

Introduction:

This review was written for an association newsletter. The Penmachno trail is in Wales in the United Kingdom, this excerpt is taken from day three of a week long mountain biking trip that myself and a good friend undertook.

Penmachno Trail Review

A lovely clear morning greeted two bleary eyed adventurers, a cup of coffee and as much breakfast as we could handle, found us ready for the day. We loaded up the bikes and our gear and headed off for the Penmachno trail. Although the trail is reputed to be more extreme than the Marin trail that we had ridden earlier in the week, we were both confident and raring to go.

After a little navigation confusion, we found the trail head and unloaded our bikes. The Penmachno trail is being constructed in two loops. The first loop is approximately 20 kilometres long and the second should add another 12 kilometres when it opens in 2007. The trail has not met all the regulations laid down by the relevant governing bodies and government agencies; therefore they cannot advertise the trail as yet, which is why it was so pleasantly quiet during our visit.

Those that have ridden the trail have found it through word of mouth and by speaking to those in the know at local bike shops. At the start of the trail is an honesty box, the organisation responsible for building the trail seek a donation from riders to help with the maintenance of the trail and the building of the new trail.

We dropped in our money, clicked in our pedal cleats and rode on up the forest road.



Cresting the day's first climb.

This initial climb was far more enjoyable than the opening climb of the Marin trail that we had encountered earlier in the week. It seemed to go up at just the right gradient. Once again we stopped at the top of the climb for photos, to strap on our armour and for a last minute bike check. Spirits were high and the trail looked good.

We set off and the trail wound its way up and down a ridge that was lined with ancient forest. The first section was perfect, in terms of gradients, surface and surroundings it was just fantastic. This section seemed to set the tone for the rest of the ride.

The trail flowed easily for many kilometres, it lead us across numerous streams that had purpose built crossings or bridges. Each crossing seemed to have its own mini-waterfall. Gaps in the trees revealed glorious views of the valley floor far below. On our

infrequent stops, we were both excitedly chatting about the trail and the views, we were hooked and loving every minute of the ride!

There were of course some really tough climbs throughout the trail, I struggled on but Ian, the 'mountain-goat', was in his element and ate up the climbs like a Pro. Ian really is a strong climber and often unknowingly forces me to push beyond my limits to try and keep up; its great having somebody to challenge you in this way. It improves fitness and skill far quicker than you could hope to on your own.



Ancient valley's of emerald green