

As Bar Road turns the corner into Marine Crescent, Falmouth Lifeboat Station can be seen on the right down Tinner's Walk. In 1867, the first lifeboat, the 10-oared City of Gloucester cost £280, was stationed in the town. A carriage costing £98 10s enabled the boat to be transported to the best launch site for any particular rescue. The present station was opened in 1993 and operates an all weather boat and an inshore lifeboat.

Carry on past the Custom House and then St George's Arcade, Falmouth's first cinema, built in 1912 and one of Britain's largest at the time.

Falmouth's famous packet ships arrived at and departed from Custom House Quay, which from the seventeenth century was the only place in Britain where the foreign post came in and out. Bullion was carried too on these small, fast two-masted brigs, as well as important passengers and some secret government intelligence.

7. When you come to Killigrew Street, to your left at the end of Market Street, turn left onto it and follow it gently uphill, bearing left at the roundabout and continuing straight ahead past roads to left and right as the hill becomes steeper and finally meets the main A39 at the top.

8. Turn left here and walk about a hundred yards, to pick up the footpath opposite, along Marlborough Avenue, passing under the railway line. Continue along Marlborough Avenue to meet Silverdale Road and then walk along the footpath straight ahead.

9. Cross the stream and then take the left turn onto the Public Footpath towards Swanpool. Fork left and then fork left again to rejoin Silverdale Road.

Swanpool is a Nature Reserve and a Site of Special Scientific Interest, which was created in 1825 when a culvert was built to allow water to flow from the freshwater lake into the sea. This led to a unique mix of freshwater and saltwater, providing a wonderful habitat for many species.

Although there are now swans to be seen here, it is thought that the name actually derives from 'swamp-pool', after the rare wooded wetlands behind the lake. In the eighteenth century there was a lead-silver mine here, and an arsenic refinery.

10. Turn right here, and then left onto Swanpool Hill. Walk up the road until you see on your right, the footpath signposted "Public Footpath to Coast Path" (opposite the entrance to Falmouth cemetery). Follow this Footpath walking between the graveyards to join Madiera Walk. Continue until you meet the junction between Pennance Road (on your left) and Boscawen Road.

11. Here, turn right down a path (beside the dog bin). Reaching the South West Coast Path turn left towards Falmouth and Gyllyngvase Beach. Continue on the Coast Path until you reach The Royal Duchy Hotel.

Gyllyngvase Beach is Falmouth's largest beach, a fine crescent of sand at low tide fringed by fingers of rock which provide great opportunities for rock-pooling. Along the seawall exotic plants with large lush leaves and blossom are a riot of colour in the summer and the tall palms of the dracaena in the gardens give it a tropical air. Looking across the bay, you can see Pendennis Castle looking out over the tops of the woodland on the point.

Other useful information

To download a digital version of this walk go to www.southwestcoastpath.org.uk/walksdb/837

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Swanpool & Falmouth Docks Walk



Photographer: Kijigley Scott

A tour of some of the historical features of the British Empire's second most important port, with its coastal artillery defences, the docks built after more than 16 thousand vessels visited in a nine-year period, and the Custom House Quay where the famous packet ships carried the post. A mostly level walk on pavements and good paths, with one relatively steep hill.

Start/finish: Royal Duchy Hotel
Distance: 5.4 miles (8.6 km)
Difficulty: Moderate

This leaflet is produced by the South West Coast Association to help the guests of The Royal Duchy Hotel enjoy their stay.



Distance:
5.4 miles (8.6 km)

Swanpool & Falmouth Docks Walk

1. Come out of The Royal Duchy hotel and, facing the sea, turn left onto Cliff Road and the South West Coast Path towards Falmouth.

Looking across the bay, you can see Pendennis Castle looking out over the tops of the woodland on the point.

2. Follow the Coast Path along Cliff Road and then Castle Drive, which travels around the headland towards Pendennis Point.

3. To visit Pendennis Castle, take the left-hand fork on the headland; otherwise carry straight on along the road.

The footpath into woodland on your left here is just a pleasant (but fairly steep) detour which drops you back on the pavement a little further on along the headland.

