



OUTDOORS
FATHER

Cape Wrath Trail - 250 miles in 11 days



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In May 2015, I walked the [Cape Wrath Trail](#) in just over 10 days and 10 nights, fully self supported, walking around 250 miles through the bogs, mountains, and forests of the Scottish Highlands.

Let me start by saying that **I've done it!** 250 miles (or 230 miles of walking for me) in 10.5 days, and what days they were! This trail has been amazing, challenging, heart breaking and uplifting all at the same time. The stunning landscape of the last truly remote and solitary place in the UK reminded me of what is important in life and why I do the things I choose to do: my family, nature and our ability to do amazing things.



Looking over on Inverscaddle Bay

In this guide I want to sum up all I've learned about the Cape Wrath Trail, how it is that I did this adventure and how you can do so too, either in the "fast and light" way I choose to do it, or in the more sane and relaxed way of walking the trail in 3 weeks. I will take you through my "why", and explain how I did it, and what else you need to be ready for.

Why the Cape Wrath Trail

The Cape Wrath Trail is an unofficial long distance trail and as such it is very remote and rarely walked. I have always been drawn to those remote and hard trails - maybe it is my need to feel that I'm on the edge and pushing my survival limits - so the Cape Wrath Trail became my goal in the UK. I decided that I had to do it.

Despite my need to be in remote and harsh places, I'm also very much a family man and being away from my family is hard. The longest I had been away from my wife was about a week (in eight years!) and only 3-4 days away from my daughter, so the idea of doing this trail over 3 weeks was not an option. From reading, doing research and over estimating myself I decided that I could do the trail in 10 days, basing it on my ability to walk 25 miles a day over several days. I originally planned on setting out in May 2014, but that decision was made only a few months prior and I needed to accept that I did not have the fitness, the gear nor the skills for such an undertaking (and what I did have instead was a newborn baby...), so May 2015 was the new time frame.



A beautiful start to the Cape Wrath Trail on the banks of Cona Glen

Over the last year I spent my time [training](#), [updating my gear](#), learning about the trail, working on my [navigation](#) and developing the [best menu](#) for such an extreme adventure. Walking the trail in the time frame I chose would not have been possible if it wasn't for the amount of preparation I put into it, and even with it I had a hard time finishing it, both physically and mentally.

You can find the gear list and my menu at the end of this report.

Logistical issues with the trail

The first issue to deal with was transportation: one side of the trail is pretty simple (Fort William) as there are train and bus services, but getting to and from Cape Wrath itself is a real challenge.

Cape Wrath is not connected by a direct road to mainland UK, so transportation is a real problem. I walked from Fort William to Cape Wrath, and only by sheer luck managed to get from the lighthouse (on the cape) to Durness (the closest bus-serviced village). To get to Cape Wrath you must either walk through the bogs north of Kilochbervie, (which is the last leg of the trail), or cross the Kyle of Durness by boat and take a minibus the rest of the way. The kyle is usually crossed twice a day by John (the ferryman) using an 8 seater dingy, but when the kyle is stormy or the wind picks up or John has had a couple of pints too many, the ferry will not cross and the only way on or off Cape Wrath is by walking back through the bogs. There is a minibus that goes between the ferry and the Cape, operated by James, who only does the 14 mile ride (roughly an hour) if John will be at the ferry to get people across. You can see how John's whims can decide whether you can come on or off the



Cape. I met several walkers who did the trail north (from the Cape) to south (Ft. William) and actually had to skip Cape Wrath due to it being inaccessible.

On the day that I finished the trail, I woke up early and so got to the lighthouse at Cape Wrath at roughly 9:45 in the morning, thinking I would have to wait till 13:00 for the minibus and ferry connection back to Durness. To my surprise, the minibus arrived to the lighthouse at 10:15 since a big group of tourists had paid extra for the John-and-James duo to get them to Cape Wrath, despite John's decision not to do any crossing of the kyle that day. I jumped at the chance to take the ride back and actually managed to get off the cape, just before John called it the day and headed to the pub!



The kyle of Durness looking calm just before becoming unpassable

Some useful information:

Cape Wrath Ferry: [site](#), or call John to check crossings: +44 (0)7719 678 729

Cape Wrath minibus: [site](#), or checking with James: +44 (0)7742 670 196

Last point to know about the Cape Wrath area is that it is a MOD (Ministry Of Defense) training ground, mainly for naval training, so during times of training the area is closed. It is important to check in advance that there is no training going on as it is very dangerous to try and cross the firing area at that time. It seems that almost all the business around Cape Wrath and in the Kilochbervie area will have the information on display (accommodations, information centers and some cafes), but you can also check yourself:

MOD Freephone Tel: 0800 833 300 or on the [Cape Wrath site](#).

How I actually walked the trail

I choose to walk from Fort William in the south to Cape Wrath in the north, for several reasons:

1. Transportation issues at Cape Wrath (see above)
2. The trail has steeper ascents if coming from the north, though it does mean "knee crushing" descents if coming from the south
3. The sections in the southern part are more technical*, but shorter in distance
4. Getting to Cape Wrath at the start was a waste of a couple of days where at the end those days were part of my recovery time

* By technical I mean either with no path or with very hard sections in the trail.



Coming down from the Streap to to Glen Pean

I based my walk on the route that is advised by Ian Harper in his great [guide](#) by Cicerone, with some small alterations or adjustments using the Harvey's Cape Wrath Trail maps. The guide breaks the trail into 14 sections, with each section taking 1-2 days to walk. In the first 4 days I walked 1.5 sections each day, and then did a couple of days doing 2 sections a day and then one section per day. The reason for that is that on the second day I made a terrible navigation mistake (more about it later) that cost me half a day and much fatigue and slowed me down, and during the last 4 days I was just too tired and battered to be able to walk more than a section a day.

I managed to walk the whole trail except for 2 sections that I decided to skip due to time limitations and fatigue/injuries: on day 8 I skipped an 18.5 km section due to time limitations, and on day 9 I skipped a 10 km section due to fatigue and injuries. Both of those sections were covered by hitch hiking from one road meeting point to the next connection point. Though I felt bad (and still do) about skipping those sections, the alternative would have been missing the Cape Wrath area, which happens to many walkers who are pressed with time or suffer physically, I think I made the right call on that.

The key for me on this trip was ensuring a good recovery overnight to be able to repeatedly take my body through another rigorous day, and I managed to achieve that thanks to my great and [efficient menu](#). Each morning I woke up stiff, but with no real muscle deterioration and after some stretching and warm up managed to go through another day of 10-15 hours of

walking. I lost some weight, but definitely not as much as I would have if it wasn't thanks to my careful meals and nutrition planning. As a side note, the two main issues I had on the trail were joint inflammation (ankles and knees) and foot injuries, both as a result of inadequate footwear. I'll talk more about these in the last post.

My Cape Wrath Trail itinerary

Despite using the guide and having my tent, my days were mainly aimed at getting to a bothy by the end of the day, so that dictated a different stopping point than what the guide recommended. From the very beginning all the way to the last day, this how my days went:

Day 1

Arrival to Fort William at 11:00 using the night train to Inverness and then a bus. From Fort William pier (just 0.5km south from the train/bus station on the main Loch road), a [passenger ferry](#) took me at 12:20 to Camusnagaul across Loch Linnhe (took about 20 min). The ferry costs £1.50 per person and is a tiny boat, so make sure you get there early to make sure you get a spot. I was the only one there on the day I took it, but I am sure that there are times when it fills up quickly.



The ferry from Fort William to Camusnagaul across Loch Linnhe

From Camusnagal the trail splits - I took the route that goes south (I know! You start by going south?...) to Inverscaddle Bay on a paved and quiet road; this is a walk of around 9km. From Inverscaddle Bay the trail leaves the road and turns to the west on a good 4x4 road all the way to a pass that heads north between Sgor Craobh a'Chaoruinn and Maell nan Damh. I managed to start the climb north from the 4x4 road to the pass



A boggy path after the climb from Cona Glen to Glenfinnan

at around 17:30. The pass itself starts on a good trail but at the top it turns wet and boggy, introducing you for the first time to the Highland's famous bogs. The boggy section is around 3km, then connects to a 4x4 road near Allt na Cruaiche (stream). This is the first point where you have cell phone signal after Fort William. The 4x4 leads you to Glenfiennan and you can either walk by the side of the A830 road (what I did, accidentally) or on a 4x4 road just south of the road. At Glenfinnan I turned north again under the viaduct which is very impressive and walked on a paved road all the way up to Corryhully bothy (about 4km from Glenfinnan).

