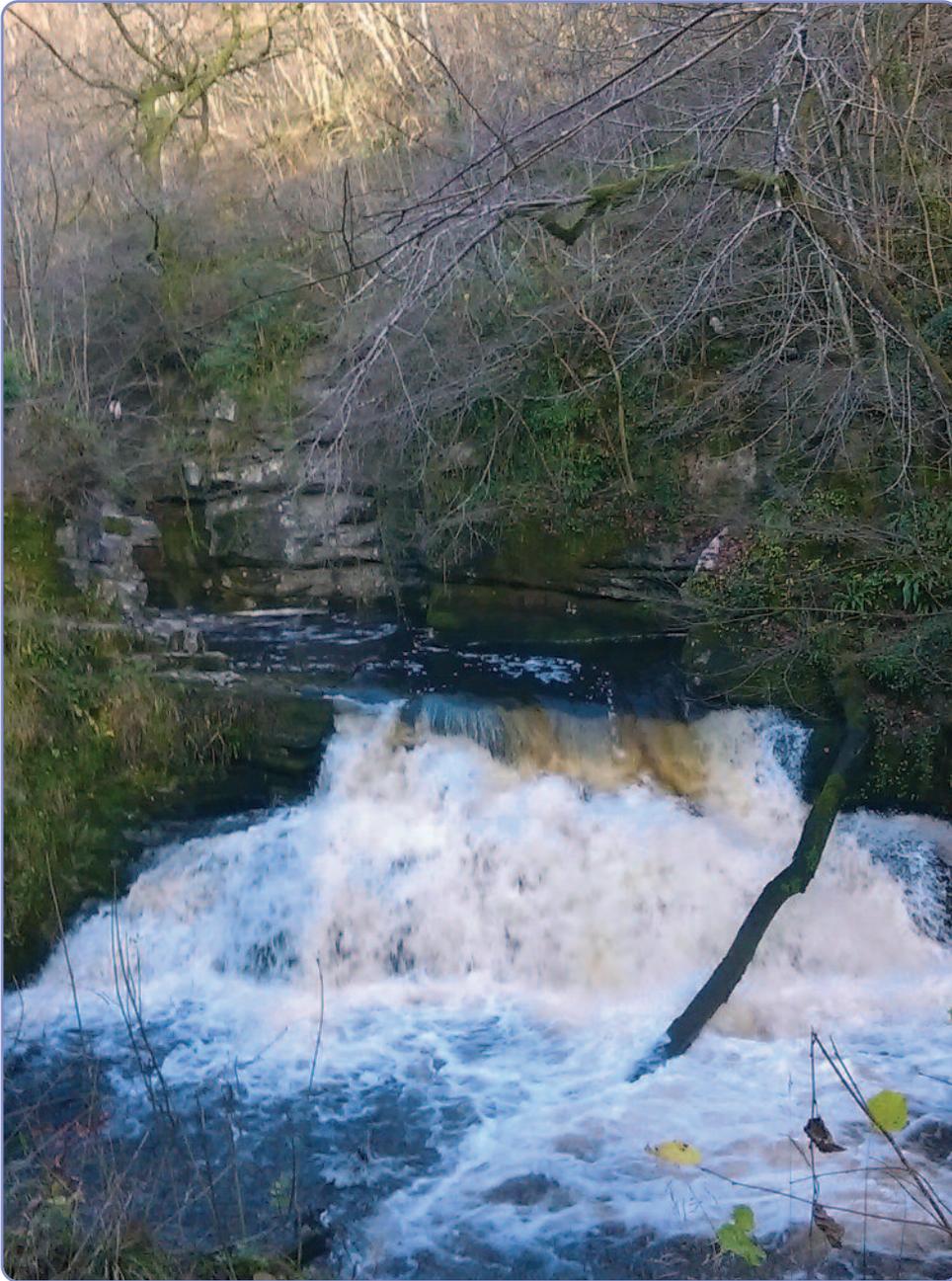


Walking Itineraries

3 Taf Fechan near Merthyr Tydfil



On the fringes of Merthyr Tydfil and the National Park, this riverside walk takes you along the beautiful Taf Fechan river valley with its gorges and waterfalls.

It is a scenic and interesting walk, a mixture of industrial heritage and wildlife. Much of the walk is through a Nature Reserve. Starting near Cyfarthfa Castle, part of the route is along an old tramway following the lead which supplied water to the Cyfarthfa Ironworks.

Information

Where is it?

Start at Cyfarthfa Castle Park,
Brecon Rd, Merthyr Tydfil, CF47 8RE.
Explorer Map OL12. Landranger Map
160. Start SO 041 073

Distance

8km (5 miles)

Time

Allow 2-3 hours.

