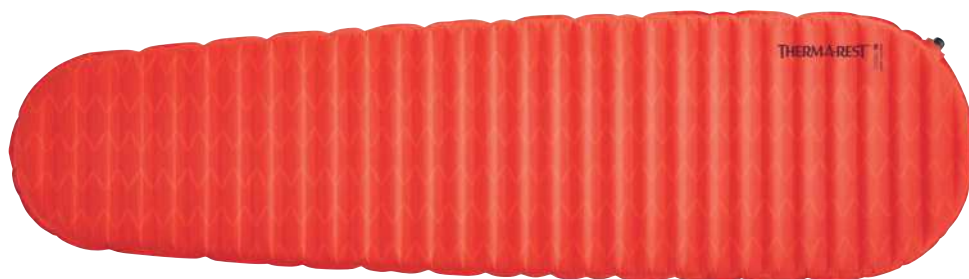


Photo: Ben Matthews

### ProLite

The proven ProLite is a top choice for backpacking. Featuring an expanding foam core that self-inflates, it is comfortable and supportive. An intuitive WingLock Valve system makes inflation and deflation even quicker.

#### Large £124.99

Size: 64 x 196 x 2.5cm  
Pack size: 33 x 15cm  
Weight: 690g  
R-Value: 2.4  
Code 230330

#### Regular £104.99

Size: 51 x 183 x 2.5cm  
Pack size: 28 x 15cm  
Weight: 510g  
R-Value: 2.4  
Code 230331

#### Women's £104.99

Size: 51 x 168 x 2.5cm  
Pack size: 28 x 15cm  
Weight: 510g  
R-Value: 2.7  
Code 230333



### Trail Lite

The Trail Lite offers comfort, compactness and essential warmth so you can sleep easy on your next camping trip. Featuring a compressible die-cut foam core, it self-inflates and rolls up small for streamlined packing.

#### Large £84.99

Size: 64 x 196 x 3.8cm  
Pack size: 33 x 21cm  
Weight: 1050g  
R-Value: 3.2  
Code 230340

#### Regular £74.99

Size: 51 x 183 x 3.8cm  
Pack size: 28 x 20cm  
Weight: 740g  
R-Value: 3.2  
Code 230341

#### Women's £74.99

Size: 51 x 168 x 3.8cm  
Pack size: 28 x 20cm  
Weight: 710g  
R-Value: 4.5  
Code 230343





# CAMP & COMFORT

## THERMAREST®



Photo: Adam Wells

### COMPRESSIBLE PILLOWS

With expandable foam fillings, these soft, packable pillows offer portable sleeping comfort.

#### Medium £25.99

Size: 36 x 46 x 10cm  
Weight: 255g  
Colour: Moon Print (901)  
Code 230041

#### Small £21.99

Size: 30 x 41 x 10cm  
Weight: 198g  
Colour: Cranberry Print (960)  
Code 230040



### AIR HEAD PILLOWS

Designed to nestle inside your sleeping bag hood, these inflatable pillows have insulated toppers for optimal comfort and support.

#### Air Head Down £54.99

Size: 28 x 39 x 10cm  
Weight: 140g  
Colour: Midnight Print (940)  
Code 230045

#### Air Head £38.99

Size: 28 x 39 x 10cm  
Weight: 158g  
Colour: Yellow Mountains (975)  
Code 230048



### MondoKing 3D XXL £214.99

The mighty MondoKing 3D gives unmatched sleeping comfort. Built with a StrataCore construction, it has a continuous layer of thermal foam sandwiched between alternating layers of air and foam. The result is 10cm of supportive cushioning and warmth you can rely on for an unbeatable night's sleep under the stars.

Size: 76 x 203 x 10cm  
Pack size: 79 x 26cm  
Weight: 2500g  
R-Value: 8.0  
Code 230300



### BaseCamp Large £104.99

Sleep better with the BaseCamp. A self-inflating camping mat with a 5cm thick compressible foam core, it provides high levels of warmth and support. For speedy setup, the WingLock Valve system maximises airflow, and toggles for one-way inflation to help save breath.