Corryhully bothy is an estate bothy, which means it is privately owned and actually has electricity! The owners do ask for a donation to cover electricity use but the bothy itself is free. I got to the bothy at 20:30 after roughly 40km of walking, the last hour in pouring rain, and I was very happy to find the bothy full of dry wood and a fire already going. At the bothy I also met a German woman who had started the Cape Wrath Trail, and after 4 days reached a hard river crossing that she decided was too hard for her. The first person I meet on the trail is quitting! Not a good start.



Corryhully bothy tucked away as a safe and dry haven

The rain continued all night long but the bothy was dry, albeit cold and very basically decorated with a concrete floor, a simple fire place, a few sleeping platforms and some chairs. I had dinner, some broken chatting with the German lady and some much needed sleep.

Day 2

Day 2 started with a light drizzle but I was able to be ready by 7:00 after food and repacking. Having the bothy to get ready in with the rain going outside makes a big difference and I said good bye to the German woman keen to set out. I even managed to get my phone charged a bit before leaving.



Climbing from Corryhully bothy to the Streap

The trail starts very comfortably with a clear 4x4 road that climbs north up to a pass near Streap mountain. At this point (about 4.5km from the bothy) the trail disappears and the true Scottish bogs are revealed, out to get you. It is a slippery climb with a magical view from the top and an even slipperier descent down towards Glen Pean. This part is wet, muddy and requires your full attention to avoid falling onto your bum in various places.

At Glen Pean (river) there is a solid bridge that takes you to a small fork (turn left) and up on a small rocky trail to meet a good 4x4 road. The road goes through the amazing Dessarry Woods and it is very easy to walk: turn right (east) upon meeting the road and stay with it all the way to A'Chuil bothy at the edge of the woods around Monadh Gorm (mountain). At A'Chuil I stopped for a lunch break as the weather that had cleared in the last hour was closing in again for more rain. After lunch I rejoined the trail and in the River Dessarry forest



A'Chilu bothy at the edge of Dessarry forest

managed to make a dramatic navigational error that cost me dearly in time and fatigue. The trail follows the river and crosses the Dessarry and small streams that spill to it many times. At the western edge of the forest, the river splits to a northern spill and a southern one; the Cape Wrath Trail goes on the northern one and I took the southern one. To avoid this mistake

you can also cross the river on a bridge that is 300 meters from the bothy and use another 4x4 road that is on the northern side of the forest, that way you stay on the right side.



Walking down to the wrong loch - not Loch Nevis, as I find out later

In any case, I took the wrong glen going to the pass and instead of reaching Loch Nevis as I should have, I reached Loch Morar, just to the south of Loch Nevis. I reached the Loch's shore at about 16:30 and decided to have a short day and just go to Sourlies bothy on the loch's shore and rest. When I arrived to the loch I realized that nothing matched the map I had, so I continued walking on the northern shore hoping to find the turn north and the trail. After an hour of walking on the north shore and not finding anything, I saw some people on a row boat and tried to get their attention, but without luck. I walked back to where I came off the pass to the loch and tried to use my limited map to understand where I was. The maps that I had and the guide didn't show the loch I was at, so I couldn't pinpoint my location. I eventually concluded I was at a loch south of Loch Nevis and I had 2 options: go back or try and climb the ridge to the north (Bidein a'Chabair, around 650-850m high). I went for the climb. By now it was 18:00, and I was already tired and panicking.



Climbing Bidein a'Chabair ridge in an attempt to correct my navigation mistake. At least the view was great until I reached the clouds

I climbed the ridge in constant rain and no trail for about an hour and reached the clouds. The whole top was in full cloud cover and I somehow managed to get turned around and started to descend back to where I started! At this point I took my compass out and followed a strict "up and north" route to the top. The climb was hard but the descent was what really got to me. It was a steep descent and midway I needed to take out some painkillers to try and finish the walk down. I arrived to the shores of Loch Nevis at 20:30, soaking wet due to the rain, the waterfalls and streams on the ridge and I could barely walk the 500 meters to the bothy. At 21:00 I reached the bothy to find it almost completely full (I managed to squeeze in), with no firewood for a fire and full of wet and very grumpy middle aged men.



Sourlies bothy - so close, but so far, with a few hundred meters of descent with already sore knees

I attempted to hang all my clothes and gear to dry in the limited space of the bothy, had a quick dinner and jumped into the sleeping bag. Sourlies bothy is located in an amazing place, but the bothy itself is small, very drafty, cold and not very welcoming. The lack of wood around makes it a slight disappointment, but at the end of the day it had walls and a roof.

Day 3

Day 3 started as grim as day 2 ended - rain was still pouring, some of my bothy mates had woken up at 4:00 (AM!) to start the walk to A'Chilu bothy (remember day 2 lunch?), so we all had a broken night. I joined the remaining bothy dwellers in a slow rise, slow coffees and the reluctant process of donning still-wet clothes. Eventually we all got dressed, fed and packed, leaving Sourlies to our separate ways - me to Kinloch Hourn and them to A'Chilu.



Sourlies bothy in the light of day in its stunning location

The walk takes a clear path that goes straight into ankle deep bog all the way to the bridge over River Carnach and then joins a clear 4x4 road that stays with the river heading north for about 6km. At some point the trail turns smaller and smaller, disappearing at times into the boggy river banks, but the sun was finally out and my spirit was up. I still had no cellphone signal to get in touch with home (I hadn't since the first night) and I felt strong pangs of home sickness, despite the improved weather.



The boggy delta near Carnoch

After the 6km on River Carnach, there is a 90° bend in the river where the trail leaves the river to join a different trail that heads north west. This is a tricky section as there is no real trail to join the other, clear trail. When you reach the bend, just climb straight north (get the compass out!) in between the two small streams that spill into the river. After about 200-300 meters you will reach the clear trail, there is no way to miss it as it will cross your way at some point, even if not going straight north. Once with the clear trail, take a left (west) and stay with the trail. It is a bit of a climb, but once you reach the pass, the valley opens into great views towards Barrisdale bay.



Finally some nice weather on the banks of River Carnach

The weather was warm enough for me to be in my t-shirt and to finally ditch the Sealskinz socks I had been wearing for a couple of days (I would not put them back on) and my feet felt immediately better. I got to the bothy in Barrisdale bay in good time and had coffee. The

bothy is a private bothy (like Corryhully) and has running water, electricity and a toilet! It is £5 a night to stay in the bothy and £3 to use a tent next to it. This is where I planned on spending the second night before I reached the wrong loch (...) and it would have been nice to stay there, even if there is no fire place.



Ben Aden standing proud above River Cornach from the pass to Barrisdale Bay

After my coffee I started the seemingly simple walk to Kinloch Hourn to camp for the night, just to be shown that is actually longer and not as easy as I thought. The trail is clear throughout, starting with a 4x4, and then turning east on Loch Beag on a narrow trail all the way to Kinloch Hourn.



On the shore of Loch Hourn between Barrisdale Bay and Kinloch Hourn

After an hour or so of walking, I accepted that it was longer than I thought so I slowed down and just enjoyed the view on the reflection of the moors on the water. I got to Kinloch Hourn at a good time (around 17:30) and found the camping place: just past the bridge. There is really nothing there in terms of amenities or even people (I was the only one to camp there). Camping is supposed to cost £1 per night, but I couldn't find a person to give money to, so I never did pay.

I got to the site, had a good river bath, did some laundry and just rested, as my body needed. It was an early night after not being able to get in touch with my family for another day and my Kindle suffering some fatal malfunction. It was a dry evening but rain was back throughout the night.

This is the end of part 1, camping in the comforts of Kinloch Hourn. I will see you soon as we are gearing up for long and hard days in the beautiful and wild parts of the Cape Wrath Trail.



Camping at Kinloch Hourn

Day 4

I had an early start from Kinloch Hourn, which happens when camping, with a quick breakfast and packing. It was dry enough to get everything sorted and enjoy the morning. The Cape Wrath Trail follows a clear 4x4 trail under electric pylons for a few km here



Above Kinloch Hourn

(just climb up through the small woods to find the trail) and splits off it at some point. I assumed the split would be unmarked so I got off the trail too early, just to see that the trail I was supposed to follow is also a 4x4 trail. Just stay under the pylon until you see a clear 4x4 branch off to the north and take it. The trail fords Allt a'Coire Reidh river (wide but slow, even in rain) next to a small deer stalking hut that can be used for sleeping if needed (not locked, with one bench).

