

# TGO Challenge 2018

## Applecross-Muchalls

Bart Horeman

(incomplete, sorry!)

### 11 May 2018

It's getting light. The train has reversed, I'm moving backwards now. Is this Perth? With my glasses on, the outside world is entering my brain, and I decide to stay awake. Pitlochry, Blair Atholl, Newtonmore pass by, and with them memories of my four previous challenges. What a nice breakfast...

The train to Strathcarron brings back more and older memories: Ben Wyvis 1983, camping at Achasheen station 1987! Markus Petter and his sister Silke are on the train too, a great coincidence. Through the message board Markus has encouraged me to start in Applecross, so it is a pleasure to meet him in person. We chat away as if we have been friends for years.... Markus and Silke sign out in the Strathcarron Hotel; I take the minibus to Tornapress.

Only 2 km of the Bealach nan Bà road to Applecross I need to do on foot. The tourists do not stop, but a local does when I hitch a ride. He knows the road, knows he can speed up to 60 miles on certain stretches! But also knows when to retreat to the previous passing place, when a tourist campervan is nearly touching the void. 'In summer it happens every day that a camper needs to be rescued', he sighs.

I have him told that tomorrow I will climb over Beinn Bhàn, so he does not stop at the bealach to let me enjoy the views. 'The weather forecast is very good, so you will have plenty of time to enjoy all this tomorrow.'

Nevertheless, I could not have had a better introduction to Applecross, a tourist gem, where the locals can no longer afford to buy their own houses.



When I have pitched the tent at the camp site, it starts to rain slowly. I can't be bothered, I am going for a walk. Tomorrow I am leaving, I need to see this beautiful place today. It is still raining when I am off to the pub for a pint. It is crowded with tourists waiting for their food. Then suddenly the sun drops under the clouds, and pours an amazing light over Applecross. I cannot stay indoors, go and fetch the camera and have a wonderful west-coast evening!



**12 May 2018**

It takes ages to get up high. Climbing, climbing! But then slowly the views are opening up: I see Raasay, Skye, Lewis, Harris. Man, this is fabulous!



The Beinn Bhàn ridge is a beautiful undulating plateau of light-yellow grass and red-brown Torridon sandstone. Once up, it gives some 8 km of fantastic easy walking, with spectacular views all around.





I am too late, the café at Tornapress closed at 17:00h. A shame, as I looked forward to a cream tea. The tea break is postponed to the shade of some birch trees at Glasnock. Just a few kilometres later the tent goes up, and in the last rays of the evening sun I am having dinner. Meanwhile I view the long Beinn Bhàn ridge, and in the north-west Harris mountains line the horizon. There is even a signal to phone up Jolanda and share the day with her! What a fabulous first day!





## 13 May 2018

The morning rain is not enough to take out my rain gear. It is still warm and the drops are refreshing. By the time I reach Strathcarron the sun starts coming out again. There is just one signature missing on the TGO Challenge signing out list: mine.

Nevertheless I meet quite a lot of people in the hills. A guy with a huge camera following the Cape Wrath trail, and some three young lads asking me how far it is to Strathcarron. I could have sworn they were Dutch, like me. And next Darren Fowler walks towards me, limping. He has injured his foot and is returning to Ben Dronaig Lodge and Strathcarron. He mentions that he saw another Challenger camping at the shieling past Loch Calavie, who went up Ben Dronaig.







Funny, I had marked that shieling as a possible camping spot. So I decide to have a look there. All the while I am thinking, this is typical Simon Sawers behaviour, pitching early and taking a hill top in the afternoon.

When I arrive at the shieling, there is nothing. No tent, nobody. Perhaps I misunderstood him? Anyway, I cross the moor and aim for the Allt Loch Calavie, which I cross and follow to find a wonderful evenings' pitch.

All evening I am thrilled by the view of An Socach, An Rhiabhachan and Sgurr na Lapaich, my next day's mountains. Eventually I decide that if I leave out An Socach, it saves me climbing another 400m, and possibly descending an airy ridge too.





**14 May 2018**

Again another glorious day!



## **15 May 2018**

'Are you a challenger?'

Sabine and Simon are having a beer at the Slater Arms, and wave me when I am coming out of the SPAR. After pitching my tent next to theirs at the campsite and a quick shower, I join them for a pub meal. It's a real pleasure to see other challengers and in particular Simon, after we met 7 years ago. Amazing that I thought of him at Loch Calavie, as it turns out that indeed it was him camping near the shieling and going up Ben Dronaig. His tent was only 100m further away, and our pitches that night were 300m apart!

Sabine is a wonderful German woman on her 3<sup>rd</sup> challenge. The evening is too short, as soon we are walking back to our tents.



In the early morning I had met a man coming down Carn nan Gobhar, and I had not seen a single soul on the high level route to Sgorr na Diollaid. Yes, lots of deer, [and lots of ticks too](#) – during a tea break – but again this was a superb day in solitude. Just as I was approaching the castle-like rocks of Sgorr na Diollaid, the clouds moved in and I had to do some serious navigation to get to the tops.

<https://youtu.be/2JttBjx37nY>

**16 May 2018**



**17 May 2018**

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**18 May 2018**

**19 May 2018**

**20 May 2018**

Ferocious Wind Alternative!



**21 May 2018**

**22 May 2018**

**23 May 2018**

**24 May 2018**

**25 May 2018**