The Weatherman Walking maps are intended as a guide to help you walk the route. We recommend using an OS map of the area in conjunction with this guide. Routes and conditions may have changed since this guide was written. The BBC takes no responsibility for any accident or injury that may occur while following the route. Always wear appropriate clothing and footwear and check weather conditions before heading out.
Weatherman Walking

Cadair Idris

Start: Dol Idris Car Park, Talyllyn on the B4485, Postcode: LL36 9AJ
Starting ref: SH 732 115
Distance: Approximately 6 miles
Grade: Difficult / Challenging
Walk time: Allow 6 hours
Parking: Dol Idris Car Park, suggested fee details on the ticket machine

A challenging climb up one of Wales’ most impressive peaks! The awesome Cadair Idris is in southern Snowdonia and it has its very own glacial lake. The trek takes us to three summits in this spectacular mountain range, the tallest of which is almost 900 metres high.

Please note: This is not a waymarked route, there are easy to follow footpaths some of the way but visibility can change quickly. All year round, the temperature can be several degrees cooler and damp at the top so bring appropriate clothing and layers. The walk includes steep and slippery sections with loose stone and shale surfaces. Wear good walking shoes and carry plenty of food and water with you as well as a map and compass. This route is as tough going up as it is going down. Do not attempt to take any shortcuts.

You can find further advice for staying safe on mountains on the Snowdonia National Park website: http://www.snowdonia.gov.wales/visiting/safety-advice

Directions
Starting in Dol Idris car park, walk towards the mountain in the direction of the ‘All Walks’ sign. Go through the wooden kissing gate and turn right onto the path. Follow the path right across the little bridge over the river. Head straight.

Once you reach the next wooden gate, follow the path to the left and continue. You will pass the visitor centre & tea room on your right and on your left you will see a stone building ruin - this was once a drinks laboratory.
Cross the bridge over the stream, bear right and you will see a wooden kissing gate at the base of some steep steps and a sign post.

Go through the wooden gate and follow the steps all the way up through the stunning wooded Nant Cadair gorge. It’s a relentless slog up but you will be rewarded with beautiful waterfall views all the way.

Eventually you will come out of the woodland and the path will fork into two. It’s marked by a small signpost that points left to ‘Cwm Cau’ and right to ‘Mynydd Moel’. We are going right here and heading over a pretty slate bridge that crosses the waterfall.
Continue up yet more steps. As you gain more height, you will see behind you a lovely view of Talyllyn Lake and in front of you a wooden stile with some steps leading over a fence. (SH 732 125)

Climb over and follow the path to the left, following the stone wall along. Continue up more steps with the stone wall to your left. This path will eventually turn to shale / loose rock. Continue up, choosing the safest path. Please be very careful as it can be unstable under foot.

Eventually you will reach the tip of this first section of the hill; other maps typically guide you left here over another wooden step-bridge in the direction of Penygadair (Grid Ref SH 729 130). Do not turn left here. Instead continue following the path straight ahead towards the peak of Mynydd Moel, up the very steep slope ahead. Close to the fence can be quite boggy with several small ditches so again choose the best path up and take care.

As you plateau slightly, you’ll see another wooden step-bridge over the wire fence on your left (Grid reference SH 728 132), climb over this one, immediately heading right to follow the grassy path all the way to the top, keeping the wire fence now to your right the whole way up. You should be able to enjoy a beautiful view of Llyn Cau from here.
Once you reach the top, you’ll see a mound of stones and a wooden step-bridge to your right back over the wire fence (Grid Ref: SH 726 136). Cross over the stile to walk to the peak of Mynydd Moel, it’s marked by a cairn and stone shelter (SH 727 136). This is the second highest peak in this range standing at 863 metres high. On a clear day you can take in spectacular views to nearby Dolgellau and even Snowdon if you are very lucky.

Head back the way you came, back over the stile and walk across the plateau. Hopefully you will be able to see the main summit of Penygadair clearly now which is where you are heading to. It’s extremely wide up here. Follow the well-trodden path and make your way to the summit through a series of rocky outcrops. Some of the more rounded shape stones you can see are known as ‘pillow lava’ - volcanic rocks formed literally hundreds of millions of years ago on the seabed when this area was submerged under water.

Safely use the rocks around the trig point to climb up to the summit of Penygadair.
**Cadair Idris Summit – Penygadair** (SH 71111 13045)

You are now 2,930 feet high! Penygadair translates as ‘head of the chair’. According to folklore, Idris was a giant who used this landscape as a seat to gaze up at the stars and survey his whole kingdom. Or the name could refer to Idris Ap Gwyddno, a 7th century prince who defeated the Irish in battle on the mountain.

Just below the summit you can find a stone shelter which is a handy place to escape any inclement weather conditions or to take a break. (GRID REF: SH 71110 13066)

You are going to continue now the way you were going, heading down with the trig point behind you. Keep to the left as much as possible (there are other paths leading to the right). Take your time on this ascent as the rocks are steep and loose under foot. Keep the lake to your left. As the walk evens out you are going to head up another steep path towards the final peak on this route.
Craig Cwm Amarch is marked by another cairn and is 786 metres high. You should be able to see another wooden foot-bridge from this summit (SH 710121). Cross over this and follow the path down through more loose rocks, keeping Llyn Cau to your left all the way and using any steps where possible.

Eventually you will come to a small hill, pictured where the path doesn’t seem as clear. Go straight over it and follow the clear path on the other side of it all the way down. It will curve down to the left over some slate steps; feel free to visit Llyn Cau as you walk past it.
In the programme, you might have seen Derek take a dip in Llyn Cau! Even though there are no restrictions for you to do the same cold water can be very dangerous and we sought special permission to do this, Derek was also joined by a wild swimming expert. If you intend to swim here or anywhere else it is advisable to seek advice from the local authority controlling the body of water, as you may inadvertently cause damage to the lake or wildlife. At the bottom of this walk guide, there are also some general wild swimming tips written by Gabby Dickinson who accompanied Derek for this walk.

Once you've taken in the lake continue following the natural path all the way down. Eventually you will rejoin the steep steps you ascended at the start of this route. They can be extremely slippery going down so again take care. At the bottom exit through the gate and turn left to head back to the car park.

Wild Swimming Top Tips from Gabby Dickinson:
Swimming in open water is fun, good exercise and a great way to explore and experience new areas. Here are a few top tips from Gabby to get the best out of it.

1. Have a look online to find a local group that meet up regularly for swims. It’s a great way to meet new people and can be safer to swim with others.

2. Always do your research before swimming at a new spot. Check there are no local bylaws which prohibit swimming there. If other swimmers have been there before try to get an idea of good areas to get in and out of the water.

3. Make sure you tell someone where you are going, what time you will be back, and who to call if you don’t return on time. They should call the police or fire service if you are on land or the coast guard if you were swimming in the sea.

4. If you are planning a sea swim, make sure you are aware of, and understand the tides. Swim at high or low water, when it’s usually the most still.

5. Wet suits provide warmth and buoyancy, which can be very reassuring if you have not done much wild swimming before.

6. Before you get into the water think about what you will need when you get out. Put your clothes in a pile in the order you will put them back on, with a towel and warm hat as the first things you will grab.

7. Make sure you pack a flask of tea and some cake to help you warm up when you get out!