

# Nant Gwynant Copper Mine

**Route Summary:** An alternative to the Snowdon Horseshoe that's nonetheless still a challenging mountain day out on quieter parts of Snowdon.

While the [Snowdon Horseshoe](#) is well known, the Alternative or South, Snowdon Horseshoe isn't. The only thing it has in common with the Snowdon Horseshoe is the section from Lliwedd to Snowdon's summit. Starting off in Nant Gwynant on the [Watkin Path](#), it's soon off path as you head up a mining track to Lliwedd. A scramble over Y Lliwedd, leads you back onto the Watkin Path just in time for the final scree path up to the summit. Finally, it's down the South Ridge and ascending the final mountain of Yr Aran. For those who want an easier ascent, you can climb the Watkin to Bwlch y Saethau and tackle Y Lliwedd as a dog-leg from there.

**Distance:** 17.04 km

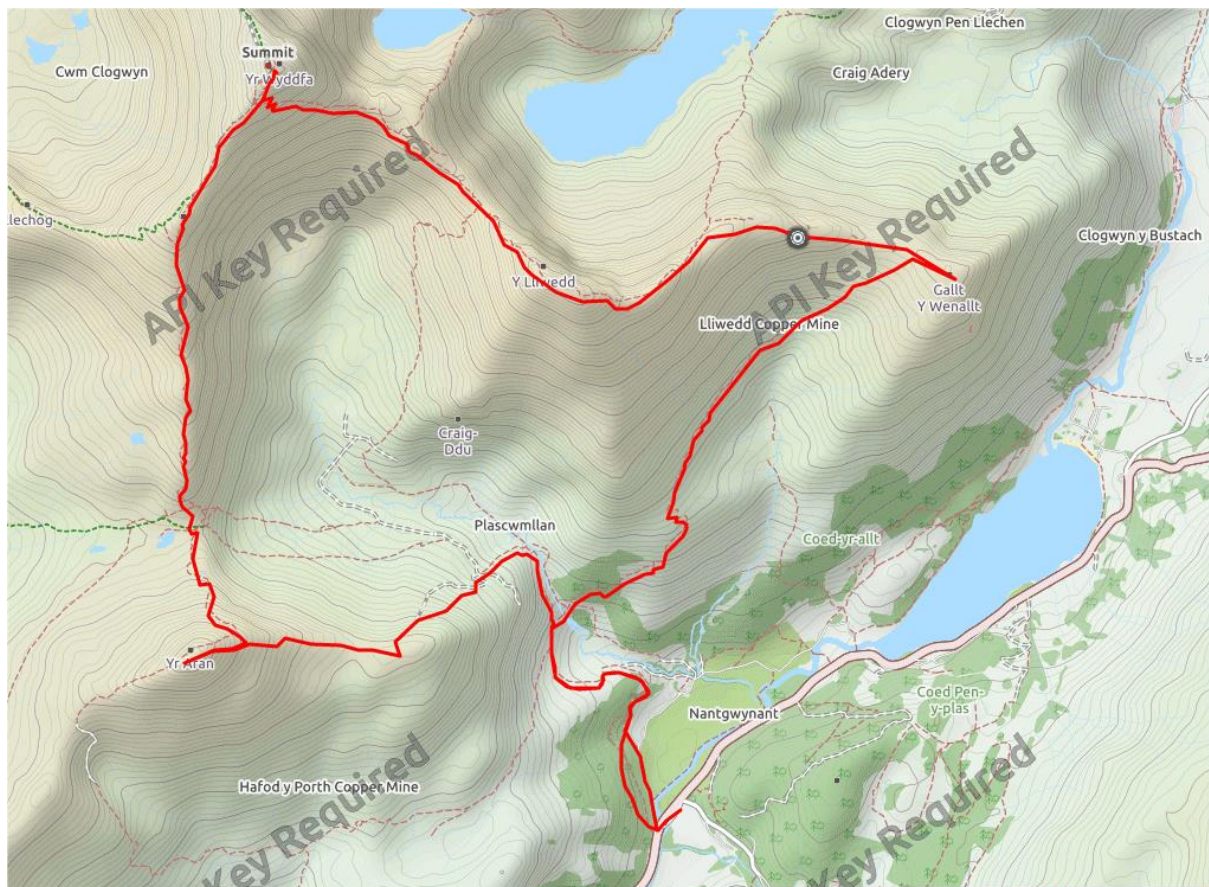
**Ascent:** 1462 m

**Time:** 8 hours

**Start and Finish:** Nant Gwynant

**Facilities:** Cafe and WC at start

**Hazards:** Scrambling in sections, steep scree path up final section of Watkin and a couple of off path sections that require some navigational skills.



## Route Description

1 Start off from the Watkin Path in Nant Gwynant, following the path through the forest initially. It soon joins the wider track which winds its way around lower Cwm Llan as it contours around the hillside. The waterfalls are a spectacle from here, especially after the rain.



2 After 1.5km the Watkin Path reaches a gate in the wall, with our route heading off right and downhill to cross the river over an old clapper bridge without any handholds. You'll need to go steady in the wet! The path now climbs steeply into a wood, and you're soon on a good quarry track. This brings you to the old copper mines, with a bit of off path navigation now needed to attain the ridge. You should aim for the minor summit of Gallt y Wenallt as the first summit of the day as well as an excellent viewpoint across the rest of the route to come.





3 From Gallt y Wenallt, a faint path will bring you onto the Pen-y-pass to Lliwedd track. It's uphill all the way now, as the route takes you first over Lliwedd Bach and then up onto the multiple summits of Yr Lliwedd. The scrambling is exciting, but nothing overly technical and not in the same league as Crib Goch. The views as well are spectacular, both towards Crib Goch and Snowdon. It's a largely loose path that leads you down to Bwlch Ciliau and the Watkin Path.





