

# Snowdonia

The high and wild mountain region of North Wales is called Snowdonia, taking its name from Mt Snowdon (1085m), the highest peak in the area. Snowdon is also the highest summit in Wales – and taller than anything in England, too.

The mountains of Snowdonia are the remains of ancient volcanoes, subsequently eroded by ice-age glaciers and leaving us a striking landscape of sharp peaks, jagged ridges and steep cliffs, while beneath the summits are smooth bowl-shaped valleys called cwms. The landscape is more rounded as you go east towards the Carneddau mountains or south towards Cadair Idris, but they still retain a ruggedness that differs from the uplands of England.

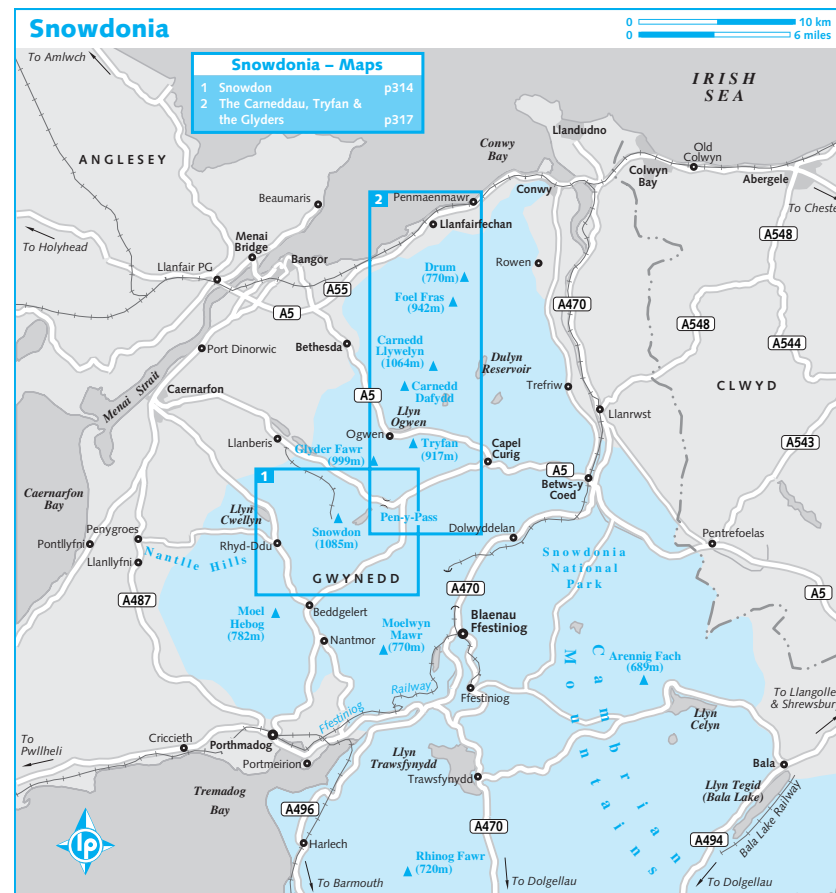
This area of mountains and valleys is contained within the extensive Snowdonia National Park. Its name is Parc Cenedlaethol Eryri in Welsh, and Mt Snowdon itself is called Yr Wyddfa. Eryri means ‘home of the eagles’ or simply ‘eyrie’ – although these days you’re more likely to see falcons and buzzards flying around the mountainsides.

Without doubt, Snowdonia offers some of the best (and most accessible) high-level walking in Britain, so a visit here is highly recommended. If you don’t have time to reach Scotland for the really big mountains, then North Wales goes a long way towards supplying the goods.

In this chapter we describe a choice selection of classic mountain day walks. On p320 we outline a few other options, so you can go off and explore more of Snowdonia’s treasures on your own.

## HIGHLIGHTS

- Making an early start and beating the crowds to the top of **Mt Snowdon** (p311)
- Tramping across the otherworldly landscape of the **Glyders** (p315)
- Throwing caution to the wind, and leaping between the summit stones on **Tryfan** (p317)
- Enjoying fine open walking and spectacular views from the **Carneddau** (p319)
- Completing the **Welsh Three-Thousanders** (p321)



## INFORMATION

This chapter covers three different mountain groups in the northern part of Snowdonia – the Snowdon massif, the Glyders, and the Carneddau. Because they’re of such high quality, some of these routes are popular and likely to be busy in the high season. But this is a big park – covering an area of over 800 sq miles (around 2000 sq km) – so for less-frequented or remote options, see the More Walks section on p320.

## When to Walk

Unless you have the appropriate mountain skills, the high-level routes described in this chapter are not recommended in the winter (between December and March) as they

may be partly covered by snow or ice. Even in summer it’s important not to underestimate conditions on the summit as they are often very different from those lower down. As in any mountain area, you should check the weather forecast before setting out.

## Maps

The Ordnance Survey (OS) Landranger 1:50,000 map No 115 *Snowdon (Yr Wyddfa)* covers the walks described in this chapter, as does OS Explorer 1:25,000 map No 17 *Snowdonia – Snowdon and Conwy Valley*. For wider coverage of the park, you’ll need OS Explorer 1:25,000 maps No 18 *Snowdonia – Harlech, Porthmadog & Bala* and 23 *Snowdonia – Cadair Idris & Bala Lake*.

Harvey Maps cover the area in three sheets, each at 1:25,000: *Snowdonia – Snowdon* and *Snowdonia – Glyderau* are required for the routes in this chapter. For further adventures, there's *Snowdonia – Rhinogs*.

