

1 Planning to walk the Trail

Snowdonia is Wales' premier National Park, located in the north-west corner of the country. Historically it was the centre of the slate industry and an engine for growth during the industrial revolution. The 83-mile (134 km) long Snowdonia Slate Trail is a fully waymarked route which explores the Park's beauty and its context of slate heritage and culture. The Trail starts at Bangor and ends in Bethesda in the Ogwen valley, the home of the slate industry's Great Strike (1900 – 1903): see page 18.

The Trail is the culmination of four years of work by the voluntary Cwm Community Action Group, from the remote Snowdonia village of Cwm Penmachno. Once a slate village with some 500 residents, it is now a quiet backwater of about 70 people. The Group developed the Trail in order to stimulate business opportunities in the former slate villages while bringing this rich and important slate heritage to a wider audience.

The Trail is shaped like a leaf hanging from a stem. The stem takes you from Port Penrhyn on the outskirts of Bangor to Bethesda. From there, the Trail crosses moors and valleys, and follows rivers, gorges and forest tracks, in an anticlockwise circuit back to Bethesda. (If you prefer to walk the Trail clockwise, you will have to reverse the book's directions and sequence.)

This Trail was created only in 2017 and facilities are developing as its popularity grows. When planning your walk, give attention to planning transport, accommodation and refreshments.

Each of the suggested day sections described in this book ends at a village where bed and breakfast accommodation is available, at least if booked far enough ahead.

If you aren't experienced at long-distance walking, you may wish to download our *Notes for novices*: see page 75. We offer advice on appropriate gear, likely walking speeds and preparation.



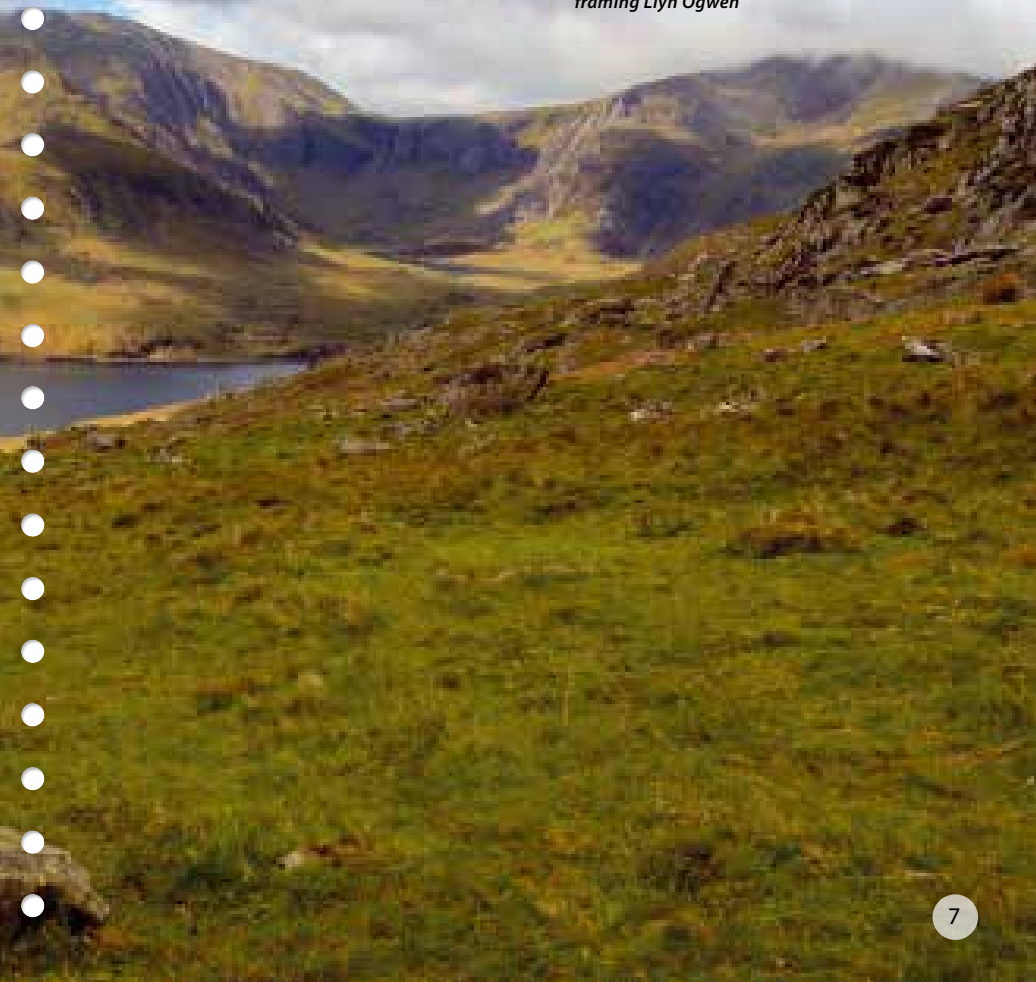
Before you set out to complete the Trail, make sure that you are capable of several day-long walks on consecutive days, carrying whatever load you are likely to need in the conditions that you expect. Consider whether you need any support with travel or baggage.

