

Eryri | Snowdonia

Mynyddoedd a Môr
Mountains and Coast

CAMBRIAN COASTLINE LLŶN PENINSULA SNOWDONIA NATIONAL PARK



2017 – A LEGENDARY YEAR

Legends past and present

This year, we've produced a slightly different travel and holiday guide. It's based around the theme of legends to reflect the fact that 2017 is Wales's 'Year of Legends'. This follows on from 2016's 'Year of Adventure', and will be succeeded in 2018 by the 'Year of the Sea'.

Each theme focuses on Wales's strengths – the adventurous 'Great Outdoors', the country's myths, history and heritage, and the fact that three of Wales's four sides are washed by the sea.

What's good for Wales is very good for Snowdonia Mountains and Coast, which embraces those three themes like no place else. For 2017, this guide reveals all about our legendary landscapes and the people who have shaped the character of North Wales.

They are legendary figures past and present. We'll bring you the thoughts of famous local lads Bryn Terfel and Dave Brailsford, knighted 'Sirs' both. Going back a bit, you'll learn about the Princes of Gwynedd. They really existed, though we're not too sure about some of the stories involving swords, magicians and dragons associated with King Arthur (they make a good read, though).

What we can say for certain is that Snowdonia Mountains and Coast plays a starring role in Guy Richie's new film, *King Arthur: Legend of the Sword*. Much of it was shot on location here, so take a look (it's due for release in May).

And take a good look though this guide. As well as our legendary past we also feature experiences and attractions from here and now that are already the stuff of legends.

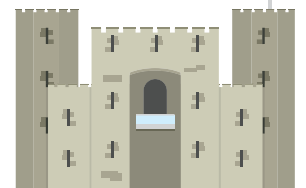
Roger Thomas, Editor

Inside out

Here's a run-down of what you'll find on the following pages and what to get up to when you're out and about.

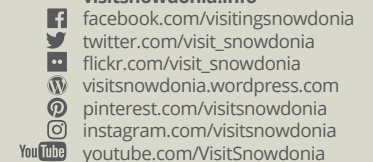
- 2 **At a glance** – a snapshot of our six holiday areas
- 4 **Welcome to our Year of Legends**
- 6 **Coast and country, castles and culture**
- 8 **Legendary experiences old and new**
- 10 **Legendary places chosen by local celebrities**
- 14 **Myth, mystery and folklore**
- 16 **The poet Hedd Wyn remembered**
- 18 **Stargazing in our Dark Skies**
- 20 **Legendary adventures**
- 22 **Cycling and mountain biking**
- 24 **Food glorious food**
- 26 **All at sea** – beaches, watersports and wildlife
- 28 **Attractions and activities** – ideas to get you going: narrow-gauge railways, family activity parks, World Heritage castles and slate caverns, birdwatching, shopping, art and crafts, museums and galleries, fishing, golf, horse riding, adrenaline adventures
- 34 **Festivals and events**
- 36 **Further information**
- 37 **Places to stay**
- 38 **Travel information and map**
- 40 **Take your pick** – Wales's holiday areas

Caernarfon Castle



Join the conversation and keep in touch

Keep up to date with what's happening and what's new by joining us on our social networks. Don't forget, it's a two-way process. Let us know what you think, and share your thoughts, images and videos with others.



Published by: Tourism, Marketing and Customer Care Service, Economy and Community Department, Cyngor Gwynedd, County Offices, Caernarfon, Gwynedd LL55 1SH. Copyright © 2017. Cyngor Bwrdeistref Sirol Conwy County Borough Council. tourism@gwynedd.llyw.cymru

Editorial written by Writerog Ltd, Roger Thomas Freelance Services, writerog.co.uk

Designed and produced by View Creative Agency, viewcreative.co.uk

Printed by W. O. Jones Printers Ltd, wojprint.co.uk

Photographs: © Alamy; © Alan Dop Photography; © Alex Meacock, Camera Drone UK; © Alun Fôn Williams; © APCE/SNPA; © Attractions of Snowdonia; © BBC Cymru; © Conwy County Borough Council; © Crown Copyright (2016) Cadw; © Crown Copyright (2016) Visit Wales © Cyngor Gwynedd Council; © Graig Wen; © Jan Davies; © Kris Williams; © National Slate Museum Llanberis; © National Trust Images/John Miller; © Owain Fôn Williams; © Swift Holiday Homes; © Trefedddian Hotel; © VisitBritain/Ben Selway; © Waitrose Good Food Guide; **Illustration:** © Brett Breckon (page 14)

Whilst every effort has been made to ensure accuracy in this publication, the publishers can accept no liability whatsoever for any errors, inaccuracies or omissions, or for any matter in any way connected with or arising out of the publication of the information. Please check all prices and facilities before making your booking.

When you've finished with the guide please forward to a friend or place in a suitable recycling container.

'Land of contrasts' is one of those overused clichés scattered around travel guides with gay abandon. But here, it happens to be true. One minute you're up, up and away in the mountains. Next stop, you're on the beach. It's no exaggeration to say that you can feel on top of the world in the morning (Snowdon's peak experience), and have Saharan quantities of sand beneath your feet in the afternoon (at Harlech, Dinas Dinlle or Black Rock Sands).

That's not quite so surprising when you consider that Snowdonia Mountains and Coast embraces the Snowdonia National Park, Llŷn Peninsula (an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty) and around 200 miles of coastline. To give you an instant picture of the way things change so quickly in these parts, we've split our region into six areas.



Criccieth, Porthmadog and the Vale of Ffestiniog

Oakwoods, beaches and adrenaline activities

There's coast – the southern shores of the Llŷn Peninsula and the hauntingly beautiful Dwyryd Estuary. And there's country – lots of it, including chunks of mountain and the wooded Vale of Ffestiniog. So you're not short of scenery. It's the same when it comes to attractions and places to visit – this part of Wales is especially rich in history, heritage and culture. Don't miss Blaenau Ffestiniog, the old slate capital reborn as an internationally acclaimed activity centre.



Cardigan Bay

A castle-crowned Cambrian Coastline

Along with the Llŷn Peninsula, Cardigan Bay puts the 'coast' into Snowdonia Mountains and Coast. Mountains meet the sea all along this lovely shoreline – but most memorably at two outstandingly beautiful estuaries, Mawddach and Dyfi. Other highlights include mighty World Heritage Site-designated Harlech Castle, picturesque Aberdyfi and little railways at Fairbourne and Tywyn.



Southern Snowdonia

More mountains – plus lakes and forests

We have our own north/south divide. Southern Snowdonia still has mountains – lots of them – but they are greener and rounder than those up north. Cader Idris dominates the scene, rearing its misty head above Dolgellau, while further east the Aran, Arenigs and Berwyns rise above Bala and Llyn Tegid, Wales's largest natural lake. There are forests too – most famously, the Coed y Brenin Forest Park, known far and wide for its world-class mountain biking.



Conwy Valley and Hiraethog

History, wooded hills and heather moors

What a difference a few miles can make. The green, fertile Conwy Valley is flanked on the west by thick forests. Cross to the east and you'll enter Hiraethog (also called the Denbigh Moors), an unexplored world of heather moorland set beneath big skies. All in all, this is an area of great variety, with the mountain village of Capel Curig at one end and the historic walled town of Conwy on the other. In between you'll find Betws-y-Coed, a buzzing country town.



Bangor, Caernarfon, Llanberis and the Villages of Snowdonia

Tops for mountains, castles and activities

Mister Big in these parts is – guess? – Yr Wyddfa/Snowdon, the highest mountain in Wales and England. But it's by no means the only attraction. There are mountain lakes and wooded valleys too, and a coastline of big beaches and sheltered straits. Man-made places also make it into the big league, especially world-famous Caernarfon Castle. And attractions like Zip World Velocity in Bethesda have helped bring Snowdonia Mountains and Coast worldwide fame as an activity hot spot.



Llŷn Peninsula

Go out on a limb

It's 'Snowdon's arm', a wildly beautiful peninsula that wraps you in a strong embrace. Llŷn's mix of culture and heritage, traditional farmsteads and little ports, beaches, bays and sea-cliffs is quite unlike anything else you'll find in Wales – or elsewhere, for that matter. Little wonder, then, that the coast is a protected 'Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty'. Walk it by following the Llŷn Coastal Path (now part of the all-Wales Coast Path).

2017 is Visit Wales's 'Year of Legends'. They couldn't have chosen a more appropriate theme – after all, we're a country with an epic past and rich heritage.

It's a theme that plays out particularly well here in Snowdonia Mountains and Coast. Myth, folklore and legend envelope our mountains and cling to our coastline, with tales of wizards, princes and dragons, shipwrecks, sunken kingdoms and sea monsters.



Conwy Castle

Legendary looks

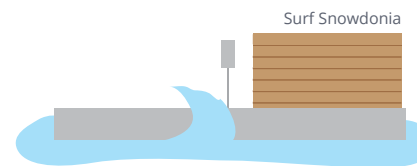
But it's not all *Game of Thrones*. Snowdonia Mountains and Coast is legendary for a multitude of reasons. For a start, our beauty is legendary, hardly surprising since we're mostly wrapped up within the Snowdonia National Park. At 823 square miles it's the third largest in the UK, stretching from the heights of Snowdon all the way down to the sea. And the bit that's outside the Park – the Llŷn Peninsula – is a designated 'Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty' (AONB).

Then there are the things you can get up to in our legendary landscapes. You've probably guessed a few already: walking, climbing, mountain biking, kayaking and so on ... all the usual suspects. But there are others too, as we'll soon reveal.

World Heritage Sites, little railways and culture

They all sit well with our other legendary experiences. We're home to three World Heritage Sites (Caernarfon, Conwy and Harlech castles), not to mention a complete history book of places ranging from ancient stone circles to workshops preserved just as they were when the last slate miners clocked off. Slate shaped North Wales as much as any other historic force, leaving a deep legacy that is currently the subject of a World Heritage Site bid.

