

Up The Ben



If you are visiting Pitlochry - You can't miss it. Ben Vrackie (sometimes known as Ben Y Vrackie) forms part of the scenic background overlooking Pitlochry. Ben Vrackie translates as 'speckled mountain' and comes from a time when white quartz rocks were scattered across its slopes. On a good clear day the view from the summit of 2,757 ft (841 m) is tremendous, with the Beinn a Ghlo range to the north and the sweep of Strathtay and Strathummel to the west. In exceptional conditions it is apparently even possible to see Arthur's Seat in Edinburgh. Ben Vrackie is a *Corbett* (a separate hill of between 2500 and 2999 feet in height).

Thanks to the work of the Perth and Kinross Countryside Trust, the path is well-constructed for most of the route and offers a delightful walk by the Moulin Burn and then across heather moorland. Red grouse and red deer live on the hillside and even the shy mountain hare can sometimes be seen. Depending on your starting point, the walk is either 6 or 8 miles there and back.

Starting from Pitlochry, follow the A924 road to Moulin (a distance of under a mile) and turn left at the Moulin Inn. Follow the signs for a few hundred yards until a small car park is reached. It is however worth remembering that the car park at Moulin is very small and, on busy days, it might be wiser to leave your car in Pitlochry.

The path is clearly marked here through the trees lining Moulin Burn, until it reaches a deer fence at the edge of the moor over which there is a stile. You've had it easy so far, but pretty soon you will get a good view of the summit and the task in hand - it is worth it!

Along the way you cross some fairly bleak landscape, but there's always a great view back to Pitlochry and the River Tummel below. Just stick to the main path all the way. You will see signs for the 'Bealach Walk' on the left, just ignore them and keep going.

On the summit there is a horizontal dial indicating what's visible from that point, including Ben Lawers, Schiehallion, the Cairngorms and like I said, Arthurs Seat in Edinburgh. The view is simply spectacular and one of the best in the southern Highlands.

Return by the same path and a well earned Braveheart Ale at the Moulin Inn.

As with all hill climbs, try to pick a clear day, as low cloud will obliterate your view. In spite of the accessibility of the mountain from Pitlochry, the safety precautions and equipment required for mountain walks are just as essential as on more isolated hills - weather conditions can change just as quickly here, so take care and always be well prepared.