

Moelwyns

Skills

Skills

Snowdon

Snowdon

Glyders

Glyders

Carneddau

Carneddau

Moelwyns

Moelwyns

West Snowdonia

West Snowdonia

South Snowdonia

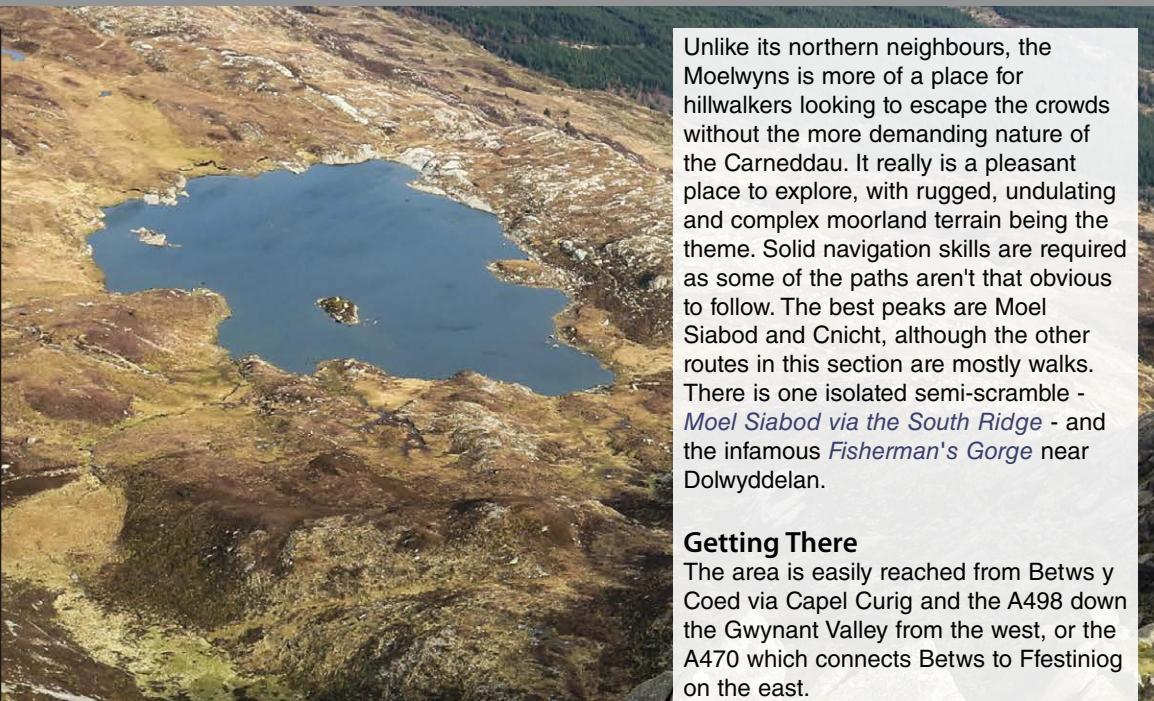
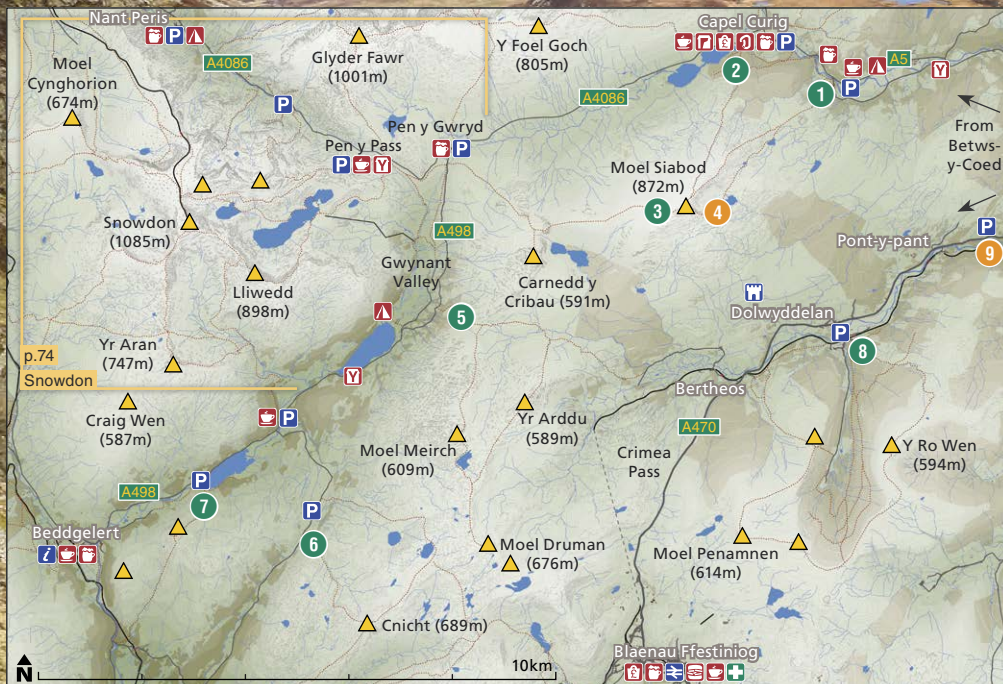
South Snowdonia

