



Mountain air

Monmouthshire & Brecon Canal - Brecon to Talybont

Towpath walks usually treat the walker to enough canal highlights to forgive any in-between mile of monotony, but the Mon & Brecon spoils you with delicious scenery every step of the way. These spectacular waterways miles shouldn't be rushed: pack a rucksack and escape for the whole weekend if you can.

This is Welsh walking; a waterside trail in the company of mountains, sheep and open spaces, with the taste of real air to feed your boots. The canal sets off travelling through the heart of the Brecon Beacons National Park, and most of the route runs parallel to the river Usk.

Because it's not connected to Britain's main canal networks, the slow waters of the Mon & Brecon miss the boaty buzz of through traffic, yet gain more on intimacy and calm cruising.

The towpath seems to hide from the worries of the world under a canopy of trees for part of this walk, with mountainous peaks and Pen y Fan yelling ahead. No matter how grateful you are for each waterways mile, just when you think the views couldn't get any better, they do.

Brecon to Talybont

You're spoiled for choice for picnic spots but Ty Newydd is definitely a place to pull out your flask and soak up the view. The canal sweeps into an unrivalled Welsh canalscape here, and is one of our favourite places anywhere on Britain's canals.

Despite being a high hill trail, the towpath from Brecon is easily accessible and its kind nature makes it popular with sunny-day strollers and extreme outdoor enthusiasts alike. But walkers who prefer solitude shouldn't be too upset, especially if you avoid Bank Holiday weekends.

This isn't a canal walk for lock enthusiasts since most of the way is lock free, but Brynich Lock makes up for the lack of numbers by winning awards for its fabulous displays of flowers.

Other features of interest include several lift bridges and Brynich Aqueduct. Built by the engineer Thomas Dadford, the four-arched aqueduct elegantly carries the canal over the River Usk below.

The cheekiest reward of this walk is that while scramblers knuckle their way to the summits of Pen y Fan and other surrounding heights, the Brecon Beacons are never more than an amble for the lucky towpath walker.





Highlight of the walk

The dramatic setting at Ty Newydd boatyard with the Brecon Beacons as a backdrop. Pen y Fan stands majestically in the distance and there are 360° views of the surrounding scenery.

Did you know?

The Taff Trail Cycle Route follows the Mon & Brec Canal from just outside Brecon to Brynich Lock where cyclists head off on the road, though walkers on the Trail can continue on the canal as far as Talybont-on-Usk.

www.tafftrail.org.uk

Fascinating fact

Spot the rusting diamond-shaped signposts (some now painted in black & white) peeping over many stone bridges on the Mon & Brec. A world without cars seems inconceivable today, yet of course canals preceded our carbon-burning noise polluters. With the arrival of the motor car, new pressure was put on canal bridges originally constructed for foot passengers or horse & cart. These signs warned drivers of new-fangled motors to beware of the weight limit (up to 5 tons!)



Start:

Brecon Basin
OS Grid ref: SO046281

Finish:

Talybont-on-Usk
OS Grid ref: SO11229

Distance:

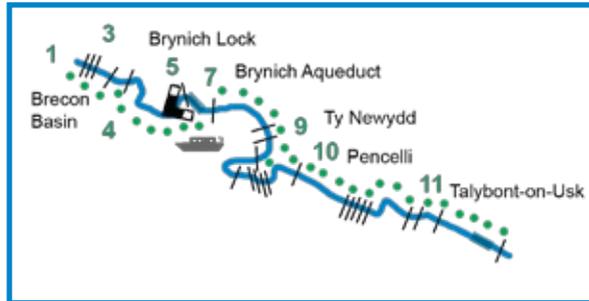
6 miles approx

Terrain:

Flat easy walking. Muddy in rural parts after rain.

OS Explorer Map

- OL12/13



The walk - step by step

- In Brecon Basin, head down to the canal in front of the Theatr Brycheiniog and follow the towpath under Dadford's Bridge.
- As you head beyond bridge 166, the canal surroundings take on the feel of a linear park.
- Pass Watton Bridge and go over the wooden stile or through the gate. To the right, there are open country views down to the River Usk and across to the mountains.
- Just beyond bridge 164, there's a conveniently placed bench with its back to the canal, facing one of the best views on the canal network.
- The canal becomes tree-lined on both sides until you reach the award-winning Brynich Lock, with its pretty lock house and flowers.
- Go through the gate and cross the road (a detour to the right takes you to the bridge over the river Usk).
- Just around the corner from the lock, the towpath crosses Thomas Dadford's Brynich Aqueduct, one of many on this canal but the most notable as it carries the canal over the River Usk below.
- Pass the popular moorings beyond the aqueduct, then go through the gate and over the bridge to continue on the opposite side of the canal.
- You emerge from a short wooded stretch to the glorious setting of Cambrian Cruisers' boatyard at Ty Newydd, overlooked by the National Park's highest peak, Pen y Fan.
- The canal loops round through woods until it reaches Pencelli and the first of the canal's lift bridges.
- Past the Royal Oak pub, the canal bends round to a wooded stretch with 3 more lift bridges in quick succession. A bigger road lift bridge marks your arrival into Talybont-on-Usk.