We have heritage railways by the trainload – one even takes you to the top of Snowdon, the highest point in southern Britain. And, to accentuate our distinctiveness, you'll hear Welsh spoken everywhere. It's the oldest living language in Europe, central to the character and culture of this part of Wales.



New for old

But here's the thing. New legends are being created as we speak – at places like historic quarries and slate mines reborn as adventure (with a capital A) centres with the fastest ziplines in the world and, below ground, acrobatics on giant subterranean trampolines. In the Conwy Valley there's another world's first – an inland surfing lagoon, no less.

As The Daily Telegraph recently wrote: 'The old favourites are still there. But there are now some new exciting ingredients in the mix.'

The legends of yesterday and today

Our legends take on many forms. They apply to people and places, sights and sounds, past and present.

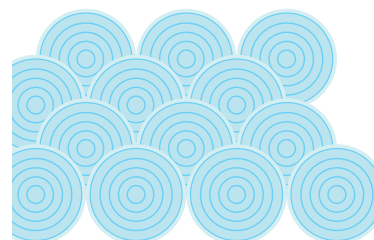
You'll encounter them at Dinas Emrys in the lovely Nant Gwynant Valley near Beddgelert, where it's said there was a great battle between the red and the white dragon (guess who won?). They're there in Aberdyfi, where a tidal bell tolls for the fabled kingdom of Cantre'r Gwaelod, submerged beneath Cardigan Bay.

Palatial Caernarfon Castle is a medieval monument that casts its net far and wide, evoking memories of Imperial Rome, Constantinople and the ancient Celtic folk tales known as the *Mabinogi*.

Let's finish by shifting gear from 13th-century Caernarfon to 2017. If zooming down a zip wire at over 100mph in a quarry near Bethesda isn't a legendary experience, we'd like to know what is.

Looking forward

In 2018 Wales's theme will be 'The Year of the Sea', during which we'll be celebrating our salty maritime heritage and hundreds of miles of coastline, which take in everything from big, sandy beaches to intimate coves and bays. Watch this space.



One of the best on the planet

Leading travel publisher *Lonely Planet* has listed North Wales high in the top 10 'Best in Travel' regions to visit in 2017, beating places like South Australia and Chile. It came a resounding fourth on the strength of its beauty, activities and food. Here's what they had to say: 'North Wales deserves to be recognised on the global stage. It's a stunning area with a vast array of activities (and has) also become the haunt of in-the-know foodies. North Wales is a gem and should be on every traveller's radar.'





Snowdonia is perhaps the best-known mountain range in Britain. It's tough and rugged, beautiful and inspiring, all at the same time.

But mountains are just one part of our story. Snowdon might rule the roost. But there are idyllic lakes and moody moorlands too, ancient oakwoods and green, grassy vales. And we haven't even begun to describe the coast, a 200-mile stretch of shore made up of dreamy estuaries, huge beaches, tiny coves and towering cliffs.

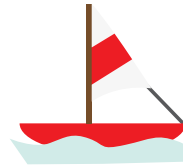
Snowdonia Mountains and Coast is a region of sudden and surprising contrasts. There are lots of reasons for visiting. Here's a sample to get you started.

Snowdon



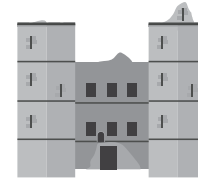
Mountain high

Possibly the most spectacular gateway to Snowdon is the Llanberis Pass. It's a pretty awesome slice of countryside, a craggy defile shaped by volcanoes and glaciers. No wonder it was used as training territory by the team that first conquered Everest in 1953. If you have the inclination, you can tick off more than 90 mountain summits in Snowdonia.



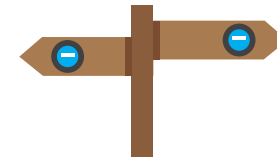
Squeaky clean sand between your toes

Our beaches (over 35 in all) range from blockbusters like Harlech (where does it end?) to intimate coves and bays like Porth Oer on the Llŷn Peninsula – better known, perhaps, as 'Whistling Sands' since the grains squeak beneath your feet. And since it's in the care of the National Trust (like a lot of our coastline) you can bet your boots that it's pure and pristine, just perfect for building sandcastles.



Past masters

Do you like proper castles? Quite apart from our big three World Heritage Sites (Caernarfon, Conwy and Harlech) you'd be a cold fish if you weren't gripped by the dramatic presence of Dolwyddelan and Dolbadarn, mountain-locked bastions of the Princes of Gwynedd. Or fail to be swept away by the goings-on at Criccieth Castle, built by a Welsh warrior king, added to by Edward I of England, and sacked by Welsh rebel Owain Glyndŵr. That's one eventful life.



Bear feet

Follow in the footsteps of Bear Grylls. 'The coastal walk ... known as the Edge of Wales Walk, is spectacular,' he says. He's fallen in love with Llŷn (who wouldn't?) – so much so that he even bought St Tudwal's Island near Abersoch.



Culture club

Snowdonia Mountains and Coast has a proud, living heritage which it shares through language, art, crafts and music. And it's accessible to all. Dip your toes into its deep pool at the unique Nant Gwrtheyrn Welsh Language and Heritage Centre on the Llŷn Peninsula.

Visit the new art and performance space at Pontio, Bangor. Seek out Tŷ Mawr Wybrnant near Penmachno, birthplace in 1558 of Bishop William Morgan whose translation of the Bible into Welsh helped secure the future of the language. Delve into our long and eventful history at STORIEL (formerly the Gwynedd Museum and Art Gallery) in its new home in Bangor. And pop into craft workshops everywhere for items fashioned from slate, wood, wool and glass.

It's what holidays and short breaks are all about – that experience or encounter that lives on, staying with you long after you're back home.



For families, it may be the smiles on the faces of the kids as they ride the world's first people-powered rollercoaster at Greenwood Forest Park near Caernarfon. For couples it might be sharing a sunset at Dinas Dinlle beach or a walk in the woods near Betws-y-Coed.

Making memories is easy in Snowdonia Mountains and Coast. Here are just a few ways.

On location

Film companies love the drama and grandeur of our mountains. Many movies have been shot here, the latest being director Guy Richie's big-budget swordfest, *King Arthur: Legend of the Sword*, which will premiere in 2017. Arthurian tales crop up everywhere in these parts – Llyn Ogwen is said to be the resting place of Excalibur, for example. Get in the mood by visiting King Arthur's Labyrinth in Corris, an enchanting family attraction that in 2017 unveils its latest feature, Dragon River.

Southern exposure

Snowdon, where King Arthur is said to have killed a fearsome giant, isn't our only mythical mountain. Southern Snowdonia is dominated by the brooding bulk of Cader Idris, the legendary 'Chair of Idris' the Giant. Spend the night on his rock-strewn summit and you'll awake a poet. Or madman. Or maybe not at all.



Waves and woods

Surf and turf takes on a whole new meaning at Surf Snowdonia in the Conwy Valley, the world's first inland surfing lagoon that creates, like clockwork, the perfect wave. Just down the road you'll get your adrenaline rush from climbing trees (and other dizzying aerial acrobatics) at Zip World Fforest. Brand new for 2017 is the Fforest Coaster, a 'toboggan run on rails' that weaves, darts and speeds through the trees.



Highs and lows

We're Britain's adrenaline and adventure capital. Where else can you whizz down a zip line at over 100mph, the fastest in the world (at Bethesda), then bounce below in a giant subterranean trampoline, another world's first (at Blaenau Ffestiniog)?



Blooming Bodnant

Here's one for the green fingered amongst you. The lush Vale of Conwy is a very green place – and the jewel in its crown is the National Trust's Bodnant Garden, one of the finest in Britain. It's a garden of two halves – formal beds and manicured lawns up above, and the wild, tangled world of The Dell down below. If you're visiting, be sure to pop into the Bodnant Food Centre nearby for a welshcake or two – and lots of other foodie goodies besides.



Barefoot in Bala

Here's an inspirational journey that you can make too. In 1800, 15-year-old Mary Jones walked 25 miles over the mountains from Cader Idris to Bala to collect a Welsh Bible from the religious leader Rev Thomas Charles. Her inspiring story, which has become the stuff of legend, is told at Mary Jones World visitor centre at Llanycil near Bala.



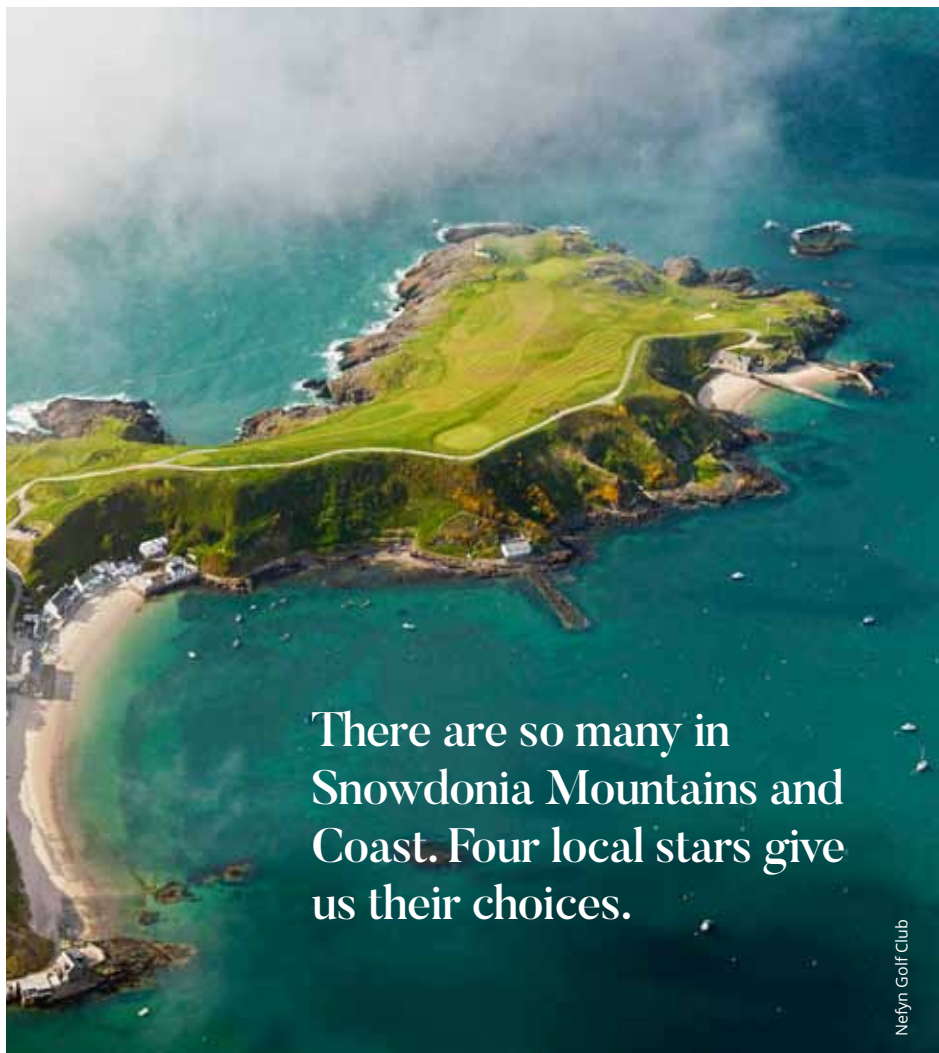
Where's the sea gone?

