

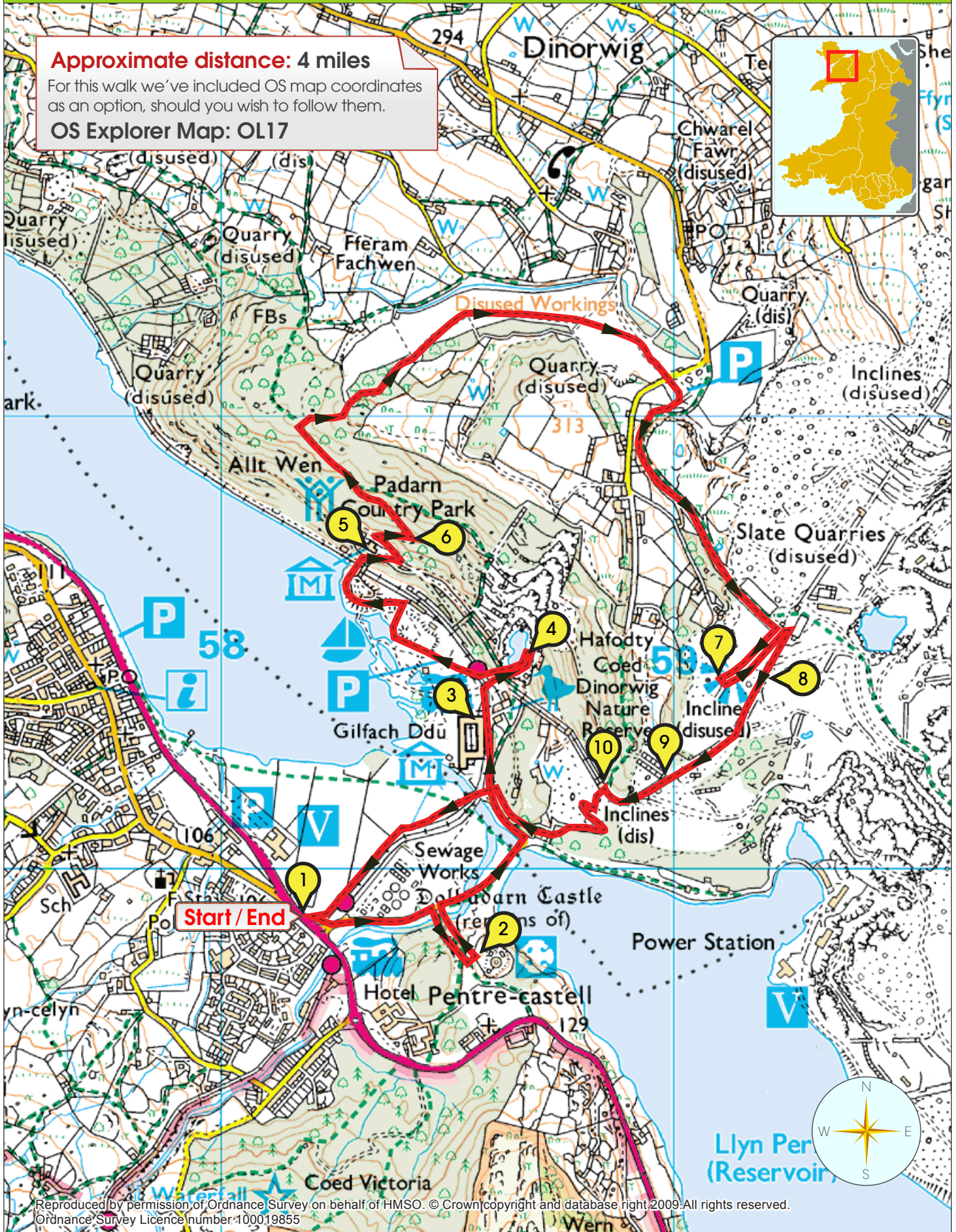
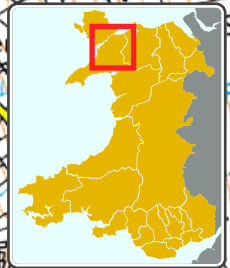
Weatherman Walking

Llanberis Walk

Approximate distance: 4 miles

For this walk we've included OS map coordinates as an option, should you wish to follow them.

OS Explorer Map: OL17



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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.

Walking information

1. Llanberis Lake Railway station (SH 58210 59879)

The walk begins outside the Llanberis Lake Railway station and not at the popular Snowdonia Mountain Railway which is a little further along the A4086 towards the town centre.

