



Llantwit Major

South Wales Coast

“The Glamorgan Coastline has a lot to offer, so it’s no wonder this part of it is a Heritage Coastline. The imposing Limestone cliffs and exposed seabed offer rich geological interest and the views from here are second to none, looking straight over to the north Devon coastline. The route offers you lighthouses, historic parks and gardens, and pretty coastal Villages to explore.”

Wales Coast Path Officer

From Barry to Porthcawl

Industry and nature walk hand in hand along this exhilarating stretch of the Wales Coast Path.

Enjoy this 3-day adventure by basing yourself at Bridgend, alternatively stay en route near the settlement at the end of each day.

Getting there

There are direct trains to Bridgend from London Paddington, Manchester Piccadilly, Newport South Wales, Swansea, Cardiff, Crewe and Bristol Parkway. There are also direct coaches to Bridgend. Check the National Express website for more details.

Suggested base

Bridgend is a busy market town set in Bridgend County Borough between hills and sea. Good transport connections make it a perfect place from which to explore the smaller coves and inlets on the Glamorgan coastline.

Accommodation

There are plenty of places to stay in Bridgend:

southernwales.com/where-to-stay/find-a-place-to-stay.aspx

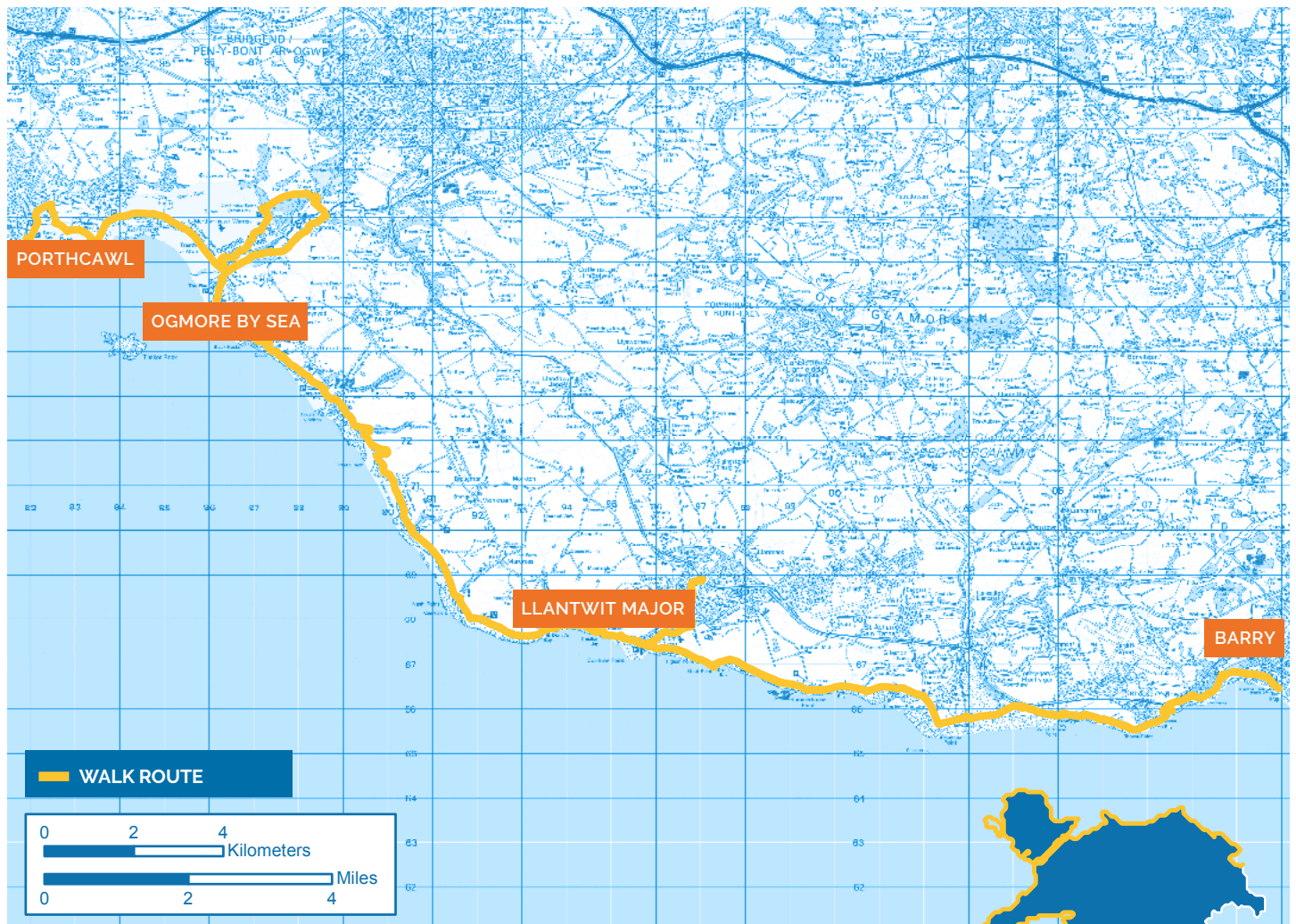
Eating Out

There are lots of great places to eat:

tripadvisor.co.uk/Restaurants-g186458-Bridgend_Bridgend_County_South_Wales_Wales.html



South Wales Coast



Terrain

As the Wales Coast Path closely follows the coastline inevitably you will encounter erosion, steep cliffs and rocky paths. Please take care and we advise that you choose footwear and clothing appropriate to these conditions and to suit the predicted weather.

Difficulty

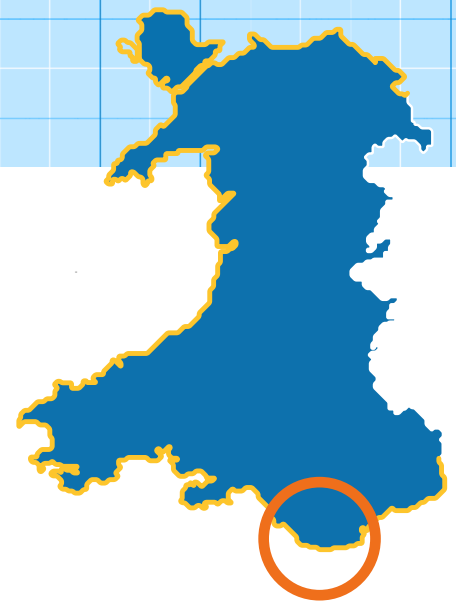
A moderately strenuous walk with some steep ascents and descents. A reasonable level of fitness required as 29 miles are covered in 3 days.