### Books

Snowdonia is very well covered by guidebooks for walkers. Good starters, with a wide range of routes, are *Snowdonia: Leisure Walks for all Ages* by Terry Marsh and Tom Hutton, and *Snowdonia, Anglesey and the Llyn Peninsula* by Brian Conduit and Neil Coates. For a bit more of a workout, *Hillwalking in Snowdonia* by Steve Ashton covers a wide range of summits and routes, while *Ridges of Snowdonia* by the same author is aimed at hardy hill-types (and includes a few hands-out-of-pockets scrambles).

### Information Sources

Tourist offices around Snowdonia include **Beddgelert** (☎ 01766-890615; tic.beddgelert@eryri-npa.gov.uk), **Betws-y-Coed** (☎ 01690-710426; tic.byc@eryri-npa.gov.uk), **Caernarfon** (☎ 01286-672232; caernarfon.tic@gwynedd.gov.uk), **Llanberis** (☎ 01286-870765; llanberis.tic@gwynedd.gov.uk) and **Porthmadog** (☎ 01766-512981; porthmadog.tic@gwynedd.gov.uk). The tourist office in Llanberis is particularly useful as some staff members are keen local walkers and can advise on routes, maps and so on.

On the internet, official national park and tourism websites include [www.eryri-npa.gov.uk](http://www.eryri-npa.gov.uk) and [www.visitsnowdonia.info](http://www.visitsnowdonia.info) – both have loads of useful information. You can also go to the local council site, [www.gwynedd.gov.uk](http://www.gwynedd.gov.uk), and click on 'Visiting Snowdonia'. Another good website, covering accommodation, activities and walks, is [www.snowdonia-wales.net](http://www.snowdonia-wales.net).

### Guided Walks

The Snowdonia National Park rangers organise a series of guided walks throughout the year; you can get details from any local tourist office or the park website. Many of the YHA hostels in the area also offer guided walks and activity courses.

### GETTING AROUND

The northern part of Snowdonia described in this chapter is compact and well served by public transport. Handiest for walkers

is the **Snowdon Sherpa** ([www.visitcaernarfon.com/sherpa/index.html](http://www.visitcaernarfon.com/sherpa/index.html)) bus network, with services starting/ending in towns around the edge of the park such as Llandudno, Betws-y-Coed, Porthmadog, Pwllheli, Caernarfon, Llanberis and Bangor, crisscrossing the main Snowdon area via Beddgelert, Capel Curig and Pen-y-Grwyd. You sometimes have to change bus to get where you want, but all-day rover tickets are available. On most routes, buses run every hour or two, typically from about April to September. The network can seem baffling when you're standing at a bus stop in the rain, but get the handy timetable and map from a tourist office and it all falls into place. Note that this service is also used by local people – notably to take children from outlying villages to schools in the main towns, so in school holidays some services are limited; they are also reduced in winter (November to March).

There are also some train services in Snowdonia that are very handy for walkers. The main line between the English Midlands and Holyhead (Anglesey) runs along the northern side of the national park, via Llandudno Junction and Bangor, while branch lines run along the eastern and southern sides of the park through several small towns and villages, including Betws-y-Coed, Blaenau Ffestiniog, Minfford and Porthmadog.

For details of public transport inquiry lines that provide details of both national and local bus and train services, see the boxed text, p456. A good source for local transport information, especially useful for walkers in Snowdonia, is [www.countrygoer.org/snowdon.htm](http://www.countrygoer.org/snowdon.htm).

### GATEWAYS

The main gateway towns for northern Snowdonia are Llandudno, Bangor and Caernarfon, from where it's easy to reach the villages and towns near the walking routes we describe. Further south, Porthmadog is another handy gateway, while Betws-y-Coed is a gateway for the northeast area. If you're travelling by coach, all Snowdonia's gateway towns are all easily reached by National Express services from the rest of the country. By train, the mainline stations for northern Snowdonia are Llandudno Junction and Bangor, with regular

### MIND YOUR LANGUAGE

Snowdonia is varied not only scenically but socially, too. In the west of this region the people are mainly Welsh-speaking, from farming and slate-mining backgrounds. In the east the communities are closer to the anglicised flatlands of Clwyd, and mainly English-speaking. This contrast has a historical thread, being the remains of frustrated English attempts to occupy Wales in the 13th and 14th centuries, on the heels of the Romans who had similarly failed several centuries earlier.

The survival of the Welsh language is a testament to the Welsh spirit and determination, and when you read, scratched on a rock, 'You English can visit Wales, but please don't come and live here', you'll see that for some the division is alive and kicking. Don't let this put you off, though. The Welsh are known for being friendly and hospitable. Especially if you're not English!

services to/from Crewe in England, where you can connect with trains to the rest of the country. Porthmadog is linked by train to Birmingham via Machynlleth.

### A SNOWDON TRAVERSE

<b>Duration</b>	5–7 hours
<b>Distance</b>	7 miles (11.5km)
<b>Difficulty</b>	moderate–demanding
<b>Start</b>	Pen-y-Pass (p312)
<b>Finish</b>	Nantgwynant (p313)
<b>Nearest Towns</b>	Llanberis (p312), Nant Peris (p312)
<b>Transport</b>	bus
<b>Summary</b>	A high, dramatic, rewarding and relatively straightforward mountain walk on clear paths.

Snowdon is Wales' highest mountain and arguably its most spectacular. Its Welsh name, Yr Wyddfa, means 'burial place' – reputedly of a giant slain by King Arthur. Myths aside, this truly is a place of awe-inspiring beauty, where razor-fine ridges drop in great swooping lines from the summit. Beneath these ridges are cliffs and airy pinnacles, and the steep slopes fall to deep lakes and sheltered cwms.

