

Sugar Loaf (Abergavenny Circular)		
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Sugar Loaf (Abergavenny Circular)

Start & Finish: Abergavenny Station

Abergavenny Station, map reference SO 305 136, is 30 km south east of Brecon, 202 km west northwest of Charing Cross, 74m above sea level and in **Monmouthshire, Wales**.

Length: 19.0 km (11.8 mi).

Cumulative ascent/descent: 622m. For a shorter or longer walk, see below **Walk Options**.

Toughness: 6 out of 10

Time: 5 ½ hours walking time. For the whole outing, including trains sights and meals, allow at least 12 hours.

Transport: Abergavenny Station is served by the Welsh Marches Line (Newport – Hereford), connecting at Newport to Paddington, with mostly two trains per hour (total journey time from 135 mins). Abergavenny Bus Station is passed early on, bus lines with regular and useful connections are: X3 (Hereford – Cardiff), X4 (Cardiff – Abergavenny), 43/X43 (Brecon – Abergavenny), 83 (Monmouth –Abergavenny).

Saturday Walkers' Club: Take a train no later than 09.45.

OS Landranger Map: 161 (The Black Mountains)

OS Explorer Map: OL 13 (Brecon Beacons NP East)

Walk Notes:

From the pretty town centre of Abergavenny walk up the iconic Sugar Loaf mountain, initially steeply up through lush pastures and ancient oak woods to Twyn-yr-Allt, a former settlement on one the lower foothills of the Black Mountains. From there continue along the mildly undulating treeless plateau of the Deri hill, covered in whimberries, bracken and gorse before turning steeply up the barren easterly flank of Sugar Loaf through the upland heathland, to the summit ridge of the southernmost peak of the Black Mountains, with superb panoramic views (in good weather) across South Wales and South West England.

Descend gently down the heather and gorse-covered flanks and continue along the gentle ridge of Mynydd Llanwenarth to descend more steeply through the large ancient oak wood of Deri Fach into St. Mary's Vale and along the spring-fed Nant Iago (stream) to tea at the superb Sugar Loaf Vineyard's Café and Tasting Room, before re-tracing the outbound route through the town centre.

Sugar Loaf is an immensely popular destination. The chosen route avoids paths from and to popular car parks, preferring quieter paths, while providing for a mixture of environments and views in all directions.

Due to being a conical top distant from any neighbouring mountain chain, Sugar Loaf is very exposed to bad weather. Especially the summit plateau can be unforgiving. Only the very highest bit can be skirted.

A longer descent route and a scenic diversion to a nearby pub at the bottom of the mountain in Llangenny are described, as is an alternative descent through Deri Fach oak wood along more challenging paths.

Walk Options:

A start/finish at the Bus Station cuts 730m each way and 30m ascent at the end of the walk. Pick up the directions at the end of the second paragraph.

A taxi ride can cut out the first steep ascent out of Abergavenny to the entrance of Sunny Vale farm at the top of the straight bit of Pen-y-Pound road by a sharp right turn (3.2 km into the walk). The taxi ranks with the best chance of a car being present are at the train station and on Frogmore Street by the Tesco (1.5 km into the walk). Pick up the directions at the end of the first paragraph on page 5.

A Longer Descent Route down the flank of Sugar Loaf adds 2.2 km/1.4 mi and 71m ascent.

A Scenic Diversion to the Dragon's Head in Llangenny adds 4.0 km/2.5 mi and 237m ascent to the longer descent route. From the pub it is straightforward to bail out to Crickhowell, along a signed lane.

Lunch

Picnic.

Lunch Off Route (details last updated 17/04/2024)

The Dragon's Head Llangenny, Crickhowell, Powys, NP8 1HD (01873 810 350). The Dragons Head is located 2.2 km downhill off the long route, after 12.9 km/8.0 mi of walking. Open 12.00-16.00 Sat-Sun and 18.30-late Tue-Sun. Food served in all sessions. **Last orders** at lunch: 14.00-14.15 hours.

Tea (details last updated 17/04/2024)

The Sugar Loaf Vineyards Coffee Shop and Tasting Room Pentre Lane, Abergavenny, Monmouthshire, NP7 7LA (01873 853 066, <https://sugarloafvineyards.co.uk/>). Located 3.7 km from the end of the walk. Open Easter-Dec Sat 10.30-17.30 and Sun/Bank Hol 11.00-17.00.

Plenty of places in Abergavenny's Town Centre. See the walk directions for details.

