



**Great Glen Challenge**



# Great Glen Paddle Challenge 2023



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# Great Glen Paddle Challenge 2023

Hello!

We hope you are looking forward to the challenge of crossing the Great Glen in Scotland.

This scenic stretch of water encompasses 92km of canals and lochs which is used by many to traverse the country without having to go the long way round. We think it's still quite a long way!

This is an endurance race, some view it as a bucket-list challenge or to beat their own time, others want to finish on the podium. Whether you are doing the race over one day or two, it's no mean feat and the sense of achievement will stay with you for years to come.

We hope you are match fit, have the right gear and have your fingers crossed for some decent weather.

Please read on for the timings, dos and don'ts, maps and info.

[Great Glen Paddle Challenge – Route Overview \(Google Maps\)](#)

See you on the start line,

Emma & Duncan (Paddlefast)

# Great Glen Challenge Schedule (Two Day)

<b>Thursday 21<sup>st</sup> September</b>	
17:30-19:15	Registration and race bib pick up at Fort Augustus Village Hall, Church Road, Fort Augustus, PH32 4DG. Mandatory Kit Check
19:30	Race briefing (briefing will include confirmed race direction. We will be running a downwind course). A full race briefing will also take place via Zoom 31 <sup>st</sup> August. We will email the invite.
<b>Friday 22<sup>nd</sup> September (Neptune's Staircase, Fort William) – Parking Banavie Lock Car Park</b>	
06:40	Pre-Race Briefing
07:00 – 07:30	<b>Start Times</b> 07:00 – Inflatable SUP 07:15 – Hardboard SUP 07:30 – OC1 and Surfski
16:30	Time Cut off at Fort Augustus (end of Day One).
<b>Saturday 23<sup>rd</sup> September (Fort Augustus – entrance to Loch Ness)</b>	
06:40	First Pre-race briefing. Paved area at entry to Loch Ness.
07:00 – 07:30	Start Times, same as Day one
16:30	Time Cut off at Inverness.
19:00	Prize giving (please arrive between 18:45 – 19:00)

## **Great Glen Challenge Schedule (Non-Stop)**

<b>Thursday 21<sup>st</sup> September</b>	
17:30-19:15	Registration and race bib pick up at Fort Augustus Village Hall, Church Road, Fort Augustus, PH32 4DG. Please adhere to current COVID regulations.
19:30	Race briefing (briefing will include confirmed race direction. We will be running a downwind course). A full race briefing will also take place via Zoom 31 <sup>st</sup> August. We will email the invite.
<b>Friday 22<sup>nd</sup> September (Neptune's Staircase, Fort William) – Parking Banavie Lock Car Park</b>	
06:00	Pre-Race Briefing
06:30	Start Times. Mass start
20:15	Time Cut off at Inverness
<b>Saturday 23<sup>rd</sup> September – Fort Augustus Village Hall</b>	
19:00	Prize giving (please arrive between 18:45 – 19:00)

# Checkpoints and Cut-off Times – Two Day Challenge

## Day One

1 <sup>st</sup> checkpoint	Gairloch. 10km (cut off time 09:30)	
2nd checkpoint	Laggan. 27km (cut off time 12:45)	Food supplied
Day One finish	Fort Augustus. 44km (cut off time 16:30)	

## Day Two

1 <sup>st</sup> checkpoint	Dochgarroch 40km (cut off time 15:00)	Food supplied
Finish	Inverness 48km (cut off time 16:30)	
We are unable to put a checkpoint in Loch Ness. Ensure you have enough food, hydration and an extra layer of clothing in case needed whilst on the Loch.		
There are water points at the mooring areas on the route if you need to fill hydration packs.		

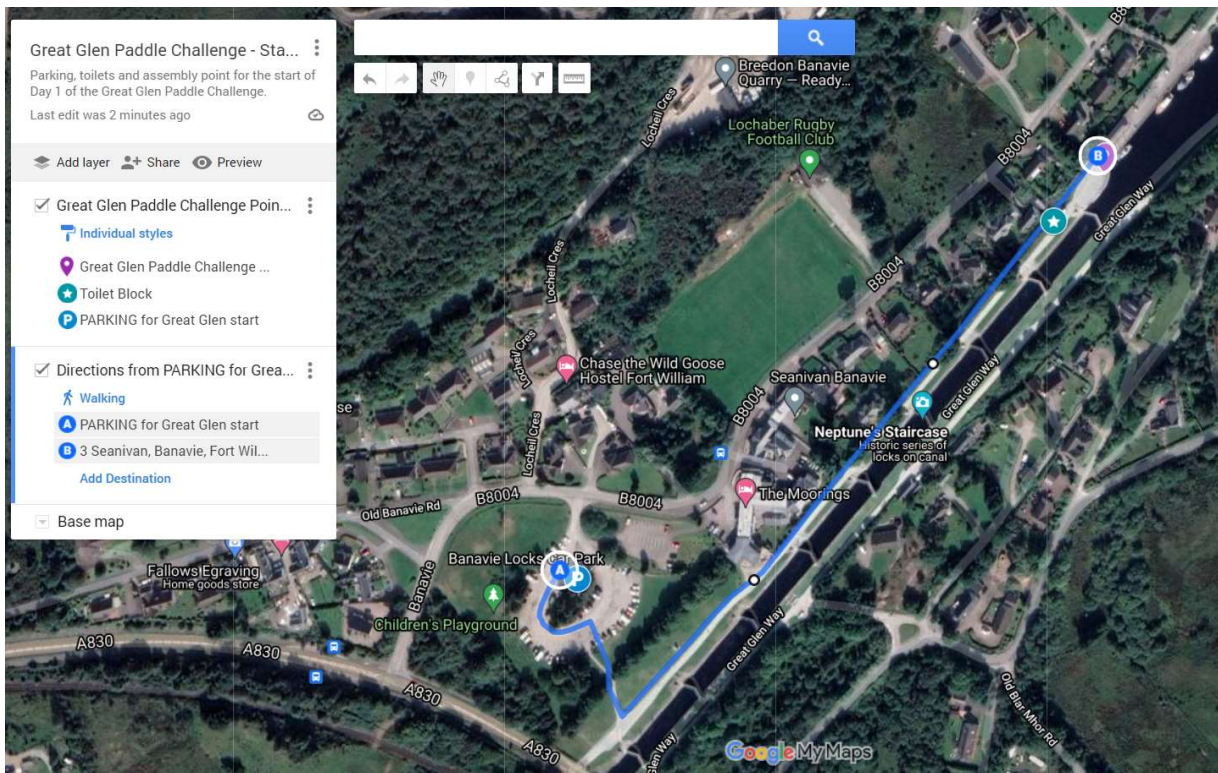
## Check Points and Cut-off Times – Non Stop

<b>Start</b>	<b>Neptune's Staircase (06:30)</b>	
<b>1<sup>st</sup> checkpoint</b>	Gairloch. 10km (cut-off time 08:00)	
<b>2<sup>nd</sup> checkpoint</b>	Fort Augustus. 44km (cut-off time 12:45)	Food supplied
<b>3<sup>rd</sup> checkpoint</b>	Dochgarroch. 84km (cut-off time 18:45)	Food supplied
<b>Finish</b>	Inverness (cut off time 20:15)	
<b>Due to this being an ultra event and requiring a faster speed, we have fewer checkpoints. We will have a checkpoint at Gairloch after 10km. This is to ensure every paddler feels confident before entering the first Loch.</b>		
<b>To make every checkpoint you will need a paddle speed of around 7kph.</b>		
<b>There are water points at the mooring areas on the route if you need to fill hydration packs.</b>		



# Great Glen 2022 Start Point

## Neptune's Staircase, Banavie, Fort William



The purple marker at B shows the start line

There is a pontoon to enable paddlers to enter the water easily. We ask that all paddlers are **behind** the start line prior to us releasing the first start.

