

= Snowdon =

Snowdon (Welsh : Yr Wyddfa , pronounced [ʔʔ ʔwʔ ʔ ðva]) is the highest mountain in Wales , at an elevation of 1 @, @ 085 metres (3 @, @ 560 ft) above sea level , and the highest point in the British Isles outside the Scottish Highlands . It is located in Snowdonia National Park (Parc Cenedlaethol Eryri) in Gwynedd , and has been described as " probably the busiest mountain in Britain " . It is designated as a national nature reserve for its rare flora and fauna .

The rocks that form Snowdon were produced by volcanoes in the Ordovician period , and the massif has been extensively sculpted by glaciation , forming the pyramidal peak of Snowdon and the arêtes of Crib Goch and Y Lliwedd . The cliff faces on Snowdon , including Clogwyn Du 'r Arddu , are significant for rock climbing , and the mountain was used by Edmund Hillary in training for the 1953 ascent of Mount Everest .

The summit can be reached by a number of well @-@ known paths , and by the Snowdon Mountain Railway , a rack and pinion railway opened in 1896 which carries passengers the 4 @. @ 7 miles (7 @. @ 6 km) from Llanberis to the summit station . The summit also houses a cafe called Hafod Eryri , open only when the railway is operating and built in 2006 to replace one built in the 1930s . The railway generally operates to the summit station from Whitsun to October . The daily running schedule depends on weather and customer demand .

The name Snowdon is from the Old English for " snow hill " , while the Welsh name ? Yr Wyddfa ? means " the tumulus " , which may refer to the cairn thrown over the legendary giant Rhitta Gawr after his defeat by King Arthur . As well as other figures from Arthurian legend , the mountain is linked to a legendary afanc (water monster) and the Tylwyth Teg (fairies) .

= = Height = =

A 1682 survey estimated that the summit of Snowdon was at a height of 3 @, @ 720 feet (1 @, @ 130 m) ; in 1773 , Thomas Pennant quoted a later estimate of 3 @, @ 568 ft (1 @, @ 088 m) above sea level at Caernarfon . Recent surveys give the height of the summit as 1 @, @ 085 m (3 @, @ 560 ft) , making Snowdon the highest mountain in Wales , and the highest point in the British Isles outside Scotland . Snowdon is one of three mountains climbed as part of the National Three Peaks Challenge .

= = Environment = =

= = = Flora = = =

The unique environment of Snowdon , particularly its rare plants , has led to its designation as a national nature reserve . In addition to plants that are widespread in Snowdonia , Snowdon is home to some plants rarely found elsewhere in Britain . The most famous of these is the " Snowdon lily " , *Gagea serotina* , which is also found in the Alps and in North America . It was first discovered by Edward Lhuyd in Wales , and the genus *Lloydia* (now included in *Gagea*) was later named in his honour by R. A. Salisbury . Snowdon lies in the northern part of Snowdonia National Park , which has also provided some legal protection since the park 's establishment in 1951 .

= = = Geology = = =

The rocks which today make up Snowdon and its neighbouring mountains were formed in the Ordovician Period . At that time , most of modern @-@ day Wales was near the edge of Avalonia , submerged beneath the ancient Iapetus Ocean . In the Soudleyan stage (458 to 457 million years ago) of the Caradoc age , a volcanic caldera formed , and produced ash flows of rhyolitic tuff , which formed deposits up to 500 metres (1 @, @ 600 ft) thick . The current summit is near the northern edge of the ancient caldera ; the caldera 's full extent is unclear , but it extended as far as

the summit of Moel Hebog in the south @-@ west .

Snowdon and its surrounding peaks have been described as " true examples of Alpine topography " . The summits of Snowdon and Garnedd Ugain are surrounded by cwms , rounded valleys scooped out by glaciation . Erosion by glaciers in adjacent cwms caused the characteristic arêtes of Crib Goch , Crib y Ddysgl and Y Lliwedd , and the pyramidal peak of Snowdon itself . Other glacial landforms that can be seen around Snowdon include roches moutonnées , glacial erratics and moraines .

