

# Top of the table

MODERATE, 18.5 km, 6h, Grid Ref.: SO233229, Wales

## Walk Description

Like giants rising from the floor of the Usk Valley, the Black Mountains' soft green tops sweep away towards the north, broken only by a series of deep valleys. At the foot of the main range lies a small, grassy knoll, known as Table Mountain, upon which Iron Age man built a fort. The fort, Crug Hywel, took its name from Hywel the Good, a 10th-century Welsh king and, in turn, gave it's name to the town in the valley below, later Anglicised to Crickhowell. This walk explores Table Mountain and climbs steeply to the airy ridges of Pen Cerrig Calch and Pen Allt-mawr, and returns down one of the area's most delightful valleys.

## WPT 1 [Grid Ref.: SO234226]

Leave your car in the small lay-by, on the left, immediately after the bridge, and walk back to the bend in the road. Cross the stile on your right and climb up through the field to another stile. Cross a narrow lane and another stile, and continue upwards along the right-hand side of a small wood. When you reach the wall, which divides the field from the open moors above, cross the stile and turn left.

## WPT 2 [Grid Ref.: SO231225]

Keep the wall on your left-hand side and contour around the hill for about 1km (½ mile). The distinctive shape of Table Mountain will soon come into sight, ahead of you and to your right. Continue the traverse until you are directly beneath the summit, and then turn right on to one of the many tracks climbing up to it. Despite looking flat from below, the top actually slopes considerably. The remains of the ramparts can be seen clearly and offer good shelter for anyone wanting to take a quick break. From here, take the clear path to the right and climb, gently at first but then more steeply, heading towards the summit plateau of Pen Cerrig-calch. This is one of the few limestone summits in the area and it's name translates quite literally to Limestone Top. Continue to the concrete trig point.

## WPT 3 [Grid Ref.: SO218219]

From here, follow a clear path north west towards the summit of Pen Allt-mawr, where there is another trig point. The views open up considerably at this stage, and to the right you get a bird's eye view of the stunning Grwyne Fechan Valley – which will be the route of your descent later in the walk. For now, descend steeply to the north and follow the clear path as it veers around to the right and crosses a grassy plateau. Ignore the right fork at the end of this section and stay on the main path to the top of Pen Twyn Glas. Look-out for two odd-looking stones. These are actually boundary markers and not graves, as often believed. Continue northwards along the escarpment edge and then, above a short craggy section, veer to the left and climb Mynydd Llysiau. Descend into the next saddle, where you will find a major junction of paths.

## WPT 4 [Grid Ref.: SO206288]

Turn half-right and drop steeply on a stony path. After 135m (150 yards) this turns sharply to the right. Follow it around and descend a broad, grassy track for about 3.5km (2 miles) to the valley floor. Cross the attractive Tal-y-maes Bridge and follow the path up through the field opposite to a field boundary. Turn right on to a good track and follow this to a metalled road by Hermitage Farm. This is actually the road you are parked on. From here it is about 3.5km (2 miles) back to the start.

## Terrain

Good, clear paths which cross high and exposed mountains. The last few miles follow a quiet country lane

## Suitable

experienced walkers only

## Parking

Small lay-by on the minor road running north, past Llanbedr, from Crickhowell. The lay-by is on the right, immediately after a sharp hairpin bend

## Town

Crickhowell

## Refresh

Good, clear paths which cross high and exposed mountains. The last few miles follow a quiet country lane