***Parking in the Banavie car park is free and you can park overnight.***

We ask that noise is kept to a minimum for both starts, as this is a residential area.

We will also be checking every paddler is wearing their tracker and it is working.

REMEMBER to have the Race Director's Phone number programmed into your phone.

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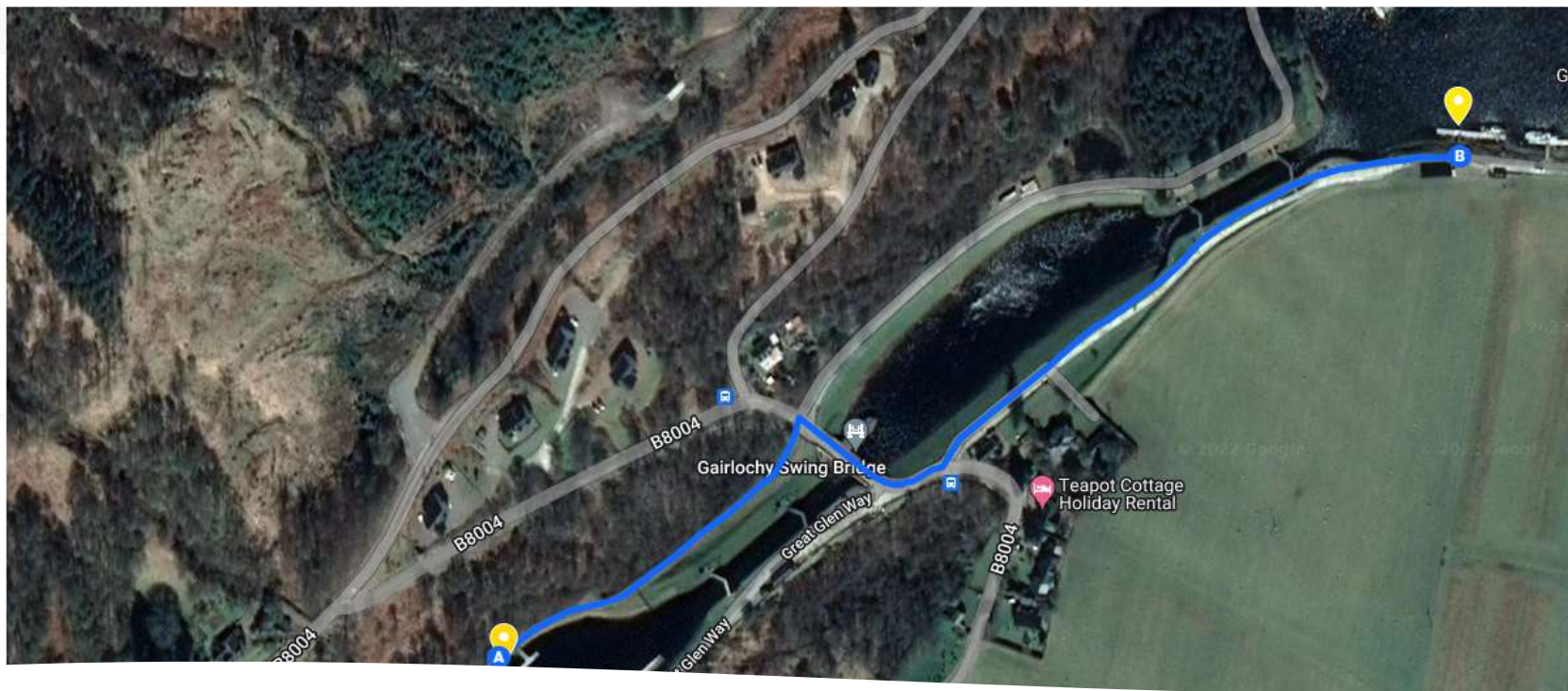
### Gairlochy Portage

- 📍 CHECKPOINT 1 Gairlochy lock
- 📍 ENTRY POINT for Loch Lochy



### Directions from EXIT POINT Gairlochy lock ...

- 📍 EXIT POINT Gairlochy lock
- 📍 ENTRY POINT for Loch Lochy



## Gairlochy Checkpoint

Easiest exit is at the pontoons shown at A. This is the longest portage.

This will be your first checkpoint. We will have marshals at that portage ensuring everyone is ok and ready to paddle the first of the three Lochs.

Parking for support crews is extremely limited. Do not park illegally!



First big loch of the course. Pull out points shown.