Welsh Glossary

aber: estuary, confluence, river mouth; afon: river; allt: hillside, cliff; aran: high place; ban/fan/bannau (pl): peak, beacon, crest, hill, mountain; big: peak; blaen: source of river, head of valley; bod: dwelling; bre: hill; bron: hill-breast; bryn: hill; bwlch: gap, col, pass; cadair: chair; cae: field; caer/gaer: stronghold, fort; capel: chapel; carn/garn/carnedd/garnedd: cairn/heap of stones, tumulus; carreg/garreg: stone, rock; castell: castle; cefn: ridge, hillside; celli: grove, copse; cerwyn: pot-hole; cist: chest; clwyd: hurdle, gate; clog/clogwyn: cliff; clun: meadow; clydach: torrent; coch/goch: red; coed: wood; craig/graig: rock; crib/cribyn: crest, ridge, summit; crug: mound; cul: narrow; cwm: hanging valley, corrie, bowl, dale; cyfrwy: ridge between two summits (saddle); ddinas: fort; dibyn: steep slope, precipice; diffwys: precipice, abyss; dim: no; din: hill-fortress; disgwylfa: place of observation, look-out point; dôl: meadow; du/ddu: black, dark; dwfr/dŵr: water; dyffryn: valley; -dyn: fortified enclosure; eglwys: church; eira: snow; eisteddfod: meeting-place, assembly; esgair: ridge; fach/bach: small; fawr/mawr: large; fechan: smaller; ffald: sheep-fold, pound, pen, run; ffordd: way, road; ffridd: pasture; ffrwd: stream, torrent; ffynnon: spring, well; gallt: wooded hill; ganol: middle; garth: promontory, hill, enclosure; glan/lan: river-bank, hillock; glas: green, when referring to grass, pasture or leaves; or blue, when relating to the sea or air; glyn: deep valley, glen; gors: bog; gorseidd: tumulus, barrow, hillock; gwyddfa: mound, tumulus; gwylfa: look-out point; gwyn/gwen: white; gwynt: wind; hafn: gorge, ravine; hafod: summer dwelling; hen: old; hendre(f): winter dwelling, old home, permanent abode; heol: road; hesgyn: bog; hir: long; is: below, lower; llan: church, monastery; llawr: level area, floor of valley; llech: slab, stone, rock, rock; llther: slope; lluest: shieling, cottage, hut; llwch: lake, dust; llwybr: path; llwyd: grey, brown; llwyn: bush, grove; llyn: lake; llynwyn: pool, puddle, moat; isa(f): lower, lowest; maen: stone; maes: open field, plain; mawn: peat; mawnog: peat-bog; melyn: yellow; merthyr: burial place, church; moel/foel: bare, bald/bare hill; mynydd: mountain, moorland; nant: brook, stream, dingle, glen; neuadd: hall; newydd: new; ogof/gogof: cave; pant: hollow; parc: park, field, enclosure; pen: head, top, end, edge; penrhyn: promontory; pentre(f): homestead, village; perfedd: middle; perth: bush, brake, hedge; plas: hall, mansion; pont/bont: bridge; porth: gate, gateway, harbour, bay, landing-place, ferry; pwll: pit, pool; rhiw: hill, slope; rhos: moor, promontory; rhudd: red, crimson; rhyd: ford; sarn: causeway; sgwd/rhaeadr: waterfall; sticill: stile; sych: dry; tafarn: tavern; tâl: end, top; talar: headland (of field); tan/dan: below; tarren/darren: escarpment; tir: land, territory; tor: break, gap; tre/tref: settlement, hamlet, town; twlch: tump, knoll; twll: hole, pit; tŵr: tower; tŷ: house; twyn: hill; uchaf: upper, highest; uwch: above, over; waun/gwaun: moorland, meadow; wen/wyn: white; y, yr, 'r: the; ynys: island, holm, river-meadow; ysgol: ladder, formation on mountain-side/school; ysgwydd: shoulder (of mountain); ystafell: chamber, hiding-place; ystrad: wide valley, holm, river-meadow.

Notes:

Abergavenny/Y Fenni

Abergavenny (Welsh: *Y Fenni*, archaically *Abergafenni* meaning "Mouth of the River Gavenny") is a market town in Monmouthshire, Wales, about 10 km from the border with England.

Abergavenny is located at the confluence of the River Usk and a tributary stream, the Gavenny and on the A40 trunk road and the A465 Heads of the Valleys road and is promoted as a Gateway to Wales.

Originally the site of a Roman fort, Gobannium (after Gobannia, Brythonic for "river of the blacksmiths"), it became a medieval walled town within the Welsh Marches and contains the remains of a medieval stone castle built soon after the Norman conquest of Wales (open daily with free admission).

Abergavenny is almost entirely surrounded by mountains and hills: the Blorenge, the Sugar Loaf, The Skirrid/Ysgyryd Fawr and Fach, Deri, Rholben and Mynydd Llanwenarth, with Sugar Loaf being the highest.

During September the town holds the Abergavenny Food Festival.

Usk Valley/River Usk (Afon Wysg)

The River Usk (Afon Wysg in Welsh) rises on the northern slopes of The Black Mountain (Y Mynydd Du in Welsh), in the westernmost part of the Brecon Beacons National Park, initially forming the boundary between Carmarthenshire and Powys. It flows north into Usk Reservoir, then east by Sennybridge to Brecon before turning southeast to flow by Talybont-on-Usk, Crickhowell and Abergavenny after which it takes a more southerly course. Beyond the eponymous town of Usk it passes the Roman legionary fortress of Caerleon to flow through the heart of the city of Newport and into the Severn estuary at Uskmouth at Newport Wetlands. Its total length is 102 km/63 mi.

