

Taith Torfaen - Southern Loop

Start at Pontypool Active Living Centre car park (GR 285006)

1. From southern end of car park, go down short tarmac path by railings. TL up lane to join main road. TL to reach second set of traffic lights (pedestrian controlled). Go R over road and on through underpass. Cross next set of cross roads at pedestrian controlled lights. Ahead under footbridge then over roundabout. Ahead for 50 yds then cross road to go up lane on the left (sharp L) for 50 yds then turn sharp R (GR 288002) and continue up narrow lane (210°). (0.5m)
2. Continue on same bearing (210°) up lane which becomes stony. When reach T junction, cross stile ahead into field. BR (228°) to cross stile by gate in top RH corner. Cross further stile to reach road where carry straight on to reach T junction (GR 282991). (1.3m)
3. Cross road and TL along grass common following line of road. Just after road bears R leave the road on L bend (GR 279984) to follow path uphill on 256° towards mast at top of hill. Keep roughly in this direction to pass to R of a house. Follow path uphill on 254°. Pass to L of mast and continue on main path as it curves R to pass 40 yds R of trig point (GR 259978). (3.1m)
4. Continue on path to reach mast just before line of pylons. At mast TL on track (140°) following to L of line of pylons. Track passes underneath pylons and continues in direction 182°. Keep roughly in this direction, ignoring a fork to the L, over brow of hill and along top of ridge. In dip BR along a grassy track keeping about 10 yds to L of wire fence. Keep this fence on R, passing forestry on R. After end of forestry, keep along top of ridge to go through metal kissing gate in wire fence and carry on towards Twmbarlwm mound. At base of mound follow path as it bears L then winds upwards round to R, up steps to top of mound (GR 242926). (7.1m)
5. Take direction 256° to trig point. Then follow path as it bears round to R, downhill across earthworks and continues steeply downhill (approximately 320°) heading towards a metal kissing gate before road. Just before the kissing gate (GR 238929) TL (signposted Darren Road) down a grassy path which goes away from forestry fence. Reach track where TR for a few yards, then L down continuation of previous path (186°). Continue downhill to join track from R Track soon becomes metalled lane, passing to R of houses. Where lane bears L (there is a tea-room on the R) continue over canal bridge (GR 234915) and turn R along towpath. (8.3m)
6. At the next canal bridge, BL down lane, forward on cycle route 47, cross railway line, continue down road to cross main road. TR then take 2nd road on L (Blackvein Rd - CR 47). Cross main road and ahead to cross river bridge, under road bridge and TR along road (GR 225912). (9.1m)
7. Continue on the lane as it zig-zags uphill, under trees, ignore all footpaths & tracks to R & L (keep going uphill). 15 yds after cattle grid turn sharp L on tarmac track. After 300 yds (just after brow of hill) FR on footpath (150°). (GR 225904). (9.8m)
8. Follow footpath through bracken.(150°) uphill, then slightly down and uphill again to pass a few gorse bushes. At waymark post where a path joins from the L, carry straight on uphill. Just after another waymark post cross a stony track, after another 20 yds turn sharp R steeply uphill on a broad well-worn path/track to reach the mast and trig point at top of Mynydd Machen (GR 224900). (10.6m)