After another 1-2km, the trail leaves the 4x4 road onto an unmarked climb up to Bealach Coire Mhalagain. This is one of the highest passes in the Cape Wrath Trail and it feels like it. The climb is long and navigation is not simple in the boggy terrain. The goal is clear but the guide and the maps suggested different approaches and I went up a ridge that got me too high up; eventually I reached the Lochen in the pass, but from a higher point. The views from the pass are stunning, especially as the weather finally cleared to expose the snowy summits of Sgurr na Sgine, Sgurr na Forcan and the Saddle. Here there is a short section to join the remains of a wall to follow, but the whole section was covered with snow, which made finding the wall hard. Fight the temptation to climb higher - just skirt the incline from the north - and you will see the wall. Walk along the wall to Meallan Odhar on a fairly clear trail.



Climbing up to Bealach Coire Mhalagain



Looking back at the bealach and Kinloch Hourn



Looking south on the snowy peak of Sgurr na Sgine



Coire Caol River leading to Shiel Bridge

The knee crushing descent starts from Maeallan Odhar, initially with a clear path north and then just picking your way north west to Coire Caol. When reaching the river (take a break and stretch those quads to treat the knees), the Cape Wrath Trail stays with it due north with no real trail to follow, just boggy terrain until you reach the ford at Allt Undalain. This is another slow flowing, wide river so just cross where it opens next to the dilapidated building.



Shiel Bridge and Sgurr an t-Searraich

Past the ford, about 40 meters up from the river (west) there is a clear and easy trail to take you to Shiel Bridge and civilization. I finally managed to get some internet connection (no cell service) and Skyped with Mika - what a relief! We chatted all the way towards Morvich and I was about to cancel the whole thing and just head home to my family, who I missed so much. Eventually we managed to finish the conversation and I spent the last km to Morvich telling myself to get it together and stay with the trail. After a lunch (coffee and a protein bar) next to the Kintail Outdoor Center I was pretty much regrouped and ready to get to Maol-bhiudhe bothy some 20km away.

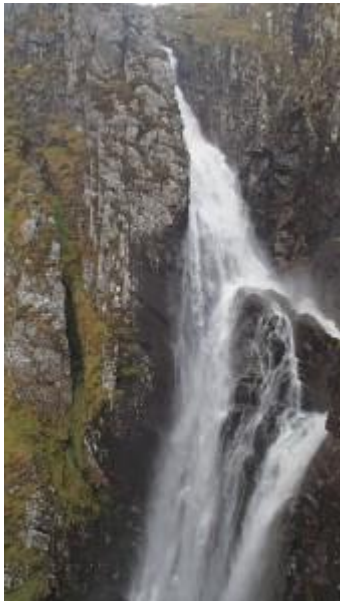


Looking south towards Dorusdain Wood and Meall'an Fhuarain Mhoir



Dorusduain Wood just north east to Morvich

From Morvich the trail goes to Falls of Glomach on a very clear trek: starting with a clear path to the forest, and then turns left to the parking lot and a paved 4x4 road for a few kilometers (just follow the signs to the falls). At the edge of the forest there is a small bridge and the trail turns into a clear walking path for a 5km of exposed walk up to



Bealach na Sroine and then down to the Falls. The Falls of Glomach are awe inspiring - they are the highest drop waterfall in the UK (100 meters) - and the power there is amazing.

From the falls you need to avoid the trail that goes down to the observation point (though it's worth seeing) and walk from the sign left (north west) to a lone rock. From there you will see the route that goes around the falls to Loch na Leitreach. The trail can be a little tricky and slippery at times, but more than anything it is a true pain for the knees. It is not a long descent, just a tiring one. At the end of the trail you join a very clear 4x4 road that splits to two options: West to Killilan and other places of habitation or north east to the Iron Lodge and then north to Loch Croushie. I picked the route to the Iron Lodge and walked the next 11km (2.5 hours) non stop on the clear trail that went to the bothy. There is a clear split just in front of the Iron Lodge.



Loch na Leitreach once the sun finally joined me

The route to the Iron Lodge is very picturesque with deer, sheep and woolly cows enjoying the lush greens around the loch and the river. After about half an hour the rain started and followed me all the way to the bothy. After the Iron Lodge, the Cape Wrath Trail climbs up to a plateau but the trail stays clear. After a while the terrain, the view and my mood all turned bleak and grey. I reached my nightly heaven of Maol-bhuidhe at 20:30 tired and very homesick to find that I had company but no dry wood for a fire! Oh well.



The long, bleak and tiring walk to Loch Cruoshie is humbling

I spent a great evening drying up with Ryan in the great bothy of Maol-bhuidhe - wooded top floor, a drying room, an emergency extra sleeping room and a very nice common room with benches and a fire place (but no wood....). The bothy is located in such a remote and isolated place that it feels as if there is nothing else in the world. For a truly remote feeling in the UK it is the right place to spend the night.



Maol-bhuidhe, one of the best bothies I encountered

Day 5

Despite the short night, I was pretty energetic in the morning, and the view from the bothy's windows was mesmerizing: blue skies, mountains and a windy loch making the perfect Highland view. Today I planned on arriving to Kinlochewe to pickup my resupply package. Packing and sorting was simple, though my feet were reaching new levels of pain: bleeding blisters, swollen ankles and crushed knees; progress at the pace I had been keeping (35-40km a day) was starting to take its toll.

The Cape Wrath Trail splits here and you can skirt Beinn Dronaig from the north or from the south - I picked the north as it is only a couple of km without trail and then picks up a clear 4x4 heading west and then north. The fording of Lub Chruinn was a bit rougher than the previous crossing with the swelling, but not a major issue. I kept steady north, north east route and found the 4x4 trail easily, joining it to walk on the northern shores of Loch Calavie. The day was windy, but dry and sunny and the walk was easy (even on my ruined feet). On the way I met two deer stalkers on an ATV from Bendronaig Lodge and when I passed the lodge I saw the very nice bothy there (another estate bothy that I heard is very nice). At this point I had a map change point (stowing away the south map and getting a new and fresh north map - exciting!).



A glorious morning over looking Loch Cruoshie



Loch Calavie

The Cape Wrath Trail continues as a clear 4x4 and then just fades away, but before that it splits to climb a very tempting pass near Eagan and past Bearnais bothy, but despite that being my initial plan, the descent from the pass is steep and I wasn't sure my knees could cope with that. After the trail disappears you just need to keep on following Amhainn Bhearnais and reach the Bealach Bhearnais - very clear and unmissable as the valley narrows down. At the pass I met two walkers heading south who recommended the bunk house at Kinlochewe.



Rejoining a real trail at Allt a'Chonais River near Craig

From the pass it is a clear (and busy-ish) path to join a 4x4 trail past a wire bridge. I had a nice coffee break as the weather warmed up a little (and rained just as my coffee was ready) and then I picked another 4x4 trail to join the A890 at Craig. Upon meeting the road past the well maintained estate and the rail crossing, it is a km or so of road walking. I opted to get off the road here and climb via Coulin pass, but the Cape Wrath Trail also offers the walk between the mountains on the banks of Easan Dorcha which seemed very nice but beyond my energy levels.



Coulin Pass Looking at Coulin and Beinn Eighe

The climb was hard but on a clear path that then joins a very clear 4x4 heading north through the pass to Coulin. The walk was very pleasant and the area seems to be popular with walkers and MTBs alike. At Coulin the trail splits north east past a bridge and then into another forest. All the forests here are for industrial wood, so don't expect too much. At the northern edge of the forest the trail was blocked by felled trees which sent me off trail and back into the bog with no trail. I eventually found the trail to my left in the form of wooden poles with yellow ribbons on them. The walk was windy and the weather was closing in, the terrain was bleak and the felled forests are not a great sight at all.



Beinn Eighe just above Kinlochewe

At the first chance I took a 4x4 road that went down to the A896 to make the walk a little easier, avoiding the felled forest and the bogs it goes through. I arrived to Kinlochewe at around 18:00 and went straight to the [bunkhouse](#) to find out they were fully booked, so my alternative was going to the camping site. It started raining and it was a quick set up and lots of great family chat (even spoke to my daughter!).



Camping at Kinlochewe



The warm and cozy drying room at the Kinlochewe camp site

The [Kinlochewe camp site](#) is nice and well organized (£9.80 for a tent) with very hot showers, a laundry room, drying room etc - all clean and very well maintained. I had a long shower, did some laundry, had dinner and chatted with my wife to refill the home batteries. I went for an earlier night as the rain continued and it was not appealing to spend time outside or on my feet.