There is plenty of parking in and around the town near the Snowdon Mountain Railway and opposite Dolbadarn Castle.

To begin the walk, follow the signs for Dolbadarn Castle and the National Slate Museum and opposite a car park turn right. Cross a large slate footbridge over the River Hwch and follow a winding track up through the woods to the castle.

2. Dolbadarn Castle (SH 58600 59792)

The castle overlooking Llyn Peris was built by the Welsh prince Llewellyn the Great during the early 13th century, to protect and control the Llanberis Pass - a strategic location, protecting trade and military routes into north and south Wales. Entry to the castle is free and it's worth exploring.

The castle comprises a courtyard, surrounded by a number of towers and a round keep, said to mimic the Norman castle found at Pembroke.

Edward I and his army took the castle in 1284 and it gradually fell into disrepair. The ruins were popular in the 18th and 19th century with artists and were famously painted by Turner in 1802.

Retrace your steps back down and over the footbridge to the road. Turn right along the road towards the National Slate Museum and First Hydro-Electric power station.

Crossing between the lakes, you'll get your first glimpse of the views to come, with the mountains and Llanberis Pass looming in the distance.

Turn left at the mini-roundabout and walk towards the National Slate Museum.

3. The National Slate Museum (SH 58563 60186)

Dinorwig Quarry closed in 1969 but the Victorian workshops, with the largest working waterwheel in Britain were preserved.

The Industrial Revolution in the 19th century led to an explosion of towns and cities across the country and saw demand for slate take off as a roofing material. It was also exported across the developing world.

In 1882 the county's quarries produced over 280,000 tons of finished roofing slates and in 1898 the slate trade in Wales reached its peak with 17,000 men producing 485,000 tons of slate.

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4. Vivian Quarry (SH 58661 60500)

From the museum, walk across the railway track and through the railway barrier-gate towards the old Vivian Quarry.

Pass through a large stone archway emerging inside the old quarry hole littered with old quarry buildings.

When production stopped in 1958, the lower half of the quarry gradually flooded to form a deep, blue lake - up to 18m in places and now popular with scuba divers.

Follow a winding track to the lakeside viewing platform for a closer look.

These days rock climbers also come here to climb in the old quarry, and you can see some traces of the climbing routes dotted around the sheer rock faces.

Walk back to the front of the museum and walk over to the far side of the car park - passing a café, toilets and gift shop (SH 58461 60462).

Follow a path of slate chippings towards the lake and along a winding track up to a grassy view point below the old quarry hospital (SH 58295 60604).

There are spectacular views here over the lake and you'll regularly hear and see the old steam train carrying passengers on a scenic trip beside the lake.

Walk up the wooden steps towards the hospital and marvel at the fascinating old photographs and medical equipment inside.

5. Quarry Hospital (SH 58317 60703)

The hospital here was for the men who worked at the Dinorwig Quarry in the 19th and 20th centuries. The idea was to have a hospital on site so men could get back to work as soon as possible after treatment.

The hospital treated a range of injuries, from broken bones to lost fingers and crush injuries, and employed the latest medical techniques of the time.

The hospital was even equipped with an x-ray machine, just three years after its invention in Germany, and was one of the first buildings in the area to have both hot and cold running water and electricity.

Turn left out of the hospital and follow a road through the entrance gates. Turn left up a rough track of slate chippings signposted as the green route, and head up a winding track into the ancient woodlands above.

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6. Sessile oak woodlands (SH 58382 60695)

The woods here date back to the time of Dolbadarn Castle and were once known as the Royal Forest of Gwynedd, stocked with deer and wild boar for royal hunting.

These days you'll find wild goats roaming around the sessile oak woodland, stunted due to the lack of nutrients in the soil. Sessile oaks have stalkless acorns that grow from their tree branches.

The track is covered in slate and tree roots so take care, especially in the wet. As you ascend, the oaks become noticeably smaller in height.

About halfway up you'll reach a viewing point overlooking the lake below. From here continue up the track following the green/yellow route.

As you approach a green/yellow sign with a red marker post, keep right and follow the yellow route up the hill and over a slate step and through a gap in an old wall towards a triangular-shaped clearing in the trees with a green post in the middle.

Keep right and follow the yellow/blue route up a muddy track leading to Coed Dinorwig. Walk past an information board onto a gravel path and into a clearing, leaving the woods behind you.

Opposite are rolling green hills, and cottages where local quarrymen once lived and rented small plots of land to grow vegetables on and keep livestock.

