

Torrent Walk

2½ miles / 4 km circular walk

Distance: 2½ miles / 4 km

Time: Around 1-2 hours

Grade: Moderate Leisure Walk

Start/Finish: Lay-by near the village of Brithdir on the B4416

Grid Reference: SH 761 182

Terrain: Rough, steep sections

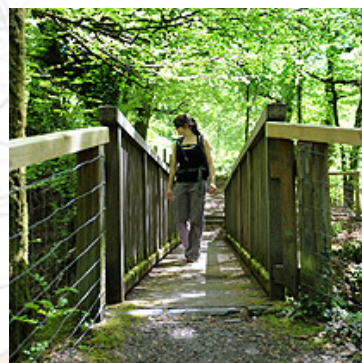
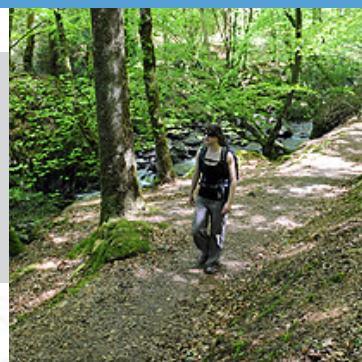
(Wear appropriate footwear)

Map: OS Explorer OL23

(Cadair Idris & Llyn Tegid)

Parking: Lay-by near the village of

Brithdir on the B4416



Note: This map is intended as a rough guide only. You should use the most recent version of the relevant Ordnance Survey map (OL 23) when walking this route.

How to get there?

From Dolgellau, follow the A470 to the south. After two miles, turn left for the B4416 towards Brithdir. Cross the narrow bridge, Pont ar Ddibyn, in 50 metres. After a further 100m there is a lay-by on the left with an oak signpost marking the path.



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About this walk

This circular path is one of the most popular paths in the Dolgellau area and it follows the river Clywedog through its striking gorge. Originally, the path was built by Thomas Payne and his son; he was also the designer of the Cob across the river Glaslyn in Porthmadog. The work was commissioned by Baron Richards of the mansion Plas Caernwch, which is further up the river, in order to extend the mansion's gardens.

More recently, the Snowdonia National Park Authority has restored the old path on the eastern side of the gorge, keeping to the route of the former path where possible. As the whole gorge has been designated a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) care had to be taken during the restoration work to ensure that the site was not impaired.

At one time the banks of the river Clywedog were bursting with industrial activity. There was a fulling mill, smithy, woollen mill and an iron furnace - some of which are still here today. The gorge also has a wealth of wildlife and special plants - there are otters, dormice and lesser horseshoe bats not to mention an important collection of lichen, ferns, mushrooms and liverwort. How many of these will you find?

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1

From the lay-by, walk back along the road towards Pont ar Ddibyn for hundred yards passing the first signpost for Torrent Walk, taking care of the traffic. Near the second oak signpost for Torrent Walk, turn right through the kissing gate. You will be crossing a wooden bridge over the ravine. There used to be a timber bridge with a patterned banister here when Thomas Payne completed the path.



2

Soon you can sit on a bench commemorated to Mary Richards, the botanist who used to live at Plas Caerynwch which is further upstream. She travelled a great deal, mostly to Africa, and was responsible for bringing many striking plants back to the gardens of Caerynwch. The sound of the river can be deafening here when there's a strong flow after it has rained.



3

Further down the ravine you will see three large boulders across the path which were carried here by glacial forces 10,000 years ago. Notice the abundance of ivy, fern and mosses covering the broadleaved trees above – oak, beech and ash trees. Important collection of lichens and liverworts also grow here.



4

Soon you will reach the bottom road. A short distance from Pont Clywedog bridge towards Dolgellau are the ruins of an old iron furnace dating back to the early eighteenth century. It was built by Abraham Darby, the Quaker from Coalbrookdale. He and other Quakers from Dolserau and Dolgun farms used to mine iron ore on nearby Tir Stent and haul it down to the furnace. If you do have time, take a detour to explore the ruins. You will need to walk about 150 yards along the country road towards Dolgellau from Pont Clywedog.



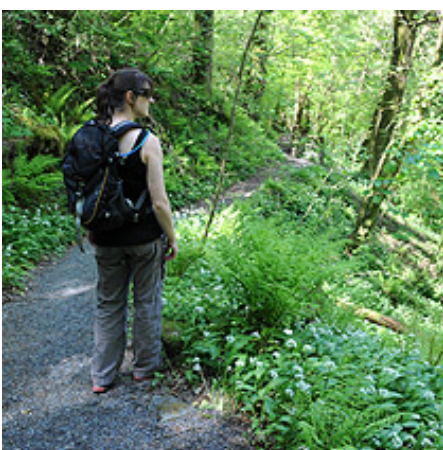
5

Turn right over Pont Clywedog to continue along Torrent Walk (go to your left if you would like to take a detour to view the ruins of the furnace). Notice the names which have been carved to the bridge's stones. The buildings on your right were previously a woollen mill and warehouse. Water to power the mill was taken from the river further upstream; some of the structure can be seen today. The flow of the water had to be controlled to prevent the waterwheel from breaking – in wet weather the river builds up destructive power and momentum in no time.



6

Keep to your right at the fork in front of you and walk up the hill until you will soon reach another signpost. Follow the path along the ravine up to the car. You will enjoy splendid views of the waterfalls along the path, and in the spring you will be walking through a woodland full of bluebells, wood anemone and wild garlic.



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