

CICERONE

WALKING

THE WALES COAST PATH

Llwybr Arfordir Cymru



Paddy Dillon

WALES COAST PATH

LLWYBR ARFORDIR CYMRU

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by Paddy Dillon

CICERONE

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Front cover: Looking ahead from Ceibwr Bay towards Dinas Head (Stage 31, Pembrokeshire)

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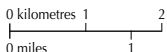
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Route map key

	route		cathedral
	alternative route		priory/church
	start point		lighthouse
	finish point		golf course
	direction of walk		ferry terminal
	building	Contour lines are drawn and labelled at 50m intervals.	
	castle		
	land above 100m		
	foreshore	 SCALE: 1:100,000	

GPX files

GPX files for all routes can be downloaded for free at www.cicerone.co.uk/1066/GPX.



*Looking back along the coast
path towards Cemaes Head
(Stage 31, Pembrokeshire)*

INTRODUCTION

Looking back from Penrhyn Glas towards Nant Gwrtheyrn and Yr Eifl (Stage 16, Llŷn Peninsula)



Walkers were invited to 'discover the shape of a nation' when the Wales Coast Path (WCP) opened on 5 May 2012. Within weeks, people were walking and running along the coast-line, on their own or with companions, purely for fun or raising funds for charity. The creation of a continuous, fully signposted and waymarked coastal trail certainly fired the imagination of walkers, both at home and abroad.

The fact that this is the longest waymarked trail in Britain, at 1400km (870 miles), was no obstacle for those who rose to the challenge of completing it. Taking each day in turn, and dealing with whatever weather came

their way, they committed themselves to walking for weeks on end from start to finish.

Wales juts proudly into the Irish Sea and has very distinct northern and southern coastlines, defined by the estuaries of the Dee and Severn. The western seaboard features the great curve of Cardigan Bay, flanked to the north by the rugged, hilly Llŷn Peninsula, and to the south by the attractive and complex headlands, bays and inlets of Pembrokeshire. The coastline of the Isle of Anglesey is an integral part of the Wales Coast Path. A handful of smaller islands aren't included, but may be visited in passing.

Looking along the cliff coast near Porth Widlin on a remote part of the Llŷn Peninsula (Stage 17)



Even at the outset, when the first wayfarers strode along the coast path, many couldn't resist continuing along the Offa's Dyke Path through the Welsh/English borderlands, to make a complete circuit of Wales. This is to be encouraged, but this book is purely and simply about the Wales Coast Path – how to follow it and what to expect along the way.

The coastline of Wales is incredibly varied. The national parks of Snowdonia and Pembrokeshire rise from the coast; many splendid stretches of coastline have been designated as Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty – including Anglesey and the Llŷn and Gower Peninsulas – and others have been designated as Heritage Coast; and there are several types of nature reserves. Of course, there are also holiday resorts, mobile home parks, and some beaches can get very busy in the summertime. Some areas are urban and industrial, but even so there may be plenty of interest, with quite attractive historical and recent developments.

A long-distance trek along the Wales Coast Path is a journey of interest, variety and constant change. There are plenty of opportunities to enjoy the scenery and wildlife, and every encounter with settlements along the way offers walkers the chance to discover a little more about Welsh history, culture and language. Walkers on the Wales Coast Path will be in the country for some considerable time and should aim to make the most of it!

GEOLOGY

It says something about the importance of Welsh geology that three ancient periods of time are named Cambrian (meaning Welsh), Ordovician and Silurian (after the Welsh tribes of the Ordovices and Silures). The oldest rocks in Wales are Precambrian, which simply means they are older than Cambrian, dating from one billion to 540 million years ago. Precambrian rocks occur in the north around Anglesey, Bangor, Caernarfon and Llŷn, as well as in the south around St Davids. Rock types vary widely from igneous and metamorphic to a variety of sedimentary beds, usually heavily faulted, with few fossils.

Marine fossils are more common in Cambrian, Ordovician and Silurian rocks, dating from around 540 to 415 million years ago. The most important Cambrian feature in Wales is the 'Harlech Dome', where a deep-sea basin was filled with sediments from

advancing deltas, to a depth of more than 4km (2½ miles). Rocks of this age occur, as the name suggests, in rugged mountains above Harlech, in Snowdonia, but also around Llŷn and Anglesey. Ordovician rocks are found in large areas of north-west and south-west Wales, as well as smaller areas of mid-Wales and the borders. Large parts of mid-Wales feature Silurian strata, but it also gains toe-holds on the north and south coasts, around Colwyn Bay and Carmarthen, as well as in significant areas of the borders.