But Snowdon also has great ugliness. The steam railway chugs noisily from Llanberis all the way to the summit – marked by a grimy station and incongruous (and controversial) café, while on the southern slopes a hydroelectric pipeline cuts an angular scar through the surrounding greenery. It's easy to escape these blemishes though, and we thoroughly recommend a walk on the mountain's ridges and slopes.

The route we describe here is one of many possible traverses of Snowdon, as at least six

paths lead up to the summit from the foothills and any two can be joined to cross the mountain, but we think it's one of the best in terms of scenery, variety and access. Once you've had a taste you'll undoubtedly want to try some of the other routes on offer.

### PLANNING

The main paths leading up Snowdon are: the Llanberis Path, running roughly parallel to the railway; the Pyg Track and the Miners Track, starting at Pen-y-Pass; the Rhyd-Ddu Path (pronounced 'reed-thee') and Snowdon Ranger Path, on the west side of the mountain; and the Watkin Path to Nantgwynant, south of the summit. The Snowdon Traverse route described here combines the Pyg Track and the Watkin Path, but there are many more possible traverses.

The route we describe is a linear walk and can be done in either direction. We recommend going east to south, as starting from Pen-y-Pass means you're already a good way up the mountain.

In fair conditions, and with an hour for stops, this route will take between six to eight hours in total. If conditions are bad, however, you should allow more time. Just because the paths are good, don't be lured into complacency.

### Alternatives

As an alternative to doing the traverse, you can turn this route into a circuit by going up the Pyg Track, and descending the Miners Track back to Pen-y-Pass. For a description of this and other alternatives, see p314.

### NEAREST TOWNS

The 'nearest town' to the start of the route is Pen-y-Pass, actually just two buildings

(the YHA hostel and a café) about 4 miles southeast of the small village of Nant Peris and about 6 miles southeast of the small town of Llanberis – the main base for walking in the region. The route ends at the tiny settlement of Nantgwynant; there are two sleeping options here, or it's easy to return to Pen-y-Pass or Llanberis by bus.

### Pen-y-Pass

At the start of the route, Pen-y-Pass consists of a large car park, a **YHA hostel** (☎ 0870 770 5990; penypass@yha.org.uk; dm £14), and a **café** with some wonderful old photographs of Snowdon on the wall. About 1 mile southeast, towards Capel Curig, the **Pen-y-Gwryd Hotel** (☎ 01286-870211; www.pyg.co.uk; s/d from £28/56; ☺ dinner) is steeped in history – it was an old coaching inn – with cosy rooms, creaking stairs and some fine Victorian plumbing. For more history, the ceiling of the wood-panelled climbers' bar is signed by members of the successful 1953 British Everest Expedition.

### GETTING THERE & AWAY

Pen-y-Pass is a major hub on the Snowdon Sherpa bus network (see p310) and you can get here from Llanberis on bus S1 (15 minutes, half-hourly), as well as Capel Curig, Caernarfon, Betws-y-Coed, Bethesda (with links to Bangor) and Llandudno.

Pen-y-Pass can be approached from Llanberis on the A4086, or from Capel Curig and Betws-y-Coed on the A5. The car park at Pen-y-Pass costs £4 per day – but often fills in summer, when a 'park and ride' system operates between Nant Peris and Pen-

y-Pass. It's also possible to hitch between Llanberis and Pen-y-Pass, as most people in cars are walkers too (but you should always take precautions).

### Nant Peris

About 4 miles from Pen-y-Pass, the small village of Nant Peris has **Cae Gwyn Farm** (camp sites for 2 £6), where facilities include basic loos and showers (50p) and...er, that's it. There's no need to book as even in high summer it's never too full – they just open another field. Opposite the camp site, the **Vaynol Arms** has good beer and no-nonsense bar food and is popular with walkers and climbers. Another good camping and bunkhouse option is **Snowdon House** (☎ 01286-870284; sites for 2 £10, dm £10).

### Llanberis

This small town is the capital of walking and climbing in North Wales, and an ideal base for any Snowdonia visit. It was once a slate-mining centre (see the boxed text, below) and now thrives on tourism with a high street lined on both sides by a range of hotels, B&Bs, pubs, cafés, food shops, a bank (with ATM) and several outdoor gear shops, plus plenty of visitor attractions. The **tourist office** (☎ 01286-870765; llanberis.tic@gwynedd.gov.uk) is opposite the post office.

### SLEEPING & EATING

Budget options include **Llanberis YHA Hostel** (☎ 0870 770 5928; llanberis@yha.org.uk; dm £14) on the edge of town, towards the Snowdon foothills. As well as the usual dorms, it has some en suite double rooms.

The **Heights Hotel** (☎ 01286-871179; www.heights.hotel.co.uk; High St; s/d/tr/q £30/45/60/80, mains £7-10) is a long-standing favourite for walkers, climbers, backpackers, local guides and layabouts. The rooms are good value, and there's a bright, noisy bar serving up burgers, pizzas and the like, plus a restaurant. Also available are packed lunches, laundry and drying facilities, pool table and live music some evenings. The flexible and friendly management can advise on outdoor activities and set you up with walking guides or just about anything else required.

For more serene B&B, good walker-friendly places include the well-organised and welcoming **Plas Goch Guesthouse** (☎ 01286-872122; www.plas-coch.co.uk; High St; d from £50), where breakfast includes vegan options, and facilities include wi-fi access and plenty of parking. (The guesthouse website is a mine of local information, too.) Also good is **Dol Peris Hotel** (☎ 01286-870350; High St; s/d from £28/50), with spacious rooms and inspiring views, plus a well-regarded restaurant.