Long-distance walks can be completed alone, and some people prefer the solitude and closeness to wildlife of this approach. Others, especially novices, will prefer the sociability and safety of walking with at least one companion. A lone walker certainly needs to have thought through how to handle problems in any kind of emergency, and to ensure that somebody knows his or her planned itinerary. That is important not only in case of accident or emergency, but also to avoid needless anxiety or even a wasted callout. Be aware that mobile coverage can be patchy in Snowdonia.

Table 1 Distances and stages

| | <i>miles</i> | <i>km</i> | <i>pages</i> |
|---------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| Bangor | | | |
| 3-1 Bethesda | 6·3 | 10·2 | 31-34 |
| 3-2 Llanberis | 7·2 | 11·6 | 35-39 |
| 3-3 Beddgelert | 20·0 | 32·2 | 40-48 |
| 3-4 Llan Ffestiniog | 14·4 | 23·2 | 49-56 |
| 3-5 Penmacho | 13·2 | 21·3 | 57-64 |
| 3-6 Capel Curig | 11·2 | 18·1 | 65-70 |
| 3-7 Bethesda | 11·0 | 17·6 | 71-73 |
| <i>Totals</i> | 83·4 | 134·2 | |

Tryfan and the Glyder range framing Llyn Ogwen



Welsh language and pronunciation

The Trail passes through some of the most Welsh-speaking areas of Wales. Although many signs will be bilingual, often place names are not. Throughout this book we name lakes and rivers by their local, Welsh names, such as Llyn Padarn and Afon Ogwen (rather than Lake Padarn or River Ogwen). A short glossary of Welsh terms with their pronunciation is included on page 75.



Best time of year and weather

There is no single best time to walk the Trail: different seasons have different moods, lighting, vegetation and wildlife. An early spring or late autumn walk may offer better weather than one carried out in high summer. Winter weather is, on average, more likely to be dull, wet and cold than summer, but there is no certainty about any particular week. Overall, here are some factors to think about:

- Winter days are short, with only 7 – 9 hours of daylight between November and January; this constrains whether and how you can complete the Trail safely.
- Parts of Snowdonia are relatively undeveloped and many of its facilities (including some B&Bs) are closed in winter.
- Public transport, particularly the Snowdon Sherpa bus, is less frequent in winter.
- In high season, particularly over Bank Holidays, accommodation in some parts of the Trail may be busy.
- Midges and mosquitos are not a major issue, but if you decide to camp near water in summer, you may find them annoying.






























Snowdonia, like any other range of western hills, has weather that is fast-changing and unpredictable. Often, as you pass from one valley to the next, you will experience a change in weather and micro-climate. So, as many walkers already know, you will need to be prepared for all weather: bring both sun cream and waterproofs! Weather forecasts can be obtained from the sources shown on page 74.




Rhiwbach quarry



How long will it take?

