

Ben Earb Ridge

WALK FACTS:

Distance: 10 miles/16km

Map: OS Landranger 1:50,000 sheet 43

Start/Parking: Car Park at Spittal of Glenshee Hotel (grid ref NO110699)

Grading: Path initially but then open grass and heather hillside with a fence to keep you on the right course. Returning over trackbed of former railway line and estate track then a bit of road walking, or along a rough track through two plantations. Suitable for fit walkers and older children. Upland walk. Sheep grazing in places so dogs on the lead.

The Ben Earb ridge stretches northwest from the Spittal of Glenshee and offers a fine upland walk with stunning views east and west.

The climb up on to Ben Earb can be hard work if you're more used to low level walks, but as you stand by the trig point all the effort is rewarded with a spectacular panoramas. The rounded summit of Meall a' Choire Bhuidhe follows you and as you wander over the flanks keep your eyes open for deer and hares which frequent the mountains and glens here. The tops, ranging in height from 801m to 868m, are too low to be Munros and don't even rank mention in the table of Corbetts. But that in no way spoils the enjoyment. For this is a fine day out in the hills.

A public right of way sign for 'Enochdhu' on the road by the bridge next to the Spittal Hotel marks the start of this walk. Pass through a gate and head up the slope on a good path keeping the wall to your right. The way climbs alongside the burn up to a wooden stile. Cross the stile and a grassy path strikes away from the wall over soft ground towards an obvious track on the hillside ahead. Continue up this to the col at An Lairig a kilometre on.

Don't cross the fence here but turn right and head out over the open hillside, following the line of the fence and keeping it to your left. The slope is initially fairly steep in places but eases off before dipping into a col.

The final ascent of Ben Earb starts here. Stay with the fence and climb a little over 150 metres to the trig point that is surrounded by a low stone shelter. Descend along the fence to another col and then begin the climb on to Meall a' Choire Bhuidhe. This is a longer, more gentle slope and the summit, when it finally comes, is marked by a cairn, located a few yards from the fence.

Descend northwest for approximately one kilometre to a col, negotiate the large peat hag then bear north (right) away from the security of the fence up a gently slope to join a single path below the summit of Meall Ruigh Mor Thearlich. Bear to the northwest and pick up the head of a small stream that descends into Glen Lochsie. Descend the grassy slope, keeping the stream to the left, to the point where it flows into the Glen Lochsie burn at grid ref 053729. When the water level is low, it is easy to cross the burn on rocks here or just downstream of this. Follow the (at times) indistinct narrow path downstream then upwards over the heather to meet a wide track just above Glenlochsie Lodge and follow this down to the shooting lodge (ruin). There is no need to follow the double track that ascends the steep slope on the left after crossing the burn.

Behind the ruin, a small path runs up to a rustic little bridge over the Allt Clais Mhor. Cross the bridge and the path continues to the track bed of the old narrow gauge railway that once ran up the glen ferrying stalkers to the lodge from Dalmunzie House below. Follow the line down Glen Lochsie. The old railway trackbed passes below Glenlochsie Farm and runs to the edge of forestry behind Dalmunzie House. Don't enter the trees but cross over a small patch of field to a tarmac road to your left beyond a wooden gate. Follow the road past the house and then on to Spittal of Glenshee.

An alternative, avoiding the tarmac road walk, is to recross the Glen Lochsie Burn to the south side and follow the wide rough track along the hillside, beside the burn, through two plantations then down to the rear of the Caird Sport shop and the hotel.