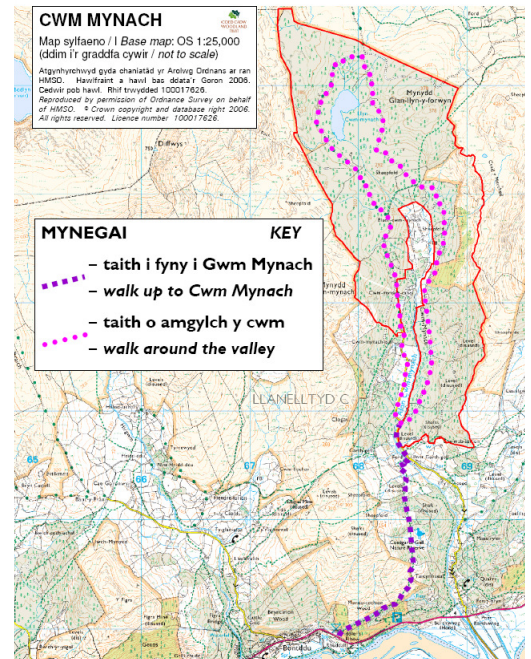


A great walk up to Cwm Mynach on public footpaths through woodland mainly but with beautiful views over the Mawddach estuary.

Relevant map - Ordnance Survey Explorer OL18 Cadair Idris and Llyn Tegid

- Park in the *Fiddler's Elbow* lay-by (Snowdonia National Park picnic area) on the A496 Dolgellau to Barmouth road, just on the eastern outskirts of the village of Bontddu.
- Take the public footpath from the lay-by. This track climbs, the two steepest sections on tarmac, passing through oak woodland, underplanted with Douglas fir and infested with *Rhododendron ponticum*.
- On reaching a wider turning area the track turns right back on itself. Do not follow the track, but instead go FORWARD on a narrow footpath which follows a moss-covered wall on the left hand side. You are now in attractive broadleaved woodland, with plentiful summer birdlife.
- Where the wall turns sharp left uphill, enter the RSPB reserve *Coed Garth Gell*. On the RSPB information panel our route follows the green trail northwards.
- The path soon forks: take the LEFT fork and begin to climb steeply on a rocky path surface, soon to leave the woodland and enter open heathland, with bell heather, western gorse and scattered rowan trees.
- Superb views open up to the right – of Cadair Idris, Dolgellau and the Mawddach estuary – and a bench has been provided to enjoy them!
- The path continues through scattered pockets of trees before going through a wall into a more wooded area, and the path becomes grassy.
- At a shady bench, go forward through a metal gate in a wall into young shady woodland of birch, with occasional mature oaks.
- The path drops gradually before levelling out and crossing on stone slabs a bog with cross-leaved heath and bog myrtle.
- It then rises slowly to another bench, before entering woodland again, and passes through an indistinct low old wall, continuing to undulate gently.
- Cross a streamlet on a stone slab bridge and immediately reach a path junction (where the RSPB circular route turns right) – continue FORWARD to soon reach the wall marking the boundary of the RSPB reserve and exit via a metal kissing gate.
- Ahead at the gate is the first glimpse of the rocky ridge on the eastern side of Cwm Mynach.
- As you enter the fields, please keep your dog on a leash here and wherever else there may be animals grazing.
- Continue forward and as the field opens out bear to the LEFT, keeping to the upper side of the field and converging with a tumbled down wall with a fence behind it.
- On reaching a low grassy ridge amidst the trees, aim for a gate in the field wall ahead, downhill from another gate in the corner of the field.
- As you reach the gate another public footpath on a grassy track joins our route from the right. Pass through the gateway and follow, as directed by the yellow public footpath arrow, the grassy track rightwards.
- Go through a wooden gate and pass the gable end of a barn, to then curve away leftwards on the stoned track.



- The track crosses a tumbled down wall and then turns right, sweeping downhill to soon meet another track where you turn RIGHT.
- Almost immediately go through a kissing gate and cross the river, Afon Cwm Mynach, on an old stone bridge (Pont Garth Gell) and join the public tarmac road in a few short steps.
- Turn LEFT onto the road and reach the conifer woodland of Cwm Mynach in 100 metres, shortly beyond a track (public footpath) on the right.
- In another short distance a gate across the road is reached. To the right is another gate with a ladder stile adjacent – this is the point to which you will return if you follow the route of a circular walk on the tracks around Cwm Mynach as described below.
- This section of the walk to this point takes about 1 ¼ hours.

A walk around Cwm Mynach: a long but easy circular walk mainly on forest tracks

- Go through the gate across the tarmac road and cross Afon Cwm Mynach on the stone bridge. Please keep your dog on a leash as animals graze here.
- Follow the public road through the fields of Cwm Mynach Isaf farm, which you pass on your left, before the road enters a section between two drystone walls and reaches another gate.
- Go onwards through the gate and enter the woodland. As the road begins to climb, the tarmac surface finishes at a fork. From the fork you could follow the route of a shorter circular walk in Cwm Mynach described in the book “Walks Around the Rhinogs” by Michael Burnett (Kittiwake Books, 2004).
- For the longer walk on the track which goes right around Cwm Mynach take the LEFT fork. This route will return you down to the ladder stile near the stone bridge on the public road mentioned above and will take about 2 ½ hours.
- Please take care on the track in case forestry lorries or machinery are working in the wood, and take heed of any advisory notices for your safety.
- The track climbs steeply, gradually levelling out soon after another track joins from behind on the left. You soon pass the ruins of an old settlement on the right.
- Ignore the public footpath that leaves the track on the right, and keep following the track which climbs very gently along the side of the valley. In the summer colourful dragonflies and damselflies patrol the track verges. Through breaks in the trees you can see the craggy far side of the valley, eventually glimpsing Llyn Cwm Mynach, the lake at the head of the valley, below you on the right hand side.
- Soon the track swings eastwards and there is a track junction on the RIGHT, which you will follow.
- You may wish to walk on first however for a few yards to reach another track junction on the LEFT, from where there are fine views northwards towards the moorland and ridges of the Rhinog range.
- Retrace your steps to the first junction and now turn LEFT into it (there is a gate, usually open, on the track in a short distance). The track is now going southwards and drops gently. Soon Llyn Cwm Mynach appears again on your right. Keep an eye out for ruins of sheepfolds and settlements amidst the trees.
- After crossing some of Cwm Mynach’s open heathland with heather and bilberry, the track enters conifer woodland again and soon passes two public footpath junctions, one on either side, which again you ignore.
- When the track reaches a junction on the right (ahead) keep LEFT and then very soon afterwards another junction on the left (ahead) keep RIGHT.
- The track passes through blocks of felled woodland now regenerating with broadleaved trees, and then runs along some of the ancient oak woodland on the left hand side, full of mosses and lichens and summer birdsong – an image of the future for Cwm Mynach!
- The track goes onwards down the valley, passing tall older conifer trees. Continue FORWARD where a track joins from behind on the left.
- Another large open area replanted with young trees is reached and the track soon comes to a lorry turning circle just in front of the gate with the ladder stile adjacent, which you cross to rejoin the public road near the stone bridge over Afon Cwm Mynach.
- From here, retrace the initial route back down to the lay-by in Bontddu (in about ¾ hour).