Snowdonia Winter

Snowdonia Winter



Amazing walking in the Moelwyns. The view from peak 672m, on the extension of the *Moel Meirch Horseshoe* (Hard) - p.228 - looking towards the Crimea Pass. Photo: Karl Midlane



Unlike its northern neighbours, the Moelwyns is more of a place for hillwalkers looking to escape the crowds without the more demanding nature of the Carneddau. It really is a pleasant place to explore, with rugged, undulating and complex moorland terrain being the theme. Solid navigation skills are required as some of the paths aren't that obvious to follow. The best peaks are Moel Siabod and Cnicht, although the other routes in this section are mostly walks. There is one isolated semi-scramble - *Moel Siabod via the South Ridge* - and the infamous *Fisherman's Gorge* near Dolwyddelan.

Getting There
The area is easily reached from Betws y Coed via Capel Curig and the A498 down the Gwynant Valley from the west, or the A470 which connects Betws to Ffestiniog on the east.

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Katrin Frosin on *Moel Siabod via the South Ridge* (1) - p.227 . Photo: Jack Thompson



Moel Siabod from Capel Curig Area

The isolated summit of Moel Siabod is a lovely mountain with a long whale-back ridge stretching from Capel Curig to just above the Pen y Gwryd hotel. The two main ridges are pleasant routes and also included is the popular walk straight up from Plas y Brenin. The highlight for the scrambler is *Moel Siabod via the South Ridge* which gives an easy approach to an exciting final barrier.

Approach to parking spots - Capel Curig is in the centre of Snowdonia on the A5 between Betws-y-Coed and the coast road. It can also be reached from Llanberis up the Llanberis Pass and turning left at the top. The routes in this section start either from lay-by parking just west of Plas y Brenin. The other parking is down the A5 in the Betws-y-Coed direction about 300m south-west of the Tyn y Coed Hotel. If using two cars for the *Moel Siabod Traverse via Carnedd y Cribau* then leave the second car at free parking a little to the east of the Pen y Gwryd hotel.

1 Moel Siabod via the East Ridge Mid

Distance	Ascent	Descent	Height Gain
~11 km	3-4 hours	2 hours	700m

A great walk up this isolated peak at the northeastern end of the Moelwyns. The final rocky summit ridge is easy in the dry, but extreme slippery when wet and best avoided via a lower path.

- From the large lay-by, turn right up the road, then take the first left and cross the bridge of Pont Cyfyng. After 50m go right up a track.
- Use a path to avoid the farmyard and then pass a holiday cottage on the left before rejoining the main track.
- Go up this track through a series of gates before a final gate where the track turns into more of a path.
- Turn right and then after 20m, turn left up a smaller path that heads up the East Ridge. Follow the path to a flattening below a prominent rocky rise onto the final summit ridge.
- In dry conditions, take the rocky ridge in a fantastic position. You eventually drop off the rocky ridge to a grassy col. Carry straight on to the summit.
- 5a)** In wet conditions, avoid the summit ridge by going right on a grass terrace on the north side of the ridge. Join the path at the far side of the rocky ridge just past the grassy col. Carry straight on to the summit.

Descent - From the summit, descend to the col and take the lower (wet conditions) path to reverse the route. Alternatively, a loop can be made by reversing *Moel Siabod from Llynau Mymbyr* and then using the connecting path through the woods close to the banks of Afon Llugwy.

