

## 3•5 Llan Ffestiniog to Penmachno

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**Distance** 13•2 miles 21•3 km

**Terrain** rough paths, open moorland with very boggy sections, quarry tracks

**Grade** steep climb out of Cwm Cynfal, then steep descent into Cwm Penmachno followed by undulating forest walk into Penmachno

**Food & drink** none between Llan Ffestiniog and Penmachno

**Side trip** Rhiwbach quarry and village remains, Cwm Heritage Drop-in Room, St Tudclud's church

**Summary** a tough but rewarding day, from the spectacular gorge and waterfalls of the Afon Cynfal to open moorland and a taste of real wilderness, followed by a steep descent to the remote ruined village and quarry workings of Rhiwbach



- From the Pengwern Arms, turn right down the road for just a few metres and cross over. Go through the gate into the field at the sign 'Rhaeadr Cynfal Falls'. Walk down the field to another gate on your left, signposted to the falls.
- Cross the field, aiming about 50 m left of the pole-mounted electricity substation, making for a footbridge in the bottom of the field. Climb the hill to a gate and along the path until you see two metal gates next to each other. Take the one on the right, signed 'Cynfal Falls'.
- Follow a broad grassy track alongside the wall/fence on your left, which takes you into the Cwm Cynfal Nature Reserve. Immediately turn right down the steps to the viewpoint. Cwm Cynfal is a hidden gem, little frequented but beautiful.

*Cwm Cynfal*



- After the viewpoint, turn right along a narrow path with the river on your left to join the main path. Descend this path down steps, cross the river and go up more steps to a path crossroads.
- Turn left at the crossroads, with the river to your left. This path hugs the edge of the gorge and is narrow in places. Exciting views may be enjoyed from the gorge edge, but take care.
- Pass under the towering viaduct, which carries the disused Blaenau Ffestiniog to Trawsfynydd railway. Continue up and down steps, through walls and over bridges, always with the rushing Afon Cynfal on your left.
-  Cross a half-stile and turn right to reach a lane where you go left. At the road junction, bear left until you meet the main road (A470): beware of traffic. Go into the fields opposite over a stile located just behind the end of the bridge parapet.
- Follow the fence and the river on your left until you reach a wooden gate slightly up the slope. Skirt the steep bank on your left.
- The public footpath bears sharply left but this area can be boggy: to avoid the bog you may prefer to pass above four large boundary trees to reach a gap in the wall at the lower edge of the slope.
- Once through the gap, keep to the dilapidated wall on your left. Pass through a wooden gate into an area of reeds crossed by a clear path that leads to a stile into the woods.
- Go left along the forest track, passing an abandoned building on your left to reach a stream which the forest track crosses on an embankment. Before the stream, a rough track goes left to a sturdy wooden footbridge over the river. Cross the field, climbing to the gate at the top right corner.
- Turn right along the lane. At a fork, take the left track signed 'Fferm Cwm farm'. Just before this historic building, go through the gate on the left into the field. Follow the wall and fence on your right, eventually to cross a stile. Afterwards, the route climbs left up the steep slope.
- Ascend a grassy path through the bracken, broadly along the field boundary and then beside a stream on your left. Near a small waterfall, bear right and continue with the fence on your left.

*Cwm Cynfal near Cwm farm*



- Pass a small slate tip and beware of a small mineshaft on the left, part of Cynfal copper mine. When you emerge onto fairly level ground, the view in front opens up to the impressive waterfall, Rhaeadr y Cwm.
- Ahead of you, the clear path contours the steep-sided valley, with the road above retained by high slate walls. Continue alongside the fence until you reach another gate to the road at a footpath sign. At the B4391, turn right and cross the road to the footpath sign just after the cattle grid.



- This next 5 km is the wildest of the entire Trail, much of it within the Migneint Site of Special Scientific Interest. Because waymarkers have had to be minimised, pay close attention to the map and instructions.
- Cross the stile and follow the fence, keeping to the slightly higher (and drier) ground to the right just below the crags. Aim for a stile in the left corner.
- The faint, grassy path beside the fence becomes a wider track, which passes over a hump between rocky outcrops.
- Follow the track to a T-junction and turn right towards Llyn Morwynion (Maidens' lake). 1 Skirt the left end of the lake, cross the dam and look for an iron gate to the left at the junction of the fence and the wall. Pass through it, following a narrow path leftwards below the crags.
- At the footpath post just beyond a ruin, gradually descend the slope on the left to a galvanised gate in the wall ahead. Do not pass through this gate but instead continue with the wall on your left.
- Make your way through the rushes, ignoring a stile on your left. Contour the hillside on your right, keeping the wall to your left, until you reach a further stile a short way ahead.
- Cross the stile and follow faint sheep tracks to the left, keeping the fence on your left, until you reach the abandoned farmstead of Garreglwyd. Cross over the stile and skirt around the right of the farm until you reach a footpath sign.
- Cross the field as directed by the footpath sign. Keep to the left of a field enclosure, then skirt to the right of the marsh, aiming for a stile at the junction of a wall and a fence.
- Go over the stile. To the left are waterworks buildings. Scramble up the steep grassy hillside immediately in front of you to reach a broad grassy track.
- Turn right along this track, bearing left at all junctions. You may wish to make a short detour to the top of the hill on your left to visit Bryn y Castell 2, a partly restored Iron Age fort.

- Follow the track leftwards into the valley of the Afon Gamallt, and cross it by a wooden footbridge. Continue along the track up the other side of the valley, beside the fence and along the line of Sarn Helen, the Roman road.
- Where the track bends off to the right, leave it to continue straight ahead, keeping to the fence past a small lake on its other side.
- Pass large rocky outcrops to left and right, along faint paths, where necessary taking to higher ground on the right to avoid wet areas, until you reach a footpath sign and stile.
- Cross the stile and descend the steep grassy slope as directed by the waymarker on the stile until you reach an old, grassy track going off left from the disused quarry. Take this, turning right when it reaches more level ground, to join the road at a prominent post.
- Climb the road to the right until you reach the quarry. At its entrance, go sharp right along a broad track which passes the remains of a radio station before dropping down to the Rhiwbach tramway. This took slate from Rhiwbach quarry to Blaenau Ffestiniog, and it leads to the head of a steep incline.
- Go carefully down the steep incline, bearing slightly left towards a pond as the incline enters a cutting. Cross the stile and explore the ruins of the works and the village.
- When finished, follow the track to the right of the fence. The track veers right and passes between the remains of buildings before going steeply down between slate tips.

*Cwm Teigl – the Trail runs along the near  
ridgeline*





*Cwm Penmachno*

- From the quarry gate, walk straight ahead along the road for about 770 m until you reach a converted church on the left. At this point, if time permits, visit the Cwm Heritage Drop-in Room about 50 m further down the road: access is gained on request and details of keyholders are given on the sign.
- Otherwise, go up the track on the left before the church. Climb the stile into the field and keep beside the fence, eventually to cross the stream on a timber footbridge.
- Follow a faint path up to a stile at the corner of the woods. Continue on the forest path, past the ruins of Hafod Fraith Uchaf. When you reach a forest road, turn right and follow it until you reach a forest crossroads.
- Continue straight ahead, and each time the track forks, bear right. After about 2.5 km you reach the road at the beginning of the Penmachno mountain bike trail.
- Turn left along the road for 175 m and then take the grassy lane down to the right, to pass stepping stones over the river. The grassy track becomes a tarmac road, White Street. At the fork, take the street on the left to reach Gethin Square outside the Eagles pub in the centre of Penmachno.



*Penmachno*