Size: 64 x 196 x 5cm  
Pack size: 66 x 23cm  
Weight: 1530g  
R-Value: 6.0  
Code 230304







### Helinox Chair Zero £109.99

When every gram counts, this is the one for you. The lightest and most compact chair in Helinox's range, it pairs featherweight polyester ripstop with ultralight, exceptionally strong DAC aluminium alloy poles. Proven comfort, without a penalty on your pack.

- Ultralight polyester ripstop seat
  - DAC TH72M aluminium frame
  - Quick and easy to assemble
  - Superlight and compact
  - Includes storage bag
- Size: 64cm (H) x 48cm (W) x 52cm (D)  
 Max load: 120kg  
 Weight: 510g  
 Pack size: 35 x 10cm  
 Colour: Black/Blue (901)  
 Code 647003



### Helinox Chair One £89.99

If you want comfort without a weight sacrifice then choose the Chair One. It features a DAC aluminium frame which is light, durable and incredibly easy to assemble. With a small pack size, it's a perfect choice for backpacking, camping, touring and more.

- 6000 denier polyester seat
  - DAC TH72M aluminium frame
  - Quick and easy to assemble
  - Lightweight and compact
  - Includes storage bag
- Size: 66cm (H) x 50cm (W) x 52cm (D)  
 Max load: 145kg  
 Weight: 960g  
 Pack size: 35 x 12cm  
 Colours: Multi Block (980) or Black/Blue (901)  
 Code 647002



### Helinox Sunset Chair £129.99

Sit back and enjoy the sunset with Helinox's innovative chair, which offers superior comfort in a lightweight package. Quick to set up, the supportive high back will be much appreciated when it's time to rest those weary legs.

- 6000 denier polyester seat
  - DAC TH72M aluminium frame
  - Quick and easy to assemble
  - High back for extra support
  - Includes storage bag
- Size: 98cm (H) x 59cm (W) x 73cm (D)  
 Max load: 145kg  
 Weight: 1470g  
 Pack size: 47 x 14cm  
 Colour: Multi Block (980) or Black/Blue (901)  
 Code 647001





**Helinox make insanely lightweight collapsible furniture, that gives you and your friends the freedom to feel at home anywhere.**

According to the ancient Greeks, the god Helios rode a chariot across the sky every day bringing daylight to the world. At night, while he slept, Nox a primordial goddess reigned over the earth, cloaking it in impenetrable blackness. Only during an eclipse do these two celestial beings meet, dancing together in the sky for a moment.

It is in this meeting of light and dark that Helinox was forged, or so we are told...

The real Helinox origin story may be a little less celestial, but it is still a tale about finding harmony between two eternally important elements, form and function.

"Our guiding principle is that every design aspect should serve a clear functional purpose and should be conveyed intuitively without any unnecessary features." (Young Lah - Founder)

# YOUR CHAIR. ANYWHERE.







The Helinox Creative Centre, Downtown Seoul

Helinox was founded in Seoul in 2009, and soon became a hit with outdoor lovers and urban dwellers alike in its home market of South Korea and across the sea in neighbouring Japan. It is the work of a father and son team, Jake and Young Lah. Jake Lah a revered scientist and engineer in the outdoor industry, who 30 years ago started his company Dongah Aluminium Corporation (DAC) which has become the global leader in high tech tent poles. Young Lah, on the other hand, is an aesthete and it is his eye for artistic design that drives both the style and creative output of the brand. Helinox exclusively uses DAC poles in their furniture, and each product is designed under the watchful eye of Young in the Helinox Creative Centre in downtown Seoul.

Young Lah took the decision to focus on Europe, and start his own subsidiary in Amsterdam, Holland in 2018. Helinox quickly built a tribal following. "We support people's freedom from the tyranny of stuff, and the desire to collect experiences [not things], by delivering comfort so you and your friends can feel at home anywhere."

**INSANELY LIGHT.  
ULTRA PACKABLE.  
SERIOUSLY  
COMFORTABLE.**

Whether it's in the great outdoors, or by the side of a school playing field, Helinox is considered the best in the world by outdoor enthusiasts and armchair weekend warriors alike!