You may well ask. Bird's Rock, Craig yr Aderyn, looks somewhat out of place. It rises abruptly from green fields in the low-lying Dysynni Valley near Tywyn. This former sea-cliff is now marooned miles inland due to the shifting coastline, but no one has mentioned this to the seabirds that still nest here. It's an exhilarating walk to the top – but watch out for the fearless wild goats who also call Bird's Rock home.



My house is bigger than your house

Conwy's narrow medieval streets are crammed with historic houses. Plas Mawr (The Big House) is a living legend – quite literally. This imposing Elizabethan townhouse, the finest in the UK, recreates life as it was lived centuries ago through audio and multi-sensory displays. 'Great for all ages,' says TripAdvisor. There's more family fun at the unbelievably tiny fisherman's cottage on the quay. See if you can all fit into Britain's 'Smallest House'.



There are so many in Snowdonia Mountains and Coast. Four local stars give us their choices.

Nefyn Golf Club

Sir Bryn Terfel

Recently honoured Sir Bryn was brought up in Pant Glas, a village near Penygroes. The opera superstar has never forgotten his roots and still calls the area his home. 'Wherever he travels, the spirit of his native North Wales goes with him,' said *The Daily Telegraph* in an interview. Here are his favourite places in Snowdonia Mountains and Coast.

Nefyn Golf Club

Sir Bryn likes his golf – especially when it's played at the legendary Nefyn & District Golf Club. This one-of-a-kind links course juts out ferociously into the sea. 'It's like playing off the deck of a battleship,' reckon hardened but shell-shocked golfers. To calm the nerves, Sir Bryn likes to retreat to another legendary place – Porthdinllaen's Tŷ Coch Inn, voted third-best beach bar in the world.

Snowdon and the Snowdon Mountain Railway

A predictable – but entirely justifiable – choice. Is there a more spectacular train ride in the UK? The Himalayan-style rack-and-pinion narrow-gauge line takes you to a 3,560ft/1,085m summit where the views are, again, predictably sensational, all the way to Ireland's Wicklow Hills. Call into the Hafod Eryri Visitor Centre for more panoramic views, information and refreshments.



Bwlch y Felten, Nantlle Ridge

The Nantlle Ridge

This ridge walk is one of the area's lesser known – but no less spectacular – high-altitude paths (a head for heights is helpful). It starts from the village of Rhyd Ddu then heads west, ending (or beginning, depending on how you tackle it) at Mynydd Garn Goch, which – surprise, surprise – just happens to loom above Sir Bryn's home village.

Llanbedrog

It's one of the many lovely beaches on Llŷn. Llanbedrog's sheltered sands are particularly attractive to families – and its much-photographed row of candy-coloured beach huts sets the scene for a genuine seaside experience, pure and simple. Sir Bryn recommends that you camp at nearby Bolmynydd.

Portmeirion

It's impossible not to fall in love with Portmeirion. This fantasy village, created by architect Sir Clough Williams-Ellis, is a wondrous mish-mash of influences that stretch from the Orient to Italy. Wherever you look, you'll see something surprising – and something that makes you smile. What's more, its lush grounds and gardens are almost as enchanting as the village itself.



Robin McBryde

Born in Bangor, international rugby star Robin won 37 caps for Wales between 1994 and 2005. He was recently confirmed as Wales coach for the 2017 summer tour of the Pacific Islands. In his own words, here's why he loves Snowdonia Mountains and Coast.

Snowdon

'My mother lives a stone's throw from Llyn Padarn, Llanberis, with fantastic views of the mountains. On a clear day the temptation to get up to the top of the mountain has proved too much and I have climbed Snowdon at least once a year for the past 15 years or so. I've taken the PYG track a few times, along with the main path from Llanberis. There's no better way to clear the mind and build up an appetite.'

Barmouth Bridge

'Whilst completing a charity walk from South to North Wales, I had the pleasure of walking across the bridge that spans the mouth of the Mawddach Estuary and on through Barmouth. It literally took my breath away.'

Caernarfon Castle

'We finished the 200-mile walk in the square at Caernarfon, and attended a concert held within the grounds of this stunning castle to celebrate the finish – a fantastic spectacle.'

Pwllheli beach

'Another great training destination for me was the beach at Pwllheli, which stretches for miles.'

The Llŷn Peninsula

'Pwllheli is the "capital" of Llŷn. A proper tour of the peninsula with a visit to the National Trust village of Porthdinllaen is definitely something I have down as a must-do.'



Lisa Gwilym

Lisa is a broadcaster, well-known in Wales, who presents programmes on BBC Radio Cymru, BBC Radio Wales and S4C, the Welsh language TV channel. She lives in Y Felinheli with her husband and young son. Here, she tells us all about five of her best. One of them might raise a few eyebrows...



Portmeirion

'It's a true one-off. The village is quirky and totally unique, the vision of architect Sir Clough Williams-Ellis. I love my music (Lisa presents a music programme for the BBC) so you'll find me at Portmeirion's magical Festival No. 6 in September. It's one of the coolest festivals in Britain and I'm so lucky to have it on my doorstep.'



Bangor Pier

'It's a Victorian gem. The pier, the second longest in Wales, takes you halfway across the Menai Strait, with wonderful views. My son loves walking across it – and I love the tasty cakes served in the tearoom.'

Y Felinheli

'I'm so happy that this is where our home is. The little port of Y Felinheli, beautifully located on the Menai Strait, has a strong community spirit. I enjoy going to the Fic and Gardd Fôn pubs – and to GreenWood Forest Park for some family fun.'



Trawsfynydd Nuclear Power Station

'Yes, you read that correctly. It's possibly an odd choice, but the view of this disused power station is spectacular none the less. Its two huge concrete edifices contrast with the natural green splendour all around. Brutalism at its best. Apparently, they were designed to look like castles in the landscape. It stands next to a lake where you can walk, cycle or fish.'



Porthdinllaen

'This National Trust village on the north coast of the Llŷn Peninsula has been the perfect location for some of my special occasions. It's totally unspoilt with a lovely beach. A drink at the waterfront Tŷ Coch Inn is a North Wales must-do.'



Owain Fôn Williams

Owain hails from Penygroes. The international footballer, who plays for the Scottish Premier league side Inverness Caledonian Thistle, was part of the heroic Welsh team that won the hearts of the world by reaching the Euro 2016's semi-finals. He's also a passionate painter, enjoying the sense of 'isolation and relaxation' it brings, away from the demands of everyday life. His paintings reflect his bond with his local environment. Places like...

Trefor

This former quarrying village on Llŷn's north coast commands stunning views of Yr Eifl mountains as they plunge down sheer cliffs into the sea. Owain likes to take a fishing boat from Trefor for these views – and those looking across to Snowdon.



Together Stronger by Owain Fôn Williams

Caernarfon

Defined by its World Heritage castle, Caernarfon is a must-visit place. But the towering medieval fortress isn't the only place on the tick list. There are charming narrow streets too, the modern, arty Doc Fictoria, and the chance to ride the scenic narrow-gauge Welsh Highland Railway all the way to Porthmadog.



Pant Ddu

Now here's a surprise. A vineyard. In the mountains. Pant Ddu Vineyard and Orchard, on the slopes of Dyffryn Nantlle, produces award-winning wines (white, red and rosé) as well as high-quality cider and apple juice.



Beddgelert

When riding the Welsh Highland, stop off here. Beddgelert is one of Snowdonia's most picturesque villages, with a cluster of stone houses set beside the River Glaslyn. You have to visit the grave of the faithful hound Gelert (it's almost compulsory), but don't let the legend of the dog's heroic death upset you too much – it was probably the invention of an 18th-century innkeeper with beds to fill.

Aberdaron

Travel along the Llŷn Peninsula to the 'land's end' of North Wales and you arrive at Aberdaron. It's an atmospheric – and quite legendary – place. Discover the peninsula's unique history and culture at the Porth y Swnt visitor centre. And if the weather is kind, take a boat trip to Bardsey, the fabled 'Isle of 20,000 Saints'.



We all like a good story. That's especially true in Wales, where the ancient tradition of storytelling was passed down word-of-mouth by poets and bards to princes and peasants.