Also popular for food is colourful **Pete's Eats** (☎ 01286-870117; www.petes-eats.co.uk; High St; ☺ breakfast, lunch & dinner; ☺), a classic café, relaxed, well-organised and frequented for many years by walkers and climbers, where tea comes in pint mugs and you can top up your cholesterol for around £5. There's newspapers, magazines and walking guidebooks to browse through, useful noticeboards, plus showers and accommodation (self-catering apartment, some private rooms and a dorm) upstairs.

A good cheap option is **Seafresh** takeaway and café, serving good fish and chips. Sometimes after a long day on the mountains a big curry is called for: **Balti Raj** (☎ 01286-871983; 32 High St) always does the trick. At the top of the league, **Y Bistro** (☎ 01286-871278; www.ybistro.co.uk; 45 High St; mains £14-17.50; ☺ dinner) fuses fine Welsh ingredients and European cuisine.

### GETTING THERE & AWAY

Llanberis is easily reached by local bus from the gateway town of Bangor. Between them, direct bus 85 (45 minutes) and 88 (via Caernarfon, one hour) run at least hourly (every two hours on Sunday).

### Nantgwynant

The tiny settlement of Nantgwynant, in the valley of the same name, is at the end of the

walk. Places to stay include **Bryn Gwynant YHA Hostel** (☎ 0870 770 5732; www.yha.org.uk; dm £14), a lovely old country house overlooking Llyn Gwynant, with Snowdon as a backdrop. It's about 1 mile northeast of where the Watkin Path meets the main road. Your other option near (in fact, nearer) the end of the Watkin Path is **Bryn Dinas Bunkhouse** (☎ 01766-890234; www.bryndinasbunkhouse.co.uk; dm £10), an excellent bargain option, with beds in heated timber cabins (bring your own sleeping bag) under the trees and a separate self-catering cookhouse.

### GETTING THERE & AWAY

Buses S4 and S97 on the Snowdon Sherpa network (see p310) passes through Nantgwynant, from where you can easily return to Pen-y-Pass or Llanberis (although you may need to change at Pen-y-Gwryd).

### THE WALK

#### Pen-y-Pass to Snowdon

3–5 hours, 4.5 miles (7km)

From the car park two paths lead towards the summit of Snowdon. With your back to the café, take the path in the back-right corner. This is the Pyg Track, paved with stone slabs, which leads after about 45 minutes up to a pass called **Bwlch-y-Moch**. ('Pyg' is sometimes written 'PyG' because it's named after the nearby Pen-y-Gwryd Hotel, although Bwlch-y-Moch means Pass of the Pig – so Pyg is sometimes spelt 'Pig'. Got that?)

At the pass you get your first spectacular view into the great bowl-shaped valley holding Llyn Llydaw and the smaller lake of Glaslyn. From this pass, a path leads steeply up towards the rocky ridge and pinnacles of Crib Goch – this is for very experienced walkers only (those happy using their hands as well as their feet to cross a knife-edge precipice...). Our path goes straight on, crossing through the pass and traversing beneath (south of) the cliffs of Crib Goch, with great views to Llyn Llydaw.

After an hour or so, this path is joined by the Miners Track coming up from the left. You then follow a steep set of switchbacks that lead up to the crest of the ridge, marked by the **Fingerstone** (a rock obelisk).

A few metres beyond the Fingerstone, the railway line comes as a surprise. Try not to be run over by steam trains and follow the path parallel to the railway track

### MOUNTAIN RESOURCES

While in Llanberis you cannot fail to see the huge (and we mean *really* huge) piles of slate dominating the valley opposite the village – the legacy of a quarrying industry that has existed here for centuries. At one time, Welsh slate was exported around the world, for use mainly on house roofs, but demand dried up in the 1970s and the quarries closed. The railway that once transported slate to the coast now functions as a tourist attraction along the lake.

Today a new industry occupies the old quarry area. A hydroelectric power station has been constructed inside the mountain, with water from the reservoir of Marchlyn, about 600m higher up the mountain, flowing down through underground pipes. Surplus energy is used to pump water from Llyn Peris up the underground pipes to Marchlyn, so the water can be reused several times.

Guided tours of the 'Electric Mountain' power station are run daily; details are available from the Llanberis tourist office. If you are unlucky with the weather it's a good alternative to walking on the tops.

for a final 500m of uphill, past the station and café (where you can buy 'Snowdon the Hard Way' T-shirts) and up to the cairn that marks the summit of **Snowdon**. Time to take a breather and admire the 360-degree view from the highest peak in Wales.

### Snowdon to Nantgwynant

2–3 hours, 3.5 miles (5.5km)

Although your route lies to the southeast, from the summit of Snowdon it's important to head first southwesterly, down the crest of the ridge from the terrace at the back of the café. After about 150m, by a cairn and standing stone, turn left (east) and zigzag down through steep, broken scree to eventually reach the pass of **Bwlch-y-Saethau** – a popular view point and a possible lunch stop if the summit was too windy or too crowded.

The path is level for a while then reaches a junction. Straight on goes up the ridge path to the west peak of Llewedd (898m). For this walk, however, we go right (south) onto the Watkin Path, which descends steeply and swings southwest into the val-

ley of Cwm Llan. From here follow the stream past the old quarry buildings and along the overgrown tramway down into the large valley of Nantgwynant. Below are two lakes, Llyn Gwynant and Llyn Dinas, with much of the surrounding valley covered by thick rhododendron bushes (see the boxed text, opposite). It's easy going downhill now to meet the main road between Beddgelert and Pen-y-Gwryd.

