

TGO Challenge 2019 – Final Details

In 1980, sixty-five people set off from the west coast on the inaugural TGO Challenge. A lot has changed since then – 6 prime ministers and 6 US presidents have come and gone, gear has evolved sometimes beyond recognition and for many, digital technology now backs up the trusty map and compass. But on this, the 40th TGO Challenge, the principle remains the same – dip your toes in the Atlantic then do the same in the North Sea while having a great adventure in the middle.

We have had a topsy-turvy year so far. February stripped all but the highest hills of snow, raising hopes of a snow free crossing. However, March has at times turned the hills white again. While there is not as much hard-packed snow as usual, those heading for the hills will need to be aware of the risk of snow on north-facing slopes and corries.

Scotland is famed for its rainfall so, as usual, care will be needed when confronted with rivers in spate condition. Be prepared for significant detours in search of safe crossing points or to wait for the water to subside. Bridges and paths may have been damaged during the winter and, though some issues are detailed on the [Access Page](#) of the website, we cannot know what problems there are in the more remote parts of the Challenge area. Please don't hesitate to use your FWAs or make other changes, as weather and fitness levels dictate. Just remember to let Control know any changes to your route by phone or text as soon as possible. It is sometimes fine and sunny so don't forget the sunscreen either! We wish you a safe and successful crossing and look forward to welcoming you in Montrose.

Before you start heading to the west coast there are a few more pieces of information to take on board. In these pages you will find details of Challenge Control, the phone numbers you will need and your Challenge number – as well as an updated list of participants.

DURING THE EVENT CALL CHALLENGE CONTROL on 01674 663 411 or TEXT 07593 185 124

PLEASE QUOTE YOUR NAME(S) AND CHALLENGE NUMBER(S)

BEFORE YOU START

MEDICAL INFORMATION AND EMERGENCY CONTACT DETAILS

If you haven't yet completed your medical and emergency contact form, please send it to the coordinators at newtonmorehostel@gmail.com as soon as possible. Copies of the form can be found [here](#). Please note completing this form is a requirement for participating in TGOC19.

We will not pass any comment or judgement on your fitness. It is up to you to ensure you have a suitable level of fitness to participate. However, if you have any long-term health problems or other concerns about your health, we strongly advise you to seek advice from your health professional making sure they are fully aware of the nature of the Event.

We also require details of your emergency contact. It is important that this person:

- Is not participating in TGOC19
- Gives their consent to Challenge Control holding their details
- Knows you are participating in and understands the nature of the Event

- Understands Challenge Control (and the Police if Mountain Rescue are involved) will contact them if you miss a phone-in
- Has access to your GPS tracker beacons/map if you are using one

Some regular Challengers have added their contact details to their route sheets. Please note, due to data protection regulations we have had to delete these so will need the information again. It will be held securely and deleted immediately after the Event. Only Challenge Control staff and, if relevant, the emergency services will have access to the medical and emergency contact details.

ACCOMMODATION DETAILS

If you haven't already done so, please send us the name and phone number of any accommodation you have pre-booked. This helps us greatly when trying to locate overdue Challengers. Please add the information to your route sheet in the Overnight Halt Column and send it to us.

SETTING OFF

SIGN OUT REGISTERS

You can sign out between 9am on Friday 10th May and 5pm on Monday 13th May. Please remember we have to fit in with the normal business hours of the establishments that kindly agree to hold the registers, so please don't get upset if there is a delay.

Contact details for the start points can be found in the [Event Details](#) and at www.tgochallenge.co.uk. The registers are normally held at reception, the exception being Glenelg where the register hangs in the porch of Mrs Davidson's house, Taobh na Mara, which is close to the War Memorial.

If for any reason you are unable to start, you must inform us and cancel any accommodation you have booked.

SPECIAL OFFERS

You can find discounts from Hostelling Scotland, TentMeals, Base Camp Foods and Mountain Trails, as well as offers from Ballater and Braemar Campsites [here](#).

CHALLENGE CARDS

We no longer issue Challenge Cards as Hostelling Scotland no longer need them to secure the Challenge discount.

