

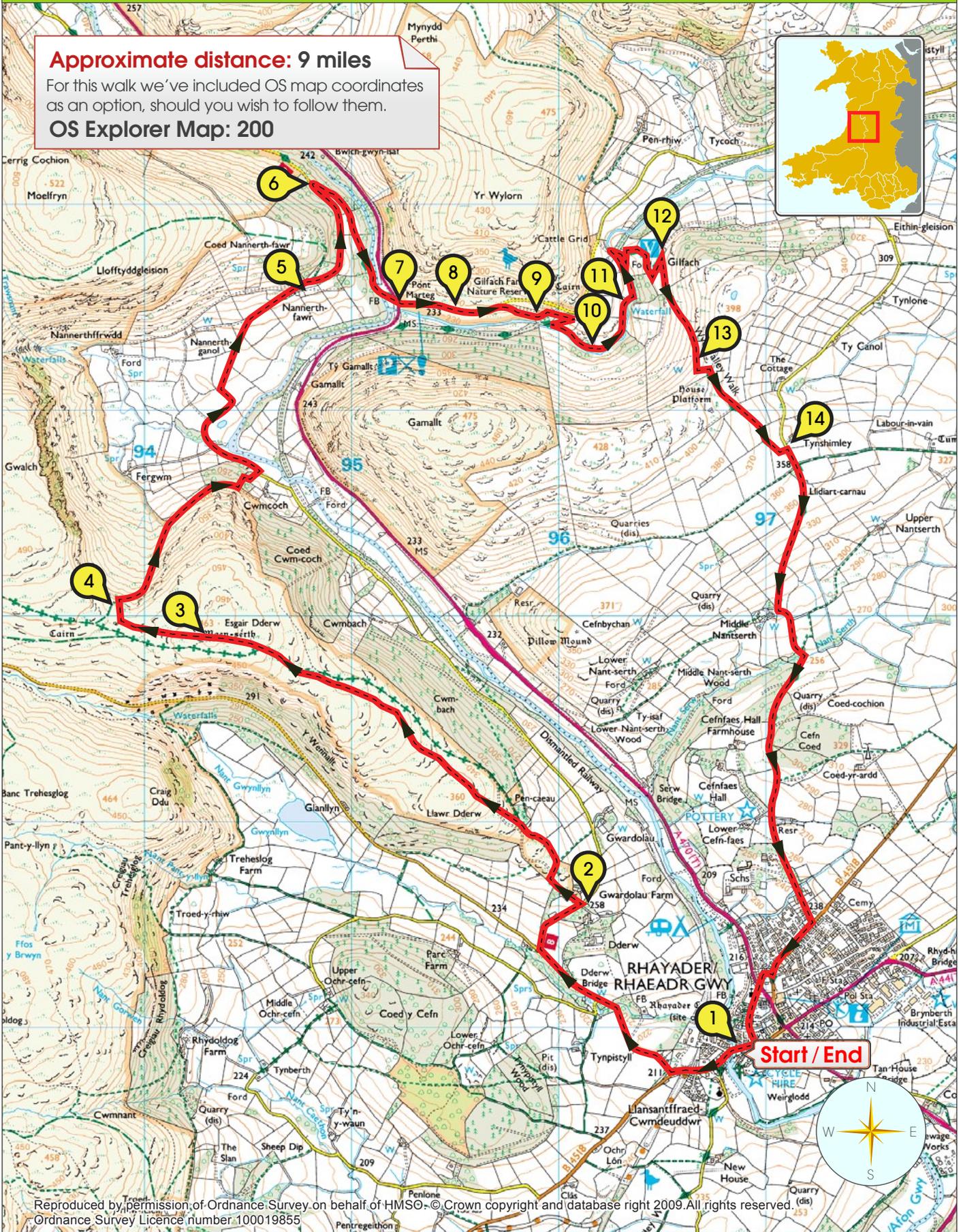
Weatherman Walking

Rhayader Walk

Approximate distance: 9 miles

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

OS Explorer Map: 200



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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.

Walking information

1. Bridge over the River Wye (SN 96878 67897)

Starting on the bridge in the town, walk over the river - 20 miles from its source on the Plynlimon range of the Cambrian Mountains and head west out of town following the B4518.

