

# The Brecon Beacons

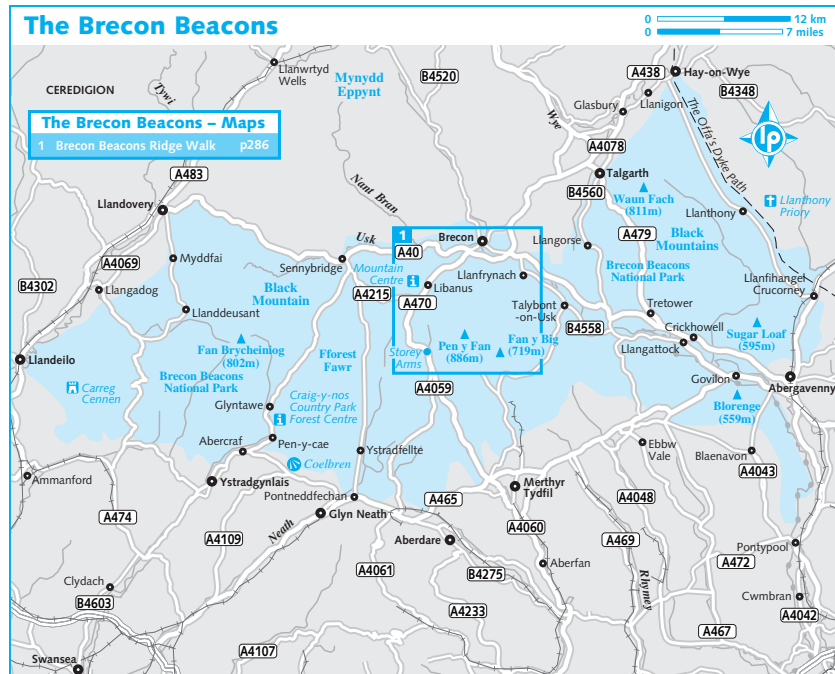
The Brecon Beacons is one of the largest mountain ranges in Wales, forming a natural border between the wild and rarely visited highlands of the central region and the densely populated southern parts of the country. Although the Beacons cannot compare in dramatic terms with Wales' best-known peaks in Snowdonia, they are the highest mountains in southern Britain, forming a series of gigantic, rolling whalebacks with broad ridges and table-top summits, cut by deep valleys with sides falling so steeply the grass has often given up the ghost to expose large areas of bare rock.

As befitting an area of such dramatic scenery, the mountains and surrounding foothills are contained within the Brecon Beacons National Park (Parc Cenedlaethol Bannau Brycheiniog, in Welsh). Just to keep you on your toes the whole area is also known as Brecknockshire, and if those names weren't enough, there are four separate mountain areas within the national park: in the west is the wild and relatively remote Black Mountain and the lower and less austere hills of Fforest Fawr; to the east are the confusingly named Black Mountains (plural); and in the centre are the Brecon Beacons themselves – the area most favoured by walkers and with the highest summits – giving their title to the whole park.

Within the park you'll find a fantastic choice of day walks. The route we describe is along one of the most frequented sections but it's justifiably popular and provides an excellent introduction to the Beacons' beauty and walking potential. If you're tempted to explore further, we give some ideas for other walks in the area on p287.

## HIGHLIGHTS

- Following the airy **ridge path** (p286) between the table-top summits of Pen y Fan and Fan y Big
- Admiring the view of the distant coast in one direction and the faint blue hills of Mid-Wales in the other from the peak of **Corn Du** (p285)
- Sauntering along the sylvan **canal-side path** (p287) into Brecon



## INFORMATION

### Maps & Books

Most of the Brecon Beacons National Park is covered by Ordnance Survey (OS) Landranger 1:50,000 maps No 160 *Brecon Beacons* and 161 *Abergavenny & The Black Mountains*. For more detail, you will need OS Explorer 1:25,000 maps No 12 *Brecon Beacons - Western Area* (for the Black Mountain, Forest Fawr and the Brecon Beacons) and 13 *Brecon Beacons - Eastern Area* (for the Black Mountains). Harvey Maps publishes two Superwalker 1:25,000 maps: *Brecon Beacons East* and *Brecon Beacons West*.

Guidebooks covering walking in the area include *Circular Walks in the Brecon Beacons* by local expert Tom Hutton, in the Walks with History series. *Walking in the Brecon Beacons & Black Mountains* by David Hunter suggests 30 routes between 3 miles and 13 miles in length, while *Walk the Brecon Beacons* by Bob Greaves includes a wide range of short and long routes with OS map extracts, colour photos and GPS information.

### Guided Walks

The national park runs a very good series of guided walks and other active events during the summer, usually at places that can be reached by the Beacons Bus (opposite). You can get details from tourist offices or at [www.breconbeacons.org](http://www.breconbeacons.org).

### Information Sources

The official national park site is [www.breconbeacons.org](http://www.breconbeacons.org) and there's a lot of good information at [www.breconbeaconsparkociety.org](http://www.breconbeaconsparkociety.org).

General tourism websites on the area, covering places to stay and eat, walking options and more, include [www.brecon-beacons.net](http://www.brecon-beacons.net) and [www.brecon-beacons.com](http://www.brecon-beacons.com). Outdoor activities sites include [www.bootsbikesbunkhouses.co.uk](http://www.bootsbikesbunkhouses.co.uk).

The main **National Park Visitor Centre** (Mountain Centre; ☎ 01874-623366; Libanus) is 6 miles south of Brecon. Other tourist offices in (or near) the Brecon Beacons – all with good information on the park – include **Abergavenny** (☎ 01873-857588; [www.abergavenny.co.uk](http://www.abergavenny.co.uk)), **Brecon** (☎ 01874-622485; [brectic@powys.gov.uk](mailto:brectic@powys.gov.uk)), **Crickhowell**

(☎ 01873-812105; [cricktic@powys.gov.uk](mailto:cricktic@powys.gov.uk)) and **Llandovery** (☎ 01550-720693; [llandovery.ic@breconbeacons.org](mailto:llandovery.ic@breconbeacons.org)). All stock a good range of leaflets, books and maps covering the areas.

There are many YHA hostels in the area – see [www.yha.org.uk](http://www.yha.org.uk). Alternatively, [www.hostelswales.com](http://www.hostelswales.com) lists bunkhouses and backpacker hostels in and around the Brecon Beacons area, many in excellent walking locations.

## GETTING AROUND

The Brecon Beacons area is well served by public transport, and there are two particularly useful bus services for walkers. The first is express bus X43, operated by **Sixty Sixty Coaches** ([www.sixtysixty.co.uk](http://www.sixtysixty.co.uk)), running along a dog-leg route through the park between Cardiff and Abergavenny via Merthyr Tydfil, Brecon and Crickhowell, with at least five services per day in each direction Monday to Saturday, and two services between Merthyr and Brecon on Sunday.

The other very useful service for walkers is the **Beacons Bus** (☎ 01873-853254) network, operating on Sundays and public holidays from late May to early September. Centred on Brecon town, there are interconnecting bus services to/from Hereford (1½ hours), Abergavenny (one hour), Newport (1½ hours), Merthyr Tydfil (45 minutes), Cardiff (1¼ hours) and Swansea (two hours), via all the main villages and attractions within the park, most with at least two services each way per day. You can pick up a timetable at any tourist office. Alternatively go to [www.breconbeacons.org](http://www.breconbeacons.org) and follow the cumbersome links to 'visit the park' then 'Beacons Bus' to find the route map and timetable.

## GATEWAYS

The main gateway to the whole Brecon Beacons area, and for the route we describe here, is the town of Brecon (p284), easily reached from other parts of Britain by National Express coach, usually via Cardiff or Birmingham, where you may have to change. If you're spending time in the southeast part of the park, Abergavenny makes a good gateway. If you're exploring the west side of the park, gateways include Llandeilo and Llandovery. The Transport chapter (p453) lists public transport inquiry lines that provide details of both national and local bus and train services.

## BRECON BEACONS RIDGE WALK

<b>Duration</b>	7½–9½ hours
<b>Distance</b>	14 miles (22.5km)
<b>Difficulty</b>	moderate
<b>Start</b>	Storey Arms
<b>Finish</b>	Brecon (p284)
<b>Transport</b>	bus

**Summary** A top-class walk, mostly through high, open country with steep ascents, fantastic views and a final flat section through peaceful farmland.

The route of the Brecon Beacons Ridge Walk follows, as the name suggests, the most impressive section of the central ridge that runs east–west across the mountain range. This route is popular, and the first few miles can be busy on summer weekends, but that's simply because it's one of the best days out in the Brecon Beacons.

The route takes in the summit of 886m Pen y Fan (pronounced 'pen-er-van', meaning Top Peak), the highest mountain in South Wales, plus three other high summits. On either side of the ridge the ground drops away into vast, bowl-like corries, with U-shaped valleys beyond, all formed by glaciers around 10,000 years ago. It's textbook geography and near the start of the walk you may see school groups struggling along the path, pens and soggy notebooks in hand, gamely attempting to take it all in.

In the final few miles you descend from the high mountains and follow the route through tranquil farms and woodland, to finish along the banks of a scenic canal near the meandering River Usk – a striking contrast to the peaks, ridges, cwms and *bwlichs* (passes) of the high ground.

## PLANNING

The walk starts at Storey Arms, a high point on the main road about 9 miles southwest of Brecon town centre. It ends at Brecon. You could do the route in reverse, but this involves a lot more ascent. There are a lot of ups and downs on this route, so with stops you should allow about eight to 10 hours. The route is not waymarked and there are no signposts on the high ground, so you'll need a map and a compass.

You can shorten the route by dropping off the main ridge earlier and aiming north

to Brecon, following the old road that leaves the ridge at Bwlch ar y Fan, making the total distance about 10 miles.

On the route itself there's no café or pub for lunch, so take all you need from Brecon town (which has several shops).

### When to Walk

You can do this walk at any time of year, although in winter (November to March) you really need to know what you're doing, as snow can block the path and ice can make it treacherous close to the steep cliffs and ridges. Even in other months the rounded nature of the highest part of the Beacons belies their seriousness. It can get wet and cold up here at any time, with winds strong enough to blow you over. Take appropriate clothing, plus a map and compass. You see day trippers with none of these things sauntering merrily along, but you also hear horror stories of people who get lost, sometimes fatally. Don't be one of them.

### Maps

The walk route is covered by OS Explorer 1:25,000 map No 12 *Brecon Beacons – Western Area* and Harvey Maps Superwalker 1:25,000 map *Brecon Beacons East*.

#### WARNING – JAZZ FESTIVAL

Some years ago, a few musicians got together in a pub in Brecon for a bit of jamming. This developed into Brecon Jazz – now one of Europe's leading music festivals, held over three days in early or mid-August and attracting crowds of thousands. If you're into jazz, or just into good times, it's great – but accommodation is almost impossible to find. For more details see [www.breconjazz.co.uk](http://www.breconjazz.co.uk).

### NEAREST TOWN Brecon

pop 7901

The old market town of Brecon, on the northern edge of the park, makes a good base for this walk. Its Welsh name is *Aberhonddu* (pronounced 'aber-hon-thee'), and you'll see this on road signs. As a tourist centre it's busy in the summer, while Friday and Saturday nights are always lively, as pub crowds get reinforced by soldiers from

the nearby barracks. As well as the official tourist sites covering the national park (also covering the towns in and around the park) listed on p282, see [www.brecon.co.uk](http://www.brecon.co.uk). The **tourist office** (☎ 01874-622485; [brectric@powys.gov.uk](http://brectric@powys.gov.uk)) is in the Old Cattle Market car park.

### SLEEPING & EATING

Options include the well-appointed **Brynich Caravan Park** (☎ 01874-623325; [www.brynich.co.uk](http://www.brynich.co.uk); sites for 2 £14), about 1½ miles east of Brecon; backpackers and walkers with no car pay £5 per person.

Hostel options include **Brecon YHA Hostel** (☎ 0870 770 5718; [www.yha.org.uk](http://www.yha.org.uk); dm £14) at Ty'n-y-Caeau (pronounced 'tin-er-kaye') near the village of Groesffordd, 2.5 miles east of Brecon town centre.