ALONG THE WAY

CHALLENGE CONTROL

Challenge Control is based at the Park Hotel, Montrose and will operate from 5pm on Friday 10th May until 5pm on Friday 24th May. Sue Oxley, John & Marie Donohoe, John Jocys and Steve Smith will answer calls on **01674 663 411** and overnight messages can be left on the answerphone. Sometimes the direct line is busy, especially if Control are dealing with an emergency, in which case your call will be diverted to the Park Hotel reception where you can leave a brief message.

You can also text on **07593185124** though we much prefer to talk to you! We try to answer all texts within an hour, but this is not always possible. Texts do sometimes go astray so please do not assume you text has arrived safely until you have received a reply. Whichever way you contact us please give your name(s), Challenge number(s) and location.

Please **DO NOT** use our usual contact phone numbers (01540 673 360 / 01540 673 583) after 9th May as we won't be there!

You must ensure that you ring in from each of the phone-in points on your route sheet. If you are behind schedule, please try to phone on the designated day if possible, even if you have not yet

reached your phone-in point. This is our primary safety system and failure to do so may result in the emergency services being contacted unnecessarily.

We're happy to hear from you, especially if you are a solo participant, in between your planned phone-ins so if you have a signal, you pass a payphone, or have the opportunity to use a landline, make the most of it and let us know where you are. If you decide to change your route, or are delayed, let us know personally, and not by a third party, at the first opportunity. Likewise, if you have to retire from the Event you must let us know as soon as possible and definitely within 24 hours.

EMERGENCIES

If you are in difficulty, and have a signal, call Challenge Control for help and advice. If the situation is serious, dial 999 or 112 and ask the police to contact Mountain Rescue. North American participants please note that 911 does NOT work in the UK.

If you only have enough signal for a text you can still contact the emergency services if you have previously registered your phone. Text "register" to 999 and follow the instructions.

GPS TRACKERS

GPS trackers, whilst helpful in establishing your last known position, will not be a primary part of our safety system which remains the phone-in system. **You must still phone in as planned.**

On several previous Challenges devices have failed causing anxiety to family and friends whilst the Challenger was, thankfully, fine. Therefore, we will not initiate a search just because your tracker is not moving – we need some other indicator, such as a missed phone-in that you may be in trouble. So, you need to discuss with your emergency contact what they will do if your tracker stops transmitting. Challenge Control will, of course, be happy to talk to anyone who is concerned about your welfare.

Please **DO NOT** use the Coordinators or Challenge Control email address or phone numbers as one of your contacts. You must ensure someone at home is checking your beacons/messages. Ideally this should be your emergency contact or someone they can contact easily.

ACCESS

Please see the [Event Details](#) for general information and the [Access](#) page on the Challenge website for specific information including missing bridges. In particular we ask you to respect the reasonable estate requests in areas such as Glen Muick and Glen Mazeran.

We're Waiting for your Call!

It can be wonderful hearing of Challengers adventures but at Challenge Control it is the phone calls that we don't get which make the job stressful. The tale below from 2018 illustrates just how important it is to phone in on time, or as soon as possible if you are delayed.

Day 2 - 9pm

The phone line is officially closed for the night but at Control we still have work to do. A review of the Challenge ledger gives a list of 15 individuals or groups who have failed to phone in as scheduled. A risk analysis is done on each bearing in mind their experience, type of route, age, confirmed sightings, whether solo or a group and any other risk factors. After careful consideration we text reminders and plan to re-evaluate in the morning.

Day 3 - 9am

Several apologetic messages account for most of the "naughty list". Time for the detective work to start. For those that have given names of B&Bs or campsites we phone the establishments. This takes another few off the list, but concern crystallises around one Challenger who was never booked at the remote hotel on his sheet. As other Challengers phone in we start asking about sightings of our missing few but this one in particular.

Noon

A few more have phoned in and we have confirmed sighting of others - most simply forgot but a few have been delayed by slow progress or injury. Another attempt to contact the Challengers directly and one answers. Just two left now - a pair of first timers and an experienced solo Challenger. We know how much a phone call to an emergency contact can cause distress and worry so it's a last resort. We risk assess the two cases again - call log, ledger and route sheets are double checked - and decide to wait another few hours.

