

Moel Eilio run

by Dean Russell



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Being fortunate enough to live on the outskirts of Snowdonia's national park there are numerous well travelled, iconic and spectacular runs a short distance from the colourful, bustling village of Llanberis. For me what makes an enjoyable run are great views, a sense of remoteness, technical terrain on the ups and rolling descents on the downs, where you can appreciate the landscape in front of you while letting your legs go!

Moel Eilio and its two subsidiary peaks is a short but spectacular run from the village centre offering some of the finest views in Snowdonia. The peaks are large grassy hills rather than mountains and don't benefit from technical ascents but it's still an absolute belter of a run. Being lower than the surrounding giants of Snowdonia that make up the 15 peaks over 3000 feet, they benefit from remaining below the cloud most of the time, even when the higher peaks are wreathed in mist, providing good views in most conditions. Nestled alongside the Snowdon massif makes the route feel like you're amongst the bigger mountains, the terrain allows you to fully take in the grandest of vistas and makes for a great run that is 13.6 km (8.5 miles) with 803 metres (2,635 feet) of height gain.

From the village centre follow signs for the Slate Way which leads you steeply through the backstreets of Llanberis where the view of Moel Eilio opens up in front of you as you leave the village behind. Continue steeply up and, before long, the road ends and joins a tarmac bridleway that traverses under Moel Eilio, heading in a north-westerly direction passing through a couple of gates. When you arrive at Bwlch-y-groes a wide obvious path leads south and up towards the summit of Moel Eilio, starting up just before a signposted gate that leads into the slate quarries and their piles of waste slate. The ascent is steady to begin with but, as soon as a fence is reached with the well-worn path on its left-hand side, it starts to steepen. As your gaze heads to the floor, your heart beat increases in pace and your breath deepens, the summit soon appears where spectacular views await. From the summit there are views over the Nantlle ridge to the south-west, Snowdon Massif to the south-east, the Glyderau to the east; and don't forget to turn around and look north and marvel at the views out to the Menai Straits, Anglesey and the sea. You may need to move around the large summit plateau for several minutes to appreciate all the views but, if you are not one to hang around, the views will not be missed as you continue along the ridge.

Heading towards the unmistakable peaks of the Snowdon range, cross the subsidiary peaks of Foel Gron and Foel Goch with short enjoyable ascents up to both. After passing Foel Goch descend steeply down to Bwlch Maesgwm on nothing more than a rut cut into the hillside where care is needed to avert a slip. Take some time at the Bwlch to look back at the impressive glacial cwm that you have been running along as its full extent finally becomes visible for the first time. The geology of the cwm you traverse during the run is synonymous with glacial activity in Snowdonia with the mountains having two distinct faces, grassy slopes facing south-west and steep craggy ones facing north-east. This is a product of how the rocks responded to glacial scouring in the late Ice Age that ended some 10,000 years ago and is clearly visible as you look into the heart of the cwm surrounding Llyn Dwythwch.

Now on a well-maintained bridleway, enjoy running free for about 3 km towards Llanberis. It's possible to continue on the bridleway all the way back into the village but it's worth taking the small path over Afon Arddu instead. Before the bridleway crosses Afon Hwch, head south-east on a track that passes over Afon Arddu and take the good path that heads downstream before crossing the Snowdon train line. Carry on the same path to its end on a road where you will find yourself back with the masses as they descend from Snowdon's summit from the Llanberis path. Run steeply down the road until it crosses over a cattle grid that brings you to the outskirts of Llanberis. To get back to the village centre and a well-deserved drink at one of the many local establishments you just need to follow signs for the village centre.

Dean Russell is an active trail runner, climber, mountaineer and trekker with over 16 years experience in the mountains. Usually found running and climbing in his local mountains in North Wales he offers private and group guiding highlighting the best routes in Snowdonia's national park. If you would like further details then you can contact Dean on <https://www.adventure-awaits.co.uk/>