Day 6

The morning started wet and windy so I retreated early to the camp site's drying room as I had time to burn until the post office opened at 9:00. It was a great place to dry all my gear, have a warm breakfast and chat to people. By 8:45 I was fully dry, packed, fed and feeling better after a chat with my family.

I sent another 5 days worth of food in advance to the Kinlochewe post office to be held for me to pick up. I went to the post office/store and got my package as well as some needed supplies: gas canister, batteries for my headlamp, [Compeeds](#) and some coffee and cookies. I went back to the camp site and spent a few minutes in the toilets building (warm and dry) to treat my feet and cover the more problematic blisters with Compeed - what a relief!



The split in the road just above Kinlochewe Highets heading to Gleann na Muice

From Kinlochewe the Cape Warth Trail starts clearly going north east and then turning north on the 4x4 fork above Kinlochewe Heights (a road gate with a walkers gate next to it). After 3-4 km the trail started to narrow down and get muddy and boggy following the constant rain. At Lochan Fada I left the trail towards Loch Meallan an Fhudair (north east) but I headed straight east as I didn't bother to get my compass out. After a quick correction I found the Loch and from there I could see Bealach nan Croise, which is where I was aiming for. The ground was very wet and slippery and the rain was back, making sure I was getting thoroughly soaked. Crossing the river prior to the Bealach was my first truly challenging and dangerous crossing - white rapids, strong current and high swell lead to a freezing knee high cross. Past the river the pass was clear and windy.



Passing LochGleann na Muiceas, the weather was closing in again



Hard navigation and rough boggy terrain passing Bealach na Croise



Passing Loch an Nid in terrible weather and on the lookout for a shelter to rest

From the Bealach it was a windy and wet descent with a trail that kept on disappearing, but it followed the river heading north east towards Loch an Nid. At the loch I had another rapid crossing and the wind was just picking up in the fjord-like valley - an amazing rock formation with huge slabs of rock that became wild waterfalls, nature and its best. I walked a bit further trying to find a place for a break (I was exhausted) and found it in the form of a dilapidated building at the northern edge of Loch an Nid.

After a coffee and a protein bar I had a little more energy and I resumed walking, aiming for Corrie Hallie (village) roughly 10km away. The trail kept on disappearing but sticking to the eastern bank of Amhain Loch an Nid made navigation simple. As the valley opens, about 5 km from the loch, I met a clear 4x4 road climbing up to the plateau above Corrie Hallie, but from the fork I could see the trail that leads to Shenavall bothy and a building that I thought is Shenavall (it was Achneigle), but I climbed up instead. The rain resumed and I realized that my chances of finding a dry camp for the night were slim. The trail has another splitting point 3km further on with another trail that goes down (south west) to Shenavall, I made up my mind to find that trail and head to the bothy.

I reached the second split to Shenavall and took it; the rain got stronger and strong face winds coming from An Teallach were picking up. The 3km trail to the bothy was very wet, muddy and slippery but I made it to the bothy - wet through my waterproofs and miserable.

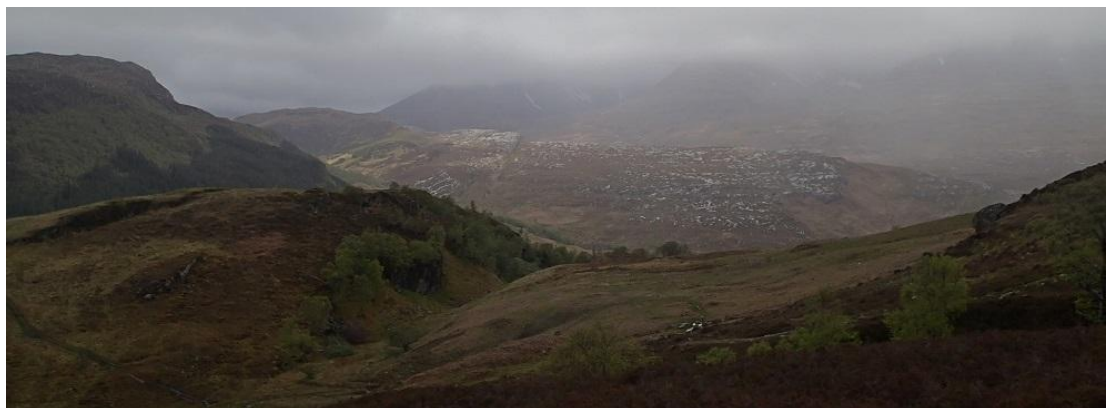


Shenavall bothy offering a much needed shelter from the constant rain and gales

In the bothy I met a guy walking the opposite direction on the Cape Wrath Trail and we had a chance to exchange experiences and give each other recommendations. With much persistence I managed to get a fire going in the bothy and we were joined by two more people who were planning to do the five 3000ft peaks in the area over the weekend. The bothy was very nice with a hardwood floored second floor and enough dry wood to have a warm evening that allowed us to get warm and fairly dry. After a nice chat I retired and made another attempt to take care of my feet that were rapidly deteriorating due to the wetness and the harsh terrain.

Day 7

The morning started wet with the rain still present, but I woke up early (5:30) so a slow start was possible. I got ready and out by 7:00, just as the rest of my bothy mates were joining me in the common room. I chose not to climb the trail I used the day before but use the level route that heads back to the bottom of the 4x4 trail, thinking it would be a very short walk, but proved to be otherwise. The trail was ok, and the weather was improving, and by the time I reached the 4x4 route I felt pretty good, though with very sore feet and stiff knees. The walk to Corrie Hallie was pleasant and the views were amazing with Loch Coire Chaorachain to the east and bits of An Teallach peaking from the clouds. I reached Corrie Hallie early and had a chance for a nice chat with my wife on the descent.



Over Looking Corry Hallie and the ridge I would climb up

From Corrie Hallie it is a bit of a tricky route to find the trail, but following the guide gets you to the right place at the end and a reasonable trail onto the ridge above Allt a'Chairn towards Inverleal. The trail does have a tendency to merge with deer and sheep trails and then disappear, but aiming to reach Loch an Tiompain and following the hills' curves leads the way easily. On the descent to Inverleal I had cell signal again and chatted to my wife, telling her about the coming section I had that involved 10km of navigation with no trail east to Meall Dubh along Glen Douchary. She said that maybe it was time to find easier alternatives to some parts as I wouldn't be able to finish the trail at this pace, so I listened to her and caught a ride to Ullapool from Inverleal (8 km).

Ullapool would have been the perfect place for a rest day, but I had no time for it and I got a coffee and a brownie at a local coffee shop and picked up the paved road that goes from the north of Ullapool to Morefield Quarry and then to Loch Achall and back to Loch an Daimh where the navigation section ends. The trail is a mix of paved 4x4 road and a good 4x4 road, leading from Ullapool east, passing Rhidorroch, Cabudh, Rhidorroch Lodge and then climbing to Loch an Daimh, roughly 15km to the loch. It was the afternoon, the sun was out and a dry wind was blowing, the route is simple and busy enough with MTB riders. I had a chance to dry my clothes and just enjoy the scenery and how relaxed it all felt on this part of the Cape Wrath Trail.



Reaching my meeting point with the alternative route I didn't take - saving 3 hours of navigation in the bog

I walked for 3.5 hours straight, and by the time I reached the southern tip of Lochan Daimh at the meeting point with the other trail, I was barely walking, dragging myself at a pace of 2-3 km/h. I had aimed to walk to Old School bothy near Doug Bridge, some 8km away, but I was so tired I decided to spend the night in Knockdamph bothy on the northern shore of Loch an Daimh (2km from the fork with the other trail).

I arrived at 17:30 to one of the most isolated bothies I've been to, though it had a 4x4 road leading to it and it was recently (the previous week) partially renovated. The location of the bothy and the bleak, vast and wild loch and mountains around created the feeling of true

solitude. The bothy is indeed in the process of being fixed, one room partially ready with a new fireplace and the other still waiting to be fixed. I choose the old room as it was more inviting and I had a big warm fire, time to dry myself and all my gear, some much needed rest. I even had a chance to do some needed repairs to gear, patched up my feet and just rested to allow a better start of the day tomorrow.



