

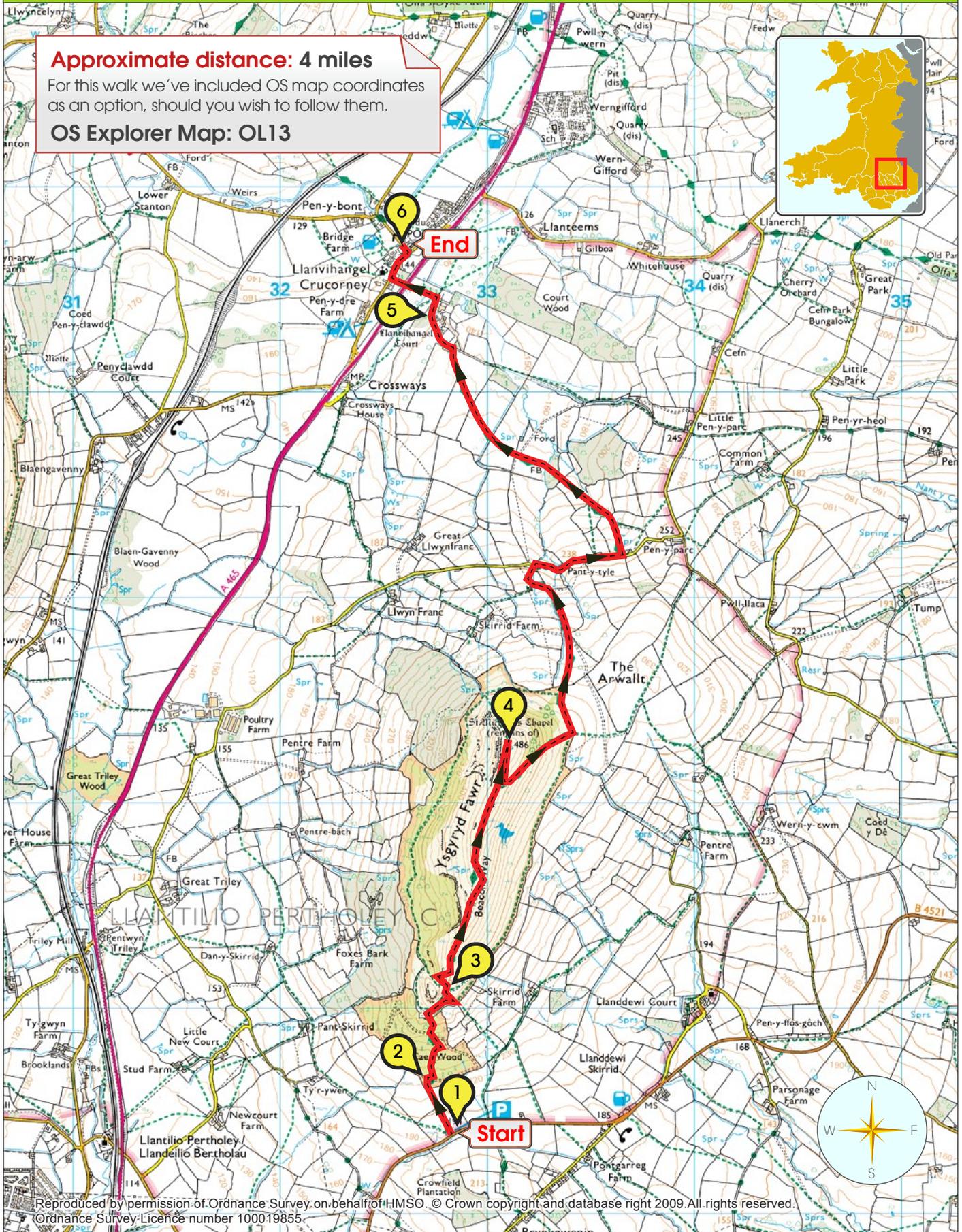
# Weatherman Walking

# Skirrid Fawr Walk

**Approximate distance: 4 miles**

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

**OS Explorer Map: OL13**



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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.

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## Skirrid Fawr Walk

### Walking information

#### 1. Start of the walk (SO 32866 16407)

The walk begins in a lay-by just off the Old Ross Road (B4521).

Head through the first gate down a gravel track, around a bend and follow a narrow sloping hill up to a wooden gate. Cross over the stile and follow the track past an information board and ornately carved oak bench.

#### 2. Oak bench (SO 32716 16602)

The bench was carved by Welsh sculptor Robert Jakes from Welsh oak to mark the start of the Beacons Way and represents the local skyline of Skirrid Fawr, even showing the land slip as a notch in the wood.

From here the track gets rapidly steeper as you negotiate wooden steps up through the semi-ancient deciduous woodland, passing forestry tracks on both sides.

The National Trust took over the management of the forest from the Forestry Commission and has returned much of it back to native woodlands so you'll hear plenty of birds along the way.

The paths are well maintained with wooden steps, drainage gullies and gravel but this might not be a route you'd wish to follow during or immediately after heavy rain.

Return to the main path and head up a steep track and steps past a wooden bench, handy for anyone wanting to catch their breath.

At the crossroads head straight over and up the hill following a steep, winding woodland path up to an old wall and wooden gate.

Turn right and continue up the hill past a mossy wall on your right. At the fork in the trail beneath a large tree, keep left. Right is the trail from the other side of the mountain.

