

16km/10 miles

STRENUOUSNESS
NAVIGATION
TECHNICALITY

Taking stock on the Diving Board, Fan y Bîg.

TOM HUTTON

Cwm Oergwm

Rocky tops are a rarity in the Brecon Beacons, but there is one stone that draws the crowds. **Tom Hutton** takes you diving on Fan y Bîg.

The Beacons' best-known rock icon is a wonderful photo opportunity close to the summit of the unfortunately named 719m (2,359ft) Fan y Bîg. The Diving Board, as it's known, is a jutting platform of old red sandstone that protrudes precariously above a deep chasm at the head of Cwm Cynwyn, allowing walkers with a head for heights the chance to star in their own version of a classic Beacons shot.

As well as offering spectacular views, the Diving Board is actually responsible for the mountain's less than dignified name: with the 'big' being a derivative of the Welsh 'pig', meaning beak. Making it the poetic and descriptive 'Peak of the Beak'.

It's best visited as part of a circuit of the magnificent Cwm Oergwm, starting in the village of Llanfrynach. The route up is painless, with the broad whaleback ridge of Gist Wen providing an easy-angled ramp to the tops. Bwlch y Ddwyallt marks the end of the climbing, and from here it becomes a skyline walkway extraordinaire, neither gaining nor losing much height as it tracks sweetly around the head of two spectacular cwms.

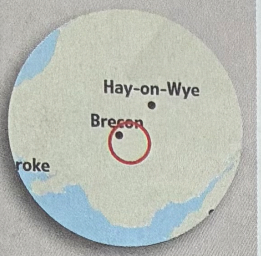


There's plenty of shelter at the northern end of Craig Cwmoergwm – first in a wonderful, grassy platform that seems to have dropped away from the main ridge, and then in the final saddle where the abundant scree has been used to fashion a multitude of different windbreaks.

And then it's up to the summit itself to get that must-have photograph as well as some wicked views across Cwm Cynwyn to the main peaks of Cribyn, Pen y Fan and Corn Du. The descent ridge is every bit as kind as the climb – easy-angled and soft underfoot – and all you're left with is a peaceful riverside stroll back to Llanfrynach.

On Craig Cwmoergwm, with Pen y Fan and Cribyn beyond.

FACTS



Distance 16km (10 miles)

Total ascent 780m

Time 5-6 hours

Start/finish Llanfrynach, **SO075257**

Nearest town Brecon

Terrain mainly good paths on high mountains; boggy in places

Maps OS Explorer (1:25,000) OL12; OS Landranger (1:50,000) 160; Harvey Superwalker (1:25,000) Brecon Beacons East

Buy maps at www.ordnancesurvey.co.uk/mapshop

Accommodation Youth Hostel at Ty'n-y-Caeau (near Brecon) – tel. 0870 770 5718. The Bunkhouse at Upper Cantref – tel. (01874) 665223 is only 2km from the start. For B&B try The Traveller's Rest at Talybont – tel. (01874) 676233. Camping at Talybont and Brecon

Public transport Beacons Bus Service links Brecon with Llanfrynach, check with TIC (below)

Guidebook *Circular Walks in the Brecon Beacons National Park* by Tom Hutton, pb Gwasg Carreg Gwalch

Tourist info Brecon – tel. (01874) 622485

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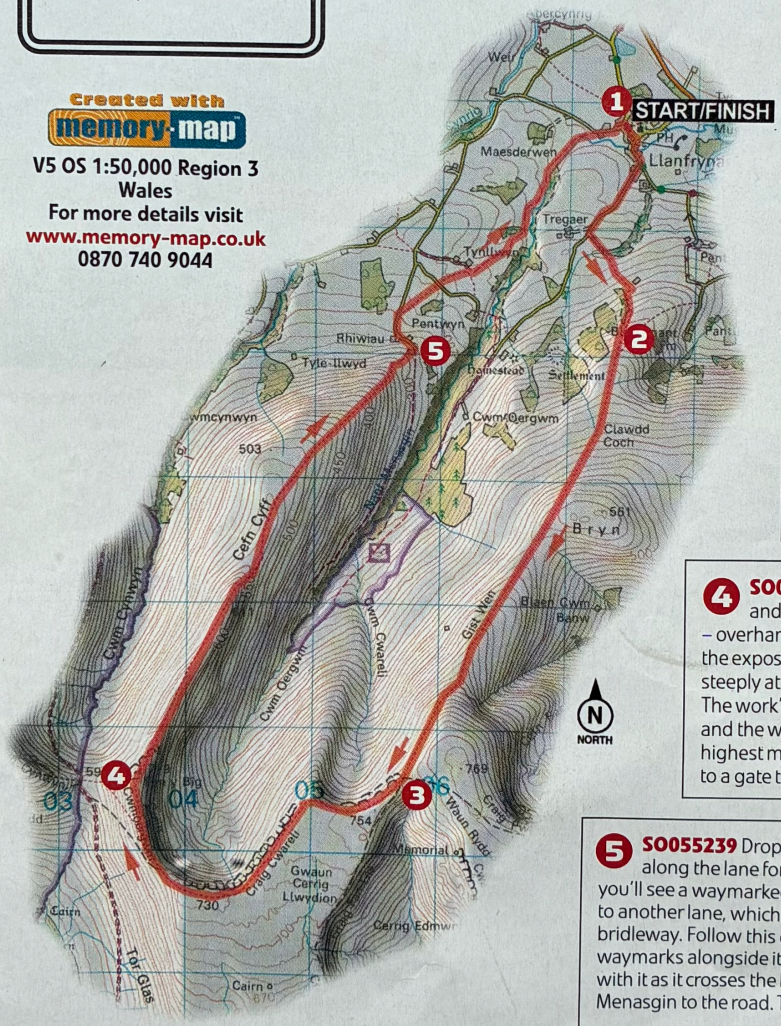
1 START/FINISH