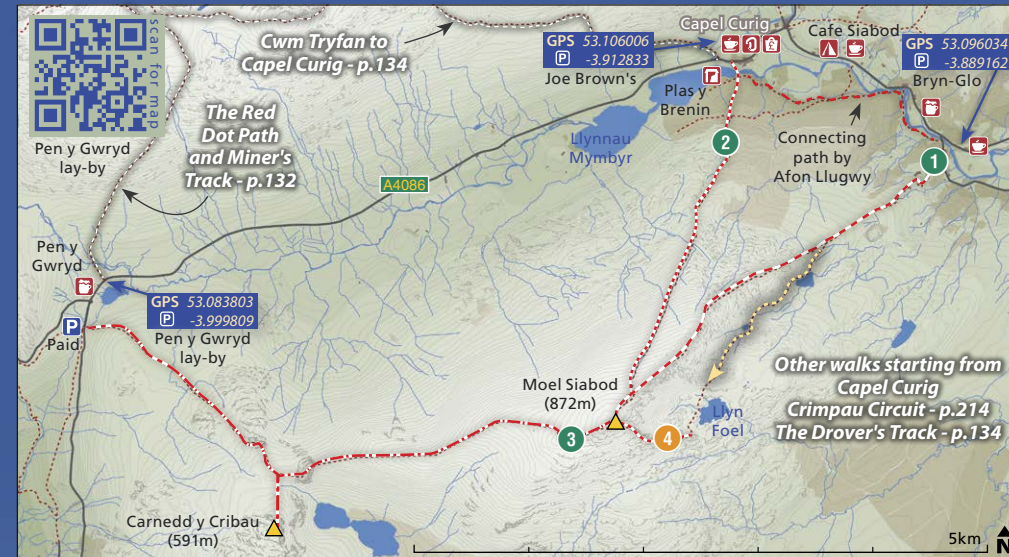
2 Moel Siabod from Llynau Mymbyr Mid

Distance	Ascent	Descent	Height Gain
~10 km	3-4 hours	2 hours	700m

This is the quickest way up and down Moel Siabod. Making the route circular can be challenging and often results in wet feet due to the boggy terrain found around the base of the mountain.

- From the parking by Plas y Brenin, walk towards the centre and turn right before the building and down to a footbridge.
- Cross the bridge and follow the path up through the woods to quickly reach a small T-junction.
- Turn right and head up to a more major junction with a forest track. Turn left and then almost immediately right to follow a path up the side of a previously forested area.
- Pass through one gate where the track gets a little smaller and continue up to a stile where the open hillside begins.
- Follow the path initially in the same direction, then diagonally up across the hillside through a couple of boggy areas - tricky to follow.
- As you come out of the boggy terrain, the path starts to rise up towards the rocky east ridge of Moel Siabod. It eventually meets some scree at the end of the true rocky spur near a small bwlch between the rocky ridge and the summit.
- Turn right and walk up to the summit where there is a small stone shelter.

Descent - Reverse the route if you want a short day. Carefully descending *Moel Siabod via the East Ridge* (check comments about wet conditions path) is also an option to create a longer loop which can be closed using the connecting path through the woods close to the banks of Afon Llugwy.



3 Moel Siabod Traverse via Carnedd y Cribau Mid

Distance	Ascent	Descent	Height Gain
~11 km	3-4 hours	2 hours	700m

A fine walk which requires two cars or the use of the Sherpa Bus Service from Pen y Gwryd to Capel. The views on the descent towards Snowdon are spectacular and it is usually quiet, especially from Moel Siabod summit onwards.

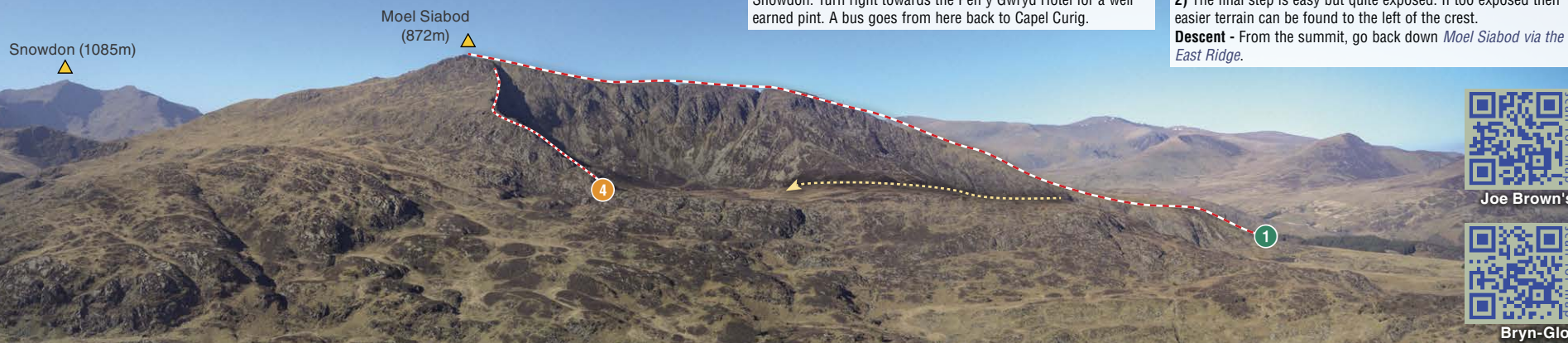
- Follow either route to the summit of Moel Siabod.
- Head west down the ridge towards Snowdon which snakes down towards the col of Bwlch Rhiw'r Ychen.
- It is a short out-and-back from the col to the summit of Carnedd y Cribau.
- Go northwest down through the broken ground to reach a large plateau. Cross this (boggy) until the hillside drops away and you can see the Pen y Gwryd.
- Descend to a stile by the main road by the parking for Snowdon. Turn right towards the Pen y Gwryd Hotel for a well earned pint. A bus goes from here back to Capel Curig.

