

## Hiking trails in the Brecon Beacons in Wales

From the period in which **our walking group** did little to nothing to prepare a multi-day hike, the circular walk through the Brecon Beacons stems. A National Park in south **Wales**. We drove to Calais, put the car on the train here, then travelled through Channel Tunnel Le Shuttle to Folkestone. Then it was another four hours drive to our starting place in the Beacons: Pontypool. On Google Maps, Pontypool seemed like a nice place to start, because it is located on the edge of the Park. Here we bought a hiking map at the local Tourist Information Centre. Then we mapped out a route for the coming days with the owner of our B&B.

**Foto's:** The Brecon Beacons National Park Authority



The choice for this B&B turned out to be a hit, the owner knew the Beacons through and through. He knew where it was more beautiful than beautiful, which paths we should or should not take, why it was nicer in terms of views to approach a certain mountain from the south, that kind of welcome hiking information. He also turned out to be a true storyteller. His stories relied on the Welshman's pride, on his own history, tradition and language and on the pursuit of independence. This aspiration is 'unfortunately' less likely to succeed than the similar aspiration of the Scots, he believed.



The light in the Beacons....

## The Brecon Beacons: the landscape

The Brecon Beacons includes four mountain ranges: the Black Mountains (Y Mynyddoedd Duon) in the east of the Park, in the center the Central Beacons and Fforest Fawr (the Great Forest of Brecknock) and the Black Mountain (Y Mynydd Du) in *the* west of the Park. This region has been inhabited since the Stone Age. The inhabitants of the area used the forests and the stones present for the construction of houses, fortresses, castles, fortresses, menhirs and tombs.

A hike through this Park means walking through a barren and empty landscape with rounded mountains flattened by wind and weather. With, partly thanks to the clean air, distant views of .....yes, of what? On the nothingness, on the emptiness, on the endless shades of color, on all shades of green, brown, red, ochre, yellow..... On the red sandstone formations, rugged meadows, barren grasslands and peat bogs and the *wide open hillsides*.

Be enchanted by the beauty of the landscape.



Your route can also go through a wooded valley or a dark gorge with a wealth of dark green ferns and – it is said – endless cave systems. Some of these caves can also be walked. In the vicinity of Llangollen, in the north of the Park, you can make special gorge walks. Step into a (rented) wetsuit and slide down over slippery boulders a number of times! Along the way you can encounter waterfalls and fast-flowing mountain rivers. Most waterfalls can be found near the villages of Pontneddfechan, Ystradfellte and Penderyn, on the outskirts of Fforest Fawr. A visit to these waterfalls can easily be combined with a route through the southern part of the Park.

## The Brecon Beacons: walking

The park has numerous hiking trails. Over the tops of the mountains, or not. You can choose from multi-day hikes, for both the experienced and less experienced hiker, or day hikes that are [also suitable for children](#). For example, the day hike to the top of the Pen y Fan, a climb of 886 meters. We climbed this mountain during the 25 kilometer long stage from Brecon to Merthyr Tydfil. With a wonderful approach from the north: *breathhtaking*, as the English say. See also the video of this mountain [on our website](#).



Or you can opt for (part of) the signposted multi-day Usk Valley Walk, which runs in the Beacons between Abergavenny and Brecon. Along the river of the same name, through old market towns, idyllic villages and through a *"patchwork of fields, forests and hills"*, as the leaflets describe this walk. For large areas in the area, you can walk wherever you want. The so-called Open Access applies here. Where that does not apply (anymore), there are signs indicating this.

The combinations of hiking trails and destinations you can make in this area are endless. And if you want to do something other than order a pint of Guinness in the local pub in the evening, go and look at the sky on a clear night. Through various measures, the park has focused on protecting and restoring the night sky. As a result, the area has the title 'International Dark Sky Reserve'.



**Central Beacons**

## General route tips

- With holidays, the chance of "*no vacancies*" on the signs in the front yard or behind the window is high. In other words: book a B&B in time around Easter, Pentecost and other days off.
- The range of hotels is limited.
- Camping where you want is not possible, always ask permission from the landowner.
- Walking in the hiking area is not really difficult. Sometimes you come across a route with a soggy bottom and the slopes of the mountains are steep.
- Cardiff and Swansea are the larger cities outside the park. In our opinion, no cities with great appeal. The villages and towns in the park are usually described as *idyllic* and they are. You go to the Beacons because of the hiking opportunities in a fantastic nature, not to visit cities.
- Good hiking maps available on site: the OL12 from OS Explorer, 1:25,000.
- If you're going off the trails, bring a compass! Dense fog and rain can suddenly set in! And then you are your "path" *in no time* Collodd y llwybr mewn eiliad!
- The weather can change quickly. That's how you walk in the rain, that's how the sun shines again. Fortunately, on the other hand, the colors in this nature are most beautiful after a rain shower!
- Warning: once the scenery of the Beacons gets to you.....



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