

KING OF THE WILD FRONTIER

and I knew that if the conditions were right then I was capable of going faster."

On the day, superb autumnal conditions meant the Cuillins were clear and dry.

Finlay said: "When I set off at noon, I knew that the Cuillins were in almost the best condition they can be.

"It wasn't too cold or hot and my trail running shoes stuck really well to the rock.

"I was relaxed and really enjoyed the run, then around two-thirds in, I knew that a sub-three hour attempt was possible.

"I just stayed focused and kept on pushing it and at just before 3pm, I arrived at the finish point.

"The knowledge that I have run the Cuillin Ridge in a record-breaking time feels very good."

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PEAK FITNESS
Finlay in the Cuillins

How to hike the Cuillin Ridge

You need to be fit and have a good head for heights to complete the Cuillin Traverse. A mountain guide is also essential for most walkers. To find out more: Skye Guides at www.skyeguides.co.uk Abacus Mountaineering at www.abacusmountaineering.com Skye Mountain Fever at www.skyemountainguides.com

THE WEEK

The Firth of Clyde has one of the deepest entrance channels in northern Europe and in its upper reaches, it is joined by Cardwell Bay. At the height of the shipbuilding

industry on the Clyde, holidaying Glaswegians travelled down the water to holiday in the picturesque seaside where well-appointed hotels and attractions flourished.

FIND YOUR WINTER FEET

Time to get winter-walking so check out a new range of waterproof footwear.

Merrell and Gore have created a ConnectFit series of walking boots and running shoes.

The Merrell Gore-Tex ConnectFit are waterproof and breathable, which makes them ideal for winter conditions. They also boast minimalist construction to create a super fit and natural feel underfoot. From £110, www.merrell.com

TAKE THREE..

The clocks go back this weekend so make sure you fix bright lights to your bike as the nights draw in even earlier.

SAVE

Electron LED Twinpack

A Micro 1 front light and Pico 3 rear light help other road users see you while commuting in town or cities, £14.99 at www.edinburghbicycle.com



SPEND

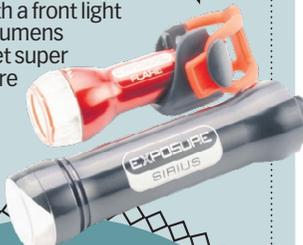
Lezyne Hecto Drive LED Light Set Lightweight and rechargeable, this light set boasts a Power Beam MOR lens for increased output efficiency, £49.49, www.evanscycles.com



SPLURGE

Exposure Sirius Mk2

Be seen – and see to navigate – in the dark with a front light boasting 360 lumens plus a small yet super bright rear Flare light, £125.96, www.wiggle.co.uk



SMOOTH WORKINGS

Maintain your bike this winter with a revolutionary new cycle lubricant. The Scottolier micro-emulsion lubricates the chain, cassette and derailleur. Anti-corrosion inhibitors protect components from the environment. After a ride on salty roads or muddy trails, all that is needed is a wash down with water. Elite Enduro rider Gary Forrest said: "I've never had oil that makes your bike so clean." £9.98 at www.ultimatebikesolution.com



SANDISON'S SCOTLAND

BRUCE SANDISON IS A JOURNALIST, ANGLER AND AUTHOR OF A STRING OF BEST-SELLING BOOKS ABOUT SCOTLAND'S OUTDOORS. HE LIVES IN SUTHERLAND.



THERE'S RAIN AND THEN THERE'S PROPER TROSSACH RAIN

The Trossachs are glorious, especially in the autumn months – the brightness of heather fades and bracken turns to burnished gold, trees shed their canopy and carpet forest floors yellow and brown.

When it rains, and there is no wetter rain in all of Scotland than Trossach rain, the spear-shaped leaves of birch trees twinkle like fairy lights. Lochs Katrine, Lubnaig, Venachar, Voil and Ard sparkle silver and blue.

One of my favourite Trossachs outings is to the summit of Ben Venue (2386ft) or The Little Hill – a great, grey slab, thrusting north from Loch Ard in a slow shoulder leading to its twin peaks overlooking Loch Katrine.

I suppose, compared with nearby Ben Lomond (3192ft), Venue is modest but it is none the less attractive for being so. It is possible to climb Venue from the north but I prefer the south route that starts at Ledard Farm by Loch Ard.

When I first visited the mountain, on a damp, drizzly morning, Venue was mist-shrouded as I parked across the road from the farm. When I started up the track, the rain stopped, leaving the hills freshly laundered, inviting me in.

Which is when I saw the goat – the tufted beard, long jaw, glazed eyes and ungainly horns sticking through the mesh of a fence. The animal was stuck. I tried a couple of twists, like an ancient patriarch preparing a sacrifice to an old god.

The goat grunted and gripped one of my fingers between chisel-edged teeth. There's gratitude. It took 15 minutes manoeuvring before I eased the head and horns back. The bad-tempered beast trotted off bleating to its fellows without a word of thanks. That's goats for you, I thought as I marched on nursing a bruised ego and finger.

A signpost pointed to a stile and the Ledard Burn. The burn was busy, full and thundering after rain, flowing amid statuesque oaks across a forest floor soft with fallen leaves, leaping in a symphonic chorus down to Loch Ard over moss-covered boulders and foam-covered pools.

On the hill by a stile, I looked back. Mirror-calm water reflected the surrounding hills. Mist wisps hung like smoke over Loch Ard. Red grouse rocketed from the heather, cackling with laughter as I passed.

I stopped for lunch by a waterfall and from a promontory, I watched the burn hurtle 20 feet over a rocky ridge into a deep, back-gorged pool.

As I reached the width of the shoulder, I looked ahead to the track, winding between Beinn Bhreac (2297ft) and Creag Tharsuinn (2215ft) with ragged Tinker's Loch leaden grey on Drumm nan Carn. It was colder now and I tramped resolutely on to the skirts of the two summit peaks.

I scrambled up the west peak, a couple of feet higher than its neighbour, and gained the shelter of the cairn.

Loch Katrine lay below me and, around, wave after wave of seemingly endless mountains and hills. It was as though time has stopped, enfolding me in a dream that I never wanted to end.

And then it started to rain, heavily, proper Trossach rain, so I scurried off the top and back down the hill.



AUTUMNAL Golden time in the Trossachs

Find out more at www.snh.gov.uk/johnmuir

Scottish Natural Heritage
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All of nature for all of Scotland
Nàdar air fad airson Alba air fad

Year of Natural
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