

The Mountain Lakes of Llan-y-Fan Fach and Llan-y-Fan Fawr

Distance: 7.2km 4.5 miles

Classification: Energetic. Begins with a long ascent and later an even steeper ascent, but does not require any climbing. Can be hard on the leg muscles coming down.

Time: Around 3 hours 30 minutes

Two crystal clear mountain lakes lie on either side of Carnau Gwys, an 800 meter high ridge on the Black Mountain, six miles to the North of Abercrave. A number of local legends surround these lakes and on visiting them it easy to see how they acquired their mythical status.

The most popular starting point for walkers is a short car ride from Abercrave.

Follow the A 4067 North for 4 miles up the valley to the Tafarn-y-Gareg Inn. A hundred yards beyond the Inn take the small country lane on the left, sign posted to Trecastle. After one and a half miles there is a cattle grid in the road, and three quarters of a mile beyond this the stream (the upper waters of the river Tawe) begins to run close to the road.



A small tributary, Nant-y-Llyn, can be seen cutting a channel down the hillside and joining the main stream. The footpath can also be seen leading upwards.

A few car parking places can be found by the road side at this point and it is also a good place to ford the stream.

Begin the walk by crossing the main stream above the junction with Nant-y-Llyn, which can then be followed up the hillside, where it gives rise to several cascades with deep clear pools.



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Nant-y-Llyn runs out of Llan-y-Fan Fawr, the most Easterly of the two lakes, and tracing the stream to the Northwest is the best way to find the lake.

Llan-y-Fan Fawr lies in a shallow depression and only becomes visible by this route when you are almost upon it. Another guide to its location is to head for the high end of Carnau Gwys which dominates the skyline as you ascend.

Follow the path around the Southern end of Llan-y-Fan Fawr and up the side of Carnau Gwys where it can be seen winding towards the summit. There are excellent panoramic views, which get even better as you reach the top, where there is a cairn at the height of 802 metres.

Skirting around the top edge of the scree slope to the North and then veering West leads gently downwards to Waun Lefrith, a vantage point overlooking Llan-y-Fan Fach, the more Westerly of the two lakes.

Really serious walkers may wish to continue around the Western end of the scree slope, keeping Carnau Gwys in sight on the right and following the bottom of the scree back to the first lake, Llan-y-Fan Fawr. There are however areas of bog to cross if you chose this option.

The most popular choice is to retrace your steps along the top of the scree and back down to Llan-y-Fan Fawr. The views are well worth a second look. Follow the outflow, Nant-y-Llyn, back to the car.

