



The Mynach Valley, Parson's Bridge, Upper Rheidol Gorge, Coed Rheidol National Nature Reserve, Pontbren Plwca bridge.

17 km (10 ½ miles) About 5-5 ½ hours.

To Devil's Bridge station on the 10.30 am train from Aberystwyth. Return from Devil's Bridge on the 5.45pm (yellow timetable); or on orange timetable days, cutting it a bit shorter, and with a brisk pace and few stops, 4.20 pm from Rhiwfron Halt.

A wonderfully varied scenic walk which is an excellent introduction to the Devil's Bridge area for the stronger walker. There are a lot of ascents and descents, some slippery and steep, and a reasonable pace is needed to keep to the suggested times. On 'green' days you have the choice of the 5.45 pm or 8.00 pm return trains, so you can include relaxing refreshment at the end!

(Please use the OS Explorer Map 213 in conjunction with this leaflet)

1. Leave Devil's Bridge station by the gate, and cross the main road (A4120). Go up towards the toilet block and car park, and follow the waymarked path to the left of the fenceline. Very soon you are in open meadow, and the faint path can be followed easily across it

towards a small copse adjacent to some cottage gardens. Here the path goes right uphill slightly, then down through shady trees to a small bridge followed by a stile which emerges onto the B4574 Devil's Bridge to Cwmystwyth road.

2. Turn right up the road and after about ½ km pass a cottage on the right called Gwar-felin. Then spot a bridle track descending to the valley on the left side of the road. Immediately after going through the gate, take the grassy path option which descends more steeply than the track towards the Afon Mynach. Cross the footbridge at the bottom over the deep swirling waters of the former mill, then bear left and ascend up the other side of the glade to emerge onto a grassy hillside.

3. Keep straight ahead uphill on the disappearing path, ignoring tractor tracks to the right until you rise up towards a gate. Instead of going through the gate, look high up on the right for a stile you have to climb steps to get to. Then after crossing the stile, turn right onto a very well-defined path which leads slightly uphill for some way on the northern side of the Mynach valley, levelling off along the contour, then descending a little through a short section of pleasant shady conifer forest. At the far boundary, you cross a small stile and drop down to a wide track which leads to a house called Llaneithyr. Here you must pass through the house's driveway gate, (indicated by a waymark), following the way round in front of the house and then away from it at the back on a muddy stretch between stone walls.

4. Immediately after the walled section of track, look for a waymark on the left pointing uphill...a very short stretch of awkward, steep zig-zags on a narrow path leads you back onto a broad track at the top, where you turn right and continue along the valley side as before. The way is now level and then slightly descending through forest, eventually ignoring a waymarked stile on the right, but very soon after that spotting a waymarked path ascending diagonally steeply uphill to the left. This is our route, a straight steep path made of loose stones which rises to the very top of the valley side after crossing two wide forestry tracks on the way up. Have a rest halfway to look behind at the wide view which has opened out. Emerging from the forest at the top, the view ahead now opens out marvellously, a reward for all that effort, with the upper Rheidol gorge in the middle distance, and a broad farm track winding down the hillsides before us. *You should be here by 1.30 pm to catch the return train at 4.20 pm from Rhiwfron Halt.*

5. Follow the track (which is a bridle path) for about 1 km downhill, through various gates, until you get to the farm called Ty Mawr (there is a camping field here for those who wish to stay...please ask at the farmhouse), then descend further to the main road (A4120). Turn left on the road and walk 300 metres. Beware of traffic, although this is usually relatively light. *[To get back to Devil's Bridge station along the main road will take up to 45 minutes from here. You will need to do this if you are well behind schedule.]* Then on the right, turn in towards the picturesque little church of Ysbyty Cynfyn with its walled graveyard. Follow the path to the right of the graveyard, turn left behind it,

then the path beyond the wall opens out to give lovely views down the upper Rheidol valley. A further turn right and a sloping straight path ahead leads to the rim of the gorge full of forest, through which your path descends in a few zig-zags towards Parson's Bridge. The bridge crosses high above the swirling Rheidol river, which has carved out deep basins in the rocks and is a spectacular sight especially in winter or after a rainy period. *You should be here by 2.00 to 2.30 pm for Rhiwfron Halt.*

