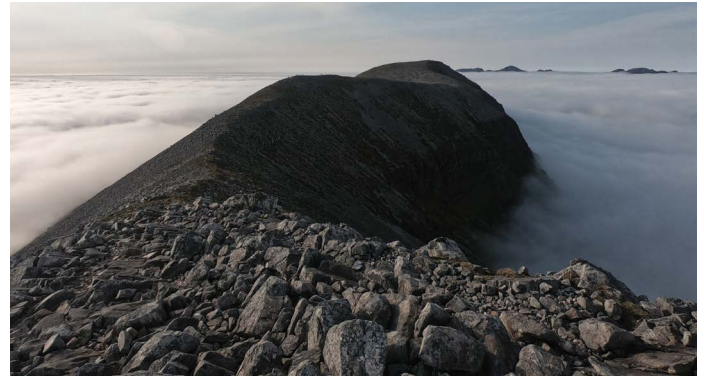
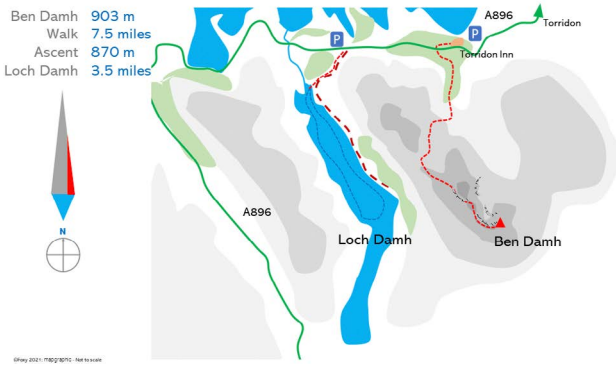


## Ben Damh + Loch Damh



*Summit inversion on Ben Damh.*

It was one of those epic Scottish drives through a mountainous landscape. We slowed to scope out a future Foxy, the put in points for kayaking Loch Loyne, and, as we drove past Loch Cluanie, I mulled over the ascent routes to Beinn Loinne. I was considering an option of kayaking across the lake and attempting to find an opening in the rocky slopes of the northern face but I would, no doubt, undertake the traditional route with a bike ride in to start when the time came.

As we drove through Kintail the cloud base dropped and the summits were obscured from view. Nothing changed as we reached Torrion late in the afternoon and the peaks there were also hidden from view. I finally set off for Ben Damh from the Torrion Inn, just before 4pm, not being sure of how long the round trip would take. A good path takes you up through the forest and then continues over open moorland. As the climb started in earnest the path became looser until I breached the rise and arrived at the bealach. The pathways were good now and it was a steady climb up towards the first summit. Once again I sensed the warmth of the sun and gradually the clouds thinned and I found myself above the second cloud inversion of the day in glorious late afternoon sun. The first summit was a jumble of rocks but the path skirted this for a gradual climb to a high point before it dropped across a narrow ridge and a final push up to the summit of Ben Damh. The mountainscape behind me had the appearance of a whale breaching the surface of a sea, clouds gently breaking around its body. On my way up I had passed a few parties of hikers on their way back down and I was now the last person of the day on the mountain; this morning I had been the first person on the mountain. Truly, in this hectic world in which we live, I had found my moments of solitude.

It was a straightforward descent and I was back at the Torrion Inn in just under 4 hours for the round trip. My wife was in the bar at the Torrion Inn; she had messaged me to ask how long I would be and if she should order another drink. I confirmed that would be a good idea and then joined her in the bar 20 minutes later. We had stayed in the Torrion Hotel 27 years before on our honeymoon but this night we are heading off to find a less expensive layby in which to camp. How times have changed.

We had a good sleep as there was almost no traffic to disturb us. The morning brought us a cloudfree view of the surrounding mountains and the loch below us was smooth and unrippled by wind. Having brewed a tea, fed the dog and had our fortifying porridge, we packed up and drove the short distance to the entrance of the track in to Loch Damh. Parking was limited but we found a space without obstructing the entrance.

From here it is about 1km to the loch and I balanced my kayak on the bike to walk it in. There is a short steep track down to the shoreline at the end of the loch, which I took. A rowing boat was moored there. Out on the loch there was already a boat with two occupants heading to the far side to fish.

The loch was smooth although a gentle wind rippled the glassy surface as I kayaked out to the halfway point. On my left was the steep side of Ben Damh and on my right was the lower rise of Ben Shieldaig.

I passed a fish farm part way up and the lefthand bank had several industrial sheds. Despite this, the elevation of the loch and the limited number of people around gave a sense of remoteness and isolation. I was out on the water for an hour and half before I walked the kayak back out and down to the road. I strapped it on the roofrack and headed back to the Torrion for coffee in the sun and a visit to the gin garden at the hotel.



*The walk back to Torrion.*



*Contemplating Loch Damh.*