



WALK TWO

The Rhyd Ddu Path and the Snowdon Ranger

Formerly known as the Beddgelert Path, the approach to Snowdon by the Rhyd Ddu Path is probably the least used. Yet it passes across outstanding mountain landscapes and, for those out late in the day, offers the prospect of incredible sunsets beyond bulky Moel Hebog and the undulating Nantlle Ridge. As a line of ascent, it is preferable to the Snowdon Ranger. You can judge for yourself, as the route continues over Snowdon and down the Snowdon Ranger, although it abandons the full descent in favour of a cross-country route that eliminates road walking.

The Route

Walk across the car park and continue alongside the railway track, and then turn right through a gate, crossing the railway line, to continue along a well-defined track. On your left is a ruined round tower that was the powder house for Ffridd Slate Quarry, now disused.

When the track divides, bear right, climbing gently as the track passes between the waste tip and the ruined buildings of the quarry, which closed in the

1860s. Cross a stile and soon you reach a gate/stile with views to your right of Llyn y Gadair and Y Garn in the distance. The track beyond the stile soon bends to the left, bringing into view **Llyn Cwellyn** in the valley to your left. Presently you reach another gate/stile with an easily missed sign on the rock opposite: 'Snowdon, first gate on left'. Just beyond this point, the path bears to the left. The path coming in from your right is an alternative start of the Rhyd Ddu path from Pitt's Head and Ffridd Uchaf, although parking

↑ *The Snowdon Ranger Path snakes above Clogwyn Du'r Arddu to Snowdon summit*

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ROUTE INFORMATION

Distance	14km/8¾ miles
Height gain	970m/3182ft
Time	5–6 hours
Grade	energetic
Start point	Rhyd Ddu village SH571526

Getting there

Car park a little south of Rhyd Ddu village on the A4085 Beddgelert–Caernarfon road, adjacent to the Rhyd Ddu station

Maps

(Harvey Superwalker) Snowdonia and the Moelwynion; (Ordnance Survey) OL17 Snowdon/Yr Wyddfa

After-walk refreshment

Tea room and pub in Rhyd Ddu, and hotels, restaurants, pubs and cafés in Beddgelert



Old powder house at start of Rhyd-Ddu path

the path emerges onto the shoulder of Llechog. From here, you can see right across **Cwm Clogwyn** and through Bwlch Cwm Brwynog, flanked by Moel Cynghorion, on the left, and Clogwyn Du'r Arddu, and down towards Llanberis.

Continuing to your right, the path climbs the Llechog ridge through a harsh landscape, one that is very exposed to the prevailing wind. The landscape is dominated by frost-shattered rocks, and what little vegetation that is found here is low growing and stunted. Soon, you reach a wall meeting you on the right, from beside which there is a superb view into Cwm Clogwyn, housing three tiny lakes, **Llyn Nadroedd** (Lake of the Snakes), **Llyn Coch** (Red Lake) and **Llyn Glas** (Blue Lake). This wild and lovely

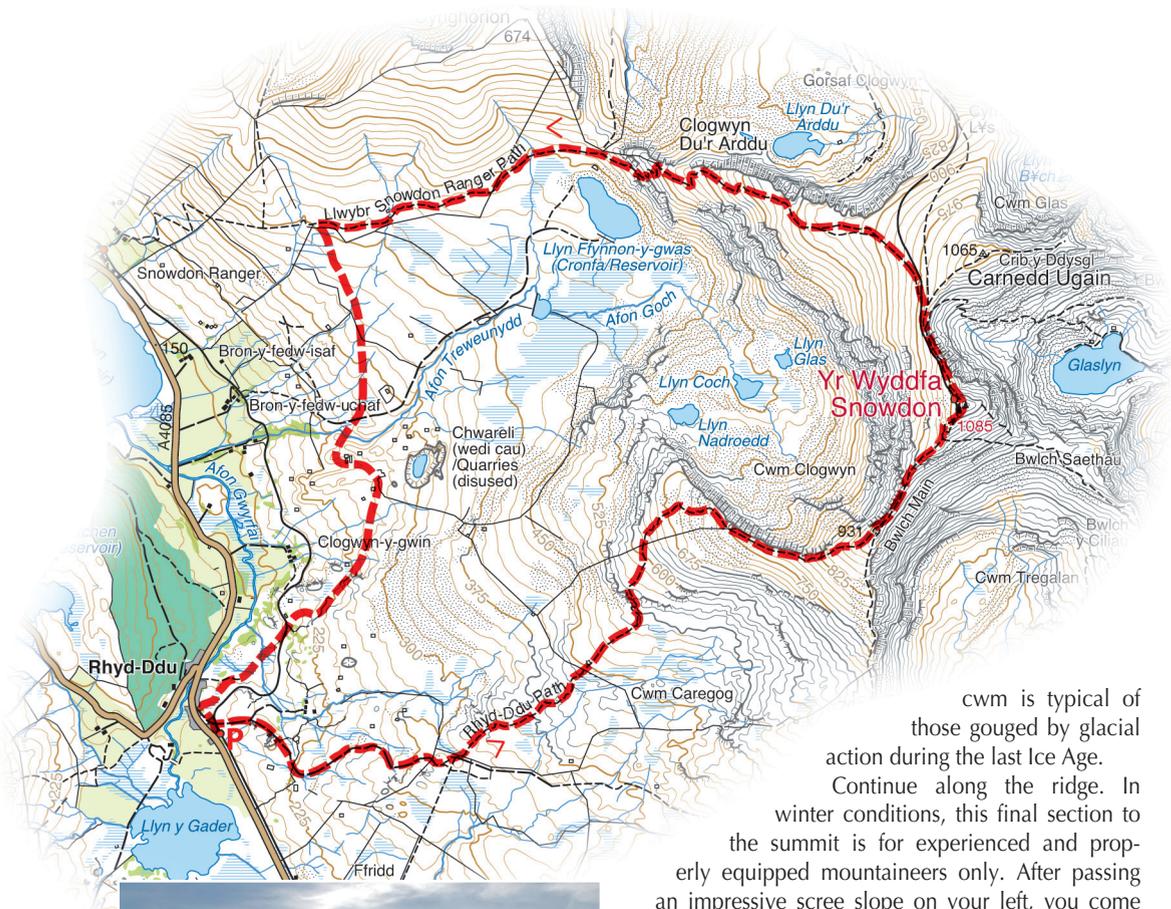
is very limited at this starting point. The track in front of you is the old miners' route to the slate quarries at Bwlch Cwm y Llan, below Yr Aran, and it is now used to reach Yr Aran, or Cwm Llan and the Watkin Path up Snowdon.