= = = Climate = = =

The English name " Snowdon " comes from the Old English snaw dun , meaning " snow hill " , as Snowdon often has a covering of snow . Although the amount of snow on Snowdon in winter varies significantly , 55 % less snow fell in 2004 than in 1994 . The slopes of Snowdon have one of the wettest climates in Great Britain , receiving an annual average of more than 200 inches (5 @,@ 100 mm) of precipitation .

= = = Lakes = = =

A number of lakes are found in the various cwms of the Snowdon range .

Llyn Llydaw ? 1 @,@ 430 feet (440 m) high , 110 acres (45 ha) ? lies in Cwm Dyli , Snowdon 's eastern cwm , and is one of Snowdonia 's deepest lakes , at up to 190 ft (58 m) deep . Various explanations of its name have been put forward , including lludw (" ash ") , from ashen deposits along the shore , to Llydaw (" Brittany ") . It contains evidence of a crannog settlement , and was the location of a 10 @-@ by @-@ 2 @-@ foot (3 m x 0 @.@ 6 m) dugout canoe described in the Cambrian Journal in 1862 . The lake is significantly coloured by washings from the copper mines nearby , and is used by the Cwm Dyli hydroelectric power station , which opened in 1906 . The lake is crossed by a causeway , built in 1853 and raised in the 20th century to prevent the causeway from flooding frequently .

Glaslyn ? 1 @,@ 970 feet (600 m) high , 18 acres (7 @.@ 3 ha) ? lies higher up Cwm Dyli than Llyn Llydaw . It was originally called Llyn y Ffynnon Glas , and has a depth of 127 feet (39 m) . For a long time , it was believed to be bottomless , and is also the location for various myths .

Llyn Ffynnon @-@ y @-@ gwas ? 1 @,@ 430 feet (440 m) high , 10 acres (4 @.@ 0 ha) ? lies in Cwm Treweunydd , Snowdon 's north @-@ western cwm , and is passed by the Snowdon Ranger path . It was enlarged by damming for use as a reservoir for use by slate quarries , but the level has since been lowered , and the lake 's volume reduced to 24 @,@ 000 cubic metres (850 @,@ 000 cu ft) .

Other lakes include Llyn Du 'r Arddu below Clogwyn Du 'r Arddu ? 1 @,@ 901 feet (579 m) high , 5 acres (2 @.@ 0 ha) , Llyn Teyrn near Pen @-@ y @-@ pass ? 1 @,@ 237 feet (377 m) high , 5 acres (2 @.@ 0 ha) , and several smaller pools .

= = Rock climbing = =

The Snowdon Massif includes a number of spectacular cliffs , and holds an important place in the history of rock climbing in the United Kingdom . Clogwyn Du 'r Arddu is often colloquially known as ' Cloggy ' among climbers , and was the site of the first recorded climb in Britain , in 1798 . It was carried out by Peter Bailey Williams and William Bingley , while searching for rare plants . It is now considered to be one of the best cliffs in Britain for rock climbing .

Y Lliwedd was also explored by early climbers , and was the subject of a 1909 climbing guide , The Climbs on Lliwedd by J. M. A. Thompson and A. W. Andrews , one of the first in Britain . Snowdon was used by Edmund Hillary and his group during preparations for their successful 1953 expedition to climb Mount Everest .

= = Ascents = =

The first recorded ascent of Snowdon was by the botanist Thomas Johnson in 1639 . However , the 18th @-@ century Welsh historian Thomas Pennant mentions a " triumphal fair upon this our chief of mountains " following Edward I 's conquest of Wales in 1284 , which could indicate the possibility of earlier ascents .

Snowdon offers some of the most extensive views in the British Isles . On exceptionally clear days , Ireland , Scotland , England , and the Isle of Man are all visible , as well as 24 counties , 29 lakes and 17 islands . The view between Snowdon and Merrick (southern Scotland) is the longest theoretical line of sight in the British Isles at 144 miles (232 km) .