Then came the written word and Britain's earliest prose literature, the *Mabinogi*, dating from the 12th and 13th centuries. This collection of tales, based on the oral traditions of old, are a heady mix of myth, legend and real history. Their leading lights include princes and maidens, dragons and white horses, giants and heroic warriors, who inhabit a fantastical world of heightened drama, romance, humour, betrayal, conflict and philosophy.

Our book of the year is...

The *Mabinogi's* magical landscapes take their inspiration from the western shores of Wales. So if we had to pick a 'book of the year' for our Year of Legends, there's only one choice, really...

The stories range far and wide across Wales. The tale firmly rooted in Snowdonia Mountains and Coast goes by the name of 'The Dream of Maccen Wledig'. (See 'Dream on' for the full story)

Saintly steps

According to legend there are 20,000 saints buried on Bardsey Island (Ynys Enlli in Welsh). We're not sure about the numbers, but we do know that three pilgrimages to Bardsey, on which a monastery was founded in AD615, equalled one to Rome. Follow in their footsteps on the Pilgrim's Way across North Wales to the tip of Llŷn. It's also claimed that Bardsey is the resting place of Merlin, King Arthur's magician, and served as the inspiration for Avalon, the legendary Arthurian island.



Segontium



Llyn Barfog

Dream on

Maccen Wledig, or Magnus Maximus, dreams of a faraway land with a beautiful maiden. He sends messengers to find her. Eventually they arrive in Snowdonia, 'The rugged land that our master saw'. He marries Helen or Elen, the woman of his dreams and daughter of a Welsh chieftain. The story is a beguiling mix of fact and fiction. Magnus Maximus served as Roman Emperor from AD383 to 388 and Caernarfon was an important Roman stronghold - you can still visit the remains of their fort, Segontium, on the hill above the castle.

Another tale from the *Mabinogi*, 'Branwen, Daughter of Llŷr', has links with Harlech - the tragic sculpture here, entitled 'The Two Kings', is bound up in the story of Llŷr and her ill-fated marriage to the King of Ireland.

No swimming please

Quite apart from the cold, please don't dip your toes into the waters of Llyn Barfog (in the hills above Aberdyfi) and Llyn-yr-Afanc (near Betws-y-Coed). They both claim to contain the Afanc, a vicious aquatic monster that makes Jaws sound tame by comparison. But which lake has the greatest claim to Wales's Loch Ness Monster? It may be Llyn Barfog, for legend has it that a nearby rock has a hoof print caused by King Arthur's horse when he dragged the Afanc from the deep.

Vortigen's Valley

The spectacular road to Nant Gwrtheyrn Welsh Language and Heritage Centre on the Llŷn Peninsula near Llithfaen slices through the cliffs down 'Vortigen's Valley'. The Celtic chieftain is said to have invited the Saxons to Britain, paying for this calamitous deed by becoming a fugitive and dying in this 'gloomy hollow'. Ironic really, for Nant Gwrtheyrn now serves as a beacon for our Celtic heritage.

Wales is a land of poets. Perhaps it's something to do with Welsh, an inherently lyrical language that has its own melodies and rhythms.

2017 sees the 100th anniversary of the death of one of the country's greatest poets, Hedd Wyn. Precocious and self-taught, by the time he was 12 he had mastered the hardest disciplines of Welsh poetry known as *cynghanedd* (meaning 'harmony'), a complex sound arrangement within a line of verse using stress, alliteration and rhyme. Some even say that you can detect vestiges of it in the English-language poetry of Dylan Thomas.

Born in 1887, Ellis Humphrey Evans's natural talent soon shone through, and he acquired the bardic name of Hedd Wyn (Blessed Peace) for his early poetry. Influenced by the romantic poets, his themes were dominated by notions of nature and romance.



A victim of war

He was no ordinary poet. And his was no ordinary death. Hedd Wyn died on 31 July 1917 after being shot during the Battle of Passchendaele in World War One while serving with the Royal Welch Fusiliers. 'Heavy weather, heavy soul, heavy heart. That is an uncomfortable trinity, isn't it?' he wrote, of the horror of the trenches.

Is there a more poignant tale than that of Hedd Wyn? He never lived to know that he had won the greatest prize in Welsh literature, the National Eisteddfod Chair.

His winning poem *Yr Arwr* (*The Hero*), posted from France, was announced at the National Eisteddfod held at Birkenhead on 6 September 1917. During the Chairing of the Bard ceremony it was solemnly announced that the winning poet, who had entered his work under the pseudonym 'Fleur de Lys', had been killed in action six weeks earlier.



The Black Chair

In honour of Hedd Wyn's life and untimely death the empty chair was draped in a black sheet. The 1917 gathering is now referred to as *Eisteddfod y Gadair Ddu* (The Eisteddfod of the Black Chair).

Hedd Wyn's story lives on. The Black Chair was taken back to his home, the humble farmstead known as *Yr Ysgwrn* near *Trawsfynydd*. Over the years it became a place of pilgrimage, even though still lived in by the Hedd Wyn family.



An open door

'It was my duty to keep the door open,' said Gerald, a nephew of the poet. In 2012 *Yr Ysgwrn* was sold to the Snowdonia National Park Authority.

'I've asked the Park to preserve it as a home and not turn it into a museum,' added Gerald. And that's exactly what has been happening during much-needed restoration and conservation work over the last few years.

Yr Ysgwrn will reopen in spring 2017 as it was in Hedd Wyn's time with one important addition - its greatest treasure, the Black Chair. It's an event that will form a cornerstone of Wales's Year of Legends. The house is signposted off a minor road that runs east from the A470 near *Trawsfynydd*, accessed just south of the A470's junction with the A4212.

We'll leave the last word to Gerald: 'The Park will go on forever and I hope *Yr Ysgwrn* will too.'

Wales remembers

For information on the way in which Wales is marking the centenary of World War One go to walesremembers.org.

Some of you may remember the late, great Patrick Moore, the eccentric astronomer who, through hosting BBC TV's long-running *The Sky at Night*, first popularised stargazing.

If he were alive today, he would – forgive the pun – be over the moon about our fascination with all things heavenly in those infinite galaxies of stars, space and black holes. He'd no doubt also be making a bee-line for the Snowdonia National Park, which in 2015 was declared the world's 10th International Dark Sky Reserve.



The dark side

So what is a Dark Sky Reserve? It's a prestigious award given by the International Dark Sky Association to places with outstanding night air quality and where real efforts are being made to minimise light pollution.

Mind you, we had something of a head start here in Snowdonia Mountains and Coast. Naturally speaking, we're amongst the darkest places in southern Britain. Covering a land mass of over 800 thinly populated square miles, we're a dark haven for stargazing, especially in our rugged, mountainous interior.

Look at it this way: Snowdonia is in the dark, but we're shining a light on the heavens.

Wales as a whole is ahead of the curve. There are also designated Dark Sky areas in the Brecon Beacons, Pembrokeshire Coast and Elan Valley. As the Dark Sky Association, based in Tuscon, Arizona, said: 'Wales now leads the world in the percentage of its territory enjoying protected status for its night skies... Nowhere else has achieved comparable success in recognising the value of night time darkness and taking concrete steps to safeguard it for future generations.'

Seeing stars

So, where to look? Well, anywhere really in this part of Wales. And there's no need to invest in expensive equipment. Very often, the naked eye or binoculars will suffice.

In general terms, looking south depending on the seasons you can see Orion the Hunter, Gemini, Sirius, the Pleiades or Seven Sisters, the Summer Triangle, Cygnus, the square of Pegasus and the Milky Way (our own galaxy).

Looking north, the stars here are the same all year round, so can easily be found on a clear night. The group of stars known as the Plough are especially easy to recognise. The others are Cassiopeia and, of course, the North Star (or Polaris).

Five favourites

Here are just a few of the locations where you'll get a great view of the night sky.

Llyn y Dywarchen

A popular fishing lake located alongside the B4418 above the village of Drws y Coed in Dyffryn Nantlle. It's just off the A4085 Beddgelert to Caernarfon road at Rhyd Ddu.



Llyn Geirionydd

This forest-ringed lake, in the hills west of Trefriw in the Conwy Valley and accessible via a narrow minor road, has a real sense of solitude, especially at night.



Llynau Cregennen

A pair of lakes on the flanks of Cader Idris in southern Snowdonia, possibly the moodiest in the entire National Park. The easiest approach is from the east, via the minor road from Dolgellau.



Tŷ Cipar

This remote former gamekeeper's house is located high on the Migneint, an area of blanket bog rich wildlife that stretches from Ysbyty Ifan to Llan Ffestiniog. It's on the B4407, about 4½ miles south-west of Ysbyty Ifan and 5½ miles north-east of Llan Ffestiniog.

Bwlch y Groes

The highest surfaced mountain road in Wales, between Dinas Mawddwy and Llanuwchllyn, 'The Pass of the Cross' rises to 1,791ft/546m. As well as its crystal night skies, it's also worth visiting in daylight for the amazing terrestrial views, stretching from Cader Idris to the Berwyn Mountains.



Snowdonia Mountains and Coast has already gone down in legend as a place of adventure. Victorian visitors to North Wales ventured beyond the seaside promenades, exploring, for the first time, Snowdonia's mountains for no other reason than pure pleasure.

Pioneering rock climbers like the legendary Joe Brown and Don Whillans cut their teeth on the fearsome slabs and overhangs of the Llanberis Pass. And Sir Edmund Hillary chose Snowdon as his training ground for the first successful ascent of Mount Everest.

The mothers of invention

So we've got form when it comes to legendary adventures. And the trend continues. We're an inventive lot in these parts. Nowadays, you can zoom down zip wires, explore caverns, perform aerial acrobatics up in the trees and down below in slate caverns, and enjoy all kinds of watersports... including surfing on an inland lagoon.

Here's what Tori James, the first woman to climb Everest, has to say: 'I always get excited about a trip to Snowdonia... Whether I've been running, hiking, climbing or kayaking, it's very hard to leave.'