68 views

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Untitled layer

● Pull Out Point - 9.5km up the loch

● CHECKPOINT 2 Laggan Locks

9

# Loch Lochy

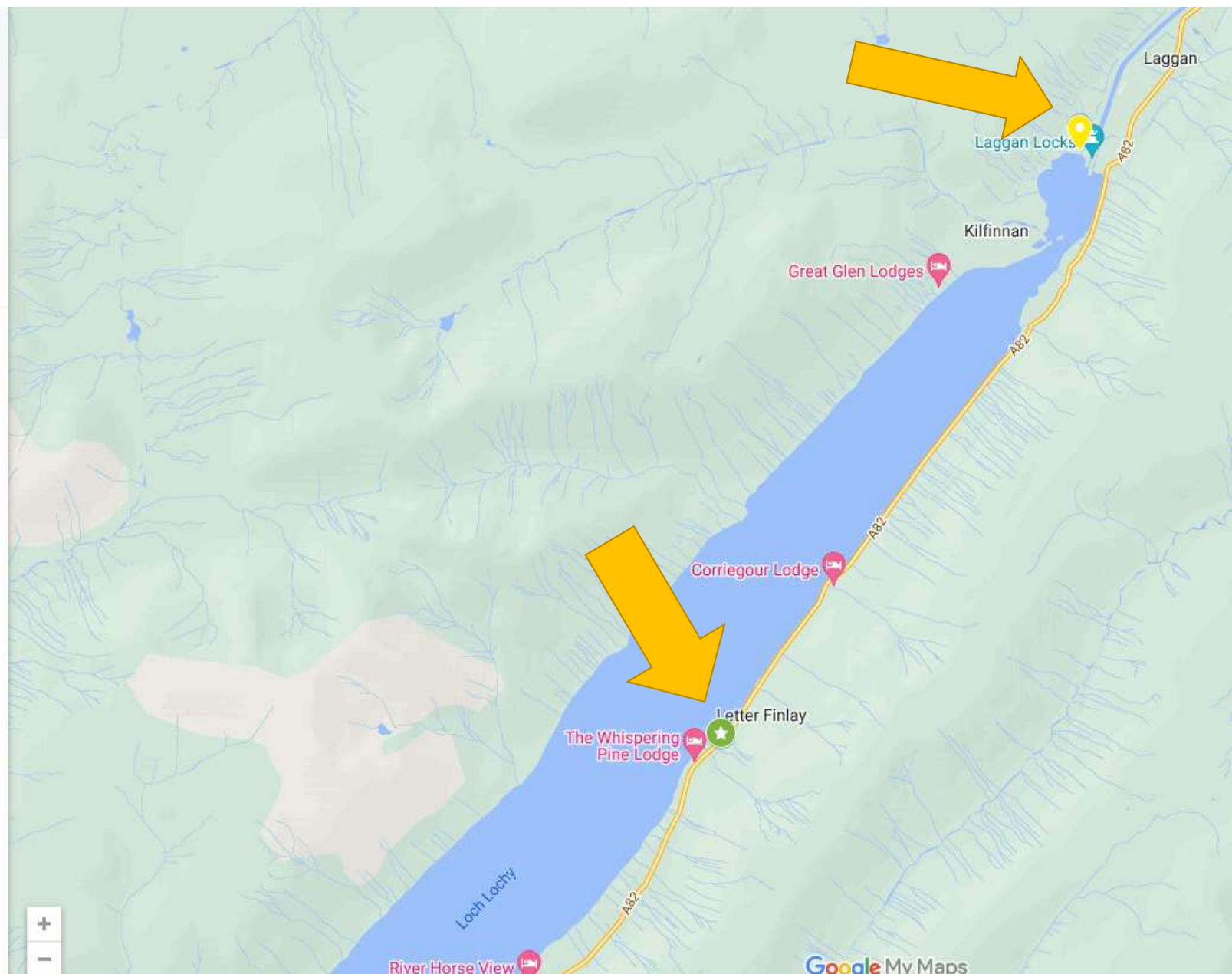
The first Loch you enter is Loch Lochy, 15km long.

You will portage at Gairlochy prior to entering Loch Lochy.

The Loch is prone to waves in high wind conditions.

We advise that you paddle on the right-hand side of the Loch as this is the side with road access.

There is a safe pull-out point 9.5km along the Loch on the right-hand side at Letter Finlay. Easy pull-out and a car park.





Checkpoint 2 - Laggan Lo...

Head for the small beach on the far left of the pontoons. DO NOT use the pontoons, these are private property. Marshalls will be on hand to

66 views

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Checkpoint 2 Laggan Locks

Checkpoint 2 - exit point

Entry to canal

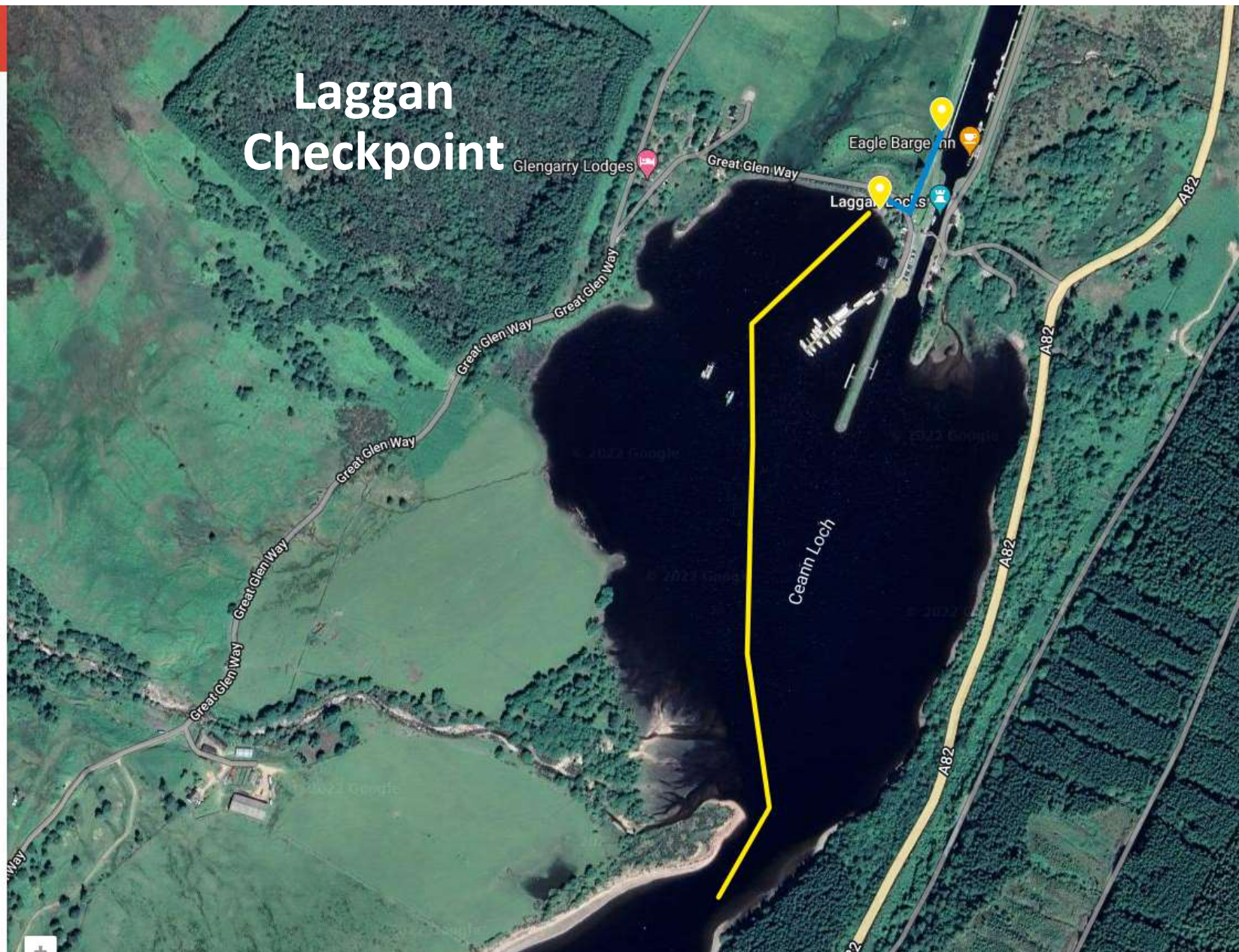
route from checkpoint to canal entry

Heading for Checkpoint 2

Your second checkpoint will be at Laggan. This is approx. 27km after the start of Loch Lochy.

**DO NOT portage onto the pontoon. This is private property.**

Follow the yellow line on the map to the portage point. By portaging at this point, you will cut over 100 metres off your walking distance. Anyone who portages onto the pontoon will receive a time penalty. We will have a flag, food, and snacks at the exit point for portaging. All support vehicles must approach this checkpoint via the A82 and use public parking. You will cross the lock bridge by foot to get to the checkpoint.



If you need to bail out, the top of Loch Oich is right by the road. There is a small pontoon just after the swing bridge.