Snowdon has been described as " probably the busiest mountain in Britain " ; a number of well @-@ established and engineered footpaths lead to Snowdon 's summit from all sides , and can be combined in various ways . The circular walk starting and ending at Pen @-@ y @-@ Pass and using the Crib Goch route and the route over Y Lliwedd is called the Snowdon Horseshoe , and is considered " one of the finest ridge walks in Britain " . The routes are arranged here anticlockwise , starting with the path leading from Llanberis . In winter conditions , all these routes become significantly more dangerous and the Llanberis Mountain Rescue Team state that " additional skills , equipment and knowledge are required " . Many inexperienced walkers have been killed over the years attempting to climb the mountain via the main paths .

= = = Llanberis Path = = =

The Llanberis Path is the longest route to the summit , and has the shallowest gradient . It follows the line of the Snowdon Mountain Railway , and is considered the easiest and least interesting route to the summit of Snowdon . It is the route used by the annual Snowdon Race , with a record time of less than 40 minutes recorded from the start to the summit .

The section of the Llanberis Path beside the railway near the summit has been called the " Killer Convex " ; in icy conditions , this convex slope can send unwary walkers over the cliffs of Clogwyn Du 'r Arddu . Four people died there in February 2009 .

= = = Snowdon Ranger Path = = =

The Snowdon Ranger Path (Welsh : Llwybr Cwellyn) begins at the youth hostel beside Llyn Cwellyn , to the west of the mountain , served by the A4085 and Snowdon Ranger railway station . This was formerly the Saracen 's Head Inn , but was renamed under the ownership of the mountain guide John Morton . It is " probably the oldest path to the summit " .

The route begins with zigzags through " lush green turf " , before reaching a flatter boggy area in front of Llyn Ffynnon @-@ y @-@ gwas . The path then climbs to Bwlch Cwm Brwynog , and then snakes along the ridge above Clogwyn Du 'r Arddu towards the summit . This path meets the railway , the Llanberis Path , the Crib Goch path , and the combined Pyg Track and Miners ' Track all within a short distance , just below the summit .

= = = Rhyd Ddu Path = = =

The Rhyd Ddu path , also called the Beddgelert Path , leads from the village of Rhyd Ddu , west of Snowdon , gently up on to Llechog , a broad ridge dropping west from the summit . It is considered one of the easier routes to the summit , with the advantage that the summit is visible from the start , but is one of the least used routes . It climbs at a shallow gradient to Bwlch Main , shortly southwest of the summit , from where it climbs more steeply , meeting up with the Watkin Path at a site marked with a large standing stone a few hundred metres from the summit . An alternative start begins at Pitt 's Head on the A4085 road .

= = = Watkin Path = = =

The Watkin Path is " the most demanding route direct to the summit of Snowdon " , since it starts at the lowest elevation of any of the main routes . It was first conceived by Edward Watkin , a railway owner who had attempted to build a railway tunnel under the English Channel , and had a summer home in Nant Gwynant near the start of the path . It was originally designed as a donkey track and opened in 1892 .

The start of the Watkin Path has been described as " the prettiest beginning " of the routes up Snowdon . It begins at Bethania on the A498 and climbs initially through old broadleaved woodland . After leaving the woods , the path climbs past the waterfalls of the Afon Llan to the glacial cirque of Cwm Llan , crossing a disused incline from an abandoned slate quarry . It then reaches Plas Cwmlan , formerly the home of the quarry manager for the South Snowdon Slate Works beyond , and later used for target practice by commandos during the Second World War . Near Plas Cwmlan is the large boulder known as Gladstone Rock , which bears a plaque commemorating a speech given in 1892 by William Ewart Gladstone , the then 83 @-@ year @-@ old Prime Minister , on the subject of Justice for Wales . The slate workings in Cwm Llan were opened in 1840 , but closed in 1882 due to the expense of transporting the slate to the sea at Porthmadog . Various buildings , including barracks and dressing sheds , remain .

