

SUMMIT WALKS | CIRCULAR WALKS | NATURE WALKS

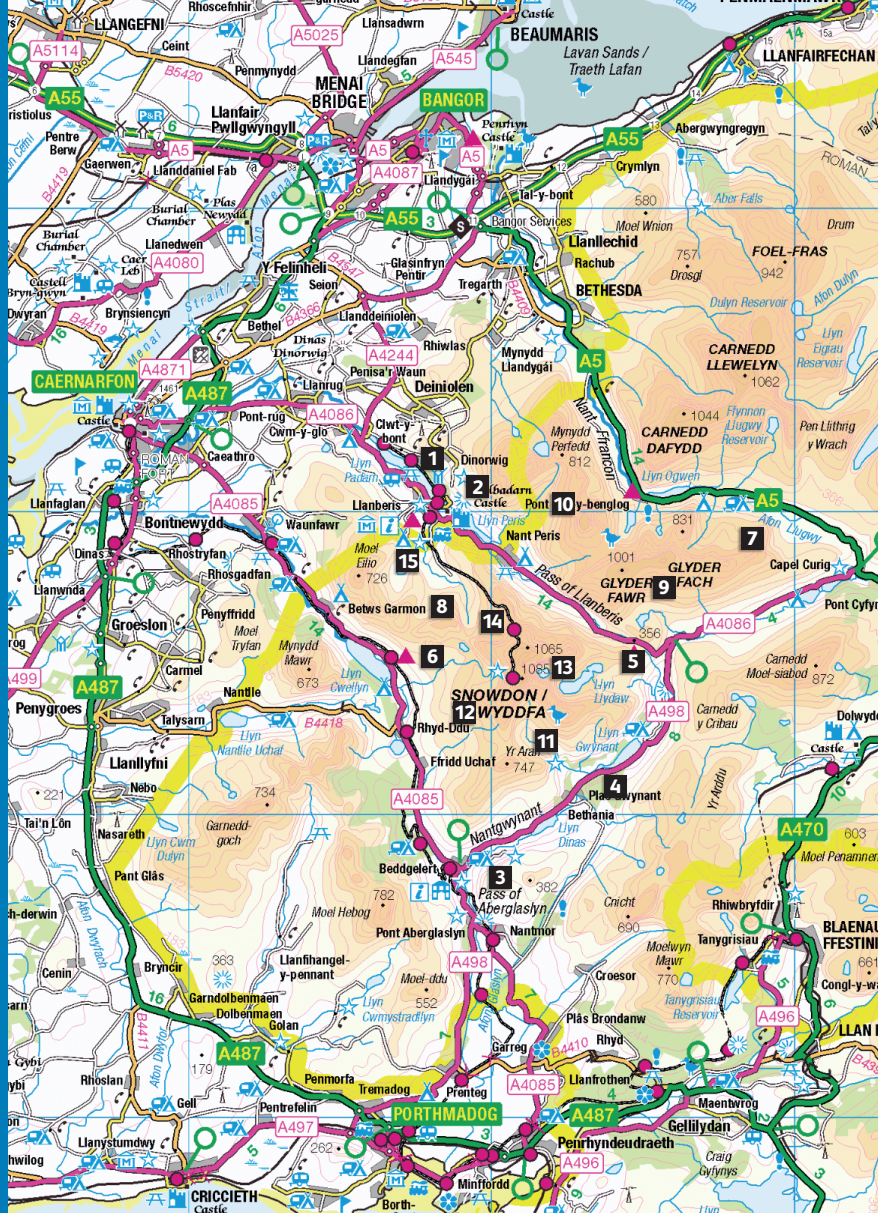
**MOUNTAIN WALKS**

# **YR WYDDFA SNOWDON**

15 ROUTES TO ENJOY ON AND AROUND SNOWDON



**KATE WORTHINGTON**



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### THE ROUTES

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Download the  
**Mountain Walks Yr Wyddfa/Snowdon**  
GPX files from  
[www.adventurebooks.com/MWYW-GPX](http://www.adventurebooks.com/MWYW-GPX)

