



Snowdon walk

A beginners guide to safely climbing the highest mountain in England and Wales.



Length 11 km / 7 miles

Toughness 7 out of 10 (9/10 for the non Pen-y-Pass routes)

Maps OS Explorer OL17 (Snowdon)

Features Snowdon (3,560 feet / 1,085 m) is the highest mountain in England and Wales. It is also the country's most climbed hill. There are several footpaths, and a narrow gauge steam railway to the summit, and a cafe when you get there. In clear weather, you can see all of Snowdonia, Anglesey laid out like a map, and even as far as the Lake District and Ireland. However there are many days when the summit is covered in low cloud when you will see nothing!

This advice is aimed at the thousands of people with little mountain experience (together with their young children and dogs) who climb Snowdon every year. Experienced hill walkers can skip most of the safety advice, and skip to the practical details about buses and car parks.

Snowdon is a 'star fish shaped' mountain with several glacial ridges (arêtes) leading to a central summit, many of which have a path, and all of which involve at least 2,400 feet / 800 metres of ascent and descent. However, this is still achievable, albeit with a lot of effort, even by the less

fit. The only exception is the Snowdon Horseshoe / Crib Goch path, which involves scrambling on an exposed (i.e. steep drops on both sides) ridge - one for the experienced in good conditions only.

It is essential that you check the Snowdonia [weather forecast](#) before you leave home.

- While you can still climb safely in mist and rain, you may not see much further than your nose from the top, in which case you may decide a lower level walk is more fun.
- In poor visibility, inexperienced walkers should stick to the easier, more popular, paths from Llanberis or Pen-y-pass.
- Some snow on the summit is OK, but winter conditions - strong wind, heavy rain and especially ice are far more serious.
- Do not be afraid to turn back. Do not carry on regardless

Do start early - the Snowdon car parks can get full quite early, especially on sunny days / weekends / school holidays

Finally, Snowdon is the most popular mountain in the country for good reasons - getting to the top is an achievement and the views are amazing

Walk Options

There are several paths to the top of Snowdon. Choose a route to go up, and another to go down. Distances below are one way.

For inexperienced hill walkers, the Miners' Track and Pyg Tracks (starting at Pen-y-Pass) are recommended - least ascent and well maintained paths

The classic Snowdon Horseshoe, for experienced walkers only, is the Miners Track + Crib Gosh up, and Horseshoe Down.

Route	Miles	Km	Feet	Metres	Notes
Snowdon via Miners Track - starts Pen-y-Pass	4.0	6.4	2,450	750	Easiest way up
.. Crib Gosh / Horseshoe Up					Spectacular knide edge ridge - only for experienced walkers in good weather
Snowdon via Pyg Track - starts Pen-y-Pass	3.2	5.1	2,400	725	Easiest way down

Snowdon via Y Lliwedd / Horseshoe Down - starts Pen-y-Pass	4.1	6.6	3,000	925	Some loose scree near the top - A good up option for experienced walkers who don't fancy Crib Goch
Snowdon via Llanberis Path	4.4	7.2	3,100	950	Gentle, but greater, ascent than the Pen-y-pass options. Basically follows the route of the railway line
Snowdon via Watkin Path - starts Bethania	4.0	6.4	3,350	1,025	Hard. Areas with loose scree (rocks)
Snowdon via Rhyd Ddu Path	3.6	5.7	2,850	875	
Snowdon via Snowdon Ranger Path	3.9	6.2	2,950	900	

Tips for New Walkers

Snowdon is a climb, but even the less fit can still manage it - thousands of people, including many young children do it each year. None of the routes up involve climbing except Crib Goch - you should know what you're doing to attempt this route.

Wear sensible shoes. Waterproof boots with ankle support are best (this helps when you are tired on the way down), but trainers are OK as the paths are well maintained).

Take a waterproof (on a mountain, cold plus wet equals dead!), spare warm clothes, a torch, and some sugary snack and lots of water.

Bring and drink lots of water, especially in summer - you will feel better the next day if you do.

Take lots of short breaks, on the way up, and especially on the way down. This gives your leg muscles (on the way up) and knees/ankles (on the way down) a rest. Resting on the way down is especially important as you knees absorb all the energy you used to climb the mountain. Take breaks before you need them!

