Approximate distance: 5 miles

For this walk we’ve included OS map coordinates as an option, should you wish to follow them.

OS Explorer Map: 151

The Weatherman Walking maps are intended as a guide to help you walk the route. We recommend using an OS map of the area in conjunction with this guide. Routes and conditions may have changed since this guide was written. The BBC takes no responsibility for any accident or injury that may occur while following the route. Always wear appropriate clothing and footwear and check weather conditions before heading out.
Walking information

1. **Old Custom House** (ST 18901 72434)

The old Custom House is situated beneath Penarth Head at the bottom of Paget Road. If you’re arriving by car there is a pay & display car park opposite.

Head towards the barrage, passing the waterbus stop and walk towards a public optical effect art installation called 3 Ellipses for 3 Locks, by the Swiss artist Felice Varini. At this stage all you’ll see is yellow paint daubed over various parts of the lock but a little further on, all is revealed.

2. **Optical art** (ST 19047 72621)

Walk along the pavement to the third lock and on the ground you’ll notice a yellow X painted on the ground.

Standing on the mark, look towards the lock and in the right position you’ll find that the yellow paint joins up to reveal a series of perfect concentric circles.

Continue along an exposed section of the barrage – open to the full force of the Bristol Channel on blustery days and after the last lock turn left towards the fish pass. There are also toilets located here.

3. **Fish pass** (ST 19081 72735)

The fish pass here is used by Atlantic salmon and sea trout (sewin). Freshwater flows down from the bay into the pass and out to sea. The fish recognise the water their home rivers and follow it up the pass to spawn.

Follow the path through a coastal landscaped area, past two white sails (ST 19130 73175) in the middle of the barrage which add a nice nautical feel to the area.

Continue on past a children’s playground and skate-park towards the Watersports Activity Centre as you pass through the old docks area.

Up ahead you’ll see a large blue, futuristic looking building which is the home of the Doctor Who Experience. Here you can help the Doctor escape from his foes, fly the TARDIS and come face-to-face with some of the scariest monsters seen on screen.

Doctor Who is actually made in the BBC drama village, Roath Lock Studios nearby (ST 19510 74064). The studios now provide a permanent, purpose-built home for Casualty, Pobol y Cwm, Doctor Who and Wizards vs Aliens.

4. **Porth Teigr Outer Lock Crossing** (ST 19439 74216)

Turn left and cross over the red metal bridge (Porth Teigr Outer Lock Crossing) known locally as the ‘Origami Bridge’ and walk towards the Norwegian Church.
5. Scott Antarctic Memorial and Norwegian Church (ST 19391 74218)

Approaching the Norwegian Church, you’ll see a rather striking statue of Captain Scott and his team.

The statue by local sculptor Jonathan Williams features white and blue mosaic, which represent the Antarctic ice and depicts Scott and his men trapped in the snow as they head towards the South Pole.

The end of the statue reveals the foresails of the expedition’s vessel, the Terra Nova, which sailed from here in June 1910. Scott was beaten to the South Pole by the Norwegian explorer, Roald Amundsen.

The church, established in 1885, was built to provide religious and social care to the thousands of Norwegian sailors employed by the Norwegian merchant fleet.

Having fallen into disrepair, the church was rescued by The Norwegian Church Preservation Trust in 1987 and carefully dismantled and re-erected the church on its present site.

Today there’s a thriving café inside, perfect for when the weather turns sour.

A short stroll along the waterfront, you’ll find the Senedd and Pierhead Building.

One of the aims of Cardiff Bay’s development was to create a vast open-air art gallery with public sculptures. Keep an eye out for some of the artworkS for which the Bay is now famous for.

Along the way you’ll pass a walled area with sea creatures carved into it (ST 19372 74384) with the World Harmony Peace Statue standing at the end.

Follow a wooden boardwalk along and head up the steps towards the Senedd for a closer look. Outside is a remarkable sculpture which is actually a face in the shape of a boats hull - a Merchant Seafarers’ War Memorial.

6. The Senedd (ST 19323 74470)

The Senedd opened in 2006 and houses the Welsh Assembly debating chamber and committee rooms. It is also a public building so feel free to use the toilets and café located inside.

Designed by Lord Richard Rogers it’s said to be one of the most environmentally friendly parliament buildings in the world. Built from mainly Welsh materials including 1,000 tonnes of Welsh slate, steel, glass and timber, the curving red cedar roof is meant to represent the waves in the Bay.

The wind cowl on the top of the roof rotates, drawing warm air up out of the debating chamber below.
7. Pierhead Building (ST 19281 74462)

This Grade 1 listed, terracotta building next door is part of the National Assembly estate.

Originally the headquarters of the Bute Dock Company it was taken over by the Port of Cardiff in the 1940s. It's now a free museum and visitor centre displaying the history of the Docks and Welsh devolution.

It incorporates a Gothic theme, complete with hexagonal chimneys, carved friezes, gargoyles, and an ornamental clock tower known as ‘Baby Big Ben’.

From here, walk around the back of the building and turn left down some steps into Roald Dahl Plass.

8. Roald Dahl Plass (ST 19226 74527)

Named after Cardiff-born writer Roald Dahl, this bowl-shaped plaza is a popular amphitheatre for events throughout the year including open-air concerts and cultural activities.