3pm

Still nothing. Time to phone the contacts. The pair are quickly accounted for so just our solo Challenger left. Surprisingly his emergency contact had not heard from him for many months and was unaware of his participation on the Challenge - not helpful from our point of view and worrying for his family. We search the start lists and route sheets for those on similar routes looking for late starters who will, in effect, sweep the route and send texts asking for any sightings.

4pm

We have a sighting! Reports of him travelling very slowly on his first day under a huge pack and camping 10km short of his planned destination. He had declined offers of help and advice to send unnecessary gear home. We now know he is behind schedule rather than having walked through his phone in point which narrows down a potential search area. We are minded to give him another night until . . .

5pm

A report comes in saying our missing Challenger leaves camp before several quicker Challengers but none of them pass him again. So, where is he? Lying injured out of sight of the track? Now we have serious concerns about his welfare.

We have a big decision to make. Phone calls are diverted to Park reception. We have speculated much - theories he has travelled fast and gone through early were replaced

with speculation he is moving slowly or has even gone home and not told us. Now we must draw together the facts - an experienced Challenger but no recent crossings, no direct contact from him, now nearly a day overdue, the phone in point doesn't recognise his description and reports from other Challengers that he is struggling and/or injured. Yes, most likely he is just moving very slowly but there is a significant risk he isn't moving at all. . . We dial 999 and ask for the police.

6pm

After a frantic hour emailing route sheets to Mountain Rescue and defining the area he is likely to be in we are now serving tea to two Montrose Police officers being reassured we have done the right thing - to have waited longer would have lost valuable hours of daylight. Mountain Rescue are walking the relevant section of his route from both ends and police are visiting his home address to check he hasn't returned home. Two more reported sighting of him "being in a bad way" heighten our concerns.

10pm

The search has been called off as the light fades. There have been several difficult phone calls to his family who are understandably distressed, but we can offer no reassurance. We now start preparing the next "naughty list". A bed is set up by the phone in the Control room but not much sleep is had amid nightmares of losing our first ever Challenger.

Day 4 - 5am

Mountain Rescue resume search.

9am

A text from one of the late starters tells us he walked with him for a day but left him camping a few miles short of his phone in point. We inform the police just as they contact us on another line to say he has been found. The cheer at Challenge Control is probably audible throughout Montrose. We can now focus on the next overdue list.

Noon

We finally speak to the Challenger. He is unaware of the anxiety caused and plans to continue but after a frank discussion we advise him to stop and retire him from TGO19. It has taken four days to walk two days of his route, he is unwilling to lighten his load and seems unconcerned at the level of concern caused.

Our elation is now tinged with frustration. This whole episode was preventable. There was a good signal where the Challenger camped on his first night. A phone call to Control telling us he was behind schedule would have prevented his family's distress, our anxiety and many hours of Police and Mountain Rescue time . . .

So please ring us as soon as you arrive at your phone-in point. To us it is the day you are due to phone, rather than the place, which is most important. So, if you are behind schedule or struggling, check your phone for a signal and please, as soon as you can, ring and let us know.

There are a couple of other pieces of news which may be relevant to your crossing:

Loch Quoich Landslip – Good news! The road is due to reopen by Easter though a bout of bad weather could still delay this until after the Challenge.

Carnach Bridge – The Knoydart Ranger Service confirm work is scheduled to replace the bridge in late April/early May. If all goes well it should be finished by the time the Challenge starts but it's a big "if" as the Scottish climate may well intervene. So, you may yet need your FWA!

Loch Lomond and Trossachs National Park – Bylaws came into force in 2017 which limit wild camping in some areas to specific sites and requires the purchase of a permit in advance online. Most of the affected areas are by lochs and rivers easily accessible from the road and will only affect Challengers on southerly routes. More information can be found [here](#).

LOCH NESS FERRY

Gordon Menzies sails from Temple Pier (NH528300), a mile from Drumnadrochit, at approximately 8am and 5pm Please pre-book, if you haven't already done so, (gordon.menziesm@btinternet.com, or 01456 450 205, 07831 434 691) and confirm your place by text, including the names of all in your group, when approaching Drumnadrochit. His boat holds 12 people with packs so Gordon sometimes needs more than one crossing but he will endeavour to get everyone across to Inverfarigaig (NH517237) as soon as he can.