Terrain

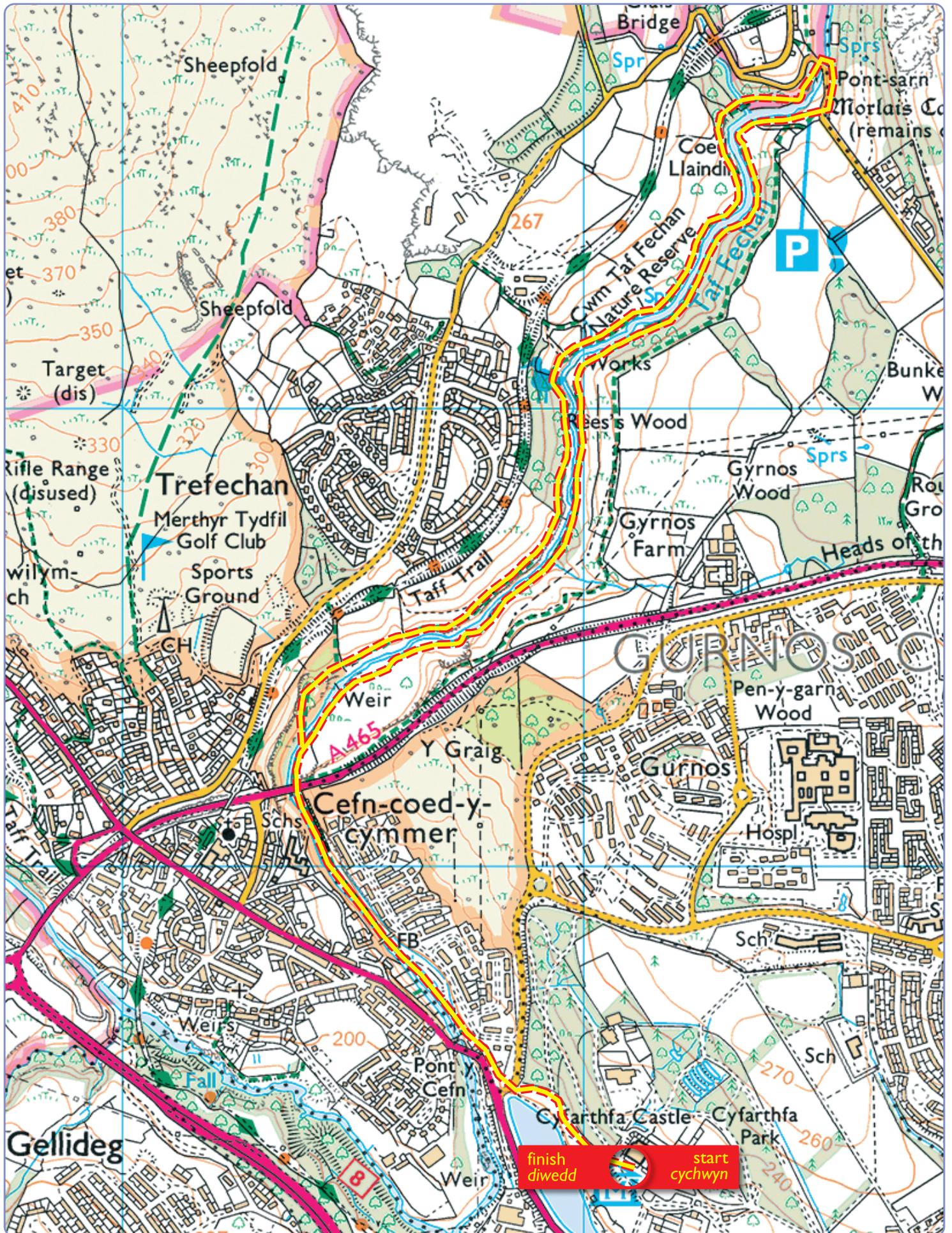
Generally level walking but uneven underfoot in places. First 200m is tarmac and scooter/wheelchair accessible.

Grade Moderate.

Please note

Can be muddy and slippery in places especially in winter. A few very short uphill sections, mostly with steps. One stile on first half of walk, one stile on second. The return path is more challenging in places as the path is narrower and more uneven.





1 Start from Cyfarthfa Castle. Follow the exit road out of the park, keeping the lake on your left. Cross the pedestrian crossing near the junction of Brecon Road and Gurnos Rd, opposite the exit from Cyfarthfa Castle Park. You will see a reconstruction of a tram and an information board telling the history of the Gurnos Tramway which was built in 1792.

.....

2 Follow the easy access tarmac path alongside the Cyfarthfa Leat which was constructed in 1825. This was the water feeder for the Ironworks and it later acted as a feeder for Cyfarthfa Lake. As you cross the bridge, notice the waterfall down to the river below. After about 5 minutes you will come to a path junction. Fork left, leaving the leat and head downhill to the old tramway running alongside the Taf Fechan river. **The next part is flat but uneven and can be wet and slippery in places so care should be taken.**

.....

3 Follow the old tramway-note the rail fixing holes in the stones. You then pass under a high bridge (the Heads of the Valleys Road) through a metal gate into a grassy open area. There may be horses or cattle grazing along the route in places from now on. You are now entering the Taf Fechan Nature Reserve, managed by the Wildlife Trust. It is particularly special for about 150 different types of mosses and liverworts, some quite rare. You might also see herons and dippers. Look out for alder trees which were used to make wooden clogs for coal mining and other industries. Do not cross the wooden bridge but continue on.

.....