There is also **Llwyn y Celyn YHA Hostel** (☎ 0870 770 5936; [www.yha.org.uk](http://www.yha.org.uk); dm £14), about 7 miles southwest of Brecon town centre, just off the main road (A470), about 2 miles north of Storey Arms.

There are several independent hostels near Brecon, but all seem to prefer groups, except **Cantref Hostel & Bunkhouse** (☎ 01874-665223; [www.cantref.com](http://www.cantref.com); dm £12, camp sites per person £3.50), about 2 miles southwest of Brecon, which accepts individual bookings Monday to Thursday. Other facilities include a café, horse-riding, activity centre, 'adventure farm' and Europe's longest sledge run (open all year).

Most B&Bs in Brecon are a few minutes' walk outside the town centre. Along a street called the Watton (the main road towards Abergavenny) are homely **Paris Guest House** (☎ 01874-624205; [www.parisguesthouse.co.uk](http://www.parisguesthouse.co.uk); d from £44); the **Grange** (☎ 01874-624038; [www.thegrange-brecon.co.uk](http://www.thegrange-brecon.co.uk); d £40-48), a bright and airy place with good facilities; and the **Borderers** (☎ 01874-623559; [www.borderers.com](http://www.borderers.com); s/d around £35/50), a former inn with low beams and a cottage-like atmosphere.

On the other side of town, there's more choice along Bridge St, including cheerful and welcoming **Bridge Café B&B** (☎ 01874-622024; [www.bridgecafe.co.uk](http://www.bridgecafe.co.uk); d £45), which is also a very nice place to eat, with healthy sandwiches and snacks. Nearby is the **Beacons** (☎ 01874-623339; [www.beacons-brecon.co.uk](http://www.beacons-brecon.co.uk); d £42-57), a long-standing and popular guesthouse with a good range of rooms and friendly management.

All of the B&Bs have a range of rooms;

you pay a bit less if you don't mind sharing a bathroom with other guests. Most also have single rooms and family/group rooms available.

Brecon also has several hotels, including the historic **George Hotel** (☎ 01874-623421; [www.george-hotel.com](http://www.george-hotel.com); d £65, mains £6-11; ☒ lunch & dinner) in the town centre, with a grand old staircase, comfortable rooms and attached bar and restaurant.

For food, Brecon also has several cafés, tearooms and a surprising number of takeaways, including Chinese and Indian – plus, of course, fish and chips. The town centre has a good selection of pubs too, with most doing bar food in the evening, including the **Boar's Head** and the **Bull's Head**.

### GETTING THERE & AWAY

Brecon is near the junction of the A470 (the trans-Wales route between Cardiff and Conwy) and the A40 (between Gloucester and West Wales).

It is easily reached from other parts of Britain by National Express coach, usually via Cardiff (1½ hours, daily) or Birmingham (four hours, daily), where you may have to change. If you're coming from the south or east, **Sixty Sixty Coaches** (☎ 01443-692060; [www.sixtysixty.co.uk/service.htm](http://www.sixtysixty.co.uk/service.htm)) bus X43 runs five times per day through Brecon between Cardiff (1½ hours) and Abergavenny (one hour), via Merthyr Tydfil and Storey Arms.

The nearest train stations are at Abergavenny (via Newport) and Merthyr Tydfil (via Cardiff), both with regular trains to/from the main line running between London and West Wales. From Abergavenny or Merthyr Tydfil you can get bus X43 (see above).

### GETTING TO/FROM THE WALK

The route starts at Storey Arms, about 9 miles south of Brecon town centre on the main road towards Merthyr Tydfil. There was once a pub here, on the highest point of an ancient drove route (later the turnpike road, now the A470) crossing the mountains between South and Mid-Wales. Today the building is an outdoor centre and there's not a beer in sight.

From Brecon, bus X43 runs to Merthyr Tydfil via Storey Arms seven times a day from around 8am Monday to Saturday

(twice on Sunday, from about 1pm, so not much use for walkers on this route). Much handier on Sunday and public holidays are buses on the Beacons Bus network (see p283), running from Brecon to Storey Arms about four times a day from about 10am. Ask the driver to shout when the bus reaches Storey Arms, as it's easy to miss.

To reach Storey Arms by car is easy, and there are car parks nearby. However, if you park here and do the whole route, you have to get back to collect your car afterwards. As buses don't run after late afternoon, you're best bet is to leave your car in Brecon and catch a bus to Storey Arms *before* starting the walk.

If you miss the bus, a taxi from Brecon up to Storey Arms costs roughly £10. There's a taxi rank on the Bulwark (the central square), and drivers are well used to collecting and dropping off walkers.

### THE WALK

#### Storey Arms to Pen y Fan

1½–2 hours, 3 miles (5km)

On the northeast side of very highest point of the main road between Brecon and Merthyr Tydfil, a gate and stile (next to a phone box) leads to a footpath that goes steeply uphill onto the moorland, with a patch of pine plantation on your right (southeast) side. Within a few minutes, you've left the busy traffic behind.

This first section of the route is often busy and the path has been 'pitched' with stones to help prevent erosion; it also makes it very easy to follow as it goes over the first ridge (about 1 mile from the start) and drops down into the valley of Blaen Taf Fawr, crossing the stream and up again to finally reach the ridge crest overlooking the lake of Llyn Cwm Llwhch, below the obvious buttress of Corn Du (appropriately meaning 'black horn').

Another path leads down beside the ridge, past **Tommy's Obelisk** (see the boxed text, p286), but our path goes steeply up to the summit of **Corn Du** (873m), the last few steps over blocky rocks. You will have been walking for an hour or so, so maybe it's time for a breather. The summit rewards you with fine views north to Brecon, west over Fforest Fawr and – most spectacularly – east along the ridge, with Pen y Fan and the other table-top summits lined up for

inspection. To the south you may catch glimpses of the Severn Estuary, with the coast of England beyond.

From Corn Du, the route is clear – assuming there's no mist! Go down the ridge and steeply up again, with Llyn Cwm Llwhch to your left (northwest) and the Blaen Taf Fechan valley to your right (south). A few steep rock steps at the top of the path bring you to the summit of **Pen y Fan** (886m), marked by a large cairn and trig point. Here the views are even better: to the east, beyond Cribyn and Fan y Big, you can see the Black Mountains.

### Pen y Fan to Llanfrynach

4–5½ hours, 7 miles (11.5km)

Take care leaving the summit of Pen y Fan, especially in mist. The path does not aim straight for the next summit (Cribyn) but goes south 'off the back' of the table top, with a view south of the Upper Neuadd Reservoir far down in the valley, before it curves round on the ridge crest once again. The Blaen Taf Fechan valley is still to the right (south), but to the left a new valley,

### TOMMY'S OBELISK

The obelisk on the ridge below Corn Du is dedicated to the memory of a young boy called Tommy Jones, who died here in 1900. A dedication on the obelisk tells the sad story: lost in the valley while walking with his father, Tommy somehow made his way up to this exposed spot, where his body was found some weeks after he went missing. A newspaper had offered a reward but the money was used instead for this memorial.

Cwm Sere, opens out, overlooked by steep cliffs on the northeast face of Pen y Fan. About 20 to 30 minutes from Pen y Fan you reach the summit of **Cribyn** (795m).

The path continues south then southeast, dropping over grassy slopes with yet another spectacular corrie (the head of Cwm Cynwyn) to your left. At a low point on the ridge called Bwlch ar y Fan, a track crosses the path. This is actually an old road; it's popular with mountain bikers and in March

and September you may also see motorcycles and 4WDs churning it up. Fortunately, for those who come to the countryside for peace and quite it's closed to motor traffic the rest of the year. This track is also an easy-to-follow short cut back to Brecon for walkers – a useful escape route from the high peaks in bad weather.

Assuming the weather is good, our route goes up again; a short, sharp slog up to **Fan y Big** (719m), the final summit and the last chance to take in the wraparound views before descending.

From Fan y Big a broad, grassy ridge leads south, curving east then north round the head of the Cwm Oergwm. The path sometimes gets boggy round the right-angled bend at Bwlch y Ddwyallt, but the going is not too bad.

Several other paths join from the right, coming up from the Talybont Valley. Ignore these and continue northeast down the grassy ridge, with Cwm Oergwm on the left and great views back up the valley to Fan y Big and the other summits dominating the skyline.

About 2 miles from Bwlch y Ddwyallt, the path drops off the ridge, through an area of scattered bushes and small trees. You need to pay close attention to the map as you drop steeply downhill, keeping the tower of Llanfrynach church ahead and to your left as you descend to reach a stile (with a yellow footpath marker) in the corner formed by two fences separating fields from the open hillside. Cross the stile and head north downhill, aiming straight for Llanfrynach church now, through a patch of woodland marked on the map as Coed Cae Rebol.

Footpath markers lead you near to the ruined farm of Tir-hir, then along an old tarred track to meet a lane near Tregaer Farm. Turn right and follow the lane into Llanfrynach village.

This is your first brush with civilisation since leaving Storey Arms, so a pint or a bite in the **White Swan** (☎ 01874-665276; www.the-white-swan.com) in the centre of the village, may be called for – although it's usually closed from 3pm to 6pm. For refreshment of another kind, there's also a water tap in the churchyard wall, opposite the pub. If you want to skip the final part of the walk, bus X43 from Abergavenny comes through

Llanfrynach and on to Brecon every two hours, Monday to Saturday; the last one is at around 6pm.

### Llanfrynach to Brecon

2 hours, 4 miles (6.5km)

From Llanfrynach follow the lane out of the village, with the church on your left and the White Swan on your right, to meet a road (marked on the map as the B4558). Turn right and continue for 400m to reach Storehouse Bridge and the **Monmouthshire & Brecon Canal**. Go over the bridge and through the gate onto a towpath, leading northeast before curving round to the northwest towards Brecon.

The towpath is a section of the Taff Trail, a long-distance path from Cardiff to Brecon, so you'll see more walkers and cyclists here. Follow this towpath for about 3 miles – a nice section of flat and easy walking – over an aqueduct and past a lock, into the outskirts of Brecon, to reach the canal basin near the theatre, where both the waterway and this walk terminate.

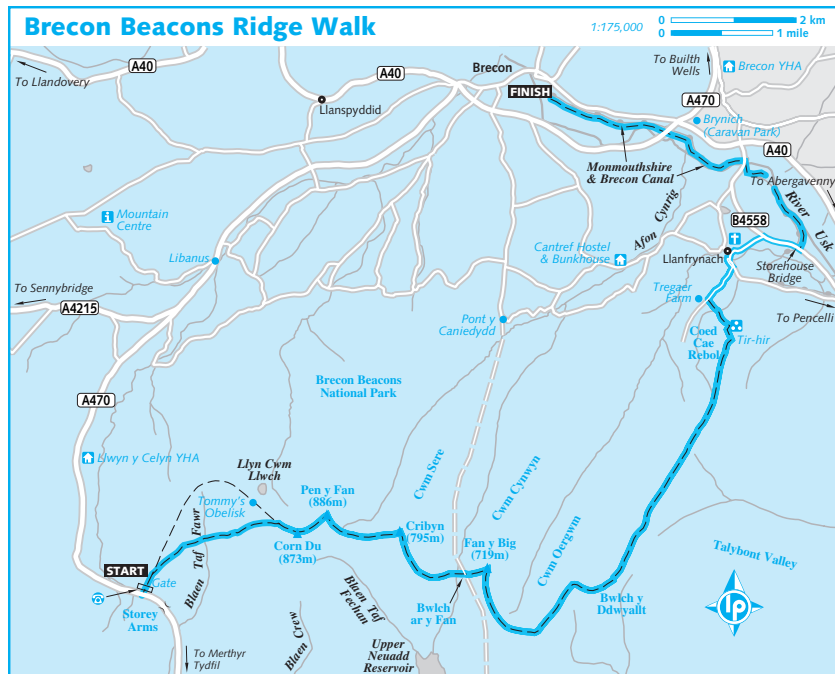
## MORE WALKS

The route we've described here is just the tip of the iceberg (or top of the mountain, as the case may be). There are many more options for walking – as well as other outdoor activities – in the Brecon Beacons National Park.

### BLACK MOUNTAINS

The Black Mountains are the easternmost section of Brecon Beacons National Park. You can use Abergavenny as a base but even handier is the pretty little town of Crickhowell, with a good range of B&Bs and hotels. It's on the X43 bus route between Brecon and Abergavenny (see p283) and gives excellent access to the surrounding mountains and valleys. The **tourist office** (☎ 01873-812105; crickt@powys.gov.uk) stocks books and leaflets covering walks in this area.