The basin was formerly West Bute Dock when the Bay was a thriving coal port. ‘Plass’ means ‘plaza’ in Norwegian, acknowledging the writer’s roots and his Norwegian parents.

At the end of the plaza is a 70ft high metallic water sculpture, with a constant stream of water running down the metallic fountain.

Behind this is the striking Millennium Centre, with its distinctive copper roof. The building is a Welsh arts centre dedicated to musical theatre, opera, ballet and dance.

Sci-fi fans will recognise the metallic towers here from the BBC Doctor Who spin off series Torchwood, which had its fictional base located underneath one of them.

Keep heading around the bay passing underneath a footbridge.

On your right-hand side are some Roman numerals carved into the side of the wall which once marked the water-levels when this was a working dock. On the opposite side you’ll find a slate plaque to Roald Dahl (ST 19229 74464).

Turn right and continue along the boardwalk. At the end you’ll find a bizarre shrine dedicated to the dead fictional character Ianto Jones from Torchwood. Fans from around the world visit here and pin their messages of condolence to the wall (ST 19137 74433).

Turn left and up onto red paving stones into Mermaid Quay with its bars and restaurants. Follow the waterfront around to the end and follow a path down past the old docks towards Techniquest.

Pass behind Techniquest and turn left near an old blue crane and walk along the edge of the far dock towards a red-bricked building.

Walk up the steps and around the corner to St David’s Spa Hotel. Just before the hotel, turn left and head down some steps to a wooden boardwalk skirting the base of the hotel (ST 19011 74183).

Follow this around to the other side and walk up the steps to a circular stone sculpture featuring nesting birds (ST 18955 74090). Follow the path along and turn left down into the wetlands reserve.
9. Cardiff Bay Wetlands Reserve (ST 18802 74120)

This unlikely reserve was created in 2002 when the barrage was finished and the previous saline mud flats were transformed into a freshwater lake.

The reserve is now an important site for over-wintering and breeding birds and is popular with birdwatchers.

You’ll find all sorts of wildlife here ranging from the familiar warblers, grebes and butterflies in summer as well as the occasional otter and even the rare water-vole.

The reserve is free and is a wonderful green and wild oasis in this urban landscape. At the far end is a wooden pontoon (ST 18647 73919) providing excellent views over the bay and the wildfowl that live in the back of the reeds.

Stepping back off the pontoon, turn left at the Cader Idris sculpture and along the path towards a roundabout near Cardiff Bay Yacht Club (ST 18609 74066).

Walk straight across the roundabout and up a path towards the busy A4232 road bridge towards Penarth (ST 18550 74153).

Turn left and walk across the River Taff Bridge via a pedestrian path down past the various luxury flats that have sprung up in recent years.

At the bottom of the footpath turn left, following the signs for the International Sports Village. A little further on, before you reach the roundabout, turn left and walk up onto a wooden boardwalk to the right (ST 18061 73310).

Take care along the boardwalk especially as it can become very slippery when wet. It’s a quiet spot section of the walk with sweeping views over the bay and plenty of ducks in the water below for company.

After a short stroll, you’ll notice a large blue building on your right. This is the temporary home of the Cardiff Devils Ice hockey team. There are plans for an exciting new ice arena to be built in the bay in the near future.

Beyond this is the impressive, glass fronted, International Swimming Pool. Walk past the pool following signs for Penarth and Cardiff International White Water.

10. Cardiff International White Water (ST 17967 72883)

This Olympic standard white water rafting centre opened in 2010 and has proved to be a huge success with local people. Here you can try your hand at kayaking, canoeing or whitewater rafting, or simply sit back and watch other people getting wet.

Continue along Watkiss Way (ST 17967 72883), past Cardiff Marina and turn left down a narrow track onto Pont y Werin, which spans Cardiff Bay’s second river - the Ely.
11. Pont y Werin (ST 17699 72796)

The footbridge, which opened in July 2010, was the final link in the chain connecting the bay to Penarth by train, bicycle and foot.

Pont y Werin means ‘The People’s Bridge’ in Welsh and it is a bascule bridge – a moveable bridge providing clearance for large boats.

The transport charity, Sustrans, provided sculptures on the bridge featuring laser cut outlines of local heroes, celebrities or historic figures. Here you’ll find sculptures of Sybil Williams, the founder member of Pedal Power, along with one of Cardiff Devils player Jason Stone.

On the Penarth side, you’ll find outlines of Paralympic gold medallist, Dame Tanni Grey Thompson and Olympic gold medallist Nicole Cooke.

Cross over the bridge (ST 17725 72620) and turn left along Marconi Avenue for around 300m. Pass the privately owned flats at Chandler’s Quay and turn left onto a red brick path which takes you along the waterfront past John Bachelor’s Way, with the barrage in the distance.

At the far end is a housing development known as Plas Taliesin. Follow a path through here to Penarth marina where you’ll catch a glimpse of the old Custom House in the background, signalling the end of the walk.

Turn right and cross over a footbridge spanning the lock gate to the other side of the marina (ST 18828 72511).

Turn left, past the Marina Office and follow a narrow path to the end, around the corner (ST 18877 72500) and back to Custom House and the end of the walk.

Depending on where you left your car, you could always hop on a water taxi back across the bay for an altogether different view of this walk.