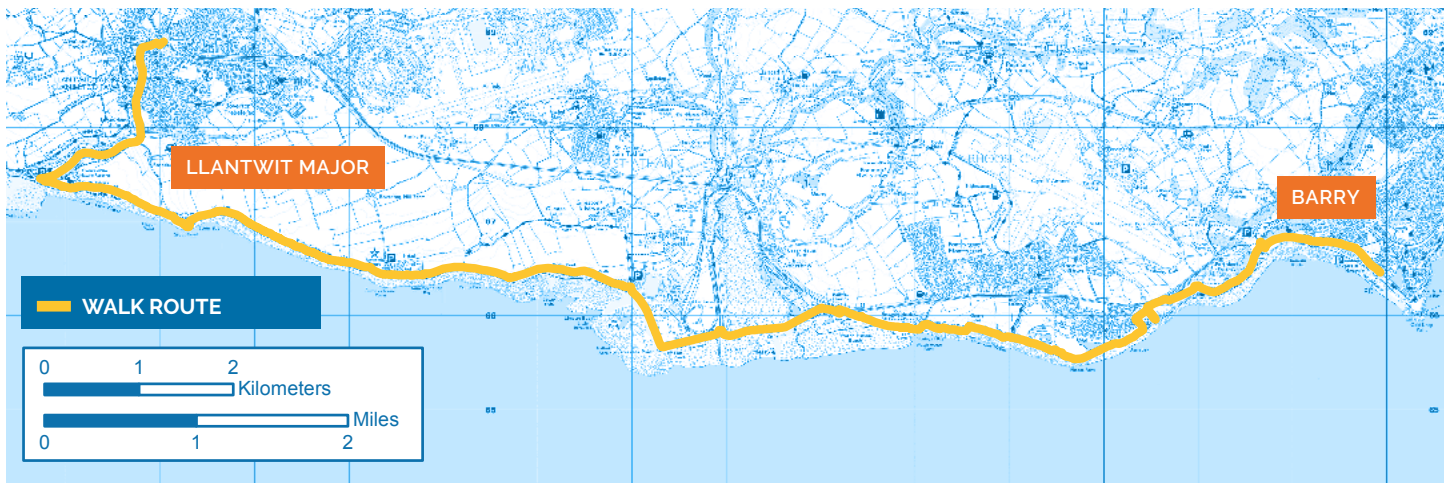
Public Transport

Details of transport are with each walk, but please check for times on Travel Line Cymru traveline.cymru or National Rail nationalrail.co.uk or Transport for Wales tfwrail.wales

Baggage Handlers

For those wanting to stay en route, take the strain out of the journey by using luggage handlers to transfer your luggage to your next stop. walescoastpath.gov.uk/plan-your-visit/planning-carrying-help/?lang=en





Barry to Llantwit Major 11 miles

Start the walk at the promenade in a well-known, pretty area of Barry, just below the Knap, with a pebbly beach and a large lake.

Start

At end of the promenade you leave urban Barry and venture up a steep grassy bank to the wide cliff top. Follow the tree-edged cliff as it continues to rise. At the end of the cliff the path descends quite steeply down the 'Golden Staircase'. Disappointingly, the staircase is not gold, or even slightly glamorous. Its name comes from the suggestion that Lord Romily, who funded the stairs, placed a gold sovereign under the foundations when they were being built.

The staircase leads into Porthkerry Country Park with its café and toilets, which is overlooked by a very impressive railway viaduct. Here keep left, continue along the top of the beach, where you bear right up a winding track through woodland. You will eventually drop down into a field at the edge of what was once an iron age settlement known as Bulwarks Camp, occupied in around 2000 B.C. As with many ancient settlements only the bare outline in the rise of the field remains, but it's a good reminder of the history that accompanies you along your walk today.

You'll pass through another more contemporary settlement now, in the form of a caravan park. (Nessa's home in the TV programme Gavin and Stacey!) Follow the path along the cliff top passing some man-made pools, which are part of an old quarry system. Today

it's a sanctuary for wildlife so keep your eyes peeled. You'll soon arrive at Rhoose Point which is the most southerly point of the mainland Wales. You'll know you've arrived as it's marked by stone circles and a 4-metre-high obelisk.

The path continues through a disused quarry area that has since been reclaimed as parkland. It gently rolls before arriving close to the village of Fontygary where you could treat yourself to a pub lunch. Be sure you take a final look back along the impressive limestone cliffs to Rhoose Point.

Fontygary Holiday Park is ahead and beyond that you'll notice a large chimney on the horizon which is part of Aberthaw Power Station. At the end of the holiday park the path passes close to a working trainline where many goods trains clatter by. Dropping down from the high ground, the walk temporarily leaves industry and passes through a peaceful area of lagoon, marsh and shingle that make up the Aberthaw Nature Reserve where you'll find a whole abundance of wild flowers and wildlife hiding in the unassuming landscape.

Leaving the reserve, you'll notice the chimney you saw earlier getting closer and bigger! You pass through a covered bridge over a small estuary and find yourself walking in the shadow of Aberthaw power station. Wales is renowned for its black hills, but the hill you will see here is a huge mound of coal!

However, this section does not last long and before you know it you are back to following the beach, to Summerhouse Bay.

A quick scramble over rocks is next, as you dip down to the beach before climbing back up to the cliffs. The rest of cliff top walk offers spectacular views over the sea and down to the rocky shoreline below. If the tide is out watch for the amazing concentric rock formations in the shore.

