



Viewpoint

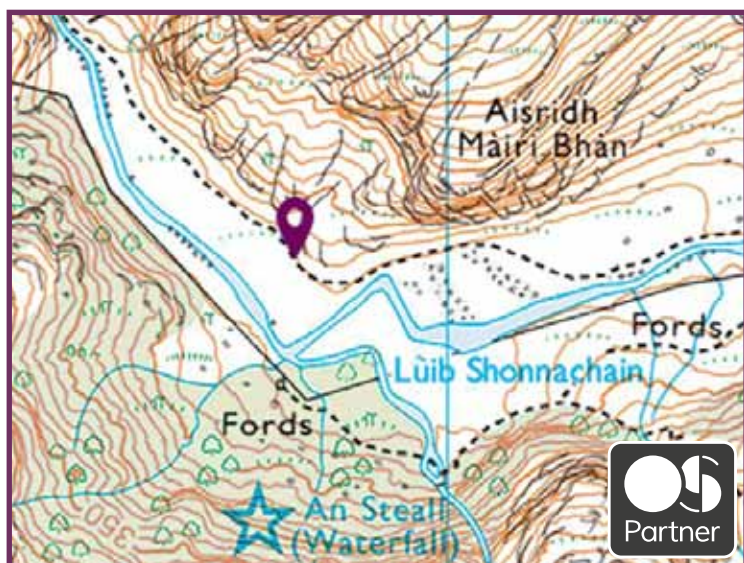
Road to nowhere?



Time: 15 mins

Region: Scotland

Landscape: rural



Location: The very end of Belford Rd (the C1162), often known as 'The Glen Nevis Road', Fort William PH33 6SY

Grid reference: NN 17796 68560

Getting there: Drive to the very end of Belford Road. From this car park at the very end of the road, follow the path for about a mile from the far end of the car park along the side of the 'Water of Nevis' (River Nevis). Shortly after the valley opens up a large waterfall is visible in front of you. Stop where the path splits.

Since leaving the main road, you will have travelled from a flat and wide road which will gradually have turned into a more remote and winding pathway.

As the road narrowed and became more of a rollercoaster track than a road with banked turns, steep drops, trees and boulders at every turn you headed deeper into the ever deepening valley.

You have now walked a further mile with the rapid River Nevis weaving its way down the mountainside through the gorge to your right.

Where does this seemingly 'road to nowhere' lead?



The answer is all around you - nature, and people's love for exploring it!

Firstly, you can see and probably hear Britain's second highest waterfall, 'Steall Falls'. Also known as 'An Steall', which is Gaelic for "The White Spout", this huge, roaring beast of a waterfall is the result of the stream Allt Coire a Mhail literally tumbling off the mountain side.

On a clear day, whether in the hot humid summer or the icy colds of winter, this peak and the waterfall traversing it stand out in the open plain like a mirage in a desert landscape.

The natural beauty of mountain and waterfall may be enough to draw you down this remote roadway, but it is how we choose to use this environment that entices people to explore further.

The mountain itself, An Gearanach, is only ranked 167th in terms of highest peaks in Scotland, yet is higher than any English Mountain at 982m tall.

It forms one of the climbs on Scotland's infamous ten mile hike, the ominously named 'Ring of Steall'!

Combining the traverse of four Munros (Scottish mountains with a height over 3,000 feet) with scrambling along narrow, rocky arêtes (thin crests of rock left after two adjacent glaciers have worn a steep ridge into the rock), this is a mountainous challenge well known amongst any keen Munro bagger!

If this wasn't enough of a test of endurance, this pathway also offers an alternative (and more challenging than catching the ski lift!) route up Aonach Beag and Aonach Mor, Britain's seventh and eighth highest mountains.

But what is unique about where you are standing is that you don't have to be a seasoned walker or mountaineer to experience the true outdoors.

The wide open area in which you now stand was created by the meandering River Nevis. It makes these peaks stand out amongst their surroundings so prominently, but also makes a nice spot for a picnic on a warm summer's day for those less inclined to mountaineer!

Take a moment to gaze up towards the top of Britain's highest mountains and the wildlife that makes these steep, high altitude slopes their home.

Had the road that you have just travelled up not been constructed, you would have needed to have completed in excess of fifteen miles on foot and climb over 700 feet to see the waterfall and peaks that envelope it.

The creation of this road has made nature accessible to all who come here.

With the waterfall and peaks surrounding you, you could easily imagine you are one of the great explorers who first conquered Everest or the Poles, especially if you are standing on this spot in winter and snow surrounds you on all sides.

Standing here now with a different perspective, you can see that this road doesn't lead to nowhere; this road is the gateway to the outdoors, the gateway to adventure.

Not just for those that wish to climb to the roof of Britain, but a secret playground for anyone wishing the leave their troubles behind!