Around the bend and about 25m along the road to your left is a turning. It's not part of the walk but has nice river views and worth a look if you have time.

Continue along the B4518 out of town, passing ornate wooden carvings marking the gateway to the Elan Valley Walking Trail.

Walk up the hill and follow the sign for the Aberystwyth Mountain Road. Turn right, taking care when crossing the road and continue for 1km, turning right onto another minor road (SN 95905 68380).

After 300 metres you'll arrive at a gate on your left hand side, opposite a farm with a sign for a byway and Llawr Dderw leading to Cwmdeuddwr Common.

2. Cwmdeuddwr Common (SN 96102 68597)

Follow a rough 4x4 track up the hill past a house on your left and up the broad ridge beyond. This area is common land and was once the site of an old golf course.

The walking track is the path on the left, with a 4x4 track over to your right. Head up a rocky track, steep in places with ferns and bracken on either side, until you reach the top of the ridge.

The views from up here are outstanding, with the Cambrian Mountains to the west and the Wye Valley to the south.

Now follow a winding grassy track up a gradual slope.

Along the way you'll spot the wind farm over at Bryn Titli and the A470 winding around the River Wye below the Gamallt hill opposite on your right hand side.

Briefly join the 4x4 track for a short stretch before turning back onto the grassy track and continue straight along a broad ridge. This was an old drover's route used for taking cattle over the hills to the markets in England.

3. Maen Serth standing stone (SN 94304 69884)

On the top of Esgair Dderw is an impressive Bronze Age standing stone. Maen is Welsh for large stone, whilst Serth can have two meanings, either steep or obscure.

Standing at roughly seven feet high this stone would have served as a waymark for thousands of years to generations of travellers.

The stone also marks the spot of an infamous murder in the 12th century when two brothers - Cadwallon and Einon Clud were murdered by Roger Mortimer, a Norman 'Marcher' Lord, after he was beaten by Einon in a jousting tournament.

Walk down the other side of the hill towards a rectangular shaped area of land, fenced off to prevent unauthorised off road vehicles from churning up the ground.

4. Head down the valley (SN 93907 69982)

Veer right and pick up a rough, indistinct track leading down through the valley between the Moelfryn and Gamallt hills.

Gradually the track becomes steeper and prominent as you make your way down through the heather and wild bilberries to a wider, stony track.

As you approach the valley basin the views are jaw dropping and out of the wind you can make out the sounds of babbling brooks and sheep baying in the valley.

Head down through the ferns, passing shrubs and rowan trees clinging to the sides of the slopes and pass through a wooden gate with rocky crags, slate and heather up above.

Walk along a wooded area on your left and turn left down through a lovely oak forest but take care as the track is loose and very steep (SN 94445 70632).

At the bottom, follow the fence line along a muddy track to a gate and turn left onto a quiet back road, with the River Wye opposite (SN 94545 70668) and continue for around one mile.

At the fork in the road turn right, following signs for Nannerth Fawr and walk up the lane.

5. Nannerth Fawr farm (SN 94706 71530)

This traditional 200 acre Welsh hill farm in the Wye Valley has some specular views and is a haven for birds and wildlife.

Walk up the road leaving the farm behind, passing under some oak woods onto a road with nice views down the valley.

6. Wooden bench (SN 94788 72091)

After passing the second of two wooden benches turn right and follow a grassy track down through the trees.

This track runs parallel to the road you've just walked along and the river below. The route brings you out into a wide open field with a large stone on one side.

Walk across the field and through a gap between some smaller stones into the next field and follow the path leading down along the fence line towards a wooden gate. Walk through, entering a light woodland with nice glimpses of the river to your left.

7. Pont Marteg (SN 95122 71573)

You'll soon arrive at a narrow wooden footbridge with views up and down the river. This area is popular with kayakers who launch from just below the bridge. Cross over and walk up a slight incline arriving at a layby alongside the busy A470.

Take care crossing over this busy road and follow a tarmac road towards the Gilfach Nature Reserve where you will find a couple of parking areas.