Snowdon is a much harder climb than low level walks, even with similar ascent. For example, the 7 Sisters walk in the southeast has several short climbs and descents, but each one is quite short, so the muscles/knees aren't worked for too long before they get a rest. Here your leg muscles will work solidly for several hours in a row, then your knees on the way down. If you don't want them to ache too much the next day - take lots of short rests.

Walking up is easier than walking down, especially if there is snow or ice, walking pole's / a stick might help. Fortunately, the rocks aren't slippery when wet.

Check the summits before you start - if there are covered in cloud, you may not see a thing, but if you are here only for a few days you may wish to climb anyway.

If your knees are hurting when you get to the top (and the train is full), or it is icy, take the Llanberis path down (it follows the railway line) which is the easiest of the paths.

Do take water and waterproofs.

In summer take extra water, and a hat / sun lotion (you'll be outside for several hours)

In winter start early and take extra warm clothes and a torch. If not doing the Miners/Pyg/Llanberis track, you must take a map and compass

Do not attempt if there is ice on the summit - check the [freezing level is well above 900m](#)

Start from Pen-y-pass (up the Pyg track, and down the Miners track) or Llanberis. For any other path you should have a map, compass, and know how to use them.

Safety

In 2009, there were about 100 incidents and several fatalities on Snowdon. Many incidents were climbers, but some were walkers. The list was headed by crag-fast (too scared to move, usually on Crib Goch), benighted (dark and no torch), false alarms (party separated or someone was late home), hypothermia (cold and no waterproof or warm clothing), tired/exhausted (often people doing the 3 peaks challenge), trips and falls, and heart attacks

Winter

Winter safety - adapted from the [Llanberis Mountain Rescue](#) website

1. Keep an eye on the [met office weather for Snowdonia](#) for a few days before your planned a trip, as it has information of the freezing level as well as weather outlook. If the freezing level has stayed below 900 metre for a day or more you can expect some icy condition high up on the mountains.
2. If it has been below freezing we recommend that you take with you both an ice axe and crampons, as even the PYG track becomes a inclined ice rink after even a short period of frost due to the amount of running water on it (and know) how to use it properly
3. If it looks winterly from the car it will look and feel very winterly on the summits.
4. If in doubt about the conditions ask at local outdoor centres or shops, most will be happy to give you the word on the street about conditions.
5. Start early, and carry a head torch, as the limited day light and the longer days associated with winter mountaineering can bully up against you.
6. If you do get caught out, could you survive the night? Are you carrying a survival bag or better still a blizzard bag, and some high energy food?
7. A map and compass are essential as ever, again with the ability to use them.
8. Carrying a fully charge mobile phone is advisable, even if it is only to warn those at home you'll be a little late back!
9. If you haven't been out in winter before take a progressive approach to the difficulty of route you try.
10. Finally, have fun there is nothing more rewarding than scaling a mountain when it is shrouded in winter's cloak.

Peak

Snowdon has 3 peaks, All are over 3,000 feet.

Bagging

1. Snowdon (Yr Wyddfa) - 1,085 m - The highest peak, by the cafe / railway station.
2. Garnedd Ugain (Crib y Ddysgl) - 1,065 m - The second highest peak in Wales. Easy to get to from the main peak - follow the Llanberis path by the railway, pass the post marking the start of the Pyg/Miners paths (400m). At the path split (100m), go right, gently uphill (400m). **Don't go further than the trig point** - it involves scrambling.
3. Crib Goch - 923 m - Part of the Snowdon Horseshoe. Not easy to get to. A scramble for the experienced only along an arête (narrow ridge) from Garnedd Ugain.

Dogs

Many people walk with their dogs, but **keep them on leads at all times** - there are sheep about, and accidents have been caused by them knocking people off balance / scaring children who then fall

Snowdon Train The Snowdon trains are quite small, expensive, and on school days / weekends, usually full. You can book a single up in advance (2010: £18 single + £4 parking, cheaper before 9am) and walk down. Book in advance otherwise you may have a long wait. However, they are also usually full on the way down - **so if you walk up on a busy day, you will probably have to walk down as well.** Note that return tickets give you 30 mins on the summit (or you miss your way down slot), so aren't suitable (again, on busy days) for people in your party who don't want to walk, but want to take the train instead and meet you at the top.

Lunch Snowdon Summit Cafe - reasonably priced given the location (Tea, coffee: £1.70. Pasties: £2 / £4 large). Bottled water only (no tap water). It gets crowded inside when the weather outside is miserable! It has toilets.

