

Taith Torfaen - Northern Loop

Start at Pontypool Leisure Centre (GR 285006)

1. From the Leisure Centre car park, cross river bridge to pass Leisure Centre on the R, TR on broad tarmac drive to go through large ornamental gates at road. TL up path (FP sign), through metal kissing gate. Path eventually becomes track. Ignore tracks to L and R. Eventually, having crossed several stiles and kissing gates, reach Folly Tower and memorial on seat on north east side of tower. (1.7m)
2. From tower, follow path (310°) with fence and wall on R. Through kissing gate, past parking area on L to go up path with wall on R on 330° over Little Mountain. Descend over track (cottage on R) at GR 288032. Over stream then up to field gate (golf course on L). (2.4m)
3. Ahead between walls, where the walls diverge, bear slightly R uphill, initially on 10°. After a long R curve, ascend on 40° with wall over to R. At cross track and far wall corner, ahead on 0° to trig point (GR 289043). From trig point, ahead on 20° to reach wall on R. At wall corner TR. Ahead (20°) with wall on R (on L after 200 yds is memorial stone at site of wartime aircraft crash). (3.7m)
4. After 800 yards, wall goes to R. Follow wall at first and descend on rough track leaving wall to reach trees on L. Follow trees & fence down to cross gate in wall and descend sunken track. After 300 yds fork L FPs (if you miss this fork, turn sharp L at FP sign) to reach GR 301061. At forest track with gate, TL and follow track (305°). At track junction go straight ahead on path about 10 yds to R of steel barrier on 310°, through KG. After 0.75 mile reach road (Goose & Cuckoo 50 yds on left) at GR 291073. (5.5m)
5. TR and descend. After 100 yds TL at FP sign (Blaenavon Rd 1.2km) over stile. Down track over another stile/gate. Past black sheds on R to cross bridge and stile on R before gate. Rejoin and follow track, round to R to cross stile in fence on L (GR 292078). Up field on 0° through small plantation. At top of plantation go over stile and ahead between fence and hedge. After 100 yds bear R on 40° to meet then follow R edge of field to stile. Cross stile and continue on 10° to meet and follow R edge of next field to stile and road (GR 294084). (6.3m)
6. Cross and along track opposite. Ignore waymark to L. At Y junction carry on ahead over stile in fence. TR and down field for a few yds to another stile to R of stables. Cross and go diagonally down field on 350° to far corner. Through gateway and down track on 20°. After 100 yds over a gate and after 100 yds over another gate, after another 50 yds, where the track bears L, go R through a gate, follow fence on L to reach stile. Cross and descend with fence on L to road. TL then fork R to reach crossroads at GR 293092. (6.9m)
7. Bear R (across the road on the R) to cross a stile, then ahead to footbridge over stream, bear R to follow waymarked path through trees. (After the start of this path, as an alternative you may follow the well-defined path that goes to the R above a stream). Both paths reach the top of steps descending to a stream, cross the footbridge. TL for 10 yds then sharp R up to road. (GR 295094). Go R along road past telephone box to TL on bridleway between 2 houses (signposted Llanfoist 4.8km) and then to R of another house. Follow this for about 1500 yds to go through a gate onto a tarmac lane. Up the lane for about 40 yds then continue straight on along a footpath (where the lane turns left). After 220 yds at a cross path, turn sharp L uphill. Follow this path, ignoring paths to the L & R, to reach and cross stile out of forestry (GR 291107). Ahead with fence on R (250°) to stile at road junction (GR 289107). (8.9m)

