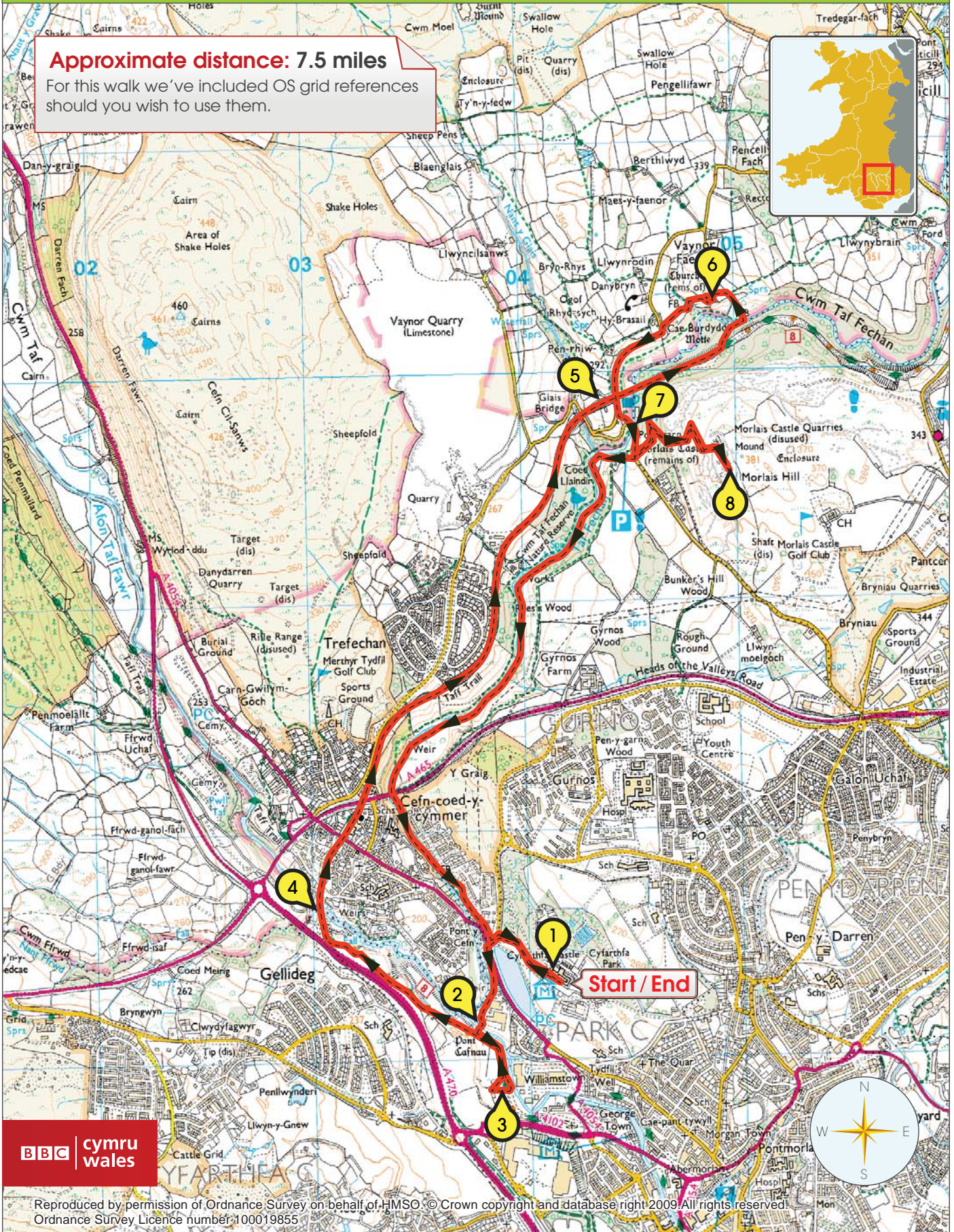
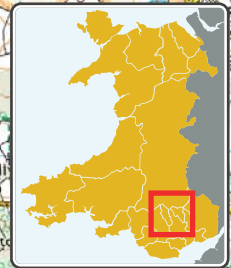


Weatherman Walking

Merthyr Tydfil Walk

Approximate distance: 7.5 miles

For this walk we've included OS grid references should you wish to use them.