8. Gilfach Nature Reserve (SN 95235 71509)

Set in the picturesque Marteg Valley just north of Rhayader, Gilfach is a 410 acre hill farm and nature reserve, owned and managed by Radnorshire Wildlife Trust.

The reserve has up to 1,300 species and is renowned for its broad-leaved woodland, birds, lichen and leaping salmon in the autumn.

Walk along the road to a wooden signpost and head down a grassy track following the signs for Nature Trail and Monk's Trod (SN 95721 71503).

Cistercian monks used to ride on horseback along here, using specially devised routes linking up the nearby abbeys of Strata Florida and Cwmhir which were 25 miles apart, the distance most monks could travel in a day by horse.

To the right is a small pond which was recently put in to attract water voles with remarkable success but you're unlikely to spot one unless you're very quiet and extremely lucky!

Continue on past an old winching post, left over from the railway and walk past the old railway tunnel.

9. Railway Tunnel (SN 95890 71433)

The Mid Wales railway opened in 1864 and was a vital route, linking up the south Wales coalfields with mid and north Wales and was a crucial passage for coal during World War One.

The line ran from Three Cocks Junction to Llanidloes but was never financially viable and closed in 1962.

The old railway line now provides excellent habitat for wildlife, particularly glow worms who relish the old chippings and owls and bats that live inside the tunnels.

Pass through the wooden gate and walk up through a small wooded area and out into a sheltered clearing which is a favoured spot for butterflies in summer. Continue along a muddy track with views over the Gammalt's hillside.

Turn left and cross over a small footbridge and through a wooden gate. Head along a grassy track above the river passing rowan trees and follow a sloping track down to the river (SN 95994 71413) where you can often find the curiously named bloody-nosed beetles.

At the bottom, turn left through a gate and walk along the river with some scenic views and the occasional dipper bobbing its tail.

10. Sheep dip (SN 96115 71310)

Walk along a grassy area towards a deep pool, next to a small waterfall with some remarkable rock formations carved out by the river. In the days before industrial chemicals were introduced local farmers would have used this spot to wash their sheep in the River Marteg.

Keep walking along the track passing through a gate and the next field, under a giant oak tree. Then on through another gate towards another clearing until you reach an impressive waterfall on the right of the field.

11. Waterfall (SN 96317 71514)

There's a viewing platform here and in the autumn it's possible to see salmon leaping here and even the occasional otter.

Continue to the next gate and cross the field, passing an information board. Arriving at a railway bridge (SN 96263 71753), turn right and walk past a large wooden otter hide, following a tarmac road up a steep hill towards the visitor centre.

12. Radnorshire Wildlife Trust Visitor Centre (SN 96481 71717)

At the top of a winding road you'll arrive at the old farmyard containing a visitor centre and a stunning 15th century Welsh longhouse, fully restored by the wildlife trust's volunteers.

A farm was first built here in medieval times and it was added to in each century. It still contains many original features and a small exhibition gives a unique insight into how farmers once worked the lands.

To the right of the visitor centre is a track with wooden railings. Follow this and walk up the track above and behind the longhouse towards the hills above (SN 96516 71642).

The large gate at the end marks the edge of the reserve and you will now follow the Wye Valley Walk up the hill in a southerly direction for around 500m (SN 96537 71536).

13. Views over the valley (SN 96672 71260)

On your way up the east side of the Gamallt you'll be rewarded with some of the nicest views of the valley, looking down between the Gamallt and Cefnbychan towards the Wye Valley, where you can often spot birds of prey soaring in the thermals above.

You'll also get a great view of the winding road you walked up earlier, through the nature reserve below.

At the top, walk down to a metal gate and cross over a wooden stile (SN 96671 71211).

The walk back is now fairly straightforward as you follow the fence line for half a kilometre through farm fields back towards Rhayader (SN 96671 71211). The views are still lovely though, as you look out over the hills to the east where the Monk's Trod route winds its way towards Abbey Cwm Hir.

Pass a small copse of pine trees on your right (SN 96805 71051) and continue along the field boundary until you reach a wooden signpost for Gilfach Nature Reserve and Rhayader, 2 miles away.

14. The road back to Rhayader (SN 97101 70804)

Turn right and follow a mostly downhill, winding quiet back road for around two miles back into town.