The name of the river derives from a Common Brittonic word meaning "abounding in fish" or "water", which also appears in other river names such as Exe, Axe, Esk and other variants.

The whole river downstream of Usk Reservoir has been designated a Site of Special Scientific Interest and has long been a noted salmon and trout fishing river.

Brecon Beacons National Park

Home to spectacular landscapes, a rich variety of wildlife and fascinating cultural and geological heritage, the Brecon Beacons National Park in Mid-Wales boasts a magnificent array of Old Red Sandstone peaks, open moorland and green valleys, spanning 1,344 km² (520 mi²). Pen y Fan within the Central Beacons is perhaps the best-known summit but there are many others in the five distinct parts of the National Park (Black Mountain (Y Mynydd Du) in the far west, Fforest Fawr, Central Beacons, the Llangattock and Llangynidr Hills, and the Black Mountains to the east).

Sugar Loaf/Mynydd Pen-y-fâl or Y Fâl

Sugar Loaf is a hill situated a good 3 kilometres north-west of Abergavenny and is the southernmost of the summit peaks of the Black Mountains, with a height of 596 metres above sea. The Welsh Mynydd Pen-y-fâl means 'mountain of the head/top of the peak/summit' from *mynydd*, *pen* and *bâl* and the name Sugar Loaf has been popularly applied to hills with a resemblance to a sugarloaf; the nearest other such hill is the Sugar Loaf in Carmarthenshire.

It is sometimes conceived as an 'extinct volcano', but consists in fact entirely of sedimentary rocks. There are a number of landslips on its flanks which are believed to date from early post-glacial times. The former Usk Valley glacier divided to the north and south of it, though the mountain itself is largely free from glacial till. It is owned by the National Trust who manage its grazing by Welsh mountain sheep. The lower slopes are deciduous mixed woodland with bracken, heather and whimberry (the local term for bilberry), on the upland slopes. The wooded slopes have been designated an SSSI.

From the summit, on a clear day, it is possible to see hills as far north as Shropshire and as far south as Somerset, including the Black Mountains to the north, the Cotswolds to the east, the Central Brecon Beacons to the west and the Bristol Channel to the south.

The Black Mountains/Y Mynyddoedd Duon

The Black Mountains (Welsh: *Y Mynyddoedd Duon*) are a group of hills spread across parts of Powys and Monmouthshire, and extending across the border into Herefordshire. They are the easternmost of the four hill ranges that comprise the Brecon Beacons National Park. The Black Mountains may be roughly defined as those hills contained within a triangle defined by the towns of Abergavenny in the southeast, Hay-on-Wye in the north and the village of Llangors in the west. Other gateway towns to the Black Mountains include Talgarth and Crickhowell. The highest mountain in the group is Waun Fach at a height of 811m above sea.

WALK DIRECTIONS

Leave the station in **Abergavenny** in the **Usk Valley** on the fringes of **The Brecon Beacons National Park** through the station building (past the **Whistle Stop Café**) or to the left of it out to the top end of **Station Road** and *turn right* along it with a sign for **Canol y dref/Town centre 1 ¼**. You have the platforms and the railway line on your right and in 60m continue through a small industrial yard, also used as a car park and in 40m along a tarmac path views ahead of **Sugar Loaf/Y Fâl**. In 50m continue along a cul-de-sac residential road with some of the church towers in the town centre visible ahead to the left. In 30m *turn right* with the road, to the right of a small green strip between it and another road. In 60m you *curve left* with the road and continue along **Holywell Crescent** and in 75m reach the top of this gentle rise. Ignore all ways off and descend into the valley of the **Gavenny River**, soon with **Bloreng** rising on the left. In 200m at the bottom of the drop at a T-junction, *turn left* along **Holywell Road**. In 130m *turn right* at a T-junction with the **A 40 Monmouth Road** and cross **the river**. In 40m by a set of lights, ignore a path bearing right past a bollard into **Abergavenny Bus Station** unless you want to go to the **Oasis Sandwich Bar** 40m away.

[If starting from the bus station, you can get first views of **Sugar Loaf/Y Fâl** from bus stands 3/4/5 on a bearing of 325°.]

Continue towards the town, along the **A40**, using a pedestrian crossing to cross both the access road to the bus station and a drive to a car park and in **[!]** 15m *turn right* this side of a large building (the former Tourist Office) and then past a toilet block. In 40m cross another short tarmac drive and in 20m **[!]** stay to the right of some bike barriers and a high stone wall and to the left of some height barriers, walking along the car park's edge, broadly towards a large church and in 80m at the top-left car park corner pass an info panel on **St. Mary's Priory Church** and *turn left* through the nicely developed **Priory Court**. You pass between the **Tithe Barn** on the left (now containing a food hall, a gift shop and the Tourist Office) and the church on the right (the "West-minster Abbey of Wales", usually open) at a T-junction with **Monk Street** (the A 40).