4 The path takes you through a beautiful gorge with cascades and waterfalls. **The path is wide but there are steep drops along this stretch so keep away from the edge.** The path leaves the gorge and continues through more open areas. A short climb up some steps brings you to meet Pontsarn road at a car park. 2.5 miles/4 km.

.....

5 It is possible for a minibus to reach here and park for a one way walk. A small coach should be possible as long as it approaches from the eastern end of Pontsarn road rather than via Trefechan. If boarding the bus here, it is worth spending an extra 10 minutes or so to walk down to the bridge as described in 6.

6 Turn left and walk down the road. After a couple of minutes the road bends left over a narrow bridge which crosses another gorge and waterfall. **Listen out for approaching cars at the bridge.** There is waiting space for a car/small minibus here. You can also see Pontsarn viaduct which was built in 1864 for the Brecon and Merthyr railway but now forms part of the Taff Trail cycle route. Either side of the road are good places to stop for lunch.

.....

7 Looking downstream by the bridge you will see Nature Reserve and National Park signs at a path entrance. Take this path but, shortly after starting, look back to get a good view of the waterfall. You are now following the Taf Fechan again but on the opposite bank of the river. This part of the walk has some short uphill sections, is more uneven than previously and the path becomes narrow in places. There is one stile and some gates. Continue on through woodland and then down through bracken to the riverside. There may be cattle or horses grazing in the fields and there are a couple of small streams with stepping stones to cross- take care in very wet weather. Continue on through the grassy areas then more woodland, passing by the gorge again. You will also pass a ruined building- an old mill. Follow the path up to a gravel track. Turn left onto this track and head downhill. Cross the wooden bridge then turn right and return the way you came earlier.

.....

8 When you get to the path which forks uphill (the path you came down at the start), follow this to retrace your steps back up to the leat and then back through Cyfarthfa Park to the start.

Variation

Easier access Walk around Cyfarthfa Park Trails www.cyfarthfa.com/attractions.aspx

To shorten One way only- 2.5 miles/4 km. 1-1.5 hours.

To lengthen extra 2 miles/3.21 km. Turn right up Pontsarn road and visit Morlais Castle. Retrace steps or follow directions to Pontsarn viaduct.

For directions see part of Gateway to the Beacons walk

www.glamorganwalks.com/merthyr_tydfil.htm

Also useful for extra historical information.

www.glamorganwalks.com/lf_mid.htm#Cyfarthfa%20Lake%20and%20Feeder

Activities suitable on this route

Bird watching, photography. There is an excellent geocaching trail within Cyfarthfa Park, GC603E7 Mano; GC603F2 Tank; GC603FX In the rough; GC60BBW Big Pineapple; GC603GX Deep Freeze; GC6095Z Top Pond.

Taf Fechan near Merthyr Tydfil



- 1 Craig-y-nos
- 2 Talybont
- 3 Taf Fechan
- 4 Pontneddfechan
- 5 Llangorse
- 6 Pen-y-crug
- 7 Twyn-y-gaer
- 8 Llanfoist
- 9 Sugar Loaf Mountain
- 10 Cribarth



Information

Opening times Castle and museum open throughout the year but not Mondays during the winter: Museum entrance charge - £2 (£1 concessions). The Park is open every day but gate opening and closing times vary. **Please check website for details**
www.cyfarthfa.com/visiting-us/opening-hours.aspx
 Or ring 01865 727371.

Parking Free parking at Cyfarthfa Castle – room for minibus/coach entrance via exit gate. Disabled parking at main entrance /by castle/ by exit gate. **It is important to check closing times especially in winter as these vary.** Parking /drop off point outside the Park possible in roads near Park exit gates. Free parking for cars/minibus on Pontsam Road half way around the walk. Access unsuitable for large coach.

Refreshments and toilets Café at Cyfarthfa Castle. Check website /ring 01865 727371 for details as times may vary. Toilets are at main entrance/eastern end of lake/near the Castle and in the Castle itself.
www.cyfarthfa.com/media/169990/Downloadable-Cyfarthfa-map.pdf

Public Transport www.traveline.cymru
 By train: Regular trains to Merthyr station from Cardiff and intermediate stops. Then bus. By bus: 25/26 from Merthyr bus station. Regular service Monday-Saturday 8 mins

Nearest Towns

Merthyr Tydfil - all facilities. Shopping - Cyfarthfa Park Retail Centre close by www.cyfarthfashopping.com Town Centre shops.

Websites

Brecon Beacons www.breconbeacons.org
 Cyfarthfa Park, Castle and Museum www.cyfarthfa.com
 Merthyr and area www.visitmerthyr.co.uk
 Old Merthyr Tydfil photos and postcards www.alangeorge.co.uk

Dogs Suitable for dogs. Note: livestock may be grazing along route. Cyfarthfa Park – dogs must be kept on leads in certain areas. See the map at park.

Sample Itinerary

10.30	Arrive and complete walk.
12.30	Picnic lunch on the route/ in Cyfarthfa Castle Park or visit café.
1.30 on	Visit Cyfarthfa Castle or Brecon Mountain Railway www.breconmountainrailway.co.uk