The Offa's Dyke Path (p333) runs north along the eastern fringe of the Black Mountains from Pandy to Hay-on-Wye, and this section could be followed as a day walk. The views are spectacular but the route is along a high, grassy ridge that can be very windy. Pandy is on the A465, on the bus route between Abergavenny and Hereford.



If you follow all or part of this route, it's definitely worth dropping down to visit the ruins of Llanthony Priory, where the remaining buildings now house a pub and a delightfully atmospheric hotel.

The highest point in the Black Mountains is Waun Fach (811m). Reaching this on foot is a serious proposition. If you have a car, it's best to drive via Patrishow (an interesting 13th-century church in an idyllic location) to the end of the track in the Mynydd Du Forest. Follow the old railway track up to Grwyne Fawr Reservoir, where a path runs up Waun Fach. Alternatively, the peak can be reached from Llanbedr up to the ridge that runs north via Pen-y-Gadair Fawr. For this route, and others in this area, you need OS map No 13 *Brecon Beacons - Eastern Area* or Harvey's *Brecon Beacons East* map.

## FFOREST FAWR & THE BLACK MOUNTAIN

In the western part of the Brecon Beacons National Park, neither Fforest Fawr nor the Black Mountain are visited as often as the main Brecon Beacons range, but they both have great scenery and several good walking opportunities.

To explore Fforest Fawr, the village of Ystradfellte is a good base. Along the rivers and streams to the south there are a number of attractive waterfalls, including Sgwd-yr-eira ('Spout of Snow'). There are other falls at Ponteddfechan and Coelbren; for details on routes, look out for the *Waterfall Walks* leaflet at local tourist offices. The hills of Fforest Fawr can be reached from the main road between Swansea and Brecon (the A4067) via Ponardawe and Ystradgynlais, served by a daily bus in each direction. Jumping-off points include Craig-y-nos Country Park and Dan-yr-Ogof caves, near the village of Gyntawe.

The Black Mountain is the westernmost part of the park. Note the singular, to distinguish this area from the Black Mountains (plural) to the east. The repetition of the name is not surprising, though – when the weather is bad any piece of bare, high ground in the Brecon Beacons deserves to be called 'black'. This western section of the park contains the wildest and least-visited walking country. The area's highest point, Fan Brycheiniog (also known as Camarthen Van; 802m), can be reached from the village of Glyntawe, between Sennybridge and Ystradgynlais, north of the industrial towns of Neath and Swansea. Maps for exploring this area include OS Explorer 1:25,000 map No 12 *Brecon Beacons - Western Area* and Harvey's *Brecon Beacons West*.

## THE BEACONS WAY

For a top-class long walk in the Brecon Beacons National Park, you could consider the Beacon Way, a waymarked 100-mile (161km) high-level meander through the best of the area, from Abergavenny on the edge of the Black Mountains in the east to Llangadog on the edge of the Black Mountain in the west. Experienced walkers can do this in a week or eight days. As with all long routes, though, you don't have to do it all. There are some excellent one-day, two-day or three-day sections. For details see *The Beacons Way* by John Sansom or go to [www.breconbeaconsparkssociety.org](http://www.breconbeaconsparkssociety.org) and follow the link to the Beacons Way.

A shorter variation is the Black to Black, a 50-mile, five-day route crossing the park from Chapel-y-Fffin, near Crickhowell, to Llanddeusant, near Llandovery, keeping to the high ground and mountain watershed wherever possible.

There's no specific guidebook to this route, so it's ideal if you like to find your own way and have a sense of adventure.

# Pembrokeshire

The county of Pembrokeshire sits comfortably in the far southwest corner of Wales, a peninsula jutting out into the waters (and, often, the winds) of the Atlantic. For many visitors, Pembrokeshire's main attraction is its dramatic coastal scenery. Without doubt, this is one of the most beautiful parts of Britain – an array of beaches, cliffs, rock arches, stacks, buttresses, islands, coves and harbours. You have to go to Cornwall to get anything like this, or to northwest Scotland for anything better.

This scenery is contained within Pembrokeshire Coast National Park, as are the offshore islands of Skomer, Skokholm, Grassholm and Ramsey (named by 10th-century Viking invaders). The park also features an impressive array of wildlife, including some of the world's largest populations of sea birds, such as shearwaters and gannets, as well as puffins, kittiwakes, cormorants and gulls, plus rarer choughs and peregrine falcons. Out at sea, seals, porpoises and dolphins are common, and there's even the odd shark. Paradise indeed.

Pembrokeshire's early human inhabitants were Celts, leaving their mark on the landscape in the form of ancient standing stones and burial sites. Even before this time, the menhirs of Stonehenge were quarried here, then transported to their present resting place in southern England.

Inland, and still within the national park, are the little-known Preseli Hills (Mynydd Preseli, in Welsh), the secluded Gwaun Valley (Cwm Gwaun) and the Milford Haven Waterway, one of the world's largest natural harbours, which upstream becomes the tranquil Daugleddau Estuary. These areas have just as much to offer as the more-famous coastline, but they're often overlooked by visitors, so if you're after solitude they could well be the place.

## HIGHLIGHTS

- Striding out along the dramatic cliff-top paths round **St David's Head** (p301)
- Sauntering, boots-off, along the beach of **Broad Haven** (p299) at the end of a good day's walking
- Patrolling the ramparts of **Pembroke Castle** (p297)
- Loving the jolly seaside atmosphere of **Tenby** (p293)
- Walking through the mystical landscape of the **Preseli Hills** (p304)



## INFORMATION

### When to Walk

The area is well known for its relatively mild climate, which means you can walk here year-round, although the coast gets hammered by some spectacular gales, especially in winter.

### Maps

For walkers the handiest maps are Ordnance Survey (OS) Explorer 1:25,000 sheet Nos 35 *North Pembrokeshire* and 36 *South Pembrokeshire*.

### Information Sources

Pembrokeshire tourist offices are run either by the local tourist board or by the

national park authority. Most open daily in summer, with shorter hours and Sunday closing in winter. Tourist offices include **Cardigan** (☎ 01239-613230), **Fishguard** (☎ 01348-873484), **Milford Haven** (☎ 01646-690866), **Newport** (☎ 01239-820912), **Pembroke** (☎ 01646-622388), **Tenby** (☎ 01834-842404) and **St David's** (☎ 01437-720392). The main tourist information website is [www.visitpembrokeshire.com](http://www.visitpembrokeshire.com).

It's worth noting that the county is often separated by tourist offices into South and North Pembrokeshire (divided by the Milford Haven Waterway), and it's surprisingly hard to get information on the north from a tourist office in the south (and vice versa).

The **national park authority** ([www.pembrokeshirecoast.org](http://www.pembrokeshirecoast.org)) publishes a free newspaper

called *Coast to Coast*, which is full of information on local events and public transport, plus tide tables and adverts for places to eat, stay or visit; it's available from tourist offices and can be read online at [www.visitpembrokeshirecoast.com](http://www.visitpembrokeshirecoast.com).

### MIND THE LINE

Pembrokeshire's name in Welsh is Sir Penfro. English incomers first arrived in the 11th century (and still pour over the border each summer, usually as holidaymakers). Despite this, the Welsh language is alive and kicking, especially north of an ancient division called the Landsker Line, separating northern Pembrokeshire from the more anglicised south.

### GATEWAYS

Pembrokeshire is easy to reach from other parts of South and West Wales, and also very easy to reach from England. The main gateway town is Haverfordwest, in the centre of Pembrokeshire, served by trains (a few per day) and National Express coaches (at least once daily) from London via Bristol, Cardiff, Swansea and Carmarthen. There are also coach and train services to/from Birmingham and the Midlands. From Haverfordwest you can reach the other main Pembrokeshire towns of Tenby, Pembroke, Milford Haven and Fishguard by local bus or branch-line train.

### PEMBROKESHIRE COAST PATH

<b>Duration</b>	15 days
<b>Distance</b>	186 miles (299km)
<b>Difficulty</b>	moderate–demanding
<b>Start</b>	Amroth
<b>Finish</b>	St Dogmaels
<b>Nearest Towns</b>	Tenby (p293), Cardigan (p294)
<b>Transport</b>	bus
<b>Summary</b>	Straddling the line where Wales drops suddenly into the sea, this is one of the most spectacular routes in Britain.

The rugged Pembrokeshire coast is what you would imagine the world would look like if God was a geology teacher. There are knobby hills of volcanic rock, long, thin

harbours formed from glacial melts, and stratified limestone pushed up vertically and then eroded to form natural arches, blowholes and pillars. Stretches of towering red cliff quickly give way to perfect sandy beaches, only to resume around the headland painted black.

The Pembrokeshire Coast Path (PCP) was established in 1970, and takes you from popular holiday spots to long stretches where the only evidence of human existence are the ditches of numerous Celtic forts. In the south, Norman castles dominate many towns and villages, and once held the Celts at bay, creating a frontier that still exists today in the Landsker Line – see the boxed text, left.

The landscape allows for all kinds of outdoor pursuits, whether rock climbing, kayaking, surfing or stretching out on a towel with a trashy novel. Marine life is plentiful, and rare birds make the most of the remote cliffs, with peregrine falcons, red kites, buzzards, choughs, puffins and gannets to be spotted.

It's not all nature and beauty, however. Several military installations require long detours along roads, and two whole days are dominated by the heavy industry of Milford Haven. Still, other manmade structures redeem our impact somewhat – beautiful St David's with its delicate cathedral, haughty Pembroke Castle and the pastel-shaded cottages of Tenby.

### PLANNING

We've suggested a south-to-north route on the Pembrokeshire Coast Path, allowing an easy start in highly populated areas to build up to longer, more isolated stretches where you'll need to carry food with you. Some distances look deceptively short, but you must remember the endless steep ascents and descents where the trail crosses harbours and beaches. Referring to a tide table is essential if you want to avoid lengthy delays on a couple of sections.

The weather can be quite changeable, so bring wet-weather gear and something warm, even in the height of summer. During school holidays it pays to book ahead, as B&Bs, hostels and camp sites fill up quickly. Between Whitesands and Fishguard sleeping and eating options are especially limited.

Day	From	To	Miles/km
1	Amroth	Tenby	7/11.5
2	Tenby	Manorbier	8.5/13.5
3	Manorbier	Bosherston	15/24
4	Bosherston	Angle	15/24
5	Angle	Pembroke	13.5/21.5
6	Pembroke	Sandy Haven	16/25.5
7	Sandy Haven	Marloes	14/22.5
8	Marloes	Broad Haven	13/21
9	Broad Haven	Solva	11/17.5
10	Solva	Whitesands	13/21
11	Whitesands	Trefin	12/19.5
12	Trefin	Pwll Deri	10/16
13	Pwll Deri	Fishguard	10/16
14	Fishguard	Newport	12.5/20
15	Newport	St Dogmaels	15.5/25

## Alternatives

If you're a strong walker, some days of this itinerary can be combined, particularly Days 1 and 2, or Days 12 and 13.

Using the extensive, cutely named coastal bus services (the Coastal Cruiser, Puffin Shuttle, Poppit Rocket and Celtic Coaster), operating frequently from mid-April to late September (pick up the *Pembrokeshire Coastal Bus Services Timetable* from any tourist office on the route, or online at [www.pembrokeshiregreenways.co.uk](http://www.pembrokeshiregreenways.co.uk)), it's easy to jump sections or split the walk into manageable chunks. You could, for instance, base yourself in Broad Haven and plan a three-day walk (Herbrandston–Marloes–Broad Haven–Solva), or at St David's for a two-day walk from Solva to Whitesands.

Quite frankly, some segments of the walk are eminently skip-able. On Day 4 we recommend you catch the Coastal Cruiser 2 service from Bosherston to Freshwater West (25 minutes, four daily) to avoid up to 12 miles of dreary road walking. From here continue walking to Angle, where you can pick up the same service to Pembroke (35 minutes, four times daily). The next day, take bus 356 to Milford Haven (45 minutes, hourly Monday to Saturday) and then change to the Puffin Shuttle for Dale (35 minutes, three daily) and resume the itinerary partway through Day 7.