200 views

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## Pull out point Loch Oich

★ Pull Out point - 6km up Loch Oich

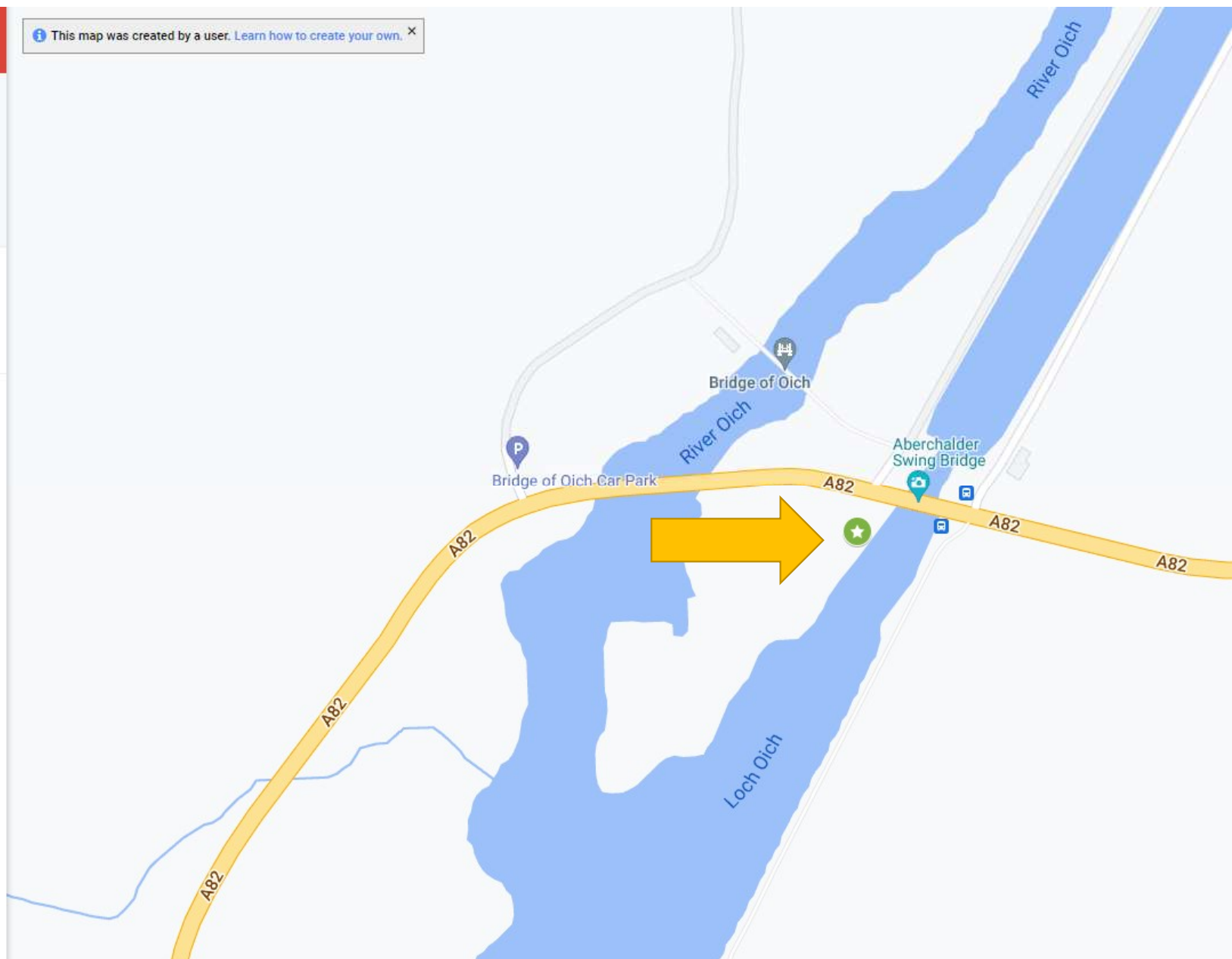
# Loch Oich

Loch Oich is the second Loch you will be paddling. This is the smallest Loch, at 6km long.

This Loch is extremely protected from the wind and will probably be flat, even in high wind conditions.

The road runs along the left-hand side of this Loch, therefore that will be the safest side to paddle, if the unforeseen should happen and you require any assistance.

The arrow points to a potential pull out point if needed.







## Fort Augustus – Finish (d1) & Portage (non-stop)

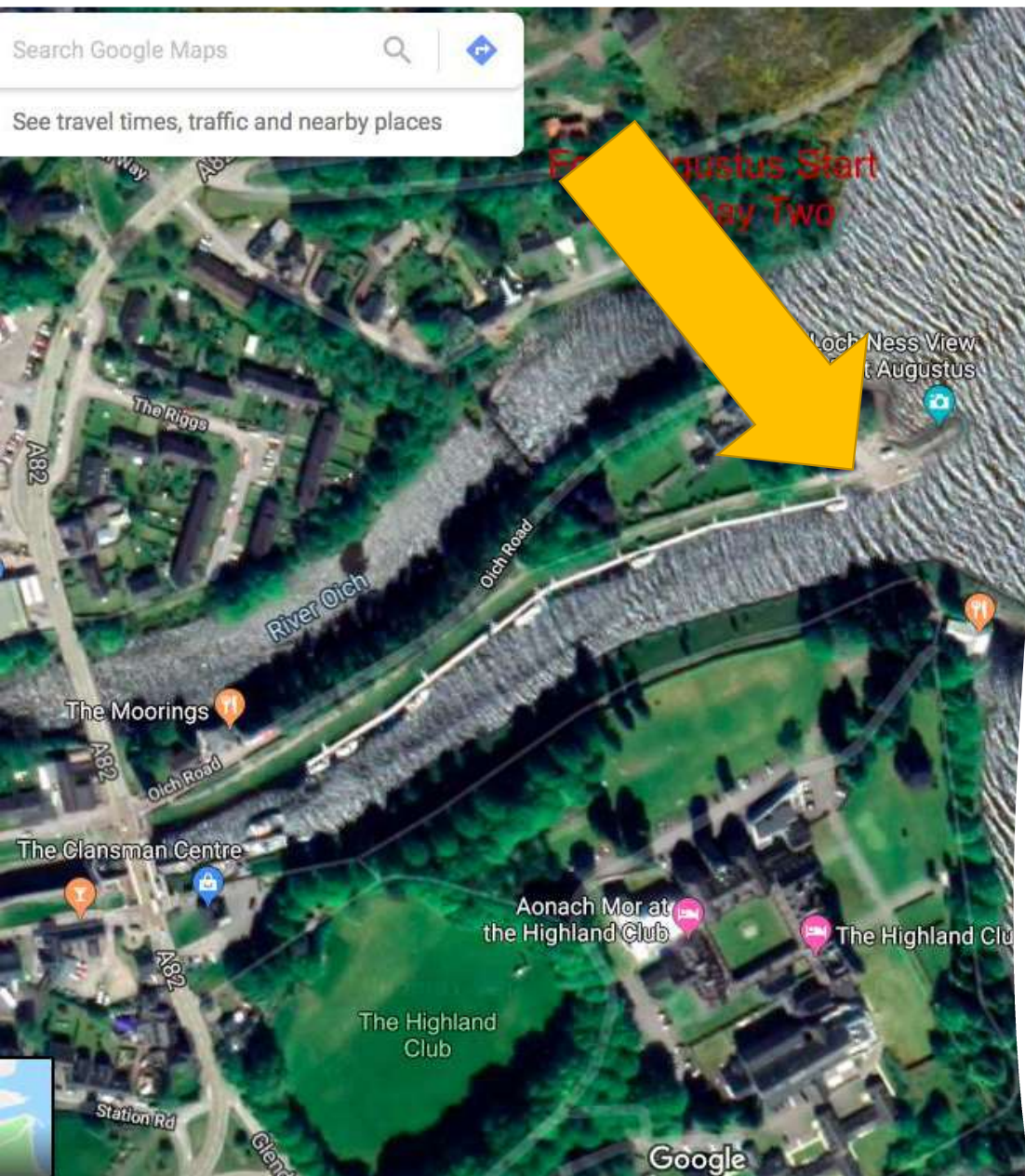
Fort Augustus is the finish point of Day One and if you are going non-stop, this is the largest portage distance.

