



Ben Nevis Guided Group Walks

The Mountain Track, or Pony Track, is the most popular route to the summit of Ben Nevis but should not be underestimated. The path winds its way up from Glen Nevis and it takes approximately four hours to get to the top. As the path is loose and rocky, we allow for the same amount of time to come back down.

Reaching the summit of Ben Nevis is achievable for most people but you will need good levels of fitness and stamina, and be prepared for a full day out in the mountains. Going up is hard work but most people find that coming back down is harder and sorer on the legs. The Mountain Track is around 8km (5 miles) each way, 16km (10 miles) in total. It climbs 1,300m and is a full mountain walking experience which requires sturdy boots and good equipment.

Here is our training plan to help you get in shape –

<https://www.abacusmountainguides.com/ben-nevis-training-plan.html>

Not only is Ben Nevis the highest point in the UK but it is home to some of the rarest plants in the UK and has always played a central role in the development of mountaineering across the world. Don't just climb Ben Nevis, discover more as you learn all about its history, geology, flora and fauna!

There are no toilets on Ben Nevis. Make sure you go before you start the walk. There are places for a pee which are reasonably discrete. Ask your guide to point them out. It is very important to drink and stay hydrated, this is a bigger concern that where to go for a pee.

Everything we carry up must be carried back down. All food wrappers, banana skins, orange peel and plastic bottles must be carried down with us. You might like to take a small bag to collect your rubbish in to help carry it down.

There can be snow patches on the route until July or August and the summit is regularly 9C colder than at sea level. Even if it is warm and dry at the start, it is normally cold and wet on top and you will need warm clothes, waterproofs, hat and gloves.

Ben Nevis Kit List

If you are not used to walking up mountains, it is quite hard to know what to wear and what to carry with you on your climb up Ben Nevis. The main point to remember is that it is a lot colder, windier and wetter on the summit than it is in the glen at the start of the walk.

You might start out in a light shirt but on top it is often 10C colder, wet and windy so you will need to wear a lot more clothing, a hat and gloves. As you come down again, you will probably need to take off all your layers again!

To wear	Other equipment
Thermal base layer top – polyester or woollen, no cotton	Rucksack – roughly 25 litres
Warm fleece	Lunch and spare food
Walking trousers – no jeans	1 litre flask or water bottle
Spare fleece or synthetic insulating layer	Whistle
Waterproof jacket and trousers	Walking poles (recommended but not essential)
Warm hat and gloves (spare gloves recommended)	Sunglasses and sun cream
Sun hat	Mobile phone in a waterproof case
Walking boots – three season with ankle support	Camera
	Personal 1st Aid Kit - plasters, blister kit, all normal medication including asthma inhaler if you have one

Here's a video about what to wear and what to carry on Ben Nevis –

<https://www.abacusmountainguides.com/blog/what-to-wear-and-what-to-carry-on-a-walk-up-ben-nevis>

What to wear on Ben Nevis

Walking boots with ankle support give you some essential protection from twists and sprains if you are not used to walking on rough ground. If you are very used to walking or you play sports such as football, rugby, squash and tennis that strengthen your ankles, then rugged walking shoes might be OK for you. Whatever you wear make sure they are rugged and have a solid sole. The path is dry and rocky (it's not muddy at all) and small, sharp edged stones push through soft soles easily making it uncomfortable.

All your clothing needs to be made of polyester or wool, and not cotton. This is because cotton soaks up any water from rain or sweat and becomes cold, heavy and uncomfortable to wear. It also takes a very long time to dry out. Polyester or wool shirts and trousers don't soak up as much water and they are designed to transport any water to the surface where it can evaporate off quickly, keeping you drier and more comfortable. It is also warm enough when it is wet.

So, wear a polyester or wool shirt, take a warm fleece or two to put on as you get higher up the mountain. Wear walking trousers – no jeans - that are loose and comfortable, or leggings that fit neatly and are not made of cotton.

You should have a spare fleece top or synthetic insulating layer, in case anything goes wrong and we need to stop for a long time. Keep this dry in a plastic, waterproof bag. Bin liners are a bit too thin so get some rubble sacks from a supermarket, tough plastic bags that are the perfect size.

A waterproof jacket and trousers are essential. The jacket needs to have a big hood that covers your head and your face, protecting you from rain being blown in sideways! Sometimes it rains all day and you will be soaked through and need to turn back if your jacket and trousers are not up to it.

Take a warm hat and waterproof gloves (spare gloves are also recommended) even on the dry sunny days. Remember the air is much colder on top and it feels even colder if it is wet and windy.

Sometimes the sun shines though so take a sun hat, sunglasses and sun cream. There is more UV higher up and you will be out for about 8 hours so it's a good idea to put sun cream on before you start the walk.

What to carry on a walk up Ben Nevis

You need a rucksack big enough to carry all your clothing and kit. This is roughly 25 litres to 40 litres.

Bring a really good packed lunch and spare food. Don't rely on sweets and chocolate. You need some good quality carbohydrates which you will get from sandwiches, oat flapjacks, dried fruit, bananas and oatcakes. Take lots of tasty snacks that you know you will enjoy as well.

A 1 litre flask or water bottle is fine. There is a stream at the half way point called the Red Burn where we can fill up the bottles. So, if you start with 1 litre, fill up again on the way up and on the way down you will get through 3 litres which is plenty.

Carry a whistle so you can attract attention if you get separated from your group and you have an emergency.

Walking poles are recommended but not essential. Many people find they really benefit from the support of walking poles on the way back down. It normally feels much harder going down than it does going up, and walking poles can help a lot. If you would like to borrow a set of poles from us please do ask, we have a few spare sets.

Mobile phone in a waterproof case and a camera to record the adventure.

Also remember to take any medication that you normally require or that you might require. If you have asthma, take your blue puffer, even if you very rarely use it.