## When to Walk

In spring and early summer, wildflowers transform the route with an explosion of colour, and migratory birds are likely to

be seen. The height of summer will tend to be drier and more conducive to enjoying the numerous beaches on the route. Other mid- to late-summer advantages include migrating whales, flocks of butterflies and plenty of wild blackberries to snack on – a good payoff for walking in the heat. As you head into autumn, seals come ashore to give birth to their pups. Winter is generally more problematic, as many hostels and camp sites close from October until Easter and buses are less frequent. Needless to say, walking around precipitous cliffs in the wind, rain and chill may not be the most enjoyable (or safe) experience.

## Maps & Books

The route is covered by OS Explorer 1:25,000 maps No 35 *North Pembrokeshire* and 36 *South Pembrokeshire*. The official National Trail Guide, *Pembrokeshire Coast Path* by Brian John, includes the coastal section of these same maps, but is cheaper and more manageable – with detailed route descriptions, albeit running north to south. More useful is *The Pembrokeshire Coastal Path* by Dennis Kelsall, which describes the route in the preferred south-to-north direction and includes detailed route descriptions, background information, line maps and an accommodation list. A series of 10 single-sheet *Trail Cards*, available from tourist offices and national park centres, covers the route, with basic maps pointing out sites of interest along the way.

## Guided Walks

In May/June national park rangers lead a 14-day walk of the entire path (£180); for details contact ☎ 0845 345 7275.

## Information Sources

There are national park centres in St David's, Newport and Tenby (see the route description for details), where you can pick up maps, guidebooks and, most importantly, the annual *Coast to Coast* newspaper (online at [www.visitpembrokeshirecoast.com](http://www.visitpembrokeshirecoast.com)). With a coastal bus timetable and a tide table, it's not just helpful – it's essential. The **national park authority** ([www.pembrokeshire.coast.org.uk](http://www.pembrokeshire.coast.org.uk)) website is also incredibly useful, with accommodation listings and abundant advice for walkers.

## WARNING

The Pembrokeshire Coast Path is safe for sensible adult walkers, but parts of it are certainly not suitable for young children. At the time of writing, no-one has died on the path for 10 years – but fatal accidents have happened in the past. The path is quite narrow and often runs close to the top of sheer cliffs. Take great care, especially when you're tired, visibility is poor, the path is wet or in high wind (when your backpack can turn into a sail).

Don't attempt to swim across river mouths and be aware that some beaches have strong undertows and rips. Particular care should be taken at Whitesands, Newgale, Freshwater West and Marloes Sands when the surf's up. Lifeguards patrol the areas between the flags every day during school holidays. Generally the beaches from Amroth to Tenby, on Day 1, are the safest.

Don't pick up anything shiny in the military firing ranges, and definitely don't attempt to cross these zones when the red flags are flying, even if there's no guard to block your way.

Probably the most dangerous stretches are where the route follows roads with no footpath. A particularly treacherous area is near the grimly named Black Bridge on the way into Milford Haven. Take care also at Wiseman's Bridge and between Little and Broad Havens. For these last two, you're safer crossing on the beach at low tide, but mind that you don't get cut off by the tide. Don't attempt a short-cut along any beach unless you're sure you can make it to the other end. If you get trapped, the best you can hope for is a sodden pack. At worst, you could be in real danger.

## NEAREST TOWNS

The route starts at Amroth, near the resort town of Tenby, and ends at St Dogmaels, near the town of Cardigan.

## Tenby

pop 4934

Perched on a headland with sandy beaches either side, Tenby is a postcard-maker's dream. Houses are painted from the pastel palette of a classic fishing village, interspersed with the white elegance of Georgian mansions. The main part of town is still constrained by its Norman-built walls, containing a mass of pubs, ice-creameries and gift shops, funnelling holidaymakers through the labyrinthine medieval street scheme. Without the tackiness of the promenade-and-pier English beach towns, in the off season it tastefully returns to being a sleepy fishing village. In the summer months it has a distinct Brits Abroad feel, with packed pubs seemingly all blasting out Status Quo simultaneously.

There's a **national park centre** (☎ 01834-845040; South Pde), a **tourist office** (☎ 01834-842402; unit 2, Upper Park Rd), which can assist you with booking accommodation along the route (for a £2 fee), and the last ATMs and internet café – **No. 25** (☎ 01834-842544; 25 High St; per 20 min £1) – before Pembroke.

It makes sense to arrive the night before starting the walk, leave your bags here

and catch the bus to Amroth the following morning.

## SLEEPING & EATING

Tenby has dozens of B&Bs and several nearby camp sites. The owners at **Meadow Farm** (☎ 01834-844829; [vickyandbobburks@tiscali.co.uk](mailto:vickyandbobburks@tiscali.co.uk); Northcliffe; sites for 2 £10) have walked the PCP themselves and offer camping right next to the trail, perched on the northern slopes overlooking Tenby.

**Deer Park Guest House** (☎ 01834-842729; [deerpark@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:deerpark@hotmail.co.uk); 12 Deer Park; s £18-35, d £36-70) is a pleasant B&B with young owners and a flower-bedecked terrace. More upmarket but just as friendly, **Rebleen Guest House** (☎ 01834-844175; [www.rebleen.co.uk](http://www.rebleen.co.uk); Southcliff St; s £45-65, d £55-75) has some sea views.

It's not the quietest location, but the **Normandie Inn** (☎ 01834-842227; [www.normandie-inn.co.uk](http://www.normandie-inn.co.uk); Upper Frog St; s/d £45/70) has massive en suite rooms right in the centre of town.

Next to the tourist office there's a **Somerfield** (☎ 01834-843771; Upper Park Rd) supermarket.

**Fecci & Sons Ice Cream Parlour** (St George's St; cone £1.30) is legendary, and was recently voted third-best in Britain.

For Indian cuisine and spectacular views, visit the **Bay Of Bengal** (☎ 01834-843331; 1 Crackwell St; mains £7-13; ☺ dinner).

If you can justify a splurge so early in the trip, **Plantagenet House** (☎ 01834-842350; Quay Hill, Tudor Sq; mains £15-22; ☺ lunch & dinner) is



a gastronome's delight, specialising in fresh local seafood and produce. The house itself, with its massive Flemish chimney, is the oldest in Tenby – possibly from the 10th century.

### GETTING THERE & AWAY

Tenby is easily reached by train from Cardiff (2½ hours, seven daily), while National Express runs direct coaches from a number of cities, including London (6¼ hours, three daily) and Manchester (8¼ hours, daily).

### Cardigan

pop 4082

While not the most exciting place to celebrate your achievement, Cardigan is an easy walk from the end of the PCP, with a **tourist office** (☎ 01239-613230; Theatr Mwldan, Bath House Rd) and food and accommodation options.

### SLEEPING & EATING

**Highbury House** (☎ 01239-613403; North Rd; s with/without bathroom £27/19, d with/without bathroom £46/37) is not as grand as it sounds, but offers cheap B&B close to the centre of things.

**Brynhafyd Guest House** (☎ 01239-612861; Gwbert Rd; s with shared bathroom £21, d £45) is more pleasant, in a quiet side street.

The **Black Lion Hotel** (☎ 01239-612532; www.theblacklioncardigan.com; High St; s/d/tr £40/60/90, mains £7-14; ☎ lunch & dinner) is an atmospheric stone-walled pub with en suite rooms and home-cooked meals.

There's a large **Somerfield** (☎ 01239-615006; Lower Mwldan) supermarket and a great deli, **Ultracomida** (Cardigan Indoor Market, High St; panini £3; ☎ lunch Tue-Sat), which serves fantastic lunches.

**Pendre Art** (☎ 01239-615151; 35 Pendre; baguettes £3-5; ☎ lunch Mon-Sat) has a café attached, with free wireless internet access and a range of photos and paintings of the Pembrokeshire coast by local artists.

### GETTING THERE & AWAY

There are no trains or National Express coaches from Cardigan, so catch a 460 bus to Carmarthen (1¾ hours, nine daily), which has plenty of connections.

### GETTING TO/FROM THE WALK

From Tenby catch the 350, 351 or 352 bus from outside the tourist office to Amroth

(40 minutes, seven daily). From St Dogmaels you can walk the 2 miles to Cardigan, wait for local bus 405 (10 minutes, 14 services daily) or ask the pub staff to call you a cab.

### THE WALK

#### Day 1: Amroth to Tenby

3–4 hours, 7 miles (11.5km)

*Starting at a wide sandy beach, this short section is the perfect teaser for what's to come, allowing plenty of time for swimming and sightseeing.*

A pair of bilingual brass plaques marks the beginning of the trail, near the eastern end of Amroth. Today's destination is clearly in sight, peering out behind rocky little Monkstone, which abuts the point at the south end of the bay. At low tide you can kick off your shoes and follow the shore all the way to Monkstone Point, although the official track takes the road and then follows the cliff tops along what was once a railway track. Just over an hour away, in Saundersfoot, there are places to eat and a **tourist office** (☎ 01834-813672) by the picturesque harbour.

The path continues through a wooded area, taking a short diversion down Monkstone Point before doubling back to come out into the fields near the large **Trevaeney Farm Caravan & Camping Park** (☎ 01834-813402; www.camping-pembrokeshire.co.uk; Monkstone; sites for 2 £8). From here there are a few sharp inclines, with ever-nearer views of candy-striped Tenby (p293) along the way.

#### Day 2: Tenby to Manorbier

3½–4½ hours, 8.5 miles (13.5km)

*Another brilliant day with breathtaking cliff-top views. There are a number of steep climbs, but the distance is mercifully short.*

Lose the shoes and enjoy the first mile along sandy South Beach. As you near the end you'll be able to see whether the red flag is flying over Giltar Point. Don't get excited and break into *The Internationale* – the revolution hasn't started. It just means the military is using its firing range. Ordinarily the path takes you up around the cliff top, but when the flag is flying you're forced to make a diversion through the nearby village of **Penally**. This isn't all bad, as Penally has a pair of decent pubs and a church containing two Celtic crosses from the 10th and 11th centuries.

You'll eventually rejoin the cliff path to enjoy incredible views over Caldey Island. Head down to caravan-covered Lydstep, about two hours from Tenby, before hooking up the road at the other end of the beach, cutting across the point and regaining the cliffs as the path twists seriously close to sheer drops. Look out for the **Church Doors** limestone formation linking two beaches far below.

Soon you'll pass the futuristic grey-and-yellow **Manorbier YHA Hostel** (☎ 01834-871803; www.yha.org.uk; Skrinkle Haven; dm/d/tr £17/44/61) – a cross between a space station and a motorway diner. It was once part of the military base that still occupies the neighbouring headland, where you're forced to make an-

other detour away from the cliffs, returning high above the extraordinary red-limestone ramparts of Presipe Beach.

It all builds to a spectacular finale, with the path heading alongside a number of sudden, 20m-deep chasms. As you turn the corner and Manorbier comes into view, look out for **King's Quoit**, a Neolithic burial chamber fashioned from massive slabs of rock.

### MANORBIER

The beach, 12th-century church and **Manorbier Castle** (☎ 01834-871394; adult/senior/child £4/2.50/1.50; ☎ Mar-Sep) are all worth exploring in this rather spoiled little village.

Friendly **Honeyhill** (☎ 01834-871906; www.bedandbreakfast-directory.co.uk/honeyhillbb; Warlows



Meadow; d £40-50) offers baggage transfers by arrangement (50p per mile).

The **Firs** (☎ 01834-871442; 4 Longfield; s/d £45/65) is nicely renovated and offers a good breakfast selection.

**Castlemead Hotel** (☎ 01834-871358; www.castlemeadhotel.com; s/d £43/86, 2-course meals £15; ☎ dinner, closed Dec & Jan) has fantastic views over the church and beach, and an upmarket restaurant.

There are further eating options at the **Chives Tearoom** (☎ 01834-871709; mains £7; ☎ lunch) and the **Castle Inn** (☎ 01834-871268; mains £7-14; ☎ lunch & dinner), and up the hill you'll find **Manorbier Stores & Post Office** (☎ 01834-871221).

