

Snowdonia walk – 3¾ miles

Nantgwynant and Craflwyn

THE NATIONAL TRUST

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One of Wales' most spectacular valleys, Nantgwynant is encircled by high mountains, with Snowdon rising up to the north. This exhilarating walk explores an historic landscape, rich in Dark Age legend, with the remains of 19th century copper mining lining much of the route. Enjoy dramatic waterfalls, great views and the chance to spot a variety of wildlife as you climb up through the National Trust's Hafod Y Llan farm, cross the hillside and descend to Craflwyn, a Victorian hall and estate.

Start: Bethania - OS Explorer 17 map – grid ref: SH 599489

How to get there and facilities...

W of Beddgelert on the A498. Bus stops at start and end of walk, on the regular Portmadog-Beddgelert-Betws y Coed bus route. WCs and parking at Bethania and Craflwyn. Info point at Craflwyn and accommodation at Craflwyn Hall. Refreshments and shops in Beddgelert.

Things to look out for...

Craflwyn Estate

In the 19th century the farmland at Craflwyn was landscaped and exotic trees were introduced. Rhododendron was particularly fashionable and it was planted all around the estate. The Trust is now working hard to prevent the spread of rhododendron, as it chokes other plants and is poisonous to livestock. This conservation clearance work has uncovered a woodland garden with ponds, rockeries and waterfalls!

Craflwyn Hall

The Trust acquired Craflwyn in 1994. It had been neglected and required a great deal of restoration. The Victorian mansion has now been converted into a centre where volunteers stay while helping with conservation tasks. You can also hire it for weddings!

Dinas Emrys

There is no mistaking this hill fort east of Craflwyn. Look for a large hump of rock covered in bushes, trees and boulders. It was once a defensive structure and there is evidence of settlements from the 1st century. Local legends include tales of a red and white dragon and a King who fled here to escape the Saxons.

Mining

Copper and sulphur were mined in the hills behind Craflwyn during the 18th and 19th centuries. The last pit closed over 100 years ago, but the land is still marked with shafts.

Dry stone walls

13th century walls indicate that medieval monks farmed the land at Craflwyn. Most walls, though, are just a few hundred years old. A surprising variety of animals and birds make their homes in dry stone walls, including wren, toad, mice and robin.



Heather heathland in Snowdonia turns hills pink in late summer. The north end of the estate is a rich heathland of juniper and heather. Elsewhere, old Atlantic oaks provide a habitat for many birds and bats.

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Choughs are a type of crow with a red beak. They are seen in the Nantgwynant valley along with ravens (the largest member of the crow family). The latter has a distinctive, deep 'kronk, kronk' call which is quite different from other crows.

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It is thought that the name Craflwyn is derived from "Criafolen" – Welsh for mountain ash. 800 years ago the land here was given by Prince Llywelyn the Great to Cistercian monks. After a succession of owners over the centuries, it eventually came into the hands of a wealthy Victorian family who built the current Hall.