ACCOMMODATION AND SUPPLIES

Please note many campsites marked on the OS maps no longer take tents so please make enquiries before you set out.

There are many establishments which offer Challengers a warm welcome and have done for many years. In the [Event Details](#) you will find details of some that give an extra special welcome to Challengers including, Ault-na-Goire, Callater, Cougie, Mar Lodge and Newtonmore Hostel. Please note that the hostel at Dalwhinnie closed in 2017, but the Loch Ericht Hotel is open and allows Challengers to camp in their grounds.

Janet Sutherland has confirmed she and Alex will be offering evening meals and breakfasts at Ault na Goire. She does need an idea of numbers before hand so if you would like to camp or eat please contact her at janet.sutherland@talk21.com or 01456 486711

At Tarfside, Ann & Alvar Thorn, Patricia & Roger Smith and Graeme & Marion Dunsire will be working tirelessly to supply food and drink to Challengers. Beds are allocated on a first come/

first served basis and cannot be pre-booked.

Please note that they cannot hold supply parcels.

Unfortunately, The Retreat will be closed this year for refurbishment but hopes to open early for breakfast again in 2020.

Many towns and villages have shops where you can resupply but you should check opening hours and stock of essential items such as fuel before you leave. The Outdoor Shop in Kingussie is, unfortunately, still out of action due to a fire in 2018. The general store in Kincaig has also closed.

If you are posting resupplies to accommodation providers, please check they are willing to accept them.

LITTER AND HUMAN WASTE

Please be scrupulous in taking away all your rubbish and leaving no trace wherever you walk or camp. **Human waste** must be buried at least 15cm deep and at least 30m from watercourses. Soiled toilet paper and sanitary products should be carried out and disposed of appropriately.

TICKS AND MIDGES

While the nuisance midge is rarely in full flight at Challenge time, the dangers of tick bites are real. Ticks are easily picked up when walking through bracken, heather or high grass. Ticks hide in your warmer regions and bites aren't always noticed. You can buy tick removers for your first aid kit. Learn how to remove them safely and examine yourself, your partner or companion for ticks when possible. If you feel unwell and suspect you've been bitten, seek medical advice as soon as possible. Early Lyme disease symptoms may include fever, headache, tiredness, and a circular rash. Many Challengers have been bitten and a few have been diagnosed with Lyme disease and successfully treated. Further information can be obtained [here](#). Please be vigilant!

A FEW RULES

Companions – Dogs are not allowed on the Challenge. Anyone breaking this rule will be disqualified.

Unofficial crossings are not permitted. The limit on numbers taking part in the Challenge has been set for sound reasons and with regard to visitor pressures. Anyone crossing with a non-Challenger will be disqualified though friends or relatives may join you for a few days.

Walk Every Step – Whilst we don't encourage it, you may take transport away from your route for accommodation or supplies but you must return to the exact same spot before you continue. If you have a gap in your crossing due to injury, illness

or fatigue please let us know on Control. We appreciate this is your holiday and many people will have used valuable annual leave so you may of course continue if you wish but it will not count as a completed crossing.

Behaviour – We know the vast majority of Challengers don't need reminding of their responsibilities to others or that they are representing the Event as well as themselves. However, when the drinks flow in some of the towns and villages that welcome the Challenge every year spirits can sometimes get a little high. Please be respectful of both locals and other Challengers. Many will have a tough day ahead whilst you are nursing a hangover!

FINISHING YOUR CROSSING

FINISH CONTROL

When you reach the east coast, you must make your way to The Park Hotel, John Street, Montrose DD10 8RJ to complete your Challenge. Motorised transport is now allowed! On arrival at The Park please remove boots, packs and wet clothing at the hotel entrance and go upstairs to the Kinnaid Room to sign the Finish Register and receive your certificate, T-shirt and, if you ordered one, a pin badge at a cost of £5. You are welcome to a cup of tea or coffee and a biscuit too!

The 2019 TGO Challenge finishes promptly at 5pm on Friday 24th May so please make sure you leave time to reach Finish Control before it closes.

