



NOVEMBER 2022

HEATHERY HEIGHTS MONTHLY

Articles, walks and news



NEXT ISSUE

Bheinn Mhic Mhonaidh

BLACK GATES AND PUCK'S GLEN

Magical waterfalls abound in this fairy glen...

Argyll is well known for its incredible coastline, lush forests, fjord like lochs and wonderful gardens. There are many corners to treasure and this walk, within the Argyll Forest Park just south of Loch Eck, embraces the grandeur of giant cypress and fir followed by a magical ascent through Puck's Glen.

The Argyll Forest Park, established in 1935, was the first of its kind in Britain and stretches from the Arrochar Alps to Holy Loch, an inlet off the Firth of Clyde just north of Dunoon. Within it lies Benmore Forest and the superb [Benmore Botanic Gardens](#).



Waterfalls abound



Giant trees soar upwards

Giant trees including redwoods, fir and cypress, some now over 150' tall, were mainly planted in the mid to late 19th Century by successive landowners, including James Duncan, a sugar refiner from Greenock and the Younger family who latterly donated much of the forest to the Forestry Commission. The Botanic Gardens – next to our starting point – came about when the Royal Botanic Garden of Edinburgh sought land suited for an impressive collection of seeds and plants, collected by a Mr George Forrest, which required the damp, mild climate so prevalent in this part of Argyll.

Hidden in the forest bubbling burns and waterfalls abound. Puck's Glen encompasses one such burn (the Eas Mor: big waterfall), where tumbling waterfalls cascade down a gorge riven by time, passing over sedimentary rocks that have been folded and metamorphosed to create schists and quartzites, now richly carpeted in lichens, liverworts, mosses and ferns. Walkways and bridges meander ever upwards, crisscrossing waterfalls and winding under steep rockfaces, a surprise awaiting around every corner. After heavier rain the waterfalls can be quite superb although do take extra care in wet conditions.

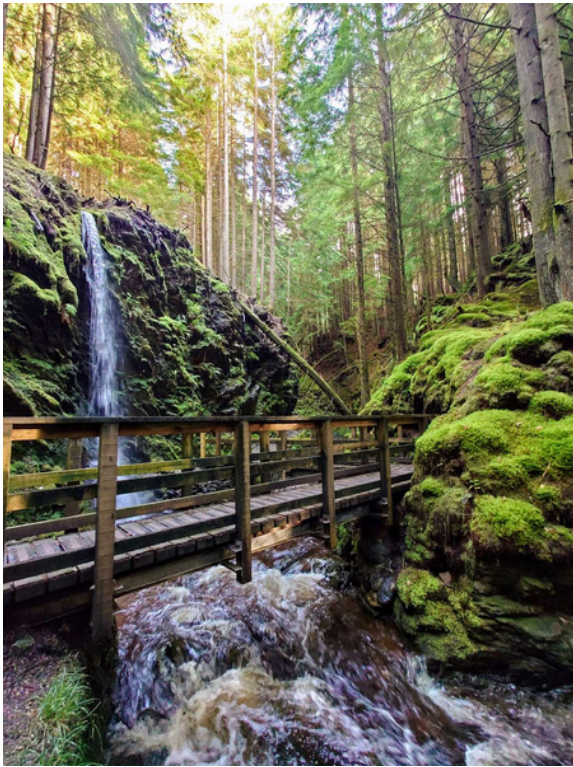
The walk

Safety in the Outdoors

Please exercise responsibly and use appropriate clothing and equipment for your chosen outdoor activity. Consider informing a contact about your route/whereabouts and don't forget your phone, snacks, drink, any medication/first aid supplies you may need and to check weather conditions. Please keep your dog under close control, especially around livestock and wildlife, and be aware some open areas of moorland may have snares in use. Please follow the Scottish Outdoor Access Code, bylaws and laws that protect areas including National Nature Reserves (NNRs) and Sites of Specific Scientific Interest (SSSIs).

www.heatheryheights.co.uk

1. Parking is available at the entrance to Benmore Botanic Gardens. The walk starts on the opposite side of the road from the car park and Black Gates entrance to the gardens. Crossing the road take the path to the left behind the bus stop past the large information board and take the small lane that heads directly south (parallel to the main road). Towering to your left are some fine specimens of the trees that were planted here. Continue for just over 1.25 km.
2. Turn left up the path signposted to Puck's Glen Gorge Walks which initially follows the right-hand side of the stream (if you reach the holiday cabins you have gone too far!).
3. The walk now meanders its way over footbridges and waterfalls along a narrow path, sometimes steeply stepped as it ascends the gorge's mossy depths. After some 400m you will reach a fork.
4. Keep left and drop slightly back down to the burn just above a confluence and continue up the gorge (the righthand path takes you down to another car park). You will cross several more footbridges before the path finally brings you up and out onto the forestry road above.
5. Turn left. This easy track now drops you slowly northwards back towards Benmore Botanic Garden and Inverchapel. There is a viewpoint to your left en route, but the area to the right has now been mainly harvested (the routes that continue up the burn and towards the open hillside were closed (autumn 2022) for further forestry operations).