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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

Merthyr Tydfil Walk

Start: Cyfarthfa Castle (free car parking at the castle and also by entrance gates)

Starting ref: SO 041 073

Distance: About 7.5 miles

Grade: Easy/Moderate

Walk time : Allow 3.25 hours

This is a fascinating walk through both town and country, packed full of history with a few surprises thrown in for good measure. Walking in the footsteps of iron workers and their wealthy masters, our route starts from Cyfarthfa Castle and heads down over the river Taff to the site of the old Cyfarthfa ironworks before heading up the Taff Trail along a green corridor out of town. Calling in at Vaynor Church, the route then loops back to climb to the summit of Morlais Hill, site of a ruined Norman castle, before returning down along the banks of the delightful cascading Taf Fechan river, and back to the start.

Directions

Starting from the castle, with the lake on your left hand side, head out of the park in a north westerly direction.



1 Cyfarthfa Castle (SO 041 073)

Built in the early 1800s this grand abode was the family home of the Crawshays – iron masters who made their fortunes when Merthyr Tydfil's iron boom was at its height. Today it houses a fascinating museum and it's well worth spending some time there before setting off on your walk. Outside the castle are a number of old cannons from the early 1800's, the time of the Napoleonic Wars. Cyfarthfa ironworks was as a leading producer of weapons for the wars and they were considered so important to the success of the Royal Navy that Admiral Lord Nelson himself visited here during a tour of the country.



Cyfarthfa castle car park - start of the walk.

Turn left out of the Cyfarthfa park gates and down to the main road. Go straight across and then left down a lane which leads through an industrial estate. Bear right along the road past the industrial units then turn right along a narrow track which leads to the old Pont y Cafnau cast iron bridge.

Weatherman Walking

Merthyr Tydfil Walk

2 Pont y Cafnau iron bridge (SO 073 071)

Pont y Cafnau is the world's oldest surviving cast-iron bridge. The name, which means Bridge of Troughs, refers not to the tramway it carried over the river, but to a 600 foot aqueduct it supported overhead. The aqueduct had two troughs that carried water into the ironworks, which in turn drove a 50 foot waterwheel to provide power for the iron-making process. Water power was later replaced by steam.



Pont y Cafnau bridge

Cross over the bridge and walk up a short rise to the tarmac-surfaced Taff Trail. The route now takes a brief detour for a few hundred metres down the Taff Trail beside the river to reach an open area of reclaimed land and an information board on the right of the path which tells the story of the Cyfarthfa ironworks.



The site of the old Cyfarthfa ironworks

3 Site of the old Cyfarthfa ironworks (SO 038 068)

This open area of reclaimed land is all that remains of the once mighty Cyfarthfa ironworks.

Cyfarthfa was the largest of four main ironworks in Merthyr where iron was smelted in blast furnaces 24 hours a day fuelling the boom of the industrial revolution. At the far side of the waste ground is a high brick retaining-wall with six arches - the remains of six blast furnaces where the iron was smelted. This would have been a very hot and dangerous place to be standing two hundred years ago.



Approaching the remains of the old blast furnaces

Retrace your steps up the Taff Trail, passing Pont y Cafnau on the right, up towards the Cefn Coed viaduct. The Taff Trail is a 55 mile walking and cycle path that runs all the way from Cardiff to Brecon. As the trail gains height, the views open up back towards Cyfarthfa, over Merthyr, and up to the Brecon Beacons ahead. Here and there the trail is signposted as Sustrans National Cycle Route 8. Do not follow Route 46 which turns right just before the viaduct.



Views back towards Cyfarthfa Castle from the Taff Trail

