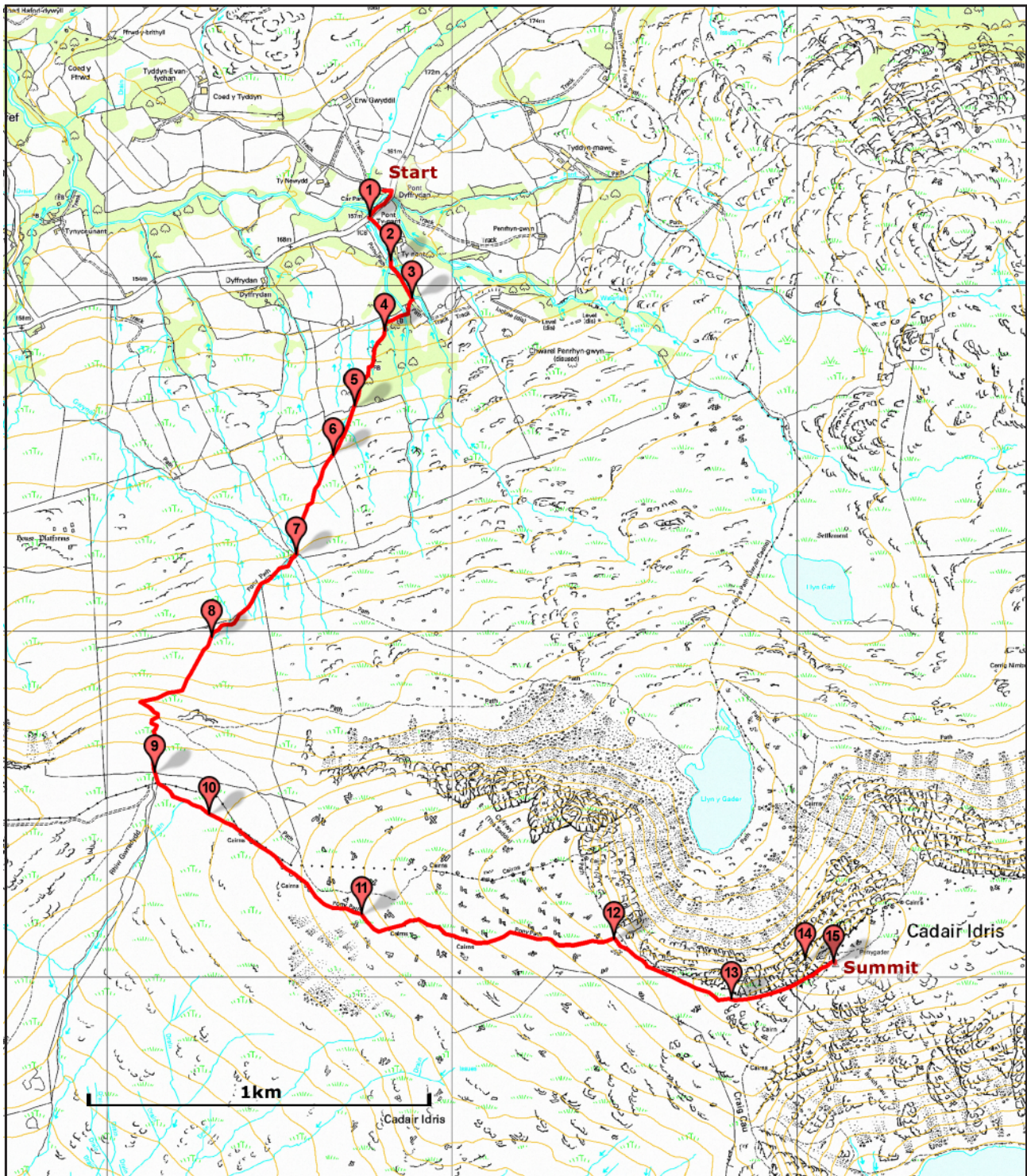


Pony Path, Tŷ Nant



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Distance: 6 miles (10km) (there and back)

Ascent: 2,384 feet (727 metres)

Time: About 5 hours (there and back)

Grade: Mountain Walk

Start / Finish: Tŷ Nant Car Park (SH 697 153)

Relevant Map: Ordnance Survey Explorer OL 23 (Cadair Idris & Llyn Tegid)

Parking

The path starts at the entrance to Tŷ Nant farm (SH 697153) on the 'Cader' road about 3 miles out of Dolgellau. There is a National Park car park and toilet block at Pont Dyffrydan almost opposite.



Pony Path, Tŷ Nant

The Pony Path from Ty Nant is the main footpath up Cader Idris from the Dolgellau side of the mountain. It is a reasonably safe and easy route, which also offers the most rewarding views.

The Fox's Path rises from the Gwernan hotel. This path requires walkers to walk along a very steep and loose scree slope above Llyn y Gader in order to reach the summit. Extreme care is needed when undertaking this path, especially when it's windy, wet or when the stones are covered with ice and snow. Descending this path requires very good physical fitness and we do not recommend anyone who are not experienced on these kinds of terrain to choose this path.