Eat

1. [Pete's Eats](#), at the Caernarfon (north) end of Llanberis High Street.
2. Kiosk in Pen-y-Pass carpark

Snowdon Sherpa Buses The Snowdon car parks are quite small and fill up early in Summer/School Holidays (and parking on the side of the road is no longer allowed - £60 fines).

However there are regular park-and-ride bus services - and the cost of the car park includes a day pass on the Snowdon bus service making a one way walk quite feasible (up 1 route down another). Do check the bus times though - missing the last one would be very expensive! For example the Pen-y-pass car park costs £5, a few km north down the pass is the Nant Peris park and ride. parking is £4, and includes 1 Snowdon area bus pass. There is an every 20min (weekends and school holidays) shuttle to Pen-y-pass. So if the Pen-y-pass car park is full, drop your passengers off there, and head down to Nant Peris to park and catch a shuttle bus back. It easier to just get there early before the car park is full.

In summer 2010, there were regular buses Llanberis (Llanberis path, park and ride) - Nant Peris (park and ride) - Pen-y-Pass (Miners, Pyg, Crib Goch paths). Some of these buses continue i) on to Capel Curig and Betws-y-coed or ii) around Snowdon (Watkins, Snowdon Ranger paths) to Caernarfon.

There are also Snowdon Sherpa buses routes suitable for the Glyders and Carneddau

Getting There - Car The A55 along the North Wales coast is a motorway - even from London, its the quickest way (M6 - M62 - A55)

Once there, **you are no longer allowed to park along the side of the road (£60 tickets)**. Only in car parks / park and rides, or on verges that are completely off the road.

- Llanberis : A4086, South of Bangor / North Wales Coast : LL55 4TY
- Pen-y-Pass : A4086, South of Nant Peris / Llanberis / Bangor / North Wales Coast: LL55 4NY. There is a pub a mile to the south east at the A4086/A498 junction.
- Snowdon Ranger : A4085 by the Youth Hostel opposite Llyn (Lake) Cwellyn : South of Caernarfon / North Wales Coast : LL54 7YS
- Watkins : A496, by [Nant Gwynant Cafe](#) in the former Capel (Chapel) Bethania, South of Snowdon : LL55 4NL

Getting There - Train Train or Coach to Bangor, then regular buses to Llanberis. There is also the Cambrian coast line to Porthmadog, and a Snowdon Sherpa bus from there. But check it runs outside of the summer school holidays

Stay Llanberis or the North Wales coast. Snowdon Ranger and Pen-y-Pass have youth hostels

Links

- [Met Office - Snowdonia Weather](#)
- [Snowdon Public Transport](#) (and park and ride scheme)
- [Snowdon Sherpa Buses Timetable](#) (if this link is broken, start from [here](#))
- [National Park - Walking up Snowdon](#) a more detailed route description
- [Crib Goch](#)

Mountain Safety This is a challenging but achievable walk in good weather, even for young children, but it is in remote exposed mountain areas. It is possible to twist an ankle on any walk, and it will take hours for mountain rescue to drive to the trailhead, then climb the mountain, to reach you. So:

- Check the weather, and start early.
- Take a paper OS map and compass - GPS are great... until the batteries go flat or you drop it
- Let someone know you're going, and take a mobile, if only to let them know you'll be late. NB: Mobiles only work at higher altitude. SMS is better in poor reception.
- Choose a route and pace for the least able member of your party.
- In hot weather, wear a hat, take and drink plenty of water.
- In any weather, take waterproofs, a survival bag (a big bin bag to keep the wind and rain out), some energy food (chocolate).
- Be careful drinking from mountain streams - consider water purification tablets (Boots sell them).
- Take breaks on the way down to give your knees a rest - they are absorbing all the energy you put into climbing!

Help Us! After the walk, please leave a [comment](#), it really helps. Thanks!

You can also upload photos to the [SWC Group on Flickr](#) ([upload your photos](#)) and [videos to Youtube](#). This walk's tags are:

By Car **Start** Snowdon, Wales

Map Walk This walk **requires** an OS map and a compass or GPS for navigation. You can print out OS maps using the link above.