Bear Grylls is also a big fan: 'Wales lends itself so well to many activities and adventures. Snowdon is an international icon and encapsulates the spirit of Wales and the Welsh people.'

Feet first

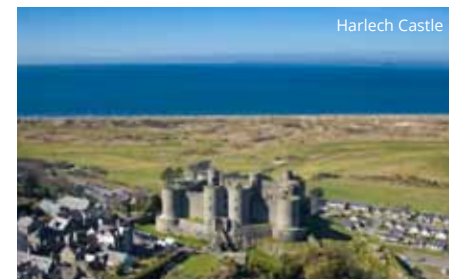
But let's start with our number-one favourite pastime: walking.

Our reputation as a challenging environment for enthusiastic walkers is well known. But we have a gentler side too. There are lots of easy, well-surfaced circular trails suitable for all the family – and you won't need a map, for they are waymarked all the way.

We're thinking of walks around Bala and places like the National Trust's lovely Dolmelynlyn Estate in the woods north of Dolgellau – and, most of all, of the new series of circular coastal walks we've developed. There are 18 in all, and since they range from just over a mile to 10½ miles in length, you're bound to find one that fits the bill. For the full picture go to the walking section of visitsnowdonia.info.



Aberdaron



Harlech Castle

The coast with the most

Talking of the coast, there's a lot of it here (around 200 miles, in fact). And thanks to the Wales Coast Path, a ground-breaking (in more ways than one) asset that's the first of its kind in the world, you can walk as much or as little of it as you want. Almost a quarter of its 870 miles lies within our region – so take your pick from peachy beaches, big bays and salty headlands. The many highlights you'll come across en route include the Aber Falls (a short circular loop off the Path), Lloyd George Museum at Llanystumdwy, Harlech Castle, Shell Island and the Dinas Oleu headland at Barmouth, birthplace of the National Trust.

A bigger splash

If you like getting wet you've come to the right place. Name any kind of watersport you like and there's a good chance that you can do it here – on the sea, or in our rivers and lakes. There's even some off-the-wall stuff, like battling your way down the white-water torrents of the River Tryweryn, zorbing (think of being inside a giant floating plastic ball) at Llyn Brenig, and riding the waves at Surf Snowdonia in the Conwy Valley, the world's first inland surfing lagoon that has made such a big splash since opening a few years ago.

'The adventure capital of Europe'

That's what we've been called – and here's why. Our Great Outdoors also play host to riding and pony trekking, fishing, golf, paintballing, ziplining, tree-climbing, and the multitude of outdoorsy skills you can pick up at dedicated adventure centres. Go to our website for more details.

Remember the days when cycling was a minority sport fit only for masochists? They're long gone. Millions of us are now back on our bikes, enjoying fresh air and the exhilarating feeling that the world is spinning beneath our wheels.

A cycling legend

This revolution has been inspired in no small measure by the stellar achievements of the British Cycling Team, led to multi-gold medal Olympic success by a certain local lad, Sir Dave Brailsford.

Ffordd Brailsford Way

Welsh-speaking Sir Dave hails from the village of Deiniolen near Llanberis. You can now follow in his wheeltracks thanks to the recent opening of Ffordd Brailsford, the Brailsford Way. Actually, there are two themed cycling routes – one 50 miles long, the other 75 – that take in the very best of Snowdonia's stunning scenery. And along the way you'll encounter some challenging climbs (Sir Dave wouldn't want it any other way) as well as rewarding descents.

The two routes have a lot in common, both involving the Llanberis Pass, a Brailsford favourite which he has climbed 'millions of times'. The shorter route then cuts through the lovely Nant Gwynant Valley to Beddgelert while the longer option takes in Betws-y-Coed and Blaenau Ffestiniog.



Easy riding

But please don't think that Snowdonia Mountains and Coast is only suitable for experienced cyclists. Our highways and byways include gentle, family-friendly trails too and recreational routes suitable for all-comers. Some follow quiet rural paths, others disused railway lines – and they're traffic-light or completely traffic-free.

The Mawddach Trail, for example, is a lazy glide along the southern shores of the beautiful Mawddach Estuary from Dolgellau to Barmouth, with the highlight of crossing the mouth of the estuary on the bridge that carries the Cambrian Coast railway. Find out more by going to Gwynedd Recreational Routes in the cycling section of visitsnowdonia.info.



The Llŷn Peninsula and Bala also have an excellent choice of highly scenic routes suitable for everyone – look out, for example, for the new Llŷn Circular Cycle Routes leaflet.

A mountain biking legend

It all started in the Coed y Brenin Forest Park way back in the 1990s. Modern mountain biking in Britain was born here when a bunch of enthusiasts created the first purpose-built singletrack trails.

And how it has grown. Coed y Brenin is now home to around 90 miles of routes. Just like cycling on the road, they cater for all abilities. Macho riders make for the 24-mile Beast of Brenin (think of it as a 'black' run in skiing terms), while mellow, laid-back riders prefer the five-mile Yr Afon 'green' trail.

There's even a trail for young children and riders with disabilities – and everyone looks forward to rounding the day off with cakes and coffee in the visitor centre's café.



Going big in Blaenau

Blaenau Ffestiniog, the former 'slate capital of the world', has put those slate mountains to very good use by creating the Antur 'Stiniog mountain biking centre. It has received rave reviews from downhill addicts. 'An awesome trail centre' and 'A brilliant addition to the North Wales MTB scene' are typical comments from breathless bikers.

And there's more world-class mountain biking here – all you have to do is head for the Penmachno Forest.

Lonely Planet placed North Wales fourth in the world's 'Top 10' destinations in 2017 – and one of the reasons was down to its food. 'North Wales has also become a haunt of in-the-know foodies, so however visitors get their kicks, once they've worked up an appetite, they'll also be well catered for,' they said.

It's not just fine dining. As well as polished cuisine at award-winning country house hotels and restaurants with rooms, you'll enjoy good food cooked with care and passion in homely cafés, bistros and inns. No surprise, really, with such inspirational local produce on the doorstep like Welsh Black beef and lamb (mountain and the tender saltmarsh variety), super-fresh seafood straight from the fishing boat, artisan farmhouse cheeses... even local wine and beer.



Black Boy Inn, Caernarfon

The max factor

Quality, honesty, maximum taste and minimal food miles are the keynotes. Our bountiful local larder is used by chefs and cooks to produce everything from hearty, honest-to-goodness simple fare to imaginative, precisely flavoured dishes.

We can't possibly feature the entire menu here – but to give you a flavour here's the 2017 *Good Food Guide's* choice.



Aberdyfi: Seabreeze

'Exposed wood and stonework and glimpses of the sea set the stage for wholesome, generous cooking. As the shelves of Welsh deli goods suggest, local fare is championed.'

Abersoch: Porth Tocyn Hotel

'A meal in the dining room ... is in old-fashioned hotel-style but dishes are carefully done: cauliflower soup with grain mustard crème fraîche and herb oil; roast corn-fed chicken breast studded with black garlic over truffle mash with ginger-infused courgettes, baby carrots and red wine jus.'

Betws-y-Coed: Bistro Betws-y-Coed

'Gerwyn Williams... mostly takes a traditional approach to the cooking, although the tradition may be as much east Asian, say deep-fried pork belly on coconut rice with coriander dressing, as closer to home.'



Dolgellau: Mawddach

'Resourceful Welsh farmers Will and Ifan Dunn have (converted) one of their 17th-century barns into a restaurant and given their home-reared lamb a starring role on the menu... Ifan's cooking is more contemporary than you might expect.'

Harlech: Castle Cottage

'Glyn and Jacqueline Roberts took charge of these Grade II-listed premises back in 1989, putting Castle Cottage into the Guide's list of longest-serving restaurants. ... Seasonal game always gets a good airing on Glyn's daily menus.'

Bangor: Blue Sky Café

'Convivial and cosy, with big leather sofas, rustic furniture and a blazing wood-burner. Soup, sandwiches, burgers and filled ciabatta make up much of the menu, but you'll also find... slow-cooked Welsh lamb with rosemary and garlic.'

Barmouth: Bistro Bermo

'Things are a little more upmarket than the humble bistro tag might suggest, with crisp table linen, folded napkins and candles adding a distinguished feel ... (there's) an extensive menu of classic and modern dishes.'



Llanberis: The Peak

'"Small menu, fresh local produce" is the clarion call at this local eatery... and chef Angela Dwyer is true to her word. Expect a colourful international line-up running from Thai fishcakes... (to) rump of Welsh lamb.'

Market forces

Local produce markets are held at Conwy, Ogwen and Porthmadog (ask locally for details). Market days take place at Barmouth on Thursday (and Sunday, summer only); Caernarfon on Saturday (and Monday May–September); Llanrwst on Tuesday; Porthmadog on Friday; Pwllheli on Wednesday; and Tywyn on Monday (summer only).



Buy local

Look out for this logo when you're out and about – it means that the shop has signed up to the Buy Local Gwynedd campaign. You'll be helping yourself find something distinctive and special – and also helping the local community.

Here's one revealing fact: it's just 10 miles from the top of Snowdon to the sea. Here's another: our coastline stretches for around 200 miles. So when we call ourselves Snowdonia Mountains and Coast, the watery, sandy bit is just as important as all those peaks, forests and moors.