Knockdamph bothy peeking over the hill to offer a much needed finish for the day



Knockdamph bothy and Loch an Daimh

Day 8

Fully recovered (besides my feet), I was ready to tackle the day with another adjustment to my walk - instead on having a 45km day I decided to cut 20km out by hitch-hiking from Okyel Bridge to Inchnadamph. Quick packing and great weather brought out an easy walk on the clear 4x4 trail to Okyel Bridge. I had a good pace and the sun was out, and by the time I got to Old School bothy after 6km I was in my t-shirt and a very good mood. In the bothy I

met two friends: Jackie and Paul, in their 70s who were also walking the Cape Wrath Trail. They were on day 15, doing the sections as the Ian Harper guide recommends. After a nice chat with them I continued on the easy trail that stayed wide to Okyel Bridge, but after a couple of km from the bothy turned less nice with felled forests and some heavy machinery along the way.



Sunny patches look promising at the start of day 8



The sun is out over the Cape Wrath Trail heading to Doug Bridge



Less exciting walk heading to Oykel Bridge



Oykel Bridge

I got to Okyel Bridge just to find a classic car rally starting, completely congesting the area around the junction and the hotel - nice cars but what a nightmare for a hitchhiker! After 30 minutes or so I caught a ride to Ledmore Junction and then another to Inchnadamph, getting there at around 12:30. The place had no cell signal, and the public phone was not working, so I headed to the lodge to call Mika and let her know that I was fine and what my plans were for the next couple of days, with that night to be spent at Glancoul bothy. After a short and unsettling conversation I had to hang up and I started walking with a heavy heart and strong longing for home.

From Inchnadamph the Cape Wrath Trail goes on a 4x4 trail and splits off just before reaching a bridge over Allt Poll an Droighinn. The trail you need is a small path going straight north in between 2 big 4x4 trails, one of them is new and not on the maps or the guide. The trail is a real mountain trail with stunning views of the surrounding peaks and it climbs steadily to meet Loch Fleodach Coire. From here the trail is harder to find but you are aiming to the Bealach north west at trig point 623; it can be easily seen as the ridges around

close on it. The climb is hard and exposed but more than rewarding with great views coming up to the pass and on the ridges to the east.



Rough mountain trail climbing from Inchnadamph to Bealach na h-Uidhe

From the Pass it is another hard descent on a clear path that splits several times; it is important to keep an eye out as you take the right fork twice and the left fork the third time. After the lochen at trig point 353, the trail is there for another 200-300 meters and then it is gone and you need to follow the stream heading north east to meet Amhainn an Loch Bhig. The weather was just closing in as I started to descend, increasing the terrain's slipperiness, sending me down to one knee, to my bum or on my hands several times. It is a dangerous descent and keeping a careful pace is vital. At the bottom of the curved valley in which you can almost see how the glacier once moved, you meet Amhainn an Loch Bhig. Cross carefully (it was pretty wild and high when I crossed) and then follow the eastern bank all the way to Loch Beag. There is no trail here and the way is very hard, wet and with very deep bogs (sometimes waist high). For me this was a breaking point of tiredness, fatigue, home sickness and hating the constant rain, but as I was stuck with no ability to do anything but walk, I kept on going to the loch. After an hour of hard walk (for 2.5 km!) I reached a faint trail near Loch Beag and followed it to Glencoul bothy.



Loch Fleodach Coire and the ridge above



Loch Beag and Glencoul are just at the end of the endless wet bog a head

The bothy sits on the shores of the loch and is in such a windy and dramatic place that it is absolutely breath taking. Getting to the bothy managed to pick me up from the near-breaking point I had reached, especially when I discovered lots of dry wood and a renovated room to spend the night in. A hot fire, food and dry clothes picked up my spirit and I spent most of the evening looking out of the window onto the foaming waters of Loch Glencoul and drinking tea.



At last a refuge in Glencoul bothy in its dramatic location



Fire, dry clothes and tea to recover

Stay tuned for the end of my adventure in the last post, next week, which also includes lots more information to help you to enjoy the Cape Wrath Trail even more than I did!

Day 9

The morning started wet and windy, as a direct continuation of the night before; Glencoul's dramatic location was enhanced by the weather. The bothy was cold early in the morning and I woke up stiff, so a quick warm up of push ups, jumping jacks and stretching helped me get moving. I quickly packed up and left the bothy, joining the clear 4x4 trail on the northern shore that heads to Glendhu bothy on the other side of Beinn Aird da Loch. The Cape Wrath Trail is a very clear path and the weather cleared a little to reveal the amazing fjord-like valley that I had come from the day before. The trail started to narrow and at times disappear, but it is easy to find again. The walk was slippery and boggy, rounding the beinn and getting into a small wooded patch about 4km from Glencoul. At this point the rain came back with a vengeance and the rest of the walk to the bothy was not very welcoming. The trail disappears just before the bridge over Glenn Dubh but picks up a clear 4x4 road straight after and the 200 meters to the bothy are easy.



Loch Glencoul from the Cape Warth Trail

At Glendhu I stopped for a quick brew and snack, where I met a Glaswegian who has been walking the Cape Wrath Trail for 17 years in parts, taking 2-3 days once a year to complete another section - he expects to finish it in 2016, what a journey! From the bothy the trail is very clear and simple, making the walk extremely easy, especially as it stopped raining and just stayed windy. The easy trail also allowed me to relax a little and enjoy the view around.



Loch Gleann Dubh



Almost reaching Glendhu bothy for a late morning break

The Cape Wrath Trail climbs north and leaves Loch Glendhu after a bridge, using another 4x4 road. The walk up to trig point 409 was pleasant, windy and stunning with views over Loch an Leathaid Bhuain and Beinn a Ghrianain. My aim for the day was reaching Lochstack lodge and camping around there. I reached the shieling at Bealach nam Fiann (trig 409) and had my lunch and coffee, huddled in the shieling as protection from the wind. At this point my fatigue was in full blast and I was very keen on getting to my camping spot. I decided to

take the road via Achfary and not walking the nonexistent trail via Ben Dreavie. The walk down to the road stayed on a clear 4x4, and at some point I was due to split left on a fork, but the gate was locked due to felling works in the forest. I reached the road at Lochmore lodge, enjoying the view over the loch and up Ben Screavie.



Look out Lochan Leathiad Bhuaín



Hiding from the wind in the Sheiling at Bealach nam Fiann

At the road I turned to Achfary, hoping to get some cell signal and talk to Mika, but had no luck. I found a semi working payphone and called home to hear my family missing me badly. The frustrating phone along with the rain that had returned and my fatigue overtook me and all I wanted was to rest, shower and have a hot meal. Mika supported my need for a break and a decision was made to make my way to Rhiconich Hotel to spend the night. I continued walking on the road, which was quiet and surrounded by mountains, mainly towered by Arkle and Ben Stack. The walk started pleasant but windy, but after a couple of km the rain was back, along with gale and patches of hail. I managed to reach Lochstack Lodge, but before leaving the road and joining the trail that is clearly boggy, wet and partially nonexistent, I opted to hitchhike to the hotel. I ended catching a ride to a place a couple of km from the hotel, cutting out roughly 10 km from the day's walk.



Achfary forest and Ben Screavie

My arrival to the hotel was with mixed feeling of relief, anticipation and guilt for opting to take the "easy route". I enjoyed the amenities, showered for a long time, scrubbing the filth off, rested and ate well. It was a great night of rest and recovery. The hotel has an in-house restaurant and offers rooms from £50 a night including breakfast (which was great and filling). I had a big dinner with a couple of pints there and enjoyed my meal, not just because I was partly starving, and the staff was friendly and welcoming.



Rhiconich hotel - a much needed break from roughing it on the Cape Wrath Trail

Day 10

I woke up feeling slightly more human, starting the day slowly, enjoying the full offer of having my hotel room until 10:00. The plan of the day was an easy 12-24km to Sandwood Bay or to Strathchailleach Bothy, so I was in no rush to start walking. After a big breakfast, another shower and putting on clean, dry clothes, I finished packing and started by leaving the A838 and turning left on to the B801 towards Kinlochbervie where the Cape Wrath Trail leads to Sandwood Bay.

The walk follows the road to the London Stores in Badcall where you can go on a nonexistent trail around Beinn a Chraisg and Sandwood Loch, or stay on the road to Kilochbervie, turning north before the port on the road to Blairmore and Oldshoremore. I picked the road, enjoying the wind, the views on the loch and the insights into life in the Highlands.



The B801 road to Kinlochbervie

As you leave Kinlochbervie the road becomes smaller and the views wilder, with the ocean peeking in between the hills. In Blairmore I left the road at the parking spot and took the 4x4 road that is clearly marked to Sandwood Bay. The Cape Wrath Trail stays clear and the weather was nice - windy, cold and sunny, the perfect combo for being active. The area is vast and bleak and when you get the first view of Sandwood Bay - it is amazingly wild and gives a feeling of being at the end of the world. I decided not to camp in the bay due to the winds, the coming rain and my new found love of bothies; despite the fact that the guide by Ian Harper defines camping as a rite of passage for walkers of the Cape Wrath Trail. Instead I decided to enjoy a long break on the beach, taking in the waves, the salty wind and the towering cliffs.



