



27 HIGHLAND SUILVEN

▶ Distance: 12½ miles/20.2km ▶ Time: 9 hours ▶ Grade: Challenging



The unforgettable profile of Suilven from the north.

HIGHLAND LEGEND



CHOSEN BY...

NICK HALLISSEY

Suilven is one of the greatest mountain walks in the UK, if not Europe. A free-standing peak rising out of the wild terrain of the Assynt, its legendary profile beckons to intrepid explorers for miles around. With a highest point of 2398ft it doesn't qualify as a Munro,

but the walk is made tougher by its remoteness: it's a 5½-mile hike just to reach the foot of the climb. (This must be repeated on the return journey, unless you break the walk overnight at Suileag Bothy – although be aware the bothy is not bookable, so it's pot luck if there's a bunk free!) The climb to Bealach Mòr is steep (but not

impossible, as it may appear from a distance) and good navigation skills are needed in places – although the paths are far clearer on the ground than they seem on the OS map, where some do not appear at all. But if you're okay with all that, and the weather is on your side, this may be one of the finest walks you ever undertake. ➔



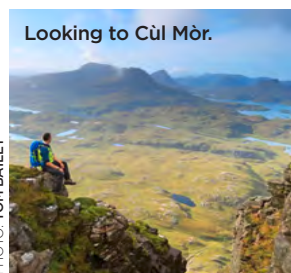
PHOTO: TOM BAILEY



▶ OS Explorer map 236 ▶ Buy maps at: ordnancesurvey.co.uk/shopBIG
DAY

1 Start
Turn L out of layby and head east on Canisp Road, ignoring branching track descending to loch. Continue on track, descending gradually to lochside, to reach Glencanisp Lodge. At fork, take L track past estate office and honesty shop. At junction of tracks, take unmade track R, signed for Suilven. (Suilven itself should now be visible ahead in clear conditions, showing the distance to be covered.)

2 ¾ mile, 1.2km
Pass through two deer enclosure gates and follow track over undulating ground. After just over two miles, pass branching track L which leads to Suileag bothy (the bothy's grid ref is NC149210, if needed for shelter). Continue ahead on main track to pass L of Lochan Buidhe. After lochan, cross footbridge over river. Path



Looking to Cùl Mòr.

PHOTO: TOM BAILEY

turns sharp R, facing flank of Suilven. Pass through gorge then, as river reappears L, look out for obvious branching path R. (It is just before a second footbridge over river, marked on OS Explorer map.)

3 4½ miles/7.4km
Turn R on path. This path is not marked on OS maps but is clear and well-maintained on the ground. Path heads south-west, adjacent to Loch na Gainimh, and soon climbs a steep slope which is effectively the first foothill of Suilven. Pass through a series of hollows and follow path as it passes between Loch a' Choire Dubh (L) and Loch na Barrack (R), eventually reaching stream that connects the two. Suilven is now directly ahead.

4 5½ miles/8.8km
Cross stream and continue ahead, tending L on clear path heading for base of mountain. Follow path as it ascends steeply up flank of Suilven; although steep it is well maintained with natural steps. Path zig-zags, eventually reaching Bealach Mòr, the pronounced gap between Suilven's two peaks. (Immense views now open up southwards to Cùl Mòr, Stac Pollaidh and

Ben More Coigach.)

5 6 miles/9.6km
Turn R (north west), passing through wall-line, and follow path climbing steadily along ridge. Pass through a second bealach (gap) and continue climbing steadily to reach small cairn atop Caisteal Liath ('the grey castle', 2398ft) the highest point on Suilven.

6 6½ miles/10.2km
Retrace steps back to Bealach Mòr. *A detour is possible eastwards to Suilven's other summit, Meall Meadhonach (2372ft) – but be warned that the final climb to the top is a difficult, exposed scramble, with a very tricky down-climb afterwards. It also adds an extra mile to the walk. Most walkers are content to climb Caisteal Liath, especially as it is the higher of the two.* From Bealach Mòr, retrace steps down the steep ascent path, descending back to the two lochs. Retrace steps back to the main Glencanisp track. Turn L and retrace outbound steps along the valley back to Glencanisp Lodge. Pass through lodge complex as before, and continue back along Glencanisp Road to start. **CW**

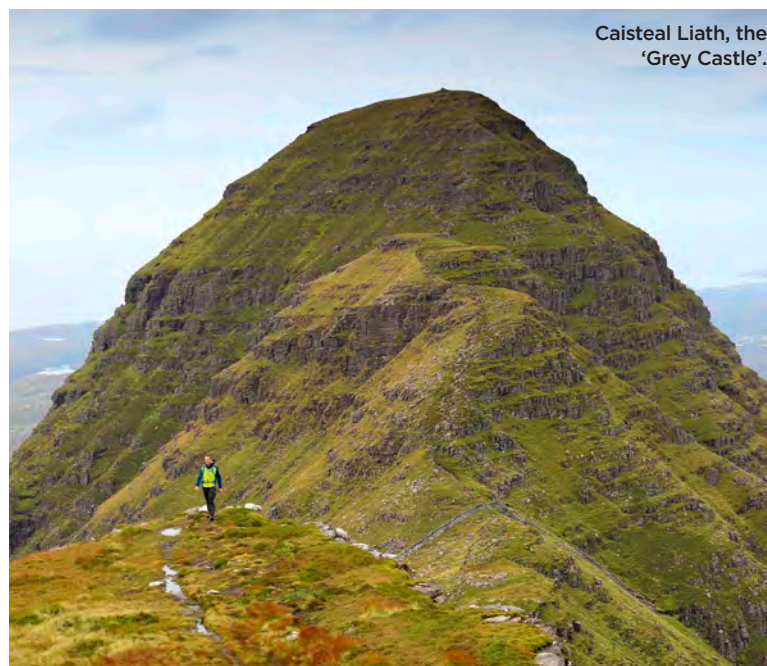
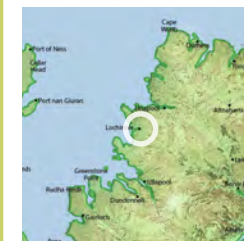
Caisteal Liath, the
'Grey Castle'.

PHOTO: TOM BAILEY



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PLAN YOUR WALK



ROUTE

Start/parking: Small layby on Canisp Road en route to Glencanisp Lodge, grid ref NC107219. If full, you have to walk from Lochinver
Is it for me? Challenging in length and terrain. A full day in wilderness country including the steep, rocky ascent and descent of Suilven itself.
Stiles None

PLANNING

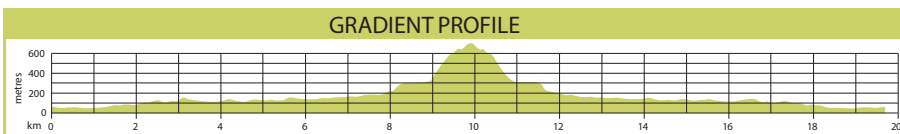
Nearest town: Lochinver
Refreshments Pub & cafés in Lochinver; 'honesty shop' at Glencanisp Lodge
Public toilets None
Public transport Bus 809 links Lochinver with Lairg and Durness; 809 links Lochinver to Ullapool
Maps OS Explorer 442, Landranger 15; Harvey Maps *Suilven* and *Assynt*

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

IN ASSOCIATION WITH



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DATE WALKED
□ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □TIME TAKEN
□ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □YOUR RATING
○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○