Turn left along the road and in 60m *turn right* at a four-way junction to cross the road carefully and continue along the traffic-calmed **Cross Street**. In 80m you pass the **Market Hall** and the **Borough Theatre** and in 35m continue in the same direction along the pedestrianised **High Street**. In 30m – tucked down **St. John's Street** on the left – is the historic **King Henry VIII School** (1542-1898) and in 75m you *veer right* gently downhill, where **Nevill Street** joins from the left, now with some hill visible ahead on 350°: this is **Twyn-yr-Allt**, to be walked up soon enough. In 40m continue in the same direction along **Frogmore Street** which has joined from the right and in 220m at a T-junction by a **War Memorial** and opposite a church, you cross the A40, 50m to the right at a set of lights.

Bear left with a tarmac path and in 20m *turn right* along **Pen-y-Pound's** right-hand pavement. You now follow this road (or a footpath parallel to it in the later stages) uphill for 1.7 km to **Sunny Vale (farm)**. **In more detail:** In 50m pass **Whitefield Presbyterian Church** and in 80m a **Catholic Church** on the opposite side of the road. In 100m where the road turns to the right, **[!]** you *turn left* at a set of lights and in 20m *turn right* to continue in the previous direction, still along **Pen-y-Pound**. You cross Avenue Road (the return route comes down that road from the left) and gently ascend with the road. In 130m you pass the gates to Abergavenny Town FC's **Pen-y-Pound Stadium** and then several other sports and school grounds.

You pass a rugby pitch and have **The Skirrid/Ysgryd Fawr** (hill) away on the right. The houses become grander as you climb up the road, and eventually shielded from view by

high walls. You cross a road, **entering the National Park**, and **[!] bear left** over a stile to the right of a metal field gate with a signposted footpath into a pasture and follow its right-hand boundary uphill, parallel to the road (which is dangerous to walk along: narrow and between high earth banks). You have the **Bloreng** (hill) on the left behind across the Usk Valley and walk under a HV pylon line in 160m, followed in 30m by a lower electricity line and in 125m go over a stile into the next pasture and continue up its right-hand boundary. You can hear a nearby stream (the **Afon Cibi**) down the left. In 180m go under an electricity line and in 60m leave the field over a stile back onto the road and walk further uphill between some houses. In 50m, by a gate to **Sunny Vale (farm)**, the road turns right uphill. [This is the **ideal drop-off point** for a taxi up from town.]

[!] Turn right uphill with the road, ignoring the footpath over a stile to the right of a metal field gate and in 50m, where the road turns left steeply uphill, you *turn right* with a signposted footpath along a steep car wide tarmac drive. In 25m continue in the same direction along the tree lined track, with steep pastures on both sides behind the trees. In 230m go through a wooden gate into a steep open hillside. This is **Access Land** and you won't leave it again until late in the walk. *Bear left* uphill along a clear path (70°) through the bracken and bramble-covered hillside. As you ascend, Abergavenny comes more and more into view, with **St. Mary's Priory Church dominating the view**. In 125m by a bench on the right by a small grassy plateau and what looks like an ex-quarry on the left, *turn hard left* back on yourself into an oak wood along a steep path (320° initially).

In 30m ignore a right fork and in 50m you have a wire fence away on the left. In 25m ignore a faint right fork and then a faint left fork and in 170m *turn right* on a bearing of 85°, ignoring the continuation ahead. The path bears to the right and then curves to the left and in 250m from the right turn at a five-way junction of forest tracks in an open area you cross a path and continue in a northerly direction towards the top of the treeline, ignoring a right fork. In 150m you reach an open bracken-grown area and ascend further to a plateau 75m away. This is **Twyn-yr-Allt** at 341m above sea, one of the foothills of **The Black Mountains**, with remnants of an ancient settlement. You have **Sugar Loaf/Y Fâl** above on the left (320°), **The Skirrid** away on the right (60°), and across the Usk Valley: **Bloreng** (215°) and **Mynydd Llangatwg** and **Mynydd Llangynidr** (265°) as well as the **Central Beacons** to the west.

Follow a clear grassy track through the bracken, initial direction due N, and *veer to the left* through an earth bank in 50m to continue across the top of this plateau with scattered oak trees to the sides. In 290m amongst some trees cross a faint footpath and continue along the main path. In another 40m you emerge from the trees into a wider open area, gently ascending **Deri**, another of the foothills of the Black Mountains. In about 200m the views open out ahead towards the nearby **Bryn Arw** (20°), with **Hatterall Hill** rising half left behind it (Offa's Dyke Path runs along it) and the **Vale of Ewyas** between them (the latter two: SWC Walk 335 Pandy Inn to Llanvihangel Crucorney), with the plains of the Welsh/English borderlands out to Herefordshire to the right of it all.

In 50m you pass a reed-filled pond on your right (on the OS map) and cross an unmarked public footpath, still gently ascending. In 350m you cross another unmarked public footpath and curve to the right with the path and in 40m bend to the left again. In 80m cross another unmarked public footpath and push up for the final 200m to **the top of Deri Allt** at 376m above sea, with Sugar Loaf now dead ahead. In 30m *veer right* with the path, now with **Gaer** (hill) with its **Twyn y Gaer hillfort** site a little to the right on 355°. In 450m you walk along a drystone wall on the left where an unmarked public footpath joins from the left along the wall. In 180m you *veer to the right* away from the wall with the path (due N) and in 120m cross another unmarked public footpath and continue towards an unnamed top at 398m height, reached in 270m.