You are allowed outside assistance with your board/boat whilst portaging and we would recommend this, at this stop. Marshalls cannot assist with equipment at portages.

For the non-stop paddlers we will have water and snacks at this point.

The exit point is a ponton on the left-hand side. We will have marshals and a flag at this point.





# Loch Ness Entry

Day two start point. Race briefing for first start will be at 06:40.

For those doing non-stop you will be portaging through Fort Augustus and straight onto Loch Ness.

Be ready for Loch Ness, it is approx. 34km long and on a windy day it will be similar to ocean conditions. Make sure you have a craft you would feel stable on the ocean.



# Loch Ness

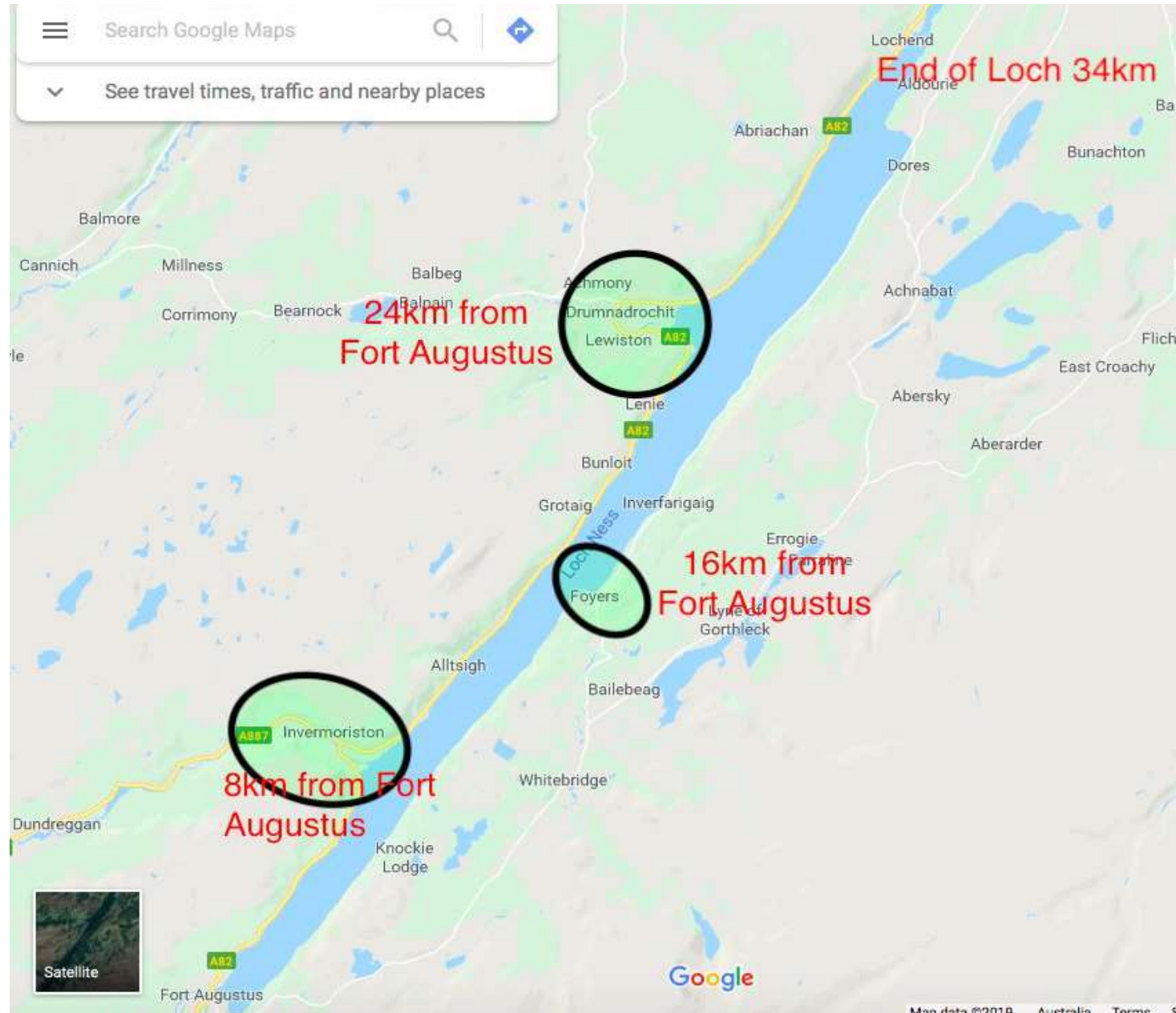
Loch Ness is 34km long and in medium to high wind, it will be similar conditions to the ocean.

