Weatherman Walking

Approximate distance: 11 miles
For this walk we’ve included OS map coordinates as an option, should you wish to follow them.
OS Explorer Map: 164

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. Millennium Coastal Park  (SS 55427 98444)

To get there by car, take J47 off the M4 and head west along the A484 towards Llanelli. Drive over the Loughor Bridge and take the second exit on the roundabout following signs for the Bynea Gateway car park.

Follow the coast path west around the corner for 200m and over a large metal foot bridge spanning the A484 and railway track (SS 55269 98352).

From the bridge you’ll be rewarded with your first views of the Burry Inlet and northern stretch of the Loughor Estuary with its pristine salt marsh habitat and large tidal range.

2. Views over the Loughor Estuary  (SS 55219 98207)

The estuary is a Special Area of Protection (SAP) and attracts a large variety of wildlife, particularly birds.

Each winter, waders and wildfowl flock here to feed on the nutrient rich mud flats and the area contains the largest continuous area of salt marsh in Wales (2,200 hectares).

At low tide extensive areas of the estuary are exposed and support a thriving cockle industry.

Away from busy main road the estuary on a calm day is a serene place with glassy reflections and picture postcard views.

Cross over three wooden footbridges (SS 547 979) and walk past the Gateway Holiday Park towards the National Wetlands Centre.
3. National Wetlands Centre (SS 53110 98394)

Set in a 450 acre mosaic of lakes, pool and lagoons, the reserve is home to many hundreds of wild and resident species including the rather bizarre Caribbean flamingo.

The man-made reserve is managed by the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust. It opened its doors to the public in 1991 and was extended as part of the Millennium Coastal Paths Project.

During the winter months roughly 50,000 birds visit the Burry Inlet, stopping off to feed at the reserve’s lagoons and shallow pools.

During the summer you can hear warblers such as sedge, reed and Cetti’s warblers along this stretch of the walk.

After roughly 1km the path turns to the right, taking you behind the old sea wall and onto a lane bordering the wetlands reserve.

Follow the road for 1.5 km, past a derelict building on your left with large rock piles opposite (SS 53285 98253).

It’s then a short stroll down a quiet wooded lane to the entrance to the National Wetlands Centre.

Turn left and cross over the road (SS 53261 98633) following signs for the Park Centre (6.4km) and walk through a wooden gateway onto a wide gravel track.

At just under a kilometre you’ll spot the Trostre steel works beyond the railway line opposite (SS 52579 98793).

Turn left onto a long straight section of track that runs alongside the Machynys golf course.

Walk 350m further on and you’ll find a wooden art installation and observation platform with hidden views over the sea wall towards the estuary.

You’ll lose sight of the estuary as you walk through a sheltered section below the sea wall along the edge of the golf course.

This is a good spot for wildlife so keep an eye out for otters, water voles, kingfisher and butterflies along the edge of the stream.

After one kilometre the track splits into two near a picnic area (SS 51880 97996). Take the left-hand track leading down to the estuary and cross over a
footbridge and tidal flap (SS 51830 97948).

The route now hugs the edge of the green salt marsh and is a perfect place to see wildlife and take in the salty sea air.

The estuary itself is a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and within the Carmarthen Bay Special Area of Conservation.

Look out for small flocks of dunlin, ringed plover, sanderling and redshank along the coast. Shelduck, oystercatcher and curlew can be seen further out on the mudflats.

After 500m you’ll notice old buildings known locally as the ‘butts’ that were constructed for target practice during World War Two.

Walk for around 800m past a golf pond with sweeping views over the estuary, north Gower and Whiteford Lighthouse - an unusual cast-iron lighthouse sat out in the channel.

4. Machynys (Monk’s Island) (SS 51246 97553)

It’s in this general area that Mynach Ynys (Monk’s Island) was once located, separated on either side by the river.

Local legend states that in 513 the holy man Saint Piro built a monastery on an island in the Loughor Estuary, known as Mynach Ynys.

There is no concrete proof of its existence, but it’s known that a grand house existed on Machynys for a considerable time.

Apparently it even had its own tunnel running from below a cellar underneath the estuary and was used by the monks to cross over to north Gower.

There are various little tracks leading down onto the banks of estuary here but take care if the tide is pushing in, as the waters here are extremely treacherous with strong currents as the tide ebbs and flows.

When the steel, copper and tin-plate industries arrived more land was needed, so a sea wall was built and the tidal marsh, drained and filled in, turning the former island into a peninsula.

The land now forms part of a peninsula and the championship golf course at Machynys.

Follow the path around a wide sandy lagoon scattered with sea grass for 900m arriving at a modern housing development, where the village of Bwlch y Gwynt stood for nearly 100 years.
5. **Bwlch y Gwynt** (SS 50877 97763)

The industrialisation of Machynys began around 1841 with the construction of the South Wales Iron and Tin Works.

This entire area was once engulfed by heavy industry with steel works, chemical factories, brick works, tin-plate works and large docks.

The peninsula here had its own community known as Bwlch y Gwynt, which consisted of several rows of terraced cottages where local factory and mill workers lived.

The homes were demolished in the 1970s and the residents re-housed in nearby Morfa and other parts of south Llanelli.

Nowadays the only buildings here are modern housing estates with expensive sea views (Pentre Nicklaus Village) but a blue plaque and information board commemorates the former community of Bwlch y Gwynt.

Continue along the coast past a modern lighthouse sculpture and blue commemorative plaque for Machynys Farm.

