



The boardwalks at the end of Loch Muick.

out about halfway around the loch and I am forced to push my bike over a rough boulder strewn path to reach the far end. Here there are a number of boardwalks that take you over the feeder streams before I find a suitable place to set the bike down and lock it up. As I set off the weather appears to be holding for the hike but the wind is picking

up. There is a good path that brings you up to the Dubh Loch and the imposing face of Creag an Dubh-loch. At the far end of the loch, I dump my main rucksack. The path, however, has now dissolved into boggy tussocks and I make use of the rock slabs over which the stream cascades to gain height. At a suitable point I cross the stream and strike upwards towards the summit. The wind is now vicious as I walk over a broad ridge to the summit cairn. I take a few quick photos before I turn back, this time following the edge of the crag and passing by the cleft of a central gully; the path that drops down the gully looks inviting as a fast decent route but is likely to be somewhat loose underfoot and I err on the side of caution and retrace my steps back down to the loch.

By the time I am back down to Dubh Loch the wind has significantly increased in strength and I am in two minds as to whether to launch the packraft. Handling an inflatable in high wind is somewhat tricky and I dump my rucksack in the raft to hold it down as I inflate it. I tentatively launch out from the head of the loch but the wind thwarts my attempts to make any sensible headway and I am almost blown back to the shore. It's time to play safe and return to solid ground. I pack up the raft and walk back along the length of the loch to descend to Loch Muick. This time I cycle out on the northern side of the loch, a level and easy bike ride back to the carpark. The weather is still unsettled and windy as we pack up the car and set the satnav for the Isle of Skye.



A brief foray onto Dubh Loch.

## The Storr + Storr Lochs

The Storr 719 m  
Walk 5.5 miles  
Ascent 560 m  
Storr Lochs 2.5 miles



The weather does not improve as we drive towards the Isle of Skye. The wind and rain have continued unabated for the entire journey. We have also spent another night in the car as it is too wet to put a tent up; this time we have found a layby just short of the Skye bridge. Come the morning the weather looks as if it may be clearing and we drive over the Skye bridge to Portree. Most of the mountain streams are going full throttle and it is clear it has been a stormy night on Skye as well. After a welcoming large 'Scottish breakfast' in the Red Brick Café we continue our drive to the Storr.

We leave Portree, taking the road that heads north. Usually there are good views of the Storr as you crest the rise at the southern end of the Storr Lochs but this time we are confronted with a cloud base that is level with the top of the Old Man; normally I can deal with clouds but

these ones are dark, threatening and uninviting. We park near the toilet block and it is with some reluctance that we leave the warmth of the car to take the path up towards the Old Man of Storr.

Our dog, Lyra, despite having a windproof coat, is looking decidedly unimpressed. My wife, Anne, wears a similar expression as we have to brace hard into strong gusts of wind to avoid being thrown off our feet. Looking back out over the Storr Lochs I can see the surface being whipped into a frenzy of white horses. Looking back up, the clouds have dropped lower and are decidedly black and impenetrable. It is very uninviting.

It is an easy decision; this Foxy is not going to happen today. We retreat back to the warmth of the car; Lyra snuggles down in the back avoiding eye contact lest I make another suggestion of a walk and we head off to more comfortable accommodation on the east coast.



Lyra is less than impressed with the Storr.