Walk along a rough 4x4 track passing a house and stables, towards some large slate tips in the distance (SH 58428 61142).

The slate tips are an incredible sight and are the end product of a very wasteful industry. A staggering 80-90% of slate mined here was wasted.

After 600m cross the road and walk past a commemorative slate statue to the former quarry workers and pass through a metal gate. Walk along a winding track marked 'slate trails' past a wonderful old slate wall draped in thick green moss and on towards the quarries.

After 500m the track widens and if it's sunny you'll be rewarded with a stunning vista of the mountains beyond.

7. Viewing Point (SH 59108 60415)

On a clear day you can see the summit of Snowdon from here and, looking carefully, you'll just make out the Snowdon Mountain Railway track as it winds its way up the mountain from Llanberis.

To your left are the old quarry workings and mills where the slate was initially cut and dressed into roofing slates on site.

Turn right and follow the path down to a viewing area and take a few moments to enjoy the scenery around you.

Below and to your left is the entrance to the Dinorwig Power Station, built deep inside Elidir Fawr (SH 59103 60411).

The station's six powerful generating units stand in Europe's largest man-made cavern, 23m wide, 180m long, and 51m tall which you can visit on an organised tour.

The power station also known as Electric Mountain is used to top up the National Grid during times of peak demand e.g. during half time in FA Cup finals when millions of kettles are switched on simultaneously.

Turn right through a rusting, kissing gate and follow an old tramway incline down the mountain. Wagons loaded with slate were lowered down the incline from the quarry to the slate finishing mill below.

8. The Incline (SH 59235 60521)

There were three main inclines, with the highest over 1500ft above sea level and home to the highest locomotive shed in Britain.

Take care walking down the first section as the slate can be slippery, even on dry days. It's a fairly surreal experience walking between thousands of tons of discarded slate, seemingly balanced precariously on either side of the incline.

You can still spot traces of the original tram tracks here and there along the incline, and after around 300m you'll pass under an old drum house, once used to control the speed of the wagons as they were lowered down the mountainside.

One rope was attached to a rake of loaded wagons at the top and the other rope fastened to empty wagons below. By skilful use of the brake on the drum, the weight of the loaded wagons going down, hauled the empty wagons up.

Follow the incline down until you reach the old quarrymen's cottages on the right-hand side of the track.

9. Anglesey Barracks (SH 58970 60212)

The two rows of terraced cottages, eleven on each side, were known as the Anglesey Barracks as they housed workers from Anglesey who stayed here during the working week.

Life was hard and very basic with four men crammed into each small cottage yet despite having no running water and only a coal fire for heating and cooking, the barracks were a hive of cultural activities with choir singing and poetry reading.

The men would leave for home at noon each Saturday and arrive back early on Monday morning ready to start work.

The cottages were condemned in 1948 as a health hazard, by which point most workers were already living in better conditions and using buses each day to travel from further afield.

Continue down the incline, with views over Llyn Peris and the power station below, taking care as you walk between the tracks and overgrown grass.

Follow a high slate wall as it curves its way around a wooded area towards another drum house. Here you'll find huge pieces of slate overhanging the wall, which served as makeshift shelter for the workers during bad weather.

On a sunny day it's very pleasant here but in winter, during rain or blizzards of snow, it must have been incredibly cold and bleak.

10. Old brake house (SH 58842 60172)

Within the remains of the brake house on the left, you'll find a curiously shaped window, aligned diagonally through the wall in such a way as to give the brake man inside an excellent view of the approaching slate wagons.

Keep right and follow the slate steps 1 for a few metres and turn left at the gap in the wall. Cross over an old iron footbridge onto the other side, above the brake house.

From the bridge you'll have magnificent views west over the town and Llyn Padarn and east towards the Llanberis Pass.

There are fantastic photo opportunities from up here especially looking down over Dolbadarn Castle.

Follow a zigzagging path bordered by an impressive slate wall, down between the slate tips and along a clearly marked track through a short section of oak woodland.

Take care as the ground is uneven with loose stones and the odd steep section to negotiate but there are wooden steps provided along the trickier parts.

Emerging at the bottom, you'll find yourself on a tarmac road. Keep right and follow the road back towards the National Slate Museum.

After roughly 180m, just after the railway track, turn left and walk over a footbridge spanning the Afon Rhythhallt (SH 58570 60178).

Follow an easy path running parallel to the railway track for 0.5km taking you back to the Llanberis Lake Railway station and the end of the walk (SH 58239 59883).