

4. *LOCHCRAIG HEAD* LENGTH: 9 Km.

At 800 m. Lochcraig Head offers superb views, extensive over the hills in all directions and downward towards Loch Skeen. It can be approached from the north, i.e. from the minor road running from Tweedsmuir to St. Mary's Loch, but a more interesting, although steeper, walk is from the Grey Mare's Tail.

Leave Moffat on the A708 to Selkirk. After 13 Km. you come to the car park at the Grey Mare's Tail waterfall. The path to the top of the falls can be seen clearly climbing up to the right. (The path to the left goes only as far as the base of the falls.) This path is steep, and the ground falls away very steeply to the left. Great care is necessary. At the top of the falls, continue on the path as it follows the Tail Burn as far as Loch Skeen.

Lochcraig Head rises steeply from the end of the loch. It can be reached from either direction making a circular walk possible. To the left of the loch, the climb between rocky crags towards Firthybrig Head is steep, but once there it is a straightforward walk along the fence towards Lochcraig Head.

To the right of the loch the gradient is less steep, at least initially, but the heather is deep and the ground near the loch can be very wet. Whichever route is taken the satisfaction of success will make the effort worthwhile.

For those who enjoy a challenge and have transport at both ends, the walk from the A701 above the Devil's Beef Tub, via Hart Fell, Rotten Bottom, and Lochcraig Head to the Grey Mare's Tail is worth considering.

5. *QUEENSBERRY* LENGTH: 11 Km.

At 697 m., Queensberry dominates the landscape to the west of Beattock although it is not in itself a particularly impressive mountain. It is one of the highest of the Lowther Hills and the easiest ascent from Moffat is by driving towards Beattock village and turning right on the approach to the village. This is a public road, known locally as the Crooked Road, and forms part of the Southern Upland Way. Drive to the end of the road past Easter and Wester Earshaig to Kinnelhead.

A rough track strikes off in a southwesterly direction towards Lochanhead from which the route to the top of Queensberry is along the edge of the forest by Pot of Ae.

There are two cairns on Queensberry, the larger one marking the summit. A third cairn, the Blue Cairn, to the south east marks the site of a battle involving William Wallace.

Return by the same route, but if transport was available at both ends of the walk, then the descent could be on the south-western side towards Capel Burn. A track follows this valley from Mitchellslacks to the public road at Daer Reservoir, either end of which would make an ideal collection point.



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TAKE 5 STRENUOUS WALKS AROUND MOFFAT



The Moffat area offers excellent hill walking, but is no different from any hill area of Britain. The weather can change very quickly and visibility can be reduced alarmingly in a few minutes. The instructions in this guide are intended to offer visitors a few ideas, and should not be used instead of conventional navigation techniques. It would be foolhardy to venture into the hills without a map, compass, appropriate clothing and a respect for the climate.

NOT ALL OF THE WALKS IN THIS SERIES ARE ON PUBLIC RIGHTS OF WAY, AND WALKERS SHOULD RESPECT THE COUNTRYSIDE AND PRACTISE THE COUNTRY CODE AT ALL TIMES. ALL DISTANCES ARE APPROXIMATE. THE SERIES IS WRITTEN BY ANDY ARMSTRONG

1. HART FELL FROM THE TOWN

LENGTH: 20 Km.

Leave the town on Well Road (into Well Street beside the War Memorial and then turn right). It is paved as far as the Moffat Well, but the track which replaces it should be followed past Blaebeck, a cottage on the right. The track goes round behind the cottage, and follows the valley of Birnock Water. However, to reach Hart Fell, the walker should strike diagonally uphill to the left of the track. A path, little more than a sheep track, is just visible.

On the brow of the hill, the path meets a gate through a fence. Do not go through. Instead go left, keeping the fence on your right, and follow it as it turns through 90° towards the broad top of Blue Cairn. There are extensive views towards the Devil's Beef Tub and the Lowther Hills.

At a fence, a grassy track appears from the left and goes through a gate towards the top of Swatte Fell. Follow this track. Do not be tempted to short cut across the left side of Swatte Fell for this means walking along the side of a very steep slope. However, as the summit of Swatte Fell is approached, bear left slightly and meet up with another fence. This descends slightly towards Hartfell Craig before climbing, initially steeply, towards Hart Fell. There is a triangulation pillar and a cairn at the top.

Hart Fell has a broad summit, and can be very windswept, but the view from the top is second to none in the area.

2. HART FELL FROM ANNAN WATER

LENGTH: 13 Km.

Leave Moffat along Beechgrove, turning right beside the Academy. Drive about 5 km. along this quiet cul-de-sac until the path to Hartfell Spa is signposted to the right beside Annan Water Hall (075104), a small community hall. There is room for two cars to park.

Take the path towards the spa and follow it for most of its length as it crosses several fields and enters hill land by a stile. The spa itself is in a small ravine and is worth a visit, but the ascent of Hart Fell is by Arthur's Seat to the right of the ravine. A faint track rises steeply from some stone sheep pens where the Auchencat Burn meets the burn from the spa. It is a steep climb initially, but once on the top of Arthur's Seat it is a more gentle climb to the top of Hart Fell.

It is possible, of course, to return by the same route, but a rewarding circuit can be done around the north end of the Annan Water valley by Whitehope Heights, Spout Craig, Chalk Rig Edge and Great Hill following the fence for much of the way. A path descends on the western side of Great Hill to Corehead from which it is a pleasant road walk back to the Annan Water Hall.

If transport was available at both ends of the walk, then a good starting/finishing point for Hart Fell is the gate on the A701 at 056127. The route is by Annanhead Hill and then Great Hill.

3. WHITE COOMB BY CARRIFRAN BURN

LENGTH: 11 Km.

Leave Moffat on the A708 to Selkirk and travel for about 11 Km. to the little bridge near Carrifran (159116). Park on the grass verge.

A rough track gives access to the valley, climbing gently and following approximately the course of the river. Saddle Yoke is to the left and the rocky crags of Priest Craig and Raven Craig dominate the upper section of the valley.

At the point where the valley begins to rise much more steeply, follow the tributary coming in from the right. This is a steep climb around the western edge of Gupe Craig, the stream tumbling down in a series of impressive little waterfalls, but near the top the gradient becomes much more gentle as it approaches the broad summit of White Coomb.

To return to the car, head just west of south towards Carrifran Gans. A tiny lochan between White Coomb and Carrifran Gans is a useful navigational aid in good weather, but is not dependable. The descent from Carrifran Gans towards the forest edge is steep but never difficult and once the forest boundary is reached it is a simple matter of following the wall to the road.

The view to the Moffat Water valley below is impressive in all but the worst weather conditions.