You continue in the same direction with another oak wood on the left in the top of the valley below, formed by the **Afon Cibi** and views ahead to **the main ridges of the Black Mountains** – stretching away into the distance up to their respective highest points at or near the far, northern end of the ridges and out of sight from this angle. In 330m a prominent footpath joins from the right from a wood 50m away. **[!]** In 20m *fork right* with the narrower path (leaving the public footpath) through an area now gradually becoming more characterised by heather and whimberries than bracken (340°). In 300m you continue along a broad grassy track joining from the left behind. On the left you can already see the onwards path climbing up **the conical Sugar Loaf**. In 300m you cross a sandy track (a public footpath) and continue on the level.

In 140m **[!]** *bear left* with the broad grassy track (265°), ignoring the continuation, a narrow path through the heather (if at all evident). In 170m *turn left* up a sandy track at a T-junction (240°). You now follow this track for 1.2 km all the way up the heathery slope **to the obvious top of Sugar Loaf/Y Fâl**, which – as you can appreciate from this angle – tops out in a broad rocky ridge. En route you pass a few small ponds (on a windy day they make much better picnic spots than the top). You follow a notable earth bank on your left for most of the ascent, this is believed to be the remnant of a **former outer park pale** of a deer park surrounding Parc Lodge in the valley below. Just before the last bit of ascent you cross a sandy track. [This is an old quarry track which skirts the top, leading to the back of it where the route continues, **[!]** so **if you want to stay out of the wind a bit and avoid some of the height gain**, *turn right* along it!].

The path becomes engineered with flagstones in the upper reaches of the ascent and when you hit the top, you realise it is a long boulder-scattered grassy plateau ridge with paths coming up to it from all directions. The trig point is about halfway down the plateau **at 596m above sea**. For the first time in view from here are the Black Mountains' highest top, **Waun Fach** (340°), **Pen Allt-mawr** (315°) and **Pen Cerrig-calch** (305°). The latter two: SWC Walk 333 Crickhowell Circular via Table Mountain and the Three Pens.

Here you have a choice:

For a longer descent route and/or a diversion to the pub in Llangenny at the base of the mountain (the routes split in 1.8 km), continue in the same direction along the plateau and leave it at its far end by descending through the rocky nose in a north westerly direction. [**Too scrambly for you?** *Return to the trig point and turn down right 15m further, along a clear path and pick up the path running around the top and 60m continue in the same direction around the top and in 130m turn left downhill along a clear grassy path on a bearing of 310°*]. In 100m from the start of the rocky stretch pick up a clear grass path on a bearing of 310°. In 40m cross the path that skirts around the top plateau and continue in the same direction downhill. Pick up the directions at the end of this text under the heading **Longer Descent (and start of Diversion to the pub in Llangenny)**.

For the main walk, (from the direction of the ascent) *fork left* 15m **before** the trig point and *turn right* along a path running around the top and in 60m *veer down to the left* along an earth track (280°) to then in about 100m descend on a clear wide grass track (the tourist route) on 240°, again with remnants of an earth bank parallel. In 330m ignore a right fork (on 265°) as the gradient eases and continue along the earth bank.

Abergavenny is now visible on the left **down St. Mary's Vale** between Sugar Loaf's foothills **Rholben** (on the left) and **Mynydd Llanwenarth** (on the right).

In 220m ignore another right fork (on 245°). In 120m cross a clear grassy path and in 160m **[!]** *bear left* with the main path on 165°, where a faint path joins from the right (on 295°) and the earth bank and its path continue in the same direction on 215°. In 240m

cross an oblique path and continue in the same direction (165°). You have a developing valley, the **Cwm Trosnant**, on the left below. In 160m ignore a faint left fork (on the OS map) and in 190m you reach a four-way junction of clear grassy paths and one or two minor tracks (at about 400m height). From the right from a drystone wall and fence 200m away (on a bearing of 300°) joins the longer descent route. *Bear left* along the leftmost clear grassy path (120° initially). You should have lost most of the car driving tourists now, as the path you just left – and the one to the right of it – lead to a large car park.

*) In another 300m you reach another four-way junction of clear grassy paths by a post on the left with a sign warning to keep dogs on leads. You have views on the right into the **Usk Valley** and across it to the **Clydach Gorge**. The route from the pub in Llangenny joins from the right.

Here you have a choice:

For a more challenging route down into the wooded valley on the left and through it along the stream at the bottom, *turn left* on a bearing of 25° along a clear grassy path, ignoring a faint fork to the right of the path (75°), and pick up the directions below under **St. Mary's Vale Route**. [Expect some boggy ground, some narrow paths along the steep wooded valley wall and several fallen trees forcing a detour.]

