TOP 10 SPICY SCRAMBLES

KEEP A COOL HEAD AND A STRONG GRIP, AS WE BRING YOU BRITAIN'S TOP TEN SPICY SCRAMBLES.

From sampling Sharp Edge to testing your nerve on the longest rock climb in Britain; from teetering on the knife edge of Cneifion Arête to pushing your limits on the Cuillin Ridge, here are ten of our sauciest scrambles. Get your hands out of your pockets and take a deep breath – it's time to get a grip.

"Scrambling is where hill walking and mountaineering meet."

No place to slip. Tackling the famously exposed ridge of Crib Goch on Snowdon, the first step in many a scrambling career. If you've mastered its rocky pleasures then read on for ten more great days out.

PHOTO: TOM HECHT.



PHOTO: NICHOLAS LIVESEY

1 Sharp Edge, Blencathra
Lake District

Wainright reckoned that this ridge was "sharp enough for shaving". Whilst this might explain the beards in bygone days, one thing's for sure: Sharp Edge is an apt name. Also known as Saddleback, Blencathra is one of the most northerly mountains in the Lake District and Sharp Edge is one of the area's most famous scrambles. In dry conditions it's smooth going but in the wet things can get rough: the Skiddaw Slate on this knife-edge ridge can be lethally greasy. Post-shave, you'll be in for a splash of incredible summit views and a dash down Hall's Fell Ridge.

SPICE FACTOR: 2/10

Short but sweet. Exposed. Very treacherous in wet or icy conditions; plenty of people have had a close shave.



PHOTO: TOM HUTTON.

2 Cwm Bochlwyd Horseshoe, Glyders
Wales

Give the Snowdon Horseshoe the hump and mount the Bochlwyd Horseshoe. This combines two of the area's best scrambles: the North Ridge of Tryfan (hands-on ground from road to the summit) followed by Bristly Ridge (exciting ground at an amenable grade), or a more difficult scramble up Glyder Fach. Most of the Snowdon Horseshoe's thrills come from the narrow ridge of Crib Goch – which, although exposed, presents little difficulty for the more seasoned scrambler. Bochlwyd's ridge ride, however, varies between exposed arêtes, narrow gullies and broad ridges. It may lack a touch of the Snowdon grandeur but you'll still hit the summits of Tryfan and Glyder Fach.

"The best easy all-day scramble south of the Scottish border."
Dan Bailey

SPICE FACTOR: 3/10

Shorter, but sharper, than the Snowdon Horseshoe. Ideal for hill walkers looking for the next step after Crib Goch.

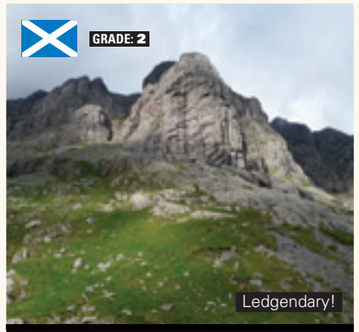


PHOTO: DAN BAILEY.

3 Ledge Route, Ben Nevis
Scotland

Don't be misledged by a utilitarian name, Ledge Route is a hill walker's scrambling line to the very highest point in Britain. The easiest scrambling route on Ben Nevis, Ledge Route is a great introduction to Britain's highest mountain and takes you right into the historical heart of Scottish mountaineering. Containing a bit of everything, it starts in No. 5 Gully and weaves an improbable line up Carn Dearg Buttress to a narrow ridge and, finally, the summit of Carn Dearg on the Ben Nevis plateau. Ledgendary.

"Interesting route finding with a big, serious feel. It might be low in the grade but don't take it lightly."
Dan Bailey

SPICE FACTOR: 3/10

Relatively straightforward but with a big feel. Careful route finding required.



PHOTO: NICHOLAS LIVESEY

4 Aonach Eagach Ridge, Glen Coe
Scotland

Eager for the Aonach Eagach? Following the spectacular serrated north wall of Glen Coe, this classic Lochaber scramble has a coveted reputation as the gnarliest ridge traverse on the mainland. While there are harder ridge scrambles elsewhere, few are as long, as thrillingly exposed, or as tricky to escape as this beast. Most people attempt it westwards, from Am Bodach, but this means braving the descent options at the western end: unpleasant, unsafe, slightly unintuitive or all three. So, if you've time, tackle the full traverse: from the Pap of Glencoe to the Devil's Staircase on the West Highland Way.

SPICE FACTOR: 5/10

Got a steady head? Unusually for a mainland ridge, you can't skirt around the most difficult sections (grade 2).



PHOTO: STUART BUCHANAN.

5 Pinnacle Ridge, St Sunday Crag
Lakes

Find religion on the saintly spires of Pinnacle Ridge. One of the Lake District's classic scrambles, this devilishly defined ridge leads you to the top of the plateaued summit of St Sunday Crag near Patterdale. It might be a long walk in but it's well worth it for the superb scrambling, solid rock and impressive positions. The ridge has a real alpine feel with a dramatic and exposed crest. From the summit of St Sunday Crag, an ascent of Fairfield (via an easy scramble up Cofa Pike) follows and then a descent via the scenic valley of Dovedale.Heavenly.