Where to eat

Tipple 'n' Tiffin

Brecon. In the Theatr Brycheiniog, canalside in Brecon Basin.

T:01874 611866 www.brycheiniog.co.uk

White Swan

Llanfrynach. Short walk from bridge 157.

T:01874 665276 www.the-white-swan.com

Royal Oak

Pencelli. Canalside by bridge 153.

T:01874 665396

Travellers Rest

Talybont-on-Usk. Canalside by bridge 142.

T:01874 676233
www.travellersrestinn.com

White Hart Inn & Bunkhouse

Talybont-on-Usk. Canalside by bridge 143.

T:01874 676227
www.breconbunkhouse.co.uk

Star Inn

Talybont-on-Usk. Canalside by the aqueduct (photos inside the pub show the extent of damage caused when the nearby aqueduct flooded it in 1994).

T:01874 676635 www.starinntalybont.co.uk

Best picnic spot

Ty Newydd with its open views of Pen y Fan.

And more

Large choice of other pubs and cafés in Brecon and Talybont.

Working boats

The Mon & Brec Canal was once busy with boat traffic, carrying cargoes of iron and coal. Traditional working boats in the Midlands had to have the whole family living (and working) on board, but on the Mon & Brec only men crewed the boats, going home after work.

Where to stay

Canalside B&Bs

Canal Bank 5-star
Brecon. Canalside near Watton Bridge. T:01874 623464
www.accommodation-breconbeacons.co.uk

The Malt House
Talybont-on-Usk. Near canal.
T:01874 676228
www.malthousetalybont.co.uk

Canalside campsites

Brynich Caravan Club Site
Brecon. Short walk from bridge 164. T:01874 623325
www.caravanclub.co.uk

Pencelli Castle Caravan & Camping Park 5-star.
Near bridge 153. T:01874 665451
www.pencelli-castle.com

Gilestone Caravan Park 4-star
Talybont-on-Usk. Short walk from canal. T:01874 676236

Canalside cottages

Darnley Cottage 4-star
Pencelli. Short walk from canal. Dog-friendly. T:01873 810811
www.wiseinwales.co.uk

The Malt House
Talybont-on-Usk. (See B&Bs)

The Briars 4-star
Pencelli. Short walk from canal.

Counting House 2-star
Talybont-on-Usk. Grade 11-listed.

Glan Camlas Cottage 3-star
Talybont-on-Usk. Canalside. Above three - T:01874 676446
www.breconcottages.com

Canalside pubs & inns
Star Inn, Talybont-on-Usk. Canalside. T:01874 676635
www.starinntalybont.co.uk

Travellers Rest
Talybont-on-Usk. Canalside by bridge 142. T:01874 676233
www.travellersrestinn.com

And more
Good choice of self-catering, B&Bs and hotels in and around Brecon and Talybont.
breconbeaconstourism.co.uk



How to get there

Train info

Nearest station is Abergavenny
National Rail Enquiries T:08457 484950

Bus info

Traveline Cymru T:0871 2002233

Parking

Car park by Brecon Basin (charge) or roadside

Local Tourist info

Tourist Information Centre

Brecon. T:01874 622485
www.breconbeaconstourism.co.uk

Canal & River Trust/Glandwr Cymru

Use the Canal & River Trust website to find specific local information.
www.canalandrivertrust.org.uk

Monmouthshire, Brecon & Abergavenny Canals Trust

Established in 1984, the Trust works in partnership with Glandwr Cymru to promote and restore the entire length of the canal.
www.mon-brec-canal-trust.org.uk

Beacons Bus

A great way to combine walking on the canal and the Beacons. Walk one way then get the bus back. T:01873 853254

Brecon Beacons National Park

T:01874 624437 www.breconbeacons.org

Theatr Brycheiniog (Brecon Theatre)

Brecon. T:01874 611622 www.brycheiniog.co.uk

Boats

Dragonfly Cruises

Brecon Basin. Cruises from Brecon to Brynich.
T:07831 685222 www.dragonfly-cruises.co.uk

Beacon Park Day Boats

Brecon Basin. Day boat hire & Canadian canoes.
T:0800 6122890
www.beaconparkdayboats.co.uk

Cambrian Cruisers

Ty Newydd. Holiday boat hire.
T:01874 665315 www.cambriancruisers.co.uk

Brecon Boats

Talybont. Day boat hire. T:01874 676401