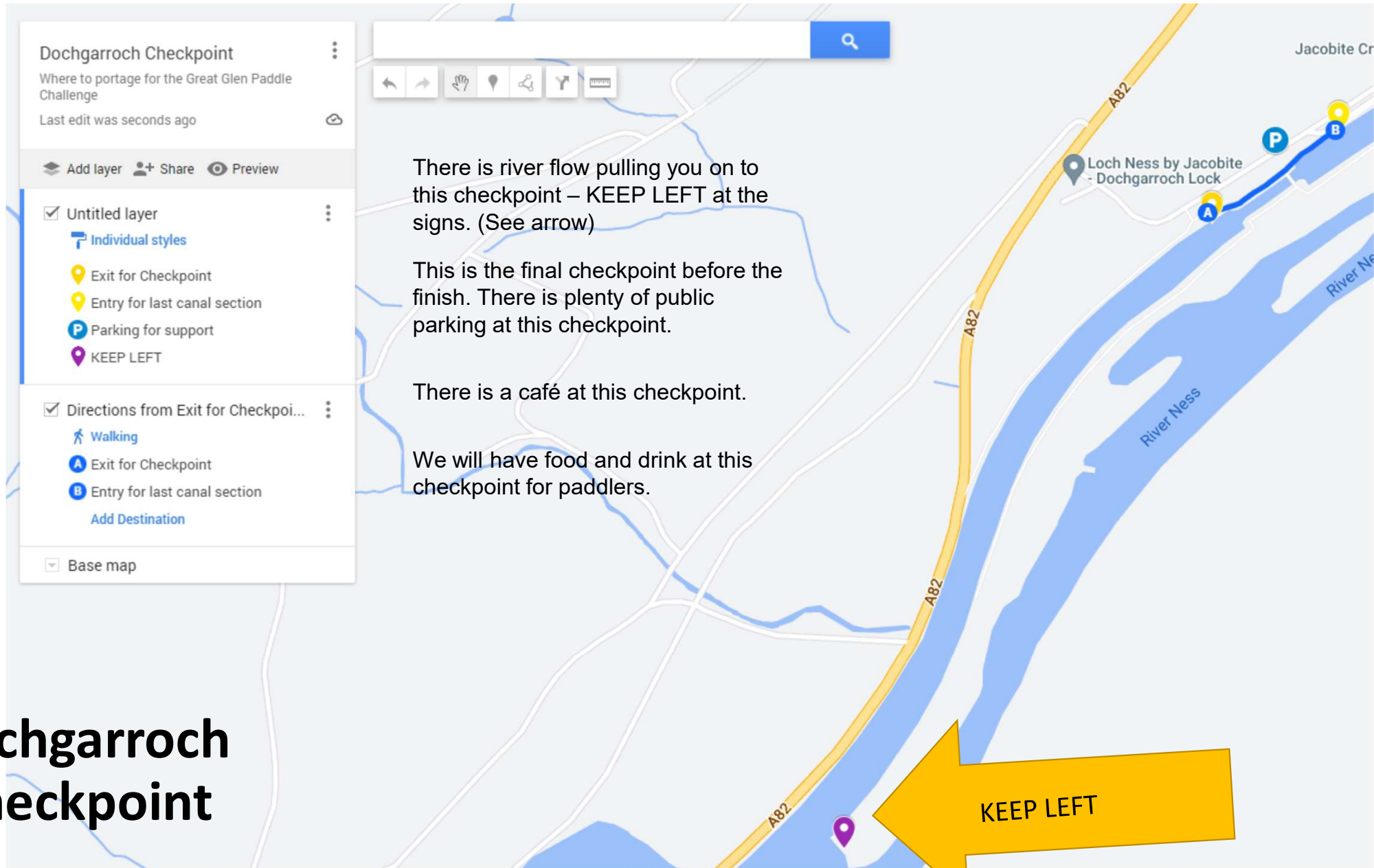
There are three safe pull-out points along the way. These are all marked on this map. Be aware you will have steep banks and rugged coastline most of the way. You will be travelling in the direction of the wind. If you find yourself tired, stop paddling and the wind will keep you moving. There are no checkpoints on Loch Ness.

Please ensure you have enough food and hydration to keep you going.

The road runs along the left-hand side of the Loch, paddle on the left-hand side.

**Only enter Loch Ness if you are sure you feel comfortable with the conditions.**





## Dochgarroch Checkpoint

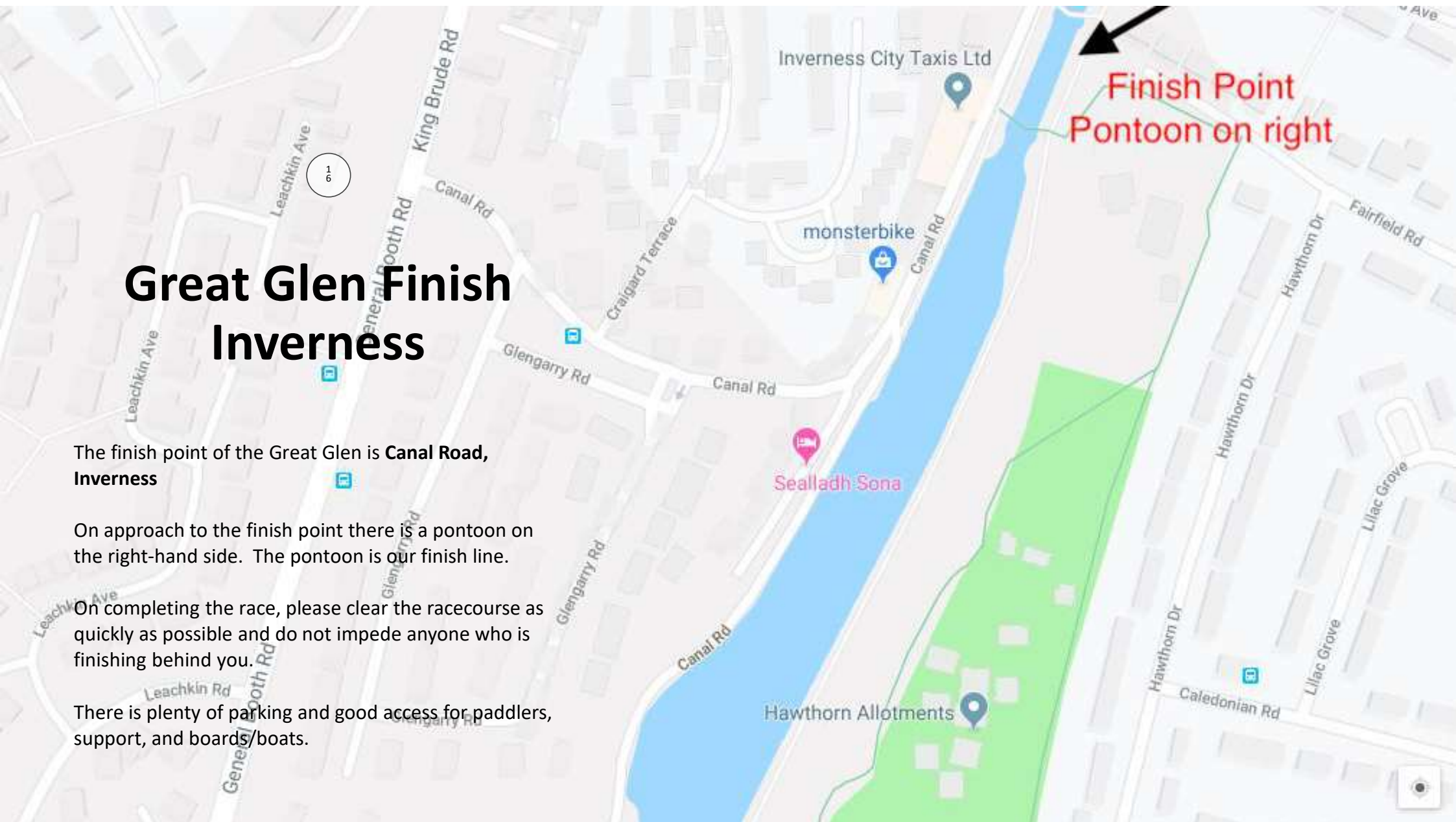
# Great Glen Finish Inverness

The finish point of the Great Glen is **Canal Road, Inverness**

On approach to the finish point there is a pontoon on the right-hand side. The pontoon is our finish line.