4 Moel Siabod via the South Ridge 1

Distance	Ascent	Descent	Height Gain
~9 km	3-4 hours	1.5 hours	724m

A great scramble up the sunny south face of the mountain with an excellent outlook. The scrambling is generally easy and any difficulty is mostly avoidable apart from one long and exposed step at the top of the ridge. *Photo on p.225.*

- Getting to the start** - Follow *Moel Siabod via the East Ridge* to the gate at the end of section 3. Carry straight on past a lake and then some ruined quarry workings and finally up the left side of a quarried pool. Continue up and over a shoulder before heading straight across a boggy area to the right of Llyn Foel to arrive at the base of the South Ridge (Daer Ddu).
- The ridge curves up and to the right towards the summit. Follow this as directly as you want, with occasional easy steps, until the scrambling gets a little harder towards the top.
 - The final step is easy but quite exposed. If too exposed then easier terrain can be found to the left of the crest.
- Descent** - From the summit, go back down *Moel Siabod via the East Ridge*.



**Moelwyns from Nant Gwynant**

Cnicht has often been described as the Matterhorn of Snowdonia because of the shape of the mountain when viewed from the Porthmadog direction. Sadly for mountaineers, it does not climb like the Matterhorn, but for walkers it gives an incredible walk with impressive exposure along the summit ridge. To the northwest of Cnicht, the slightly lesser peak of Moel Meirch features on a good remote circuit which has great views towards Snowdon. Further down the valley is a more leisurely walk which takes on some interesting industrial features as well as the more touristy hotspot of Beddgelert.

5 Moel Meirch Horseshoe Hard

Distance	Ascent	Descent	Height Gain
~10 km	3-4 hours	1.5 hours	500m

A nice remote walk with a wild feel about it. Some of the paths are vague and good navigation skills are required. Start at the parking in Nant Gwynant. *Photo on p.222.*

- 1) From the bend where you have parked, go up the signed path, steeply at first, through more open hillsides to reach a wooded area. Carry on to the col of Bwlch y Rhediad.
- 2) From the col, turn right and follow a path along the side of the intermittent double fence towards the summit of Moel Meirch.
- 3) From the summit, go south to Llyn Edno where you can then take in the small top (672m) beyond Ysgafell Wen if you wish.
- 4) Then head northeast towards the slender summit of Yr Arddu.
- 5) From the top, drop down in a northwesterly direction to some drystone walls. Follow one of these northwards, straight down the hillside, to a small stream leading to a track.
- 6) Turn left and go over a small bridge then up the other side to another junction.
- 7) Head left here back to the col of Bwlch y Rhediad and down to the car.