The Devonian period is named after rock types found chiefly in Devon, from 415 to 360 million years ago. However, parts of South Wales are Devonian, notably around the lofty Brecon Beacons, and to a lesser extent around the Gower Peninsula

and Pembrokeshire. This rock is red sandstone, formed in harsh desert conditions, with much of the sand generated from the erosion of mountain ranges in Scotland and Ireland. A period of mountain-building saw vast areas of rock throughout Wales compressed and lifted.

The Carboniferous period, around 360 to 300 million years ago, saw two quite different sets of conditions in Wales. A shallow sea, teeming with life, allowed the formation of thick beds of limestone as countless trillions of tiny, shelled creatures lived, died and accumulated on the seabed. The cliffs of Little Orme, Great Orme and the Gower Peninsula are Carboniferous limestone. Later, vast deltas spread into the sea, covered with dense vegetation that was



Coastal geology, with Liassic rocks seen near Nash Point (Stage 52, South Wales)

BRIEF HISTORY OF WALES

A walk along the WCP is a journey through the entire history of Wales. No more than a brief overview is offered here, based on a few key events. One thing that should be remembered from the outset is that a form of 'Welsh' was once spoken throughout a large part of Britain, from the south of England well into southern Scotland. The fact that the language survives at all is truly remarkable. Welsh is a true native British language, whereas English is a chaotic mixture of 'foreign' tongues!

Prehistory

The remains of a Neanderthal boy found in North Wales date back 230,000 years. The bones of a young man found in South Wales date back 33,000 years. Paleolithic, Mesolithic

and Neolithic remains have been discovered around Wales, with continuous human occupation dating back 12,000 years. Neolithic people switched from being hunter-gatherers to settled farmers, clearing forests, raising crops and animals, building structures and manufacturing tools and materials. By the Bronze Age, trade and commerce in Wales was well established, linking with trade in Europe.

Roman Wales

The Roman conquest of Wales began in AD48 and was completed by AD78. For the most part, the land was simply occupied and a number of mining sites were developed. Parts of the south coast, notably around Caerwent and Carmarthen, were

The view from Penrhyn Mawr on Stage 11 stretches back across tall cliffs to South Stack (Anglesey)

periodically buried beneath sand. These formed the important and extensive 'coal measures' that later fuelled the heavy industries of South Wales.

The Permian, Liassic, Triassic and Jurassic periods ran from about 300 to 145 million years ago. Wales endured desert conditions, but the land was also submerged into the sea, and later rose from it, so conditions were constantly changing. Rocks from these periods are represented on the southernmost coast of Wales. After this time, the sculpting of the landscape was achieved in the past one million years by glaciation, and the present coastline was determined by rising sea levels after the ice caps melted. Ireland became separated from Britain, then Britain became separated from Europe.

Sheer cliffs between the village of Southgate and Pwlldu Head (Stage 49, Gower)



Ynys Lochtyn is an attractive islet seen on the way to Llangrannog (Stage 29, Ceredigion)





STAGE 1

Chester to Flint

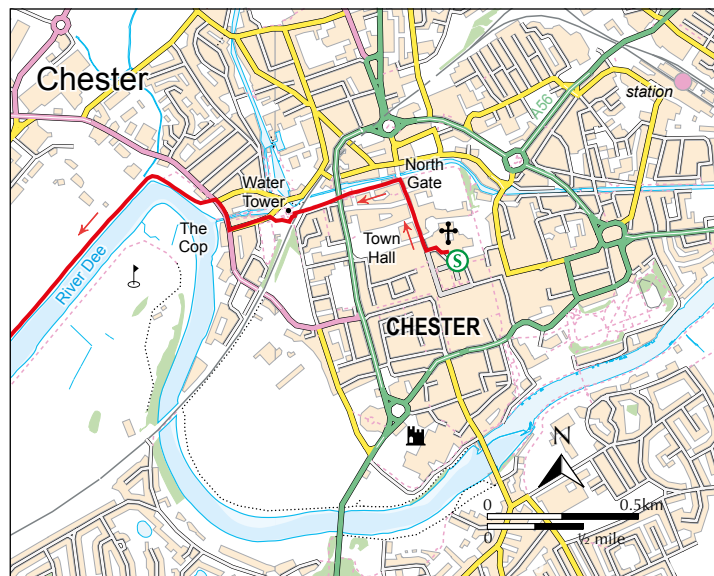
Start	Chester Cathedral
Finish	Flint Castle
Distance	20.5km (12¾ miles)
Ascent	30m (100ft)
Time	6hrs 30mins
Terrain	Easy, low-level tarmac riverside paths, road walks and field paths.
Refreshment	Plenty of choice in Chester. Cafés and restaurants at Garden City. Pub and café at Golfryn. Plenty of choice in Flint.
Transport	Regular rail and bus services link Chester, Connah's Quay and Flint.
Accommodation	Plenty of choice in Chester, from bunkhouse to hotels; campsite off-route near Queensferry; B&Bs off-route at Shotton and Oakenholt; small hotels at Flint.