Pass a modern housing estate and walk around another small bay to join up with a cycle route. After 1km turn right and follow signs for Cycle Route 4 (SS 50290 98500).

A track takes you back to civilisation and along the busy B4304 road to Llanelli, crossing over a blue footbridge and roundabout signposted Copperhouse.

Follow the path parallel to the road for around 1km arriving at the old North dock.

6. **North Dock** (SS 49860 99452)

Large ships once docked here, importing and exporting goods for the flourishing steel and tin-plate industry which led to the town being known as Tre’r Sosban, the town of saucepans.

A sea wall was built in the estuary here to direct the flow of river towards the dock in order to prevent it from silting up but the dock was eventually abandoned in the 1950s.

Turn left and cross over the road bridge, past the dock opposite which is now used for recreation and water sports with housing along its edges.

Up ahead is the Discovery Centre - a contemporary building designed to resemble the top funnels of a large white ship.
7. **The Discovery Centre** (SS 49702 99418)

This contemporary building has panoramic views over the estuary and Gower and is an ideal stopping-off point with a café, toilets, tourist information and bike hire available.

From the centre the walk continues along the estuary, following a winding cycle track through green, landscaped hillocks with angling lakes and art installations.

A kilometre away from the visitor centre, the land rises to a mound with a commemorative plaque on the top overlooking Sandy Water Park.

8. **Sandy Water Park** (SN 49357 00300)

This section of the park played a crucial part in the rebirth of the Llanelli coastline and was the first of the main regeneration projects - showing how a former industrial area can be reinvigorated.

The 16 acre lake is now a wildlife haven and lies adjacent to the Festival Fields (SN 49143 00530) where the Eisteddfod took place in 2000.

A modern stone circle of Gorsedd stones marks the spot where the Eisteddfod ceremonies took place (SS 49702 99418).

Head along the coast past course fishing lakes and a championship fishing lake which attracts anglers from all over the world (SN 47873 00814).

The reed beds are home to mute swans, mallards, tufted ducks, grebes and moorhens and a stronghold for the rare, yellow brimstone butterfly.

After 2km, pass a cricket pitch field and continue straight on, ignoring a right turn which leads you up past another small lake.

One kilometre further on, follow the path around a right-hand bend and take the path to the left. Walk down to a railway bridge and cross over.

Continue on a winding track past a small fishing lake and opposite is a sculpted mound of earth that appears to curl its way towards you, forming a peninsula.
9. The earth sculpture (SN 46148 00356)
The earth sculpture “Walking With The Sea” is known locally as Teletubbies Mountain and was designed to be visible from land, sea and air and two new beaches have formed on its western and eastern edges.

Continue for 1.6km past three more lakes and a roller blade park (SN 45073 00236) towards Burry Port Harbour.

Along the way you can see the route of the old coastal path which was washed away by a combination of high spring tides and a violent storm in March 2008.

The new path takes you slightly inland away from the sea but not for long as you arrive back at the coast, car park and slipway. Turn right and walk along the sea front to the harbour.

10. Burry Port Harbour (SN 44626 00297)
Burry Port was born out of the industrial revolution and the need to export coal from nearby valleys to the rest of the world.

Over £8 million has been spent on converting the old tidal harbour into a modern marina with water levels being controlled by an automatic tidal gate.

As a result there have been some silting issues but one benefit appears have to been a new beach covering what was once mud flats, making Cefn Padrig a popular destination for day trippers.

In 1927 Amelia Earhart landed in the plane “Friendship” here becoming the first woman to fly across the Atlantic.

Her plane was towed into the harbour where you can still find reminders of this historic flight - including the original wooden buoy it was moored to.

At the marina turn right and walk down past the lifeboat building and turn left.

Make your way around the harbour and walk across two footbridges. On a paved area between them is an inscription commemorating Amelia Earhart’s historic visit.

The old west dock to the right has an unusually rich diversity of wildflowers growing along the old walls including the rare small-flowered catchfly, rock samphire, sea lavender and round-leaved crane’s bill.

There’s usually a mobile food van parked in the car park here should you require some sustenance for the return leg.
(Detour - to get a closer look at the picturesque lighthouse turn left and walk down the other side of the harbour (SN 44448 00035).

Walk straight on in a westerly direction for 500m past a few houses at Chandler’s Yard and turn left, following signs for the coast path towards a sandy track.

Where the path splits, turn right and follow the path down between sand dunes and the Shoreline leisure-home park.

Along the way you may wish to take a slight detour and follow a boardwalk down onto the beach or just keep going as we did.

Follow the path for another kilometre down to a tidal lagoon and take the path leading to the old harbour wall. It’s then a short stroll to the end of the harbour for some amazing views.

11. Pembrey Old Harbour  (SS 43674 99905)

The old harbour perches right on the edge of the estuary with panoramic views across to Gower, Carmarthen Bay and southern tip of Cefn Sidan.

Cefn Sidan is an eight mile long, award winning beach that forms part of Pembrey Country Park and is Wales’ longest beach, renowned for its fine sand and a favourite of sun worshippers, swimmers and walkers.

The harbour was built in 1819, during the coal mining boom but suffered from silting issues and was replaced by Pembrey New Dock (Burry Port Harbour), a few decades later.

Our walk ends here but you can catch a train from Pembrey and Burry Port train station (just off the B4311) back to Brynea train station (1km north of the start point/ car park) or hop on a local bus which stop along the B4297 near the start point.