Eventually you reach the beach at Cwm Colhuw. There is no transport from the beach, so you'll need to walk up the lane to reach the village of Llantwit Major for about a mile to reach the railway station and bus stops.

Transport to the start

Catch the number 303 bus from Bridgend Bus Station to Park Avenue in Barry. The buses run every hour and the journey takes approximately 1 hour and 25 minutes. The train from Bridgend to Barry leaves approximately every hour and takes approximately 35 minutes. Please check times before you set off.

Return to base

Catch the train from Llantwit Major train station to Bridgend. The trains run every hour and the journey takes approximately 20 minutes. Alternatively, the 303 bus from Llantwit bus station to Bridgend runs every hour and takes approximately 45 minutes. Please check times before you set off.



Llantwit Major to Ogmore by Sea 9.5 miles

From historic Llantwit Major to the golden sands of Ogmore by Sea this cliff-top walk offers a multitude of geological wonders.

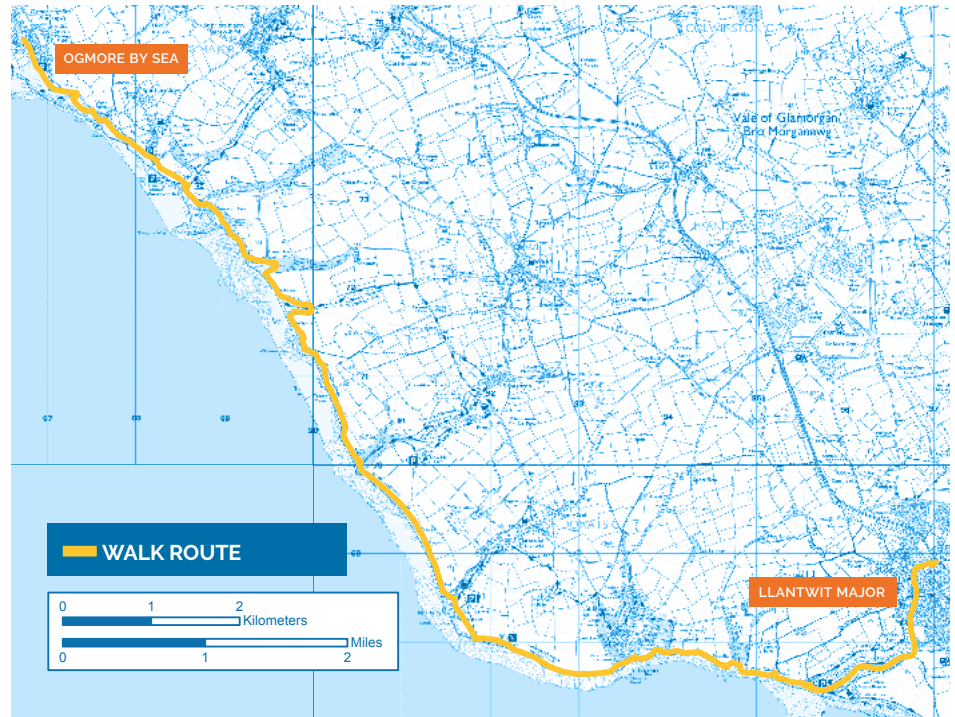
Start

Leave the train at Llantwit Major to begin this walk. For a small town Llantwit Major has many historic buildings, which include a medieval town hall, the ruins of a manor house, the foundations of a Roman villa, a medieval gatehouse, Tudor architecture and to top it all a castle! So, if you're a history lover be sure to take a tour before setting off.

From the town, head towards the sea where there is a beach side café. Here you join the Wales Coast Path, as it climbs and continues along the cliffs west towards Ogmore by Sea.

Soon you'll pass by a stone-built WW2 pill-box where the cliff top path drops down to the pebble beach at Tresilian Bay, recognisable by the single white house overlooking it. Apparently there used to be an Inn at the bay frequented by pirates, but there's no inn now and no Jolly Rogers on show today, so cross the beach and climb back up the elegant stone staircase to the wooded cliff tops and onwards to St Donat's Bay. Here the path crosses the quay and you pass by St Donat's Castle and College. Make sure you are aware of any particularly high tides here.

