

THE BMW 1 SERIES
GOOD FOOD RIDE
101 GREAT BRITISH FOOD ADVENTURES
WALES

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Designed by Fibre

Illustrations by Stephane Kardos

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WALES

002 THE BEST FOR DRINKING CHAMPAGNE BY THE RIVER

The Bell at Skenfrith

Monmouthshire NP7 8UH

01600 750235

www.skenfrith.co.uk

Overlooking the Monnow River, with views of a ruined Norman castle and the surrounding lush green Welsh countryside, The Bell at Skenfrith is as elegant and moving a location to eat and drink beside a river as any in Britain. The building is a former 17th-century coaching inn and, while flagstone floors and oak beams have been sympathetically restored, carefully chosen antique furniture and snug sofas ensure that visitors feel comfortable. The food is unfussy and seasonal, making the most of fresh, local produce, and has won The Bell, among other awards, a place in the list of top 10 pubs in the UK. The proprietors haven't scrimped on luxury or the little things that make a place memorable and the experience as special as possible. Take, for example, the eight guest rooms – named after fishing flies such as “Tups Indispensable” and “March Brown” – which offer pared-down luxury with fine linen and pure Welsh wool blankets.

006 THE BEST MODERN SEASIDE EATING

The Harbourmaster Hotel

*Pen Cei, Aberaeron, Ceredigion,
West Wales SA46 OBA*

01545 570755

www.harbour-master.com

After years of decline, many of the UK's coastal towns and resorts have recently been undergoing revivals, thanks in part to a rash of excellent new hotel and restaurant openings. The Harbourmaster

Hotel is typical. Its décor could have been inspired by toothpaste packaging with crisp whites, cobalt blues and fire-engine reds giving it a fresh nautical air without cliché. That really sums up the appeal of the place – it is smart and rather chic without ever feeling as if some annoying urban entrepreneur has just dumped their incongruent vision of cosmopolitan cool on unsuspecting neighbours. At The Harbourmaster you feel properly connected to this handsome Welsh coastal town, and that feeling follows through to the food. The menus celebrate the best of Welsh produce with imagination and flair without being fussy; Welsh beef is served simply with skinny fries, and local lamb comes honey-roasted with saffron and toasted almond rice. Seafood dishes include smoked cod and cockle chowder, spider-crab risotto and wild Gower sea bass with basil mash. A tall staircase whorls up the middle of the hotel and leads to four of the six bedrooms. Each is named after a ship built in the harbour such as “Pandora” and “Aeron Belle” and all are simply decorated with bare stone walls, sparkling white paintwork and blocks of primary colours and op-art patterns lending a slightly retro feel. All have magical views of Aberaeron – with the natural drama of the land and seascape offset by boats and buildings daubed in jolly paint-box hues.

009 THE BEST BACON SANDWICH

One Planet Adventure Café

*Coed Llandegla Forest, Ruthin Road,
Llandegla, Denbighshire LL11 3AA
01978 751656*

You might expect to find Britain's best bacon sandwich in a classic café or born-again British restaurant trying for a bit of laddish cachet, but no. The editors of this guide found no one more dedicated to the art of making such sandwiches than the staff here, and – this is the

clinker – no better place for generating the kind of hunger needed to fully appreciate their art. Just a year old, the One Planet Adventure Café is housed in a log cabin that snuggles cosily into the heart of this 650-hectare forest, and offers far more than you'd expect from a forest eatery serving food to mountain bikers. Customers, who usually come post-ride, find a menu packed with decent local fare such as lamb and leek pâté with crusty bread, mussels cooked in garlic, and home-made burgers topped with dry-cured ham and a poached egg – hearty fare undoubtedly, but cooked with a laid-back flair and style that keeps the café open all year round – even when the snow makes biking treacherous. It's their understanding that "hearty" doesn't have to mean "bland stodge" combined with the locale that makes the bacon sarnies special. In the words of one regular, "All the ingredients are local and when, after 22 kilometres of mountain biking through the forest, you bite through the bread into the best bacon, then wash it down with a mug of strong tea, the experience can only be described as mystical."

