

Llwybr Natur

Y GOGARTH | GREAT ORME

Nature Trail



INTRODUCTION

The Great Orme is a spectacular limestone headland, thought to be over 350 million years old. It supports a wide variety of flora and fauna, which can only exist because of the different habitats on the Great Orme. These range from rich heathland to sea cliffs, limestone grassland and woodland. Some of the species found on the Great Orme are very rare, like the chough, a member of the crow family; and other species can be found nowhere else, such as the silver-studded blue butterfly.

The geology of the Great Orme is also very important and affects the habitats found on the headland. Add this to the unique flora and fauna found here and it is easy to understand why most of the Great Orme has been designated a Special Area of Conservation (SAC). It is also managed as a Country Park and Local Nature Reserve by Conwy County Borough Council's Countryside and Rights of Way Service to ensure that all of these natural elements can co-exist successfully.

This nature trail allows you to see and learn more about some of the species that make the Great Orme their home, and the habitats they live in. Whilst you are walking the trail, think about the important part we all play in protecting and conserving these species and habitats for future generations.



HOW TO GET HERE

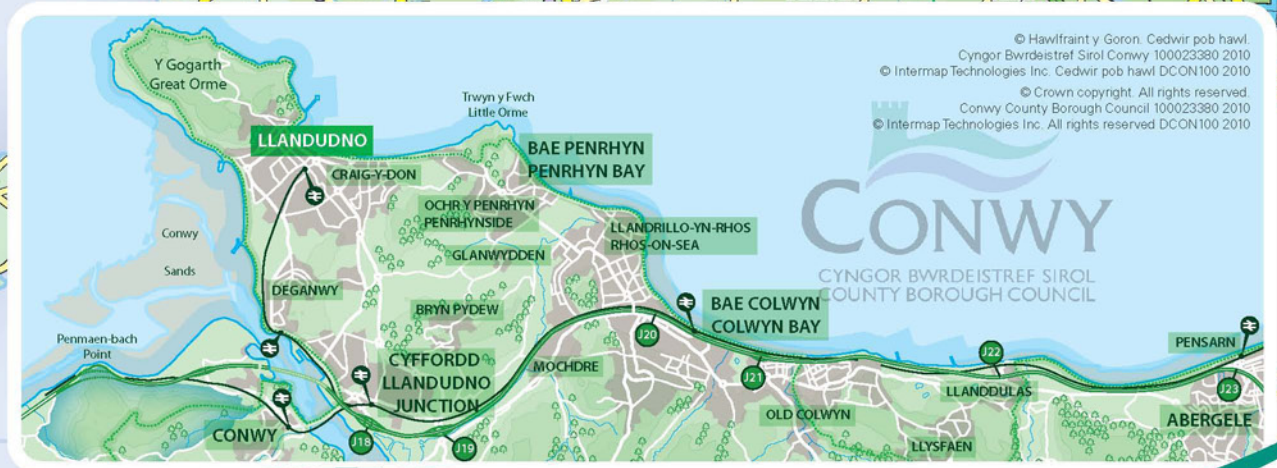
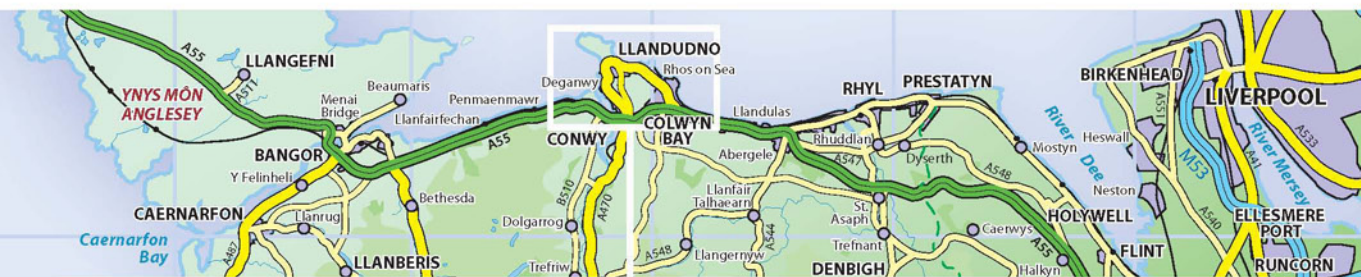
By train: For information about trains to Llandudno, please phone the national enquiry line on 08457 48 49 50 or visit www.nationalrail.co.uk

By bus: Services to the summit of the Great Orme vary with the time of year. For information on services please phone Traveline Cymru on 0871 200 22 33 or visit www.traveline-cymru.info

You can also phone the Public Transport Enquiry Line on 01492 575 412.