#### ROUTE GRADES

Easy	●○○○
Medium	●●○○
Hard	●●●○
Full-on	●●●●



## **INTRODUCTION**

This collection of walks celebrates the grandeur and contrasting character of Yr Wyddfa and its surrounding landscapes. Set within Eryri National Park, the Yr Wyddfa massif and its many valley communities, delicate habitats and wildlife, people and history offers the opportunity to explore, enjoy and connect with a very special place. Designated a National Nature Reserve, the rugged mountain shapes of Yr Wyddfa and the neighbouring summits were born from intense geological forces acting on the Earth's tectonic plates over 625 million years ago. Fast-forward to 2.6 million years ago and glacial activity had started to carve out the landforms we see today – high mountain cwms and glacial llyns, narrow ridges and steep, scree-covered slopes. The environs of Yr Wyddfa have provided natural resources and shelter for humans since the end of the last ice age about 12,000 years ago.

The routes described offer a wide variety of ways to enjoy Yr Wyddfa's landscapes, catering for long mountain days as well as shorter walks suitable for families or unsettled weather conditions. Perhaps you'll feel inspired to learn more about a particular village or valley, Welsh summit name, historical or natural feature. There are some classic routes here, as well as some alternative ideas to freshen up your planning. Many visitors to Eryri already 'know' and appreciate the special qualities of Yr Wyddfa, but this book offers additional discoveries and insights into this much-loved mountain massif.

Mwynhewch eich cerdded ar Yr Wyddfa.

**Kate Worthington**



13km/8.1 miles

# 12/YR WYDDFA VIA RHYD DDU PATH & SOUTH RIDGE

If you want to explore a different aspect of Yr Wyddfa, head over to Rhyd Ddu for an adventurous approach to Wales's highest mountain.

## / ESSENTIAL INFO

GRADE ●●●○

DISTANCE 13KM/8.1 MILES

ASCENT 920M

TIME 5.5 HRS (WALKER)/3 HRS (RUNNER)

START/FINISH RHYD DDU STATION

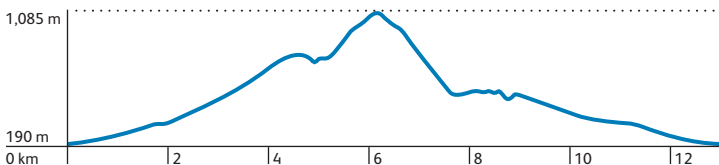
START GRID REF SH 570 526

START GPS 53.0513, -4.1335

OS MAP OL17 SNOWDON/YR WYDDFA  
(1:25,000)

## / OVERVIEW

West is best? You may well think so when you've explored Yr Wyddfa from this side. This is usually a less-frequented approach, especially outside peak holiday times. The village of Rhyd Ddu is modest in size compared to Betws-y-Coed and Llanberis, but is bursting with character and history, and will not disappoint discerning or hungry walkers. The buildings in the village were mostly built for slate quarry workers and their families in the 1800s, and it's worth checking Welsh Highland Railway timetables to catch a steam train coming through. The upper sections of the Rhyd Ddu Path offer fantastic mountain scenery along Llechog and Bwlch Main, drawing the eye up the expansive and steep western side of Yr Wyddfa.



Looking down the South Ridge towards the coast. © Evan Davies



View to Yr Wyddfa from the South Ridge. © Evan Davies

## DIRECTIONS

- S** From the pay & display car park, a signpost for Yr Wyddfa leads you across the railway line and on to the lower section of the Rhyd Ddu Path. Follow the curving track through farmland for just over 1.5km, and shortly after going through a gate you'll arrive at a distinct crossroads of paths.
- 2** A waymarker for the Rhyd Ddu Path points **north-east** uphill; follow the stone-pitched path steadily upwards for 1km to a stone wall and gate. The path climbs for another 1km towards the ridgeline of Llechog above 700m. Upon reaching the ridgeline, the path swings to the right, crossing more level ground for 400m before ascending again via zigzags to the start of Bwlch Main at 900m. The next 500m is one of the finest sections of walking path on the mountain, heading along a steep-sided ridge on a steady path which weaves around the vertically lined rocks. When the ridgeline broadens, follow a rocky path for a further 300m, passing the summit visitor centre on your left, before arriving at Yr Wyddfa's summit steps and cairn.