"In anything but perfect conditions the crux is worth roping up for – or even in perfect conditions if bit nervous!" Jon Sparks



PHOTO: TOM HECHT.

6 Clogwyn y Person Arête, Snowdon
Wales

Are you the type that likes to escape the crowds? Put your head down for a long walk in, up past the silent walls of Cyrn Las. You'll be rewarded with high mountain solitude and Clogwyn y Person Arête, probably the best scramble in Snowdonia. It's climbed via a series of little walls and ledges and the easiest line (grade 3) takes some finding. Tougher variations are possible; tough persons might also like to add a harder start with a couple of Difficult pitches up the Parson's Nose. Above the arête there's plenty more excitement: follow the Crib y Ddysgl - Crib Goch ridge to bag the best bit of scrambling on the Snowdon Horseshoe (grade 1), then complete the circuit with an airy descent of Crib Goch's little-trodden North Ridge.

SPICE FACTOR: 6/10

A mountaineering day with an alpine feel. With the easiest route at grade 3 – and the option of starting up Parson's Nose (D) – you'll need to know your ropes.



PHOTO: ROB JARVIS.

Bernard Jarvis tackling the crux of Curved Ridge.

7 Curved Ridge, Buachaille Etive Mor
Scotland

SPICE FACTOR: 6/10

An outstanding ridge that requires basic rock climbing ability. Big and exposed, it's one for the technically competent.

Curved Ridge: where scrambling becomes mountaineering. Buachaille Etive Mor is one of Britain's most evocative mountains and this is a real route to remember. After a two-hour approach the views over Rannoch Moor are stunning and they only get better the higher you scramble. Curved Ridge weighs in at a hard scramble or an easy rock climb, but it is climbable in all weathers. Much of the route is straightforward, with the exception of a steep section near the top where a few obligatory rocky steps have to be climbed.



PHOTO: DAN BAILEY.

9 Dubhs Ridge, Skye
Scotland

Dubhs is pronounced do, and you really should. At about 900m this is often quoted as Britain's longest rock climb; it's hard to think of a better one at any grade. Sweeping straight out of Loch Coruisk, a huge mound of overlapping slabs runs unbroken from near sea level to a subsidiary summit at over 700m, with perfect sandpaper-rough gabbro all the way. From here the ridge narrows dramatically, with sustained interest right to the Munro summit of Sgurr Dubh Mor. You don't get much more thrilling than this without it being pure rock climbing.

SPICE FACTOR: 9/10

Long approach. An unroped scramble for most of its length but the occasional tricky step and one airy abseil earn a Moderate grade. Very remote: getting benighted is entirely possible.

8 Cneifion Arête
Wales

Nudge yourself up the knife edge of the Cneifion Arête. Exposed and demanding, this test piece is an absolute classic – whether taken on its own or combined with the Idwal Slabs. You can access Cwm Cneifion in several different ways but a favourite is to warm up on the Idwal Staircase (a very pleasant grade 2 scramble up the side of the Idwal Slabs) then skip across Cwm Cneifion to the foot of the route. The start involves a couple of pitches of rock climbing but after that it eases back and becomes a beautiful knife-edge ridge; you could be in the Alps.

"A brilliant mountain day. Something for both experienced climbers and scramblers." Gareth Hanson, Editor, RCUK

SPICE FACTOR: 8/10

Exposed and demanding. This grade 3 arête is the benchmark for its grade. A couple of Difficult rock pitches and the knife-edge ridge mean it's for seasoned scramblers only.



PHOTO: TOM HECHT.

On a Cneif edge.



PHOTO: JAMIE HAGEMAN / WWW.JAMIEHAGEMAN.COM

Awesome: the Basteir Tooth, Cuillin Ridge.

10 Cuillin Ridge, Skye
Scotland

The Cuillin Traverse muscles into yet another Summit top ten. And unashamedly so, it's the closest thing we've got to the Alps. The 22 peaks of the Black Cuillin Mountains in Skye lie in a continuous chain stretching over 12 kilometres, creating the Cuillin Ridge Traverse – one of the finest and longest alpine-style rock-climbing routes in Europe. With over 4,000 metres of ascent and descent – and once thought impossible to complete in one day – it's now been run in 3.5 hours. Yet most of us would still struggle to complete it in two days. You need to be confident with your ropework and soloing, carry all your water and food and be lucky with the weather. But, if you've got stamina and experience, this will be the highlight of your scrambling career.

SPICE FACTOR: 10/10

This isn't just any scramble or rock climb: this an alpine climb. Extremely long and exposed, you need to be competent soloing at Difficult (and occasionally Severe) on possibly wet and dubious rock. Your choice is to tackle it fast in one very long and demanding day or add the complexity of carrying your overnight gear and enough food and water. Escape is only possible at certain points and navigation can be difficult. **Good luck!**

Words: Katy Dartford / Alex Messenger.
Thanks to: Dan Bailey and Jon Sparks. Dan is author of 'Scotland's Mountain Ridges' and 'The Ridges of England, Wales and Ireland' and Jon is author of 'Scrambles and Easy Climbs in Snowdonia'. Buy both from www.bmcshop.co.uk.