020 THE BEST TOAST

The Felin Fach Griffin Inn
Felin Fach, Brecon, Powys LD3 0UB
 01874 620111
www.eatdrinksleep.ltd.uk

The food writer Nigel Slater loves good toast, so much so that he named his best-selling memoir after it. According to Slater-lore, the perfect slice should be cut thick from an old-fashioned white loaf, toasted over an Aga hot plate until golden brown with charring edges, and then spread with salted Welsh butter. Charles Inkin, owner of the Felin Fach Griffin Inn, clearly thinks the same way. His award-strewn restaurant-and-pub-with-rooms in Powys is possibly the only establishment in Britain allowing guests to make their own toast Slater-style. If you stay overnight, you breakfast in the Aga room downstairs, where Inkin makes everyone feel completely at home with an informal atmosphere and a table strewn with the morning papers. Best of all, if you want to, you can heave up the huge hinged cast-iron lids of the Aga yourself, open up the toasting rack and clamp your

bread inside, and remove it two minutes later as a piping hot and, yes, utterly delicious slice of heaven. It should be pointed out that the Felin Fach Griffin serves marvellous wine and food at all other times too, and has extremely pleasing bedrooms painted a restful crisp white with irresistible, comforting goose-down duvets. A visit is never anything less than magical and if you agree with Slater when he says, "It is impossible not to love someone who makes toast for you" – well, you may never want to leave.

033 THE WILDEST WEEKEND

Fungi Forays
Tan-y-cefn, Nr Rhayader, Powys LD6 5PD
 01597 811168
www.fungiforays.co.uk

Most of the world's edible species of mushroom grow wild in Britain's mild wet climate but, for reasons which are unclear, the practice of wild mushroom picking does not flourish on these shores as it does in countries such as France or Italy. For the past few years the author Daniel Butler has been on a one-man mission to change that, and now, in the beautiful Elan Valley in the Welsh borders, he leads small public mushrooming expeditions into the countryside around his home. By day, Butler guides small groups around spectacular scenery looking for edible species. By night, guests enjoy fine wine, a tasting session and a mushroom feast. Foragers can expect to find a wealth of up to two dozen edible varieties, including porcini,





Cadair Idris, close to Penmaenuchaf Hall

shaggy ink caps and chanterelles as well as the marvellously named hedgehog and beefsteak fungus. They also benefit from their host's boundless enthusiasm for the subject. Most people find it impossible to spend more than a few minutes in the company of this passionate and eccentric young man without having their ideas about food and the countryside altered. Public interest in foraging for wild food is blooming again, as it did in the early 1970s, and there can be few better people in Britain to convince you of its merits. As Butler points out, the treats that he finds can cost a small fortune in the shops, but are simply there for the taking from April to December. Jack, Daniel and partner Bel's enterprising 12-year-old son, has taken advantage of this by progressing from supplying local restaurants to selling his spoils online.

044 THE BEST DRIVE

Penmaenuchaf Hall

Penmaenpool, near Dolgellau,

Gwynedd LL40 1YB

01341 422129

www.penhall.co.uk

When you are located halfway up a mountain and are still fully booked for dinner most nights there has to be a reason. At Penmaenuchaf Hall there are

three: breathtaking views, excellent food and roaring fires. The Hall is situated at the end of a steep and winding drive through mountains, with huge vistas of the coast and estuary below, so the anticipation of arriving is half the fun. Numerous stone walls hide the vegetable gardens, and secret, mossy pathways lead off the drive as the Hall majestically appears around the final bend. Whether you arrive dressed for dinner or post-walk, wet-through and Wellington-booted, you're always made to feel welcome and warm. Lorraine Fielding and Mark Watson, who bought "Pen" in 1990, have spent much time and effort creating a hotel and restaurant that feels like a rural retreat, a secret place to come and unwind. Wait for dinner stoking and poking one of their many open fires and it's hard not to relax. When dinner is served, around eight, you won't be disappointed. Chef Justin Pilkington creates simple, classic dishes that draw on the region's best ingredients such as freshly caught Pwllheli lobster served with home-grown new potatoes and a fresh tomato dressing, or Black Beef, with wild mushrooms and a port sauce. Each dish is presented beautifully in the grand, wood-panelled dining-room that hums with voices speaking Welsh and English. If you're stuck for chit-chat between courses try to find the secret cupboards hidden away behind the panelling. There are at least two.

051 THE ECO-FRIENDLIEST LUNCH

Centre for Alternative Technology

Machynlleth, Powys SY20 9AZ

01654 705950

www.cat.org.uk

Fancy a glass of rose petal wine after ascending 180ft on a water-powered cliff railway? Once a slate quarry, this seven-acre site on the hillsides of southern Snowdonia is now one of Europe's most fascinating environmental display centres, with its own accommodation blocks (some made of straw bales), windmills and solar power. The restaurant is in an old slate building and abides by all recognised principles of sustainability, offering vegetarian wholefoods either grown in the Centre's own gardens, or bought from local farmers. Tarka dhal with rice, tagines with couscous, wholemeal penne with spinach, mushrooms and walnuts in a cream sauce are typical offerings, accompanied perhaps by British country wines, including gooseberry, silver birch and elderflower "champagne". If you are keen to grow your own food, after lunch try the "Taste Me" beds in the organic show gardens, which offer encouragement and instruction to even the most apprehensive gardeners. After all, there can be few more enjoyable and inspirational experiences than wandering around the very gardens in which your food was grown. The "Smell Me" beds offer a great olfactory experience as well. The most popular exhibit of all, however, is the centre's composting area, where a working example of a compost toilet "welcomes contributions from visitors".