6 Cnicht Horseshoe Hard

Distance	Ascent	Descent	Height Gain
~11 km	3-4 hours	2 hours	500m

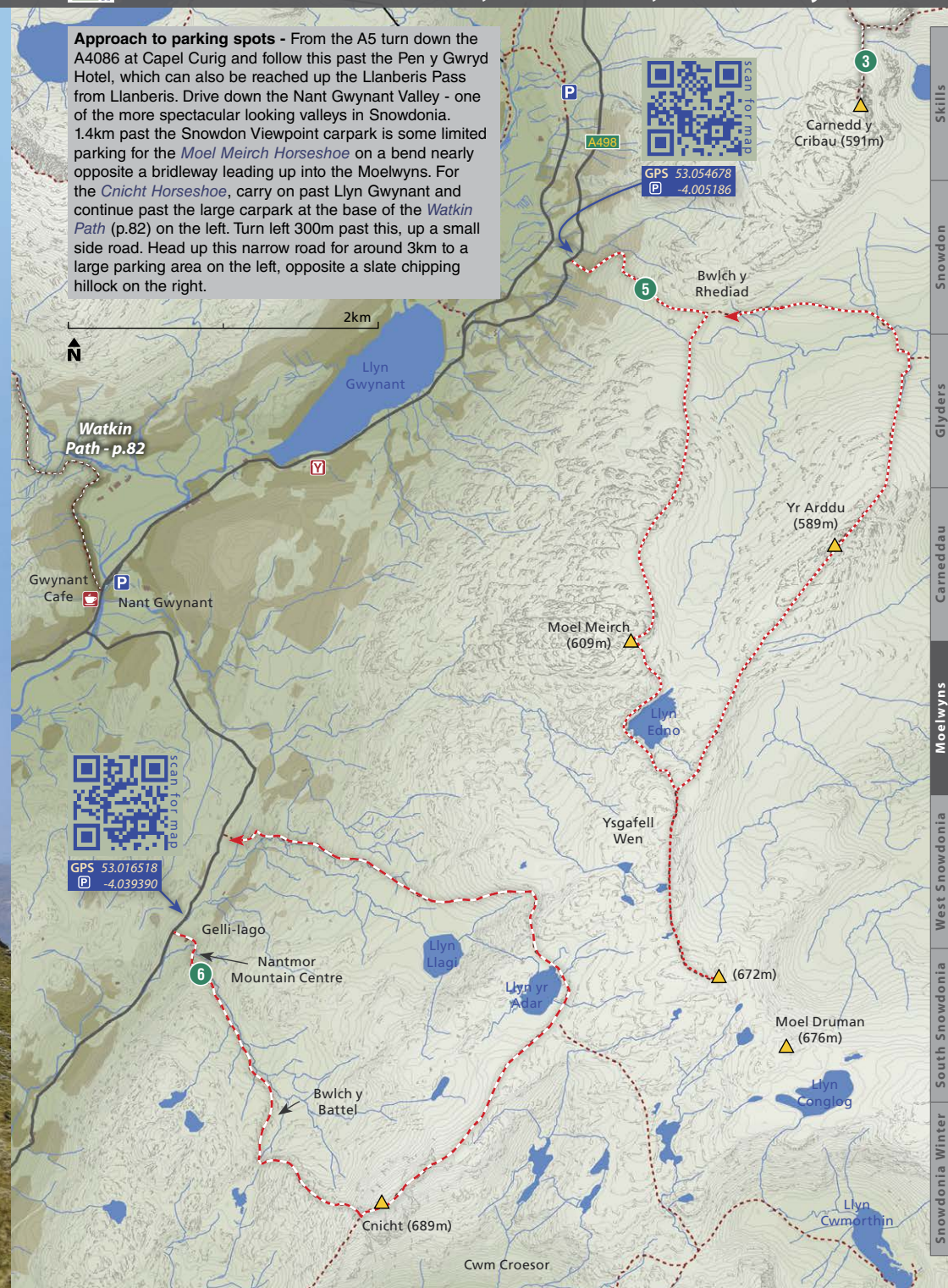
A great route with spectacular views and some mind-blowing exposure on the summit ridge of this striking mountain. Start on the minor road below Gelli-lago. *Photo on this page.*

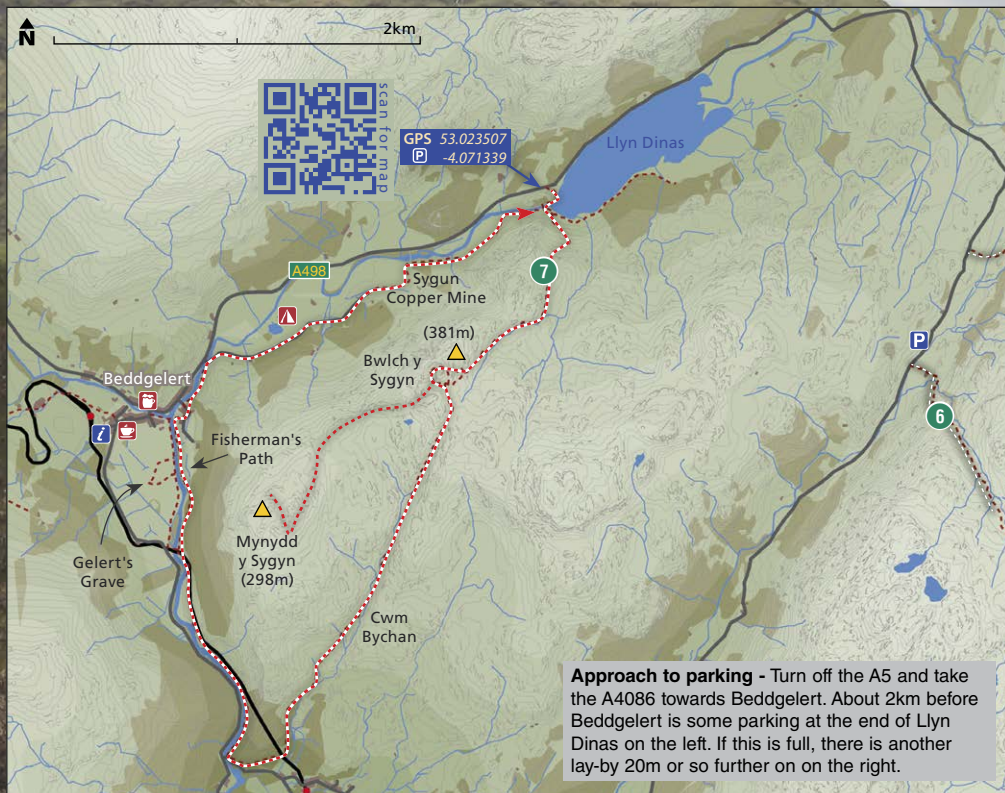
- 1) From the roadside, go along the road for 100m and turn left over a bridge and gate towards Nantmor Mountain Centre - a scout hut.
- 2) Keep left of the hut and ascend a steep path that zig-zags up the side of a stream then eases off as you reach a small valley.
- 3) Continue up the right-hand side of the river to reach an open area on the right - Bwlch y Battel.
- 4) Cross the short boggy section to gain the ridge and either head straight up and over the ridge, or take a path that skirts up to its left.
- 5) Where the ridge disappears into the hillside, aim for a scree-filled gully on the left and go up it to a flat shoulder below a steep section of the ridge.
- 6) Tackle the steep section which is relatively straightforward and takes you to the broad grassy summit ridge. The ridge is exposed, especially to the right down into Cwm Croesor.
- 7) From the southern summit, traverse the ridge and over the northern top and continue straight on to Llyn yr Adar. Follow the path around the far side of Llyn yr Adar and over a small rise before dropping leftwards down into a steep gully.
- 8) The path leads down the right side of the gully, to the right of Llyn Llagi then down the hillside to the right side of the stream back to the road. Turn left and the parking is around 300m down the road. The Gwynant Cafe offers some great coffee and cake should you need refuelling.



