



• Distance 6½km/4 miles • Time 1½-2hrs • Type Forest



**Plan your walk**



PHOTOGRAPHY: PAUL LAMARRA



**WHERE:** Circular walk exploring Puck's Glen and Benmore Botanic Gardens, Cowal.

**START/END:** Puck's Glen car park by A815 (NS147839).

**TERRAIN:** Good paths and forest tracks. Exposed tree roots can be very slippery. Some steep ascents and descents - handrail available at steepest points. Path by fast-flowing stream can be narrow and unguarded. No stiles but lots of steps.

**MAPS:** OS Explorer 363; Landranger 56

**GETTING THERE:** Train from Glasgow Central to Gourock; ferry Gourock to Dunoon ([www.calmac.co.uk](http://www.calmac.co.uk)). The 484 or 486 bus services operate regularly between Dunoon and Benmore Botanic Gardens - no Sunday service northbound (© 0871 200 22 33, [www.travelline.co.uk/acatalog/Scotland.html](http://www.travelline.co.uk/acatalog/Scotland.html)).

**EATING & DRINKING:** Benmore Botanic Gardens cafe (01369 840 509); Coylet Inn (© 01369 840 426,

**The Benmore forest and botanic gardens, 10km/6 miles to the north of Dunoon, were first laid out in 1862 by Piers Patrick, an American. He was responsible for planting an avenue of 50 giant Sierra redwoods. Within the botanic gardens the avenue's awesome peace and grandeur rivals that of a great medieval cathedral. The garden is also renowned for its extensive collection of rhododendrons. Puck's Glen, named after Puck from *A Midsummer's Night's Dream*, is a deep gorge where trees hang precariously and green vegetation thrives in a cool atmosphere infused with spray from the numerous waterfalls. Although the way ahead is always obvious, and almost always upwards, it is an exciting walk with drama in spades. When the highest point is reached and the vegetation thins out, the views out over the surrounding peaks are impressive.**

**1. START** Leave the car park by the footpath rising towards a wooden footbridge. The path continues

- steeply at times - uphill through beautiful woodland of tall pines, red woods, birch, ash, rowan and oak.

**2.** At a junction with another footpath, turn L and contour round before climbing steeply again.

**3.** At the junction of paths by a paved area, take the L fork and follow the sound of fast-flowing water. Steps and switchbacks lead you steeply downhill (an iron handrail is available) into a deep rocky gorge that's dripping with water and heavily wooded. The extensive tree canopy high above completely blocks out the sky. Moss grows thickly on every surface and the energetic stream rushes by.

**4.** Turn R upstream signed for the upper Glen. The path is narrow in places and at times you will have to duck to avoid overhanging rock. The footbridges offer good

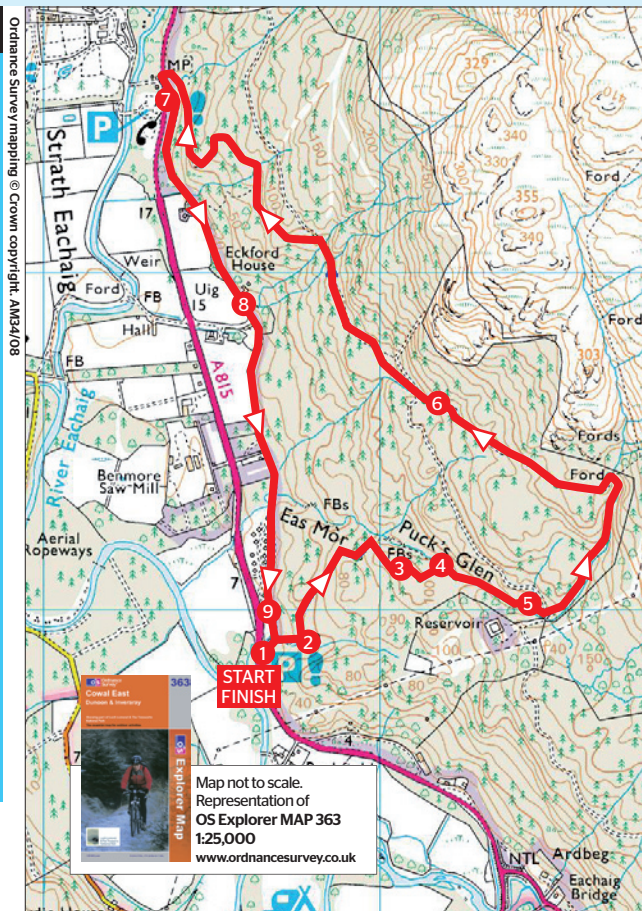
**Continued...**

[info@coyletinn.co.uk](mailto:info@coyletinn.co.uk);  
Whistlefield Inn (© 01369 840 440, [www.whistlefield.com](http://www.whistlefield.com));  
The Creggans Inn, Strachur (© 01369 860 279, [info@creggans-inn.co.uk](mailto:info@creggans-inn.co.uk)).  
**SLEEPING:** Creggans Inn, Strachur; Coylet Inn; Whistlefield Inn (see above for contact details).  
**VISITOR INFORMATION:** Dunoon Tourist Information Centre (© 01369 703785, [www.cowal-dunoon.com](http://www.cowal-dunoon.com)); Benmore Botanic Gardens (© 01369 840 504, [www.rbge.org.uk/the-gardens/benmore](http://www.rbge.org.uk/the-gardens/benmore)).  
**GUIDEBOOKS:** *The Cowal Peninsula: Map/guide to Eight Easy to Follow Walks* (£2.50, Footprint Walks); *Walking Loch Lomond and The Trossachs: The Lomond Trossachs National Park* by Ronald Turnbull (£12.95, Cicerone Press, ISBN 978 1852845308).  
**LOCAL RAMBLERS AREA/ GROUP:** Inverclyde Ramblers (© 01475 724002, [www.inverclyderamblers.org.uk](http://www.inverclyderamblers.org.uk)).

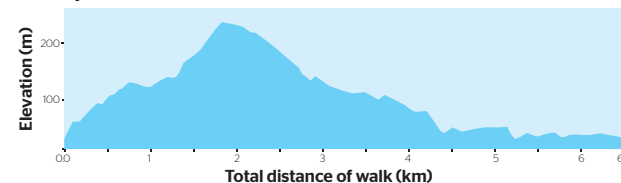
opportunities to view the many waterfalls.

**5.** Follow the path to a junction with a forest road. (To the R is a shorter route to Benmore Botanic Gardens - L for Kilmun Arboretum). Continue straight over onto narrow path to continue following Puck's Glen - signed as Puck's Glen Loop. The walk continues as before, with occasional sets of steep steps to climb. Water collecting on the path can be deep at times.

**6.** The path eventually emerges from the glen and the mist into lighter tree cover, where you turn R at a sign for Black Gates. Descend through the tall trees to another junction with the forest road.



**Steepness of walk**



**7.** Turn R at the sign for Benmore Botanic Gardens. Ahead are excellent views of Ben Mhor (741m/2,431ft). Continue past turnings for Eckford House walk and Big Tree walk and take the third L (currently unsigned).

**8.** Follow the footpath downhill and over (or under) the silver fir,

which was blown down on Boxing Day 1870.

**9.** Emerge from trees opposite Benmore Botanic Gardens (and a bus stop) then turn R to follow an old road signed for Puck Glen's car park.  
*Route devised by Paul Lamarra*



Route and gradient profile created using Anquet Maps v06. Download more maps from [www.Anquet.co.uk](http://www.Anquet.co.uk)