



26 HIGHLAND FALLS OF KIRKAIG & FIONN LOCH

▶ Distance: 6 miles/9.7km ▶ Time: 3 hours ▶ Grade: Moderate

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Heading into the hills above purple-headed birch copses.

PHOTO: RUTH LUCKHURST



CHOSEN BY... RUTH LUCKHURST

A short but adventurous route heading into mountainous terrain, giving breathtaking views of the Kirkaig Falls and Suilven. Anyone who's taken a backpack into the wilderness areas of the Scottish Highlands will tell you that one of the greatest pleasures is the unexpected waterfall. The first thing you notice is the distant roar; and then as you start to ascend, the mountain stream below you will begin to bury itself deep within its banks. Slowly the valley you're following becomes a gorge, and its moist braes turn into a riot of colourful moss and lichens, with birches and

rowans springing from deep cracks in impossibly bare rockfaces. Reaching the precipice which hurls the water into the plunge pool far below, you see that the river above has been picking up pace over a series of rocky steps which have become ever steeper until suddenly the riverbed disappears altogether and the water has nowhere to go except abruptly down. As you climb towards the waterfall, you realise that you are in the foothills of some of Assynt's iconic mountains. Suilven lies ahead of you (as you know from the Norman MacCaig quote at the start of the walk), while away to the right are the companionable humps of Cùls Mòr and Beag.

PLAN YOUR WALK



ROUTE

Start/parking

At Kirkaig Falls car park, grid ref NC085193

Is it for me? Rough path, steep and rocky, often slippery

Stiles None, but plenty of obstacles to negotiate

PLANNING

Nearest town Lochinver

Refreshments at coffee shop at start of walk, also in Lochinver

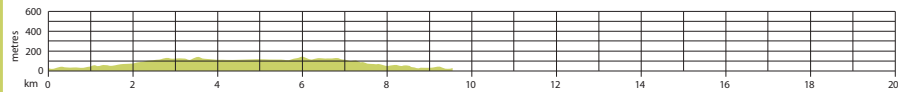
Public toilets in Lochinver

Public transport Dial-a-Bus; www.highland.gov.uk

Maps OS Explorer 442, Landranger 15

Canisp and Quinag lurk in the distance. Notices warn of the perils of the path, which is steep and rocky, with slippery stretches and some exposure. Make sure you are well-shod, with a good level of agility, and be prepared for the weather to change abruptly.

GRADIENT PROFILE



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► OS Explorer map 442 ► Buy maps at: ordnancesurvey.co.uk/shop

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DATE WALKED

TIME TAKEN

YOUR RATING

1 Start

Exiting car park turn R, take lower lane opposite: 'Falls of Kirkaig'. Through gate, along lane, take footpath R to follow boundary. Through deer gate, path ascends through copse of purple-headed birches then drops gently to river.

2 ¾ mile/1km

Through small gate, low-level path follows river across open ground and into another birch copse. Steadily climbs above river and crosses another open area of marsh grass dotted with birches. Traverses hillside heath, ascends through another

birch copse, heads into the hills, high above the river.

3 1½ miles/2.5km

Path winds through wilderness of rough mountain grass and bracken, with occasional rocky outcrops underfoot. High river appears ahead, rushing through narrow rocky channel just before it spills over the last ledge to plummet dramatically into steaming plunge pool.

4 2 miles/3.25km

Path becomes narrower, stretches of low-grade scrambling to R, to descend to viewpoint above plunge pool.

Beware slippery ground in perilous places. Retrace steps to main path (Point 4) and turn R, following it alongside river (gets a little boggy) to the shore of Fionn Loch for a view of Suilven.

5 3 miles/2.8km

Retrace outward route back to the start. **CW**

VIEW THE WALK ON OS MAPS ONLINE:

lfto.com/cwroutes

IN ASSOCIATION WITH



OS MAPS



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