By tram: The Great Orme Victorian Tramway runs from the foot of the Great Orme to the summit between March and November. For timetable information phone 01492 879 306 or visit www.greatormetramway.co.uk

By car: Follow the A470 into the centre of Llandudno. Go up the main street, Mostyn Street, turn right at the roundabout and follow the road past the entrance to the pier and the Grand Hotel onto Marine Drive. A toll is payable on this road. Follow the signs to the summit where there is a pay-and-display car park and Visitor Centre.



Walk Information

Distances:

Route A – 3.5 miles (5.5 kilometres)

Route B – 4 miles (6.5 kilometres)

Times:

Route A – 2½ hours

Route B – 3 hours

All times and distances are approximate

Waymarking information:

The directional waymarkers indicate the route, and numbered discs show the stops on the nature trail. Both are pictured below.



⬅ Please follow
The Countryside Code
Respect • Protect • Enjoy

Terrain: The ground is uneven, with steep hills on grassy paths and tracks. Also, please stay on the pavement whilst walking the section around Marine Drive as this road can be particularly busy during the summer months.

Dogs: Please keep dogs under close control at all times as there are grazing animals on the headland.

Map: Outdoor Leisure 17.

Start and finish grid reference:

Great Orme Summit Car Park SH 765 833.

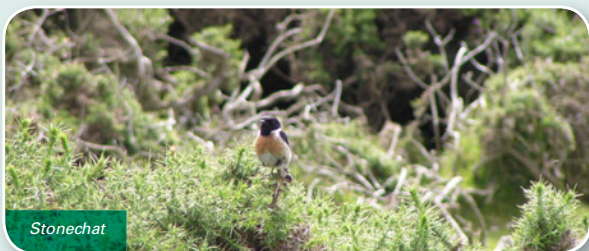
Refreshments: These are available at the Summit Complex café or at the Rest and Be Thankful café on Marine Drive. Both are open daily from Easter until the end of October, and on some weekends out of season.

BE PREPARED. Please ensure that you wear footwear suitable for uneven and rough ground, and come prepared for all weather conditions. Bring warm, waterproof clothing even on warm days as the weather at the summit can be very different to the weather in Llandudno.

Check the weather at: www.metoffice.gov.uk
Be aware of changing weather conditions.

Route A

Start from the car park at the summit. Go out of the main entrance to the car park and walk a few steps down the grassy slope to the right. You will see a starting post with a yellow top showing where the Nature Trail begins. Keep the stone wall on your right and follow the waymarker to the first stop.



Stonechat

STOP 1:

You are standing beside an area of heathland growing on deep soils deposited here over 12,000 years ago. As sheets of ice moved across the Great Orme, they scraped away soil and rocks from one place and left them in another as the ice melted. This left pockets of deep soil on the Great Orme which allows the heathland to thrive.

The heathland also provides food and shelter for birds such as the colourful stonechat; which can be distinguished by its unique call. This is a series of clicks that sounds like two stones being struck together, giving the bird its name.

From here you may see areas of cut heathland. Cutting is carried out every winter to encourage seedling heathland plants to grow on the bare ground and replace older plants that are deteriorating or dying.



Did you know?

The heathland is also home to reptiles, such as slow worms and common lizards.

Carry on round the corner of the wall and continue to follow it, again keeping it to your right. You will reach two direction markers indicating the old path used by the monks who lived at the now ruined abbey on the West Shore over 500 years ago. Half way down Monks' Path you will reach Stop 2.



Monks Path

STOP 2:

You are now surrounded by limestone grassland, which is the most common habitat on this headland. There are more than 400 different types of wildflower on the Great Orme, some of which are very rare. The wildflowers that grow here are often small and stunted because water can be scarce, and much of the grassland is exposed to the harsh weather. By growing closer to the ground these flowers save water and can shelter from the elements.

From June onwards you will be able to see the yellow common rockrose carpeting the ground alongside the purple flowering self-heal. Although it is tempting, please do not pick these wildflowers; leave them for others to enjoy.



Did you know?

Ancient medics thought that the red flowers of the Salad Burnet signified blood and for centuries the plant was used to treat wounds and burns.