SO075257 With the toilets to your right, and the church to your left, walk along the road for a few metres and turn right by the telephone box. Follow this across the bridge and then turn first right, up a narrow lane. Continue for 500m to a drive on your left (waymarked footpath) and follow this across a ford and up to some ruins. Bear right across a stile, before the drive bends left, and then cross another stile before climbing steeply up through some trees with the fence to your left. Continue to the top, where you're funnelled right slightly, and then carry on out onto open hillside.



At Craig Cwmoergwm (point 4).

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www.memory-map.co.uk
0870 740 9044



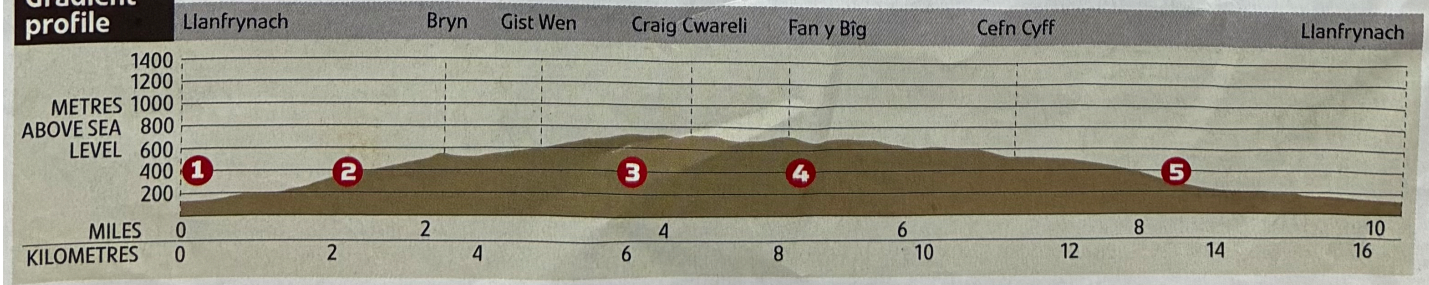
2 SO074242 Head diagonally right up the hill ahead, and you'll soon pick up a clear track that leads easily up onto Gist Wen. Now follow the main path upwards with Cwm Oergwm and then Cwm Cwareli down to your right. Continue straight ahead and you'll eventually reach Bwlch y Ddwyallt, where there's a major meeting of paths.

3 SO057206 Bear right and follow the obvious path around, above steep crags. The path tracks around a good-looking spur, and then continues south-west to Craig Cwmoergwm at the head of the valley. Continue with steep drops to your right, and a boggy plateau to your left, and you'll pass a short drop to a neat grassy ledge – perfect for lunch – before eventually reaching a shallow saddle, easily identified by broken ground and a good covering of scree. From here, you need to keep right, with the drop to your right, to continue upwards to Fan y Big.

4 SO036207 The summit is pretty obvious, and the Diving Board is just to the left of this – overhanging Cwm Cynwyd. Enjoy the views and the exposure, and then continue north, to drop steeply at first, down onto a broad, grassy ridge. The work's all done now so enjoy the soft going and the wonderful views over Cwm Cynwyn to the highest mountains in the National Park. Keep ahead to a gate that leads onto a rocky bridleway.

5 SO055239 Drop down to the road and bear left to walk along the lane for a few paces to a gate on the right, where you'll see a waymarked footpath. Take this and cross two fields to another lane, which you cross to follow a recently diverted bridleway. Follow this down to a brook, where you can follow waymarks alongside it. The path is well-marked now, so stay with it as it crosses the brook and continues alongside the Nant Menasgin to the road. Turn right to return to Llanfrynach.

Gradient profile



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Trosnant
Pontbrengarreg
Three Rivers Ride
Tynllwyn
Tregaer
Pencelli
Pentwyn
Pantilefrith
Cornwall Fm
Bailea
Rhiwiau
Tyle-llwyd
Cwmcynwyn
503
Cwm/Oergwm
Clawdd Coch
561
Bryn
Cefn Cyff
Cwm Cynwyn
611
Cwm Oergwm
Cwm Cwareli
House Platforms
Gist Wen
Blaen Cwm Banw
Cwm-Gwy
Tyle-Clydach
Nantllannerch
Cefn Bach
Cefn Edmwnt
599
717
Fan y Big
04
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533
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754
762
Craig Pwllfa
Twyn Du
Craig Cwareli
Gwaun Cerrig Llwydion
Memorial
Nant Tarthwynni
730
Craig Fan Las
Cerrig Edmwnt
Settlement