Table 2 Daily distances for various options from six to eight days

| | 6-day miles km | | 7-day option A miles km | | 7-day option B miles km | | 8-day miles km | |
|---|-------------------|------|----------------------------|------|----------------------------|------|-------------------|------|
| Bangor   | | | | | | | 6.3 | 10.2 |
| Bethesda   | 13.5 | 21.8 | 13.5 | 21.8 | 13.5 | 21.8 | 7.2 | 11.6 |
| Llanberis     | | | | | 9.7 | 15.6 | 9.7 | 15.6 |
| Nantlle    | 20.0 | 32.2 | 14.8 | 23.8 | | | | |
| Rhyd Ddu     | | | 5.2 | 8.4 | 10.3 | 16.6 | 10.3 | 16.6 |
| Beddgelert     | 14.4 | 23.2 | 14.4 | 23.2 | 14.4 | 23.2 | 14.4 | 23.2 |
| Llan Ffestiniog   | 13.2 | 21.3 | 13.2 | 21.3 | 13.2 | 21.3 | 13.2 | 21.3 |
| Penmachno   | 11.2 | 18.1 | 11.2 | 18.1 | 11.2 | 18.1 | 11.2 | 18.1 |
| Capel Curig     | 11.0 | 17.6 | 11.0 | 17.6 | 11.0 | 17.6 | 11.0 | 17.6 |
| Bethesda   (+bus to Bangor) | | | | | | | | |

 B&B/hotel  hostel/bunkhouse  campsite

Most people find they can complete the Trail comfortably inside seven walking days. Table 2 shows four options, albeit all are identical from Beddgelert onward. You can vary these further, to suit your preference for accommodation. In particular, the 20 miles from Llanberis to Beddgelert can be split if you are camping or book accommodation in the Nantlle valley, Y Fron or Rhyd Ddu. See pages 11-12 for accommodation suggestions.

Alternatively, you may decide to spend longer in one of the larger villages to visit some of their attractions. An extra day in Llanberis would give you time to climb Snowdon or to visit the National Slate Museum and Electric Mountain, which takes you on an underground tour of the pumped storage hydro-electricity station. A stay in Blaenau Ffestiniog (3-5 miles north of Llan Ffestiniog) would allow you a ride on the famous Ffestiniog Railway or a tour of the fascinating Llechwedd Slate Caverns.

Part 3 describes the Trail in seven sections, but most of these can be divided into sub-sections to allow you to vary the number of days and the length of each day's walk. Upon completion of the Trail, you can use the regular public transport back from Bethesda to Bangor. However, if you decide to walk the Trail as a series of one- or two-day walks, careful planning is needed to make your sections fit in with your transport arrangements. Public transport in some sections is poor, and two cars may be necessary.

A further option is to return to Bangor on foot after completing the Trail, made more interesting if you take a different route. From Bethesda, follow the Lôn Las Ogwen cycleway to return to the start. However, if arriving by car, be aware that secure car parking may be an issue.

Bed and breakfast accommodation is available in all villages at the end of each section. There is also a sprinkling of campsites and camping barns along the Trail which can widen your options. Wherever you plan to stay, book your accommodation well in advance.

When planning your walk, be realistic about likely walking speed. In practice, few walkers sustain more than 2-2.5 mph (3-4 kph) over a full day of walking, though for short sections it is easier to keep up a faster pace. Many factors can slow you down, including the size of your group, the nature of the terrain, what weight you are carrying, the amount of altitude gain/loss, the number of stiles and other obstacles and how often you stop for breaks.

Getting there and away

Bangor is easily accessible by car and train, being on the main A55 North Wales Coast Road and also on the London to Holyhead mainline railway. The journey times shown in Table 3 are the shortest identified in 2017. Car journey times are based on average speeds with no allowance for traffic delay or stops.

The nearest major airports are Liverpool and Manchester, where you can catch the train or rent a car. However, hiring your rental car for a week can be expensive and secure parking may be problematic. Unless there is a non-walking driver in your company, you are likely to find that the car is never in the right place.