The Cape Wrath Trail heading to Sandwood Bay



First sight of Sandwood Bay



The approach to Sandwood Bay



A long coffee and snack break while enjoying the sea breeze



Sandwood Bay at all its glory

The walk to Strathchailleach bothy has no trail, but navigation is very simple: head to the northern part of the beach, cross the spill from the Loch and climb up the little cliff ridge heading north east. Find the 3 peaks at 125m, 172, and 217m high, all easily identifiable and head to the pass between the two lower peaks, roughly to the east. Walk around the Lochan and head east to Strath Chaillach, from there you will see the bothy easily.



Strathchailleach bothy

Strathchailleach is not the greatest bothy I have ever seen, as tends to happen with such remote bothies with no trail or road that leads to them. It used to be the residence of a hermit who lived there for 35 years, and the evidence is there. One room is the "common room" with some chairs and a fire place. A small second room is attached to the common room and seems to have been used as a kitchen. The second big room is a sleeping room with a sleeping platform. I tried to light a fire using peat, but it was too damp and I was unsuccessful. I choose to place myself in the sleeping room, and even found some boots in my sizes to use as camp shoes! After 3-4 hours in the bothy I had a couple from Reading who were hiking in the area join me, and we had a nice social evening together before all of us just fell asleep, exhausted.

Day 11

The bothy was very cold and I woke up early ready to finish the Cape Wrath Trail. After trying my best to pack up quietly so to not wake up my bothy mates (I wasn't that successful), I said my goodbyes and headed north to Cape Wrath and the end of my adventure. Since this area has no trails, it requires some navigation, but it is an easy one: crossing Strath Chaillach (the river) right outside the bothy (to the east) and then keeping a northern bearing until crossing a small stream that feeds Strath Chaillach. After the stream, contour the cnoc to the east (Cnoc na h-Uidhe) and head north to Keisgeig River. Past the crossing, head to the fence that marks the MOD training zone just north to the river and cross it, **making sure there are no red flags indicating the training zone is in use**. Past the fence head north-north east to the saddle, and past the saddle you can pretty much see the cape.



MOD signs around the Cape Wrath training zone

The descent from the saddle was nice and easy and the day was clearing, but winds were starting to pick up from the west, sending a few very cold gales. From the saddle it is an uncomfortable slosh through a bog until reaching the 4x4 road that connects Cape Wrath to the Kyle of Durness. When I met the road I just took a left turn (west) and followed to all the way to Cape Wrath. At this point the drizzle was back, making the walk a little ominous in the bleak landscape.

After rounding Dunan Mor I finally saw the lighthouse that is situated on the cliff, and even got a break in the rain to really enjoy the view and the situation. The rest of the walk was easy and I reached a pretty deserted Cape Wrath. The place is very exposed, windy and looks a little tired from the constant battle with the elements. I had a walk around the area, peering (carefully!) over the cliffs and marvelling at the endless ocean around me. After I walked around I found refuge from the elements next to the cafe entrance. That was at 9:45, and I learned that the cafe opens at 10:00. I waited while exploring the place a little more and reading the information signs. The place as a whole is a little anti-climatic in my opinion, but it was dramatic enough to mark the end of my trip: 250 miles (minus 20 miles of hitchhiking) in 11 days, or just over 237 hours.

After the cafe opened I enjoyed a coffee and a cake, learning that the minibus and ferry were doing a special, earlier, one-off trip from Durness to Cape Wrath and back that day, arriving to the cafe at 10:20, leaving at 10:30. You can learn more about that journey under the logistical issues at the start of this guide.

Once I reached the ferry, Durness was still a walk away, but I managed to catch a ride with my fellow Cape Wrath escapees. I got to the Spar store in Durness at 12:00, got some much needed provisions (cheese, meat, crisps and beer), went to the camp site (100 meters down the road) and pitched my tent.

The rest of the afternoon consisted of rest, talking to my family and eating, lots of eating - from my new provisions, to some of the food I had from the trip, to a dinner in the local pub. The Durness camp site is very windy and exposed, so there is not much to do around there, especially with a tired, fatigued body, inflamed knees and ankles and very injured feet.

And that last night marked the end of my journey. In the morning I packed up, headed out and made my way to Inverness, where I was reunited with my family and started the process of recovering and absorbing the whole incredible experience.

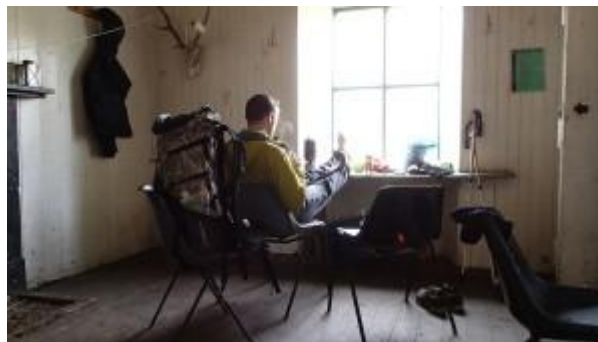
The conditions I had to deal with and why bothies are the best

I walked the Cape Wrath Trail from the 16th of May 2015 until the 26th of May, and according to many locals and the various weather sites, the weather was roughly 2-3°C lower compared to the average. That May also ended up being wetter than previous Mays, resulting in some very wet days, waterways in a swell and bogs being more saturated than the usual. In comparison, May 2014 was 2-3°C warmer than the average (which is 15°C high to 8°C low) and sunny, with barely any rain. I packed a pair of shorts for this trip but they were not used except for a couple of times when going for dinner in my tights!



Wet morning over Loch Glencoul

Since the weather was so grim and the land so saturated, camping was a real challenge, both on the comfort front and the land limitation front. The limited camping meant either relying on paid accommodation or on bothies; I chose bothies, over and over again. But first, let me explain what bothies are: bothies are an emergency shelter that can be found in Scotland and Wales and are free to use when space is available. Bothies are maintained by the MBA (Mountain Bothies Association) and are usually old houses that have been donated to the MBA by the owner of the land they are situated on.



Enjoying a brew break in A'Chilu bothy

Bothies are very basic structures and as such offer no amenities at all but a concrete floor, 4 walls, a door and a roof. On the other hand, some bothies are more regularly maintained or are more easily accessible for maintenance and offer an excellent range of "spoils": sleeping platforms, wooded floors, fire places, dry wood, etc. The MBA is a volunteer-based organization that receives no funding and collects no money for the use of the bothies, so it relies of donations and membership fees to exist. I personally donated and became a member the moment I was back to show my gratitude for this great organization and the wonderful work they do. If you plan on going to Scotland and might be using bothies, please [support the MBA](#) for their efforts.

I spent 7 nights out of 11 in this trip in bothies, I had several lunch stops in bothies on the way to escape the rain and wind, and I was extremely happy to find them along the way.

Every bothy I saw and went into felt like a true refuge from the harsh elements that the Scottish Highland had been throwing at me.



Strathchailleach - another MBA supported bothy

Another small point is that bothies do have a [basic code of behaviour](#) that should be followed. Don't assume you can use a bothy as they can get full very fast, so having a tent as an alternative is a must. The most important thing about bothies is to think about fellow walkers: keep it clean and tidy, try and leave wood to dry inside even if you haven't had any when you got there as it will make the person coming after you very happy.

Gear - the good, the bad and the dead

I've talked and explained much about the gear I took on this trip. Much of it was in the ultralight category, bringing my bag's dry weight (without food or water) to just under 10kg (22lbs). As far as the gear itself goes, I was very happy with the vast majority of it. I used my gear, abused it and enjoyed it, and as with all great challenges, some items were extraordinary, some were extremely bad, some didn't survive, some wasn't needed and some was just missing. So let see what fell under those groups:

Extraordinary

- Mountain Equipment Ibex Pants - I have had the Ibex for about 3-4 years now, and they are now my go to trousers for any outdoors activity that is not in scorching heat - they are robust, stretchy, lightly wind resistant and fit me perfectly. I find that with light rain, the rain sheds easily, and when the rain is strong and they get soaked, they dry in no time.