From the slate quarries , the Watkin Path veers to the north @-@ east to reach Bwlch Ciliau , the col between Snowdon and Y Lliwedd , which is marked by a large orange @-@ brown cairn . From here , it heads west to meet the Rhyd Ddu Path at a standing stone shortly below the summit of Snowdon .

Scenes from Carry On ... Up the Khyber were filmed on the lower part of the Watkin Path in 1968 , with the Watkin Path representing the Khyber Pass in the film . One of the stars of the film , Angela Douglas , unveiled a plaque at the precise location where filming took place in 2005 to commemorate the location filming and it forms part of the North Wales Film and Television Trail , run by the Wales Screen Commission .

== = Over Y Lliwedd == =

The route over Y Lliwedd is more frequently used for descent than ascent , and forms the second half of the Snowdon Horseshoe walk , the ascent being over Crib Goch . It is reached by following the Watkin Path down to Bwlch y Saethau , and then continuing along the ridge to the twin summits of Y Lliwedd . The path then drops down to Cwm Dyli to join the Miners ' Track towards Pen @-@ y @-@ Pass .

== = Miners ' Track == =

The Miners ' Track (Welsh : Llwybr y Mwynwyr) begins at the car park at Pen @-@ y @-@ Pass , at an altitude of around 350 metres (1 @,@ 150 ft) , and is the most popular route to the summit of Snowdon . It begins by skirting Llyn Teyrn before climbing slightly to cross the causeway over Llyn Llydaw . It follows the lake 's shoreline before climbing to Glaslyn , from where it ascends steeply towards Bwlch Glas . It is joined for most of this zigzag ascent by the Pyg Track , and on reaching the summit ridge , is united with the Llanberis Path and Snowdon Ranger Path . Derelict mine buildings are encountered along several parts of the path .

== = Pyg Track == =

The " Pyg Track " , or " Pig Track " (both spellings may be encountered) , also leads from Pen @-@ y @-@ Pass . The track climbs over Bwlch y Moch on the eastern flanks of Crib Goch , before traversing that ridge 's lower slopes . Above Glaslyn , it is joined by the Miners ' Track for the zigzag climb to Bwlch Glas between Snowdon and Garnedd Ugain . Regarding its name , the website of the Snowdonia National Park Authority states :

Nobody knows for certain why this path is called the Pyg Track . It 's possible that it was named after the pass it leads through , Bwlch y Moch (translated Pigs ' Pass) as the path is sometimes

spelled ' Pig Track ' . Or , maybe because it was used to carry ' pyg ' (black tar) to the copper mines on Snowdon . Another possible explanation is that the path was named after the nearby Pen y Gwryd Hotel , popular amongst the early mountain walkers .

= = = Crib Goch route = = =

The traverse of Crib Goch is " one of the finest ridge walks in Britain " , and forms part of the well @-@ known Snowdon Horseshoe , a circuit of the peaks surrounding Cwm Dyli . The path follows the Pyg Track before separating off from it at Bwlch y Moch and leading up the East ridge of Crib Goch . All routes which tackle Crib Goch are considered mountaineering routes or scrambles .

= = Snowdon Mountain Railway = =

The Snowdon Mountain Railway (SMR) (Welsh : Rheilffordd yr Wyddfa) is a narrow gauge rack and pinion mountain railway that travels for 4 @.@ 75 miles (7 @.@ 6 km) from Llanberis to the summit of Snowdon . It is the only public rack and pinion railway in the United Kingdom , and after more than 100 years of operation it remains a popular tourist attraction . Single carriage trains are pushed up the mountain by either steam locomotives or diesel locomotives . It has also previously used diesel railcars as multiple units . The railway was constructed between December 1894 , when the first sod was cut by Enid Assheton @-@ Smith (after whom locomotive No.2 was named) , and February 1896 , at a total cost of £ 63 @, @ 800 (equivalent to £ 6 @, @ 658 @, @ 000 as of 2015) .