Walkers heading along the amazing summit ridge of Cnicht on the *Cnicht Horseshoe* (Hard) - *this page*. Photo: Karl Midlane

Approach to parking spots - From the A5 turn down the A4086 at Capel Curig and follow this past the Pen y Gwryd Hotel, which can also be reached up the Llanberis Pass from Llanberis. Drive down the Nant Gwynant Valley - one of the more spectacular looking valleys in Snowdonia. 1.4km past the Snowdon Viewpoint carpark is some limited parking for the *Moel Meirch Horseshoe* on a bend nearly opposite a brideway leading up into the Moelwyns. For the *Cnicht Horseshoe*, carry on past Llyn Gwynant and continue past the large carpark at the base of the *Watkin Path* (p.82) on the left. Turn left 300m past this, up a small side road. Head up this narrow road for around 3km to a large parking area on the left, opposite a slate chipping hillock on the right.





Approach to parking - Turn off the A5 and take the A4086 towards Beddgelert. About 2km before Beddgelert is some parking at the end of Llyn Dinas on the left. If this is full, there is another lay-by 20m or so further on on the right.

Cwm Bychan Ropeway

You would be forgiven for thinking you have entered some forgotten Welsh ski resort as you come into Cwm Bychan. The remains of the cable-way are from an early 20th century copper mine. It was used to transport the ore from the working to the processing plant near Nant Mor. This ruins give a surreal feeling to the valley.

7 Cwm Bychan Circuit **Mid**

Distance	Ascent	Descent	Height Gain
~10 km	3-4 hours	1 hours	200m

A short walk with amazing views across the area. It is popular with less energetic hillwalkers and is easy to combine with an ice cream or coffee and cake in Beddgelert, plus a visit to the infamous Gelert's Grave. Start from the end of Llyn Dinas.

Photo this page and p.60.

- 1) From the parking, go towards Llyn Dinas and cross the bridge. Turn left and walk round the side of the lake to a path on the right that leads up onto the hillside.
 - 2) Follow this path to the col of Bwlch y Sygyn. You can carry on to tick the little summit of Mynydd Sygyn.
 - 3) Back at Bwlch y Sygyn, turn right and head to the top of Cwm Bychan. This small valley leads down past some old cable-way towers and looks a little like an abandoned ski resort.
 - 4) Drop down to the Cwm Bychan carpark - toilets if needed.
 - 5) Go through a tunnel under the Welsh Highland Railway. A small path leads up and round a woodland to gain the Fisherman's Path up the side of the Aberglaslyn Gorge.
 - 6) Follow this all the way into Beddgelert and cross the bridge into the village.
- Stop for refreshments and a visit to Gelert's Grave (which gives the village its name) and read about the dog's incredible story.*
- 7) Go back across the bridge and turn left down the side of the river. After 300m turn right down a small road and follow the road to its end.
 - 8) A path leads to the approach to the Sygyn Copper Mine. Carry on along a riverside path and make your way back to the footbridge at Llyn Dinas. Turn left here and head back to the car.