### Day 3: Manorbier to Bosherton

5½–7 hours, 15 miles (24km)

*A slightly longer day, continually alternating between sheer cliffs and sandy beaches. Lunch options are limited, so consider taking food with you.*

From Manorbier it's an easy 3.5 miles to Freshwater East. While not the surfer mecca of its western namesake, it's still a popular holiday destination. After another surging section of cliff you reach the tiny harbour of Stackpole Quay, and then pass two massive arches, one big enough for even large boats to pass through. From Stackpole Head you can proudly peruse your whole walk so far.

About 2 miles further, you reach a bay called Broad Haven (not to be confused with your stopping point on Day 8), where the trail goes inland slightly and crosses a footbridge on the edge of **Stackpole Estate National Trust Nature Reserve**. West of here is another military firing range, and the trail divides. If there's no red flag you can take the path along the coast, past several natural rock arches, to St Govan's Head and visit the tiny 6th-century **St Govan's Chapel**, set into the cliffs. From the chapel you follow a lane 1.5 miles north to reach the little village of Bosherton.

However, if the red flags are flying, you'll have to take a short cut inland through the nature reserve (a very nice route in its own right), over footbridges and round long, thin lily pools to reach Bosherton.

### BOSHERSTON

To the southeast of the village, and not far from the track, **Trefalen Farm** (☎ 01646-661643;

trefalen@trefalen.force9.co.uk; sites for 2 £8, s/d with shared bathroom £25/50) welcomes campers and rents rooms. The proprietors have four more rooms at friendly **St Govan's Inn** (☎ 01646-661455; trefalen@trefalen.force9.co.uk; s/d £30/60, mains £4-12; ☎ lunch & dinner) in the heart of the village.

Across from the church, **Cornerstones** (☎ 01646-661660; john.jukes@virgin.net; s/d £32/60) is a well-established B&B; the owners will happily suggest other local houses if they have no vacancies themselves.

You can't visit Bosherton without stopping for cream tea at **Ye Olde Worlde Café** (☎ 01646-661216; sandwiches around £2; ☎ 9am-6.30pm). It's a local institution, having opened in 1922. It's still run by the original owner's daughter – who's slightly older than the café itself!

### Day 4: Bosherton to Angle

5½–7 hours, 15 miles (24km)

*There are patches of wonderful coastal scenery, but prepare for some tedious road walking, courtesy of the British Army. For tips to avoid this, see p292.*

Quite why the army needs to use some of the most beautiful parts of Britain's coast to test its killing power is anyone's guess. Much of the next stretch is a tank-firing range, meaning that it's permanently off limits to the public. Other parts are open as long as firing isn't actually taking place. There's usually a schedule of the firing times posted in Bosherton.

If you're lucky, you'll be able to head back down to St Govan's Chapel and continue the trail along the coast – a beautiful 3.5-mile stretch with numerous caves, blowholes and natural arches, including the much-photographed **Green Bridge of Wales**. At Stack Rocks you still have to turn inland and begin the 9-mile road walk. With ear-splitting detonations from the range, very little protection from passing vehicles and high hedgerows hiding much of the view, this is not an enjoyable diversion. If you're unlucky and the red flags are flying, you'll have to take the road for an additional 3 miles west from Bosherton. The upside of this is that it saves you a few miles and gives you more incentive to wait for the bus.

You reach the coast again at spectacular Freshwater West, and the trail loops around the Angle Peninsula – another beautiful section with caves, tiny islands and little

bays. At popular West Angle Bay you could easily cheat and follow the road 10 minutes to Angle village. Otherwise it's only an hour to Angle Point, where the path curves back into the village.

### ANGLE

There's a **village shop** (☎ 01646-641232), a cute wooden-beamed church and a friendly local pub, but no accommodation in the village itself. Despite the 'no riff-raff' sign, the **Hibernia Inn** (☎ 01646-641517; mains £5-14; ☎ lunch & dinner) is very welcoming to scruffy walkers, and serves the usual pub grub.

On the eastern edge of the village, right on the PCP, the **Castle Farm Camping Site** (☎ 01646-641220; sites for 2 £5) offers very basic facilities for campers amongst the ruins.

Near Angle Point, the **Old Point House** (☎ 01646-641205; The Point; s/d £30/60, mains £8-13; ☎ lunch & dinner, closed Tue Nov-Mar) has four rooms available in a 15th-century cottage overlooking the oil refinery. **Hardings Hill House** (☎ 01646-641232; Hardings Hill; s/d with shared bathroom £30/50) has rooms 800m to the south.

### Day 5: Angle to Pembroke

5–6 hours, 13.5 miles (21.5km)

*Today the scenery turns industrial and there's nowhere to get lunch.*

As you enter the Milford Haven estuary, the castles and church steeples that have dominated this landscape since Norman times are now dwarfed by the massive towers and domes of modern oil refineries. When they're not spewing out black smoke there's something almost majestic about the scale of them – although the novelty may wear off after two full days walking in their shadow.

The trail runs around Angle Bay and along the south bank of the estuary, alongside the vast Texaco refinery and past several tanker jetties. Your next highlight is the demolished power station, beyond which tracks, lanes and roads lead through medieval Monkton into Pembroke.

### PEMBROKE

pop 7214

**Pembroke Castle** (☎ 01646-684585; www.pembrokecastle.co.uk; adult/concession £3.50/2.50) was the strongest of the chain of keeps used to hold the stropky Celts at bay. Henry VII, founder of the Tudor dynasty, was born

here in 1457, and the castle remained important until it was sacked and left in ruins by Cromwell's vandals.

Being the largest town since Tenby, there's a **tourist office** (☎ 01646-622388; The Commons Rd), ATMs and plenty of shops. You can check your email or buy licensed Harry Potter wands at **Dragon Alley** (☎ 01646-621456; 63 Main St; per hr £3).

**Beech House** (☎ 01646-683740; 78 Main St; s/d with shared bathroom £18/35) is a wonderfully kept 15th-century house, blanketed with flowers in season, offering B&B.

While not as classy, friendly **High Noon** (☎ 01646-683736; www.highnoon.co.uk; Lower Lamphay Rd; s/d with shared bathroom £23/49) has comfortable, clean rooms.

Once the townhouse for the Stackpole Estate, 250-year-old **Penfro** (☎ 01646-682753; www.penfro.co.uk; 111 Main St; s £45-70, d £55-80) is a sumptuous option; the grand entry hall has a heritage-listed staircase.

The misnamed **Pembroke Carvery** (☎ 01646-685759; The Commons Rd; mains £6-9; ☎ lunch & dinner) is a Chinese restaurant, right next to the tourist office.

You can't beat the castle views from the waterside deck of **Watermans Arms** (☎ 01646-682718; 2 The Green; mains £7-13; ☎ lunch & dinner), which serves a great beef curry along with local seafood specials.

### Day 6: Pembroke to Sandy Haven

6–8 hours, 16 miles (25.5km)

*The day starts urban and quickly becomes industrial. Make sure you check your tide timetable before setting out, or you may find yourself with a nasty detour.*

The path takes you across the Pembroke River and round the backstreets of Pembroke Dock (a separate town), then over the large Cleddau Bridge, which does at least provide some views. Stay on the road until you cross a second bridge before following the river back down into Neyland. If you're camping, nearby **Shipping Farm** (☎ 01646-600286; Rose Market; sites for 2 £8) comes highly recommended. There's a large new gas terminal and a very dangerous section of pavement-deprived road before you cross the Black Bridge into the grim suburbs of Milford Haven. Beyond the docks there's a final section of grey suburban streets and, just for luck, another bloody gas terminal (Exxon) and – hurrah! – you're back to

the national park and the beautiful coast again. From here it's a short hop to Sandy Haven.

The little estuary of Sandy Haven can be crossed (using stepping stones) 2½ hours either side of low tide (a tide table is posted by the slipway on each side). At high tide it's a 4-mile detour via Herbrandston and Rickeston Bridge. At Herbrandston the **Taberna Inn** (☎ 01646-693498; s/d £25/50, mains £10; ☺ lunch & dinner) offers B&B (shared bathrooms) and food in a popular pub.

### SANDY HAVEN

Before the crossing, relaxed **Sandy Haven Camping Park** (☎ 01646-695899; www.sandyhavencampingpark.co.uk; sites for 2 £9-11) has good facilities.

On the west side of the estuary, close to the trail, **Skerryback Farm** (☎ 01646-636598; www.pfh.co.uk/skerryback; s/d £30/55) offers B&B to weary walkers.

Further towards St Ishmael's, **Bicton Farm** (☎ 01646-636215; jdlewellyn@aol.com; s/tw with shared bathroom £20/46, d £50) is another good B&B option.

### Day 7: Sandy Haven to Marloes

5–6½ hours, 14 miles (22.5km)

*Today takes you back to nature, with more ragged cliffs and deserted beaches, as the industrial plants dissolve into the distance.*

From Sandy Haven there's 4 miles of fine, cliff-top walking to the Gann, another inlet that can only be crossed 3½ hours either side of low tide (otherwise it's a 2.5-mile detour via Mullock). The path leads into Dale, where you can grab a sandwich at the **Boathouse** (mains £3-5; ☺ breakfast & lunch), or a more substantial meal at the **Griffin Inn** (☎ 01646-636227; mains £4-12; ☺ lunch & dinner). A 10-minute walk through the village, past Dale castle, to Westdale Bay would save you 2½ hours, but cost you 5 miles of beautiful scenery around St Ann's Head. If you're tempted to linger, **Allenbrook** (☎ 01646-636254; www.allenbrook-dale.co.uk; s/d £35/70) has rooms in a beautiful ivy-covered country house right by the beach.

Two miles after Westdale Bay you'll see the remains of an abandoned **WWII airfield**. Above the impressive sweep of Marloes Sands, the sign to well-positioned **Marloes Sands YHA** (☎ 01646-636667; reservations@yha.org.uk; Runwayskiln; dm/tr £12/36) is three-quarters of the way along the beach.

As with Dale, Marloes village straddles a peninsula. From Marloes Sands head 1.3 miles to the northeast or you can continue on the PCP for a further 4 miles, where the village is less than 1 mile southeast of Musselwick Sands. There are two large camp sites right by the trail towards the bottom of the peninsula. **West Hook Farm** (☎ 01646-636424; sites for 2 £8) isn't far from Martin's Haven, while **East Hook Farm** (sites for 2 £8) is 1 mile further on. Both have similar facilities.

### MARLOES

The best organised camp site on the whole route is at **Foxdale Guest House** (☎ 01646-636243; www.foxdaleguesthouse.co.uk; Glebe Lane; sites for 2 £9, s £35, d £56-60). Campers are provided with a bar, café and shop, and there are also rooms available.

**Albion House** (☎ 01646-636365; s/d £25/50) has basic, comfortable rooms in the heart of the village.

The pumping village pub, **Lobster Pot Inn** (☎ 01646-636233; s/d £25/50, mains £4-8; ☺ breakfast, lunch & dinner), offers rooms as well as standard pub meals.

The **Clock House** (☎ 01646-636527; www.clockhousemarloes.co.uk; s £33-38, d £50-60, mains £6; ☺ lunch Tue-Sun, dinner Tue-Sat) is more upmarket and has a great café attached, serving excellent Mediterranean food.

### Day 8: Marloes to Broad Haven

4½–6 hours, 13 miles (21km)

*Another wonderful stretch along dramatic cliff tops, ending at an impressive beach.*

Head back to Marloes Sands where, at the end of the beach, you pass Gateholm Island, a major Iron Age Celtic settlement where the remains of 130 hut circles have been found. You'll pass many such sites today – look out for the earthwork ramparts of promontory forts.

Martin's Haven, at the tip of the peninsula, is the base for **Skomer Island boat trips** (☎ 01646-603123; boat adult/child £8/6, island entry adult/child £6/free) and the office of the Skomer Marine Nature Reserve, with an interesting display on the underwater environment. Set into the wall next to the office is a **Celtic cross** that may date from the 7th century.

Around the headland the cliffs change from red to black, and after an hour you'll reach Musselwick Sands. **St Brides Haven** is a further 2 miles down the track, with the

headland dominated by a Victorian faux-castle, once owned by the Barons of Kensington. A reasonably easy 5-mile stretch leads to Little Haven, separated by rocks from Broad Haven. From the path you'll be able to assess the tide and decide whether to follow the busy road or cross via the beach. Little Haven is a pretty village with restaurants and several B&Bs.

