



# Weatherman Walking

# Glyder Fawr

**Start:** Ogwen Visitor Centre, Llyn Ogwen, Snowdonia

**Starting ref:** SH 649 604

**Distance:** Approx. 4.7 miles

**Grade:** Moderate with difficult sections

**Walk time :** Allow 5 hours

This challenging but rewarding walk takes us to the top of the fifth highest mountain in Wales - Glyder Fawr, whose summit lies at just over 1,000m (3,280ft) making it officially a supermountain!

This walk takes you through some quite tricky terrain so attention to safety, fitness levels and having the right equipment is vital before you set off.

For more information visit the Snowdonia National park website and read their 'Mountain Safety Advice'.

## Directions

**The walk begins at the new visitors' centre next to Ogwen Cottage and situated alongside the A5 at the head of the Nant Francon Valley. There is a pay and display car park nearby, but you can also find alternative places to park along the road a bit further down.**



Ogwen cottage car park

## Ogwen Cottage (SH 650 602)

Ogwen Cottage started life as a coaching inn along Thomas Telford's newly completed A5 road in 1836. Since then it's been a magnet for outdoor thrill seekers and adventurers using it as base to explore the great mountains right on its doorstep.

Until quite recently, it was run by Birmingham City Council as an Outdoor Activities Centre for children. Today it's owned by the National Trust and run by the Outward Bound Centre.

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From the visitor centre, head towards Ogwen cottage and climb the stone steps on your right following the track uphill. Pass through a hand-crafted gate, then over a little bridge and continue uphill following the stone path as it veers off to the right until you arrive at the edge of the glacial lake - Llyn Idwal.

You have now arrived at the dramatic Cwm Idwal and a mecca for geologists, botanists and outdoor enthusiasts.



Llyn Idwal path



Over the wooden bridge and follow the path up to the lake

### 2 Cwm Idwal (SH 646 589)

Both the lake and the glacial valley are named after Idwal, the son of Owain Gwynedd, a 12th century Prince of Gwynedd.

There are many variations to this legend, but one version is that Idwal was reputed to be more scholarly than warrior-like and when his father set off to wage a campaign in Powys, the young Idwal was left in the care of his cousin Nefydd. The story goes that Nefydd was jealous of Idwal's looks and intellect and, when the opportunity arose, pushed Idwal into the lake where he drowned. His distraught father named the lake after his son but could never prove Nefydd's guilt.

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When you reach the lake, take the left path and follow this alongside the lake. After a short distance you will notice some rather prominent large boulders on your left. These are known as Darwin's Boulders



Darwins Boulders

### 3 Darwin's Boulders (SH 646 597)

Cwm Idwal has seen its fair share of important visitors but probably none more so than the scientist Charles Darwin who came here in 1831. During his visit here he first noticed the fossils of creatures on the boulders which at one time must have existed beneath the sea, helping him to formulate his subsequent theories about the Origin of the Species. The rocks have since been known as Darwin's Boulders.

The whole of Cwm Idwal is an important nature reserve and the first to be established in Wales in 1954. Many species of sub-Arctic flora have survived here under harsh weather conditions and the area contains many rare and unusual plants making it a must-see for many geologists and botanists.

As you continue along the path you begin to appreciate the challenge ahead as Glyder Fawr rises above you. Follow the path next to the lake and after a number of quite steep steps you'll arrive at the Idwal Slabs on your left. You'll usually find a number of thrill-seeking rock climbers here tackling these huge sloping slabs of rock.



the path begins to get steeper after passing Idwal Slabs

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Continue on and up some more steps until you reach a tricky crossing point at a stream which requires a bit of scrambling down to cross. During the winter months or after heavy rain it can become quite treacherous, and it's here that many people turn back. If you do decide to attempt the crossing take great care making sure you have the appropriate footwear and ability to cross.

Once over the path gets noticeably steeper as you approach the Devil's Kitchen and begins to take a more direct route up to the ridge above you. Again there is a well maintained path to follow, so continue uphill heading for Devil's Kitchen.

### 4 Devil's Kitchen (SH 640 588)

Devil's Kitchen is a menacing gap overlooking Cwm Idwal. It's Welsh name is Twll Du, meaning Black Hole.

It got its name after sailors onboard ships moored off Anglesey, thought the mountain looked like a huge steaming cauldron as it was regularly shrouded in swirling cloud and mist, resembling a devil's kitchen.



Cwm Idwal from Devils Kitchen

Stick to the path and steps as you keep climbing up and around Devil's Kitchen, taking short rests and rehydrate along the way. This section can feel pretty tough, but the views back over the valley are definitely worth it. There are also some small scrambling sections to tackle.

Eventually you reach a stile over a stone wall which has been built to retain the much looser stone on the other side. Continue up until the landscape levels out and keep a sharp eye out for the path as it become less clear at the top.

Even though it has levelled out, you are still approximately 45 minutes of hard walking from the top, so please be aware of this.

As the path becomes more faint you will be veering off to the left and as you pass the lake (Llyn y Cwm) keep left and begin to head uphill. Here the rock becomes very loose underfoot, so take your time.

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As you near the top you'll see small piles of stones that guide you towards the summit. Soon you'll arrive at a very different and stark landscape with huge drifts of stones, outcrops of jagged rocks to walk across.

Again great care and suitable footwear is required to safely cross these jagged rocks.

After reaching the top of the ridge you are rewarded with views of the other side including Llanberis, Llyn Padarn, and Snowdon itself.

Approaching the last part of the walk, due to the amount of rock, the path tends to become less obvious so choose your own route to the summit of Glyder Fawr.

The summit is hard to pin-point but head for a tower jagged rocks rising out of the surrounding landscape.



Y Garn rises out of the mist

### 5 Summit of Glyder Fawr (SH 642 579)

The summit of Glyder Fawr stands at 1,001m. Hopefully, the weather will have been kind to you and you're rewarded with the majestic views of Snowdonia, particularly the Carneddau, across to Anglesey, down the Llyn Peninsula and in the opposite direction, towards the Great Orme and Liverpool beyond.

When you have rested, refreshed and taken in the views begin your return journey by retracing your steps. Take your time and take care. Most accidents and injuries – twists, sprains and breaks, occur during the descent due to tiredness and fatigue.

As you make your way down you get another chance to enjoy views of Cwm Idwal. As an alternative, you can return using the path on the other side of the lake back to the path down to Ogwen Cottage and the start of your walk.