A WALK TO THE PARK

Reaching the Park Hotel from Montrose Station sometimes proves more difficult than navigating your way across Scotland!

From the station, walk up to the roundabout with its swan sculpture. Keep right, crossing the road where the railing ends, go straight ahead up a small alley (Railway Close) to the High Street. Cross the High Street, turn left, then right down John Street. The Park is on the second corner. If in doubt, ask a local person who, are by now, very well used to backpackers arriving in the town at this time of the year.

ACCOMMODATION

The Park (reservations@montrosepark.co.uk, 01674 663400) offers rooms at discounted rates to Challengers. They are fully booked on Thursday 23th May but have rooms available on all other days.

Angus Council run the South Links Holiday Park which is the only campsite in Montrose. They advise pre-booking, especially for Thursday

and Friday. Bookings can be made by phoning the council advice line on 03452 777 778. Please let them know you are part of the TGO Challenge.

PARCELS

You can post clean clothing to Challenge Control to pick up on your arrival in Montrose. Please label the parcel clearly with your name and Challenge number. Post to TGO Challenge, Park Hotel, John Street, Montrose, Angus DD10 8RJ. Please, do not send parcels until shortly before the Event as the hotel cannot store them for long periods.

CELEBRATION DINNERS

There will be gatherings, including a fixed price three course meal, at the Park on Wednesday 22nd, Thursday 23rd and Friday 24th May. The largest gathering is on the Thursday evening, when most of the plaques are presented to those who have completed 10 or 20 crossings. Places are limited to 180 and it is already oversubscribed. A few places are reserved for those celebrating 10th or 20th crossings and their guests, a small number of sponsor representatives, the organising team and vetters. The rest of the places will be allocated to those who have successfully crossed. As per the Event Details those who submitted their routes early have been prioritised. If you submitted your route less than 2 weeks from your deadline you will be on the reserve list. We anticipate many will gain places due to withdrawals before or retirements during the Event but we may not be able to confirm places for those on the waiting list until the day. With so many Challengers on the reserve list it is unlikely we will be able to accommodate family or friends.

The Friday dinner will be a celebration of past and present Challenges with the presentation of the remaining plaques. We hope previous Challengers will take the opportunity to come and meet old friends as well as some of this year's first timers.

You will be asked to confirm your dinner requirements during the second week of the Challenge. Tickets will be available at Challenge Control. You then pay at The Park reception where you can also notify them of any special dietary requirements.

KEEPING IN TOUCH

Scottish Reunion - 4th-6th October at the Balavil Hotel, Newtonmore, organised by Kirsten Paterson. There will be a three-course dinner on Saturday night and plenty of opportunities to go for a walk. Information on the event and the booking form can be found [here](#).

Spring Gathering – organised by Alan Hardy and usually held at the Snake Pass Inn, Derbyshire in March. Details of the 2020 dates and the venue will be circulated when known.

Hill and Mountain Walking Club – founded by Challengers and meets regularly throughout the year both in the UK and abroad. You are welcome to come to a meet before joining. Details can be found [here](#).

2020 TGO Challenge. The dates for the 41st TGO Challenge are 8th-22nd May 2020 and we will be taking entries online from mid-September 2019.

BERNIE MARSHALL



In February we said good-bye to Bernie – a wonderful Challenger, vetter and friend. It is a testament to the love and respect for him in the Challenge community that a large number attended his funeral in Silsden – some travelling from overseas to pay their final respects.

In recent years Challengers will have known him as a vetter or have been cheered by his voice at Challenge Control – but he also completed 22 crossings between 1983 and 2009 including one memorable crossing when he married Pauline along the way!

We will of course remember Bernie at the Challenge dinners, but he was a true mountain man and we feel he should be remembered in the hills too. So where ever you are, be it by yourself in a tent or enjoying a well-earned pint with other Challengers, please raise a plastic/titanium mug or a glass to him at 9pm on Thursday 16th May.

2019 Facts and Figures

This year our youngest Challenger will be 18 year old Adam Blackburn, from Oregon, USA, who will be crossing with his father and uncle. For a second time Ellie Barker (20), is our youngest female. She will also be walking in a family group with her mother and cousin. At the other end of the age scale we have three octogenarians joining us. Our senior participants are Lou and Phyllis LaBorwit with a combined age of 176.