8. TR (350°) on road. Ignore 2 footpaths to L. At salt bin and entrance to Upper Ninfa on L (GR 286112) turn sharp L through field gate and climb steeply up sunken track, initially on 180°. Follow this track until track turns L, go through gate on R (Woodland Trust) and descend between fences, then keeping fence on R, to Punchbowl. Along R edge of pond then BR through former gateway. Follow bridleway round lower edge of Blorenge, through gate at bottom of wall. TL and climb steeply on faint path following wall. Wall bears left then at wall corner continue uphill until it levels out along a narrow path to meet a wide grassy track at a T junction. TR and follow track until reach a small building. Leave the building on 260° to reach a path (initially on 270°) that leads eventually to the trig point (GR 269118). (11.6m)
9. Retrace your steps and 5 yds after the end of the rocks turn sharp left along a faint, but well-defined, path (300°) that continues downhill to reach T junction. TL & after 270 yds TR downhill. (Stone WMS 'Govilon & Llanfoist' on RHS) Descend for 0.6 miles (passing 1 FPS 'Forging History') to reach T JCN with FPS near woods. (GR SO 269 127) TL (245°) & after 220 yds TR from main TK & head for corner of woodland. At woodland corner, downhill keeping fence on RHS as path 'zigs' & 'zags' to reach stile in bottom RH corner. Cross stile, straight on crossing 2 more stiles to reach road. (**BUSY FAST ROAD**) (GR 265129). (12.6m)
10. Carefully cross road and go down footpath opposite signposted Govilon 1.1 km. Footpath becomes rough drive later. At road by white walled house TR (GR 262133), go between 30 mph signs to fork L over bridge, then TL on road for 120 yds. At small parking area TL through barrier to TR onto disused railway track (cycle route 46) for 1000 yds. Under 3 bridges, 100 yds after third bridge turn sharp L to zig-zag up small bank and go through small gate. Go half R up track (240°) to reach road at GR 252136. (14.2m)
11. Cross half R up tarmac lane to pass to L of house (between house and shed) on a stony path. Reach road and TR on 285°. At road junction (GR 2433136) TL on 255°. Cross cattle grid then after 150 yds, fork R on grassy track (260°) (Across the valley to the R can be seen the Lonely Shepherd stone). (15.0m)
12. Ignore footpaths to the R and continue to go along underneath electric power lines, through small steel gate to reach old quarry. (Clydach Limeworks, on the R is an impressive viaduct and at far end is the old Clydach railway station and beyond it the entrance to a tunnel). Ahead ignoring paths on L & R to reach T JCN. T sharp R, follow LH path passing ruined quarry buildings to reach gate. Through gate to road at end of viaduct. TL and cross viaduct. BR on road past 'Old Railway Inn'. (15.7m)
13. Where a road comes up from the R, go L up road (Chapel on L, GR 230127) and up round sharp L bend. Ahead up road (steep at first) for 1000yds to reach T junction by telephone box GR 224121. (16.4m)
14. TL on road (120°), immediately fork L and where road bends to L, go ahead to right of garages, through gate on concrete/stony track, (some form of development ongoing here) under power lines and over metal stile. Where track bears L downhill, (approximately 200 yds after metal stile), carry on for 5 yds then TR on meandering track, At top of first small bank track curves right then left to then climb steeply. At top of rise reach cross track 20yds to right of small concrete hut. Straight over at the cross track which then curves left. After 150yds meet broken concrete track, TL on track and ahead on 100° for 75yds where a path comes up from the left. TR along a track (150°), carry on across a ditch, after a short rise, track becomes broad. Follow the track (190°) as it bends L then R (140°), then R again to meet a concrete track from the R, carry on in the same direction along the track. After 10 yds the track becomes tarmac, follow the track down to reach main road (B4248 at GR 230104). (17.9m)

15. Cross road with care and head down road opposite towards the Whistle Inn to cross bridge over disused railway line (to L of bridge is the end of the Blaenavon steam railway). Continue past Whistle Inn and along the tarmac lane, over stile by metal gate. Lane becomes a stony track, when this turns L carry straight on along wide grassy track which turns L to cross stile by metal gate and ascend the wide grassy path which climbs steadily towards the top of the ridge, crossing a tarmac road on the way. Eventually reach a line of metal posts on the left, path levels out, carry on in the same direction towards wind turbines. (18.9m)

16. Reach a cross track 50yds before wall, TL. Pass 2 yellow gas pipeline marker post on L. Continue following path as it starts descending and turns onto 180°. At lowest point reach a cross track and yellow gas pipeline marker (GR 231068). (20.3m)

17. Over cross track and carry straight on. After 50 yds ignore L fork and continue on 190° uphill. At top of rise path bends to L onto 155°. Path descends and curves to R onto 210°. Path starts to descend and then bears left onto 138° along a wide well defined track. When the track reaches a deep valley to the R (GR 235037) straight on uphill & after 80 yds reach Y junction. BL uphill on stony track. After 390 yds reach T junction with gas pipeline crossing marker (GR 237035. TL (fencing on left) to reach cross track near trig point. TR (140°) to reach a road. (22.8m)

18. TR for 100yds to reach concrete area to L of road. TL down wide grassy track (135°) which soon becomes path between bracken on 150° to reach cross track before a gate & wall. TL and continue with fence on R (104°). Follow path in approximately same direction as it descends. Over a red gate, straight on downhill. Ignore R fork to gateway and follow fence on L. Ignore L turn before fence to carry straight on downhill. Track becomes grassy and reaches a gate, carry on downhill to reach and cross a track, over grassy area and down path with fence on right. Over a second cross track and stile, path narrows to reach a third cross track. Over and through kissing gate and carry on downhill to reach a road (GR 264024) where TR and then follow main road down to the L Continue down road, bearing L as it crosses a disused railway to reach a main road at the bottom (GR 273019). (25.3m)

19. Cross with care and turn right, over bridge then sharp L down steps to reach road (Pegasus pub opposite). TR downhill to crossroads Straight on left pavement (blue bollards on the right). Reach road T junction & cross road half left. TR into Church Lane. After 10 yds fork R, past a metal barrier and continue along footpath, through grassy areas. Fork R to stay by the river. Then fork L by a manhole cover on the main track, climbing slowly away from the river, to reach lane by house. Carry on as track widens to reach a road. Cross and TR along pavement. Where road turns R over a bridge, turn up road on L. Pass through ornamental gates then Pontypool museum on R, through ornamental gates and ahead along tarmac track. 50 yds after wall ends on R, BR to reach Leisure Centre, TR across bridge to car park. (27.0m)

End of Taith Torfaen Northern Loop

Total distance: 27.0 miles
 Total ascent: 5600 feet