On completing the race, please clear the racecourse as quickly as possible and do not impede anyone who is finishing behind you.

There is plenty of parking and good access for paddlers, support, and boards/boats.



# Great Glen Challenge

## Mandatory Equipment

Ground Support Crew is advised. If you do not have support, you must be self-sufficient for food, hydration and do not require assistance with equipment. A bag can be taken to checkpoints for you. It will be the paddlers responsibility to retrieve their bag at checkpoints and place back at bag drop off.

Please be aware that even with the best precautions and preparations, it could take a while to reach you in these remote areas.

Please ensure you have the following kit...

### **ON YOUR PERSON:**

- Appropriate clothes for the weather and water conditions,
- fully charged mobile phone in waterproof container,
- whistle,
- PFD which must be kept on AT ALL TIMES (waist PFDs are permitted, please ensure your cannister is in date and you know how to use it),
- Waterproof torch,
- bivvy bag or space blanket,
- race bib (usually left leg)
- tracker.
- SUP – leash

### **ON YOUR CRAFT:**

- sufficient food and drink,
- change of clothes in dry bag (include a hat!),
- means of charging your mobile phone.

Ensure you take enough food, drink and dry clothes for the full distance and in the event of a rescue. Water and snacks will be available at checkpoints but please do not rely on this for your race hydration and nutrition.

# **Great Glen Challenge**

## **Paddle Safety**

### **General Safety**

When the safety of the participant is not 100% guaranteed, the organisation can take the participant out of the event. The participant is at all times responsible to judge their own situation and the potential danger that could occur. The organisation will not be deemed responsible for the participant's decisions on safety.

### **Race Safety**

The race may be cancelled, postponed, or shortened if water or weather conditions are deemed too hazardous by race officials.

Paddlers must carry a mobile phone and a charge bank for charging it, in a waterproof container, at all times. The Race Director's number must be stored in your phone – **number will be informed at briefing.**

All SUP paddlers must wear a PFD and quick-release waist leash at all times. PFD can be waist PFD for SUP, it must be serviced and you must be familiar with how to use it. All sit down paddlers must wear full PFD. If not wearing correct safety requirements, you will receive instant disqualification.

All paddlers must ensure they wear suitable clothing for the water and weather conditions. We encourage drysuits or neoprene. Water temperature will be around 5 degrees.

### **Cut off Times**

We have cut off times at checkpoints across the course, these are detailed in your race schedule. If a paddler does not arrive by the cut off time, they can opt to continue paddling the course, but it will be as an individual paddler and not under the safety of the race. Your race number, bib and tracker must be removed.

Please remember we will be paddling downwind so this will ensure a faster paddle time. If you choose to continue paddling as an individual paddler and not as part of the event you must sign a disclaimer at the checkpoint.

### **Watercraft Choice**

Please ensure you paddle the correct watercraft for the water conditions. We would advise one that is suitable for ocean conditions. The large bodies of water can resemble the ocean if the wind picks up. We do not advise the use of flat-water narrow boards / boats.



# **Coastguard Safety Information**

## **Emergency procedures / information**

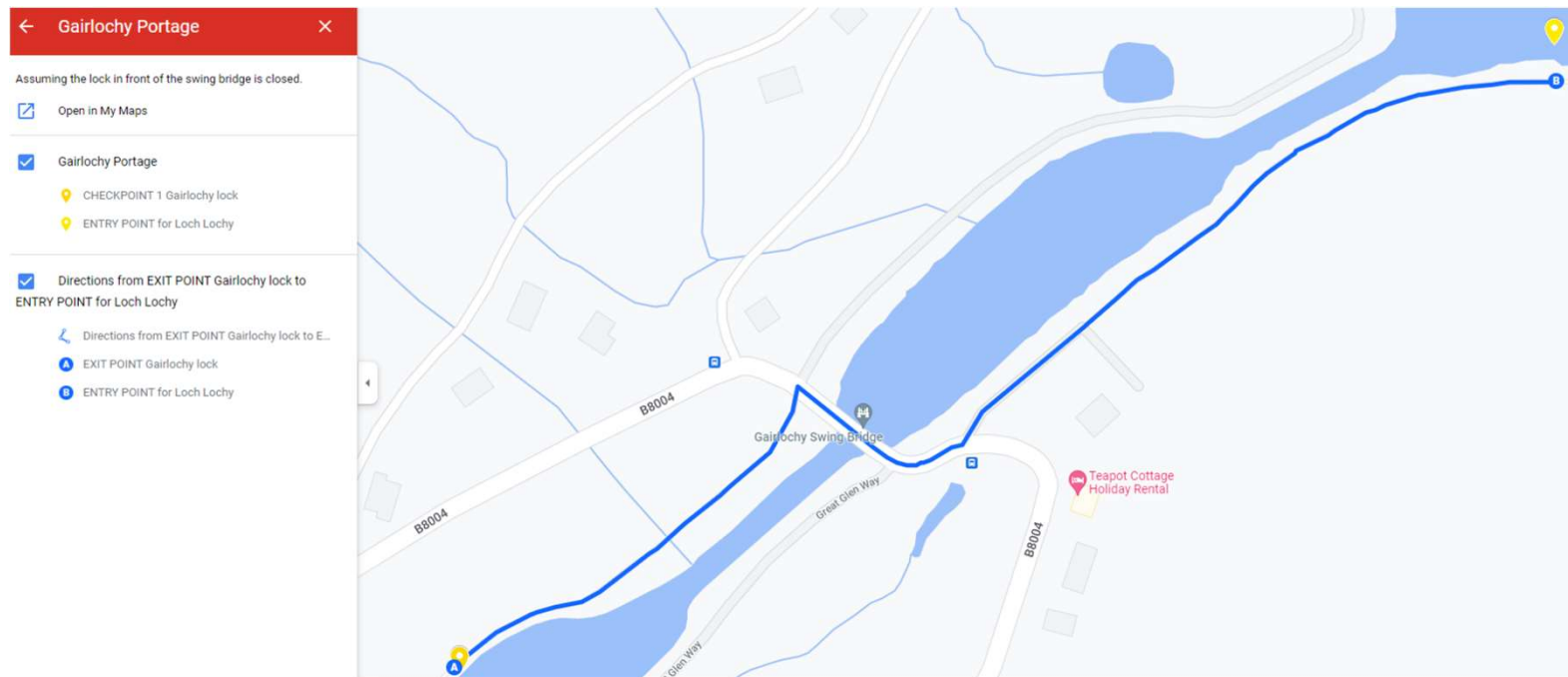
Social users and professional groups using the Caledonian Canal and the Great Glen Canoe Trail will hopefully never have to call on the emergency services. However, if something does go wrong, it is vital that you know who to call in the event of an emergency to ensure prompt action. HM Coastguard undertakes the co-ordination and initiation of Search and Rescue operations on the loch systems that make up much of the canal and the canoe trail. What you need to know is how to contact the Coastguard in the event of an emergency and what information you must have to hand.

How to contact the Coastguard in an emergency/distress: Licensed VHF radio – Channel 16 and call ‘Mayday’ Telephone – Dial 999 and ask for the Coastguard.