Continue to the bottom of the path and carefully cross the road. Turn right and head uphill along Marine Drive. Keep walking until you come to a small shelter with some seats.



Whinchat

STOP 3:

The shelter is a good spot to rest and admire the magnificent coastline. The scrub below you is a favourite place for the Great Orme's herd of Kashmir goats to shelter. It is interesting to watch them during the autumn when the male billy goats clash horns to compete for the attention of the female nanny goats. The baby goats or kids will be born in the spring time and the nanny goats often leave their kids hidden in bushes whilst they feed. If you do see a lone goat kid in spring time PLEASE LEAVE IT ALONE, as its mother knows where it is.

This area is also important for migrant birds like the ring ouzel and whinchat. During the autumn they begin their journey to Africa where they will spend the winter. The birds use the hawthorn and gorse here to shelter, rest and feed before carrying on their epic journey.

Return to the gap in the wall, carefully cross the road and walk up the concrete road in front of you. Look for a direction marker about 60 metres on your right. Follow the arrow towards the fenced area.



Limestone Pavement

STOP 5:

The expanse of limestone surrounding you is known as limestone pavement, and was first exposed during the last ice age. Ice sheets moved across the land and scraped away the soil to expose the limestone rock underneath. Over time rain, snow and ice have dissolved the softer parts of the limestone rock and created deep cracks called grykes. Grykes provide shelter, shade and moisture for plants that prefer damp and dark environments, such as sanicle, wood anemone and dog's mercury.

This small area of limestone pavement has been fenced off to see what plants and shrubs grow when sheep and goats are prevented from grazing here.

Continue around the car park to your left. Follow the direction marker uphill to the corner of the wall. If you wish to only complete Route A, keep the wall to your left and follow it back round to the summit car park and visitor centre.



Did you know?

You can tell the age of a goat by counting the deep rings on its horns, similar to the way you might age a tree.

Carry on uphill along Marine Drive. Along the way look up at the nooks and crannies in the cliffs. They provide excellent nesting places for ravens and kestrels. Eventually you will pass Mare's Well on the opposite side of the road. Walk a little further, passing a gate, and then walk through the gap in the wall on your left and follow the waymarker to Stop 4.



Guillemots

STOP 4:

Please pay attention to the notice by the waymarker! You are now standing above a cliff face which is covered in seabirds every spring and summer. At this time hundreds of kittiwakes, razorbills and guillemots come to nest on the narrow cliff ledges. Guillemots do not make nests on the cliff face and instead lay their pear-shaped eggs straight onto the rock ledges. This shape stops the egg rolling over the cliff edge into the sea. Each guillemot egg also has an individual pattern that helps the adult birds to recognise their own eggs amongst the hundreds laid here every year.

Please do not try to climb these cliffs. They are very dangerous and the sea birds that breed here are protected by law during the breeding season.



Did you know?

You may also see Fulmars in this area. These birds spend most of their lives at sea and so have tubes on top of their beaks to remove excess salt from their bodies.



Did you know?

Maidenhair spleenwort gets its name because the sori, or spores, on the underside of the leaves are spleen shaped. Medieval people used it to treat diseases of the spleen because of this.

Route B

Continue around the car park to your left. Follow the direction marker uphill to the corner of the wall and turn left here. Walk along the wall, keeping it to your right, and ignore any other paths away from the wall. When you reach the next corner of the wall look ahead and to the left and you will see Stop 6.



Wheatear

STOP 6:

One bird that feeds on the insects in the short grassland here is the wheatear. The wheatear is instantly recognisable by the flash of white on its rump you will see as it flies past. It is not a resident of the Great Orme but is a visitor that comes to the Orme to breed, and stays from April to September.

The rocks scattered in this area are called glacial erratics, and have been left behind when the glaciers of the last ice age melted. If you look closely at some of the larger rocks you will notice wildflowers and small plants managing to grow here. Even on these thin and dry soils you may be able to see hoary rockrose, and wild thyme flowering between May and August.



Did you know?

The scent and the nectar produced by wild thyme attracts bees and other insects, and was once thought to attract fairies as well.