Pass through a gate and cross a stream. The path continues to climb gently, and gradually broadens. The landscape is now one of tangled heather and rock, through which the path leads to another stile with sheep pens to the left of the path. On your right is the wide expanse of **Cwm Caregog** bounded on the far side by Allt Maenderyn (Hill of the Bird Stone), a fine, narrow ridge used in Walk Three. The path soon becomes steeper and rougher underfoot.

The path crosses a stream, and climbs steeply until it reaches a wall. This section of the path is straightforward, but is bouldery and uneven. Through a gate in the wall,



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Looking along the Allt Maenderyn ridge

cwm is typical of those gouged by glacial action during the last Ice Age.

Continue along the ridge. In winter conditions, this final section to the summit is for experienced and properly equipped mountaineers only. After passing an impressive scree slope on your left, you come to the beginning of Bwlch Main, also known as the 'Saddle'. From here you can look across Cwm Tregalan to the Watkin Path on the right, and into Cwm Clogwyn to your left.

Bwlch Main is a narrow col, and is extremely exposed to the wind. It is safe, in reasonable conditions, provided you keep to the path.

The path soon starts to climb steeply again and meets the Watkin Path coming from the right at a solitary marker stone. The summit is only a few minutes climb away up a gentle but bouldery slope.

From the top of **Snowdon**, a constructed path leads down beside the railway line. In years gone by, climbers on their way down from Cloggy would put a slab of rock across the rails, sit on it, and slide down to Llanberis. It's unthinkable that anyone would do that now; it must have been both a high-risk and exhilarating practice, and it is a wonder no one was killed doing it. Very much a case of 'Don't try this at home!'

The Llanberis Path and the **Snowdon Ranger Path** are one at the top of Snowdon, and closely follow the railway track. On the way down you pass

a prominent marker stone on your right, where the Pyg Track descends for Pen y Pass. A short way further on, look for another marker stone over the other side of the railway on your left at the start of the Snowdon Ranger path. Follow this down above the cliffs of **Clogwyn Du'r Arddu** you reach the pass, Bwlch Cwm Brwynog, where you carry on along the path for a further 1.5km (1 mile).

Clogwyn Du'r Arddu (the Black Cliff) is considered by many rock climbers to be among the finest cliffs in Britain, north facing and remote, and combining unrelenting steepness, seriousness and quality of rock. From the 1930s until 2000, 'Cloggy' maintained the record among the climbing fraternity of having the most difficult climbs in Britain, and many routes first climbed by the likes of the Abraham brothers, Joe Brown, Don Whillans, Colin Kirkus and Pete Crew are still high-ranking. To peer down the cliffs you need to leave the descending Snowdon Ranger Path, but do not do so if the wind is likely to be blowing from behind you – and stay well away from the very edge.

To head back to Rhyd Ddu you need to quit the Snowdon Ranger Path (although if you stick with it,

you will eventually reach the A4085, and can turn left to walk back along this). For a more direct route, however, keep an eye open for a stile over a wall on the left (approximately at SH576553), just before the ground starts to fall away steeply again. Cross this stile into the moor beyond. The ongoing path is continuous but indistinct at times, aided by white marker posts that lead down to a stile in a fence, and then continue towards slate tips ahead. Pass round the right-hand edge of the tips, crossing a bridge over a stream, then up into the tips.

These **tips** are fascinating and a famous Welsh poet, T H Parry Williams (1887–1975, who lived at Rhyd Ddu) wrote about how every piece of slate we are walking on has been through someone's hands.

Parry Williams was the first poet to win the double of Chair and Crown at the National Eisteddfod of Wales, which he achieved at Wrexham in 1912 and repeated at Bangor in 1915.

When you emerge from the tips continue following markers over boggy ground until you reach and cross the railway and arrive back at the village car park.