We would like to extend a warm welcome to the 103 people who will be crossing for the first time. Our most experienced Challenger is Alan Hardy who will be on his 29th crossing followed by fellow vetter Graham Brookes on his 28th. Should they cross successfully, nine people will be celebrating their tenth crossing and four, Anthony Bowe, Mick Hopkins, Terry Leyland and Norman Reeves, will be on their twentieth.

We once again have a large contingent from overseas with 1 in 5 Challengers travelling to Scotland from outside the UK. The USA tops the list once again with 29, followed by the Netherlands (21), Denmark (7), Canada (6) and Germany (5). We also have Challengers from Austria, Barbados, Belgium, Finland, France, Ireland, Poland, Sweden, and Uganda, as well as our first ever participant from Japan.

Shiel Bridge is again the most popular start point with 77 Challengers starting here. Oban is next with 60 followed by Mallaig (49), Lochailort (35), Strathcarron (34), and Dornie (29). It is good to see our new start Portavadie proving popular with 24 starters. Then comes Acharacle (16), Torridon (16), Glenelg (10), Plockton (10) and Kilchoan (9). Just a few discerning Challengers are experiencing the delights of the remaining two start points with 5 each going to Morar and Ardrishaig.

St Cyrus remains the most popular finish point with 67 heading down the cliff path to the beach. Montrose is second with 56. Unusually this year we have more finishers at Stonehaven (54) than nearby atmospheric Dunnottar Castle (49). We have a significant increase in the numbers finishing south of Montrose, 25 going to Lunan Bay and 12 to Arbroath, reflecting the number of southerly routes starting at Portavadie and Oban. 9 Challengers have managed to find some solitude on the East Coast with a unique finishing point.

TGO CHALLENGE SUPPORTERS

The Great Outdoors Magazine

Created by hillwalkers for hillwalkers, The Great Outdoors Magazine has been providing outdoor enthusiasts with ideas, inspiration and the best gear reviews in the industry for 41 years.

Published every four weeks, Britain's original outdoor magazine is packed full of stunning photography, top class writing and brilliant walking and backpacking routes, along with authoritative gear reviews from the country's most experienced team of testers and essential skills advice from highly qualified outdoor instructors.

Regular contributors include our Gear Editor Chris Townsend – the UK's most experienced long-distance walker – as well as comedian Ed Byrne and respected outdoor writers Jim Perrin, Roger Smith, Ronald Turnbull, David Lintern and Vivienne Crow.

Bridgedale

Bridgedale are a global market leader in the design and manufacture of technical socks for Walking, Hiking, Trekking and Mountaineering as well as Running, Skiing, and Everyday outdoor styles.

We pride ourselves on producing the most comfortable, highest quality, hardwearing socks in the business, and are market leaders in the innovation of hosiery technology, which means we produce the most comfortable socks on the latest machinery.

Every single Bridgedale is passed through a series of inspection processes and at the packing stage is hand inspected to reach our very high quality standards. Quality is at the heart of everything we do.

Komoot

Komoot is the perfect tool to help you to get out and experience more on your hikes. Home to a community of over 6 million people sharing tips and insider info on the outdoors' best hidden gems, as well as accurate information on paths, streets and trails across the planet, it allows you to plan, discover and experience better hiking and walking routes – all in just a few taps.

Then, once you head out on the trail, Komoot's award-winning turn-by-turn voice navigation keeps you on track so that you can explore with complete peace of mind – even when you've got no internet.

Available on Android and iOS, Komoot is free to download from Google Play and the App Store.

MSR

MSR is a market leader in delivering innovative and precision-engineered outdoor gear; from backcountry tents for the modern-day alpinist, to trekking poles and water-filters for the first-time backpacker.

At MSR, we believe the most important thing is trust. And we demonstrate this by being fiercely uncompromising in our quality, performance and testing; by educating others of the technology behind our solutions; and by remaining inspired to innovate by those who share our passion for the outdoors.

This year we celebrate 50 years of creating the most-reliable, high-performance gear possible, designed to ensure our customers achieve their outdoor dreams, whatever they may be.

