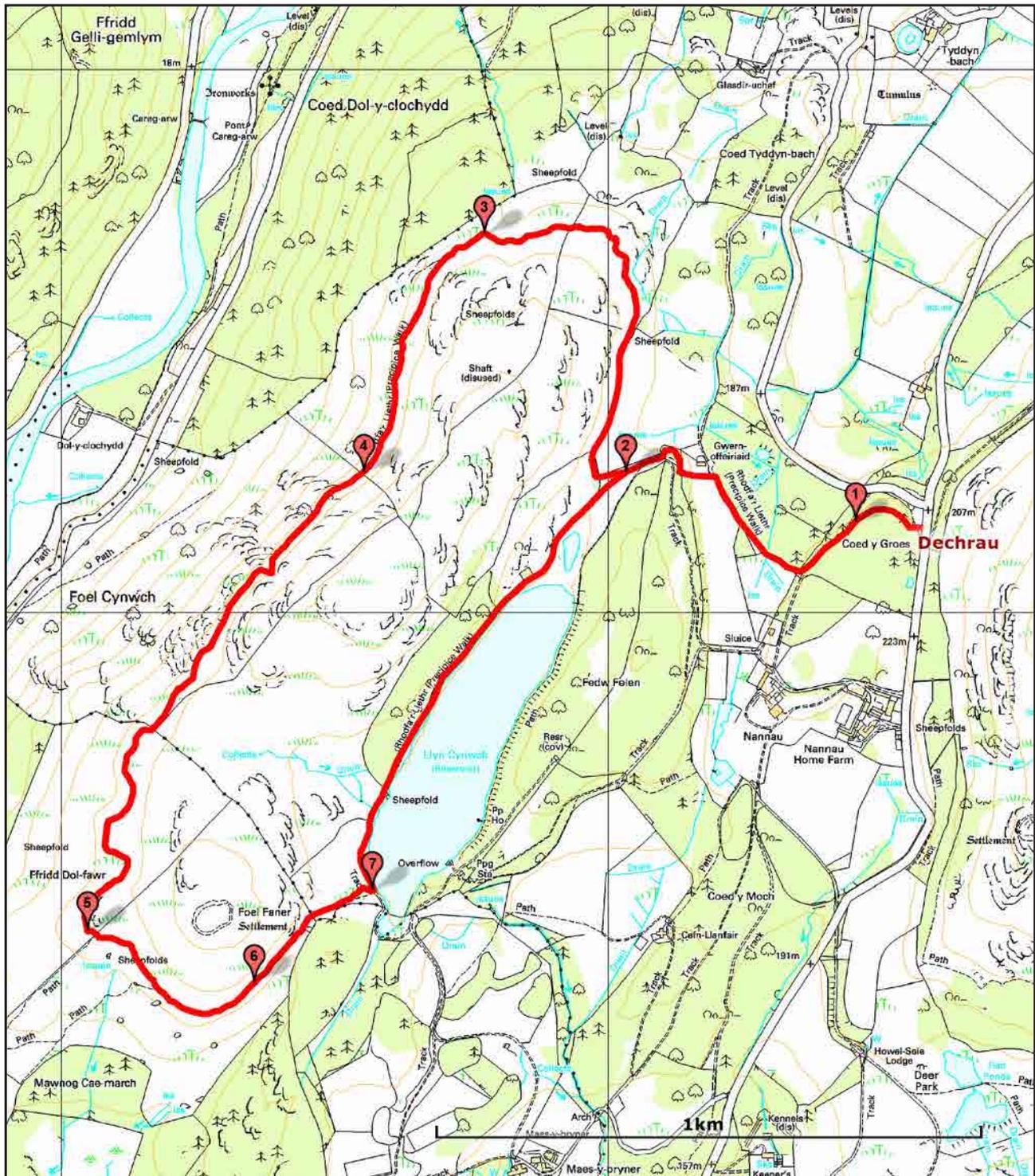


## Precipice Walk, Dolgellau



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**Distance:** about 3 miles (5 km)

**Time:** about 2 hours

**Grade:** Moderate Leisure Walk

**Start / Finish:** Saithgroesffordd car park, Llanfachreth (SH 746 212)

**Relevant Map:** Ordnance Survey Explorer OL 18 (Harlech, Porthmadog & Bala)

**Facilities:** Toilets

### How to get there?

From the centre of Dolgellau, go over the big bridge and turn right towards Bala. After about 500m turn left across the road to the Library up a hill towards Llanfachreth. After about 2 miles, at the top of the hill, you will arrive at Saithgroesffordd car park on your left at the junction. There are toilets here and ample parking.

