

• Distance 15½km/9½ miles • Time 5-6hrs • Type Coastal, mountain and valley

2/3 NAVIGATION LEVEL 2/3

2 FITNESS LEVEL 2



Plan your walk



WHERE: Linear walk from Barmouth to Taicynhaeaf.
START/END: Barmouth railway station (SH612158).

TERRAIN: Open mountain, woodland and the occasional surfaced road. Some parts can become boggy and stones on woodland paths slippery if it's been raining.

MAPS: OS Explorer 18 & 23; Landranger 124.

GETTING THERE: Regular trains arrive at Barmouth Station (© 0845 6061 660, www.arrivatrainswales.co.uk). Reduced Sunday service. Buses X94 and 28 serve the north and south sides of the estuary respectively, or there's Derek's Taxis (© 01341 422409/07876 084523).

EATING & DRINKING: Arguably the best restaurants in the vicinity are Dylanwad Da in Dolgellau (© 01341 422870, www.dylanwad.co.uk) or Bwyty Mawddach in Llanellyd (© 01341 424020, www.mawddach.com). For drink, reward yourself with a pint of Welsh ale at the George III in



PHOTOGRAPHY: ALAMY

The boundaries of this varied walk are formed by the ore-rich Rhinogydd hills on the northern side of its estuary, above the Victorian seaside resort of Barmouth, and the river Mawddach to the south, with Cadair Idris (2,930ft/893m) rising beyond it. The highest point of the walk is reached within 4km/2½ miles of the start, at Bwlch y Llan (Church Pass), then follows a gentle sloping descent to the valley floor, along the 'carriage roads' that once linked Barmouth, Dolgellau and Harlech. An industrial history is inscribed in the very landscape at many points along the way: fenced-off gold mines, spent veins of manganese and quartz deposits; stones underfoot have been worn smooth by the passage of mine wagons and the feet of the faithful, trekking to church. The mansions of wealthy industrialists are visible

in the woods on the south estuary, looking down on disused railway lines and mossed-over slate quarries. Sheep and cattle still graze the hills, however, and agriculture's victory over other short-lived industries is spelled out in the matrix of drystone walls, so integral a part of rural North Wales.

1. START Barmouth – a bastardised English version of the original Welsh Abermawddach – started life as a fishing village but became something of a tourist mecca for the Romantic poets. Wordsworth, Shelley, Darwin and Ruskin all stayed here – the latter attempted to create an experimental socialist commune for the poor in the stone cottages of the old town, among whose steep streets the walk starts. From Barmouth Railway station (SH612158) head for the High Street and turn R. Take the

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Penmaenpool (© 01341 422525, www.georgethethird.co.uk), at the other end of the toll bridge from Taicynhaeaf.

SLEEPING: There is a range of accommodation available in Barmouth and Dolgellau, but ideally placed for the Mawddach Way are Coed Cae B&B in Taicynhaeaf (© 01341 430628/07909 996983, www.coedcae.co.uk) and Graig Wen in Arthog near Dolgellau (© 01341 250482, www.graigwen.co.uk).

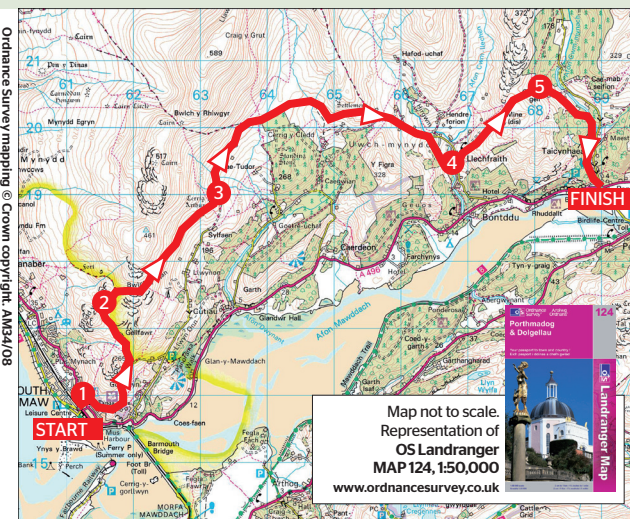
VISITOR INFORMATION: Barmouth TIC (© 01341 280787); Dolgellau TIC (© 01341 422888, www.discoverdolgellau.com).

GUIDEBOOKS: *The Mawddach Way* is available as a printed booklet or e-book from www.mawddachway.co.uk/mawddach-way-guide.html (£9.99/£4.99); *Walk Barmouth & the Mawddach Estuary* by David Berry (£4.95, Kittiwake Press, ISBN13 9781902302218).

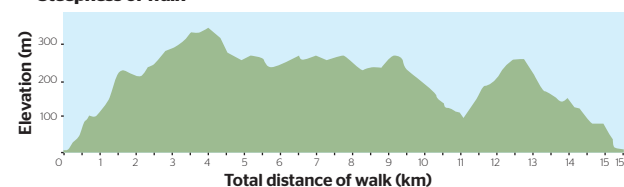
LOCAL RAMBLERS AREA/ GROUP: Meirionnydd Ramblers (© 01341 247693, www.ramblers.org.uk/areas_groups.htm).

passage opposite St David's Church, following the steps up to the R into the old town proper. Keep climbing R and follow signs for the 'mountain walk' out into open ground, with panoramic views over the town.

2. At a sign commemorating Dinas Oleu (SH615157), the first land donated to the National Trust, bear R, following drystone walls through a wooden gate and past the entrance to the Frenchman's Grave (SH616157), reformer Auguste Guyard, who came to Barmouth seeking refuge from persecution. Where the footpath forks twice bear L each time, striking uphill past the Barmouth Slabs, onto the minor road leading through Gellfawr Farm and onto what was once the road to a manganese mine. Follow the clearly marked footpath around to the R, up the hill



Steepness of walk



and onto the headland looking down over Harlech and Penrhyn Llŷn. Keep R, cross a small stream and turn R off the track over Bwlch y Llan (SH621175).

3. Follow the path L down the hillside, passing Bronze Age standing stones Cerrig Arthur (SH631188). Overcoming your disappointment at how small they are, fork L on to a well-made track. At the crossroads a kilometre or so further along, glance L at the start of the winter 'carriage road' that travellers of yore used to take to Harlech, complete with wishing well (SH637201), but turn R through fields to the valley floor, passing woods to the R, and carry on up the other side of the valley.

4. A weathered milestone (SH655202) marks the junction with the summer route to Harlech, winding up into the hills to the L. Walk on until you reach a surfaced road, following it down as far as a

footpath sign on the R; skirt farm buildings, turning L then R across a stream. Strike uphill toward a gate in the field corner, and down through the workings of the former Vigra goldmine. Cross over the bridge, keeping the river to your L, and walk until you hit a road, following it for 250m, then turn L onto a footpath, and L at the first fork.

5. An incline leads through fields and past fenced-off mineshafts. At the top, cross a stile to the L and continue over the pass. A sign for Gell Fawr farm marks the start of a downward climb to Cwm Mynach (Monks' Valley). Keep dogs on a lead as this is a permissive path until the oak woods of the RSPB's Coed Garth Gell reserve; underfoot lies another track used in gold mining. Keep going until the junction with the main road at Taicynhaeaf (SH689191).
Route devised by Jacky and Graham O'Hanlon