Looking at Cadha Buidhe ridge on a sunny morning

- Under Armour Original 9"Boxer Briefs - I have been using these for years, but on this trip I only had what I was wearing and another set. I washed them with soap several times, left them to dry during the night, finding them damp and getting them to dry on me in no time. I also had no chaffing or any crotch irritation (not a pretty topic but vital in these adventures!).
- Mountain Hardware Quasar Anorak - I got this waterproof hooded top a few years ago as the fabric is supposed to be very breathable, but it was only here that I finally had the chance to fully try it. The weather kept on changing from sunny and windy to wet in no time, so I ended up walking in it all day long without feeling uncomfortable or sweaty.

Extremely bad

In extremely bad, I have only one thing to mention: **my footwear** - [Inov-8 Trailroc 235](#). I have been using these shoes for a year now, getting used to them for longer and longer trips. The Trailrocs are a zero drop minimalist trail running shoe and I was sure I was ready for hike a thru hike with them but I was wrong.



Inov-8 Trailroc 235 at the start of the Cape Wrath Trail

First, they started to fall apart before I even left, and by day 2 of the Cape Wrath Trail I had my little toe on my left foot outside of the shoe. Having a hole in the shoe created rubbing and blisters on the smaller toes on my left foot. Second, the shoes were not wide enough for a whole day on my feet, especially with the Sealskinz waterproof socks, so I had blisters starting on most toes and the fore foot. I eventually took the insoles out from the shoes and managed to get some space, but then some of those blisters popped and became infected due to the constant humidity from being soaked in the bogs.

Lastly, the shoes didn't offer enough support or protection for my feet. The terrain on the Cape Wrath Trail was harsh - rocky, boggy, slippery, wet and many miles on pressed paths. My feet didn't have any protection from any of it. I needed more cushioning and some ankle support to help with carrying 15kg on my back for 10-15 hours a day, every day.



Damaged feet from my footwear

I will replace my Trailrocs with another pair as I find that they are excellent mixed terrain running shoes, but I am back in search for zero drop hiking boots that will be wide and minimalist enough - any ideas anyone? Drop a note if you know of any.

Didn't survive

Unsurprisingly, I had quite a few things that didn't make it through the trip, some from the abuse, some from old age, some from unknown failure and some because I stupidly forgot it - here is the list:

- Backpack: Elemental Horizon Kalais - probably the biggest surprise for me as it has broken seams on the contact point of the shoulder straps. The pack was great throughout the trip, even with the broken seams, and I wouldn't have noticed it if it wasn't for getting gear wet in the bag (it is meant to be waterproof). I'm a little disappointed that it happened as it is a bespoke back that costs a fair bit, but I will be in touch with the manufacturer.
- Shoes: Inov-8 Trailroc 235 - old age and many miles of abuse managed to ruin the shoes. I still have them in the house and Mika keeps reminding me to bin them, but I am attached to them. The mesh is broken in many places and the soles are wearing out, but they are great shoes.
- One walking pole: Leki Trekker - those are very old by now, about 7-8 years, and I have taken them on every single trip I've done since buying them. Those poles saved me on many occasions, especially on the Cape Wrath Trail: stopping dangerous slides, breaking falls, preventing me from sinking into deep bogs and helping on river crossings. I am sad to see them go but it is time for a new pair.
- eReader: Kindle Gen 1 - for some unknown reason, when camping in Kinloch Hourn the screen just froze and never got back to itself. The lack of reading material was very frustrating, but I learned I can use my phone as an eReader for the time being until I get a new Kindle.
- Dry bag: 8L Sea to Summit bag - stupidly I forgot to hang my food bag on a beam in one of the bothies and mice got to it, making a hole in the bag.
- First aid kit: self made - this trip I really used my first aid; from cleaning wounds to feet treatment and emptying the pain killers arsenal. Time to make a new kit and restock it.



The gear that didn't survive the Cape Wrath Trail

Wasn't needed

- Sealskinz - I took the Sealskinz waterproof socks to try and protect my feet from the constant humidity and cold, but at the end it wasn't as cold and it was much wetter than I was expecting. On day 3 I just gave up on those and my feet finally stopped deteriorating into more and more blisters.
- Waterproof trousers - I packed my Mountain Equipment Firelite trousers (Gore-Tex Active) but I only used them once, and that wasn't really needed either. Since I chose the "wet feet" method, I found that there wasn't much of a need to protect my legs all that much, as when my trousers did get soaked, they dried in no time.

Between the 2 items, I could have shaved almost 400g (out of 9700g), so a pretty significant weight saving.

Missing

Here are a few things that I was most definitely missing; there were other small things, but those were the items I repeatedly missed:

- Camp shoes - The debate about camp shoes in the ultra lightweight gear world is long and on the verge of violent, and for many years I didn't believe in them. During this trip, I missed a pair of camp shoes every single night, especially in bothies. It was so bad that on night 6, when spending the night in Shenavall I decided not to go relieve my bladder before going to bed, which led to a very uncomfortable night. In the future, if I go for more than one night, I will be carrying a second pair of shoes, especially as there are some really light options out there.
- Compeeds (lots) - I had just a couple when I set off to walk the Cape Wrath Trail, and by the time I finished the trail I had gone through 2 packages. I think the main

problem is that I haven't used them early enough and I haven't had enough to replace the ones I had that kept on falling off due to the wetness of my shoes, socks and feet.

- Towel - This is a small comfort item that I easily was able to replace using one of my shirts, but I had a few showers, mainly in camp sites, in which a small, quick-drying towel would have been welcome. A towel would also have been useful when I gave my feet a cooling and a wash in a few streams along the way.

Total expenses for the trip



The bridge next to Rhiconich hotel

My total expenses for the whole trip including travel were £400 (and 18 pence), roughly \$640 USD. So what did I spend money on:

Travel

My biggest expense here, but by booking in advance it was less bad than realising the need to travel last minute:

- Night train from London to Inverness (I planned on going north to south at the beginning) - £79.50
- Bus from Inverness to Fort William - £11.60
- Ferry from Fort William to Camusnagaul - £1.50
- Minibus from Cape Wrath to the ferry - £6
- Ferry across the Kyle of Durness - £4.50
- Bus from Durness to Lairg- £8.10
- Train from Lairg to Inverness - £16.70
- Bus from Inverness to the airport - £4
- Flight from Inverness to London - £103

Total travel: £234.90

Accommodation and meals

My second biggest expense despite spending most nights in bothies (which are free):

- Donation at Corryhully bothy - £1
- Camping site at Kinlochewe - £9.8
- Hotel at Rhiconich - £50
- Camping site at Durness - £7



A pile of junk food while resting in the tent at a rainy Durness afternoon

With accommodation I usually dined in the local places:

- Dinner at Rhiconich Hotel - £20
- Dinner at Durness - £16
- Coffees/sandwiches/cakes along the way - £29.25

Other

I also got supplies in a couple of places (Kinlochewe and Durness), plus I had to buy more Compeeds, batteries, a whistle and other small bits. All those other expenses ended up being just over £30.

For an 11 day trip in another country, £400 is not bad. It is important to remember that this doesn't include my packed food that ended up costing a couple of hundred pounds.

Final thoughts about the trail and its future

The Cape Wrath Trail is one of the hardest trails I have met, but it was walking it in a fast and aggressive way that really took it to a whole new level, making it the hardest thing I have ever done in my life; second only to the first three months of my daughter's life (which are, by all definitions, the hardest thing on the planet).

On the other hand, despite all the hardships and challenges I had a long the way, the Cape Wrath Trail was an amazing experience that took me back to days of wild roaming and immersion into nature. I had time to reflect, think, meditate and clear my mind - all at the same time, which is what a thru-hike should provide. I would recommend anyone that trusts their ability, skills and gear to try a trail of this magnitude and enjoy the elation that is part of finishing it. In retrospect I would have done thing slightly differently, but I would definitely do it again. Who knows, I might get another chance to enjoy the Cape Wrath Trail.

At the moment, the trail continues to be relatively unknown, walked by a few dozen each year (I don't have exact numbers). The first thing that goes against the Cape Wrath Trail is that it is not an official long distance trail in the UK, and so doesn't get funding and support as other national trails do. At the moment it is not even an actual trail as you need to navigate to find your way in some parts. The third thing that goes against the Cape Wrath Trail is its remoteness, making it very hard to become popular enough to support a well maintained trail, or even to justify marking it.



Beinn Eighe just above Kinlochewe

The combination of the above reasons are what makes the Cape Wrath Trail one of the very few truly wild trails in the UK, offering a unique and amazing challenge. For that reason alone it is worth walking it, either in the traditional pace or my more "challenging" pace.