= = View from the summit = =

Snowdon offers some of the most extensive views in the British Isles ; on exceptionally clear days , Ireland , (the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland) , Scotland , England , and the Isle of Man (as well as Wales) are all visible , as well as 24 counties , 29 lakes and 17 islands . From here , it is also possible to see the mountains of the Peak District and South Pennines that surround Manchester . The view between Snowdon and Merrick (southern Scotland) is the longest theoretical line of sight in the British Isles at 144 miles (232 km) . In practice atmospheric conditions make such sightings extremely rare and indeed there are no reported sightings . The mountain itself may also be viewed on take off and approach to both Manchester Airport and Liverpool John Lennon Airport on very clear days , and even from Howth Head in Dublin , Ireland .

= = Summit buildings = =

The first building on the summit of Snowdon was erected in 1838 to sell refreshments , and a licence to sell intoxicating liquor was granted in 1845 . Very basic accommodation was also provided for visitors . When the Snowdon Mountain Railway was opened in 1896 , it added its own accommodation and sales outlet near the summit .

During the 1930s , many complaints were received about the state of the facilities at the summit and in 1934 / 5 a new station building was erected in two phases . It was designed by Sir Clough Williams @-@ Ellis and included rooms for visitors and a café . The other operators were bought out and the ramshackle collection of buildings on the summit was cleared . The flat roof was intended to be used as a viewing platform and some photographs show it being used in this way . However , other photographs taken of the café show that the roof leaked , which probably explains why the practice was stopped . The Summit was taken over by government agencies during the war and the accommodation was restricted to staff use afterwards . Having become increasingly dilapidated , this building was described by Prince Charles as " the highest slum in Wales " . Its state led to a campaign to replace the building . In April 2006 , Snowdonia National Park Authority with the support of the Snowdonia Society agreed a deal to start work on a new café and visitor centre complex . By mid @-@ October 2006 the old building had been largely demolished .

The new RIBA Award @-@ winning £ 8 @.@ 4 million visitor centre , Hafod Eryri , designed by Ray Hole Architects in conjunction with Arup and built by Carillion , was officially opened on 12 June 2009 by First Minister Rhodri Morgan . The Welsh National Poet , Gwyn Thomas , composed a new couplet for the new building , displayed at its entrance and on the windows , which reads " Copa 'r Wyddfa : yr ydych chwi , yma , Yn nes at y nefoedd / The summit of Snowdon : Here you are nearer To Heaven " . The name Hafod Eryri was chosen from several hundred put forward after a competition was held by the BBC . Hafod is Welsh for an upland summer residence , while Eryri is the Welsh name for Snowdonia .

= = Folklore = =

In Welsh folklore , the summit of Snowdon is said to be the tomb of Rhitta Gawr , a giant . This is claimed to be the reason for the Welsh name Yr Wyddfa , literally meaning " the tumulus " . Rhitta Gawr wore a cloak made of men 's beards , and was slain by King Arthur after claiming Arthur 's beard . Other sites with Arthurian connections include Bwlch y Saethau , on the ridge between Snowdon and Y Lliwedd , where Arthur himself is said to have died . A cairn , Carnedd Arthur , was erected at the site and was still standing as late as 1850 , but no longer exists . According to the folklore , Arthur had Bedivere throw his sword Excalibur into Glaslyn , where Arthur 's body was later placed in a boat to be carried away to Afallon . Arthur 's men then retreated to a cave on the slopes of Y Lliwedd , where they are said to sleep until such time as they are needed . Merlin is supposed to have hidden the golden throne of Britain among the cliffs north of Crib y Ddysgl when the Saxons invaded .

Glaslyn was also the final resting place of a water monster , known as an afanc (also the Welsh word for beaver) , which had plagued the people of the Conwy valley . They tempted the monster out of the water with a young girl , before securing it with chains and dragging it to Glaslyn . A large stone known as Maen Du 'r Arddu , below Clogwyn Du 'r Arddu , is supposed to have magical powers . Like several other sites in Wales , it is said that if two people spend the night there , one will become a great poet while the other will become insane . Llyn Coch in Cwm Clogwyn has been associated with the Tylwyth Teg (fairies) , including a version of the fairy bride legend .