### BROAD HAVEN

Broad Haven has a surfie vibe, with its wide stretch of sandy beach patrolled by tanned young lifeguards, and a variety of cafés, chippies and surf shops.

The **Broad Haven YHA Hostel** (☎ 01437-781688; www.yha.org.uk; dm/q £17/67; ☺ Apr-Sep) is excellent, with sumptuous sea views from its dining room and deck.

Both **Anchor Guest House** (☎ 01437-781476; www.anchorguesthouse.co.uk; The Seaford; s £25-35, d £50-70) and **Albany Guest House** (☎ 01437-781051; www.albanyguesthouse.co.uk; 27 Millmoor Way; r £54-56) offer rooms close to the beach.

Up the hill between the Havens, **Atlantic View** (☎ 01437-781589; www.atlantic-view.co.uk; Set-tlands Hill; camp sites for 2 £10, d £64) rewards yet another climb with great views.

The **Sea View Café** (3 Marine Rd; mains £3-6; ☺ breakfast, lunch & dinner) is a cheerful chippie staffed by cool surfie dudes, while **Nautilus** (☎ 01437-781844; Seaford; mains £8-16; ☺ lunch & dinner) is more smart, with a focus on seafood.

### Day 9: Broad Haven to Solva

4–5½ hours, 11 miles (17.5km)

*Don't be fooled by the distance – today's no easy stroll. There are several steep climbs, but thankfully the scenery remains superb.*

Ancient fortifications are even more evident today as you follow the cliffs up from the beach. After an hour you should reach the **Druidstone** (☎ 01437-781221; www.druidstone.co.uk; s £44-48, d £65-143, mains £5-18; ☺ breakfast, lunch & dinner), a rambling old hotel and restaurant at the top of Druidston Haven, offering a range of rooms from basic to downright flash. Just down from the hotel, what looks like a Bronze Age barrow turns out to be an ultramodern home dug into the earth.

A further 30 minutes will bring you to Noltun Haven, a former coal port with a **pub** by the beach. From here the trail gets really steep, sweeping up and down the cliffs towards beautiful Newgale Sands – a

2.5-mile stretch of sand and arguably the best surf beach in Wales. Frustratingly, you can't get down to the beach until you've walked half the distance on the undulating cliff path. **Newgale Camping Site** (☎ 01437-710253; www.newgalecampingsite.co.uk; sites for 2 £10) has well-kept facilities and is perfectly positioned – by the beach and next to the **Duke of Edinburgh** (☎ 01437-720586; mains £4-7; ☺ lunch & dinner) pub.

As you pass over the bridge by the pub, you're crossing the Landsker Line (see the boxed text, p291). From Newgale the trail climbs back onto the cliffs. The 5-mile walk to Solva is along a rugged section with impressive rock formations.

### SOLVA

Lower Solva is a touristy little village at the head of a peculiar L-shaped harbour, where the water drains away completely at low tide. Upper Solva is a few minutes further up the trail on the headland.

If you're camping, continue on the PCP a further 45 minutes and turn inland at a wide footpath leading up from a sheltered inlet. **Nine Wells Caravan & Camping Park** (☎ 01437-721809; Ulandridon; sites for 2 £8) has well-kept facilities, next to nine holy wells – popular with sick pilgrims during the Middle Ages.

In Lower Solva, right next to the river, **Gamlyn** (☎ 01437-721542; Y Gribin; s/d £24/55) offers bare-basics B&B. Much nicer is the **Old Printing House** (☎ 01437-721603; 20 Main St; s/d £25/50), with stone walls and hefty beams, which also operates as a tearoom.

**Pebble Cottage** (☎ 01437-721229; grace-pebble@tiscali.co.uk; 9 Prendergast St; s/d £35/50) is similarly character-filled, while the **Royal George** (☎ 01437-720002; r £60, mains £8-14; ☺ dinner) in Upper Solva is a lively pub with en suite rooms, some with sea views.

The **Harbour Inn** (☎ 01437-720013; 31-33 Main St; mains £7-9; ☺ lunch & dinner) does average pub grub, but it does have an ATM.

**Caboose** (☎ 01437-720503; 13 Main St; mains £5-7; ☺ lunch) is a bright and cheerful modern café with tables in a garden by the river.

The best restaurant in the area is the **Old Pharmacy** (☎ 01437-720005; 5 Main St; mains £13-36), with an emphasis on fresh seafood and local organic meats.

On your way out of town, you can stock up on supplies at **Solva Minimarket** (☎ 01437-729036; 19 Maes Ewan) in Upper Solva.

**Day 10: Solva to Whitesands**

5–7 hours, 13 miles (21km)

*The spectacular coastline takes a spiritual turn, as you follow in the footsteps of Wales' patron saint.*

From Solva, the trail climbs back onto the cliffs and the superb coastal scenery continues. After two hours you'll reach Caerfai Bay, a sheltered sandy beach with two wonderful, walker-friendly camp sites, right on the path. **Caerfai Farm** (☎ 01437-720548; www.caerfai.co.uk; sites for 2 £8) is organic and creates its own electricity from a windmill. Its small shop is your best option for lunch today, unless you decide to detour through St David's. Neighbouring **Caerfai Bay Caravan & Tent Park** (☎ 01437-720274; www.caerfaibay.co.uk; site for 2 £9) has similarly good facilities and sweeping views over St Brides Bay.

Around the next headland is **St Non's Bay**. Named after the mother of St David, this historic pilgrimage site is a supremely peaceful place. If you're cutting to St David's for lunch, it's a 20-minute walk along the marked path through the fields.

Back on the PCP, another half-hour brings you to Porthclais, with a landing stage and some lime kilns. Continuing round the headland there are good views across to **Ramsey Island**. The treacherous rocks close to the island are evocatively known as the Bitches. From the shore you can see and hear the tide rushing through the largest of them, the **Great Bitch**. Another 2 miles of easy walking will bring you to the busy surf beach of Whitesands Bay.

**WHITESANDS & ST DAVID'S**

There's not a lot at Whitesands, apart from a public toilet, telephone and a seasonal café. If you're lucky enough to find it open,

**Whitesands Beach Café & Shop** (☎ 01437-720168; packed lunch £3.50; ☹ weekends, daily school holidays & summer) can sort you out for food, caffeine, sun screen or surf gear. The nearby **Whitesands Beach Campsite** (sites for 2 £6) has basic facilities. About 800m uphill is **St David's YHA Hostel** (☎ 01437-720345; stdavids@yha.org.uk; Llaethdy; dm/d £16/40), a converted farmhouse with great views.

The microcity of St David's, 2 miles southeast, has both a **tourist office** (☎ 01437-720392; The Grove) and a **National Trust Shop & Information Centre** (☎ 01437-720385; High St). If you're staying longer, **Thousand Islands Expeditions** (☎ 01437-721721; www.thousandislands.co.uk; Cross Sq) will take you to the Ramsey Island Nature Reserve (adult/child £14/7) or for a three-hour whale- and dolphin-spotting cruise (adult/child £50/25). **TYF Adventure** (☎ 01437-721611; www.tyf.com; 1 High St; half/full day £45/85) seems to stick its oars into just about everything adventure-related – kayaking, surfing, climbing, abseiling and coasteering (everything your mother told you not to do around cliffs).

In St David's, **Y Glennydd** (☎ 01437-720576; www.yglennydd.co.uk; 51 Nun St; s/d £30/55) has a mixture of simple rooms, some with en suites and sea views.

A popular pub serving food, the **Grove Hotel** (☎ 01437-720341; www.thegrovestdavids.co.uk; High St; s £35-55, d £60-90, mains £12-15; ☹ lunch & dinner) inhabits a large Regency house.

**Old Cross Hotel** (☎ 01437-720387; www.oldcrosshotel.co.uk; Cross Sq; s £38-62, d £68-105, mains £7-13; ☹ dinner) offers rooms and food, with friendly staff but a rather ugly restaurant.

**Bryn Awel** (☎ 01437-720082; www.brynowel-bb.co.uk; 45 High St; r £50) is a laid-back, walker-friendly home, where you can ease those weary legs in en suite bathtubs.

**ONCE IN TINY ST DAVID'S CITY**

Born in 462 where the ruined chapel stands in St Non's Bay, David was one of a number of missionaries during the pan-Celtic explosion of Christian activity known as The Age of Saints. He founded a monastery in the city that now bears his name and his remains are kept in a casket in the cathedral. It is this fascinating building that makes St David's technically a city – the smallest in Britain. Set in a hollow rather than dominating the skyline, this didn't stop it being sacked three times by Vikings.

The Holy Well at St Non's is said to have sprung up miraculously during the saint's birth. The current Catholic St Non's Chapel takes the form of the original, but was only built in 1934 – using stones sourced from old cottages, which had themselves been built from the ruins of nearby church buildings destroyed during the Reformation.

If you need to stock up on cash or provisions, this is your last opportunity before Fishguard in three days' time. There's a large **CK Supermarket** (☎ 01437-721127; New St) or you could spoil yourself with perishable deli items from **St David's Food & Wine** (☎ 01437-721948; High St).

Coffee is excellent at groovy **Pebbles Yard Espresso Bar** (☎ 01437-720122; Cross Sq; ☹ breakfast & lunch), and you'd be hard-pressed finding a more authentic Welsh country pub than the **Farmers Arms** (☎ 01437-721666; Goat St; mains £7-9; ☹ lunch & dinner).

If you're wanting to treat yourself, **Lawtons at No. 16** (☎ 01437-729220; 16 Nun St; mains £15-32; ☹ dinner, closed Sun Sep-Jun) is the place to do it – with a great wine list and a menu using quality local produce.

**Day 11: Whitesands to Trefin**

4½–6 hours, 12 miles (19.5km)

*Wild St David's Head offers a rugged new landscape at the beginning of a beautiful but taxing walk, with several steep ascents.*

From Whitesands the trail quickly takes you to **St David's Head**, an untamed outcrop scattered with boulders, and in summer painted with streaks of yellow and purple flowers. For the next 2 miles the only signs of human habitation are ancient, with the simple **Neolithic burial chamber** on the headland predating the surrounding remnants of Celtic forts. Adding to the primitive feel, herds of horses roam around freely.

After an undulating 3½-hour walk, the beachside settlement of Aberiddy reveals ruins from the industrial age. Another half-hour will bring you to Porthgain, another former quarry town – now a quiet village with a quaint harbour. The **Sloop Inn** (☎ 01348-831449; mains £5-15; ☹ lunch & dinner) provides an all-day bar menu as well as more substantial evening meals, while the **Shed** (☎ 01348-831518; mains £19-23; ☹ lunch & dinner) is an award-winning seafood bistro.

Don't worry too much if the food starts to weigh you down; it's an easy hour from here to Trefin and a well-earned rest.

**TREFIN**

Blink and you'll miss sleepy little Trefin (pronounced 'Treveen'). **Prendergast Caravan Park** (☎ 01348-831368; www.prendergastcaravanpark.co.uk; sites for 2 £7) is so well sheltered behind its hedges, it's difficult to spot. The facili-

ties are excellent and well maintained, but you'll need to put a coin in the slot to get a hot shower.

Relaxed and friendly **Hampton House** (☎ 01348-837701; viv.kay@virgin.net; 2 Ffordd-y-felin; s/d £25/50) has three simple rooms, including one double with an en suite. **Bryngarw Guest House** (☎ 01348-831221; www.bryngarwguesthouse.co.uk; Abercastle Rd; s/d £40/60) is more established, with some impressive sea views.

The only dinner option is the **Ship Inn** (☎ 01348-831445; mains £7-15; ☹ lunch & dinner), serving typically uninspiring but hearty pub food.

**Day 12: Trefin to Pwll Deri**

3½–4½ hours, 10 miles (16km)

*Today's walk is yet another wonderful experience, with cliffs, rock buttresses, pinnacles, islets, bays and beaches. It's tempered by a distinct paucity of eating and accommodation options.*

From Trefin it's an easy 3 miles to Abercastle. Before you reach the small beach, take a short detour over the stiles to **Carreg Sampson** – a 5000-year-old burial chamber with a capstone over 5m long. After another 4 miles you'll reach sandy Aber Mawr beach. One mile to the south, through the woods, **Preseli Venture Adventure Lodge** (☎ 01348-837709; www.preseliventure.com; Parcynole Fach; per person £30) is a good sleeping option for groups, but only takes individual walkers on the weekend. Attached to a small outdoor activities centre, you can linger here and indulge in kayaking, coasteering and the like, starting from £39 for a half-day.