## Transport

x

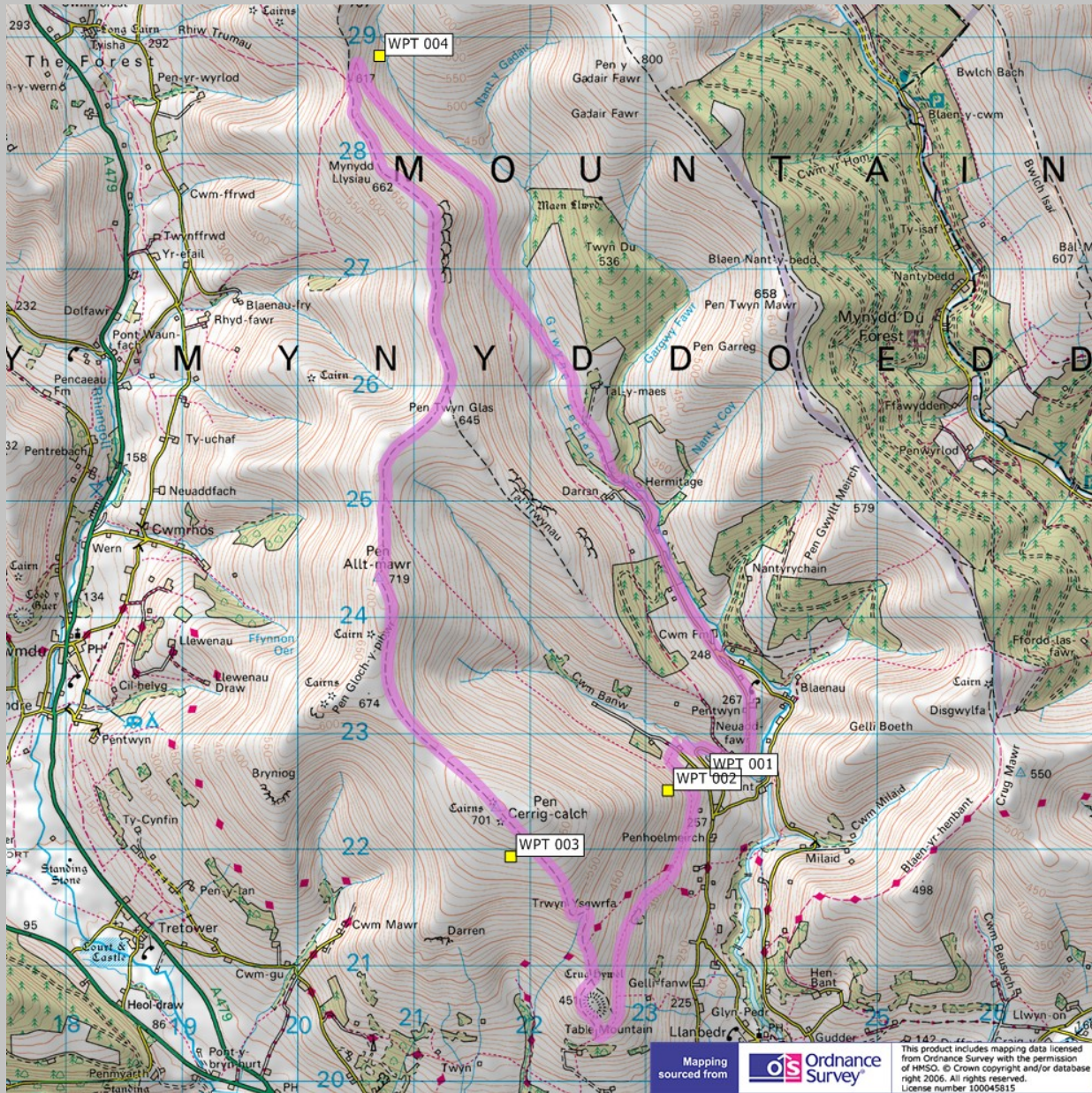


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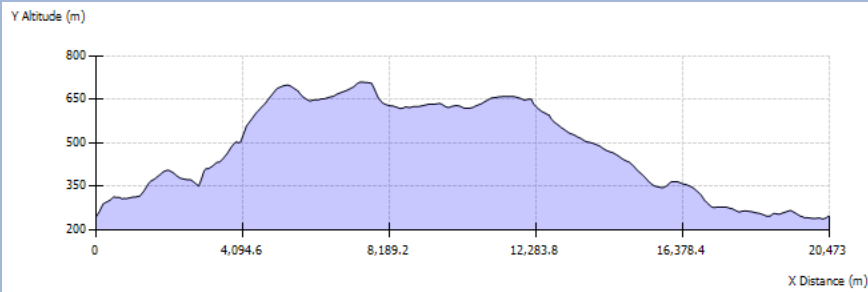
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Total Air Distance: 20,473 m  
Total DTM Distance: 20,566.3 m  
Min. Altitude: 237.6 m  
Max. Altitude: 710.5 m  
Avg. Altitude: 479.7 m  
Total Ascent: 727.1 m  
Total Descent: -727.1 m  
Total Ascent Distance: 8,890.6 m  
Total Descent Distance: 10,177.8 m  
Total Level Distance: 1,497.8 m  
Percent Ascent: 43.2%  
Percent Descent: 49.5%  
Percent Level: 7.3%



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