Footbridges lead you onwards

6. Follow the road for the next 2 or so km. You have a choice of options to drop down; either use the marked trails with the blue or blue and orange marker posts on your left or continue to a small path that tracks back sharply to your left just before a burn (the purple route on our map). It has a small signpost indicating the steep route down. If you go beyond this and over the burn the road will drop you all the way down to Inverchapel and the main road a further 1km north.

7. Take care down the steep path which wends its way back through ever larger trees until you once more join the track at the bottom near the bus stop, where you can easily retrace your steps to the car park – and café when open (seasonal).

Walk Information

Route: Black Gates and Puck's Glen

Distance: 5 km (3 miles)

Ascent: 188 m

Time: 2 - 2.5 hours

Terrain: Mixture of road, forestry track and paths with steep uneven sections

Map/s: OS Landranger 56 (1:50 000) and OS Explorer 37 (1:25 000)

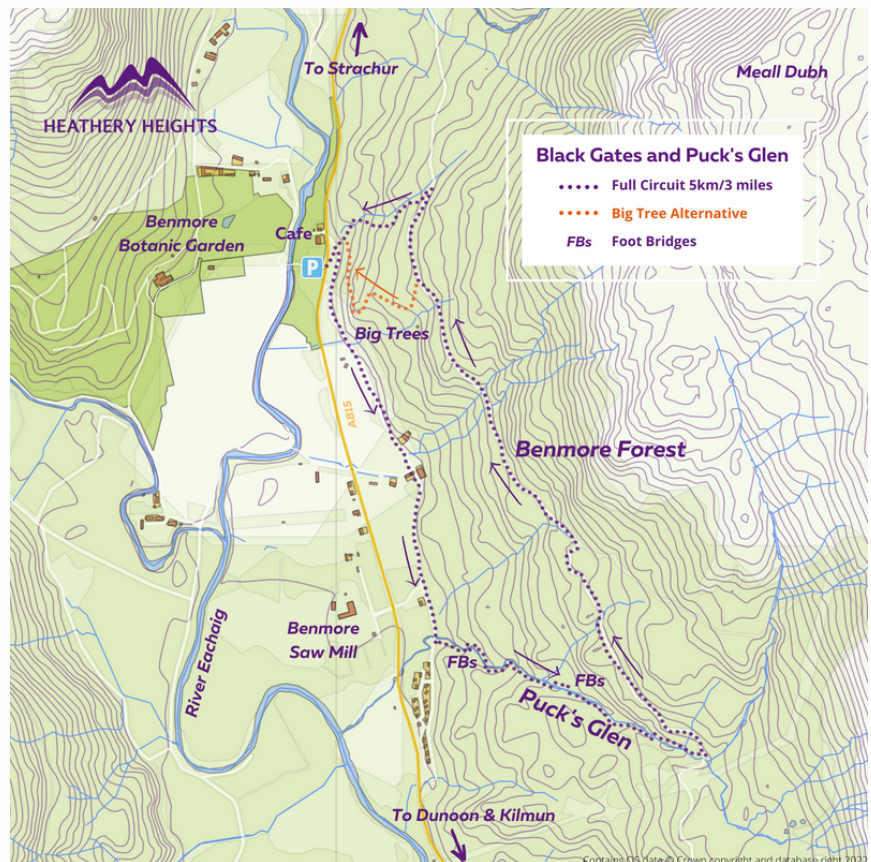
Start/Finish/Parking: Benmore Botanic Garden car park

Grid reference: NS 143854

Public Transport: Bus 484, 486

Toilets: Seasonal

[OS Map Link](#)



The described route and accompanying information are there to be used as a guide and do not replace the use of map and compass and the skills required to use them. Whilst every effort is made to ensure the route is accurate at the time of going to print please be aware that track and path closures can happen at any time. All walks are undertaken at your own risk. Further information on routes and updates from Forestry & Land Scotland can be found [here](#)