Standing on the summit of a prominent hill above the Usk Valley, Pen-y-Crug is one of the most impressive hillforts in the Brecon Beacons National Park.

It can be found at a height of 331 m on the Crug, a hill just outside Brecon. During the Iron Age, about 2000 years ago, Pen-y-Crug would have been a very busy place, where people lived, worked, farmed, and traded.

In the 18th and 19th centuries, areas of the Crug were occupied by a brick and tile works, and worked as a tile quarry, old quarry workings and clay pits, trackways and kilns indicate the Crug was a locally important industrial site. Today the site is situated on common land and is owned and managed by the Brecon Beacons National Park Authority.

The walk to the hillfort is well worth the trip, coupling impressive archaeological remains with breathtaking and expansive views of the Central Beacons.
The Route

1. **Maen-du Well** SO 039296 Start the walk from the drop off near the roundabout, where Maen-du Well is clearly marked with a brown sign post next to the red ‘no entry’ signs. Head over to Maen-du Well which dates from the mid-1700s. You will see a small stone building with a water course coming from it. Inside the building you will be able to see the well-pool - the spring is here.

2. Looking towards the peak of Pen-y-Crug, cross the stile to the left of Maen-du Well. This leads into the next field on your route. Follow the National Park way markers more or less straight ahead and continue uphill until you reach the summit of the Crug marked by a stone pillar (trig point). This section of the walk crosses stiles and fields initially, then more open bracken covered hillside.

3. When you are close to the top you will cross the fort’s ramparts, which today are rounded earthwork banks and ditches. These were once made of stone and earth with a wooden defensive palisade or fence, built on top. They allowed those who occupied the hillfort to defend themselves and made it very difficult for anyone to attack the settlement. Entry to the interior of the hillfort was gained through a single well-guarded entrance on the southeast side. Above ground, little survives of the round houses, stock pens and granaries that once occupied the hillfort.

4. **Pen-y-Crug** SO 029303. It is clear to see why Iron Age peoples chose to build a defendable settlement here. In clear weather you can see over the whole of Brecon and far beyond from the trig point at the top of Pen-y-Crug. Looking south-west, you should be able to make out the Iron-age hill fort of Twyn-y-Gaer on the Mynydd Illtud Common. Looking south-east you should be able to make out Slwch Tump (with the mobile mast), the third of the hill forts all visible to each other. You can also see the Black Mountains in the east and Pen y Fan and the Central Beacons to the south. Notable landmarks in Brecon are St Mary’s Church tower and the Cathedral.

5. To return to the start point, retrace your steps and head down back towards the well.

**Variation**

To lengthen 4km/2.5 miles. Start your journey at Brecon Cathedral (SO 045290) then head up the hill away from the town centre. The road is signed as Pendre and changes to the B4520 (please note that Pendre Close is the wrong road). Head up the hill until you get to the last left hand turn – Maes y Ffynnon. Take the obvious and immediate right hand turn, and follow the road until you reach a mini-roundabout. Follow the route card from the Maen-du Well section.

Return via bridle path back to the B4520 (green dashed line on the map.)

**Activities suitable on this route**

Journey sticks. Photography. This route is ideal for bird spotting. A set of binoculars will also make it easier to view some of the landmarks such as Twyn y Gaer and Slwch Tump.
Information

Parking There is often free parking in Maes y Ffynnon for cars or a mini bus and a roundabout for easy turning.

Refreshments and toilets Pilgrims Tea Rooms, next to the cathedral. Ring 01874 610610 to check opening times.

Public Transport There are no train services. For buses to Brecon check www.traveline.cymru The 40A leaves from Brecon Interchange and town centre every half an hour Monday-Saturday to Maes y Ffynnon at the start of the walk.

Nearest Towns Brecon has most facilities including cafes and pubs. Places to visit include Brecon Cathedral, the Regimental Museum of the Royal Welsh and the Monmouth and Brecon Canal.

Dogs Suitable for dogs but should be on leads due to livestock and ground nesting birds.

Sample Itinerary

10.30 Take a little time to have a look around Maen-du well at the start of the walk. Bring a set of binoculars to spot local birds and landmarks.
12.30 Complete walk Picnic lunch or eat at Tea Rooms
1.30 Visit Brecon Cathedral and Heritage Centre.

Websites
www.visitbrecon.com
Brecon Tourist Information Centre
www.breconbeacons.org/brecon-tourist-information
Tel: 01874 622485
www.breconbeacons.org
Facebook Page FYI Brecon