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The South Ridge. © John Coe field

- 3** Retracing your steps from the summit cairn, pass the summit visitor centre again and continue down the steps and rocky path, passing a fingerstone pointing to the Watkin/Rhyd Ddu paths (not easily seen in ascent). **Continue south-west** for 700m along Bwlch Main, reaching a junction of paths at the end of the ridge.
- 4** On your right is the continuation of the Rhyd Ddu Path used in ascent, but the route instead descends Yr Wyddfa's rugged South Ridge. **Head south**, descending a varied path for 1.5km towards the pass of Bwlch Cwm Llan. The route descends through a steeper section of rock just above the 750m contour.
- 5** From the flatter, grassy Bwlch Cwm Llan, **turn right** and follow the rocky path heading generally west towards Rhyd Ddu in the valley below. Pass old slate quarry workings and tips, following the line of a railway from the quarry down to the railway station below. After 2km, you'll approach the crossroads of paths seen earlier, continuing **straight on** to return to Rhyd Ddu via the farm track.

## GOOD TO KNOW

### PUBLIC TRANSPORT AND ACCESS

To access Rhyd Ddu village, make the most of the Sherpa'r Wyddfa bus services that run around the mountain. Between April and October, services are frequent and the S3 travels between Beddgelert and Caernarfon (linking with other routes via Beddgelert). Car users can park in the Eryri National Park pay & display car park beside the station, but it is more fun to splash out and use the Welsh Highland Railway. Rhyd Ddu station was known as 'Snowdon' in Victorian times.

### WHEN TO WALK IT

Routes on this south-western side of Yr Wyddfa do not offer shelter from prevailing southwesterly winds, so walkers can be quite exposed to wind and rain on these routes, in particular on the ridge of Bwlch Main. The walk can be achieved in slightly less time than the longer/more technical options on other sides of Yr Wyddfa. This is advantageous for shorter days in autumn and spring.



*Ascending the lower Rhyd Ddu Path.*

### TERRAIN AND NAVIGATION

The main paths on Yr Wyddfa are constantly being upgraded and managed. Unless you're seeking out off-path adventures (of which there are many!), you can follow clear, navigable routes from valley to summit. Hence this route uses visible paths on the ground, though the terrain underfoot and mountain conditions can still be challenging at times and keeping track of your location remains essential. The ground becomes more technical above 900m, where the mountain shows off the modest ridgeline of Bwlch Main.

### FACILITIES AND REFRESHMENTS

There are public toilets conveniently situated in the pay & display car park.

Do make time for a post-walk visit to the expansive Cwellyn Arms, a traditional and welcoming pub a few hundred metres from the start of the Rhyd Ddu path. Nestled

in a row of 200-year-old cottages is the wonderful Ty Mawr Tea House, with a mixture of Danish and Welsh specialities, including amazing pancakes! Both the pub and the tea house offer accommodation too.

### POINTS OF INTEREST

Rhyd Ddu is a characterful start point for Yr Wyddfa, used by tourists since the 19th century. Railway operators were desperate for Rhyd Ddu station to become *the* station used to access the mountain, but the mountain railway to the summit was ultimately built from Llanberis. The slender ridge of Bwlch Main is walked twice, giving time to appreciate its dramatic terrain and views into Yr Wyddfa's upper cwms, as well as further south-west to Cardigan Bay. During the descent you'll also pass close to the remains of the Bwlch Cwm Llan slate quarries, cavernous holes dripping with vegetation and water.