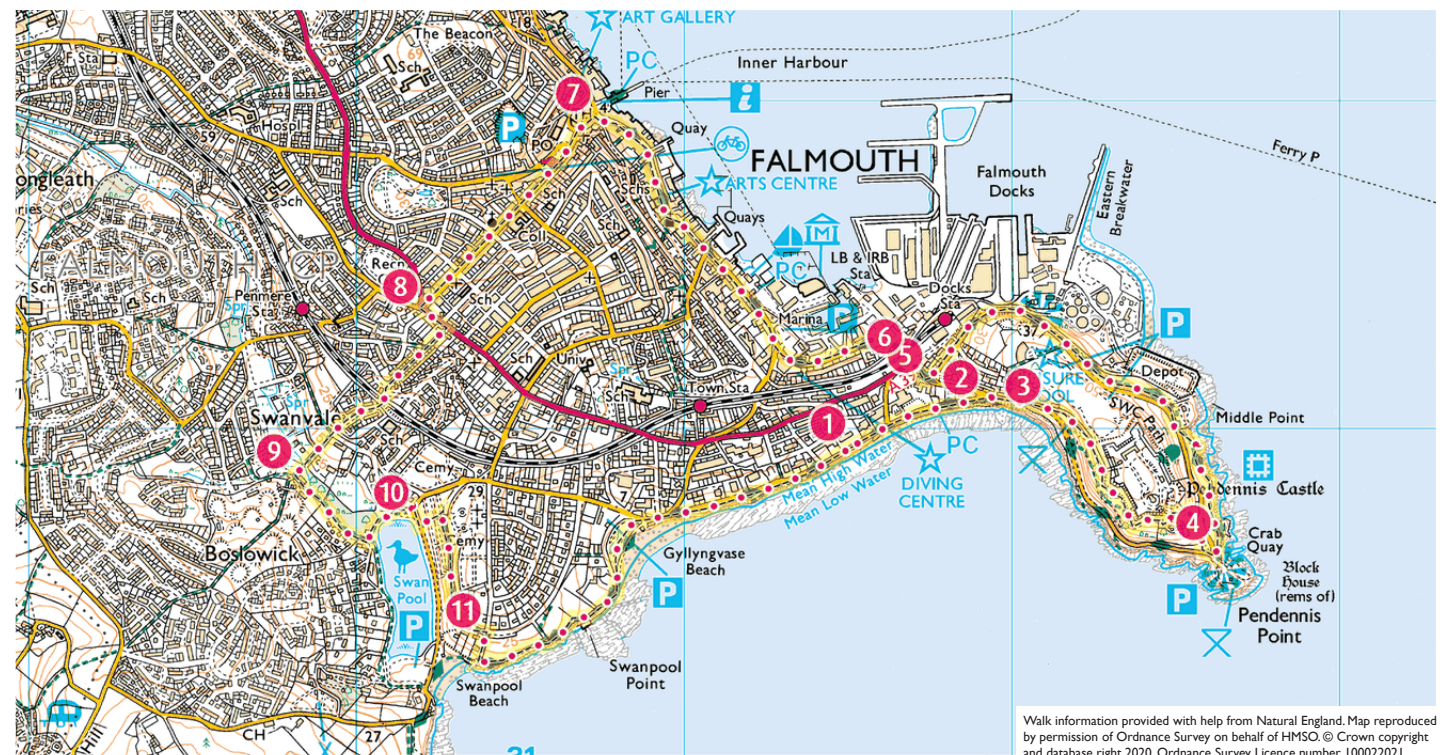
There is an old lime kiln on the point, used in the nineteenth century to make lime by burning limestone and coal, which would have been brought here by ship.

The Coastguard Station, just around the point, opened in 1981 and is the most southerly coastguard station in the UK. Its area extends from the Devon border on Cornwall's north coast to Dodman Point in the south, and includes the Lizard, Land's End and the Scilly Isles. With the area of sea covered reaching to 30 degrees west and 45 degrees north, this gives the station the biggest Search and Rescue region in western Europe, at around 660,000 square miles.

The blockhouse on the south-eastern tip of Pendennis Head was built as part of Pendennis Castle, which was built between 1540 and 1545, along with St Mawes Castle, across the water. Henry VIII was at war with France and Spain during this time, and the two castles were regarded as a critical link in a chain of coastal artillery fortresses built to defend England from the foreign fleets. Gun ports can still be seen on the lower floor of the blockhouse, and the long flat area beside it was its long platform, also used as an artillery site.

It is thought that there have been coastal defences here since the Iron Age, when a promontory fort was established, probably on the south-eastern tip of the headland where the blockhouse is now.

There have been suggestions that the Romans and Vikings, too, mounted defensive operations at the mouth of this important port, and Pendennis Castle was strengthened and added to several times over the centuries.



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Crab Quay, just north of the blockhouse, was the best landing place on the headland, and there were guns here by 1700. The two concrete positions visible today were built in 1902 for quick-firing guns used against fast torpedo boats and modified during the Second World War, when they saw considerable action.

4. Once you have explored the features around Pendennis Point, return to the Coast Path, which now follows a path through woodland before coming out on the road above Falmouth Docks.

In May 1858, a public meeting was held in Falmouth Town Hall, during which it was announced that it had become essential to provide increased accommodation at the port for the loading, unloading, building and repair of the ships visiting the port, the second most important in the British Empire. In the previous nine years, the towns people were told, 16,078 vessels with a combined registered tonnage of over 4 million had arrived at the port, excluding coasting vessels, which in themselves were estimated at over a million tons.

A committee was appointed to survey the harbour and prepare plans and estimates for dry docks, slips, wharfage and storage accommodation. In November of the same year another public meeting was held to report back on the findings, and in April 1859, an Act of Parliament was passed, and royal assent received for the

formation of the Falmouth Docks and Engineering Company, charged with the construction of Falmouth Docks.

Between 1860 and 1867, the western wharf and the eastern breakwater were constructed, with the dry dock and gridiron wharf being opened in 1863. The Great Western Railway arrived this year, too, with a line running from Falmouth to Truro, which increased the flow of trade through the harbour. Shipbuilding began in 1878, and during the early to mid-twentieth century further wharves were built, while Dry Dock Number Two was enlarged in 1958, being opened by HRH Prince Philip and renamed the Queen Elizabeth Dock.

There is a viewpoint on the pavement above the docks, and a toposcope indicating the layout of the dry docks, wharves and workshops which are spread out below.

5. Carry on along Castle Drive, past the docks, until you come to the T-junction.

6. Turn right here, continuing across the roundabout and under the railway bridge. (There is no access to the seafront here, as the marina area is privately owned). Continue ahead on Bar Road as it curves inland and then sweeps to the right to continue in the original direction. At the roundabout keep going forward as it becomes Avenue Road and heads past, on your right, the National Maritime Museum (open daily throughout the year).