**Mega Strong:** The products come with a 5-year warranty

**Insanely Light:** The Chair Zero weighs just 510 grams but can hold more than 120kg

**Ultra Packable:** The Chair One packs down easily, and smaller than a bottle of wine

**Very Comfortable:** The connection points are precisely crafted for easy assembly and sturdy comfort



The DAC Green Anodisation Factory, Seoul

#### THE HELINOX SUSTAINABILITY STORY

Metal is a dirty business, but Helinox, in partnership with DAC are on a mission to clean it up! DAC invested eight years into developing a process to produce aluminium in the least harmful way possible, they call this process 'green anodisation'.

- Green anodisation eliminated 133 tons of phosphoric, nitric and sulphuric acids (nasty stuff!) in 2018 alone
- Green anodisation also eliminates most of the fuel and energy consumption usually required to anodise aluminium
- DAC is the first aluminium supplier in the world to use the HIGG Index to measure the environmental aspects of its business and improve supply chain impact
- DAC recycles all aluminium





## CANISTER STOVES

When size, weight and convenience are paramount, canister stoves are the number one choice. Designed for use with screw thread canisters that contain pressurised gases these versatile stoves work with a wide range of camping cookware.

### MSR PocketRocket Deluxe £69.99

The enhanced PocketRocket Deluxe is an ultralight performer featuring the most durable piezo igniter MSR has ever made for maximum ease of use.

**Fuel:** Gas canister (screw thread)

**Boil time:** 03:20 (1L water)

**Weight:** 83g

**Code** 272012



## STOVE SYSTEMS

A type of canister stove, these systems integrate a pot with a burner to deliver fast boil times and exceptional fuel efficiency. Ideal for one-pot meals and boiling water quickly, once done the nesting design helps keep pack size to a minimum.

### MSR WindBurner 1.0L £134.99

Combining MSR Reactor technology with an enclosed design, this windproof, highly fuel-efficient stove achieves outstanding all-season performance.

**Fuel:** Gas canister (screw thread)

**Boil time:** 04:24 (1L water)

**Capacity:** 1L

**Weight:** 433g

**Code** 272060



## LIQUID FUEL STOVES

The workhorse of the stove world, liquid fuel stoves will perform reliably in all conditions. They require priming before use and more maintenance but run on widely available liquid fuels that deliver superior economy over long-term use.

### MSR XGK EX Stove £159.99

A high-performance stove engineered for extreme conditions, it will burn hot and strong at high altitudes, low temperatures, in windy conditions and more.

**Fuel:** White gas, paraffin/kerosene, unleaded petrol, diesel and jet fuel

**Boil time:** 03:30 (1L water, white gas)

**Weight:** 384g

**Code** 272001





## BACKPACKING STOVES

### MSR PocketRocket 2 £34.99

With a powerful burner, precise flame control and a tiny pack size, the PocketRocket 2 is a great choice for ultralight adventures.

**Fuel:** Gas canister (screw thread)

**Boil time:** 03:30 (1L water)

Weight: 73g

Code 272007



### Primus Mimer Stove £24.99

A robust, sturdy stove for those who want to enjoy good food outdoors; the pot support acts as a windshield for the flame, making cooking quick and safe.

**Fuel:** Gas canister (screw thread)

**Boil time:** 03:30 (1L water)

Weight: 195g

Code 249013



### Jetboil Flash 2.0 £119.99

With a fast boil time, strainer lid and easy canister connection, the impressively versatile Flash 2.0 enables quick and convenient cooking, anytime, anywhere.

**Fuel:** Gas canister (screw thread)

**Boil time:** 01:40 (0.5L water)

Capacity: 1L

Weight: 371g

Code 288113



### Jetboil Zip £89.99

The Zip delivers Jetboil's trademark convenience and reliability; its all-in-one design allows you to heat, eat, and drink from the ultra-compact unit.

**Fuel:** Gas canister (screw thread)

**Boil time:** 02:30 (0.5L water)

Capacity: 0.8L

Weight: 340g

Code 288106



### MSR DragonFly Stove £139.99

The DragonFly features a dual valve design that gives precise flame control and extra wide pot supports that increase stability for use with larger pans.

**Fuel:** White gas, paraffin/kerosene, unleaded petrol and diesel

**Boil time:** 03:30 (1L water, white gas)

Weight: 401g

Code 272015



### MSR WhisperLite International Stove £104.99

This classic liquid fuel stove features a one-piece, stamped stainless steel leg assembly for increased stability, reduced weight and simplified maintenance.