Just beachy

We have over 35 beaches. Here's a quick run-down, from north to south, of some of our coastal highlights:

- **Penmaenmawr** – long, sandy beach with sailing club and attractive promenade
- **Llanfairfechan** – fun, family-friendly seaside village with large sandy beach. The nearby Traeth Lafan Nature Reserve is a great place for birdwatching
- **Dinas Dinlle**, near Caernarfon – enormous beach with widescreen views to match. Great for walkers, windsurfers and power kites
- **Nefyn** – two miles of sweeping sands, scooped out of the coastline in perfect crescents. The impossibly pretty National Trust village of Porthdinllaen is perfect too
- **Porth Oer, near Aberdaron** – a true one-of-a-kind, with 'Whistling Sands' that really do squeak underfoot
- **Aberdaron** – broad sandy beach on Llŷn's 'land's end', sheltered between two spectacular headlands
- **Abersoch** – one of our most popular resorts. A big hit with families, watersports enthusiasts, shoppers and people watchers
- **Pwllheli South Beach (Marian-y-De)** – a three-mile curve of sand and shingle, backed by rolling dunes
- **Morfa Bychan (Black Rock Sands)** – this big beach's golden sands, rock pools and dunes make it a popular spot for families
- **Harlech** – untouched sandy beach, backed by dunes and theatrically overlooked by Harlech Castle
- **Shell Island, Llanbedr** – sand, dunes and, of course, shells
- **Barmouth/Abermaw** – bustling resort town that boasts a huge sandy beach, plus views over the mountains and Mawddach Estuary
- **Tywyn** – popular surfing beach with almost five miles of sand, and also a good place to spot dolphins and porpoises
- **Aberdyfi** – dramatically located at the mouth of the Dyfi Estuary, this big sandy beach is great for windsurfing and wildlife spotting



Coast lines

Jutting into the sea like an outstretched arm, the Llŷn Peninsula is a sanctuary of Celtic culture, wildlife and pristine coastal beauty. This protected Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and Heritage Coast is home to 90 miles of secluded bays, rocky headlands and friendly little resorts. And the beauty goes on and on further south, on the Cambrian Coastline's beaches, headlands and mountain-backed estuaries, the inspiration of painters and poets.

A taste of the sea

Local menus feature catch-of-the-day seafood. Tuck into seafish lobster, crab and scallops caught in Llŷn's clear waters, fresh sole or bass landed by local boats, or that famous Conwy speciality – rich-tasting mussels sustainably hand-raked from their natural home on the seabed, a centuries-old industry (to find out more go to the Mussel Museum on the quayside).



Natural selection

Much of our seashore is protected as National Parkland, Heritage Coast, and 'Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty'. As you'd expect, wildlife thrives here – go dolphin-spotting in Cardigan Bay, or catch the boat to Bardsey Island, a National Nature Reserve with an international reputation for its wealth of wildlife and spectacular seabird colonies, including Manx shearwaters.

Easy riding

Ditch the car and explore our coastline by train or bus. It's easy. Local bus services take you almost everywhere. Ask about the hop-on, hop-off Llŷn Coastal Bus Service, for example. And for the ultimate 'train with a view' with convenient 'Seaside Strolls' en route, ride the Cambrian Coast line that travels along Cardigan Bay from Aberystwyth to Pwllheli.



We've already given you plenty of ideas to get you thinking about what to see and do in Snowdonia Mountains and Coast.

See pages **8/9** for some of our many legendary experiences – everything from wandering medieval Conwy to inland surfing and forest ziplining. Pages **10/13** list places that are local favourites with stars like Sir Bryn Terfel and Robin McBryde.

Pages **18/19** are dedicated to stargazing in our Dark Skies, while our legendary adventures on pages **20/21** embrace land and water, walking and watersports.

The theme is cycling – both road and mountain biking – on pages **22/23**. Food is on the menu on pages **24/25**, while pages **26/27** focus on all things beachy.

Which brings us to where we are now. On the following pages you'll find more ideas and themes to help plan your visit. So off you go ...

(Unless otherwise stated, go to visitsnowdonia.info for more details.)

Water worlds



Aquatics

With all of that water at our disposal we have our fill of watersports. You can go sailing or paddleboarding, kayaking or surfing. Sailing fans head for the open seas or sheltered Menai Strait from havens, harbours, marinas and slipways all along the coast. The Plas Menai National Outdoor Centre on the shores of the Strait is one of many places offering multi-activities, including sailing, windsurfing and kayaking.

Pwllheli, at the gateway to some of the UK's finest sailing waters, has extended its reputation as a magnet for enthusiasts thanks to the opening of Plas Heli, the Welsh National Sailing Academy and Events Centre. This striking new building close to Hafan Pwllheli's superb 400-berth marina, has lined up a packed schedule of prestigious events for 2017 (see pages **34/35**).



Fresh (and white) water

Inland, our lakes and rivers also overflow with aquatic action. Float your boat on the UK's highest sailing venue at Llyn Brenig, one of Wales's largest areas of inland water 1,200ft/365m up on the Denbigh Moors. Bala's Llyn Tegid, the biggest natural lake in Wales, is a thriving watersports centre. It's close to the River Tryweryn, a torrent that guarantees white-water (and white-knuckle) rafting thrills at the National White Water Centre, where anyone who doesn't mind getting wet can have a go.

Go kayaking on beautiful Llyn Gwynant near Beddgelert or Llyn Padarn at Llanberis. Other watersports lakes include Llyn Geirionydd hidden away in the Gwydyr Forest, Llynnau Mymbyr near Capel Curig, and Llyn Trawsfynydd.



Give us a wave

Opened a few years ago, Surf Snowdonia in the green Conwy Valley has been a massive hit. No wonder. The world's first inland surfing lagoon has been designed to produce better and more frequent waves than any of Britain's beaches. Having said that, when conditions are right the surfing is pretty awesome on the Llŷn Peninsula at places like Porth Neigwl (its alternative name, Hell's Mouth, says it all). For a great day's wakeboarding go to Glasfryn Wake Parc, an innovative attraction suitable for beginners and seasoned pros where everything is laid on for you.

If you fancy an adrenaline buzz without getting wet – and the rare experience of whizzing under the Britannia Bridge and Thomas Telford's Menai Suspension Bridge – then take a ride on a RIB powerboat along the Menai Strait.

See overleaf for more ideas

Family fun



Little railways

Little in gauge, large in appeal. We're the world capital of narrow-gauge railways. The Snowdon Mountain Railway does what it says on the tin, taking you to the top of the highest peak in Wales and England. Close by there's the idyllic Llanberis Lake Railway. For Britain's longest heritage railway ride hop on the 25-mile Welsh Highland Railway from Caernarfon to Porthmadog – then go even further by riding its sister line, the classic Ffestiniog Railway, all the way to Blaenau Ffestiniog.

Also in Porthmadog is the charming Welsh Highland Heritage Railway, while down the coast there's tiny Fairbourne (our smallest, with a gauge of just 12¼ins) and Talylyn. It's the world's first preserved railway and the best way by far to enjoy the views across the water in Bala is on the Bala Lake Railway.



Activity unlimited

Go to Glasfryn Parc near Pwllheli if you want to wear out the kids (in the nicest possible way). It's billed as 'North Wales's premier action and activity centre'. Enough said. Greenwood Forest Park near Caernarfon is one very green attraction, winner of many awards for its eco credentials. But most of all, it's fun for families, especially the ride on the world's first eco-friendly people-powered rollercoaster.

You're in a cave, on a boat at King Arthur's Labyrinth, Corris, floating past tableaux and sound-and-light shows that bring Celtic Britain and Arthurian legend to life. What better way to get in the mood for Wales's 'Year of Legends'? At Caernarfon, Yr Hwylfan/The Fun Centre is North-west Wales's biggest indoor adventure play centre.



Our story

Castles and slate caverns

Our historic legacy is expressed in stone and slate. Three iconic castles – Caernarfon, Conwy and Harlech, all World Heritage Sites – dominate the scene (cadw.wales.gov.uk). But the native fortresses of the Welsh Princes of Gwynedd have an equally compelling tale to tell (and you won't find a more atmospheric location than that of Castell y Bere, locked away in the foothills of Cader Idris). To find out more go to princesofgwynedd.info and download audio tours of key sites. For more heritage-based audio tours and inspirational itineraries go to snowdoniaheritage.info.

The story of slate crops up everywhere. Journey deep underground at Llechwedd, Corris and Llanfair slate caverns. The timewarp scene at the National Museum of Slate, Llanberis, looks just as it was when the workers clocked off for the last time, while the Inigo Jones Slateworks near Caernarfon are still going strong, 150 years on. Oh, and can we sneak in a mention here for the Sygun Copper Mine near Beddgelert, another remarkable underground experience that tells the story of Victorian miners?

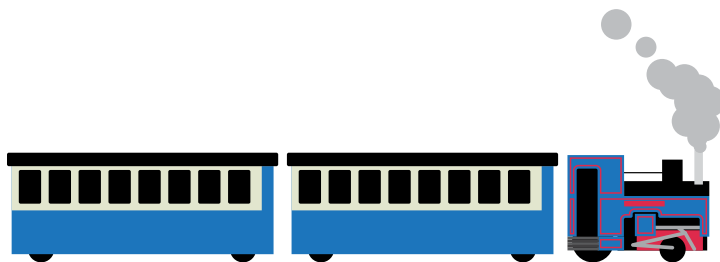
Slate and stone come together at the National Trust's palatial Penrhyn Castle, Bangor, built in the 19th century as a monument to the immense wealth created by the slate industry. Plas Tan y Bwlch, the Snowdonia National Park's Study Centre at Maentwrog, was the home of the Oakley family, influential quarry and land owners. Their beautiful gardens and grounds are open to the public.



Watch the birdie

Pack your binoculars

They're sure to be kept busy when you visit our estuaries and coastline, mountains and woodlands, habitats rich in birdlife. The RSPB Conwy Reserve, for example, is a 'wildlife oasis on the edge of Snowdonia' whose star species include lapwing, sedge warbler and shelduck. But our greatest feathery stars are to be found near Beddgelert at Bywyd Gwylt Glaslyn Wildlife, where incredibly rare ospreys can be viewed by telescope and live remote coverage.



See overleaf for more ideas

The art of shopping



In the food mood

Bodnant Welsh Food in the Conwy Valley is the place to go for the tasty combo of shopping and eating. It showcases the very best Welsh artisan produce, from organic veg to cheeses, mountain lamb to delicious treats. There's a tearoom and restaurant too.