### ALTERNATIVE DESCENTS FROM SNOWDON

If you want to return to Pen-y-Pass from Snowdon summit, you can retrace your steps to the Fingerstone and down the steep zigzags to the fork, where the Pyg Track goes east and the Miners Track (which you follow) goes southeast down to the shore of the small lake of Glaslyn then past Llyn Llydaw and along the wide and easy path all the way down to Pen-y-Pass.

If the mist is really bad or you just want to get down from the summit by the easiest route, you can follow the clear path beside the railway tracks all the way to Llanberis. If you're just too tired to walk, you could

### INVASION IN PINK

Walking in Snowdonia in May, you can't fail to notice the profusion of beautiful pink flowers all over the hillsides. You will probably stop to marvel at this amazing floral display, but don't be deceived – these are rhododendrons, the scourge of the hills.

Rhododendrons were introduced to Britain about 200 years ago as an ornamental shrub in the estates of large houses. They thrived in British weather conditions, but it wasn't until the early 20th century, with the break-up of many estates, that they started to spread unchecked. Their environmental impact is devastating, and they now threaten the existence of many indigenous plant and animal species in Snowdonia, and even the very nature of the landscape.

Rhododendron leaves and roots are poisonous, while the dense foliage means that no plants can grow beneath them. This deprives plant-eating animals, birds and insects of a vital food supply, which in turn leads to the decline of carnivorous animals and birds of prey.

So why don't the locals just get rid of them? Not so easy. These plants are almost indestructible. They tolerate all extremes of weather, require minimal daylight for survival, grow back rapidly after cutting and each bush produces several million seeds every year. They are, in short, a conservationist's nightmare. Their single redeeming feature is their spectacular flowers, but if it wasn't for those, they wouldn't have been imported into Britain in the first place.

even hop on the train; one-way standby tickets cost £14 but priority goes to passengers who come up on the train, and it doesn't run when weather conditions are bad. For more details see [www.snowdonrailway.co.uk](http://www.snowdonrailway.co.uk).

and surreal shapes. This route combines the two Glyder summits with a scramble over Tryfan – a classic Snowdonia outing.

At the foot of Glyder Fawr is the nature reserve of Cwm Idwal. Central to this cwm is the Devil's Kitchen, a dark and austere gorge cutting deeply into the surrounding cliffs. It's a place of Celtic aura and fantasy that befits a landscape steeped in legends of King Arthur. The National Trust protects this delicate and valuable environment. The RAF (Royal Air Force), by contrast, uses the area as a fighter-jet training alley, so on weekdays prepare to be dive-bombed!

### TRYFAN & THE GLYDERS

<b>Duration</b>	5–7 hours
<b>Distance</b>	5 miles (9.6km)
<b>Difficulty</b>	demanding
<b>Start</b>	Llyn Ogwen
<b>Finish</b>	Ogwen (p316)
<b>Nearest Town</b>	Capel Curig (p316)
<b>Transport</b>	bus

**Summary** A classic mountain walk through otherworldly scenery; steep ascents and descents, with going a bit rough and slow on the high ground, especially in the wet.

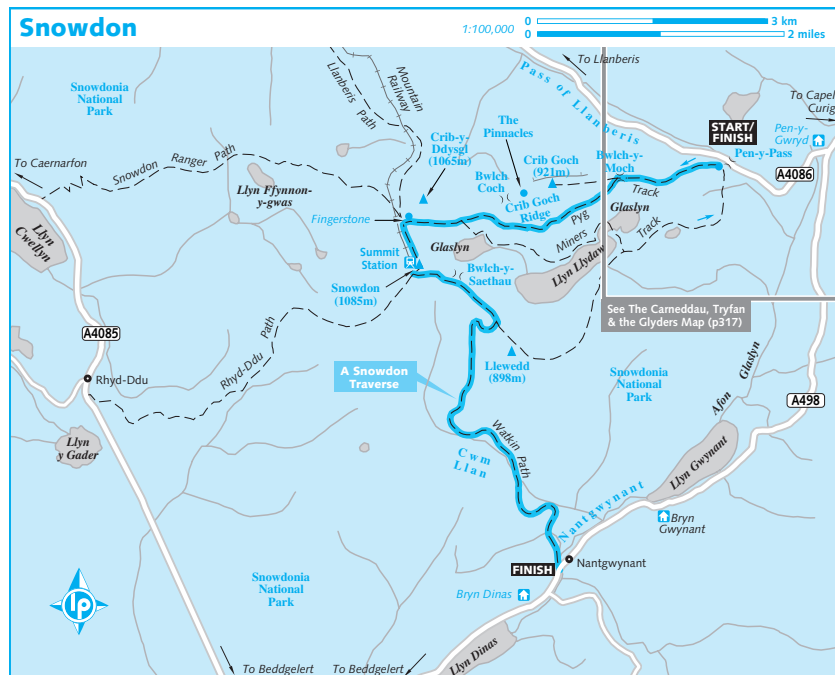
In profile, the peaks of Tryfan appear like a huge dinosaur, with a prickly back curved in a gigantic arc – one of North Wales' most famous sights. The name Tryfan (pronounced 'tre-van') means 'three peaks', with the dramatic rocky summit (915m) flanked by two slightly lower tops.

