



Cardiff Bay (Wales Coast Path) walk

Cardiff Bay, barrage, heritage docks, the Welsh Assembly, bayside cafes and bars



Start and Finish Cardiff Bay or Penarth

Length 3.5 miles (5.6km) out-and-back or about 2.5 miles (4 km) one way. Level unless you parked on Penarth hill

Cardiff Bay Trail Circular : 10.2 km / 6.3 miles

Time 2 hours + sightseeing

Toughness 1/10

Travel Cardiff Bay and Penarth stations are on separate branch lines from Cardiff Central. Cogan station (on the Penarth branch line) is close to the south westerly corner of the Cardiff Bay Trail (and signposted from it).

Drivers can park for free on Penarth hill (around CF64 1DR), or there is a pay car park (approx £1/hour) at the bottom of the hill, right by the Penarth side of the tidal barrage (Sat Nav: CF64 1TT).

Walk Notes This is a walk around the new Cardiff Bay development. It used to be docks and tidal mud flats, now it's an inland freshwater lake with a barrage (lock gate) across the harbour entrance. The Bay area has been regenerated, and there is a large pedestrian area around Mermaid Quay, with the

Senedd (the Welsh Assembly building), an Opera House, and several restored heritage and former industrial buildings, many bay side cafes and bars, and Ianto Jones' shrine (a fictional character from the Torchwood TV series).

There are guided tours available of the Senedd and of the Millennium Centre (Arts/Opera House). Other notable buildings are the Norwegian Church (Cafe and Arts Centre), the Pierhead Building (beside the Millennium Centre), Coal Exchange (to be a hotel), and Techniquest (a science museum). The Bay visitor centre and the Doctor Who Experience have closed.

The suggested walk is out-and-back, but there is a train station at either end so you could do a one-way walk. You can start the walk at either end.

Options

Cardiff Bay Trail

There is a 10 km "Cardiff Bay Trail" circular walk around the entire bay. However, the Bay hasn't been fully gentrified yet so there are some inland and road detours, as well as some rather soulless low rise new-built housing. The route shown around the west side of the Bay is the official one (at the time of writing), avoiding sensitive habitats and unmade paths. It will get closer to the waterfront as new developments continue to be finished.

Boat Trips

There are regular tourist boat trips leaving from by the big Ferris wheel (£2 to £4) near the Welsh Assembly. The routes are a) up along the Taff river to the old town (recommended), b) around Cardiff Bay, or c) to Penarth.

Old Town

Cardiff now has 2 centres, the Bay area (where this walk takes place), and the old town. The old town is about 1 mile further inland (bus, or one stop by train) with Cardiff Castle, the Millennium Rugby Stadium, Cardiff Central station, Bute Park/Sophia Gardens, the National Museum, Cardiff (Storey) Museum, and the pedestrian shopping/cafe/bars area with its many arcades. The tourist boat trip between the two is recommended.

It's hard to recommend a walking route from the bay area to the old town ("castle quarter"), maybe apart from the Taff Trail along the river (see below list).

- Other than that, the easiest way is to way follow the wide Lloyd George Avenue (green, with modern low rise buildings).
- Slightly to the east the Welsh Coast Path heads inland (avoiding the working docks) via Bute East Dock, but that also passes plenty of modern low rise buildings.

- Slightly to the west, you could follow the Taff Trail (the west riverbank) to Sophia Gardens. This is probably the nicest route.

Once you get there, the old town is a pleasant surprise, with a large pedestrianised area of shops, cafes and bars. North of the railway line, Sophia Gardens/Bute Park is nice, as is the [Castle](#), a medieval castle containing a Victorian Gothic mansion (£13.50/£9.50 adults/children in 12/19).

Penarth

If you climb the hill above the barrage, you get to Penarth. It has many grand residential buildings, a seafront, and a pier, but its not (yet) worth the extra walk.

Cardiff Docks

Cardiff was a small town until the industrial revolution. In the 1790's, a coal carrying canal from Merthyr opened. By the 1880's Cardiff was the biggest coal exporting port in the world leading to a tremendous boom, peaking in 1913. However, nearby Barry docks (with better tidal access), and then competitor coal mines and steel plants abroad made for an even more dramatic decline in the city's fortunes. By the 1980's, most of the mines and steel plants had closed, and the bay was an industrial wasteland. The 1999 barrage, the Welsh Assembly, waterside bars, and new housing are aimed at regenerating the area.

Eat and Drink

Mermaid Quay, just west of the Senedd and the Pierhead Building, has many cafes, bars and restaurants to choose from, including a large Wetherspoon's (The Mount Stuart) in a heritage seafront building. Its upper deck has a lovely Bay view.

The Norwegian Church on Harbour Drive houses a large cafe (and a shop and an exhibition space).

The Old Custom House (the imposing building at the Penarth end of the Barrage) has two restaurants and a bar.

Penarth Marina has an award-winning cafe (The Galley) and a restaurant (Pier 64).

Near the south westerly turn of the circular route, you'll find The Oystercatcher pub.

On the other side of the Ely River, in the new development by Cardiff Marina, is a branch of the locally dominant Coffi Co coffee shop chain.