The headland of Penbwhdy is the beginning of one of the most impressive stretches of cliff on the whole path. If the weather is good you can see all the way back to St David's Head. If it's windy you may be thankful for the circular dry-stone shepherds' shelter here. Either way, it's a wild 40-minute walk to join the road above the bay of Pwll Deri, where there's another stunning view back along the cliffs.

**PWLL DERI**

The **Pwll Deri YHA Hostel** (☎ 01348-891385; pwllderi@yha.org.uk; Castell Mawr, Trefasser; dm/tw £15/30) must have one of the finest locations of any hostel in Britain. Apart from the options listed in the route description, there is no other accommodation or food

nearby. If you're a strong walker you could head straight on to Fishguard. Another option would be to catch the Strumble Shuttle to Fishguard (30 minutes, three daily, in winter three weekly) from either Trefasser Cross (1 mile inland) or Strumble Head (3 miles further on the PCP) and then catch it back to pick up the trail the next day.

### Day 13: Pwll Deri to Fishguard

3½–4½ hours, 10 miles (16km)

*There's excellent cliff scenery and reasonably easy walking on this deserted section, but come prepared or you may be very hungry by the time you reach Goodwick.*

From Pwll Deri the trail leads along the cliffs for 3 miles to the impressive promontory of Strumble Head, marked by its famous lighthouse. One mile inland you can pitch a tent at **Tresinwen Farm** (☎ 01348-891238; sites for 2 £4). About 3 miles further on you reach Carregwastad Point, where the last invasion of Britain occurred around 200 years ago (see the boxed text, right). Shortly after this, the small wooded valley of Cwm Felin comes as a surprise in this otherwise windswept landscape.

An hour later you round the headland and with a sudden jolt there's Fishguard – the largest town since Milford Haven.

Although close, the villages of Goodwick, Fishguard and Lower Fishguard are quite distinct. Goodwick (Wdig, in Welsh), pronounced 'Goodick', has the train station, the beach and the port for ferries to Ireland.

**Glendower Hotel** (☎ 01348-872873; glendowerhotel@hotmail.com; Goodwick Sq; s/d £39/69) has basic rooms above a popular local pub. A more stylish option is the recently renovated **Hope & Anchor Inn** (☎ 01348-872314; www.hopeandanchorinn.co.uk; Goodwick Sq; d £60-70, mains £10-13; ☺ lunch & dinner), with an excellent restaurant attached.

The **Rose & Crown** (☎ 01348-874449; Goodwick Sq; mains £5-7; ☺ lunch & dinner) has a shabby charm, with a chamber-pot collection decorating the lounge bar.

The trail drops down to the port of Goodwick to come out by the ferry quay, then past a roundabout at the bottom of the hill. Nearby, there's a **tourist office** (☎ 01348-872037; The Ocean Lab, The Parrog) with a **cybercafé** (per 30min £2). Along the waterfront there are a series of interesting historical plaques and mosaics illustrating the history of the area.

Alongside the road, Goodwick Moor was the site of the 1078 battle between northern and southern Celtic chieftains (as if they didn't have enough to worry about from the Normans), culminating in a bloody massacre of the southerners. From here the trail climbs steeply up to the cliffs skirting Fishguard. Stay with it until you reach a viewpoint overlooking Lower Fishguard, then go up the street called Penslade, which will bring you out on West St, very near the town centre.

#### THE FISHGUARD INVASION

While Hastings may get all the press, the last invasion of Britain was actually at Carregwastad Head in 1797. The rag-tag collection of 1400 French mercenaries and bailed convicts, led by an Irish-American named Colonel Tate, had hoped that the British peasants would rise up to join them in revolutionary fervour. Unsurprisingly, their drunken pillaging didn't endear them to the locals, and the French were quickly seen off by volunteer 'yeoman' soldiers, with help from the people of Fishguard, including, most famously, one Jemima Nichols, who single-handedly captured 12 mercenaries armed with nothing more than a pitchfork.

#### FISHGUARD

Fishguard (Abergwaun, in Welsh) is larger and more interesting than Goodwick, with ATMs, shops and a wider choice of places to stay, eat and drink. The **tourist office** (☎ 01348-873484) is temporarily housed in the library (High St) but due to return to the town hall (Market Sq) in late 2007. There are two stone circles, but before you start preparing to dance skyklad, be aware that they were built in 1936 and 1986 to coincide with the town's hosting of the Eisteddfod.

**Hamilton Backpackers Lodge** (☎ 01348-874797; www.hamiltonbackpackers.co.uk; 21 Hamilton St; dm/d £14/36) is a cheerful place with good communal areas, including a kitchen.

**Avon House** (☎ 01348-874476; www.avon-house.co.uk; 76 High St; s £20-33, d £45) offers comfortable, quiet B&B with a mix of rooms with and without en suite.

The walker-friendly **Manor Town House** (☎ 01348-873260; www.manortownhouse.com; Main St;

s £35-40, d £60-75) inhabits a charming two-storey Georgian building with views over the bay. For £5 it will transport your bags anywhere between St David's and Newport. A couple of doors away, in a similar setting, **Basilico** (☎ 01348-871845; 3 Main St; s £45, d £60-70, mains £7-13; ☺ lunch Wed-Fri, dinner Tue-Sun) is predominantly a wonderful Italian restaurant, but has a couple of attractive large rooms upstairs.

There's a **Somerfield** (☎ 01348-872566; High St) supermarket, and you won't find it difficult to find a pub – the **Royal Oak Inn** (☎ 01348-872514; Market Sq; mains £7-11; ☺ lunch & dinner) is a must-visit. Loaded with character, the table where the treaty ending the Fishguard Invasion (see the boxed text, opposite) was signed takes pride of place at the back of the dining room.

For a completely different buzz, **barfive** (☎ 01348-875050; 5 Main St; mains £10-14; ☺ lunch & dinner Tue-Sat) is a hip, upmarket bar and restaurant in a cleverly renovated Georgian townhouse. Despite the city-slicker ambience, you might be surprised to know that the owner catches the lobsters and crabs himself.

Lower Fishguard (Cwm, in Welsh) is a sleepy harbour with pretty stone cottages, a pub and not a lot else. It was the location for the 1971 film of Dylan Thomas' *Under Milk Wood*. There are a couple of B&Bs, including quiet **Ael y Bryn** (☎ 01348-874733; aelybrynfishguard@hotmail.co.uk; Glynymel Rd; s £45, d £50-60).

If you continue on the path for a further 2.5 miles there's camping at the **Fishguard Bay Caravan & Camping Park** (☎ 01348-811415; www.fishguardbay.com; Garn Gelli; sites for 2 £10-12), with a shop, laundry with free hot water, as well as a shower, laundrette and TV lounge.

### Day 14: Fishguard to Newport

5–6 hours, 12.5 miles (20km)

*There are superb views from the cliffs on this section, but only one lunch option.*

Leaving Fishguard, follow the trail round picturesque Lower Fishguard and then out along the cliff tops once again.

About 4 miles on, at the small bay of Pwllgwaelod, **Old Sailors** (☎ 01348-811491; mains £8-12; ☺ lunch & dinner) is a good lunch stop. It's possible to take a short cut to Cwm-yr-Eglwys through the valley that almost divides Dinas Head from the mainland, but

don't be tempted – Dinas Head offers a wonderful walk where you might spot seals and dolphins.

From Cwm-yr-Eglwys it's only 3 miles on to Y Parrog, the old port of Newport, where you'll find the **Morawelon Camping & Caravaning Park** (☎ 01239-820565; carreg@morawelon.fsnet.co.uk; sites for 2 £10), with a café and shop attached. From here, continue to follow the PCP through a small wooded section, turning right at the fingerpost to the YHA and you'll hit the centre of Newport.

#### NEWPORT pop 1120

Newport (Trefdraeth, in Welsh) is very Welsh (good luck with the street signs) and a great rest stop. Its modern conveniences (shops, a bank, several bars and excellent restaurants) are matched with a gloomy, ruined Norman castle and a prehistoric burial site, **Careg Coetan**, well signposted from the road just past the Golden Lion. At first glance it looks like the giant capstone is securely supported by the four standing stones. A closer inspection suggests that some druid magic has held it together all these thousands of years, as it's precariously balanced on only two of them.

**Trefdraeth YHA Hostel** (☎ 01239-820080; reservations@yha.org.uk; Old School Business Centre, Hed Fair Isaf; dm/d/tr £16/35/50) is well set up and central, with a number of bunkrooms of different sizes.

If you're fond of dogs (there's a miniature English bull terrier in residence) and cute 18th-century stone cottages, the **Globe** (☎ 01239-820296; www.theglobepembs.co.uk; Hoel Fair Uchaf; s/d £35/50) has character-filled rooms that share a bathroom.

The **Golden Lion** (☎ 01239-820321; www.goldenlionpembs.co.uk; East St; s £35-40, d £55-60, mains £8-10; ☺ lunch & dinner) is a large, friendly pub with en suite rooms and an overflown cottage across the road with a shared bathroom. Unfortunately, the 2ft-thick walls don't block out the sound of happy punters rolling their way home.

A quieter option is **Cnapan** (☎ 01239-820575; www.cnapan.co.uk; East St; s/d £45/76, 2-course meal £22; ☺ lunch & dinner), which has an upmarket restaurant serving interesting home-cooked meals.

**Doctor's Court/Llys Meddyg** (☎ 01239-820008; www.doctorscourt.com; East St; s £75, d £90-120; ☺)

### IT'S ALL WELSH TO ME

One thing that makes Wales so distinctive is the survival of Welsh as a living language. Welsh, with its long chains of consecutive consonants, is part of the Celtic group of languages, which includes Scots Gaelic, Irish, Manx, Cornish and Breton. The language as it is spoken today, although later influenced by French and English, seems to have been fully developed by the 6th century, making it one of Europe's oldest languages. Despite English colonisation, Welsh is still the first language for many, especially in the north. In 1967 the *Welsh Language Act* ensured that Welsh-speakers could use their own language in court, and in 1994 it became illegal to discriminate against Welsh speakers in employment. Since then Welsh has claimed its rightful place on the airwaves, on street signs and, increasingly, in popular culture.

is a great opportunity for a splurge. This Georgian townhouse has handsome rooms with interesting art, walk-in wardrobes and a digital selection of music and movies. If this doesn't tempt you, you can still indulge at the posh restaurant (mains £14 to £19), or have a great relaxed meal in the idyllic Kitchen Garden (mains £8 to £15).

If you prefer feeding yourself, **Bwydydd Cyflawn Trefdraeth** (☎ 01239-820773; East St) has an excellent selection of organic wholefoods. Another relaxed option for lunch or an early dinner is **Café Fleur** (☎ 01239-820131; Hoel-y-farchnad (Market St); mains £5-11; ☺ lunch & dinner).

### Day 15: Newport to St Dogmaels

6–8 hours, 15.5 miles (25km)

*We've saved the longest, steepest day till last – when those newly formed, rock-like thighs and buns of steel can best handle it. Grab a packed lunch and head for the finish line, enjoying some of the best walking of the whole route.*

East of Newport Sands the coast along the first half of this section is wild and uninhabited, with numerous rock formations and caves. Pwll-y-Wrach, the Witches' Cauldron, is the remains of a collapsed cave. You may see Atlantic grey seals on the rocks nearby. Onwards from Ceibwr Bay is quite tough, but it's a wonderful roller-coaster finale, past sheer cliffs reaching a height of 175m – the highest of the trail.

At Cemaes Head stop and take stock. The end of the trail is nigh but aesthetically this headland is the finish. So, turning your back on the cliffs, follow the lane towards St Dogmaels and Cardigan. The **Poppit Sands YHA Hostel** (☎ 01239-612936; www.yha.org.uk; dm/d £18/40) is 1.5 miles further on, giving you an opportunity to stop and enjoy the sandy dunes rather than rushing back to normal life.

