



25 HIGHLAND BEN HOPE

▶ Distance: 4½ miles/7km ▶ Time: 4–6 hours ▶ Grade: Challenging



SEE
FEATURE
ON PAGE 16

Ben Hope from the
Road of Desolation.



PHOTO: RALPH STORER



CHOSEN BY... RALPH STORER

Isolated on the
shores of Loch Hope,

less than a dozen miles from the north coast of Scotland, the craggy wedge of Ben Hope makes a fitting northernmost Munro. Surrounded by moor and water, uncomplicated by satellite tops, its commanding dome-like summit has an air of spaciousness unequalled on the mainland. To the north is only sea. With apologies to a certain spot in Cornwall, it really does make you feel like you have reached the end of land. It must have been a stirring sight to the Vikings of old after their hazardous journey across

the sea, and it is the only Munro that they named. Hope is Norse for Bay, referring to nearby Loch Eriboll. The only easy approach is from the south-west, where the single-track Road of Desolation runs past its foot through wild Strath More. There's a guarding line of crags here too, but a grassy shelf breaches them to permit easy access to the south ridge. It's still a steep and rugged ascent, but the summit experience is unforgettable. It is no coincidence that, to celebrate the completion of a Munro round, many Munro baggers leave Ben Hope till last.

PLAN YOUR WALK



ROUTE

Start/parking Bridge over Allt a' Mhuiseil on Road of Desolation in Strath More, 2ml north of Dun Dornaigil broch. Large farm building on north side of bridge, parking spaces on south side, notice board; grid ref NC462476

Is it for me? Steep, rough path makes for tough start, easing higher up
Stiles None

PLANNING

Nearest town Thurso (Tongue is nearest village)

Refreshments Altnaharra Hotel (01549 411222; altnaharra.com)

Public toilets None

Public transport None

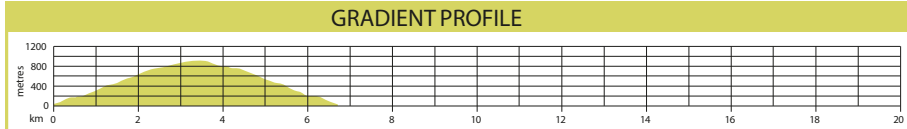
Maps OS Explorer 447; Landranger 9

1 Start

Path climbs cascading Allt a' Mhuiseil's R side (not L side, as erroneously shown on current OS maps).



GRADIENT PROFILE



25 HIGHLAND BEN HOPE

► OS Explorer map 447 ► Buy maps at: ordnancesurvey.co.uk/shop

It's initially steep, rough, rocky and muddy, with some high-stepping up rocks unavoidable. Various lines can be taken to ease the going. As compensation, you'll pass a succession of enticing waterfalls and pools. Angle eases for a while as path follows the Mhuiseil L onto grassy shelf that leads to Dubh-loch-na-Beinne. It crosses one side stream then a second.

2½ mile/0.75km Immediately beyond second stream, path bears R away from the Mhuiseil to climb steeply again, although on easier ground than before. There's another respite as path bears further R to re-cross second stream. Another steep ascent leads to grassy tongue that gently ramps up L and crosses stream once again to reach brief levelling at foot of south ridge. At a height of c.400m/1300ft, this is a good spot to pause for a breather and admire the view back down Strath More.

3 mile/1.75km Convex slopes of the broad south ridge begin steep and rocky. Path climbs diagonally R across them to tackle them at an easier angle. With a mixture of grass and rocks underfoot, cairns mark the way up. After 300m/1000ft climb

you come to another levelling above crags of north-west face. It's another good spot to pause and take in the expanding views before tackling the final 220m/700ft ascent.

4 1¼ miles/2.75km Again it's a convex slope but this one's much easier and shorter and soon brings you to summit dome and trig pillar, complete with comfy rock seat in windbreak. Stroll to NW

edge of summit plateau for views over crags of N Ridge.

5 2¼ miles/3.5km Descend by route of ascent. **CW**

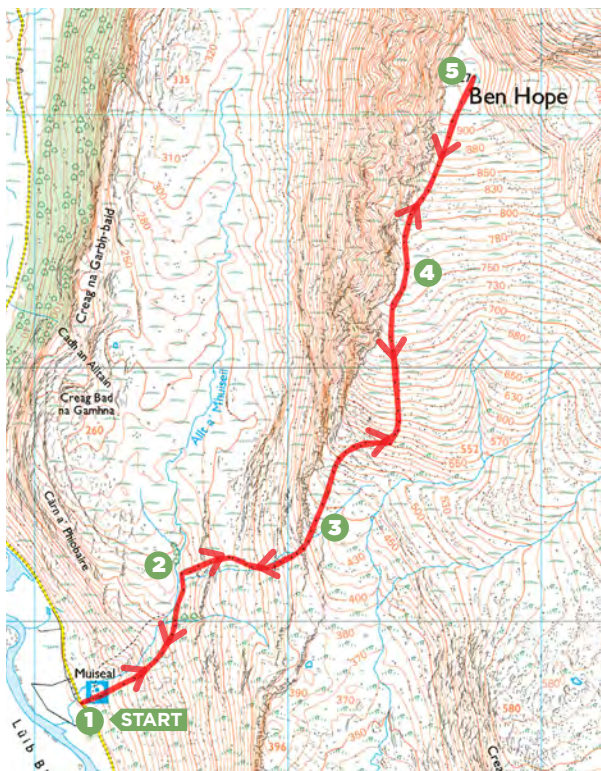
**VIEW THE WALK ON
OS MAPS ONLINE:**
lfto.com/cwroutes

IN ASSOCIATION WITH



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DATE WALKED

TIME TAKEN

YOUR RATING