4 At Bwlch y Ciliau, you should try and keep high on the ridge for as long as possible before descending to the Watkin Path. That maximises the view across Llyn Llydaw to Crib Goch, as well as those in practically every direction at this stage! By Bwlch y Saethau, you'll need to be re-joining the Watkin Path for its final steep scree run to the summit. At the top of the scree path, you'll join the Rhyd Ddu path right to the summit.



5 The final section of the Alternative Snowdon Horseshoe descends Snowdon South Ridge, and why it's also known as the South Snowdon Horseshoe by some. The initial section over Bwlch Main is the trickiest section, with some parts being exposed. It's not in the same league as Y Lliwedd, so if you've got yourself this far then it shouldn't pose too many problems. Beyond that, the South Ridge is a largely straightforward descent barring one short section of pure scrambling around half way down (just after the 781 spot height is passed). The path ends abruptly, so it seems, just above Bwlch Cwm Llan, but there's a good set of steps down that can be missed if you veer too far left.



6 At Bwlch Cwm Llan, follow the wall towards Yr Aran. There are a couple of ups and downs across the bwlch with some borderline scrambling before you reach a small tarn that marks the start of the ascent. Head uphill steeply, following the wall until it turns left and the path takes a slightly easier line across the flanks of the hill. The path soon brings you to viewpoint where the path turns back on itself for the final ascent up Yr Aran.





7 The summit is adorned with a rock that might allow some shelter, but other than that there's not a lot up here! The views however make this mountain worth climbing, even as a good half day's walk from Rhyd Ddu. They extend back along the entire route completed, and south towards Bae Tremadog and South Snowdonia.



8 The final descent requires you to descend the way you came, as far as the viewpoint before heading on down the grassy ridge. You'll need to choose a point of descent wisely – not too soon as the ground is too steep. The best approach is to follow the wall as far as between the spot heights at 528 and 524 before heading downhill towards the quarry along a faint path. It starts off steeply on some loose rock (as seen below) but soon levels out. This brings you down, if you can keep on the path and not lose it, on the Cwm Llan Tramway at SH618 518 which you need to cross and descend to the Watkin Path. Note if you find yourself descending further up the valley, then you can just follow the tramway to the junction.



9 Finally re-join the Watkin Path (yet again!) turning right to return to Nant Gwynant.