Help National Rail: 03457 48 49 50 • Traveline (bus times): 0871 200 22 33 (12p/min) • TFL (London) : 0343 222 1234

Version Aug-24 [Andrew](#)

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Walk Directions

Paths to/from the Pen-y-Pass car park (East of Snowdon)

Pen-y-pass has an expensive (£5) car park, **which fills up very early at summer/weekends/school holidays/good weather** so get there early - before 8am on a sunny Saturday in August. Just north of here (about 1 km down towards the coast) is a spot where you can park completely off the road (free, £1 by bus back to the start). There is a park-and-ride in Nant Peris (about 2km north down the pass towards the coast, £4 plus £1 each way on the bus, every 20 mins summer, weekends, and school holidays). Or south of Pen-y-pass, at the A4086/A498 junction, you can park completely off the road, but a walk or less frequent buses

Miners Track

This is the easiest of the paths. It is very well maintained. Route finding is very easy, even in fog. Suitable for children

1. This walk starts at the Pen-y-Pass car park.
2. Take the car wide path on the left (lower of the 2 car park levels) that slowly heads up to, then around some lakes.
3. On the far side of the lakes, the path climbs steeply (some steps) to meet the Pyg Path (note the post at the top for the way down)

4. Carry on climbing steeply until the rim, to meet the Lanbaris Path (note the post at the top for the way down).
5. Carry on along the Lanbaris Path, alongside but just above the railway tracks, to the summit.

To descend this way from the summit, follow the railway line, after 600m, at the first post/monolith, descend steeply downhill. Turn steeply downhill at a second post/monolith towards the lakes

Pyg Track

This is a shorter but steeper than the Miner's Path.

1. This walk starts at the Pen-y-Pass car park.
2. Take the path on the right (upper of the 2 car park levels) that climbs slowly but surely to the top.
3. Ignore the Crib Cosh path (up to the right) and later, the Miners track joining from below on the left by a post.
4. Carry on climbing steeply until the rim, to meet the Lanbaris Path (note the post, for the way down).
5. Carry on along the Lanbaris Path, alongside but just above the railway tracks, to the summit.

To descend this way from the summit, follow the railway line, after 600m, at the first post, descend steeply downhill. Carry straight on at the second post.

Crib Gosh Path / Snowdon Horseshoe

The Snowdon Horseshoe is regarded as one of the finest walks in the country. Be warned, that this involves scrambling, i.e. not climbing but you will need to use your hands. Crib Gosh is a knife wide arête, and there are steep drops on both sides. Even experienced walkers have died here, or become cragfast (i.e. so frightened they cannot move). People are rescued here every year - do not attempt if you are afraid of heights, in snow or ice, in rain, in high winds, or with children, or are tired at the end of a 3 peaks challenge. Do not go down this route - the arête is 'one way'. Do not underestimate this route, especially in not perfect weather. Having said that, its so popular you will have to queue at the start of the rudge at busy times. Do not stress or hurry the person in front of you - after all, there's no hurry, you have a fantastic view to enjoy.

1. This walk starts at the Pen-y-Pass car park.
2. Take the Pyg path on the right (upper of the 2 car park levels).
3. Take the right hand path up to Crib Gosh
4. Cross the arret to the minor summit of Garnedd Ugain (1065m)

5. Continue on to meet the Llanbaris path, follow it and the railway to the summit.
6. The second part of the Horseshoe is taking the Watkins path down.

Y Liwedd /Watkins Path

This is the 'down' leg of the Snowdon Horseshoe, but you can go up this way - it has a non-scary ridge to traverse.

Up : Follow the Miners track, pass the first lake, but turn left just before the causeway over the large lake

Down : Head SW from the summit trig point, then descend steeply SE. At the junction go straight on around the rim (not steeply down)

Lanbaris Path (North of Snowdon)

The most popular single path, though more people start at Pen-y-pass with its 3 paths. Longer but less steep than the above, it basically follows the railway line the whole way..

1. This walk starts in Llanbaris.
2. Walk along Victoria Terrace, opposite the Royal Victoria Hotel, near the train station.
3. The road becomes a path
4. Pass Halfway House Cafe / Station
5. Pass Clogwyn Station
6. Continue to the summit

The national park authority advise people not to follow the railway track down - it can be slippery in snow/ice and there have been accidents

Down: Follow the path just above the railway line. The first post/monolith marks the start of the Pyg/Miners tracks. **At the next junction, go left** (right is the dangerous Crib Gosh route - If the path starts to climb again to a summit - **go back** - it is the wrong way

Snowdon Ranger Path (West of Snowdon)

This path starts on the A4085 by the Snowdon Ranger Youth Hostel and Welsh Highland Railway station.

Rhyd Ddu Path

Watkins Path

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