Chester is busy and crammed with history, heritage and shopping opportunities. Spend time exploring before starting the Wales Coast Path. The walk beside the River Dee and its estuary is flat and easy, but wins few prizes for prettiness, being blighted by industry and tangled with power lines, but there are green spaces and interesting wildlife sites.

CHESTER

The Roman city of 'Deva' was founded in AD79, in honour of the goddess of the River Dee. Throughout successive centuries it was a military centre that saw constant border strife. The city has a castle, cathedral and historic timber-framed buildings, all neatly encompassed within a stout city wall.

Chester is an important transport hub and offers a full range of services. Visitor Information Centre: tel 01244 405340, www.visitcheshire.com/chester



Chester isn't on the WCP, but it has to be negotiated, so start at the prominent **cathedral** in the city centre. Head for the ornate tower of Chester **Town Hall** and turn right along Northgate Street. When **North Gate** is reached, turn left up steps and walk along the city wall. Pass in quick succession Morgan's Mount, a bridge over a busy road, and Pemberton's Parlour, to reach the **Water Tower**.

Go down steps and through an arch under the city wall, into the Water Tower Gardens. Pass a stone tower, climb a few steps and turn left to follow Tower Road to a junction. Turn right, cross a canal and follow a busy road. Turn left at **The Cop** into a little play park. A tarmac path overlooks the tidal **River Dee**, turning left at the first signpost for the WCP.



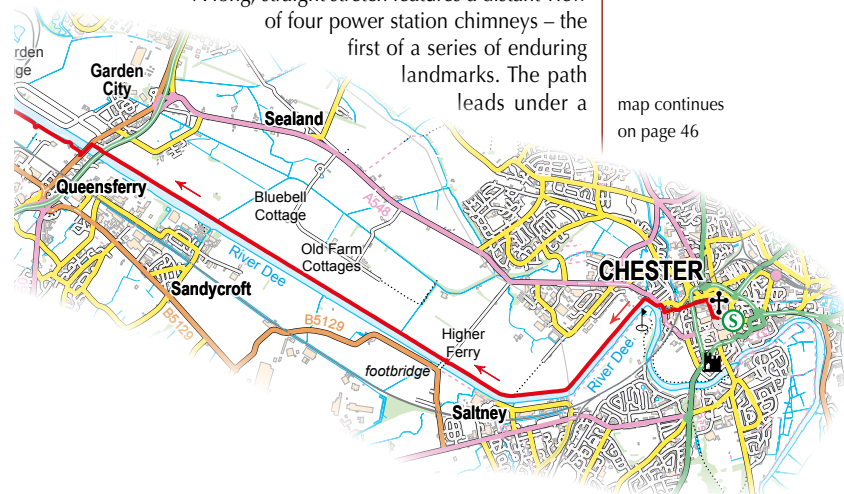
The Jubilee Bridge, or Blue Bridge, spans the River Dee near Queensferry

The broad path is a cycleway, so keep to the edge and beware of speedy cyclists. The path is dead straight at first, later turning right after a 'Welcome to Wales/ Croeso I Gymru' notice. Pass through a stone 'gateway' commemorating the WCP, and spot several stone and metal dragonshell logos. ▶ The path bends right again, passing houses and a footbridge at **Higher Ferry**.

A long, straight stretch features a distant view of four power station chimneys – the first of a series of enduring landmarks. The path leads under a

Get used to these, as thousands of them mark the route – and watch underfoot, as tiny dragonshells are embedded in the path.

map continues on page 46



The TATA steelworks across the river were founded as the Hawarden Bridge Steelworks in 1896.

busy road bridge and then quickly reaches a blue girder bridge, the Jubilee or Blue Bridge, beside the former Queensferry Hotel at **Garden City**. Cross a pedestrian crossing, then cross the bridge; turn sharp right up a minor road and then left before Bridge Villas.