For the main walk, continue in the same direction along the clear grassy path along the top of the ridge of **Mynydd Llanwenarth**, gently curving to the left with it.

) You follow this path for 1.1 km until – where Abergavenny comes into the view and the descent becomes a little steeper – you *turn left* into the hanging oakwood on the left (at spot height 330m). **In more detail: in 140m cross a faint path (on the OS map, and clearer on the right than the left); in 140m ignore a faint path on the right; in 120m cross a clear path, in 110m ignore a faint path on the right; cross more paths in 250m, 60m (both clearer on the right than the left) and 130m (clearer on the left than the right); in 100m and in 70m cross more paths and in another 90m where the next broad grassy path comes up from the right below, you *turn left* at a crosspaths.

In 80m cross a track at the fringe of **Deri Fach** (meaning 'small oak woodland') and enter the wood, an **ancient coppice for charcoal production**, along a clear path. Ignore a left fork and *bear right* with the path (65°), as it descends through the wood, initially gently so. In 200m cross a path and in 30m reach a T-junction, where another footpath joins from the left. *Turn right* downhill along this sunken path and in 200m at a T-junction with a tarmac drive *turn left* along the drive (a public right-of-way) past a farmyard (**Pen-ŷr-heol**), down into **St. Mary's Vale**. The drive continues as gravel in 15m and in 230m passes a cottage to then re-enter the wood (this is **Access Land**). In 80m ignore a right fork and in 150m reach the bottom of the vale by a stream coming down from Sugar Loaf's flanks, the **Nant Iago**. The alternative route joins from the left. *Turn hard right* back on yourself and follow the stream on your left-hand side.

) In 180m a path joins from the right above and in 250m you cross the stream over a clapper bridge and continue steadily rising away from it. In 80m ignore a left fork and in 40m you pass a **National Trust Y Deri Fach-sign (backwards) and have a fenced garden on the left. In 100m go through a metal field gate (**leaving the Access Land**) and continue in the same direction along a car wide gravel track past some cottages on the left. In 150m where a footpath joins down from the left along a gravel track (from **Rholben**, the only subsidiary hill of Sugar Loaf not walked along today), you *veer right* down a tarmac lane. In 190m where a signposted byway joins on the left, you *bear right* downhill

with the lane. In 220m by a white painted cottage with green windows on the left, just before **Home Farm**, [!] *turn right* over a stile with a signposted footpath.

Go down an enclosed path and in 30m emerge in open ground along a fenced path. In 25m go over a stile and *turn right* through a paddock. In 50m go through a metal gate into the next field and *bear left* through the field (240°) and in 130m go through a metal gate in the boundary hedge to *bear right* downhill through the next field to its bottom right corner. In 90m leave it through a metal gate and continue downhill along a fenced path, soon through another metal gate and with a vineyard on the right. In 200m you emerge onto **Pentre Lane** and *turn right* along it. In 110m *turn right* to walk up the drive of the **Sugarloaf Vineyard** with the **Nant Iago** gushing down on the left of the grounds, and in 130m you reach **The Sugar Loaf Vineyard Coffee Shop and Tasting Room**.

Return to Pentre Lane and *turn left* along it. Ignore a right turning lane and the footpath on the left you came down along. In another 650m at a four-way junction *turn right* downhill along the left-hand pavement, leaving the National Park. In 70m where the road bends to the right, *turn left* through a metal kissing gate to the left of a metal field gate and continue along a gravel track between houses. This soon continues as tarmac and in 200m as a road with pavements as **you descend into Abergavenny**. This is **Chapel Lane**, continuing as **Avenue Road**, and it passes a **Cricket Club** on the left and then curves to the left to eventually meet **Pen-Y-Pound** road at a T-junction by a set of lights. You passed here at the start of the walk, ascending up the hill on the left. *Turn right* along **Pen-Y-Pound** and retrace your steps back to the station.

In some detail:

- in 270m cross **the A40** at a set of lights 50m to the left and continue in the previous direction along **Frogmore Street**: you pass **Amo's Restaurant**, **Casa Bianca**, **Auberge** Bar & Lounge Restaurant, **Tapas Twist** (currently closed), **The Codfather** Fish Bar & Café, **Nicholls' Restaurant**, **The Grofield Inn** (down Baker Street on the right), the **Victorian Tea Rooms**, **Mezze Me**, **Café Nero**, **The Little Treat**;
- in 220m continue in the same direction along the traffic-calmed, then pedestrianised **High Street**: you pass **The Coliseum** (Wetherspoon) and **Portico Lounge Café Bar** on the left and **Annette's Café and Diner** (down Lewis's Lane on the right), **Coffee No. 1**, **Gurkha Corner**, **Coffee Pot** & **The King's Arms** (off to the right down Nevill Street), **Costa Coffee**, **The Hen & Chickens** pub (in a side street on the right);
- in 160m continue in the same direction along **Cross Street**: you pass **The Art Shop & Chapel** & **Bean & Bread** (down the left along Market Street), **Cwtch Café**, **Kings Head Hotel**, **Luigi's** Café Ristorante and **The Angel Restaurant & Bar**, with its **Angel Bakery** opposite, and (where Monk Street (the A 40) joins from the left) **Abergavenny Castle and the Castle Meadows** are down Castle Street to the right;
- continue in the same direction along **Monmouth Road**: you pass a **Thai Restaurant** and **The Coach & Horses**, **Cinnamon Tree** and **Anatolian Meze Bar** and in 220m pass the **Bus Station**;
- **The Abergavenny Hotel's** bar is just beyond the Gavenny river on the right, on the route back to the train station, where you'll find **The Great Western** pub hotel.