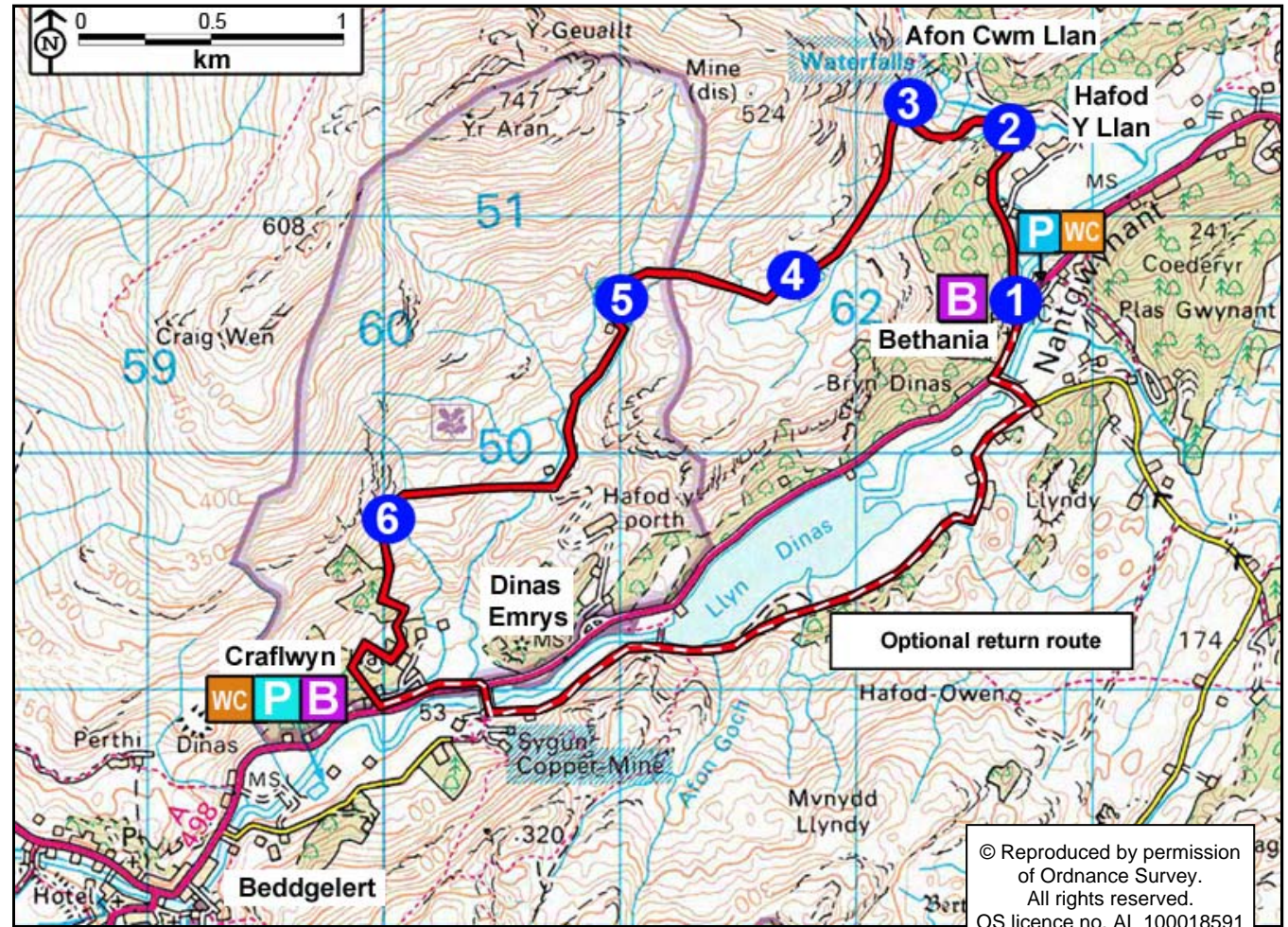
Welsh mountain goats are frequently spotted on the Snowdonian hills. There are around 1,000 in the area so you have a good chance of seeing one on this walk!

Route and directions

1. Start at the car park on the A498, near Bethania. Take the Watkin Path (eventually leads to Snowdon's summit) on the other side of the road heading north with an oak woodland on your left.
2. Once you rise above the woodland, you are greeted by a wonderful view of the Afon Cwm Llan waterfalls. The ridge to your right is home to many plants, including Juniper.
3. Leave the Watkin Path and turn left onto a track. Enjoy a wide panorama of the valley, Llyn Dinas lake and the surrounding mountains.
4. Continue on this track, passing through a wall before entering Bylchau Terfyn. You are now on National Trust farmland which is managed in an environmentally sensitive way. Welsh black cattle graze this land, keeping it in optimum condition for plants by preventing excessive grow of certain grasses and bushes. A little further on, cross a dry stone wall using the stile.
5. Walk uphill through heather until you reach the highest point on this walk (315m). You can see Beddgelert village from here and warnings that there are old copper mine shafts around. Bats inhabit the old mine workings. Descend the hillside, crossing a stream which has stepping stones, and climb over a stile.
6. Pass a derelict barn (once used to shelter animals) and follow the way-marks to another stile which leads into the Craflwyn estate. Keep on the path until you reach a T-junction, where you turn left and walk down to the estate buildings and car park. To your left is the historic site, Dinas Emrys. Return via bus or along the valley and around Llyn Dinas.

Terrain and accessibility

This is a quite strenuous and exhilarating 6km (3¾ mile) walk with the option of returning via a valley path or taking the bus. You're walking on naturally uneven surfaces with several sections of ascent and descent.



National Trust places to visit nearby: Aberglaslyn, Plas Newydd, Carneddau, Bodnant Garden

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