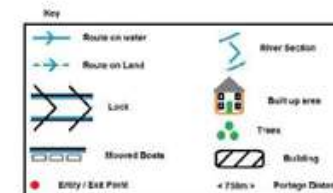
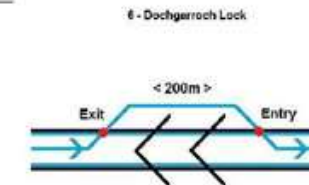
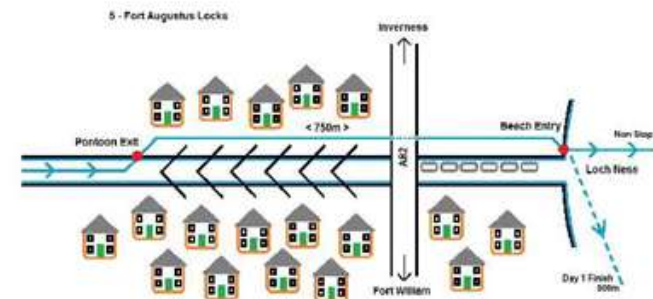
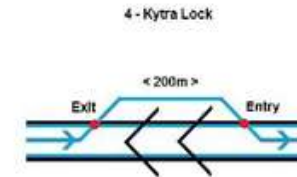
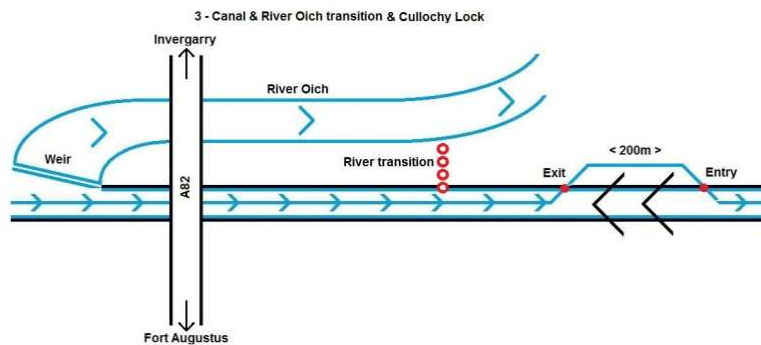
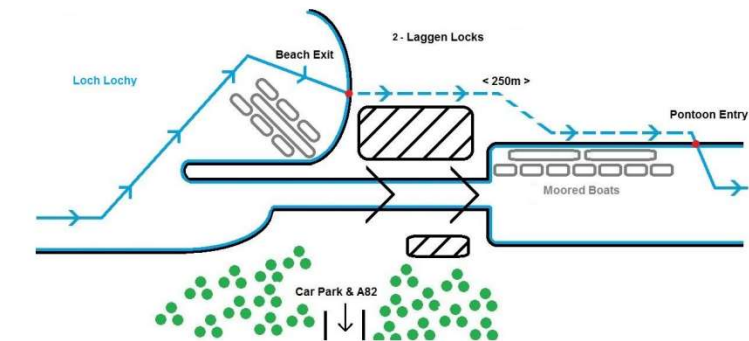
All groups should have shore support, but this cannot be guaranteed so individuals and group members should be able to answer questions that are likely to be asked in the event of an emergency. You will be asked questions like ‘What has happened?’ ‘Where?’ ‘When?’ and so on. You must be able to answer those questions accurately, lives may depend on it. To help you be prepared follow the safety advice available from the Scottish Canals and the Great Glen Canoe Trail websites but also:

- Know exactly where you are – carry a GPS, use What3Words App
- Know your own limitations and that of your group – stick to those limits.
- Know how many people you are with and be able to name/describe them.
- Carry appropriate safety equipment – know how to use it.

# Portage Diagrams



# Portage Diagrams continued



# **Great Glen Challenge**

## **Other Info & FAQs**

### **Personal bags at checkpoints**

At each start venue we will have bag drop off points. These points will be split by individual checkpoints. Please ensure you leave your bag at the drop off point relevant to which checkpoint you wish your bag to be taken. Please ensure bags are small/medium sized, no large holdalls – ideally labelled or easily identifiable.

At every checkpoint there will be a 'bag pick up' and 'bag drop off point'. It will be the paddlers responsibility to collect and drop off their own bags. Marshalls will only be responsible for transporting bags. Marshalls will sanitise hands prior to handling any bags.

### **Litter**

Please ensure you do not leave any litter along the course. Take everything with you.

### **Shuttles to and from start/finish**

Transport to and from start/finish positions will be arranged between paddlers and their shore support. If you are unable to arrange prior to the event, you may be able to team up with other paddlers at registration to come up with a plan. If you'd rather not leave it to the last minute, we can recommend Kelty and the team at Highland Yaks:

<https://www.highlandyaks.com/>



### **Safety Boats**

There will be safety boat cover on Loch Ness if needed.

### **First Aid**

MX Medical will be providing on-shore First Aid support during the event.

### **Drafting**

Drafting and wake surfing is not permitted during the race.

**What are the cut off times for the race?**

See the schedule above.

## **Great Glen Challenge - FAQs**

**My friend wants to enter, can they still do that?**

Webscorer entry is available until 31<sup>st</sup> August 7pm. After that point, entry is still available by calling Emma on 01324 861 756. There will be a late entry fee added to the entry cost.

**What time is the online briefing?**

31<sup>st</sup> August 7pm – a zoom link will be sent to your registered email address in advance

**Can I help out?**

Many hands make light work and 92km is a long stretch to cover. We would love some help manning checkpoints. Jobs include checking names off a list as they arrive at the checkpoint, boosting morale, and offering snacks and water.

**Can you help me get to/from the start/finish?**

In short, no. We don't have the manpower, but we know someone who does – Kelty at Highland Yaks is your man. <https://www.highlandyaks.com/>



**Can I have help at portages to carry my kit/fill my hydration/hand me food?**

**If you have shore support, you can use them to help carry your KIT, but not your CRAFT.** If you are solo, you have to get yourself, your craft and your kit through the course yourself which is why we have a bag drop service to help level the playing field. Our Marshalls are there for your safety, to check you arrive at each checkpoint and direct you along the course (while also boosting morale and offering a shoulder to cry on if need be!).

**Where can I pee?**

A legitimate question for any long-distance paddler. There are toilet blocks at Fort William start and at Fort Augustus start which we will have the key for. Toilets and a café available at Dochgarroch as well. There are no toilets nearby at the finish in Inverness so take advantage of the ones at the last checkpoint (Dochgarroch).

**My other half/family/best friend would like to join the prizegiving, is that possible?**

Of course, we would love to see a full house at the Fort Augustus village hall for the prizegiving. 7pm on the Saturday – Highland Hog Roasts are putting on a 2-course spread and informal dancing afterwards.

If you would like extra tickets for the dinner, you can get them here (cut off is 22nd August)

The hall doesn't have a licence so bring your own drinks for dinner. There is a small car park at the back of the village hall.

**Can I bring the dog(s)?**

Well behaved dogs are welcome at the village hall for registration and prizegiving.





**Great Glen Challenge**



Great Glen Paddle  
Challenge 2023

*Will you see Nessie this year?*

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