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.
Weatherman Walking

Start: Crickhowell Bridge, River Usk
Starting ref: SO 215 182
Distance: 8.74 miles / 14.07km
Grade: Moderate / Strenuous
Walk time: Allow 4.5 hours (4 hours + stops)

This walk has just about everything - a picture-postcard town, mountain views, lots of history and even the odd barge or two! Follow the route taken by Derek when he climbed Table Mountain, hitched a ride of a distinctly different kind and found out if walkers really are welcome in Crickhowell! And, on this walk, you might be surprised to learn that shoes are optional! Derek’s guide was barefoot walker and runner Lynne Allbutt, a landscape gardener and newspaper columnist who has run the breadth of Wales... without wearing shoes. Lynne was keen to explain the benefits of barefoot walking to Derek and even managed to persuade him to try it for himself!

Please note that this is a very challenging walk in places and walkers do need to be fit and properly equipped for mountain conditions.

Directions

The walk starts from the Bridge End Inn at Crickhowell Bridge. Note that the car park opposite the Bridge End is for pub customers only; there is limited on-street parking nearby or walkers can use the main pay and display car park at the top end of town behind the visitor information centre.

Crickhowell Bridge (SO 2136 1812)

This landmark bridge was built in 1706 and is interesting because it has 12 arches on one side and 13 on the other! It’s thought that it originally had 13 on each side but, when it was widened, two arches were replaced with a single arch. The pointed supports are called cutwaters and they help the flow of the river.

Crickhowell Bridge has 13 arches on one side but only 12 on the other!
Weatherman Walking

Crickhowell

From the Bridge End Inn, follow Bridge Street uphill and around to the right (signposted to the town centre). At the T-junction, turn left and walk along High Street, passing the ruins of Crickhowell Castle.

The Pound House is one of many quirky and charming houses on Bridge Street!

Derek and Lynne manage to resist popping into this popular pub!

The amazing views start in the town!

Walk along High Street towards Table Mountain, which rises up above the town. Continue to the square, looking out for the ‘Walkers are Welcome’ signs in some shop windows. Crickhowell is one of just 25 towns in Wales to have this accreditation!

Cross at the zebra crossing and continue left, past the historic Bear Hotel (SO 2178 1843). Walk along Brecon Road (the A40), passing the fuel station on your right.

Crickhowell Castle (SO 2175 1827)

Also known as Alisby’s Castle, this was initially a motte and bailey castle thought to have been built by the Turberville family. It was destroyed in the early 1400s by Owain Glyndwr’s army, which also burned Abergavenny and several other nearby sites. The remains of the stone double tower still stands on Castle Green.

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Sir George Everest

We won’t pass it on our walk today but not far from here is Everest Drive. It was named after one of Crickhowell’s most famous sons, Sir George Everest, who was born in 1798 at the Gwernvale Manor and went on to become the Surveyor-General of India. Mount Everest, previously known as ‘Peak XV’, in the Himalayas, was discovered a few years after Everest retired and named in his honour – although it’s thought he never laid eyes on the mountain!

Continue along Brecon Road and turn right into Llanbedr Road. This is where the climb begins! Walk all the way to the top of the road, where it reaches a T-junction with the lane. Turn left and continue uphill – after a quick breather to admire the views!

Shortly after the bend in the lane, go through the five-bar metal gate on the left. Follow the track up to The Wern Farm (SO 2232 1925), which is uninhabited. Cross the farmyard and go through the metal gate to the right of the farmhouse. Follow the grassy path alongside the hedge, go through the next metal gate and turn left, following the track uphill.
Go over the stile and uphill through the field to a second stile. Another field leads to a third stile at the top of wooden steps; go over this and bear left onto the track. At the top of this field is yet another stile, after which the path goes right, into a small wood.

As you come out of the wood, you’re rewarded with a clear view of Table Mountain. A direct path to the peak is easily seen but this route is steep, so you might want to veer to the right, where an alternative path contours around the hill.

### Table Mountain / Crug Hywel (SO 2253 2052)

Congratulations, you’ve reached the summit! You’re now on the spot of an Iron Age fortress, chosen for its excellent views to the south, east and west. The peak is the original ‘Crug Hywel’ – Hywel’s Hill - that gave the town its name, although the Hywel in question came a long time after the Iron Age. For a long time the name was thought to refer to Hywel Dda, a 10th century king who ruled most of Wales, but it now seems likely to be that of Hywel ap Rhys of Morgannwg.

Have a look at the earth and stone ‘ditch and rampart’ defences that encircle the entire hill, and take time to admire the views. The distinctive peak to the east is Sugar Loaf, another of Derek’s favourite climbs!
You might think you’ve done all the climbing you’re going to do, but unfortunately there’s a bit more to go! Cross the summit and descend into the dip slightly before the land rises again. The path is clearly marked and is part of the route to the summit of Pen Cerrig-calch – but don’t worry, we’re not going that far!

This is the last steep climb, honestly!

Black Mountains / Brecon Beacons National Park

Pen Cerrig-calch, Table Mountain and the Sugar Loaf are in the Black Mountains, the eastern-most of four ranges of hills that form the Brecon Beacons National Park. Confusingly, the western-most range in Carmarthenshire is called the Black Mountain, singular. Even more confusingly, there is a peak in the Black Mountains called Black Mountain!

At the top of the short, steep section in front of you, the path continues and reaches a fork. Go left, so you’re now walking across the mountain, towards the Darren.