On the other side of the quay the path goes up the cliff again and through more woodland emerging onto an open cliff top with Nash Point lighthouse in full view. This was the last manned lighthouse in Wales. If you look closely, you'll see there are two lighthouses and a giant set of foghorns. Luckily there is no danger of them sounding as you pass as they were decommissioned some years ago (although they are sounded for weddings that take place in the lighthouse!).



Beyond the lighthouse the grassy cliff tops give way with a graceful dip and rise to where Marcross Brook finds its way to the sea. If you have come prepared this is a perfect place for a picnic. The cliff top walking here is easy and there are regular views out to sea. Look out for incredible rock formations in the beaches and the limestone cliffs, where many stacks look as though they are in danger of toppling over!

The path continues to climb and then descend through wooded valleys and small inlets until shortly after the steps at Cwm Mawr you reach Dunraven Park. This is the site of an ancient fortress and pillow mounds. There are paths that explore the site but return to the Coast Path, that will bring you past a castellated Ice Tower. The best view of the site is looking back from the other side of Dunraven Bay. Look out at this point for the Heritage Coast Centre where you can pop in to read about the history of the coastline and its geology.

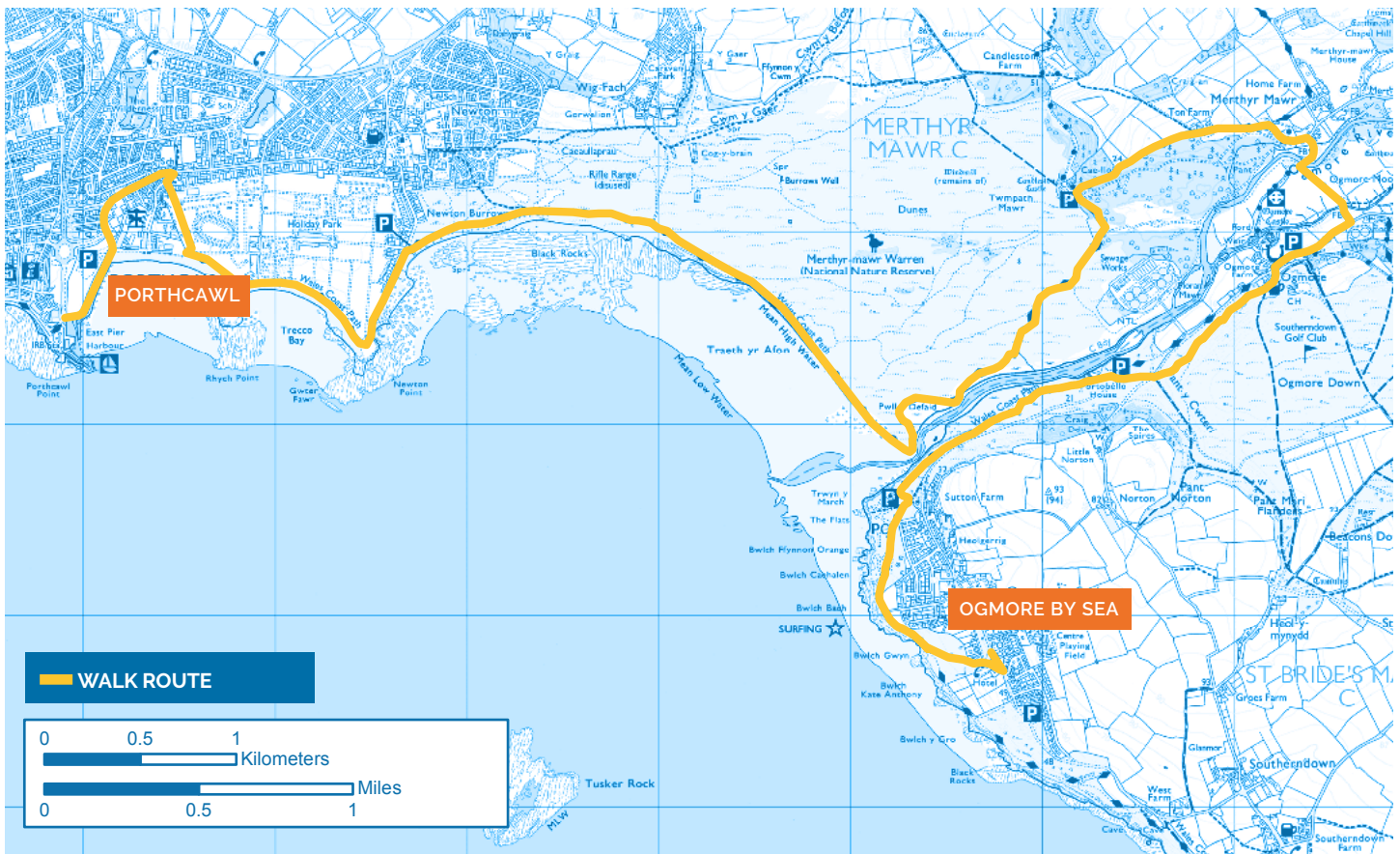
You're close to Ogmore by Sea now where the cliffs roll down towards the sea but with a huge deceptive drop at the end, so if you have dogs or children with you do take care. Eventually the cliffs turn to low sand dune backed shores and you make your way to the mouth of the River Ogmore and into the village to catch your transport back home.