6. After the bridge, follow the path sharply up to the left, then take the left hand of two waymarked routes. After this, follow waymarks initially through a woodland area and then along the edges of several fields...the path is sometimes indistinct, but the arrow directions at stiles and gates are easy to follow. Notice the lovely views of the surrounding country with the upper Rheidol gorge to you left and behind. Eventually you emerge onto a good farm track where you turn left, pass by Llwyn Teifi Uchaf farm, the track then leading gently downwards and round to the right. You will soon spot a small copse with a footbridge over a stream down to the left...follow a stile and path which leads to it, then up the short steep pony meadow ahead to a gate at Penrhiw. Turn left on this next track...keep straight on through gates downhill...the track becomes a grassy path along the edge of scrubby and bracken-strewn pastures, heading a long way down towards the forested Rheidol gorge ahead. *You should be here by 3 pm to 3.20 pm for Rhiwfron Halt.*

7. Enter the Coed Rheidol National Nature Reserve at a gate and stile, and follow the good path round to the right, fairly easily descending at first, with spectacular views of gorge and sessile oak forest all around, then very steeply

straight downhill, where you must take care not to fall on your back! At the bottom the path continues to the right, undulating, before rising gently along the bottom edge of the forest with a pasture and attractive 'alpine'-looking cottage to the left. Beyond the cottage the path emerges onto the very end point of the valley road, here stony and unsurfaced. Carry on ahead downhill again, past the rapids of the Upper Rheidol Falls then the filter beds on the left, and arriving at the signpost pointing to the Pontbren Plwca bridge over the river, and carrying a brown railway waymark. *You should be here at least by 4 pm to catch the 4.20 pm train from Rhiwfron Halt.*

8. Cross the bridge, and follow the path uphill following the waymarks until you get to a 'meeting of the ways' at a gate and stile, where there is also a Nature Reserve signboard.

9. Here there is the option to take the stiff climb up to Rhiwfron Halt (taking up to 20 minutes) to catch the train back to Aberystwyth from there. This will cut over 30 minutes from your walking time, and will probably be necessary on 'orange' timetable days (the train is at 4.20 pm). If you decide on this, go diagonally uphill, on a very steep, narrow slippery path which here and there zig-zags sharply, then eventually joins a much wider, broader easier bridle path leading diagonally left straight up to the Halt.OR...

10. *Finishing at Devil's Bridge might take you up to another 50 minutes. (if you are relying on the 'orange' timetable, check*

that you can get there by 4.15 pm.) Go left instead of sharply uphill from the gate, and follow the very clearly defined Borth to Devil's Bridge path, which undulates by the river for a while, then makes a long exhausting ascent through the forest which gets progressively steeper and ends with a very long zig-zag which takes you up the valley side to magnificent views. Near the top, the path crosses the railway, and passes alongside it for some way, then drops down to a small gorge with stream, attractive mini-waterfall and bridge (and at the time of writing, several old lengths of wire fencing, and a few discarded industrial objects, which spoil the effect somewhat).

11. After the stream, emerge along the edge of a meadow, following the indistinct path to the left alongside the trees, using the waymarks, down alongside the railway line, then rising to a stile at the bottom edge of woodland. The path makes a few very small, steep zig-zags upwards through the trees, before levelling off somewhat and continuing through the woodland. Follow waymarks along the edge of another grazing area, leading round to the right, and the first houses of Devil's Bridge come into view. Keep going and reach a gate onto the main A4120. Here turn left and descend to the village, being aware of traffic. You will soon see the railway station on the left below you.

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