



Three Cliffs, Pwll Du and Bishopston Valley Walk

Description:

A lovely costal walk taking in some of the best south Gower bays before tracking inland up the peaceful Bishopston valley. When you arrive at the bus stop you can text the code swagtp to the number 84268. you will receive a text notifying you of the departure times of the next buses back to Parkmill. To check times before you leave timetables are always available at the house or check on www.traveline.info. **For those of you not staying with us you are welcome to use this walk but as there are no rights of way through the grounds, please just park and start the walk from the national trust car park in Penmaen.**

Distance covered: miles **Average time:** 3 hours **Terrain:** Easy under foot but Bishopston valley can be very muddy.

Directions:

Walk out of the front door of the house and turn right, walk past the end of the house and up the corral (fenced in area).

Follow the track through the corral and along the old Church path, you will pass the trout ponds on your right, and valley gardens on your left immediately after this there is a cross roads – take the track straight on across the fields and through the woods.



At the woodlands end you will cross a style next to a gate, here the track will bear left taking you past a small pink cottage end on to the road and then through a grassy car park.

When you reach the tarmac village lane turn left over the cattle grid. Look out for Penmaen Church on your right.

Now cross the main road and continue for 100yds down the lane, take the first and only right turn. Follow the road until you find yourself at the lookout above Three Cliffs Bay

Follow the track down to the river, cross the stepping stones and follow the storm beach to the other side of the valley. Look for a path to take you up back on to the cliff top on the edge of Pennard golf course and then bear right and follow the coast around.

If you keep to the coast you will have the opportunity to follow walk along the neck of three cliffs well worth a detour especially if the tide is in. The next bay you will pass is Pobbles before climbing back up to the coastal path and following the cliff edge past fox hole. At this point you will see a national trust car park and on the round about next to it there is the 3 cliffs coffee shop, a great place to stop for lunch or buy some snacks.

Continuing along the coast in the direction of Hunts bay (also known as Deep slade) about 600m from the coffee shop down below the cliff top you can find Minchin hole bone caves. Be careful if you decide to go down to the cave it is a real dangerous scramble but it is also probably the reason that the cave is in such pristine condition today.

History of Minchin Hole Cave:

The cave has been excavated on a number of occasions in the past; the first of which took place in the mid nineteenth century. The many artefacts now lie in Swansea Museum include the remains of a straight-tusked elephant, bison, soft-nosed rhinoceros, cave bear, reindeer, wolf and hyena.

Along with the animal remains which indicate residence in the upper Palaeolithic period evidence of later occupation in the form of pottery (pots, dishes, boles, spindle whorls, combs, bronze brooches and a number of coins indicate that the cave was still in use during the Romano-British occupation and later in the Dark Ages.

A little further along the coast on the Western headland of deep slade there is a second cave known as Bacon hole reportedly on account of one of the formations within the cave which bears some resemblance to streaky bacon ! The cave was first excavated in 1850 by Colonel Wood who documented the presence of various Pleistocene animals including the straight-nosed elephant and narrow-nosed rhinoceros. Later excavations also uncovered early Iron-Age pottery. The cave is also believed to have been occupied by humans during the Roman occupation, the Dark Ages and throughout Medieval times.

Also well worth looking out for while you are exploring these cliffs is a quite insignificant looking but very rare plant known as Yellow whitlowgrass, (*Draba aizoides*) it only grows about 2 inches high and carries yellow flowers in late winter to mid spring. A member of the Brassicaceae family the plant is widely distributed in continental Europe . This is the only place in the UK where it can be found.

Now continue along the coastal path until you round the headland into the picturesque Pwlldu bay. There are a number of paths which will take you down onto the bay itself, so take your pick.

History of Pwlldu:

Much of the scenery of this beautiful bay results from the Quarrying activities which existed here until the beginning of the 20th century rights of "cliffage" were awarded to farming tenants, who could then quarry the limestone from the slopes of Pwll-Du Head which was then shipped across the water to Devon where it was cooked to make agricultural lime.

Looking to the east of the bay you can still clearly see where the limestone was removed from the cliff. The stone was then piled a short way from low water and marked with a post. Ships then sailed into the cove at high tide, locate the posts and remained there until the tide dropped leaving the ship beached and ready to be loaded before the next high tide. I have also read that some of the ships would actually scuttle their vessels before the tide had fully dropped and as the ship beached the sea cocks would again be closed, the water partially filling the hold of the ship would break the fall of the cargo of rock as it was loaded. The remaining water would be drained out before the tide returned. It is also speculated that much of the limestone making up the huge shingle banks at the head of the beach are also derived from the smaller peaces of stone left on the beach after the ships were hurriedly loaded between the tides. The houses nestling at the head of the beach were once pubs serving the thirsty workers

Next you will need to head to the cottages at the top of the beach, the path starts here for the final leg of your journey along Bishopston valley. Pass the cottages and take the path which bears left off the lane following the western side of the valley. You will need to follow the river or at least the bottom of the valley as the river has a habit of finding its way below ground through the fissured limestone strata.

At the head of the valley you will join a lane, at the first opportunity bear right. The lane will take you up to a junction with the main road, turn left down the main road. After 50yds turn right into the gravel car park of Barlands Common.

Follow the lane which heads down hill to the west. When the lane bears ninety degrees right take the footpath which leads straight on into a small woodland. It is well way marked, follow it for half a mile until you emerge at next to Kittle hill farm. Turn right along the lane and continue until you meet the main road.

Turn left and walk about 100yds to the bus stop outside the entrance to cannisland park. To find the next bus times text the code swagtp to the number 84268. You will receive a text noitifying you of the departure times of the next buses back to Parkmill, ask the driver to get off at Shepperds shop Parkmill.

When you are facing the shop take the lane left towards the Gower Heritage Centre, cross the ford and head straight up the lane in front of you back to the house.

Three Cliffs, Pwll Du and Bishopston Valley Walking Map:



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