South of Tryfan are the less obvious mountains of Glyder Fawr and Glyder Fach. Bordered on the north and east by steep cwms and cliffs, they form a broad ridge strewn with shattered stones and contorted boulders, moved by ice to form eerie towers

### PLANNING

The route starts with an ascent of Tryfan, then joins the main Glyder ridge and descends via the Devil's Kitchen. Experienced scramblers will enjoy picking a route up the rocks, but there are easier options, although the range is distinctly rocky and every walker needs to use their hands in a few places. For those who are inexperienced or like to keep their hands in their pockets, there's an alternative route on Tryfan that avoids the ridge (and the summit) completely.

We recommend a clockwise circuit, starting with the ascent of Tryfan, because the scrambles are best approached in an uphill direction. The walk measures only 5 miles on the map, but because of the ascents and steep rough ground, the walking time is longer than you would expect. With stops, about six to eight hours is likely.





like a map of Australia. Further away, to the southwest, the summits of Snowdon appear as distant giants, while to the north the view of the classic U-shaped Nant Ffrancon valley leads the eye out to the Anglesey coast.

### Tryfan to Glyder Fawr

2–3 hours, 2 miles (3km)

Once you've torn yourself away from the view, descend southwards from the summit of Tryfan. It's a steep, rough and rocky path, with a few cairns along the way, keeping to the right (west) side of the ridge, especially down lower. This leads down to **Bwlch Tryfan**, a wide pass crossed by a large dry-stone wall (handy for sheltering behind in bad weather).

South from Bwlch Tryfan a very steep ridge rises up in a series of rocky needles. This is affectionately known by walkers as **Bristly Ridge** – a wonderful outing for happy scramblers – although you won't see this name marked on maps. If you prefer not to use your hands, the steep and stony path goes to the left of the ridge. It is a bit loose underfoot but it brings you out at the top of the ridge, where it flattens into a plateau covered with a manic jumble of huge sharp blocks, some lying flat and others pointing skywards like jagged pinnacles.

The path is marked by cairns as it continues across this plateau, aiming southwest. Look out for the **Cantilever Stone**, a huge monolith suspended on its side over a drop, a bit like a diving board (with a very bad landing). About 100m beyond is the rock tower that marks the summit of **Glyder Fach** (994m).

From Glyder Fach summit, the path descends slightly, passing a particularly large, impressive and unbelievably spiky outcrop called **Castell-y-Gwynt** (Castle of the Wind) on its left side, and then drops to a pass. (If the weather is bad, an escape route de-

scends from here to Llyn Bochlywd in Cwm Bochlywd.)

The main path continues southwest and then west, clearly at first and then over rocks (if there is mist, pay close attention to your navigation), to the summit of **Glyder Fawr** (999m), one of several rock towers standing on the broad summit plateau. Time for a rest and a final look round in this fantastical landscape, before heading towards home.

### Glyder Fawr to Ogwen

1½–2 hours, 2.5 miles (4km)

The path leaves the summit of Glyder Fawr heading southwest. Take special care here in bad weather as it's easy to go too far south. The path is marked by a few cairns as it curves and descends over very steep and loose scree, heading generally northwest, down to a flat pass near the small lake of **Llyn-y-Cwn**.

Once again, care is called for to avoid getting lost. Don't go to the lake (unless you want to stop here for a picnic) but aim right (northeast), away from it, to follow a path that takes you to a rocky gap through the cliffs. This path gets steeper, but is paved with rough stone steps. Make sure you find the proper path; any other apparent descent will soon lead you over precipitous cliffs.

As you descend on the path, to your left (north) is the **Devil's Kitchen**, a steep gorge with a waterfall and surrounding cliffs covered with ferns and mosses constantly fed by the mist and dripping water. The mist sometimes looks like smoke from a cooking fire – hence the name.

Beyond the gorge, the path divides, taking you either west or east of the lake of **Llyn Idwal**. There's hardly any difference in distance but the western path is worth taking after heavy rain as there's a deep and

fast stream on the eastern route. Beyond the lake, an easy paved path takes you down to Idwal Cottage YHA hostel and Ogwen car park, at the west end of Llyn Ogwen, where the snack bar can provide a welcome ice cream or hot coffee – depending on the weather.

## A CARNEDDAU CIRCUIT

<b>Duration</b>	4–6 hours
<b>Distance</b>	8 miles (13km)
<b>Difficulty</b>	moderate
<b>Start</b>	Llyn Ogwen (eastern end)
<b>Finish</b>	Nant y Benglog
<b>Nearest Towns</b>	Ogwen (p316), Capel Curig (p316)
<b>Transport</b>	bus
<b>Summary</b>	A classic route with straightforward walking on mostly good (if faint) paths through a relatively quiet area.

The group of mountains called the Carneddau (pronounced 'car-neth-aye'), in the northeastern section of the national park, take their name from the two main peaks – Carnedd Dafydd and Carnedd Llewelyn. This area has a more isolated atmosphere than many others in Snowdonia because its mountains are broad and open, although hidden among the grassy slopes are cliffs of a scale more often seen in the Highlands of Scotland. The northern similarities continue further, as in winter the Carneddau attract more snow than other areas, and even in summer the weather can become atrocious on the tops.

## PLANNING

The circular route we describe here starts near the eastern end of the lake of Llyn Ogwen, between Bethesda and Capel Curig; it takes in the main summits of the Carneddau and returns to the main road in the valley of Nant y Benglog (universally called the Ogwen Valley), about 1.5 miles east of the start point.

This circular route can be walked in either direction, but clockwise is recommended, as the ascent of Pen yr Ole Wen is better early in the day. On top of the Carneddau you can cover quite a lot of ground fairly quickly. Add at least an extra hour to the walk for lunch and photo stops.

