

BRECON BEACONS

A classic circuit of the highest peaks, escarpments and ridges of South Wales

Overview

The Brecon Beacons National Park contains some of the most spectacular and distinctive upland scenery in southern Britain. Much of the area is formed of Old Red Sandstone, resulting in rolling peaks, escarpments and long ridges, making it fantastic trail-running terrain. It is also home to Pen y Fan, the highest mountain in southern Britain at 886m.

This two-day circuit visits the highest peaks of the central Brecon Beacons, as well as the varied surroundings, from secluded reservoirs and forest, to gentle pasture and quiet canal. The charming village of Talybont-on-Usk offers plenty of accommodation and pubs for an overnight stop.

Highlights

- Pen y Fan and Corn Du, the two highest peaks in the National Park plus their neighbour, Cribyn
- Superb running on escarpments, ridges and open moorland
- Quiet reservoirs and forests, hidden in the mountains
- The beautiful and peaceful Monmouthshire and Brecon Canal – the most popular visitor attraction in the national park
- Fantastic views of the whole area, from the Black Mountain and Camarthen Fans in the west, to the Black Mountains to the east.

Top tips

- Carry sufficient water for each day as there is nowhere to fill up en route.
- Watch out for deep bogs on the ridges and upland sections.
- You can lighten your pack by wearing the same running gear both days, with a change for the evening.
- Pick shoes with good grip on wet rock because of the steep, paved paths between summits.
- Running poles are helpful but not essential.
- Pen y Fan is very popular with walkers, especially at the weekends, so an early start is recommended to ensure a parking space.

STAGE 1

Start: Pont ar Daf car park on the A470 near Libanus, Powys

Finish: Talybont-on-Usk

Distance: 28km (18 miles)

Total Height Gain: 810m (2660ft)

Total Height Loss: 1130m (3690ft)

High Point: Craig Gwaun Taf 824m (2703ft)

Approx. time: 6–8 hrs

Terrain: Good mountain paths (often paved); ridge, moorland and canal paths without especially technical terrain. Route passes through sections of boggy ground. Apart from steep climbs, a very runnable route.

Maps: OS Explorer OL12 Brecon Beacons National Park (Western Area) or Landranger 161 Brecon Beacons

Navigation: Straightforward in good weather; in poor conditions good navigational skills are needed

Where to stay: Talybont-on-Usk has guesthouses plus a bunkhouse at the White Hart Inn. YHA Brecon Beacons Danywenallt is a further 3km outside the village (on the Stage 2 fastpacking route). There are two pubs in the village.

Supplies: Post office & General stores, Talybont-on-Usk

Stage 1 Route

A straightforward climb on the main path to Pen y Fan brings you to the col at Bwlch Duwynt. Here, turn south (away from Pen y Fan and Corn Du) to join the long escarpment above Gwaun Taf before dropping down to the valley and passing between the Pontsticill and Pentwyn reservoirs. From here, you follow good trails over moorland to reach the forested slopes above Talybont Reservoir. It's a stiff climb over Tor y Foel and then a lovely descent through successive pastures, followed by a short road section and across fields to join the canal path to Talybont village.

STAGE 2

Start: Talybont-on-Usk

Finish: Pont ar Daf car park

Distance: 19km (12 miles)

Total Height Gain: 1240m (4070ft)

Total Height Loss: 930m (3060ft)

High Point: Pen y Fan 886m (2907ft)

Approx. time 4–5 hrs

Terrain: Good mountain paths (often paved); ridge and moorland without especially technical terrain. Route passes through sections of boggy ground. Apart from steep climbs and descents around main summits, a very runnable route.

Maps: OS Explorer OL12 Brecon Beacons National Park (Western Area) or Landranger 161 Brecon Beacons

Navigation: Straightforward in good weather, however in poor conditions, good navigational skills are needed

Supplies: None on the route. Refreshments at Pont ar Daf car park and Storey's Arms car park.

Stage 2 Route

From Talybont-on-Usk you follow a short section of the Taff Trail to reach the head of the Usk Reservoir where you cross along the dam wall. It's a steady climb up the slopes of Twyn Du to reach the giant cairn of Carn Pica, then over Waun Rydd before climbing to a wonderful escarpment path. This leads you to the summits of Fan y Big, Cribyn, Pen y Fan and Corn Du before dropping down through a quiet hidden valley to reach Storey's Arms, where you turn left for the short distance alongside the road back to the start.



