

Helensburgh - Ben Bowie Loop

ROUTE TYPE: Walk

DISTANCE: 10 miles/16 km

AVERAGE TIME TO COMPLETE: 4.5 Hours

DIFFICULTY LEVEL: ■■■□ Long walk over hilly terrain



THE ROUTE

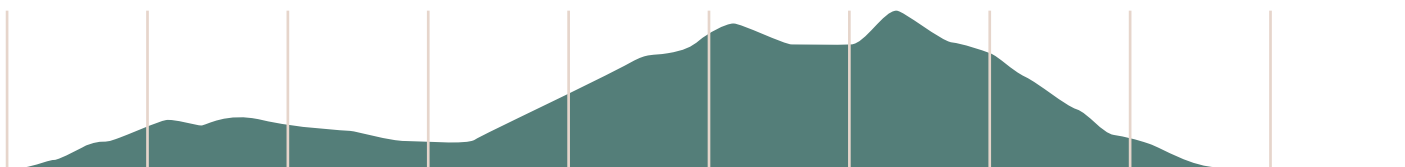
This half-day walk follows the John Muir Way and Three Lochs Way to create a loop that has a bit of everything, from seaside cafes to remote hilltops. There's not much flat though, so be prepared to work for the fantastic views over Loch Lomond and the Firth of Clyde.

Starting and finishing at the John Muir Way's western terminus, explore Helensburgh's waterfront and Colquhoun Square before ascending along quiet streets towards the famous Hill House. Follow the John Muir Way signs to head out of town along the walk/cycle path and then up the forestry climb to Gouk Hill. The optional spur to the summit is worth the scramble off the main path as the views towards Ben Lomond are spectacular.

Retrace your steps a short distance and return via the Three Lochs Way. There's an option climb the summit of Ben Bowie on an unmarked path that follows the fence/treeline. The waymarked Three Lochs Way descends all the way to the eastern end of Helensburgh and it's an easy stroll back along the coast to the centre.

ELEVATION PROFILE

Total ascent 407m / Highest point 313m



Ben Lomond from Gouk Hill

PLACES OF INTEREST

1

HELENSBURGH WATERFRONT

The circular sculpture and seat at the entrance to Helensburgh Pier mark the western end of the John Muir Way and also the start/finish point of this route.

2

SCOTTISH SUBMARINE CENTRE

The route passes close to Scotland's only submarine museum where you can view a Stickleback sub and learn about the exploits of those daring submariners.

3

THE HILL HOUSE

Explore Charles Rennie Mackintosh's finest domestic creation, currently housed inside a protective 'box'. Go on a tour inside and out (even over the roof) and relax in the café.



Route Start – Helensburgh Waterfront



The Hill House

4

GOUK HILL

Your reward for the almost constant climb from Helensburgh is the 277m summit of Gouk Hill. Take in the fantastic views over Loch Lomond and the Trossachs.

5

BEN BOWIE

The route's highest point is accessed from an often soggy unmarked track but it's worth the detour as it overlooks both Loch Lomond to the north and the Firth of Clyde to the south.

THE INSIDE TRACK

Helensburgh has some great eateries where you can stock up or replenish those climbing calories and it's well worth building in time to look around the Hill House on route.

TERRAIN

This route uses a mixture of pavements, gravel footpaths and forestry road. The optional spurs to the summits of Gouk Hill and Ben Bowie involve unmarked paths over uneven and sometimes boggy or muddy ground, however the bulk of the route follows the waymarked routes of the John Muir Way and Three Lochs Way. With 400m of elevation gain in 10 miles, it's a hilly route and steep in places, requiring a good degree of fitness.

Please enjoy Scotland's outdoors responsibly.

Visit: outdooraccess-scotland.com

GETTING THERE

BY RAIL: There are regular trains from Glasgow to Helensburgh Central and a less frequent service to Helensburgh Upper. Balloch is served by a separate line.

BY BUS: First Greater Glasgow service 1B operates between Glasgow, Balloch and Helensburgh.

BY CAR: There is free parking at the far end of Helensburgh Pier.

Plan your trip and find more routes at:
johnmuirway.org/day-trips