The next section is fairly level but can be tough going as the ground is springy underfoot, and a little frustrating as the path is not always clear. The wide grassy path soon peters out to a series of sheep paths criss-crossing the mountainside. Ahead in the distance is the peak or crag known as the Darren, jutting out towards Crickhowell; head roughly towards this but keep a safe distance from the edge!
The Darren (SO 2140 2100)

Tarren, or Darren, is Welsh for ‘escarpment’ and is a popular place name in south Wales. In fact, the boy’s name ‘Darren’ may originate from the Gaelic for ‘burnt land or hill’. Not a lot of people know that!

As you draw level with the crag, bear right and look for a couple of small cairns a short distance apart. After these, the route drops fairly sharply downhill and picks up a wider path heading to the left. Continue to a small pile of stones, where the path forks, and bear right. Soon the path meets the Beacons Way, a 95-mile route traversing the Brecon Beacons National Park. Turn right and continue along the well-defined track towards the ‘cwm’.

Walk alongside the stone wall until it ends and a waymarker points in two directions. Follow the right-hand path then quickly turn left at the next fork (at the point the right-hand path starts to climb steeply uphill). You are now on a narrow and steep path running downhill towards the stone house; the building furthest into the cwm.
Arrive at Cwm Mawr (SO 2035 2127) and join the lane. Walk downhill to the crossroads and continue straight ahead, past Cwmgu cottage. As the views open up across the Glanusk estate, look for the yellow-painted waymarker at the metal gate, pointing right, across the fields. Follow this path, seeing if you can spot the large tower on the valley floor, below. This is where we’re heading!

Walk to the bottom right-hand corner of the field and go through the wooden gate, with the route clearly signposted. Straight ahead is a stile leading through the trees to a field seasonally planted with mangolds; turnip-like vegetables used to feed sheep. Note that following poor weather, a shallow stream can run past the stile and the field can become extremely squelchy!

Walk alongside the line of trees to the stile, next to the culvert at the foot of the field. Go over the stile and cross the A479, carefully as traffic can approach at speed and visibility is poor (SO 1946 2014).

Continue straight ahead, along the narrow path, to reach the A40. Again cross carefully and walk along the grass bank to the blue painted gates of the Glanusk estate, at the pretty lodge. The central gate is locked to traffic but to the left is a pedestrian gate, which our trail goes through.

Walkers can now use the permissive path through the Glanusk estate.
Glanusk Estate (SO 1912 2007)

This beautiful country estate has been in the hands of the same family for almost 200 years, since ironmaster Sir Joseph Bailey bought the site and built a mansion here. Along with his brother, the notorious Crawshay Bailey, he founded a number of ironworks in the south Wales valleys but, after making his fortune, Joseph moved to Glanusk, became an MP and was eventually created a baronet.

Today Glanusk is the estate of Bailey’s descendant Shan Legge-Bourke, the Lord Lieutenant for Powys, and her son Harry, who joined Derek and Lynne for this section of their walk. Mrs Legge-Bourke is a great friend of Prince Charles’ whilst her daughter Tiggy, who now runs a B&B in Crickhowell, was the royal nanny to Princes William and Harry.

Bailey’s mansion was demolished in 1952 after being seriously damaged by fire during the Army’s requisition during World War II. The family now lives in the Dower House.

In 2013 the family kindly opened up the permissive path through the centre of the estate, allowing walkers like Derek to enjoy a scenic stroll and making a circular walk around the Crickhowell area far easier. This idyllic location is renowned for its trees and has more than 200 species!

Walk along the drive towards the Tower Bridge and cross the River Usk. Continue along the drive from the bridge, passing the first turning on the left and then, at the next fork, taking the left-hand path. This leads to the former stable block and goes under the archway in the centre.
Immediately on the other side of the stable block, turn right and follow the path to West Lodge. Leave the estate through the gate – heeding the warning notice on it as you go!

Cross the road carefully and follow the path straight ahead, which climbs steeply uphill to reach the canal at bridge 121 (SO 1931 1913). Step over the stone stile and you’re on the towpath!
The Monmouth and Brecon Canal

Known as the ‘Mon + Brec’, this is a 20th century name for two 18th century canals; the Brecon + Abergavenny Canal and the Monmouthshire Canal.

Today the canal is an attractive waterway for pleasure boats, but it was once an essential route for transporting heavy goods like coal, iron, limestone and wood, loaded onto barges and towed by horses.

Another branch of the Monmouthshire Canal ran from Crumlin to Newport via Fourteen Locks – another place Derek has recently visited!

A survey has shown the Mon + Brec to be the most popular attraction in the Brecon Beacons National Park!

Follow the towpath, with the canal to your right, for about a mile and a half. It’s a welcome gentle stretch after Table Mountain and the Darren! Reach Llangattock Wharf, a popular mooring site where large lime kilns are still visible. Leave the towpath at bridge 115 (SO 206 173) and follow the road left, towards Llangattock village.

Continue along this road and turn left into Hillside Road. Pass the slate sign into Llangattock and shortly turn left into the narrow lane (SO 210 177). Follow the lane to the church and enter the churchyard.

Welcome to Llangattock!
Llangattock Church (SO 211 178)

Named after Saint Catwg, the church dates back to Norman times. The oldest part is the enormous, heptagonal tower, which underwent major work in the 15th century and is no longer aligned with the rest of the building!

Follow the path through the churchyard and turn left onto the tarmac path running through the field to arrive back at Crickhowell Bridge.

The Bridge End Inn marks the start and end of this lovely walk.