

Walk: EOC 09
Location: Dare Valley Country Park (Aberdare)

Directions: Head via Glynneath onto the A465 going towards Merthyr Tydfill. Do not go as far as Merthyr Tydfill. Look out for two roundabouts a few miles after leaving Glynneath, at the end of the first section of dual carriageway. The first is very large (the Hirwaun roundabout) with a large grass expanse in the middle and no housing around. The second is a smaller roundabout amongst some houses. Take third exit at this roundabout, leaving the A465, and heading towards Aberdare. This is even sign posted Dare Valley Country Park (watch out for the brown tourist signs).

Sadly the signage will take you into the centre of Aberdare where it then abandons you in some playing fields (which are NOT the park). You are now some distance from the Country park and it is difficult to find any signs to it from here. Only if you are lucky will you spot some signs directing you up side roads and in the general direction from which you came, to Dare Valley Country Park.

You may have to stop and get directions, but if you persist, you may pick up the country park symbol again. I persisted, as I do not like to ask for directions.

Subsequently I found a more direct route. After taking the third exit to Aberdare off 2nd roundabout on A465, at first large brown tourism sign to Dare Valley Country Park, you can then go straight on. You must now ignore the further brown tourism signs directing you left along the main road into Aberdare. Continue instead bearing right along some minor roads through terraced housing areas, and the Country Park is actually now on your right. To get to it is another matter. Look out for a steep single track road between terraced housing going uphill to your right. This leads straight to the Country park and even has a discreet brown tourism country park symbol.

Distance (miles): 19.4 to Aberdare
 Time (hours): 0.34
 Length of Walk: 2-3 hours depending how far you want to go.
 Dates Walked: 02/01/2010
 Parking: Free where we were
 Pop in to: Aberdare for a wander around

Description: A small valley almost entirely given over to Country Park, quite large as Country Parks go. There are large open field areas for dogs to have a free run, plus lots of gravelled paths, some tarmaced, some running alongside a river, a few footbridges and some sort of obstacle course with various interesting features.

The further you go into the valley (involving a small climb though most of it is pretty level) the more deserted and remote it becomes.

You can do a circular walk simply by going up one side and coming back down the other. It is very easy to find your way around. Towards the start of the walk there is a large lake on the right that you can walk around and in which the dogs can go swimming.

Dare Valley Country Park is a useful stop off point if going en-route to Cardiff via the Heads of the Valley Road, or going anywhere towards Cardiff or on the way even to England, or returning from England, as it is only 30 minutes or so from the Castle and in good weather makes a very nice run for the dogs. (You would not go via Merthyr on this route as you would cut the corner of the triangle).