**Fuel:** White gas, paraffin/kerosene and unleaded petrol

**Boil time:** 03:30 (1L water, white gas)

Weight: 318g

Code 272005





## CAMPSITE COOKING



### UCO Flatpack Portable Grill and Firepit £49.99

A flatpack portable grill and firepit in one; perfect for camping trips, beach barbeques, garden get-togethers and more!

Made from light yet durable stainless steel, set up is easy: simply unfold, place the grate on top and you're ready to go.

- Durable stainless steel
- Stable base for safe grilling
- Grill sides double as wind-break
- Can be used as a Firepit
- Packs down flat

Weight: 1.45kg

Code 265160



### UCO Grilliput Portable Grill £36.99

Grill on the go with this clever contraption from UCO! A portable grill made from stainless steel, it's lightweight, durable and easy to assemble. Stowing neatly into the grill's side rail, it'll take up minimal space in your pack.

- Durable stainless steel
- Thick tube with stopper
- Thin tube with cleaning groove
- Twelve grill rods
- Four grill feet

Weight: 560g

Code 265164



### UCO Grilliput Portable Firepit £17.99

This portable firepit is perfect for low-impact camping. Made from durable stainless steel it can be loaded up with charcoal or wood, creating a fire that is contained for safe and secure cooking.

- Durable stainless steel
- Rust and corrosion resistant
- Can be pre-loaded with fuel
- Safely contains a fire
- Collapsible design

Weight: 286g

Code 265165







### Primus Onja Stove £144.99

Take your cooking outdoors with the Onja. Compact, portable and stylish, it's a two-burner stove suitable for use with large pots. The top is covered by an oak lid, which doubles as a chopping board for versatility.

- Two burner gas stove
- Extends out into a stable cooking unit
- Protects the burners from the wind
- Oak lid doubles as a chopping board
- Shoulder strap aids transportation

**Fuel:** Gas canister (screw thread)

**Boil time:** 03:40 (1L water)

Weight: 3.25kg

Code 249009



### Primus Tupike Stove £224.99

With the Tupike, creating a feast for friends and family is easy. A gas stove with piezo igniters, dials provide flame control and wind shields ensure steady cooking. Suitable for large pots and pans, it includes a griddle plate perfect for grilling burgers.

- Two burner gas stove with piezoelectric igniter
- Side wind shields ensure steady cooking
- Removable pan supports and drip tray
- Collapsible legs, fold away under stove
- Custom griddle plate with non-stick surface

**Fuel:** Gas canister (screw thread) or refillable cylinder

**Boil time:** 04:20 (1L water)

Weight: 4.25kg

Code 249007



### Primus CampFire Cookset £79.99

Made from durable 18/8 stainless steel, this practical cook set was designed to last. The pots have lids with integrated strainers while the frying pan has an aluminium base for even heat distribution.

- 18/8 stainless steel
- 1 litre pot and 1.8 litre pot
- Two lids with strainer holes
- Frying pan with foldaway handle
- Storage bag

Weight: 1.2kg

Code 249028



### Primus CampFire Frying Pan £35.99

Cook up a storm outdoors with this cookware essential. Made from light yet durable stainless steel, an aluminium clad base distributes heat evenly. For versatility, it can be used on a camp stove or placed directly on an open fire.

- 21cm frying pan
- 18/8 stainless steel
- Aluminium clad base
- Foldaway stainless-steel handle
- Storage bag

Weight: 470g

Code 249032





# COOKWARE & COFFEE

## MSR Trail Lite Pots

Excellent additions to your camping cookware. These high-quality, hard-anodised aluminium pots offer strength, lightness and efficient heat distribution. Ideal for backpacking, the lids double as strainers and the locking handles fold away securely.

- Hard-anodised aluminium
- Durable and scratch-resistant
- Internal measurement markings
- Secure strainer lid
- Folding/locking handle

### Trail Lite Pot 1.3L £29.99

Capacity: 1.3 litres  
Weight: 204g  
Code 272092



### Trail Lite Pot 2L £34.99

Capacity: 2 litres  
Weight: 244g  
Code 272091



## MSR Pika 1L Teapot £24.99

Minimise weight without compromising your cuppa with the Pika, an ultralight hard-anodised aluminium teapot. With a no-drip precision spout, it delivers a targeted stream of water that's easy to direct, so you can achieve the perfect coffee pour-over every time.

