

### Route 1: The First Step

**Terrain:** Boardwalk paths

**Time:** 1 hr 30 mins

**Difficulty:** Easy

Beginning from the Rorymuir Tea Rooms, where you can power up with one of Rosemary's famous lemon drizzle slices, this is a predominantly flat route that relies on canal paths and fenced walkways, keeping you at arm's length from the local sheep and cows. Turns are noted well in advance, and there is little opportunity to get lost, or even to get caught short (amenities can be found on the way). A brief exploration of a fascinating peat bog area, this route contains the chance to get your boots muddy and to climb the very casual incline to the viewing tower, from which you may look out into the rest of the wilds. Ideal for those who've missed nature and want to see it again, but may not be inclined to go further.

### Route 2: Once-returner

**Terrain:** Well signposted paths, mostly maintained.

**Time:** 2 hrs

**Difficulty:** Easy, with intermediate diversions.

A truly beautiful trail that offers a few challenges, just to get the heart going. Join the orange-marked path from behind Larker's Farm and follow this as far as the stone bridge by the old forge. You will barely notice the gradual incline up through the wind farm, though you will likely feel the wind pick up as you reach the flat top. Where the path parts, take either choice; this split forms a loop around which you will return, no matter which way you go. It's nice to be out here, isn't it, with the sounds and sights and smells of the outside world? Beware of lambs in spring, but if you do come across one, lean close in and sniff the sweet stink of youth on its burgeoning fuzz. It's a smell you knew well, once. Sit with that feeling as you round the loop and find your way back to the path you followed before. It's just a straight walk home from there.

### **Route 3: Stream-enterer**

**Terrain:** Requires good hillwalking boots, poles and a good supply of Kendal Mint Cake

**Time:** 4-5 hrs

**Difficulty:** Intermediate

A thoroughly enjoyable walk that takes a climb up and over a few moderate hills before meeting an attractive body of water, rounding out with a stiff descent into the Calltanner Valley. Don't be put off by the relatively steep ascent on the forest tracks behind the starting point of the Three Queens Inn; though this route requires a little fortitude you will soon find yourself right at home. Follow clear markers and keep yourself steady as you hit the boggy area between the two peaks. As you round Loch Aber you will be entranced by the soft ripples across the water, the stormy blue far beneath the silken-soft top. You will stop and stoop and dip your index finger in; it will pass through and come back with barely a movement of the surface. So simple to go. It would be like stepping through a mirror, and down there, it would be silent, the storm's warmth contained and stilled, wrapped around you like wool. You could stay down there for as long as you wished, for time would not notice you gone, and there you could convalesce. You wonder how many are down there recovering now, quiet together, breathing the same water as if it were delicious, reviving, life-giving air.

### **Route 4: Non-Returning**

**Terrain:** All types

**Time:** 8 hours +

**Difficulty:** Not for the faint-hearted

Begin before sunlight, and only in summer, from wherever you can find that feels right. Head torches may be required for the first portion of the trail. A map will be required as you find your way onto the Peaks Ridge, though your compass will not work, due to the ferromagnetic materials in the rock. The route bears right and steeply upwards before reaching the bealach, requiring some scrambling or even climbing. At the apex of Ben Rangor you will take a brief moment to survey the glorious landscape in front of you. You've

missed it, somehow; the gentle hum of the air, the comforting vibrations of the soil, the way the ferns at your feet lie against each other to make a quilt. Is this how you remember it, or is it more alive than ever? You wonder whether you have been asleep to this, or whether it has changed around you, terraforming into something that you've needed all along. You can hear the seeds popping, the spores dropping, the leaves catching drops from the soft sheet of rain just sweeping over to envelop you and the mountain on which you now stand.

### **Route 5: The Achievement**

**Terrain:** Mostly rocky and rough, often icy, with brief plains of sheer idyll and a divine summit

**Time:** Six weeks minimum

**Difficulty:** Unfathomable

You'll set off from home and follow the pull north. Go alone, though the other guides may recommend companionship. You will trek easily across undulating land; this is not where the difficulty lies. You must hold your nerve through the pockets of bleak indifference, through the valleys and the bogs. The ascent will feel indescribably long, and yet soon you'll be there, straddling the high peak, ecstatic. The haar will come in, though you are miles from the sea, and you won't find this at all unsettling. It will make sense; will, in fact, be all you've ever wanted. You will stand as the clouds of mist baptise you, you will breathe in the cold, wet air, you will send yourself down into the granite and it back up into you. You remove your boots. The rock is barren, yet vines break painlessly through the soft meat of your feet, tickle your muscles as they wind around your bones, give you a strength you have never had before. You take off your clothes and moss blooms on your skin. Your blood is clear water. You are rooted. You are renewed. This is where you belong.