Transport to the start

Catch the train from Bridgend train station to Llantwit Major. The trains run every hour and the journey takes approximately 20 minutes. Alternatively, the 303 bus from Bridgend Bus Station to Llantwit Major runs every hour and takes approximately 45 minutes. Please check times before you set off.

Return to base

The number 303 bus from Main Road, Ogmore by Sea to Bridgend Bus Station runs every hour and takes approximately 20 minutes. Please check times before you set off.



Ogmore by Sea to Porthcawl 8.5 miles

Encounter the Big Dipper of the natural world in the Merthyr Mawr Warren National Nature Reserve and pass castles and a host of other historic ruins as you make your way from Ogmore by Sea to Porthcawl.

Start

From the bus stop continue walking in the direction the bus was travelling and cross the road to walk down a small side street on your right, near the Post Office, Slon Lane. Near the end of the lane you will see a route that leads down to the Wales Coast Path on the sea front.

Once at the Coast Path, turn right to walk along the coastline in front of Ogmore by Sea. The path will skirt the car park before turning inland along the mouth of the River Ogmore and heading up the flat river valley. The way ahead is gorse lined and you can see the meandering river spreading across the valley bottom until you reach a small road side parking spot.

Here you cross the B5424 where the path will take you through lush countryside leading you up and away from the road. The path brings you out at the 'Pelican in her Piety', an historic pub opposite the ruins of Ogmore Castle.

The path continues by the road for ¼ mile or so to a bus stop after a cattle grid. You turn left off the road here and cross over a small footbridge spanning the Ewenny River, a tributary of the River Ogmore

After crossing a field there is a small path leading down to Ogmore Castle which is worth a visit and for the adventurous there are some stepping stones across the river at low tide! Returning to the Wales Coast Path a suspension bridge, known locally as the bouncing bridge, takes you across Ogmore River and from here the path follows a minor road briefly to the hamlet of Merthyr Mawr. Bear left at a green and follow the road past the delightful Victorian St Teilo's church on your right.

Continue down this lane for about half a mile, passing woodland and open fields, until it reaches a car park for Merthyr Mawr Warren – a National Nature Reserve, which is home to the highest sand dune in Wales, known as the Big Dipper! It's a haven for wildlife; sand has settled on top of the ancient limestone cliffs creating a special habitat for insects, fungi and plants.

You may also catch a sneaky peak of the ruins of the 14th century Manor House known as Candleston Castle over to your right. It has been in ruins since the 18th Century. Again, if time allows it's worth a small detour to have a look around.



Ogmore by Sea to Porthcawl (continued) 8.5 miles

A number of paths converge at this car park, so be sure to take the Wales Coast Path which crosses the car park to the far-left hand corner from where you entered.