- Hard-anodised aluminium
- No-drip spout gives precise pour
- Wide opening aids filling and cleaning
- Secure lid stays on when pouring
- Folding handle

Capacity: 1 litre  
Weight: 147g  
Code 272090



## MSR Titan Cup £39.99

MSR's Titan is an ultra-light titanium cup. The simple streamlined design features a folding wire handle, so it's easy to carry and takes up less space in your pack.

- Titanium for ultralight durability
- Rolled edge for drinking comfort
- Folding wire handles

Capacity: 400ml  
Weight: 54g  
Code 272072



## Primus Essential Pot Set 1.3L £44.99

If you want to cook outdoors, this set is a great place to start. The lightweight aluminium pots spread the heat well, and the frying pan benefits from a non-stick coating.

- Hard-anodised aluminium frying pan
- Two 1.3L aluminium pots
- Pan has non-stick coating
- Pan can double as a lid
- Pot gripper

Capacity: 1.3 litres  
Weight: 503g  
Code 249036



## Primus Toaster £14.99

Make camp cooking more homely with this stainless-steel toaster. The mesh net helps distribute heat over the bread slices and a folding handle allows compact storage.

- Stainless steel toaster
- Collapsible design
- Use only with gas stove

Weight: 186g  
Code 249041





**GSI Mini Espresso Set £44.99**

However far from the beaten track, great coffee is easy to find thanks to this stovetop espresso set. Quick and easy to use, it can make a double shot of coffee in less than 90 seconds.

- Glacier Stainless steel construction
- Ultra-rugged for lasting performance
- Simple design is easy to use
- Double wall stainless steel cup
- Includes travel case

Capacity: 74ml

Weight: 311g

Code 265616



**GSI Coffee Rocket £12.50**

Perfect for backpackers, the Coffee Rocket is a one person pour-over coffee maker that produces a quick and robust brew. Easy to use, easy to clean and easy to carry, it can be stowed neatly inside your favourite camping mug.

- Clear Polypropylene
- Removable drip cone with snorkel
- Nesting grounds cup
- Durable stainless-steel filter screen
- Sturdy folding legs grip nearly any mug

Capacity: 235ml

Weight: 77g

Code 265622



**GSI Infinity Backpacker Mug £12.99**

This lightweight insulated mug comes with a Sip-It lid to keep your drinks warm and the bugs out. Made from Clear Polypropylene, it's BPA-free and won't absorb odours. Easy to carry, the insulating neoprene sleeve includes a collapsible webbing handle.

- Clear Polypropylene
- Internal measurement markings
- Spill-resistant sealable Sip-It lid
- Insulated neoprene sleeve
- Collapsible webbing handle

Capacity: 500ml

Weight: 99g

Code 265606



**Light My Fire Spork'n Straw BIO £5.99**

Sipping and snacking got even easier with this handy set from Light My Fire. Including their much-loved Spork and durable ReStraw, this compact duo is ideal for camping trips and makes an excellent alternative to single-use utensils.

- Spork Original BIO
  - ReStraw BIO
  - Dishwasher safe
  - Microwave safe
  - BPA-free
- Weight: 18g  
Colours: Hazy Blue (940), Musty Yellow (976) or Sandy Green (930)  
Code 265332



**Light My Fire Spork Original BIO £3.50**

Light My Fire's Spork makes the ultimate eating utensil; a spoon, fork and knife in one, it brings a bit of civilisation to the wild and a bit of the wild to civilisation.

- Shallow spoon
- Fork with knife edge
- Lightweight and durable
- Safe for non-stick cookware
- BPA-free

Weight: 11g

Colours: Hazy Blue (940), Sandy Green (930), Musty Yellow (976) or Dusty Pink (968)

Code 265338







# Designed from the stakes up

The new Copper Spur HV UL  
Vestibule Awnings, TipLok Tent Buckles,  
Lighter yet Stronger Fabric, and more.



Got it made in the shade,  
San Juan Mountains, CO  
Photo: Noah Wetzel

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