## Alternatives

For a longer walk in this area, see the Carneddau Three-Thousanders route description on p320.

## GETTING TO/FROM THE WALK

See p316 for details of bus services.

Llyn Ogwen is beside the A5, between Bethesda and Capel Curig. The handiest car parking is at the camp sites of Gwern Gof Uchaf and Gwern Gof Isaf (for details, see p316); parking costs a few pounds for the whole day.

## THE WALK Map p317

**Llyn Ogwen to Pen yr Ole Wen**  
1½–2 hours, 2 miles (3km)  
From the eastern end of Llyn Ogwen take the track towards Tal y Llyn Ogwen farm. Just before the farm gate, the path strikes north, uphill, then follows a stream called Afon Lloer, continuing north and uphill. This leads you to a large bowl-shaped valley, Cwm Lloer. Don't go into this valley, but turn left (west) and continue along the ridge that curves round towards the north and leads to the summit of **Pen yr Ole Wen** (978m). This is the first of the Carneddau summits – and the worst of today's ascent over – so time for a breather. There are great views to the south over to the Glyders with Snowdon behind, and northwest to Bangor with the island of Anglesey beyond.

## Pen yr Ole Wen to Carnedd Llewelyn

1–2 hours, 3 miles (5km)  
From the summit of Pen yr Ole Wen, follow the ridge north, over a bump called Carnedd Fach, then northeast to the summit of **Carnedd Dafydd** (1044m). Once again the views are good; among other summits you can see Carnedd Llewelyn, your next objective, to the northeast.

From this summit it's important not to head straight for Carnedd Llewelyn. First you must head east, along the ridge, with the fittingly titled sheer cliffs of Ysgolion Duon (Black Ladders) dropping down to your left (northwards) at the head of the Afon Llafar valley.

Continue for about 1 mile then swing northwards, now with a steep drop down to your right (southeast) as well, for a final ascent up to the summit of **Carnedd Llewelyn** (1064m) – the highest in the Carneddau

## THE CARNEDDAU & THE GLYDERS

The mountains around Carnedd Dafydd and Carnedd Llewelyn are known as the Carneddau. *Carnedd* means 'mountain' in Welsh, and the correct plural form is *carneddau*, which means literally 'mountains' – not very helpful if you translate, as there are a great many mountains hereabouts. Strangely, although Carnedd Dafydd and Carnedd Llewelyn are known by the Welsh plural name, the nearby mountains of Glyder Fawr and Glyder Fach are nearly always anglicised to the Glyders, rather than the Glyderau, which is the correct plural form in Welsh. You pick your language, and takes your choice.

range. Time for another break, and to marvel at the views. Looking south, the aspect across to Tryfan is now truly magnificent, while in the other direction the other Carneddau summits of Foel Grach, Foel Fras and Drum stretch away to the north. (If you're tempted to follow the broad ridge that links these rounded giants, see Carneddau Three-Thousanders, below.)

**SIDE TRIP: YR ELEN**  
1 hour, 1.5 miles (2.5km)

If you want to bag another Carneddau peak over 3000ft you can take an out-and-back detour to the summit of **Yr Elen** (962m) – very worthwhile if you have the time and the energy. There is a dramatic drop into Cwm Caseg from the summit, so make sure you come back the same way.

**Carnedd Llewelyn to Nant y Benglog**

1½–2 hours, 3 miles (5km)

From the summit of Carnedd Llewelyn the path leads southeast down a steep, narrow ridge, with some near-sheer drops on either side. This is tricky in mist, so take care.

About 45 minutes from Carnedd Llewelyn you reach the steep-sided pass of **Bwlch Eryl Farchog**. Do not go through the pass, but turn right (south) and follow the steep, zigzagging path that takes you down to the Ffynnon Llugwy reservoir, nestling in the horseshoe of steep mountainsides. Follow the path along its east bank to join the service road, which carries you swiftly down the hill. It's an eyesore but at least you can't lose the way! This brings you down to the A5, where this route ends, opposite the farm and camp site of Gwern Gof Isaf.

If you need to get back to the start, turn right (west) and follow the main road for 1.5 miles to reach the east end of Llyn Ogwen.

## MORE WALKS

The routes already described in this chapter are well known and well trodden. But Snowdonia has a lot more to offer, and this section will give you a few ideas for further exploration.

**CARNEDDAU THREE-THOUSANDERS**

In the Carneddau Circuit section (p319) we described a circular route across three high

summits in the Carneddau mountains. Also possible in this area is an excellent linear option taking in seven summits, all in a line and all over the magic 3000ft (914m) contour.

This route starts at Llyn Ogwen and follows the Carneddau Circuit route over the summits of Pen yr Ole Wen (978m), Carnedd Dafydd (1044m) and Carnedd Llewelyn (1064m), and detours out to Yr Elen (962m). The linear route then carries on northwards along the fine broad ridge to Foel Grach (976m), Carnedd Uchaf (926m) and Foel Fras (942m), and eventually to Drum (770m), the final top. From here you descend a broad ridge in a northwesterly direction on a vehicle track to Llanfairfechan. (Alternatively you can head northwest from the pass between Foel Fras and Drum to meet the lane coming up from Abergwyngregyn.)

The route can be walked in either direction, but if you start from Llyn Ogwen you have the advantage of being already at 300m, whereas Llanfairfechan is at sea level. The total distance for this route is 11.5 miles (18km), but the going is fairly good and in fine weather it will take about six to seven hours' walking (seven to eight in total).