St. Mary's Vale Route

You descend gently down the hillside, with Sugar Loaf slightly to the left. In 180m cross a faint path (on the OS map) and continue more steeply downhill. In 200m you reach the bottom of the drop by a spring-fed stream and *turn right* along it, ignoring a clear path up ahead on the far side of the stream. Follow the stream as close as sensible along its right-hand side along the – initially not very well defined – path for 1.3 kilometres, while avoiding watery and muddy bits. Eventually you meet a broad path coming down through the wood and the onwards path becomes more defined, wider and even part-cobbled.

In more detail: ignore a right fork in 50m; in 30m a streamlet joins from the right; in 100m you enter a wood in the steep-sided valley; in 70m a stream joins on the other side of the valley (this is the **Nant Iago** (= Jacob's Stream) whose highest source is just below the top of Sugar Loaf and whom you'll follow broadly to the tea stop at the vineyard); in 30m a fallen tree blocks the path (circumvent to the right); in 100m the path rises away from the stream and in 80m you *fork left* to re-join it in 30m; the path rises again in 20m around a fallen tree but in 40m re-joins the stream; in 40m ignore a fork up to the right; in 80m the path rises again but re-joins in 75m by a fallen tree and where a stream joins on the other side of the stream; the path rises again in 90m to get around a very narrow bit of the valley, a fallen tree and a muddy area and re-joins the stream in 100m; in 120m crawl through the branches of a fallen tree and in 40m through another; in 30m a stream joins on the other side of the Nant Iago; in 150m a broad path joins from the right down the wood and the path becomes more defined, wider and part-cobbled.

The joining path is the main walk route. Continue along the Nant Iago and pick up the directions above in the main text at the triple asterisk ***).

Longer Descent (and start of Diversion to the pub in Llangenny) (Add 2.2 km/1.4 mi and 71m ascent or 6.2 km/3.9 mi and 308m ascent)

In 390m by a boggy section and a pond on the right, the gradient eases so much that the terrain is almost flat and you continue along this whaleback-shaped ridge for 830m to a fork in the path (at spot height 480m), with views of Table Mountain and Pen Cerrig-calch. Here **[!]** *fork left* (220°) along the ridge of this spur of Sugar Loaf, with a developing valley on the left, along an unmarked public bridleway.

In 320m at a right turn at 440m spot height you have a choice:

For the diversion down to the pub in Llangenny at the bottom of the hill, *turn right* (285° initially) and pick up the directions at the end of this text under **Diversion to the pub in Llangenny**.

For the Continuation of the Longer Descent Route, continue in the same direction and in 210m ignore a faint left fork. In 170m a track joins from the right. In another 140m, at the bottom of the walled Access Land, ignore the continuation of the bridleway through a metal gate to the left of two metal field gates as well as another bridleway joining from the right and *turn left* along the wall. Path and wall curve to the left and in 270m at the end of the wall, you continue along a gravel farm track, descending into a valley. In 320m you cross a stream coming down Sugar Loaf's flank and curve to the right with the track and in 50m *turn left* (ignore a stile in a wall), and rise with the track along the wall on the right, with a (recently clear-felled) wood behind.

In 140m by the corner of the wall, *turn right* along the wall. In 220m the wall bears to the right, and you continue in the same direction gently uphill along the track through the bracken which cuts a corner of this steep pasture. In 250m you have the wall on your right again. In 210m a broad track joins from the left behind and in 40m at a wall corner you cross a broad grassy track at an oblique crossing (i.e.: take the left of two tracks ahead) and in 10m cross another grassy track. In another 50m at the top of the rise you reach a clear four-way junction of wide grassy paths with a minor fork on the right. The path from the left down the flank of Sugar Loaf is the Main Walk. You ignore the right fork and cross the path coming down from Sugar Loaf to initially continue in the same direction (120°) and then *veer right* with the path.

Pick up the directions above in the main text at the asterisk *).

Diversion to the pub in Llangenny (Add a further 4.0 km/2.5 mi and 237m ascent to the longer descent)

In 250m cross a grassy path and in 90m at a fence with a steep green valley beyond it, *turn left* along the boundary of the Access Land and in 80m *turn right* through a metal gate in a drystone wall with a 'Direct Route to Llangenny'-marker on top of the gate post and **out of the Access Land**. Continue to the bottom of the valley ahead, more or less in a straight line.