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An unknown walker heading along the ridge just above the main footpath towards the summit of Mynydd y Sygyn on the *Cwm Bychan Circuit* (Mid) - *opposite*.

Gelert's Grave

In the 13th century, Llywelyn, Prince of North Wales, had a palace at Beddgelert. One day he went hunting without Gelert "the faithful hound" who was unaccountably absent. On Llywelyn's return, the truant, stained and smeared with blood, joyfully sprang to meet his master. The prince was alarmed and hastened to find his son, finding the infant's cot empty, the bedclothes and floor covered with blood. The frantic father plunged the sword into the hound's side thinking it had killed his heir. The dog's dying yell was answered by a child's cry. Llywelyn searched and discovered his boy unharmed but nearby lay the body of a mighty wolf which Gelert had slain. Filled with remorse, the Prince is said never to have smiled again. He buried Gelert here. The spot is called Beddgelert.



8 Cwm Penamnen Horseshoe ... Mid

Distance	Ascent	Descent	Height Gain
~16 km	4-5 hours	1.5 hours	610m

An enjoyable and quiet circuit around the hidden Cwm Penamnen valley to the south of Dolwyddelan. The walk has superb views towards Moel Siabod and Snowdon and even into the eastern end of the Carneddau. To the south you look across wild moorland towards the remote Arenig Fawr and Fach. The only down side is a boggy section after the peak of Y Ro Wen as you descend to walk round the head of the valley. Start from the station in Dolwyddelan.

- 1) From the station carpark, go back up to the High Street and turn left. Cross over the railway and bear left. Continue to the end of the road and turn left down a gravel road just before the last terrace.
 - 2) Walk down here for 100m to a track on the right up the hill just past a farmhouse.
 - 3) This track leads up the side of the forestry. Go straight on at a junction and then around to the right to gain the ridge-line.
 - 4) Follow this to a sharp left turn on the ridge and carry straight on to the summit of Y Ro Wen.
 - 5) The next section can be damp. Try and keep to the top of broad ridge-line. The forest boundary to the right is easier to follow, but is damper underfoot and undulates a lot. Follow this round to the top of the valley where the ridge starts to become more defined and moves close enough to the forest boundary that you can easily find the optional early descent back into Cwm Penamnen
- Descent from here** - Drop down the path through the forest, either straight down or take any of the main forest tracks that lead right. They all eventually meet the main track out of the cwm on the eastern side of the valley.
- 6) Carry on round the edge of the valley to Foel-Fras. From here, head almost due west to the summit of Moel Penamnen.

7) Go north along the broad ridge then back east to the edge of the forestry. Go along the edge of the forest to a small col before Pen y Benar.

Descent from here - Turn right and drop down into Cwm Penamnen and the track at the bottom which leads back to Dolwyddelan.

8) From the col, take the path northwest down towards Bertheos.

9) About 300m before the farm, turn right and contour across the hillside to eventually gain a more prominent track.

10) Turn right on this track, which soon turns into a less-defined path. This takes you through deciduous woodland to Dolwyddelan.

9 Fisherman's Gorge 1

Distance	Ascent	Descent	Height Gain
~1.5 km	1-2 hours	~ hours	20m

A unique journey which is great for a short day, but best avoided when the river is high and raging. On the narrowest section is a walkway above the river which requires a certain confidence. Despite some effort to make this traverse safe with new bolting and a clip-line, there are places that need careful management. The walkway was built a while ago to help fisherman access this section of the river. Start from the lay-by off the A470.

Photo opposite.

Getting to the start - Walk back 100m towards Betws y Coed on the river side of the road to a gate and descend to the right to the start of the gorge.

- 1) The walkway starts with a short rocky scrambling section - bolts to protect if required. This leads to the main walkway and more substantial clip-line.
- 2) At its end, climb a ladder back out. You can escape here or continue on a couple more ladders that lead down and back up from a bay to add little to the outing.

