

## 3.4 Fort Augustus to Invermoriston

57 59

**Distance** 7.3 miles 11.8 km

**Terrain** forestry road on Low Route; from Allt na Criche to Invermoriston, option of High Route with its winding path across exposed hillside

**Food and drink** Fort Augustus (wide range), Invermoriston

**Summary** Low Route runs parallel to Loch Ness' shore with only intermittent views of the water; the more challenging High Route climbs above the trees and offers much better views



- From the main road bridge in Fort Augustus, head north beside the A82 to cross River Oich and pass a garage on the left. Within 200 m bear left up a path leading to a minor road.
- Bear left along the road as it passes the village hall and various B&Bs, and bends right. After 800 m of minor road, at mile 35.3 bear left along a discreetly marked path that climbs steeply through tall conifers to meet a forest road: turn right.
- After the road gains more height, there's a bench with a view over Loch Ness and Loch Ness's only 'island' – actually a crannog, an Iron Age manmade feature. Later it boasted a castle, but now it has only a few trees. It was renamed Cherry Island by Oliver Cromwell.
- At mile 36.1 you reach a waymarked junction with an information board that explains your options. Cyclists may prefer the Low Route, which is less exposed. The High Route appeals more to walkers: it has better views and wildlife, is more strenuous and is slightly longer (by 0.8 miles/1.3 km). Its path leads straight on, soon climbing steeply: see page 58 mid-page.

*South over Loch Ness from the Way*





## Low Route

- The Low Route follows the road bending right downhill in a zigzag almost to loch level. It levels out at about 50 m and crosses the Allt na Criche stream (pronounced alt-na-cree) at a car park.
- It then follows an undulating, winding route through conifer forest for the next 4 miles or so (6-7 km), never rising above the 100 m contour.
- There are breaks in the trees which afford views over Loch Ness, and a number of small waterfalls on the left. You may see the house at Portclair on the lochside, over halfway to Invermoriston.
- After a couple more miles on the forest road, the village of Invermoriston comes into view below. Where the road starts to swing to the left towards Glen Moriston, you are joined from the left by the High Route at mile 41.1.
- Drop down to a path beside the forest road, heading north-west. About 0.6 miles (1 km) beyond the junction, turn sharp right off the forest road down a shortcut path which drops steeply to a minor road.
- Turn right for 500 m, then at the A82 turn left to cross the river and reach Invermoriston. Skip to page 60.

## High Route

- From the junction reached at the foot of page 56, the route climbs steeply through the trees for about 800 m on a constructed path, gaining 140 m of altitude in under 1 km.
- When you emerge from the trees, you are richly rewarded with great views back over Fort Augustus. You can trace the curve of the canal and River Oich, and in the distance clearly see Loch Oich perched at a higher level than Loch Ness – the height difference is 164 ft/50 m.
- The path swings north-east and continues to climb, first to 290 m and then to its highest point at 313 m (1030 ft), on the shoulder of Carn an Doire Mhoir. Throughout this section it crosses open ground and offers excellent wide views.



*'Snake head' rock feature beside the path*

*Horseshoe Crag: see top of page 60*





- About mile 38.5, look across the water to the half-oval of bare scree known as Horseshoe Crag. Legend has it that people were trying to lure Nessie out of the loch by putting a bottle of whisky on the hill. The monster is supposed to have taken the whisky, but returned to the deep, leaving the horseshoe trail behind.
- Soon afterwards you reach a splendid curved stone shelter, built at an ideal spot to enjoy the view over Loch Ness.
- There's now a long, winding descent, at first fairly gentle and still with splendid views over Loch Ness. The path crosses Portclair Burn, and descends further, re-entering the trees about mile 40.
- In the forested section, the descent is steep in places, and continues to a junction with a forest road. Cross it and follow a dogleg path down and across another forest road to rejoin the Low Route at mile 41.1: see page 58 bullet 4.



*The winding descent*

## **Invermoriston**

This little village is centred on the Glenmoriston Arms, built in the 1800s on a site that dates back to a cattle drovers' inn built in 1740. Parts of the very thick granite walls can still be seen inside. The hotel has had many famous visitors since Samuel Johnson and his biographer James Boswell met here on their historic trip to the Hebrides in the 1770s. The village also has a general store and craft shop. There is a drinking water tap outside the Millennium Hall.

The village's early growth was based on timber from Glen Moriston. This was used in the 13th century when ships were built from oak and pine to go on the Crusades. By the 1640s, the village sawmill was in action. In the 19th century, trees were floated downstream for use in constructing the Caledonian Canal. Invermoriston depended on water transport until Thomas Telford built local roads.

*Upper falls of Moriston*





*Telford bridge, Invermoriston*

Telford also designed Invermoriston's splendid old bridge. Begun in 1805, its design was sound, but it suffered from construction problems and spiralling costs. Its financier went bankrupt before completion in 1813. The bridge was restored many times, but after flood damage in 1951, it was replaced by the modern bridge (1954) which gives a good vantage point for admiring the older bridge.

The Way crosses the modern road bridge heading north. To see the old Telford bridge properly, descend steps on the far side of the road bridge, cross the old bridge and drop down to view the upper falls. To explore the lower falls, take the woodland path that descends from the east side of the road bridge. There's a summer house with viewing platform overlooking the river where it tumbles down over hard old rocks towards the loch.

From the road bridge, the Way heads towards the Glenmoriston Arms. Steps on your left lead down to St Columba's Well, where the Saint is supposed to have driven out evil spirits and given the water curative powers.

*River Moriston, autumn*