One mile past the hostel you leave the national park, and a plaque on a wall seems like the end of the trail. Don't celebrate just yet. The actual end is a couple of miles further on, unmarked, near a carved wooden mermaid as you enter St Dogmaels village. Now you can pop the champagne! There are a couple of pubs nearby to facilitate this, the closest and most upmarket being the **Ferry Inn** (☎ 01239-615172; Poppit Rd; mains £7-21; ☺ lunch & dinner). The friendliest is the **White Hart Inn** (☎ 01239-612099; Finch St; mains £5-12; ☺ lunch & dinner), if you can bear the walk to the other side of the village, on the way to Cardigan.

### PRESELI HILLS & HISTORY

<b>Duration</b>	6–8 hours
<b>Distance</b>	15 miles (24km)
<b>Difficulty</b>	moderate
<b>Start/Finish</b>	Newport (p303)
<b>Transport</b>	bus

**Summary** A delightful walk through varied scenery – farmland, open moorland and wooded valleys – with great views of the coast and a historical flavour.

The Preseli Hills are the highest points in Pembrokeshire, and in the whole of West Wales, but remain relatively little known thanks to the proximity of the much more famous coastline just a few miles away. This means a lack of crowds and the chance to enjoy your walking undisturbed apart from the sound of sheep and birds – and sometimes the wind.

The views from the summits are exceptional, despite their modest altitudes. The bays and beaches of the Pembrokeshire coast can be seen of course, and on a clear day you can see as far as the Gower Pe-

ninsula to the southeast and even to the mountains of Snowdonia in the north. In extremely fine conditions you may even see the Wicklow Hills in Ireland.

Nearer at hand, the Preseli Hills area boasts an abundance of monuments from the Iron Age, Bronze Age and Neolithic eras. A glance at a map will show that the landscape is dotted with hut circles, burial chambers, hillforts, old trackways and standing stones. The ancient inhabitants of Britain believed the hills had mystical powers, and the famous mehirs of Stonehenge were carried from here to Salisbury Plain.

The route we describe gives you a taste of this magical, mystical area. From the small coastal town of Newport you cross the moorlands around the peak of Carn Ingli, dip into the tranquil Gwaun Valley, then rise again to wilder moors, before looping back to the start via the woods of Sychbant.

### PLANNING

This circuit of the Preseli (sometimes spelled Presely or Preselli) Hills starts and ends at the small town of Newport. Do not confuse this place with the large city of Newport in Gwent, southeast Wales, or any of the several other places in Britain that share the name. The town's Welsh name is Trefdreath (Town on the Beach) and the hills' name in Welsh is Mynydd Preseli.

The route can be walked in either direction, but an ascent of Carn Ingli is best done near the beginning so that you get a preview of the splendours to come. Paths are generally well marked, although indistinct in places and boggy after rain, but this route is not waymarked, so a map is definitely required. There's a reasonable amount of ascent and descent (though nothing very serious), and you should allow about an hour for lunch or looking at ancient monuments – longer if you're a big eater or historian.

### Alternative

If you want to trim the distance, from Llanerch you can go straight down the Gwaun Valley to Sychbant, missing out the southern part of the route, making a total of around 8 miles.

### When to Walk

You can do this route in any season, but although the hills are not particularly high,

they are exposed. A strong wind (with rain) can blow at any time of year and there's an occasional covering of snow in winter, so take appropriate clothing.

### Maps & Books

The OS Landranger 1:50,000 map No 145 *Cardigan/Aberteifi & Mynydd Preseli* fully covers this area. For more detail use the OS Explorer 1:25,000 map No 36 *South Pembrokeshire*.

Guidebooks specifically covering the Preseli Hills include *Walking in the Presely Hills* by Brian John, describing seven circular walks. The same author has also produced *Five Circular Walks around the Upper Gwaun Valley and Bluestone Country – The Carningli Walks*, packed full of useful information on history and ecology, as well as route descriptions.

### Guided Walks

National park rangers run guided walks in the Preseli Hills. You'll find details at the Newport tourist office, or in the free visitor newspaper *Coast to Coast*. For longer walking trips – guided and self-guided – through the Preselis and other parts of the 'Pembrokeshire Heartlands', see www.greenwaysholidays.com.

### Information Sources

Newport's seasonal **tourist office** (☎ 01239-820912; info@newporttco.fsnet.co.uk) can assist with information on the area and accommodation options. If this is closed, contact one of the larger tourist offices listed on p290. See also www.pembrokeshirecoast.org.uk.

### GETTING TO/FROM THE WALK

See p291 for details on National Express coaches and trains from outside the region to the gateways of Haverfordwest, Pembroke, Fishguard and Cardigan. There's a daily local bus almost hourly (twice each way on Sunday) between Fishguard (20 minutes) and Cardigan (30 minutes) via Newport.

### THE WALK Newport to Llanerch

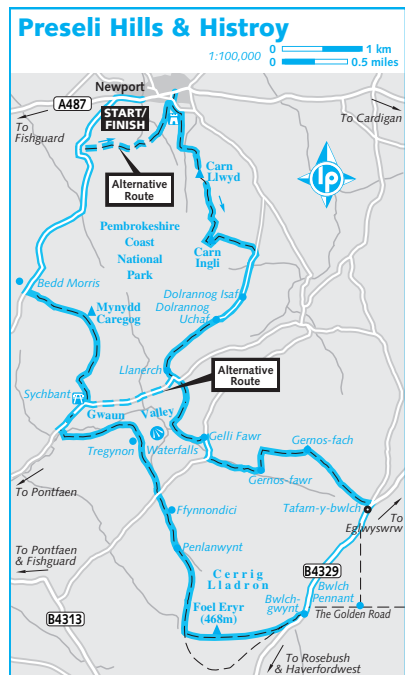
2–2½ hours, 3 miles (5km)

From the centre of Newport, take Market St then Church St uphill, past the castle on your right. At a fork in the lane called College Sq, go right, uphill, following narrow

tracks past a couple of farms and houses, up through an area called Carn Cwm to reach a gate leading onto the open hillside of **Carn Llwyd**. Work your way up on grassy paths through the bracken to the summit. It's steep in places, so while you stop to catch your breath, don't forget to look back and admire the view.

From this summit, keep heading south, and still steeply up, to reach the summit of **Carn Ingli**. The name means 'Peak of Angels' and it's certainly a heavenly view. This is also the site of an Iron Age hillfort, fully exploiting the precipitous hillsides as natural defence. It's a scramble over rocks up to the top, so take time here to rest as you admire the 360-degree vista.

From Carn Ingli summit take the path down the southeast side of the hill to reach a lane. Turn right and follow this lane, past the farms of Dolrannog Isaf and Dolrannog Uchaf, where the lane becomes a dirt track, and down through a tranquil stretch of woodland to reach the farm at Llanerch and the lane that runs down the Gwaun Valley.



If you are taking the short cut (see Alternative on p305), turn right (west) along the valley road towards Sychbant.

### Llanerch to Sychbant

3–4 hours, 7.5 miles (12km)

If you are going for the southern part of this route, follow the road straight on (southeast) for 200m then, where the lane swings round to the left, you go straight on, over a gate and along a path through some more lovely woodland, alongside pools and waterfalls, uphill to eventually meet a lane at Gelli Fawr.

Turn right and go 300m along this lane, then turn left onto a signposted bridleway. Follow this through the old farm of Gernos-fawr then up through fields to go through the yard of Gernos-fach (still a working farm, so close the gates!). From here a track leads across the moor to Tafarn-y-bwlch.

At Tafarn-y-bwlch you meet the B4329. Turn right and follow it for about 1 mile to Bwlch-gwynt. This road is fairly traffic-free, but if you want to avoid it, a bridleway forks off to the left (south) and meets another bridleway at Bwlch Pennant (*bwlch* is Welsh for 'pass'), where you turn right (west) to reach Bwlch-gwynt. This second bridleway is part of the **Golden Road**, an ancient route across the crest of the Preseli Hills.

From Bwlch-gwynt a permissive path leads up onto the hillside of Cerrig Lladron; the summit itself is called **Foel Eryr** (Hill of the Eagle) and certainly offers bird's-eye views. Then you descend again to meet a bridleway leading over rough moorland, eventually down past the farms of Penlanwynt and Ffynnonidici to meet a lane. Cross the lane and go down the drive of a house called Tregynon, where you must follow the markers that take the footpath through the garden. As you cross a stile and enter the woods again, look out for the bumps in the landscape – this is the site of an Iron Age fort.

A narrow path leads down into the densely wooded Gwaun Valley. The boggy valley floor is crossed by a footbridge, and you again meet the lane running down the Gwaun Valley. Turn right (east) along this for about 300m to reach Sychbant, a patch of woodland with some short walking trails, a picnic site and public toilet.

If you need refreshment, you can turn left (west) to reach Pontfaen, 1 mile west of

the route, where the **Duffryn Arms** is a single room in the landlady's rather tumbledown house, unchanged for about 50 years. Beer is served in jugs through a hatch, and food is limited to chocolate, crisps and pickled eggs. At one time, many rural pubs were like this, but very few remain in Britain today.

### Sychbant to Newport

2–2½ hours, 4.25 miles (7km)

From Sychbant follow the main trail uphill, first on the west side of the stream that runs down the steep little valley of Cwm Bach, then crossing a small bridge to the east side to reach a gate, which you go through to reach open moor. Go right and continue for about 100m, passing a plaque on a tree stump that reads 'Penlan Restoration'. Depending on the age of your map, this area may be shown as a conifer plantation, but when we were researching here in 2006 the trees had all been felled, and some of the walls all but removed too.

The path follows marker posts through the former plantation, leading north towards the top of a hill called Mynydd Caregog, then swings left (west) to meet a lane at a standing stone called **Bedd Morris**. Local myth tells of a highwayman called Morris who was buried here, but it is in fact a Bronze Age marker stone, still used as parish boundary today.

Turn right (northwards) onto the lane. You can follow it all the way to meet the A487 on the western edge of Newport, enjoying the views straight ahead over the coast and out to sea.

Alternatively, about 1 mile from Bedd Morris the lane swings left then does a sharp right at a place called Y Garn. About 100m beyond here, a bridleway crosses the lane. Turn right (east) and follow this for about 800m, past Hill House, traversing the hills above Newport. This eventually meets the top of Mill Lane, which leads straight down into the town centre.

## MORE WALKS

### THE DAUGLEDDAU ESTUARY

For walkers, the best parts of Pembrokeshire are the coast and the Preseli Hills – both covered in this chapter. But another part of the national park that is often overlooked

is the Daugleddau Estuary – a tranquil wetland area where four large rivers meet. So few people come here that it's been dubbed the 'Secret Waterway' by the local tourist organisation. There are several short walking routes, called Secret Waterway Trails, along the eastern side of the river and into the surrounding farmland.

Good points to aim for include the villages of Landshipping and Lawrenny, which can both be reached by public transport from Haverfordwest, Pembrokeshire or Tenby. Also well worth a visit is Carew Castle. There are some historic shipbuilding sites, and several of the villages have pleasant pubs and tearooms, which make good lunch stops. The bird-watching is also excellent.

To tie in a lot of these options, you could take the bus between Pembrokeshire and Tenby, get off at Carew, visit the castle, then walk north on one of the Secret Waterway Trails through Cresswell Quay, Lawrenny and Landshipping, to finish at Canaston Bridge, on the bus route between Haverfordwest, Narberth and Tenby. This is over 20 miles (32km), so it would be a long day, but you could always shorten it by getting the bus to/from Lawrenny or Landshipping, or splitting it in two by staying overnight in the area; Lawrenny and Cresswell Quay both have a selection of farmhouse-style B&Bs.

You can get a range of free leaflets covering walking routes, places to stay and things to see, from any tourist office in South Pembrokeshire. Or go to [www.greenways.holidays.com](http://www.greenways.holidays.com) and follow the 'Pembrokeshire Heartlands' link to 'secret waterways'.

### HIDDEN HERITAGE & LANDSKER TRAILS

A series of short and long circular walking routes have been developed to take visitors away from the more popular and crowded areas. Many of these can easily be reached from the Pembrokeshire Coast Path, and make interesting diversions away from the main route. For the short routes, you can pick up leaflets with maps and route descriptions from local tourist offices. For more information on longer routes and organised walking holidays that include accommodation, packed lunches, maps, route guides, baggage transfer and transport to/from train stations, see [www.greenwaysholidays.com](http://www.greenwaysholidays.com).

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