

WELSH COUNTRY

Your Countryside Magazine for Wales

Walking in Wales



Fan y Big



...a hillwalkers delight



The high peaks of the central Beacons are a hillwalker's delight. Easy summits linked by undulating ridges that carry great paths. Most of the attention is focused on the highest peaks at the western edge of the range, but the eastern reaches of the massif offer equally enthralling walking, in many

cases with less actual climbing and descending. This walk proves the point perfectly with a steep opening climb followed by some of the finest, yet easiest hillwalking in Wales. The summit of Fan y Big holds its own surprises and is one of the best viewpoints in the national park.



Walk back out of the car park and through the gate next to the cattle grid before turning immediately right and following a stone path steeply uphill with a few small waterfalls down to your left. The path levels briefly then steepens again to climb steeply up onto the southern flanks of Craig y Fan Ddu, marked with a cairn. That's all the steep stuff out of the way!



Bear slightly right, to join the escarpment edge, and then follow this around to the left to hug the edge with stunning views over the remote Caerfanell Valley below. Continue easily along the escarpment edge, climbing gently all the time, and after around 1km you'll reach the rocky niche carved out by the infant Caerfanell River. To your left is a boggy, featureless plateau where the stream rises; and beyond that, you'll get your first views of the high peaks of Pen y Fan and Corn Du.



Continue on a man-made path that crosses a very boggy section, and then hook up with the escarpment edge again to enjoy more wonderful views and easy skyline walking all the way up to the grassy notch at the very head of the valley. Here you'll meet a huge junction of paths above the head of Cwm Cwareli.





Turn left and follow a good path that now cruises sweetly around Craig Cwareli, with great views over Cwm Oergwm to Fan y Big. Continue above Craigcwmoergwm and then climb easily onto the summit of Fan y Big. Continue north for a few paces for a photo-opportunity on the impressive ‘diving board.’ This protruding platform of old red sandstone is likely to be the reason behind the peak’s often-ridiculed name: pig is Welsh for beak or bill, which is exactly what the rock looks like.



Drop west from the summit to follow a clear path down into Bwlch ar y Fan, where you’ll meet a rough track – an ancient road usually known as the Gap Road. Turn left onto this and drop to a gate, which you pass through. Continue easily down, with great views up to Pen y Fan and Corn Du and also down over the Neuadd Reservoirs. You’ll drop into a rocky ravine and climb out again before eventually reaching a road. Turn left and immediately left again onto a broad track. Now follow this through a succession of gates to meet another road. Turn left to return to the car park.

- Distance: 13km (8 miles)
Time: 4/5 hours
Start: Torpantau (SO 056175)
Paths: Mainly clear paths over high mountains.
Maps: OS Explorer Series (1:25 000) OL12
Brecon Beacons
Tourist Info: Brecon TIC - Tel: (01874) 622485
National Park Visitor Centre
Tel: (01874) 623366



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