


Coastal Walk – 5 miles

Rhossili Bay, South Wales





Take in the tremendous coastal views from Rhossili Down before descending to Rhossili Bay, considered one of the finest sandy beaches in the UK. At the southern end of the bay, when the tide is low, a finger of limestone rock leads to Worms Head where seabirds and seals can be seen.

Start: Rhossili National Trust visitor centre – grid ref: SS415879 – OS Landranger map 159

How to get there and local facilities

On the SW tip of the Gower Peninsula. Approach from Swansea via A4118, then the B4247. There is a regular bus from Swansea, passing near the . Car parking and WCs (not NT) next to visitor centre. NT holiday cottages, plus refreshments and a YHA in Rhossili village.

Things to look out for...

-  **Rhossili Down**
The backdrop to Rhossili Bay is this stretch of moorland that rises over 600ft from the shore. At the top on a clear day you can see right across the Bristol Channel and to Pembrokeshire.
-  **Archaeology**
A scattering of Bronze Age burial sites and Neolithic burial chambers are found on Rhossili Down. Known as Sweyne's Howes, these stone age sites are thought to have been named after Sweyne, a Viking war-lord, despite predating the Vikings by at least 3,000 years.
-  **Rhossili Bay**
This pristine three-mile long sandy bay is enjoyed by hikers, families and surfers, but rarely becomes overcrowded. When the tide recedes at the southern tip, the skeletal remains of the shipwreck, Helvetia, are revealed. The boat was beached one winter's night in 1887.
-  **Worms Head**
A tidal causeway links this hulk of rock to the mainland. Worms Head was once used for grazing sheep. The meat from this area was particularly popular, it was said to be tender owing to the salty grass.



A kittiwake rests on a cliff edge. They are distinguished by their fairly small size, round head and black wing tips. Chicks hatch in late summer and can be seen at Worms Head.

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Rhossili beach stretches into the horizon. To the right is Rhossili Down blanketed with bracken, gorse, grasses and heather. The National Trust cares for 75% of the Gower's coastline.

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Mussel, limpet and crab shells at Worms Head. The limestone here has many gullies and crevices, making it perfect for rock pooling. Spot sea weeds, sea anemone, crab and the tiny cushion starfish (only found at a handful of sites in the UK) at low tide.

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National Trust places to visit nearby

Whiteford Burrows, Three Cliffs Bay, Pennard Cliffs, Bishopston Valley

Route and directions

1. Start at the National Trust Visitor Centre and walk over the top of Rhossili Down. Many Bronze Age sites have been discovered at the highest points. The Beacon marks the top where there are uninterrupted views in every direction.
2. Follow the path towards Hillend.
3. Turn back on yourself and take the track to the right which leads to Rhossili beach. Here, at the southern end of the bay, are sand dunes called the Warren.

There were once houses and a church here, but over time they became abandoned and buried in the sand. This 'lost village' dates back to before the Normans.

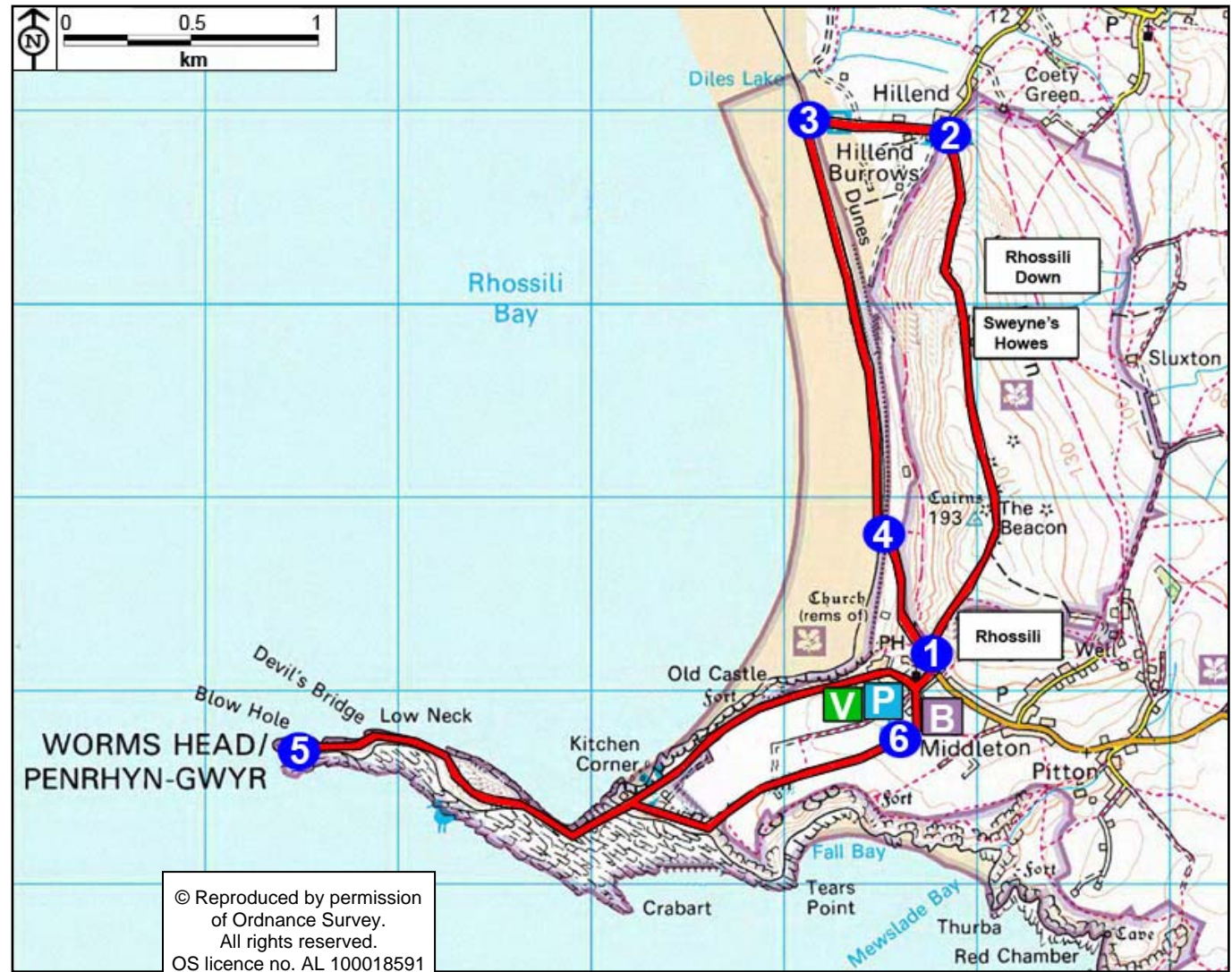
4. Walk along the beach and back to the Visitor Centre. The row of three buildings used to be coastguard cottages. One is a National Trust shop, which has recently been refurbished.
5. To extend this walk, continue to Worms Head. Take the path along the headland then drop to sea level. At low tide it is possible to walk over the causeway to the isle without getting wet feet. Be careful to check the tide times as you only have about two hours either side of low tide.

You'll see why it gained its original name 'Wurm', meaning dragon, as it rises from the sea like a mythical beast. Here you can see an Iron Age fort by the cliff edge as well as many seabirds and a natural rock arch known as Devil's Bridge.

6. Return the same way or take the path that runs inland back to the Visitor Centre.

Distance, terrain and accessibility

5mile (8km) circular route. Mostly flat but there are some steep climbs. No stiles; just pedestrian gates. Steps from the beach to the car park. Note tide times at the Visitor Centre before crossing to Worms Head. Take care close to cliffs.



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