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## Precipice Walk, Dolgellau

This circular walk does not follow a public footpath but a private walk over a particularly beautiful part of the Nannau estate, which dates back to the twelfth century. The public have been invited to use this walk by the estate since 1890 on the understanding that they observe the country code, follow the route indicated and use the proper access. Please keep dogs on a lead.

The Precipice Walk is one of the famous attractions of Dolgellau. It passes through an interesting variety of habitats which include deciduous woodland, a conifer plantation, meadows, lakeside and sheep-walk. But the main attraction of the walk is the incomparable views down the Mawddach Estuary and of the principal mountain ranges of Snowdonia. To the north are Snowdon and the Moelwynion, to the west is the Rhinog, immediately south is the long scarp of Cader Idris, while to the east lies the Aran and Arenig.

It is a contour walk in that the path roughly follows the level of the 800ft contour line, so there is not much climbing or descending involved and it is an ideal walk for the whole family. The precipice, along part of the western side, is by no means as terrifying as it sounds but walkers who suffer from vertigo may need some assistance along this section.

There is some doubt as to the origin of the path but most authorities seem to favour the explanation that it was originally a path created by sheep in their search for summer grazing but has since been widened by public use.

**1.** Start by leaving the car park at the Dolgellau end, where there is a path which turns right through the conifer plantation called Coed Cefndiwiog. Soon you will reach a lane that will lead you passed Gwern Offeiriad house and through a gate towards Llyn ('lake') Cynwch. To your left is Coed Fedwfelen which is full of bluebells in the summer.

**2.** Turn right at the signpost. There are a number of ancient oak trees growing in the parkland on the other side of the wall and on them are important populations of lichens and mosses.

**3.** Soon you will have a fine view looking North over the Forestry Commission's Coed y Brenin ('King's Forest'). You will be passing another signpost directed towards the old copper mine of Glasdir and the Forestry Commission's Tree Garden. The Forestry Commission will not be planting the land below the path that was cleared recently. This land is part of a scheme to restore woodlands, and native trees will reclaim this part. This path, which gives you the choice to walk further along the Llanfachreth area leisure network, has now been re-opened. Walk straight on.

**4.** Imagine the river valley below a mere 15,000 years ago. It would have been filled by a slow-moving glacier, scraping its steady way towards the coast. The Afon ('river') Mawddach that winds its way below has since deposited silt in the flattened valley bottom making it a great deal more fertile than the rugged valley sides.

Near the confluence of the Mawddach and Wnion rivers are the ruins of Cymer Abbey where the Cistercian monks settled. The abbey was granted a charter by Llywelyn ap Iorwerth (Llywelyn the Great) in 1209 but it was dismissed during Henry VIII's Dissolution. During this Dissolution the abbey's silver chalice and paten were hidden on a

secluded rock in Cwm Mynach beyond the mountain of Garn which is to your west.

**5.** This is one of the best views of Cader Idris and its neighbouring peaks Mynydd Moel, y Cyfrwy and Tyrrau Mawr. This mountain range has a volcanic root, and the hard rocks were able to resist the force of the glaciers.

**6.** Thousands of years ago, much of this area used to be covered with woodland spreading high up into the mountains. As a result of climate change and the influence of people, the old woodland shrank substantially. The trees were used for the old Mawddach shipping industry, for the coal mines in the South, the bark was also collected to be sold to the Irish tanneries and charcoal was made for the iron industry which existed here. Indeed, the name on the land above the village of Llanelltyd – Bryniau Glo ('coal hills') – refers to the old trade of making charcoal.

**7.** Turn left when you reach Llyn Cynwch and follow the path around the northern edge of the lake, re-tracing your steps back to the car park.

On the opposite side of Llyn Cynwch is the ancient mansion of Nannau estate, on whose land this walk crosses. It is a site of ancient origins. There is a record of a house being built here in the eleventh century. The original house was probably destroyed by Owain Glyndŵr during his revolt. The present house, which is over 230m (almost 750ft) above sea level, was built in 1796 and was the house of Vaughan family who owned most of the land in the area. It is at least the fifth house to be known as Nannau. It is a three-storey, late-eighteenth-century stone house, square in plan, built of dressed blocks of local dark grey stone, with a shallow-pitched slate roof. This was the last mansion to practice the old tradition of sponsoring poets and harpists.



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