



Graded rock-scrambles

Noel Williams, author of many acclaimed guidebooks, gives the description of rock-scrambling as "progress which is too exciting to be just hillwalking, but not difficult enough to be genuine rock-climbing". It's where hillwalking ends and ends where rock-climbing begins ! Below are definitions of rock-scrambling grades in dry, summer conditions as defined by the SMC in their "Skye Scrambles" guidebook, along with a few remarks from us.

Grade 1 : easy rock-scrambles

"This grade of scramble will be fairly straightforward for most experienced hillwalkers. It may be necessary to use the hands occasionally for progress, but the holds will normally be large and the exposure will not be too daunting." The use of a rope is not expected.

To join a guided Grade 1 rock-scrambling day with us, we ask that you are relatively fit and have done a good few hillwalks.

Grade 2 : interesting rock-scrambles

"This grade of scramble will require the hands to be used for more sustained sections. The exposure will be significant, and retreat may be quite difficult." Route finding will also be more tricky than Grade 1. For people with the necessary experience, the use of a rope is not usually expected.

To join us on a Grade 2 rock-scrambling guided day, we ask that you have done at least 3 Grade 1 rock-scrambles and are comfortable moving along such terrain. Ideally you'll have been out with us before on some trips.

Grade 3 : Advanced rock-scrambles

"This type of scramble may involve making moves on steep rock in very exposed situations. All but experienced climbers might prefer the protection of a rope in some places. Occasional moves of Moderate rock climbing standard may be encountered. The ability to abseil may be useful if a retreat has to be made." Grade 3 rock-scrambles are effectively Moderate Climbs, and we treat them as such using ropes and relevant climbing gear.

You will need to have done a few Grade 2 rock-scrambles and be comfortable progressing on such terrain, before you can join us on trips which involve Grade 3 rock-scrambling. In addition, you will ideally have been out with us before.

Examples

Below is a list of fine Grade 1 and Grade 2 rock-scrambles that are on the way to popular peaks in Scotland. It's by no means a definitive list, just a list of routes that we know and like ! Use this list as a helpful guide to pre-requisites for booking onto our guided rock-scrambling days.

Grade 1 rock-scrambles

North

Beinn Alligin, the Horns of Alligin

West

Lurg Mhor, east top

Beinn Eighe, the Black Carls
Beinn Dearg, Torridon, north and east ridges

Central

Ben Nevis, Ledge Route avoiding initial slab
Ben Nevis, Carn Mor Dearg arete
Mamores, Devil's Ridge
Mamores, An Garbhanach
Mamores, Am Bodach east shoulder
Bidean nam Bian, Gairn Aonach zig-zags
Stob Gabhar, Aonach Eagach
Ben Alder, Short Leachas
Ben Alder, Long Leachas
Beinn a'Bheithir, east ridge of Sgorr Bhan

Skye

Cuillin, Sgurr Dearg from the Memorial Hut
Cuillin, Sgurr nan Eag
Blaven (variations on main 'tourist route')

Forcan Ridge, by-passing the 'bad step'
Beinn Fhada, west ridge (Kintail)
Mullach Fraoch-choire (Cluanie)

East

Cairngorm, Fiacaill Ridge path

South

Ben Cruachan, east ridge incl 'bad step'
Lawers, Ant Stuc east ridge
Stuc a'Chroin, north-east buttress direct

Other Islands

Rum, Ainshival
Arran, Cir Mhor (east ridge, avoiding difficulties)

Grade 2 rock-scrambles

North

An Teallach, classic traverse avoiding direct pitch
on Corrag Buidhe
Liathach, Am Fasarinen Pinnacles
Stac Pollaidh
Suilven, east ridge

Central

Ben Nevis, Ledge Route including initial slab
Aonach Eagach

West

Forcan Ridge, direct route including 'bad step'

Skye

Cuillin, Am Basteir (east ridge)
Cuillin, Sgurr Mhic Choinnch
Cuillin, Sgurr Dubh Mor
Cuillin, Sgurr Alasdair, south-east ridge

East

Cairngorm, Fiacaill Ridge direct

We'll get some examples of rock-scrambles in Wales and England up in due course.

Steven Fallon • walk | climb | bike

31 Argyle Place, Edinburgh EH9 1JT

Email : info@stevenfallon.co.uk | Phone : 0131 466 8152 / 07795 146400

Web : www.stevenfallon.co.uk | Facebook : facebook.com/StevenFallonMountainGuiding | Twitter : twitter.com/SteveFallon