

Ben Nevis Summer Ascent Trip Information





Lochaber Guides

Fort William

Ben Nevis Summer Ascent

Introduction	Page 3
Itinerary	Page 4
Your Guides	Page 5
The Mountain Environment	Page 6
Fitness and Training	Page 7
Equipment List	Page 8





Introduction

Thank you for enquiring about this trip with Lochaber Guides. We hope this information pack will give you some idea as to what is involved in this particular trip and help to answer some questions you might have. Rather than try to push the 'hard sell' we've tried to be as honest as possible with what to expect and what to prepare for. You may find the tick list style of the equipment list useful when packing!

If you would like any further information, please don't hesitate to get in touch with us and we will be happy to discuss things with you.

We look forward to meeting you in the Highlands!

Best Wishes

Dave Anderson

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Ben Nevis Ascent-7-9 hours

We aim to start between 0800 and 0900hrs on the Ben Nevis Mountain Track. We will pick you up from your accommodation in the Fort William area and drive to the start of the route.

We start from the Ben Nevis Inn at Achintee. The first part of the ascent is fairly steady, providing a good natural warm up for the legs. We are treated to great views down into Glen Nevis, one of the stunning backdrops for the film Braveheart as well as some of the Harry Potter films. Slow but steady is the aim for this part of the day. The trees and vegetation give us a stark contrast to what awaits us higher up. As we turn the slopes of Meall an-t Suidhe, we reach an area known locally as the Half Way Lochan. This is situated at a height of 505m so is actually less than halfway. Fairly easy walking leads us to the real halfway point, the Red Burn. after about 2 hours, for some refuelling before heading up to the second half.

Some good steps take us up the first of 9 zig zags which take us from halfway to 1200m. We'll count down the 8 corners, having plenty stops for snacks, water and photos as needed. This can often feel like the hardest part of the day but your perseverance will definitely pay off as the zig zags get shorter and easier the higher we go.

Steadily make our way onto the summit plateau of the Ben. The plateau is more like a very wide ridge as there is steep ground on both sides. The Mountain Track needs to be thought of as a narrow strip of civilisation on an otherwise wild landscape. There can be snow on the plateau all the way into June and the first snows of the season often arrive in September! It's worth bearing in mind that it is winter on Ben Nevis from November all the way through to April so even Summer ascents can feel pretty wintry higher up!

A line of cairns can sometimes be seen as waypoints but more often than not, are shrouded in mist . Your guide will keep you on the right track, avoiding the dangerous edges of the North Face cliffs whilst keeping away from the infamous Five Finger gully on the right.

About 500m from the summit we avoid the edge of Tower gully and the final stretch to the summit begins. Within the last 150m we have to change direction to avoid Gardyloo Gully, a large crevice in the plateau, which even into summer can have its edges hidden by a large cornice. From there, we make our way to the summit area, marked by the summit shelter and the trig point. The ruins of the old Observatory, an Emergency shelter and a Trig point mark the top of the UK. Enjoy the moment of reaching the summit, a real achievement! But remember, you're only half way through your day, we still have to descend.

We head back across the plateau and down our same path of ascent. Going down can be just as tough as going up and its important to concentrate fully until safely off the mountain.

As we return to the Glen with weary legs but big smiles, you can sit in the Ben Nevis Inn and have a celebratory drink to mark your success.

We'll then return you to your accommodation and say our farewells before you finish your trip with us.



Looking across to the summit from Tower Gully



Your Guides

The most important part of the service we offer is by far the guides on our team. When on the summit plateau of Ben Nevis, in strong winds, heavy rain and thick mist it is essential that you are with someone who makes you feel safe and looks after you as well as encouraging you to enjoy this aspect of being in the mountain environment

All of our guides are:

- Highly experienced working in the Scottish Highlands in all seasons.
- Active climbers and mountaineers themselves (i.e. they climb for fun in their spare time as well as working in the mountains!).
- They have the appropriate professional qualifications in Mountain Leading gained through a rigorous training and assessment process.
- They have professional insurance.
- Qualified in First Aid Appropriate to the Mountain Environment.
- They are friendly, professional, enthusiastic and have a genuine passion for working in the mountains, which they hope to pass on to you!



. Dave enjoying some ice climbing high on Ben Nevis



The Mountain Environment

The Scottish Mountains are a truly special place to be. Whilst they may not be as high as the Himalaya or the European Alps, they offer a true wilderness and can be as dramatic as any mountain range anywhere in the world.

The weather in the Scottish Mountains can change rapidly, with a seemingly friendly and benign blue sky day disappearing within hours to give way to ferocious winds, blizzards and freezing temperatures.

Your guide will stay up to date with the latest mountain weather forecast services to give you as much information as to what conditions to expect. Having said that however, the weather forecasts aren't always accurate so being prepared for most eventualities is vital.