In the next few years I think that the Cape Wrath Trail will see a growing interest and investment, maybe taking away some of it wildness. The first step can be seen in the upcoming ultra mountain race planned for the end of May 2016, bringing some increase of users and support systems to the trail. I'm not sure how the presence of the race will effect walkers, but I have a feeling that being on the trail at that time next year will mean a much less quiet time with much less solitude. The race is planned to take 8 days (only a couple of days fewer than me, not that quick...) and will follow the same route I've done. If you are interested in taking part, [check their site](#); and no, I will not be taking place no matter how many times I'm asked about it....



2 trail runners above Glen Dessary

About the author

Gilad Nachmani is a husband, father and fervent lover of all things outdoors. He is a professional in the outdoor industry and constantly trying to justify more time outdoors. Gilad is the founder of [Outdoors Father](#), a website dedicated to getting busy fathers outdoors (including himself) with more knowledge and better tools.

Outdoor Father was born from the experience Gilad had with the outdoor retail environment, where staff are not always the most knowledgeable and advice can be sometimes misguided. Outdoors Father is here to provide fathers who are outdoor enthusiasts the best advice Gilad accumulated over the years as a father and a professional.



This guide is an exclusive offer to the Outdoors Father's newsletter readers.

From time to time we offer guides and more to our readers, so if you would like to join, we would like to give you yet another great guide right here.

Cape Wrath Trail Gear List - May 2015

Category	Sub category	Item	Product	Weight (g)	Group weight
Carrying	Main	Main carry pack	Elemental Horizon Kalais 60L Bag	865	1210
	Extra	Front Pack	Ribz 8L	345	
	Dry bags	Dry bag XL	Thermarest NeoAir Pump	102	
		Dry bag M	Sea to Summit Ultrasil Dry Sack 8L	33	
		Dry bag S (x2)	Sea to Summit Ultrasil Dry Sack 4L	56	
		Dry bag XS (x2)	Sea to Summit Ultrasil Dry Sack 2L	44	
Sleeping	Shelter	1 Person Tent	Nordisk Telemark 1 ULW + 2 MSR mini Y pegs	854	2152
	Sleeping bag	Down	PHD Minimus 400	904	
	Pad	Light air mat	Therm-A-Rest NeoAir	394	
Food and water	Stove+Pot	Cooking system	MSR Reactor 1l system	415	1165
	Mug	Aluminium with lip	Esbit Aluminium Drinking Cup	75	
	Spoon	Titanium	MSR Mountain Bowl	104	
	Fire starting	Titanium Spork	Sea to summit Alpha Light Spoon	15	
	Other	Flint	Light My Fire Fire Steel Scout 2.0 Fire Starter	28	
	Other	Coffee system	Aeropress + Filters (30)	239	
	Water treatment	Chemical	Lifesystem Chlorine Dioxide Water Treatment Tablets	In first Aid Kit	
		Filter	Sawyer Mini Filter+squeeze container	87	
	Water container (total 3L)	Flexible	Platypus Platy Plus Bottle (1L+2L)	35	
Clothes - Carrying	Short shirt 2	Merino T	Devold Sport T	167	2314
	Trousers 2	Running shorts	Under Armour Woman's Running Shorts	104	
	Rain Gear	Rain Jacket	Mountain Hardwear Quasar Pullover	276	
		Rain Pants	Mountain Equipment Firelite Pants	189	
	Insulation	Synthetic	Arc'teryx Atom LT Hooded Insulated Jacket	389	
		Down	Stoic Hardon Cardigan	194	
	Accessories	Underwear	UA Original Series 9" Boxer jock Boxer Briefs	89	
		Warm hat	Inov8 Rainpeak 60	63	

		Neck Gaiter	Summer UV Buff	38	
		Gloves	Haglofs Gram Shell Mittens	57	
		Merino socks	Ulvang Training socks	46	
		Neoprene socks	Seal Skinz Mid Knee Hiking socks	135	
	Nightwear	Shirt	Icebreaker 200 GT Zip Neck Top	249	
		Tights	Icebreaker 200 GT Tights	173	
		Extra socks	SmartWool Mountaineering Heavy Crew Sock	145	
Navigation	Compass	Plastic compass with a scale	Silva Explorer Compass	28	418
	Map	1:40000	Harvey Tough Maps (North+South)	126	
	Pacing	Pacing beads	Self made	20	
	Guide	Cicerone guide	The Cape Wrath Trail by Iain Harper	244	
Emergency	Knife	Pocket knife	CKRT Pazoda 2	45	309
	First aid	Prepack superlight	Self made	100	
	Lighter	Electric lighter	Self preference	28	
	Emergency shelter	Space blanket	Sea To Summit Space Blanket	59	
	Emergency fire	Petroleum balls	Self made	77	
Hygiene	Tooth brush/paste	Mini brush + mini paste	Self preference	30	580
	Floss	Tape floss	Oral-B Satin Tape	14	
	Deodorant	Coal powder	The Guv'ner by Lush	18	
	Soap	Bio Degradable	Lifeventure All Purpose Soap	82	
	Hand sanitizer	Medical Hand Gel	Sea To Summit Hand Sanitizer	66	
	TP In water proof bag	Roll of toilet in a 1 litre dry bag	Self preference	123	
	Wipes	Travel pack	Huggies 24 wipes	123	
	Ointments	Foot treatment	Joshua Tree Climbers Salve	18	
		Sun Screen	Lifesystems Expedition sun protection (SPF 50)	62	
		Lip balm	SPF 30+	19	
	Small scrubber	Cut off dish pad	Self preference	7	
	Bag	Mesh bag	Skinz Product bag	18	
Electrics	Camera	"Tough" camera	Olympus Tough TG-2	241	1119
	Accessories	Tripod	Jolby GorillaPod Classic	42	
	Communication	Mobile phone	Samsung Galaxy S4 with a heavy duty case	280	
	Light	Head lamp	Black Diamond Spot Headlamp	91	
		Tent light	LuminAid light	85	
	Entertainment	eReader	Kindle	167	

	Energy	Solar Charger	Powertraveller Explorer (including tip for phone, camera, main plug and connecting cable)	213	
Extra	EDC	Wallet	Some really old sport wallet	150	1061
		Keys	House keys	49	
	Writing	Notebook	Self preference	142	
		Pad + Pencil	Moleskin + Half size reg lead pencil	120	
	Other	Chair	Alite Mayfly Chair - stripped	600	
		Duct tape	Self preference	With Lighter	
		Repair kit	Mix from various products' kits	In first Aid Kit	
		Total Carried	"Dry weight"		10396
Clothes - Wearing	Long shirt	Merino hoody	Janus Sportwool Hoodie	268	
	Short shirt 1	Merino T	Janus Summer T	123	
	Trousers 1	Synthetic trousers	Mountain Equipment Ibex Softshell Pants	420	
		Wind Shirt	The North Face Vetro Jacket	81	
	Accessories	Underwear	UA Original Series 9" Boxer jock Boxer Briefs	89	
		Summer hat	Inov8 Hotpeak 40	52	
		Head net	Sea to Summit Treated Head Net	30	
		Gloves	The North Face Power Stretch Glove	43	
		Neck Gaiter	Summer UV Buff	38	
	Shoes	Trail running shoes	Inov8 Roclite 235	504	
	Walking socks	Merino socks	Ulvang Training socks	46	
Other	Walking Poles	3 parts poles with shock absorbers	Gabel Explorer Poles	518	
	Watch	Robust sport watch	Casio G-Shock DW-6600	66	
		Food	Carried	4800	8300
			Shipped	3500	

Cape Wrath Trail Menu - May 2015

	Activity	Item 1	Item 2
07:00	Breakfast	Breakfast mix	Coffee
10:30	Snack	Protein bar	
13:00	Snack	Protein bar	Coffee
16:00	Snack	Protein bar	
18:00	Camp	Trail Mix	Herbal tea
19:30	Dinner	Freeze dry meal	
20:30	Night	Protein drink	
All day	Trail mix	100g	
	Billtong	50g	

Nutritional values:

Per day	qty	calories	protein		calories	protein
Breakfast	1	570	15		570	15
Coffee (Spoon)	4	2	0		8	0
Protein bar	3	400	15.4		1200	46.2
Billtong (50g - pack)	1	137.5	25		137.5	25
Cashews (50g)	1	275	9.11		275	9.11
Banana Chips (50g)	1	253	0.7		253	0.7
Protein drink (42g)	1	130	26		130	26
Freeze dry meal	1	800	25		800	25
Total:					3373.5	147.01