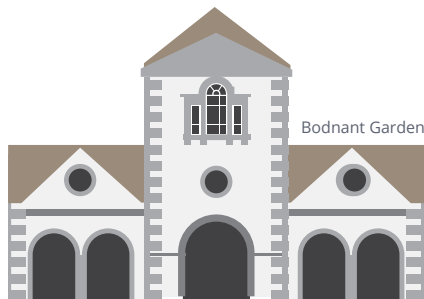
Wherever you go, you'll see that speciality shopping is... well, our speciality. Family-run businesses are our lifeblood, and they don't get much better than Edwards of Conwy, the most famous butcher's shop in Wales, winner of many awards including Britain's Best Butcher 2014/15 and the Best Butcher's Shop in Wales for 2016/17.



Craft works

Art and crafts workshops and studios pop up everywhere. The Corris Crafts Centre is a collection of nine studios featuring a range of hand-made crafts. At Parc Glynllifon near Caernarfon the craft collective lard (pronounced 'yard') also brings together a number of independent businesses.

Trefriw Woollen Mills is a long-established manufacturer of traditional Welsh bedspreads, blankets, rugs and tweeds with a well-stocked shop. Other shopping hot spots include Bangor (its high street is the longest in Wales), Betws-y-Coed, Caernarfon, Conwy, Llanberis, Porthmadog and Pwllheli.



Open doors



Little and large

The National Trust's Tŷ Mawr Wybrnant is a humble 16th-century farmstead with a huge cultural significance. It was the birthplace of Bishop William Morgan, who first translated the Bible into Welsh, a giant step in securing the future of the language. It's in a lovely, secluded spot deep in the hills above Penmachno. Seek it out – you won't regret it. Other National Trust gems include the lovely Crafllwyn Estate near Beddgelert, the delightful mini-manor house of Plas yn Rhiw near Aberdaron, and also at Aberdaron Porth y Swnt, an interpretive centre that acts as a gateway to the Llŷn Peninsula's unique personality and rich cultural heritage.



Other notable museums and visitor centres include the Porthmadog Maritime Museum, STORIEL at Bangor, and the awesome Electric Mountain at Llanberis, where you get to visit – on an eye-popping underground tour – Europe's largest pumped-storage hydro-electric power station.

Cast off, tee off, gallop off into the distance



Golf as it should be

That's the style of golf on offer here in Wales – golf that's played in the true spirit of the game on quality courses renowned for their welcome and friendliness. Our mix of golfing venues suits all abilities and includes three of the UK's top 100 clubs. Tee off from the beach at Nefyn and Aberdyfi, or play against the backdrop of Harlech Castle at Royal St David's. A trio of legendary golfing experiences in this, Wales's 'Year of Legends'.

Horses for courses

Everyone from absolute beginners to experts are welcomed at our riding and trekking centres. The terrain is pretty varied too. Explore the wooded bridlepaths of the lovely Vale of Ffestiniog or gallop along the beach on the southern shores of the Llŷn Peninsula.

Online

Go sea angling from our shores and deep-sea boats. Or head inland for game fishing on rivers and lakes (Llyn Myngul near Abergynolwyn, for example, has superb brown trout fishing). There's good coarse fishing too at places like Llyn Trawsfynydd, which has excellent facilities for anglers.

Here's a run-down of some of the festivals and events taking place in Snowdonia Mountains and Coast in 2017. For more details and an updated events list go to visitsnowdonia.info.

Please note: This list was compiled March 2017 and details may have changed, so please check dates and times if you're planning to attend an event.

May

13 May: Gŵyl Fwyd Caernarfon 2017 gwylfwydcaernarfon.cymru

13 May: Merlin Rockets Sailing Championships – Silver Tiller, Plas Heli, Pwllheli, plasheli.org

19–21 May: Trefriw Walking Festival trefriwwalkingfestival.co.uk

19–21 May: Welsh Highland Railway – Cwrw ar y Cledrau/Rail Ale 13th Annual Beer Festival, Dinas, Caernarfon festrail.co.uk

20–21 May: Snowdonia Slateman Triathlon, Llanberis alwaysaimhigherevents.com

21 May: Snowdonia Half Marathon, Llanrwst, runwales.com

27–28 May: Men of Harlech – Meet the South Wales Borderers Regiment/ Screening of Zulu, Harlech cadw.gov.wales/events

27–29 May: Conwy Pirates Weekend conwypirates.co.uk

27–4 June: North Wales Garden Festival, Portmeirion portmeirion-village.com

28 May: '50 Things' Fun at Llanbedrog nationaltrust.org.uk/features/llanbedrog

30 May: Beddgelert Fun Day nationaltrust.org.uk/craflwyn-and-beddgelert

June

3 June: Rock Ardudwy, Harlech rockardudwy.co.uk

4 June: Bala Middle Distance Triathlon wats-on-events.com

10 June: The Snowdonian – 80-mile round trip on the Ffestiniog & Welsh Highland Railways, festrail.co.uk

11 June: Etape Eryri – The Snowdonia Sportive, Caernarfon alwaysaimhigherevents.com

16–17 June: Salomon Trail Marathon Wales, Coed y Brenin, Dolgellau trailmarathonwales.com

17–25 June: Criccieth Festival cricciethfestival.co.uk

23 June: Snowdon Twilight Race, Llanberis, snowdonrace.co.uk

24 June: Criccieth Festival Food Slam cricciethfestival.co.uk

24 June: Snowdon Rocks, Llanberis lovehopestrength.co.uk

24–25 June: The Tournament, Conwy – one of the flagship events during Wales's 2017 'Year of Legends' thetournament.co.uk

25 June: '50 Things' Fun at Porth y Swnt, Aberdaron nationaltrust.org.uk/porth-y-swnt

28–2 July: Hijinx Unity Festival, Caernarfon, hijinx.org.uk

July

1 July: Blas y Môr/A Taste of the Sea, Aberdaron, nationaltrust.org.uk/porth-y-swnt

1 July: North Wales Agricultural Show, Caernarfon, caernarfonshow.com

7–9 July: Gŵyl Arall Caernarfon gwylarall.com

7–9 July: Welsh Wakeboarding Open, Glasfryn Parc, Pwllheli, glasfryn.co.uk

8–9 July: Barmouth Kite Festival barrikiteflyers.com

10–13 July: Lotus 7 60th Celebrations, Portmeirion, portmeirion-village.com

15 July: International Snowdon Race, Llanberis, snowdonrace.co.uk

15–17 July: Sesiwn Fawr, Dolgellau sesiwnfawr.cymru

22 July: Wales in a Day – Cycle Sportive, Caernarfon to Chepstow opencycling.com/wales-in-a-day

23 July: Scott Snowdonia Trail Marathon, Llanberis, alwaysaimhigherevents.com

23–28 July: Dinghy Week, Abersoch scyc.co.uk

23–29 July: Conwy Classical Music Festival conwyclassicalmusic.co.uk

29 July: North Wales Half Marathon, Conwy runwales.com

29–30 July: Snowman Triathlon, Capel Curig alwaysaimhigherevents.com

August

1, 8, 15, 22 & 29 August: '50 Things' Fun at Porth y Swnt, Aberdaron nationaltrust.org.uk/porth-y-swnt

4–12: National Eisteddfod of Wales, Anglesey eisteddfod.cymru

11–13 August: Snowdonia Outdoor Festival, Bala, snowdonia-outdoorfestival.co.uk

19 August: Race the Train, Tywyn racethetrain.com

19–21 August: Glass Butter Beach, Abersoch & Llanbedrog, glassbutterbeach.com

19–26 August: Conwy River Festival conwyriverfestival.org

September

2 September: Laser 4.7 – Ladder 1 Sailing Competition, Plas Heli, Pwllheli, plasheli.org

3 September: Bala Standard Distance Triathlon, wats-on-events.com

8 September: Queen's Baton Relay Commonwealth Visit, various locations in Gwynedd, teamwales.cymru

8–10 September: Festival No. 6, Portmeirion festivalnumber6.com

13 September: Conwy Honey Fair conwybeekeepers.org.uk

16–25 September: Barmouth Walking Festival, barmouthwalkingfestival.co.uk

17 September: Ras y Cob, Porthmadog festrail.co.uk

24 September: Red Bull Hardline, Dinas Mawddwy, redbull.com

October

6–8 October: Victorian Weekend, Ffestiniog Railway, festrail.co.uk

26–29 October: Wales Rally GB (various locations), walesrallygb.com

28 October: Marathon Eryri, Llanberis snowdoniamarathon.co.uk

28–29 October: Gwledd Conwy Feast gwleddconwyfeast.com

December

1–3 December: Portmeirion Food & Craft Fair, portmeirion-village.com

Our Tourist Information Centres and Points are your first port of call for lots of helpful information on everything from attractions to accommodation, events and activities.

Tourist Information Centres

Aberdyfi*,
Wharf Gardens, LL35 0ED
01654 767321
tic.aberdyfi@eryri-npa.gov.uk

Beddgelert Hebog Centre*
LL55 4YD
01766 890615
tic.beddgelert@eryri-npa.gov.uk

Betws-y-Coed
Royal Oak Stables, LL24 0AH
01690 710426
tic.byc@eryri-npa.gov.uk

Conwy
Muriau Buildings, LL32 8LD
01492 577566
conwytic@conwy.gov.uk

Llandudno
Mostyn Street, LL30 2RP
01492 577577
llandudnotic@conwy.gov.uk

Visitor Experience Hub
Porthmadog **07557553762**
Caernarfon **07584455430**

** Open Easter–October*

Medical information

Ysbyty Gwynedd Hospital
01248 384384. 999 should only be called in an emergency.