During your time on the mountain, your guide will carry out a dynamic risk assessment of the conditions and monitor closely the progress of the team. It is sometimes necessary to turn around before the summit of a peak is reached due to deteriorating weather or some other factors concerning group members. Our number one aim is to get you off the mountain safely. Getting to the top, whilst is important to us and to you, is a secondary aim. Ben Nevis and the Scottish Mountains claim many lives every year and we are here to prevent our clients adding to these statistics! Having said that, we do have a very high success rate for our chosen ascents and will do everything we can to maximise your chance of safely reaching the summit.

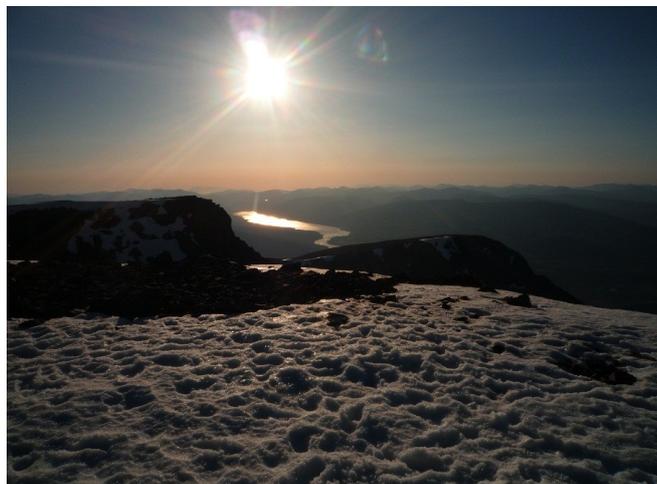
Occasionally the mountain weather is such that an attempt of a particular summit e.g. Ben Nevis is just too dangerous. If that is the case, appropriate alternatives will be offered, for example, another peak which is more sheltered from the wind. This is thankfully quite rare.

For skills courses we may make use of one of the indoor climbing facilities available to us in Lochaber and can look at various aspects of what we had planned to cover in a different environment.

We will do what we can to ensure we give you the most productive experience during your time with us.

As with all aspects of mountaineering, all risk cannot be removed completely but we will do everything possible to safeguard your well being throughout your trip with us.

To get the most out of your time in the mountains, be prepared for some hardship but also try and enjoy it. Sometimes the most memorable experiences are the ones which are tough at the time but afterwards they can feel positive and stay with us for a lifetime.



View from the summit of Ben Nevis



Fitness and Training

As a general rule, the fitter you are, the more you will enjoy your experience and the better the chance you have of achieving your objective, e.g. reaching the summit of Ben Nevis.

By far the most useful experience is mountain experience. If you have climbed peaks in the Highlands, the Lake District, Peak District, North Wales or abroad, this will certainly set you in good stead for your trip in the Scottish Mountains.

Having said that though, not everyone is located within a short distance of hills and mountains to train on.

Other forms of exercise can be adapted to help prepare you for the mountain environment.

Taking some sort of exercise regularly and knowing how your body copes with this is essential.

Walking- try walking with a light rucksack for several hours, taking in as many hills and as much uneven ground as possible. Walking over boulders is good to keep you light on your feet and is good for balance.

Running- try running with a light rucksack and try and run up and down as many hills as you can. Go for distances of around 5-10k rather than short sprints.

Cycling- good for endurance and leg muscles but make sure you choose a hilly circuit for training.

Swimming- great all round form of exercise but not very mountain specific.

In general, good cardio-vascular fitness is the most useful but some sort of conditioning of the leg muscles and joints is very important too.

Aim to be exercising 2-3 times per week.

Above all else, a sense of determination and real desire to enjoy the experience really helps!



Equipment List

Essentials

- Waterproof Boots** -Probably the most important piece of kit. Good ankle support recommended.
- Waterproof Jacket**- With a good hood. Plastic ponchos are not adequate.
- Waterproof Trousers**-Side zips are useful to help get them over your boots
- Hat**- wool or fleece
- Gloves**- Even in Summer, Summit temperatures can be low especially on the Ben
- Warm Layers**- Fleece works well.
- Food and Water**- Around 2 litres of water and plenty snacks and high energy foods to get you through the day
- Rucksack**- large enough to carry all of the above, large poly-bag liner useful as rucksacks aren't waterproof!

Other kit(optional or weather dependant)

- Sun Screen, Sun Glasses and Hat**- Mountain sun can be fierce
Trekking Trousers- with or without zip-off's
- Wicking Baselayer**- keeps moisture away from your skin and reduces how cold you feel
- Trekking Poles**- Can take 3 tonnes of loading off of your knees over the course of a day- well worth it for the Ben!