**A SNOWDONIA COAST TO COAST**

If you want a longer walk in Snowdonia, several options exist for crossing the whole area from the north coast to the southwest coast. Perhaps surprisingly, there is no established waymarked multiday route, as in many other national parks. However, the following suggested route crosses some of the finest scenery in the country.

The route is best split into four or five stages, each of a day's duration (although you can just do two or three stages if you want), and it can be walked in either direction. Only the barest directions are given here; the walking is mostly on good paths, but to do this whole route you need to be a fit and experienced walker, confident of your navigation skills in poor weather.

**Stage 1**

Start at Llanfairfechan on the north coast, going via a small hill called Garreg Fawr to the summit of Drum, from where you cross the Carneddau Three-Thousanders of Foel

**THE WELSH THREES**

Snowdonia has 14 peaks (some say 15) that rise above the magical 3000ft (914m) contour. A popular challenge for walkers is to get to the top of them all within 24 hours, an outing known as the Welsh Three-Thousanders, or more simply the Welsh Threes. The 'rules' allow the peaks to be bagged in any order, but the nature of the landscape offers two main choices – a north-to-south line or vice versa – starting the clock as you leave the first summit and stopping it on the summit of the last. Assuming a south-to-north line, the route starts with an ascent of Snowdon's three highest summits (as the countdown starts at the top of Snowdon, some people use the train to get up here), then descends to Nant Peris. From here the route goes up Elidir Fawr, over Y Garn, and then takes in the Glyders and Tryfan. That's all before you nip across to the Carneddau peaks, which stretch in a line northwards to Llanfairfechan. The whole route can be completed in around 12 hours if you're very fit and don't stop, although a target of 18 hours is more usual (and many people need the full 24 hours). The record for fell runners is under five hours – doesn't it make you sick? For more casual walkers, the 14 peaks (or 15 – Castel y Gwynt is the debatable one) can be split over a few days and enjoyed at leisure. We've even heard about some hardy adventurers doing a variant called the Welsh Freeze – combining a run up some of the mountains with a swim in some of the lakes. Reservoirs are out of bounds, but this is still a challenge best left to super-fit athletes, or the insane.

Fras, Carnedd Uchaf, Foel Grach, Carnedd Llewelyn, Carnedd Dafydd and Pen yr Ole Wen, before descending to Llyn Ogwen.

**Stage 2**

You have two main choices. The first is a long one: from Llyn Ogwen, follow the route described in the Tryfan & the Glyders walk (p315) to Llyn y Cwn, then continue northwest to Y Garn (947m), then north to Foel Goch (831m). From here the ridge descends to Bwlch y Brecan, from where you can descend to Nant Peris, 3 miles west of Pen-y-Pass.

Your second main choice is much shorter and can be combined with Stage 3. From Llyn Ogwen take the Miners Track (not to be confused with the track of the same name on Snowdon), which leads past Llyn Bochlywd to Bwlch Tryfan. From here the track continues down to the Pen-y-Gwryd Hotel, from where a short walk along the side of the main road brings you to Pen-y-Pass.

**Stage 3**

From Pen-y-Pass take the Pyg Track to the summit of Snowdon. From the summit you have more options: you could either descend on the Rhyd-Ddu Path to Rhyd-Ddu or via the Watkin Path into Nantgwynant.

**Stage 4**

For the final stage you have several options. If you descended yesterday on the

Rhyd-Ddu Path, then you could follow the Nantlle Ridge, eventually dropping down to Llanllyfni, near the village of Penygroes, from where you can continue to the coast at Pontllyfni.

If you descended the Watkin Path to Nantgwynant, then for Stage 4 you could go from Beddgelert over the Moel Hebog (782m) and Moel Ddu (552m), eventually to reach the coast at the seaside town of Porthmadog.

A much longer option (requiring two days) leads you south from Nantgwynant via the summits of Moelwyn Mawr (770m) and Moelwyn Bach (711m), or through the valleys between these peaks and Mowl-yr-Hydd, down to the villages of Maentwrog and Trawsfynydd. The final day is through the rough, tough and little visited Rhinogs mountain range. You can proceed either via the summit of Rhinog Fawr (720m) or by skirting the peaks to the west, following tracks and paths that lead eventually down to Barmouth, on the coast of the Irish Sea.

**NORTH WALES COAST**

If the weather is bad on the high peaks of Snowdonia, there are some great options nearby for coastal walking.

The north and west of the Isle of Anglesey has huge sea cliffs, quaint fishing villages, busy ports and sweeping, sandy beaches. You can choose between short day walks (the area around South Stack, an impressive

headland and important nature reserve on the western tip of the island, is a good place to start) and a 120-mile (193km) circuit of the entire island, or something in between. See *Coastal Walks around Anglesey* by Carl Rogers for more ideas.

On the mainland the North Wales Path is a 60-mile (96km) route following the coast from Bangor to Prestatyn (also the end of the Offa's Dyke Path). It is possible to complete the path in four to seven days, or you could explore it in single-day circular outings or linear sections using the frequent buses and trains running along the coast.

This is a popular holiday area, so B&B options are good. The whole route is described in a handy guidebook, *The North Wales Path* by Dave Salter and Dave Worreland.

South of Anglesey, the northwestern extreme of the Welsh mainland is the Llyn Peninsula. This offers great coastal scenery, particularly between Abersoch and Nefyn, and is quieter than the North Wales Path, although less dramatic than Anglesey. When the weather is bad on the high ground and other parts of the coast, conditions here are often good and it's a great place for a walk.