#### 3. View point (SO 328051 7049)

Walk up steep steps and down into a dip on the other side, past a wonderful old moss covered tree to a view point looking down over Monmouthshire and the Severn Estuary.

Follow the path around a bend to a left hand turn and another view point giving you a sneak peek of the Black Mountains. Above you to your right is an area of exposed red sandstone.

Return to the main path and after a short walk you'll arrive at another view point - with even better views over north Monmouthshire. Herefordshire is to your left and the Bristol Channel is down to the right.

Behind you is the Sugarloaf (with the summit of Pen y Fan in the distance beyond).

It's now a short stroll up to the southern end of the Skirrid. Walk along the spine of the mountain towards the highest point.

Skirrid Fawr, also known as Big Skirrid or the Holy Mountain, is derived from the old Welsh word Ysgyryd meaning split, cloven, shattered or separated - referring to the craggy landslide on the western side of the ridge.

At the summit you'll find a trig point and two large boulders marking the old entrance to a chapel.

#### 4. St Michael's chapel (SO 33111 18278)

All that remains of the chapel that once stood here are the stones marking the entrance way and a depression in the earth. Possibly founded in the 10th century, the chapel was dedicated to St Michael and is surrounded by a circular earthwork.

It was in use until around 1680 before being demolished and was a place of pilgrimage for centuries, particularly during times of religious persecution.

Local farmers would gather the red soil from around the holy mountain to spread on their land to ensure a good harvest.

From the summit you can appreciate how the ice age influenced the landscape, with moraines (rocks and debris left over from glacial movements) and other glacial features visible.

The views are staggering, Herefordshire and the Mendips to the north, the Usk valley and Somerset to the south, Gloucester to the east and the Black Mountains and Brecon Beacons to the west.

Re-trace your steps for approximately 200m and turn left (SO 3306918095) onto a grassy track leading down the eastern edge of the mountain down to sheep pastures below.

Keep straight on and follow signs for the Beacons Way trail, passing through a wooden gate on the far side (SO 3335418442).

Walk down through the field to a stile beneath a large ash tree and cross over into the next field edged with hazel and oak trees.

Continue down the left-hand side of the field and hop over a stile into the next field (SO 33388 18823).

Head towards the left-hand corner, hop over another stile (SO 33290 19050) and walk across the field towards the field entrance near some farm buildings (SO 33216 19067).

Head through a gate and down through the next large sheep field with views of the Sugarloaf on your left.

Walk down to a metal gate next to a tree, cross over a stile and turn right onto a quiet country road. Follow a quiet, winding road for 500m, passing a few houses en route.

Near the Gables house turn left following the sign post for "Crucorney 2km", walking towards large farm barns in the distance (SO 33660 19203).

Walk down through a long narrow field and into the next. Keep right along the woods and at the far end under some trees is a wooden footbridge.

Cross over into an over-grown, marshy field and, halfway across, veer left. Head through a metal gate at the edge of the trees (SO 33356 19585).

Enter a quiet woodland and walk across a footbridge and through a small metal gate next to an old stone marker (SO 33278 19650).

Walk 300m across a large open field passing a lone tree and into the next field, which was full of hay

bales during our walk in September (SO 33022 19772).

Aim towards the corrugated iron barns up ahead, keeping the fence line on your right (SO 32866 20072).

Walk past the first barn, through a wooden gate and turn left along a track, muddy at times, (SO 32834 20212) running along the back of the farm towards Llanvihangel Court, a 15th century Tudor manor house.

### 5. Llanvihangel Court (SO 32747 20346)

The track runs past a large timber barn which would have once been used for corn storage, which wouldn't look out of place in St Fagans museum.

Next door to the barn is the privately owned Tudor manor house, which has been described as 'the most richly decorated house of the early 1600s in Wales, and contains 17th century panelling, plaster ceilings and a magnificent oak staircase.

The house was reputedly used as a hideaway by King Charles I during the Civil War. It is open to the public from May to August for guided tours, details of which are available on their website.

Follow the track down the hill, past the manor house.

For a front view of the manor house turn right through a wooden gate, following a rough vehicle track past some fir trees emerging at a metal gate and two public footpaths.

Return to the main driveway again and head west towards the A465. Carefully cross the busy road and follow the lane opposite up into the village of Llanvihangel Crucorney (SO 32537 20554).

At the end of the lane turn right and walk past St Michael's Church on the other side of the road. Follow the pavement down towards the petrol station and just beyond it on the left is the Skirrid Inn.

### 6. The Skirrid Inn (SO 32592 20667)

It's claimed that a pub has been here in some form since the 11th century making it one of the oldest pubs in Wales. Most of what remains today dates from the 15th century.

Outside the pub is a mounting block for horses where Owain Glyndwr is said to have stood and rallied his soldiers before attacking nearby villages and settlements sympathetic to Henry IV.

The first floor of the inn was used as a courtroom where sentences were handed out and executions took place. Up to 185 people were allegedly hanged there from a wooden beam above the staircase, which has notches worn into it from the rope.

The pub is infamous for its paranormal activity and has been featured in a number of TV programmes about ghosts. A quick read of the visitor book is highly recommended.

This is where the walk ends. You could either get a taxi from the pub straight back to your car or catch a bus to Abergavenny and take a taxi from there.