There is also a cafe in the White Water Centre.

The voco St. David's Hotel has a large restaurant with splendid views across the Bay.

Help Us!

After the walk, please leave a [comment](#), it really helps. Thanks!

You can also upload photos to the  [SWC Group on Flickr](#) (upload your photos) and [videos to Youtube](#). This walk's tags are:

By Car **Start** CF10 5LE

Help National Rail: 03457 48 49 50 • Traveline (bus times): 0871 200 22 33
(12p/min) • TFL (London) : 0343 222 1234

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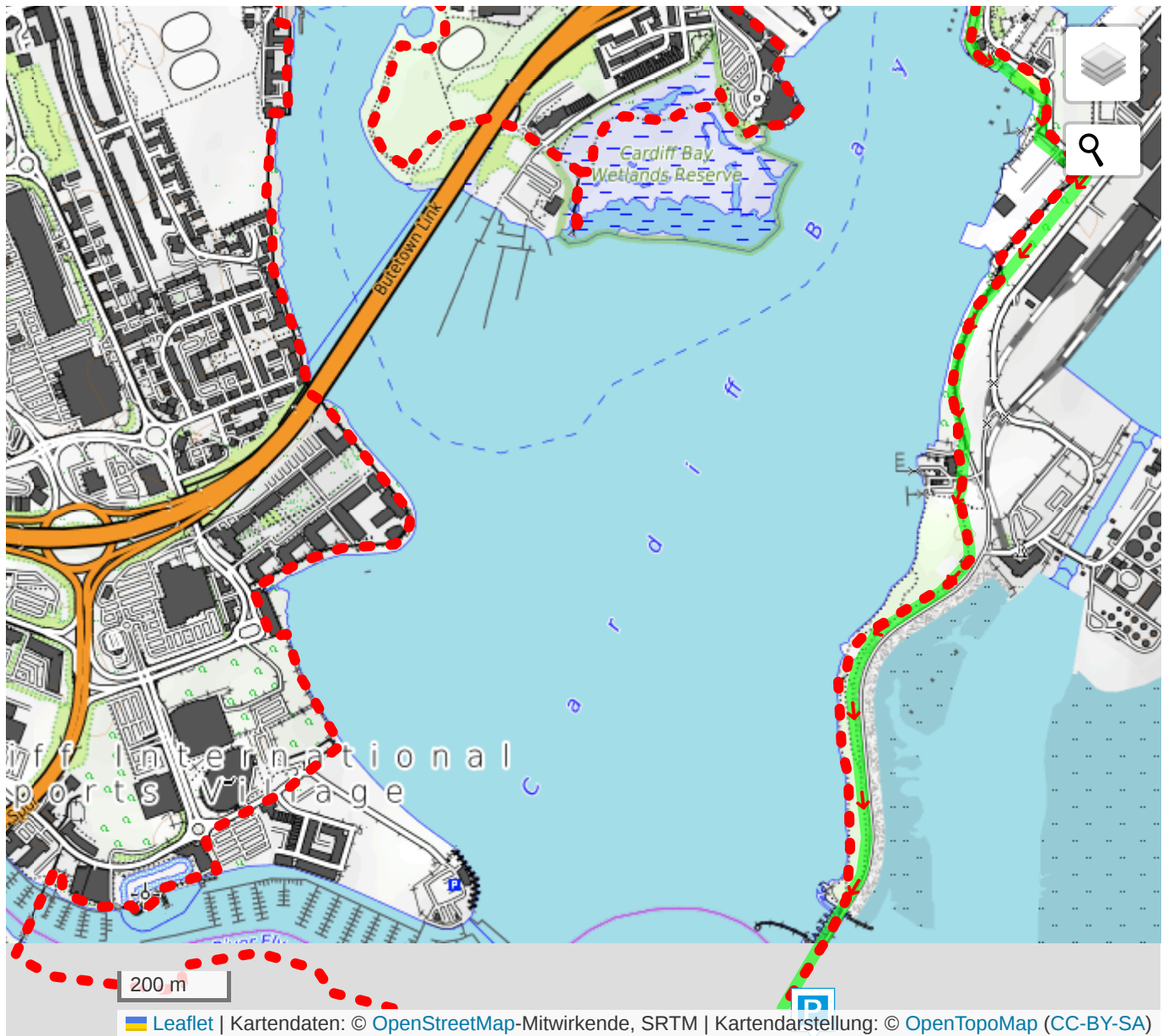
Walk Directions

OpenStreetMap (not OS) mapping is used in the PDF for licence reasons.

The route is quite obvious - just follow the Bay!

1. Starting from Penarth. Park at the top of the hill (free) and walk down to the barrage (pay car park)
2. Cross the lock gates, and follow the landscaped pedestrian barrage towards the Bay area.
3. The path briefly leaves the bay side, then you pass another lock gate past a newly gentrified former docks
4. Then you pass the Norwegian Church Arts Centre, the Pierhead Building, the Senedd (the new Welsh Assembly Building, free entry), the Opera House, and many bars and cafes overlooking the bay.
5. Cardiff Bay station is just a little further north along the wide dual carriageway Lloyd George Avenue.

Cardiff Bay Walk



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