Allwedd | Key

 Parc Gwledig Country Park	 Tref Town	 Taith A Route A	 Toiledu Toilets
 Môr Sea	 Adeiladau Buildings	 Tramfordd Tramway	 Safleoedd Picnic Picnic Sites
 Tywod Sand	 Flyrdd Roads	 Car Cebll Cable Car	 Lluniaeth Refreshments
 Coed Trees	 Trac Track	 Parcio Parking	 Ffôn Argyfwng Emergency Telephone
 Caeau Fields	 Taith B Route B	 Canolfan Ymwelwyr Visitor Centre	



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Follow the direction markers along the grass path to Stop 7.

STOP 7:

The wildflowers found in these areas of heathland and grassland attract many different types of butterfly. Twenty one different species of butterfly have been recorded on the Great Orme, including unique races of the grayling and the silver-studded blue butterflies. These butterflies have developed features that allow them to live successfully on the Great Orme.

The silver-studded blue is a small but attractive butterfly. The males have blue on the upper-sides of their wings, and the undersides have a row of silver spots or 'studs' on the outer edges. The female butterflies have darker markings on their upper wings but still have the 'studs' that give the butterfly its name.

The grayling butterfly is a camouflage expert that pulls its forewings behind its rear wings on landing to blend in with the rocks and soil it is resting on.



Carry on following the track past a tarmacked car park at the bottom of the grassy slope on your left. Leave the track at the direction marker and head uphill to Stop 9.



STOP 9:

Stop and admire the view from here. Behind you is the trig point that marks the summit of the Great Orme, which rises 207 metres (679 feet) above sea level.

If you walk a little further up the hill, on the far side of Llandudno Bay you can see the Little Orme, which is home to a substantial cormorant colony. Cormorants are large birds that can often be seen standing on rocks holding their wings out to dry. This is because their feathers are not totally waterproof.

In the surrounding grassland you may also see thrift carpeting the area. Look out for low-growing clumps of bluish-green fleshy leaves and rose pink flowers appearing from May to July. Thrift is so named because it 'thrives' as its leaves stay green all year round.



Did you know?

The rock you are standing by is nicknamed the Free Trade Loaf because it looks like a small cob loaf. 'Free Trade' refers to olden times when people would meet here to strike bargains.



Did you know?

In some areas of China, fishermen have harnessed the cormorant's talent for catching fish and have trained the birds to catch fish for them.

Looking towards St Tudno's Church from Roman Well



Now continue along the track in front of you. Walk around the gate on the track and continue to Stop 8.

STOP 8:

If you look to your right you will see Roman Well situated in this wall. This is one of several springs on the Great Orme, which are the only source of natural freshwater here. Notice the area of wet ground where the spring emerges on the opposite side of the track. These waterlogged areas form an important watering hole for the resident wildlife. Many of these wells never dry up, even at the height of summer. These natural springs are also important for invertebrates and insects.

The area around this well is also an important feeding and breeding ground for the dark green fritillary butterfly, which flies between July and August. This butterfly gets its name because of the olive-green scales on the underside of its wings.



Did you know?

Dark Green Fritillary caterpillars survive on the Violets and Thistles that grow in the surrounding limestone grassland.

Carry on up the hill past the Cable Car Building and round the corner of the Summit Complex. Head towards the car park and go through the metal gate on your left into the wildflower garden. The final stop on the nature trail can be found in the garden.



STOP 10:

The wildflower garden contains just a handful of the plants and wildflowers that can be found growing on the Great Orme. In summer, notice the difference between these and the plants you have seen on your walk. The wildflowers in the garden are much taller and stronger because they are protected from grazing and are sheltered from the weather by the garden walls. The display panels in the garden explain more about the plants here.

The Visitor Centre is open daily from March to October, and will tell you more about the wildlife, geology, history and management of the Great Orme Country Park.



If you wish to learn more about the Great Orme pick up a copy of the 'Discovering the Great Orme' booklet or the 'Historical Trails' booklet from the wildlife shop in the Great Orme Visitor Centre, or the Tourist Information Centre in Llandudno.



Become a Nature Trail Detective and see what you can spot along your walk - tick the circles next to all the pictures and get a point for each thing you find.



Dropwort



Common rockrose



Fungus



Thrift



Grayling



Chough



Bloody cranesbill



Kashmir goat



Painted lady



Bumblebee



Six spot burnet moth



Rabbit



Kestrel



Speckled wood butterfly

Herring gull



Razorbill



Cistus forester moth



HOW DID YOU DO?

15-17	<input type="checkbox"/>	Excellent detective work
10-14	<input type="checkbox"/>	Very good nature spotting
0-9	<input type="checkbox"/>	The animals and plants must be well hidden today