NHS Direct Wales: 0845 4647

Out-of-hours GP service:
0300 123 5566

Tourist Information Points

Abergynolwyn
Y Ganolfan, LL36 9YF

Abersoch
The Vestry, High Street, LL53 7DS
enquiries@aberochandllyn.co.uk

Bangor
STORIEL, Ffordd Gwynedd, LL57 1DT

Blaenau Ffestiniog
Antur 'Stiniog, Y Siop, High Street, LL41 3ES

Corris
Corris Craft Centre, SY20 9RF

Criccieth
Post Office, LL52 0BU

Llanberis
Hwb Eryri, Electric Mountain, LL55 4UR
07867 976183
info@hwberyri.co.uk

Tywyn
Library, Neptune Road, LL36 9HA

Y Bala
Penllyn Leisure Centre,
Pensarn Road, LL23 7SR

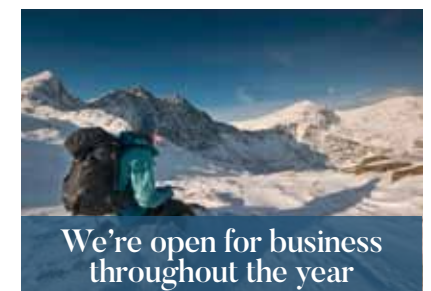
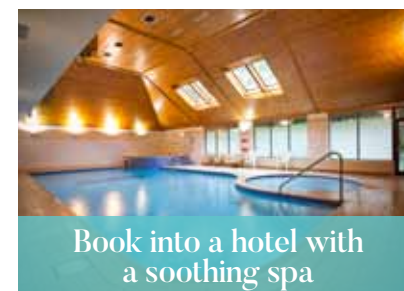
Stay safe

Conditions change fast in our wild and rugged landscapes. For help and advice visit **mountainsafe.co.uk**.

Stay safe with essential advice from **rnli.org/safety**.

Follow the Countryside Code.
naturalresources.wales

You'll find the accommodation that's just right for you in Snowdonia Mountains and Coast. We do the lot – luxury and quirky, classic and contemporary, fashionable and funky, arty and foodie. Here's a sample:



Snowdonia Mountains and Coast is easy to reach, however you choose to get here.

GETTING TO US

By train

Direct services (including Virgin Trains from London to Bangor) take you to the popular North Wales coastal destinations from most parts of Britain. Make inland connections via the Conwy Valley Line (conwyvalleyrailway.co.uk) which runs through the Snowdonia National Park to Betws-y-Coed and Blaenau Ffestiniog. Services from the Midlands through Shrewsbury and Machynlleth link up with the Cambrian Coast Railway (thecambrianline.co.uk).

For National Rail information and enquiries:
nationalrail.co.uk
 08457 484 950

By coach

For National Express information:
nationalexpress.com
 0871 781 8181

By car

There's quick, straightforward access from the North West along the M56 and A55. Motorway links with the Midlands are good too, and the same roads – the M6, M5 and M1 – also bring Snowdonia Mountains and Coast within easy reach of the South of England.

By sea

Irish Ferries and Stena Line operate regular and high-speed services to Holyhead from Dublin. For southern Snowdonia Mountains and Coast, ferry services into Fishguard and Pembroke Dock are a handy alternative.

Irish Ferries:
irishferries.com,
 08717 300 400

Stena Line:
stenaline.co.uk,
 08447 70 70 70

By bike

Reach bike-friendly Snowdonia Mountains and Coast by following the National Cycle Network. Quiet, traffic-calmed and traffic-free routes give good access from the surrounding area and further afield.

nationalcyclenetwork.org.uk

By air

Transfers from the international gateways of Manchester, Liverpool and Birmingham take less than two hours.

Manchester Airport:
manchesterairport.co.uk
 08712 710 711

Liverpool John Lennon Airport:
liverpoolairport.com
 08715 218 484

Birmingham Airport:
birminghamairport.co.uk
 0871 222 0072

AND WHEN YOU ARRIVE ...

Local services

The Snowdon Sherpa is the super-convenient bus service for Snowdonia Mountains and Coast and its attractions. Whether you are walking or sightseeing, take the green option, leave your car behind, sit back, relax and enjoy the scenery. For more details plus information on Gwynedd's local bus services go to gwynedd.llyw.cymru/publictransport.

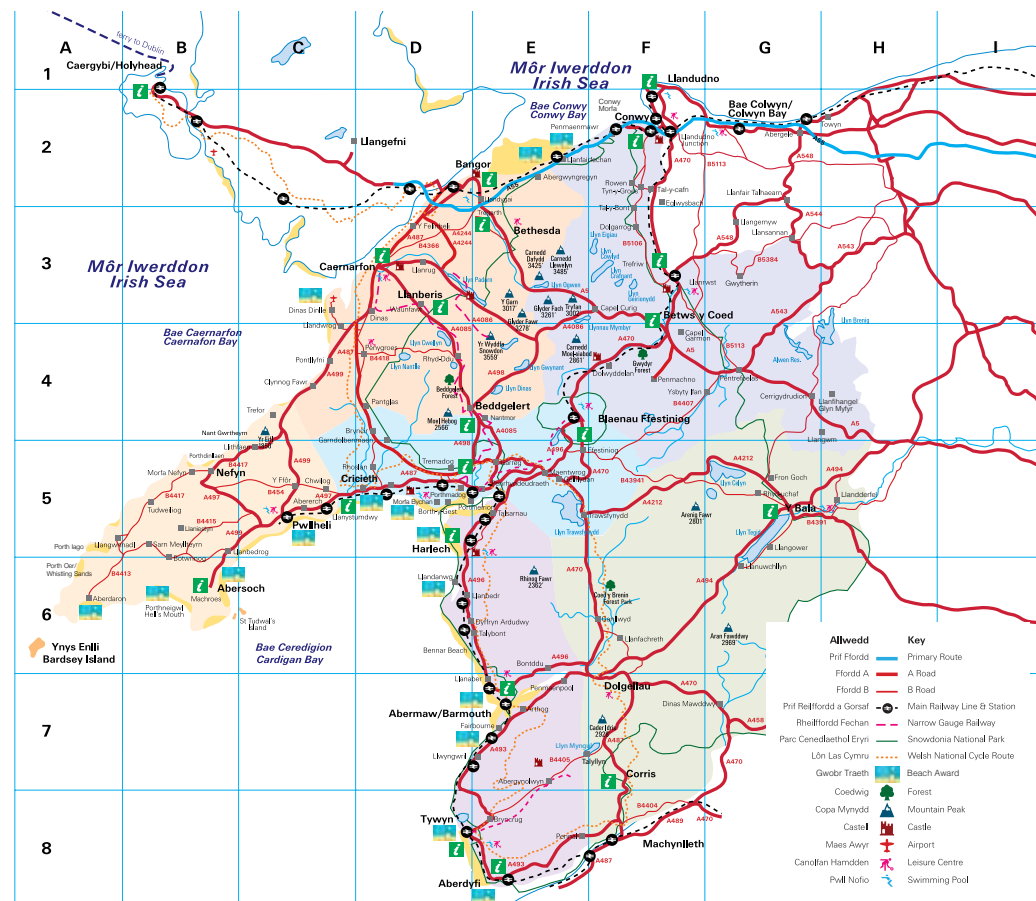
Just the ticket

The Explore Wales Pass is just what it says – one ticket that gives you unlimited access to all of Wales's mainline train services and almost every bus service.

arrivatrainswales.co.uk/ExploreWales/ExploreWalesPass
 03333 211 202

North Wales Rover tickets allow travel for one day on buses and trains. For details of zones and prices:

arrivatrainswales.co.uk/ExploreWales/NorthWalesRover
 03333 211 202



Introducing Wales's Holiday Areas Snowdonia Mountains and Coast is one of the Holiday Areas within Wales. Each area has its own distinct character.

The Isle of Anglesey

t: +44 (0) 1248 713177
e: tourism@anglesey.gov.uk
visitanglesey.co.uk
[facebook.com/visitanglesey](https://www.facebook.com/visitanglesey)

Llandudno and Colwyn Bay

t: +44 (0)1492 577577
e: llandudnotic@conwy.gov.uk
visitllandudno.org.uk
[facebook.com/VisitingLlandudno](https://www.facebook.com/VisitingLlandudno)
twitter: @visit_llandudno

North-East Wales

t: +44 (0) 1978 292015
e: tourism@wrexham.gov.uk
t: +44 (0) 1745 355068
e: rhyltic@denbighshire.gov.uk
northeastwales.co.uk

Mid Wales My Way

t: +44 (0)1874 622485
e: tourism@powys.gov.uk
midwalesmyway.com
[facebook.com/MidWalesMyWay](https://www.facebook.com/MidWalesMyWay)
twitter: @MidWalesMyWay

Ceredigion – Cardigan Bay and the Cambrian Mountains

t: +44 (0)1970 612125
e: brochure@ceredigion.gov.uk
discoverceredigion.wales
[facebook.com/discoverceredigion](https://www.facebook.com/discoverceredigion)
twitter: @visitceredigion

Pembrokeshire – Britain's Only Coastal National Park

visitpembrokeshire.com

Carmarthenshire – Carmarthen Bay

t: +44 (0)1267 231557
e: marketing@carmarthenshire.gov.uk
discovercarmarthenshire.com

Swansea Bay – Swansea, Mumbles and Gower

visitswanseabay.com
twitter: @visitswanseabay

The Valleys – Heart and Soul of Wales

t: +44 (0)29 2088 0011
e: contactus@thevalleys.co.uk
thevalleys.co.uk

Cardiff, Capital of Wales

t: +44 (0)29 2087 3573
e: visitor@cardiff.gov.uk
visitcardiff.com

The Glamorgan Heritage Coast and Countryside

t: +44 (0)1446 704867
t: +44 (0)1656 815332
e: tourism@valeofglamorgan.gov.uk
e: tourism@bridgend.gov.uk
visitthevale.com
bridgendbites.com

Wye Valley and Vale of Usk

t: +44 (0)1291 623772
e: tourism@monmouthshire.gov.uk
visitmonmouthshire.com

Find out more by visiting visitwales.com/brochures to download as many as you like.