9. Leave trig point on 322° onto track beyond L of mast enclosure. Continue to R of trees. Where the stony track bears R downhill, BL along grassy track. Follow path, level then downhill to tarmac lane where TL over cattle grid (GR 202904). After 10 yds fork L uphill over second cattle grid. *(12.1m)*
10. After 800 yds, just after open area on R at waymark (marked, the Sirhowy Valley Walk (SVW) GR 195905), turn sharp R downhill. TL through a kissing gate, along a wire fence. Ignore L fork and continue along wire fence to join a stony track from the R. TL along track. *(12.7m)*
11. Ahead for 450 yds to SVW fingerpost, fork R down path to reach Ynys Hwyl camping barn. TR, down steps, TR and go down tarmac drive passing small car park on the R. Just after another car park on the L, turn sharp L down a path. Continue along path, ignoring steps down to R, over 7 footbridges through forestry. Just before a deep gully TR at metal pole and go down steps to track (disused railway). TL and continue along track. At house on R, carry on along track through metal barrier. Just before stone walls, BL off track to go R underneath bridge to reach tarmac lane. Continue downhill past Ynysddu Hotel, over river and straight across main road (GR 180926). *(14.7m)*
12. Up road opposite and TR. In 40 yds TL over metal grid, up tarmac track to reach Tyladu House on R. Continue up lane to road at Ty Capel. TL and in 50 yds TR up stony track to reach road at Twyn-gwyn Farm. TL up road for 350 yds to go through kissing gate on R (GR 185931). *(15.3m)*
13. Cross field on 80° to stile in bottom LH corner. Cross stile and ahead on 20°. Fork R to reach disused reservoir. TR over stile and cross dam. TL and follow railings to stile. Ahead (78°) up grassy path then uphill to R of stream bed. At top keep about 20 yds to R of stream bed to cross stile to R of farmhouse. Carry on through gate, turning L then R onto track to reach road (GR 194937). *(16.0m)*
14. TL on road towards a church, follow the road to the R round the churchyard to reach some steps leading up to a stile on the R (opposite the churchyard). Over the stile and, keeping the fence on the R, go over a stile in the far R corner of the field. Straight on keeping a wall on the R, follow the wall over 2 stiles until the wall ends where there is a gate & stile on the R. Over the stile, TL and carry on along a wire fence on the L. About 50 yds after a plantation on the L go over a stile at the end of the wire fence. Carry on in the same direction along a well-defined path towards a gate and stile. Over the stile into a wood. Follow the path into the wood, ignore a R fork, continue downhill to reach a Ravens walk post where there is a small zig-zag, L then R. Follow the path downhill with a fence on the L. When the fence ends, continue downhill to reach a cross-track. Bear slightly left to continue on the path opposite (to Cwmcarn). Follow this downhill to the bottom. At the bottom ignore a gate and white barrier on the L and follow the track down to the left to reach (but not cross) a bridge over a railway. Carry on with the railway on the R. Past some houses on the L, follow the track to the left, about 10 yds before a bridge over the track TR onto a path, past some concrete posts, between wire fences to reach a metal footbridge over the railway. TR over the footbridge and TL along path between railway and river to cross bridge over river to reach a junction, TL, ahead and follow road to junction (GR 215947). *(18.4m)*
15. Do not TR but continue ahead for about 100 yds to pass a Scout building on the R. TR through a small car park to reach and go through an underpass. Follow path up to road where TL then L again by shop. Take first R on lower road past sheds. Continue to L of lake, ahead into grassed area and left up steps next to wooden benches. At top of steps TL, for 40 yds, then turn sharp R to pass small post box on your left. Continue in same direction along road to end of houses then past green garages on R. Ahead up road. 100 yds before house on L, TL steeply uphill (through overgrown bracken in summer). At top TR along path to cross stile (GR 223953). *(19.3m)*

16. Along path between fences, over stile and TL along fence uphill to reach gateway on L where BR onto track along top edge of field. Continue along track to go over cross-track to cross stile, along path between trees and fence. Continue in same direction over several stiles/gates. Eventually TL along track to reach lane (GR 230965) where TR along lane. *(20.3m)*
17. Where lane bears L away from forestry on R, go forward on 44° on track which fades to path. Where path bears R keep ahead on 42° over rough grassland to reach junction of tracks 10 yds to left of a pylon (GR 240979) at end of row of trees and stone wall on L. *(21.4m)*
18. Take track (60°) to L of pylon and to R of stone wall. Keep the wall to L, ignoring tracks on R. When wall starts going L, follow it downhill to cross stile 20 yds to R of wall (GR 245984). Descend bank carefully to forest track & TL down forest path (280°) for a quarter of a mile to reach track junction where T sharp R on track (60°). Follow this round LH bend to track junction at large open area (GR 245987). Follow track initially on 60° for 1 mile to reach finger post and steel stairway on R. Climb stairway and TL to follow path (yellow waymarks on trees. Cross a wall at a yellow arrow on tree (be careful this is easy to miss) to follow the yellow waymarks to L of the wall (do not follow wall too far) through forest, faded yellow blobs on trees, ignoring any forks to the L, for approximately half a mile to cross stile at edge of wood (GR 270996). *(24.1m)*
19. TL downhill, fence on L, to cross stile on L. TR to go down to L of fence (60°) (not down enclosed track). Where fence turns L, go over stile in corner and ahead through a small metal gate, ahead through the garden and go through a small iron gate in RH corner by house (it looks private but is a right of way). Ahead down drive to T junction (GR 274996). *(24.5m)*
20. TR at junction to go downhill on 220°. At next junction TL onto tarmac road. BL across wide tarmac area onto road (30°). Follow road, crossing to L side when convenient, for 0.75 mile past school on L. Go ahead at roundabout into Victoria Rd, turn L just before St Matthews church (GR 285003). Ahead across footbridge and at far end TL to reach pedestrian controlled traffic lights. Cross road and TR. In 100 yds TL to reach the Active Living Centre car park. *(25.6m)*

End of Taith Torfaen Southern Loop

Total distance: 25.6 miles

Total ascent: 5300 feet