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BBC Coast Walk 3 Miles

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The walk starts at the visitor centre which has information boards and leaflets. From April - September, the centre is staffed by wardens from the Countryside Council for Wales.

1. The visitor centre is the best place to start this walk. There's usually a warden on hand to answer any questions you may have and there are plenty of leaflets telling you about the dunes.

Display boards on the walls of the centre highlight the main plants and animals to look out for as you walk through the dunes. There are also activity sheets for children to fill in along the way.

Outside the centre you'll see an oak sculpture in the form of a banded snail, one of the creatures which lives in the dunes. This particular snail needs crushed shells to make its own shells. The banded snail in turn is needed by birds for their food. It's worth climbing the wooden snail to look out across the estuary and the dunes.

Leaving the visitor centre, bear left onto the boardwalk leading to the shell path. Crushed shells make this path firm as you head south through what are known as the grey dunes, after the colour of the lichen colonising the bare sand which is more stable here. Look out for butterflies such as the common blue.

2. The shell path extends a few hundred yards from the Visitor Centre to a flat area known as a dune slack. Here, during the summer months, you'll find a host of pretty orchids in flower.



Go ahead along the boardwalk noticing how restharrow, whose pink flowers can be seen from June to September, binds the sand together to carpet the dunes. Fixing nitrogen like clover, it blends in with the aromatic wild thyme.

Birds living in the dunes include linnet, stonechat, skylarks and meadow pipit. Elder thickets, bramble bushes and large marram grass tussocks provide cover for linnets to nest in. Grasses are preferred as cover by stonechat, meadow pipit and skylark. Abandoned rabbit burrows may be exploited as nesting sites by wheatear and shelduck. It is the rabbits which also attract the red kites, especially in winter.

3. Make your way along the boardwalk to the viewpoint platform. This is the highest point in the dunes and on a fine day, the views from here can be stunning. The 360 degree sweep is a view to please any pair of eyes. Look across the sea to the north-west to spot Bardsey Island off the Lleyn Peninsula. Some swear they can make out the summit of Snowdon to the north, while New Quay head is prominent to the south.

Most distinguishable are the resorts of Aberdyfi, across the river on its Gwynedd shore, and Borth overlooked by cliffs to the south. Inland of Borth is Cors Fochno, which is regarded as one of the most impressive lowland raised bogs in the UK.

4. The boardwalk ends where the beach begins. A red flag warns you not to bathe from the beach because of the strong currents here.

When the boardwalk ends, follow the short sandy path to the main beach and turn left towards the village of Borth, with the sea on your right-hand side.

You can choose to walk either on the shingle ridge or on the beach. Attractive pebbles are a feature of the shingle ridge. Many have been brought by the north-flowing current from the base of the cliffs at Borth. These grits and mudstones often contain veins of quartz (white crystalline rock) and waves grind and smooth these sedimentary rocks into rounded pebbles.

5. Keep walking along the beach in the direction of Borth until you reach the fifth sand groyne along from Ynyslas. At low tide, the remains of an ancient forest can be seen in the sands here.

If very lucky, you may spot a seal or a dolphin in the sea. Less welcome are the greater and lesser weaver fish. If found on the beach, beware of their poisonous spines. Razor shells live in this sand. Their long shells look like a cut-throat razor. Burrowing into the sand gives them protection from birds.

Beyond the Second World War Pill Box on your left, the end of the national nature reserve is heralded by the golf course car park. During the summer months, there is a portable toilet here for public use. Keep walking along the beach in the direction of Borth until you reach the fifth sand groyne along from Ynyslas.

6. The first dunes at Ynyslas are thought to date back to the fourteenth century. These older dunes can be seen behind the Visitor Centre.

7. As you round the headland, you'll see an old telegraph pole in the sand. This marks the spot where a ferry used to take passengers across the Dyfi estuary to Aberdyfi.



At low tide, the remains of an ancient forest can be seen in the sands here. It's worth making the trip to Ynyslas at low tide in the hope of witnessing this amazing sight. Tree stumps of oak, pine, birch, willow and hazel can be found embedded in peat at one metre below the normal surface between high and low water marks. Even twigs and branches are uncovered.

This submerged forest proves that the coastline used to be further west and that the sea level has risen. Radio carbon dating suggests that these trees died around 3500 BC (but others to the south, near Borth, date from 1500BC). The tree stumps were preserved by the acid anaerobic conditions in the peat.

Notice an emergency telephone (remember no bathing!) at the first flag pole on your right. Pass the second red flag, marking where your outward boardwalk met the beach.

8. Make your way back up along the beach towards the Visitor Centre. From here, you'll see at low-tide a vast expanse of sand on the southern shore of the Dyfi estuary known as Traeth Maelgwn - a tract of land steeped in legend.

If you want a shorter walk, turn right where you see a third red flag and you can return to the Visitor Centre via another boardwalk. To complete the three-mile walk, continue on to the northern point of the headland. As you round the headland, you'll see an old telegraph pole in the sand. This marks the spot where a ferry used to take passengers across the Dyfi estuary to Aberdyfi.

The walk ends where it began at the Visitor Centre.