The Route

1. The path starts at the entrance to Tŷ Nant farm. As you walk from the car park, you will see Tŷ Nant farmhouse on your left, and beyond it the Cader Idris Ridge with, from left to right, Mynydd Moel, Pen y Gader - the summit (2,927ft, 893m) and Cyfrwy (The Saddle), with the conspicuous notch which is Idris' Table.
2. Follow the track up to Tŷ Nant, and pass through a kissing gate beside the farmhouse. Soon you cross a concrete bridge over a stream and pass through a mixed woodland of birch, hazel, sycamore, ash and hawthorn. Woodland is useful on a mountain farm as it provides shelter for stock in bad weather. However, constant grazing by sheep prevents young trees from growing, and this has resulted in a serious decline in Snowdonia's native woodlands. The National Park Authority is taking measures to encourage the conservation of existing and the creation of new woods.
3. The path is rocky and climbs very gently. This section, as most of the path up Cader Idris, has suffered badly from erosion in the past. Slates have been sunk across the path to prevent hill-slip and to drain off surface water.
4. Shortly you will come to three large sweet chestnut trees where you must turn right (marker post). Pass through a kissing gate and cross the stream by the stone bridge. Presently the path starts to climb steeply up a grassy hillside.
5. Passing through a gap in a dry-stone wall by a stream, you will notice that the terrain has become more open. The only trees around are dwarfed and twisted hawthorns. This is largely because the climate becomes harsher the higher up the mountain you go, and fewer species are able to stand such adverse conditions.
6. Keeping to the steps built into the slope ahead, you will eventually pass through a gate (please close) and over a small bridge. To your left are the impressive cliffs of Cyfrwy. Notice that trees have virtually disappeared at this altitude.
7. Soon you will come to another gate in the wall. As you pass through the gate (please close) you will notice a large area of very green grass to your left beside the banks of a stream. This area is greener, and has a greater variety of grasses and broad-leaved plant species growing in it because there are more nutrients in the soil. The stream has dissolved them out of an area of soft (basic) rocks under the watershed above. Cross the stream and contrast this area with the coarser grassland a few yards along the path. There are very few nutrients in this soil because it is fed by streams that have flowed over hard (acidic) rocks. Most of Snowdonia's mountain areas are made up of acid soils of this type.
8. The path starts to climb very steeply by some stone sheep pens on your right. At the top of the stone steps a barrier fence stops you going straight ahead. Please turn left here (waymarker) and zigzag up the steep slope known as Rhiw Gwredydd.

9. After a steep climb the path levels out until it reaches an intersection of fences with a gate and stile. This point is known as 1842ft.(560m.) - the spot height.

10. Turn left and continue for a while along the level, grassy path. In some places there has been considerable erosion and there are several areas where the peat has been deeply exposed. It is unlikely to be re-colonised by plants because of the lack of nutrients and the harsh climate. Plants grow very slowly in these conditions, and the constant passage of walkers' feet effectively prevents them from becoming established. In a few years' time, heavy rain will have washed most of the peat away leaving only bare subsoil and rock. Some of the steeper parts of the path ahead have been reduced to this condition.

11. The path soon starts to climb steeply. Cairns marking the route are an important guide, particularly when there is snow on the ground. Please do not damage them or build new ones. The path follows a series of zigzags, alternatively steep and then level, until you top the rise and are rewarded by a view of Pen y Gader and its outline of frost-chiselled boulders. To the left is the Cyfrwy ridge and behind you Carnedd Lwyd and the Pony Path down into the Pennant Valley (or locally called Cwm Llan).

12. Passing through the bleak terrain of frost-shattered rock, you are on top of the cliffs overlooking Llyn y Gader. Follow the path to the right taking great care going through the rocks when windy - Bwlch y Gwynt ('Windy Pass') is the local name on this area. Do not go too close to the edge on windy days, or when there's a lot of snow when you could be in danger of standing on a cornice overhanging on the precipice and could break without warning.

13. Soon you will come to the peculiarly shaped rocks that you saw on the skyline earlier known as pillow lavas - rocks which were originally on a pristine sea bed. The path keeps to the left of them and you catch a glimpse of Llyn Gafr (Goat Lake) far below on your left. It is now only a few minutes scramble to the summit.

14. Close to the summit cairn is a shelter which is maintained by the Snowdonia National Park Warden Service.

15. On your return, make sure at the beginning that you aim towards the right direction, especially when it's foggy. Keep to the right when descending. In about 25m you will pass an old fire place which was part of the original cafe, and after about 25m further the path forks. Keep to the right here. The left hand path will take you down towards Bwlch Cau and the south side of the mountain. When descending, the pillow lavas should soon be on your left hand side.

Remember

Though you are in the Snowdonia National Park, please remember that the path passes through the privately owned farm and grazing lands of Tŷ Nant, Dyffrydan, Ty'n Ceunant and Pennant, where dogs are not welcomed unless under close control or on a lead.

Much of this part of Cader Idris is a National Nature Reserve; owned and managed by the Countryside Council for Wales.



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