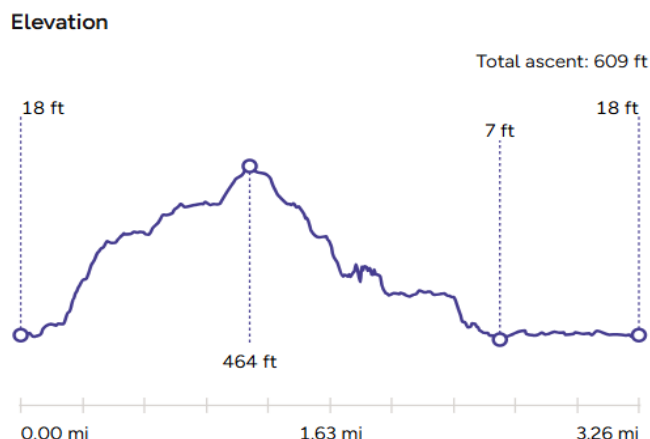


The Sailors' Safety, Pwllgwaelod

Pembrokeshire Coast Path loop of Dinas Head, via Cwm-yr-Eglwys, 3.3 miles

OVERVIEW

A proper Pembrokeshire Coast Path classic, and a rare thing on this coastline — a genuinely circular walk, roughly 3.3 miles, easy enough to suit most walkers while still delivering high cliffs, big views, and a real sense of headland drama. From Pwllgwaelod the path climbs onto Dinas Head itself, the small peninsula that very nearly becomes an island, with the ground opening out into gorse and heather as height is gained.



The trig point at the top, Pen-y-Fan, is the walk's high point in every sense — 142 metres up, with views stretching along the coast, inland to the Preseli Hills, and across to Fishguard Bay and Newport. From there the path drops back down towards Cwm-yr-Eglwys (church), one of the first beaches I ever knew as a child, and still about as good a spot for a young family as this coast has to offer, its ruined church standing quietly above the sand.

From the church, the walk finishes on a level path across the narrow neck of the headland, back to Pwllgwaelod — passing, on the way, a three-quarter lime kiln still standing on the beach, a working reminder that this cove was more than just a beach beside a pub.

Start/Finish	Sailors' Safety, Pwllgwaelod, Dinas Cross, nr Newport, SA42 0SE			
Parking	Public car park and toilets in front of the pub. The pub is popular, and car park spaces limited, especially during school holidays. Arrive early.			
Grid Reference	SN 006 399			
What3Words	///sharpens.these.doghouse			
Distance	3.3 miles / 5.3 km	Time	1.5 hrs	Ascent 610 ft / 190 m
Paths/Terrain	Coastal path walking, some steep sections. A level accessible path is laid between Cwm-Yr-Eglwys and Pwllgwaelod.			
Difficulty	Generally easy, but the elevation and uneven surfaces make me inclined to say moderate. On the approach to Cwm-yr-Eglwys there are two options: the original coast path that runs quite close to a cliff edge, then a higher route well away from the cliff edge.			

Public Transport	Bus services stop at Dinas Cross, with Pwllgwaelod a mile down the lane.
Toilets	Public toilets at Pwllgwaelod and Cwm-yr-Eglwys, and at the Sailors' Safety.
Other Pubs Nearby	The Castle Inn, Newport; the Dyffryn Arms in Pontfaen is a must; The Ship in Fishguard's Lower Town; and in Dinas Cross try the Ship Aground, now under an excellent landlord; and the Freemasons.

DIRECTIONS



1. Standing on the road in front of the beach with your back to the pub, bear right to follow the concrete lane in the direction of Dinas Island Farm, ignoring its warnings of "Private." This is the coast path route.
2. Up a short incline you'll see a wooden gate in front of you marking the access to the coast path, with a National Trust sign announcing Pen Dinas (Dinas Head). There are lovely views back towards the beach as you start the climb away from Pwllgwaelod — on my walk, a beach Test Match was being watched from a deckchair on the sand below, and Pembrokeshire's Paul Whitehouse and Bob Mortimer were crabbing off the rocks, Ted nowhere to be seen.
3. The path circles Dinas Head, climbing to a trig point called Pen y Fan, the highest point of the walk, with magnificent views the whole way up. It's a rare opportunity to walk a genuinely circular section of the coast path like this.

4. Continuing downhill, you'll reach a fork in the footpath. The left-hand path is the original coast path route, with some short sections passing high above the sea. The right-hand route steers away from the coast, for anyone who'd rather not walk quite so close to the cliff edge. I'm not keen on heights myself, and had no trouble taking the left-hand route.
5. The two paths rejoin before the cove at Cwm-yr-Eglwys.
6. Arriving at the cove, you'll see a path leading to public toilets — this marks the direction of the return to Pwllgwaelod. Beyond the toilets, the path passes through a small caravan park and is clearly signposted from there.
7. It continues on a level path all the way back to Pwllgwaelod, arriving right alongside the pub.

NOTES - Two coves, one storm, and a name worth unpicking

The ruins above Cwm-yr-Eglwys beach are what's left of St Brynach's Church — another St Brynach, as at Pontfaen — a 12th-century Celtic-type church of which only the belfry and part of the west wall now survive.

It was destroyed in the same storm of October 1859 that wrecked the Royal Charter, the most famous of the ships lost, and by the church's own memorial plaque, one of 113 other ships lost along the coast of Wales in the storm.

It was severe enough, nationally, that it directly led to the Met Office establishing the world's first gale warning service, the ancestor of today's Shipping Forecast.

The church didn't get to rest after that, either: a further storm in March 1979 brought severe additional damage to the churchyard. A model ship known as the Cwm Trader stands there today as a memorial — a scale model, built by local blacksmith James Eifion Thomas of Dinas Cross, of the kind of shallow-draft, flat-bottomed coastal trading brig that once worked this coast, sailing into bays at high water to be unloaded onto horse and cart at low tide. Many such vessels were lost in the same 1859 storm.

The geography linking the two coves is worth understanding properly, rather than treating Pwllgwaelod and Cwm-yr-Eglwys as simply two separate beaches either side of a headland. Depending on which way the wind was blowing, one or the other offered shelter: an easterly made Pwllgwaelod the safer water, a northerly or westerly would have favoured Cwm-yr-Eglwys instead.

Pwllgwaelod served a wider purpose too, as a genuine overflow shelter for shipping when strong easterly winds made Fishguard's own harbour too dangerous to use. The level path across the neck of the headland — the same stretch the walk finishes on — meant goods and people could move easily between the two, whichever cove the weather had put out of use that day. It's a reminder that this landscape wasn't just scenery to the people who worked it; it was a choice of two doors, and you used whichever one the wind had left open.