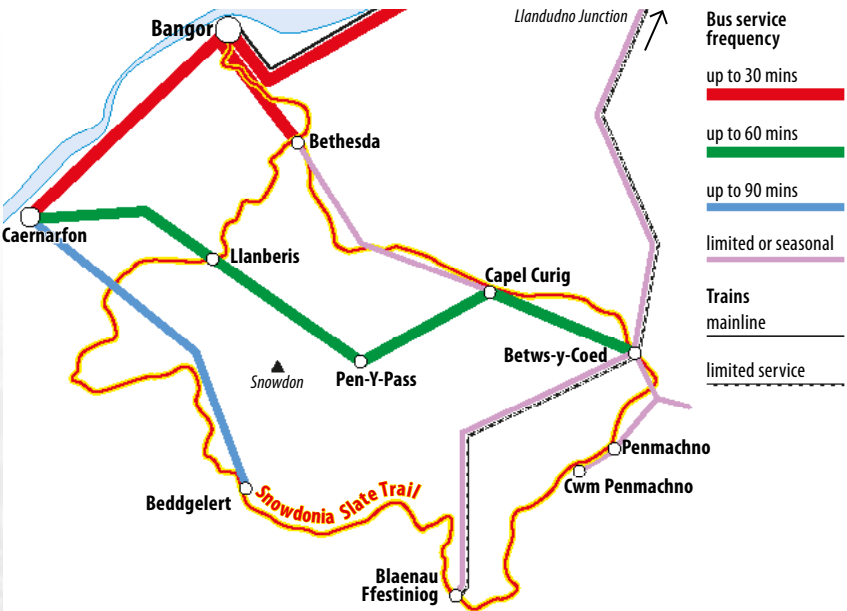


Table 3 Distances and shortest journey time from selected places to Bangor

| | <i>miles</i> | <i>km</i> | <i>by bus</i> | <i>by train</i> | <i>by car</i> |
|------------|--------------|-----------|---------------|-----------------|---------------|
| Holyhead | 25 | 40 | 1h 20m | 25m | 30m |
| Chester | 63 | 101 | 4h 15m | 1h 5m | 1h 15m |
| Manchester | 99 | 159 | 5h 15m | 2h 15m | 2h |
| Birmingham | 143 | 230 | 6h 10m | 3h 15m | 2h 45m |
| London | 255 | 410 | 9h 35m | 3h 10m | 5h |
| Glasgow | 299 | 481 | 10h 25m | 5h 20m | 5h |

All figures are rough guidelines only: for sources, see page ??.

Check timetables carefully in advance; winter timetables usually differ from summer.

Those who decide to walk the Trail in several expeditions may find themselves having to rely on a car. However, getting back to your car can be a lengthy journey by public transport and a second car, although not so ecologically friendly, may be the sensible choice in some instances. Bus services are limited in certain parts of the Trail: see page 74 for sources.

Accommodation and refreshments

Where you stay will depend on how many days you want to spend on the walk. Some places have many sights and attractions worth exploring, or you may prefer to return to visit them after your walk is completed. The layout of this book suggests you book accommodation in Bangor, perhaps Bethesda, Llanberis, Beddgelert, Llan Ffestiniog, Penmachno, Capel Curig and, finally, after catching a bus from Bethesda, Bangor unless needing to complete onward travel. Details were correct when we went to press, but check carefully for updates.

Table 4 Accommodation and refreshments

| | <i>miles from last place</i> | <i>km from last place</i> | <i>B&B/ hotel</i> | <i>hostel/ bunkhouse</i> | <i>campsite</i> | <i>pub/ café</i> | <i>food shop/ takeaway</i> |
|--------------------|------------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------|----------------------|--------------------------------|
| Bangor | | | ✓ | ✓ | | ✓ | ✓ |
| Bethesda | 6.3 | 10.2 | ✓ | ✓ | | ✓ | ✓ |
| Llanberis | 7.2 | 11.6 | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Waunfawr | 3.8 | 6.1 | | | ✓ | ✓ | |
| Y Fron | 4.2 | 6.8 | | ✓ | | | |
| Nantlle | 1.7 | 2.7 | | | ✓ | | |
| Rhyd Ddu | 5.1 | 8.2 | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | |
| Beddgelert | 5.2 | 8.4 | ✓ | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Croesor | 4.4 | 7.2 | | | | ✓ | |
| Tanygrisiau | 4.6 | 7.4 | ✓ | | | ✓ | |
| Blaenau Ffestiniog | 1.9 | 2.9 | ✓ | ✓ | | ✓ | ✓ |
| Llan Ffestiniog | 3.5 | 5.7 | ✓ | ✓ | | ✓ | ✓ |
| Penmachno | 13.2 | 21.3 | ✓ | ✓ | | ✓ | |
| Conwy Falls | 2.8 | 4.6 | | | | ✓ | |
| Betws-y-Coed | 2.5 | 4.0 | ✓ | ✓ | | ✓ | ✓ |
| Capel Curig | 5.9 | 9.5 | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Bethesda | 11.0 | 17.6 | ✓ | ✓ | | ✓ | ✓ |

Accommodation in Bethesda is limited and some is distant from the Trail. Café at Antur Waunfawr has limited opening hours.

Lodge Dinorwig is a few miles short of Llanberis, directly on the route, and provides food and bunkhouse accommodation.