In more detail: you descend steeply along a pasture's left-hand boundary and in 150m pass a wood on your left-hand side (bluebells in season). In 80m go through a metal gate and continue in the same direction with the wooded slope on your left and a drystone wall and a fence on your right. In 220m go through a wooden field gate and continue in the same direction along a bumpy track towards a farmyard with a car wide farm track away to the right. In 100m pass by a corrugated barn on its left and in 25m go through a metal field gate. You continue in the same direction along a tarmac lane at a bend, ignoring the marked footpath turning left (not on the OS map). In 780m cross a tarmac lane by some cottages on the left. In 250m, after passing **The Old Vicarage** on the right and just after a house on the left, a footpath turns left along a tarmac drive. This is **the continuation of the route after lunch**.

Near the bottom of the drop ignore a right turn towards **Pendarren House Outdoor Education Centre** and *bear left* with the road. In 30m a footpath joins from the right over a wall and in 25m you *turn right* over **Llangenny Bridge** across the **Grwyne Fawr** river, signposted 'Llanbedr 1 ¾', 'Fforest 4 ½'. On the other side is **The Dragon's Head**. From the pub re-trace your steps back across the bridge, *turn left and right* to go uphill along the road and in 160m *turn right* along a tarmac drive, signed for 'Castell Corryn' and 'Sugarloaf Lodge'. In 60m continue in the same direction along a gravel track where the tarmac turns left to a house and *bear left* through a car park. In 30m go over a stile to the right of a metal field gate and go up a left-hand field boundary. In 100m in the top-left corner, go over a stile into the next pasture and *turn right* to the top-right corner of the narrowing field.

In 120m go over a stile onto a tarmac lane by a two-way footpath signpost and cross it to go over a stile to the left of a couple of metal field gates and follow a car wide gravel track between trees (a streambed after rain). *Turn right* with the track in 50m. The track goes through an open area, and in another 40m you go over a stile and continue between trees again along a grassy slope with good views into the **Usk Valley** on the right. In 150m go over a stile and follow a barbed wire fence on the left past a marker post on the right. In

50m you pass a ruined farmstead on the right and in 80m *fork left* with a footpath into trees, ignoring the continuation into the pasture below. In 60m go over a stile in a fence line into a sloping curving pasture and broadly follow its right-hand bottom fence, veering away from it a little – slightly to the left of a lone oak tree – to in 190m leave it over a stile 10m to the left a metal field gate. You go through another pasture along its bottom boundary and in 120m leave it over a stile to the right of a (missing) field gate.

Veer up to the left along a car wide track (a byway on the OS map) at a bend, ignoring the right turn downhill. In 200m go over a stepless stile to the right of a metal field gate and continue in the same direction along a left-hand field boundary. There is now a wood across the valley (the **Cwm Gwenffrwd**) on the right and in 180m you go through a metal field gate a little to the right of the left field corner to *turn right* in another pasture and in 15m go through a metal field gate and *turn left* to follow a further field's upper boundary. In 70m ford a stream and in 40m – by the end of a line of trees on the left – *bear right* down towards a car wide track running parallel 60m away and continue along it (a public footpath). The track forks, and you **[!]** stay to the right of a fenced pasture and in 25m ignore a left forking bridleway, signed 'Way to hill/LLwybr i'r mynydd'.

In 100m go through a metal field gate and *turn right* with the track (a public right-of-way) to cross a stream and follow it uphill through the wood. In 120m you pass through **Cwm-cegyr** farm and in 50m go through a metal field gate and further uphill along the farm track. You've got a pretty bowl-shaped pasture dropping down to the wood on the right and in a while ascend more steeply on the track. In 190m cross a forestry track and continue along tarmac through trees. In 100m go through a metal field gate and in 25m *turn left* with the tarmac lane. You follow the lane for 550m over the top of the rise and to a metal field gate at a four-way junction by **Pen-y-graig Farm** on the left. *Turn left* and continue to the right the main farm buildings, along tarmac once past the farm.

Follow the lane for about 500m (through a couple of turns and a couple of metal field gates en route) to **Llyweddrog Farm** and walk to the right of the farm buildings on the lane. Ignore a couple of footpaths turning right off the lane and go through a metal field gate at the far end of the farm. You have re-entered **Access Land**. In 10m *turn left* up the left-hand boundary wall of the grassy flank of **Mynydd Llanwenarth**. In 350m, near the top of the rise by a wall corner on the left, you cross a broad grassy track and continue gently uphill. In another 90m you cross a broad grassy track (the tourist route down from Sugar Loaf) and continue for 60m over the brow to another clear four-way junction of wide grassy paths with a faint fork half right. The path from the left is the Main Walk.

Here you have a choice:

For a more challenging route down into the wooded valley on the left and through it along the stream at the bottom, continue in the same direction on a bearing of 25° along a clear grassy path, ignoring the faint fork to the right of the path (75°), and pick up the directions below under **St. Mary's Vale Route**. [Expect some boggy ground, some narrow paths along the steep wooded valley wall and several fallen trees forcing a detour.]

For the main walk, *turn right* along the clear grassy path along the top of the ridge of **Mynydd Llanwenarth** (155°), gently curving to the left with it, and pick up the directions above in the main text at the double asterisk ******).