Follow a track flanked by trees and go through a couple of gates, then a fenced path leads closer to the river. Follow a grassy embankment parallel to the river, passing a concrete pillbox to reach **Hawarden Bridge**, which carries a railway. ◀

Go under the bridge and follow a tarmac path, rising gently to a gate, but fork right through another gate. Walk along a grassy embankment, passing an impressive tangle of power lines, then the path bends left to a road. Turn right to cross a bridge over a muddy channel, then right again along a broad tarmac path.

Pass a notice for the **Wepre Riverside SSSI**, where there are industrial views. Continue on a brick-paved riverside path and then follow the road inland a little. Turn right at a junction to pass two cafés and reach a pub – The Old Quay House. Go behind it as signposted and follow a broad tarmac path past a play park, later turning left to cross a railway. Walk straight ahead along Rock Road and turn right down the busy B5129 road through **Golfryn**.

This is part of **Connah's Quay**, and the road passes the odd shop, a café and a pub called The Halfway House.

Walk straight ahead, gently up Kelsterton Road, towards Coleg Cambria.

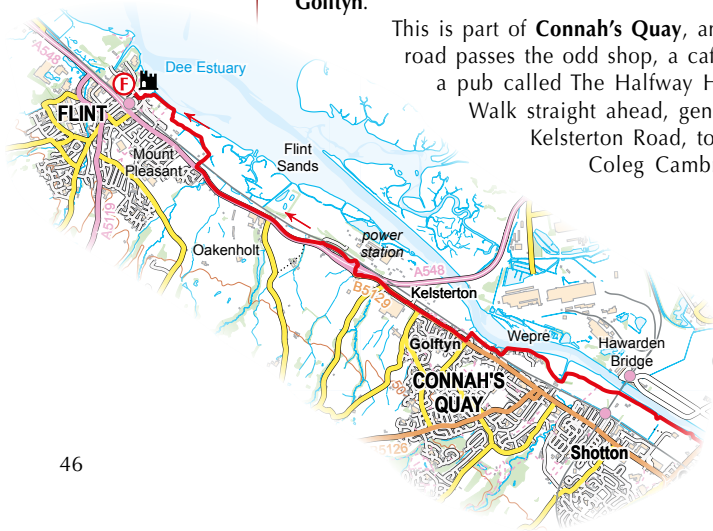
Cross a pedestrian crossing and pass the college entrance, following the road towards four prominent power station chimneys. Cross the busy road again at a turning for a cemetery, then pass beneath an even busier road – the A548.

On the other side, take the **power station** access road, and after passing Rockcliffe Cottage, cross the road as marked and follow a tarmac path parallel to the main road. Later, pass the Essity paper mill and keep right at a roundabout, passing a pub called The Yacht on the outskirts of **Flint**. ▶

Pass a bus shelter at Caesar Avenue, then a signpost points right along a narrow road for the **Dee Estuary**. Use a level crossing over a railway, then follow a field path to the right of a sewage works. Turn left at a marker post, with views across the estuary to the Wirral. The grassy path can be wet and muddy, but there is a short boardwalk. Aim for a wooden footbridge and a muddy channel is easily crossed.

Another footbridge is crossed later, followed by a smaller one at a kissing gate. Go up a gritty path and turn right at a junction, heading back towards the marsh to join a tarmac promenade path. Turn left to follow it, left again to pass in front of a lifeboat station, then left inland. Turn right along Castle Dyke Street to reach the entrance to the ruined **Flint Castle**.

If the weather is very wet, or a very high tide is forecast, follow the main road into town.



FLINT

The 13th-century castle was part of the 'Iron Ring' built by Edward I around Wales. It looks across the Dee Estuary to the low-lying Wirral peninsula. The town centre is easily reached by following Castle Street to the railway station.

Facilities include hotel, shops, pubs, eateries, banks with ATMs, post office, trains and buses.



Flint Castle



- **1400km (870 mile) route in 57 daily stages from Chester to Chepstow • Snowdonia and Pembrokeshire Coast National Parks • Heritage Coast and AONBs**

The fully waymarked Wales Coast Path covers, as far as is practical, the entire Welsh coastline (including Anglesey), linking ancient castles, visiting seaside resorts and traversing wild cliffs, rocky coves and sandy beaches. Walking is mostly easy although there are occasional rugged sections, short steep ascents and descents and more remote stretches with fewer facilities.

The scenery is both beautiful and diverse and there is plentiful historical and cultural interest, with opportunities to visit castles, museums and nature reserves.



- takes 2–3 months but can easily be broken into shorter sections
- best in summer when all services are open
- with notes on accommodation, refreshments and public transport
- can be linked with Offa's Dyke Path to complete a full circuit of Wales

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