Follow the soft, sandy path through woodland, this becomes an undulating area of sand dunes, criss-crossing with many small paths. The dune system here is unique to Wales, partly due to the huge area it covers – it extends to 840 acres (the size of 340 international rugby pitches!). It may be difficult at times to distinguish the Wales Coast Path, but bear in mind you are aiming to reach the mouth of the river, which is south-westerly from this point. The river is now on your left hand side and from here you will be able to glance across the river and see your starting point just a short distance but some time ago!

At the mouth of the river, facing the sea, follow the path to your right, along the Mean High-Water line, crossing the beach and Black Rocks to the other side of the Bay. This is a beautiful stretch of unspoilt coast so take a moment to look back at the amazing dune system behind you.

The path continues round the bay and turns a corner near Newton Point, edging along a static caravan park above Trecco Bay, where you can see across the Bristol Channel to the Devon coastline. You have now reached Porthcawl. Continue to the next bay which is Sandy Bay – no prizes for guessing why it has that name! Passing the fun fair at Coney Beach, you can then follow the promenade to Porthcawl Harbour, where you can get some well deserved refreshments. This is where the walk ends, and you can make your way up into Porthcawl to catch your bus back to Bridgend.

Transport to the start

The number 303 bus from Bridgend Bus Station to Main Road, Ogmore by Sea runs every hour and takes approximately 20 minutes. Please check times before you set off.

Return to base.

Take the number 172 or X2 bus from John Street, Porthcawl to Bridgend Bus Station. There is at least one bus every half hour and the journey takes approximately 30 minutes.

South Wales Coast Additional Attractions for your stay

Ogmore Castle

There are substantial remains of a Norman stone-built castle on the banks of the River Ogmore, which provides a lovely setting for a picnic and for the very brave there are stepping stones across the river, which are evident at low tide.

cadw.gov.wales/daysout/ogmorecastle

Porthkerry Country Park

Porthkerry Country Park offers everything for a relaxing family day out. There are 220 acres of woodland and meadows to explore leading on to a limestone pebbled beach.

Within the park itself you can find a great little 12-hole pitch and putt course, not to be confused with mini golf! There are also nature trails of varying lengths and difficulties to follow, plus quiet picnic spots and BBQ areas (BBQ incurs charges: call 029 2070 1678 to book one) These are scattered widely so you can almost always find yourself a quiet spot.

There is an app to help you get the most out of the park. With augmented reality (AR) you can meet Henry Ringham, whose company was brought in to repair the viaduct after it started to collapse, and Ann Jenkin, the witch of Cliff Wood Cottage. Find out about the potions she made and the spells she may have cast. At the bottom of Cliff Wood, the app will allow you to see the medieval sawmill, whose ruins are only just visible today.

The app has GPS triggered collectable trails which will allow you to explore the park, collecting virtual plants and animals along the way while you look out for the real ones. You can collect myths and legends from around the park with the story trail and there's a kids' collectable trail around the meadow area too enabling them to collect facts about different animals while they run around.

visitthevale.com/en/Be-Inspired/Parks-and-Gardens/Porthkerry-Country-Park.aspx



Ogmore Castle



Ogmore

Porthcawl Museum

A warm, friendly and informative museum. Over the years, through donations and loans, the museum has amassed in excess of 8,000 items. These include: a documented history of the town and surrounding areas, a wide range of artifacts covering household items, commerce, education, politics, social history and entertainment. Other items include military history and memorabilia from the last century, ceramics, rare local documents, thousands of local photographs, and archaeological items including the Blundell Collection.

porthcawlmuseum.com

St Illtud's Church and Galilee Chapel

One of the most important churches in Wales, containing a collection of ancient crosses. St Illtud established a church and place of learning in 500AD. The imposing 11th century Church now standing on the site has been called the Westminster of Wales.

At the western end stands the Galilee Chapel which houses an exhibition of Celtic crosses and carved stones – reputedly the finest collection outside of the National Museum of Wales.

visitthevale.com/en/Be-Inspired/History-and-Mystery/St-Illtuds-Church-Galilee-Chapel.aspx