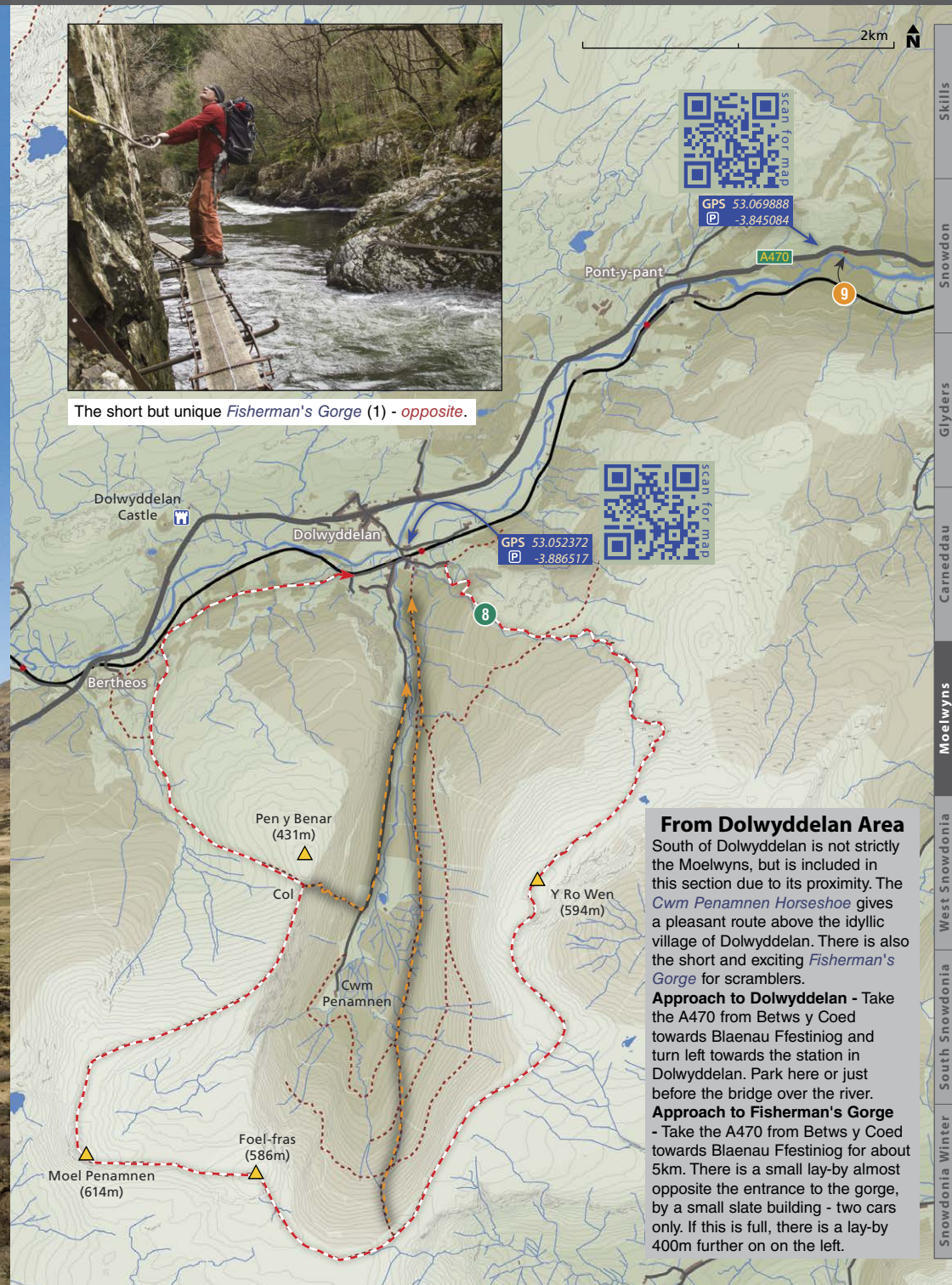
Dolwyddelan Castle

This beautiful remote castle feels like it should have featured in Game of Thrones. It is not as impressive as the main castles of Gwynedd, but it is still well worth a visit. Built in the 13th Century by Llywelyn the Great (Prince of Gwynedd and Wales), it fell to the Edward I of England in 1283 during his conquest of Wales. Edward added to the castle and used it, along with six other castles, to subdue local insurgencies for many years.

Dolwyddelan Castle, with Yr Aran and the Snowdon Horseshoe just visible on the skyline.



The short but unique *Fisherman's Gorge* (1) - *opposite*.



From Dolwyddelan Area

South of Dolwyddelan is not strictly the Moelwyns, but is included in this section due to its proximity. The *Cwm Penamnen Horseshoe* gives a pleasant route above the idyllic village of Dolwyddelan. There is also the short and exciting *Fisherman's Gorge* for scramblers.

Approach to Dolwyddelan - Take the A470 from Betws y Coed towards Blaenau Ffestiniog and turn left towards the station in Dolwyddelan. Park here or just before the bridge over the river.

Approach to Fisherman's Gorge - Take the A470 from Betws y Coed towards Blaenau Ffestiniog for about 5km. There is a small lay-by almost opposite the entrance to the gorge, by a small slate building - two cars only. If this is full, there is a lay-by 400m further on on the left.