087 THE BEST CHEF-GARDENER

The Cors

Newbridge Road, Laugharne,

Carmarthenshire SA33 4SH

01994 427219

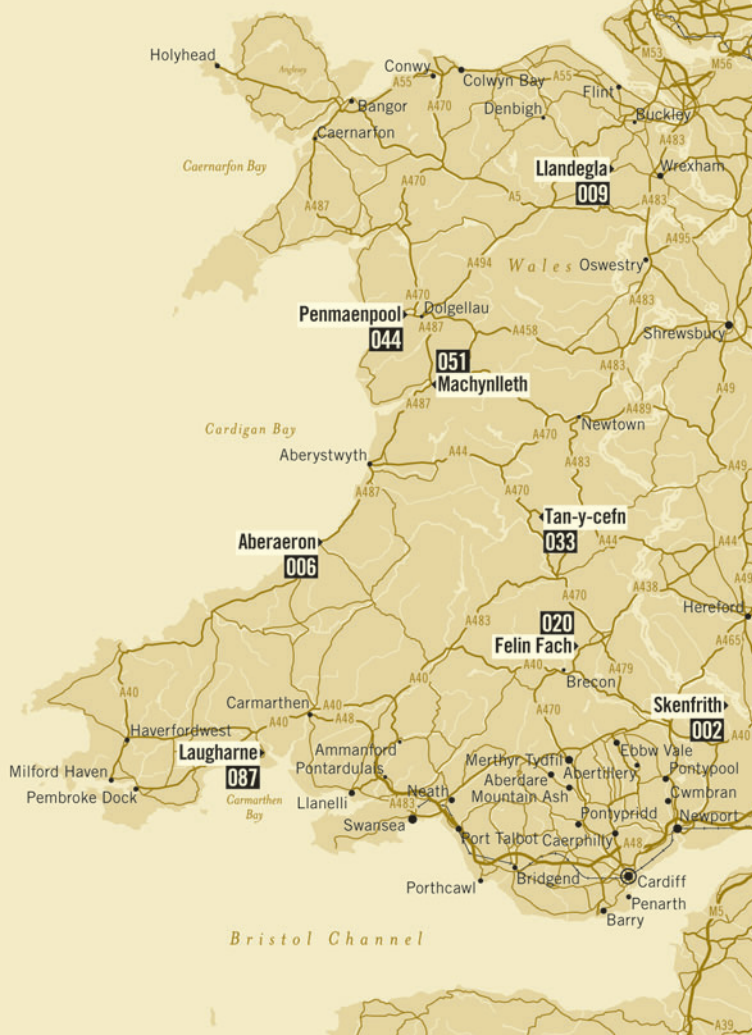
www.the-cors.co.uk

"Cors" means bog or marsh in Welsh, which is pretty much what Chef-Proprietor Nick Priestland had to battle with on the two-and-a-half acre plot around his handsome 1830s house in

Laugharne. Now it is all Box balls and Gunnera – a beautiful and intriguing setting for an unusual restaurant which opens just three days a week (Thursday-Saturday). The exclusivity has one very practical reason – Priestland is a true one-man show, doing all the cooking and gardening. Within these limits, he has been spectacularly successful, opening the grounds in June each year for the National Gardens Scheme and turning several bedrooms into quirky guest accommodation. Couples find the Cors, with its dark red, candlelit dining-room, wonderfully romantic; fans of Dylan Thomas (Laugharne's most famous son) see it as a characterful stopover. The menu, which changes daily, is likely to feature fish from the markets in Carmarthen, often including – for its brief summer season – locally-caught sea trout, or sewin as it is called in Wales. You might also find, for example, "smoked haddock crème brûlée" (the brûlée is a Parmesan crust), and Saltmarsh lamb with a rosemary crust and red wine jus.

MAP 6 WALES

- 002** The Bell, The best for drinking champagne by the river
- 006** The Harbourmaster Hotel, The best modern-seaside eating
- 009** One Planet Adventure Café, The best bacon sandwich
- 020** The Felin Fach Griffin Inn, The best toast
- 033** Fungi Forays, The wildest weekend
- 044** Penmaenuchaf Hall, The best drive
- 051** Centre for Alternative Technology, The eco-friendliest lunch
- 087** The Cors, The best Chef-gardener



TOUR 6 WALES

In food terms Wales is among the most interesting and dynamic areas in the UK, with its culinary offerings now a match for its spectacular scenery. This 67-mile trip will bring some exquisite tastes, traditional and modern, with a variety and quality of settings.

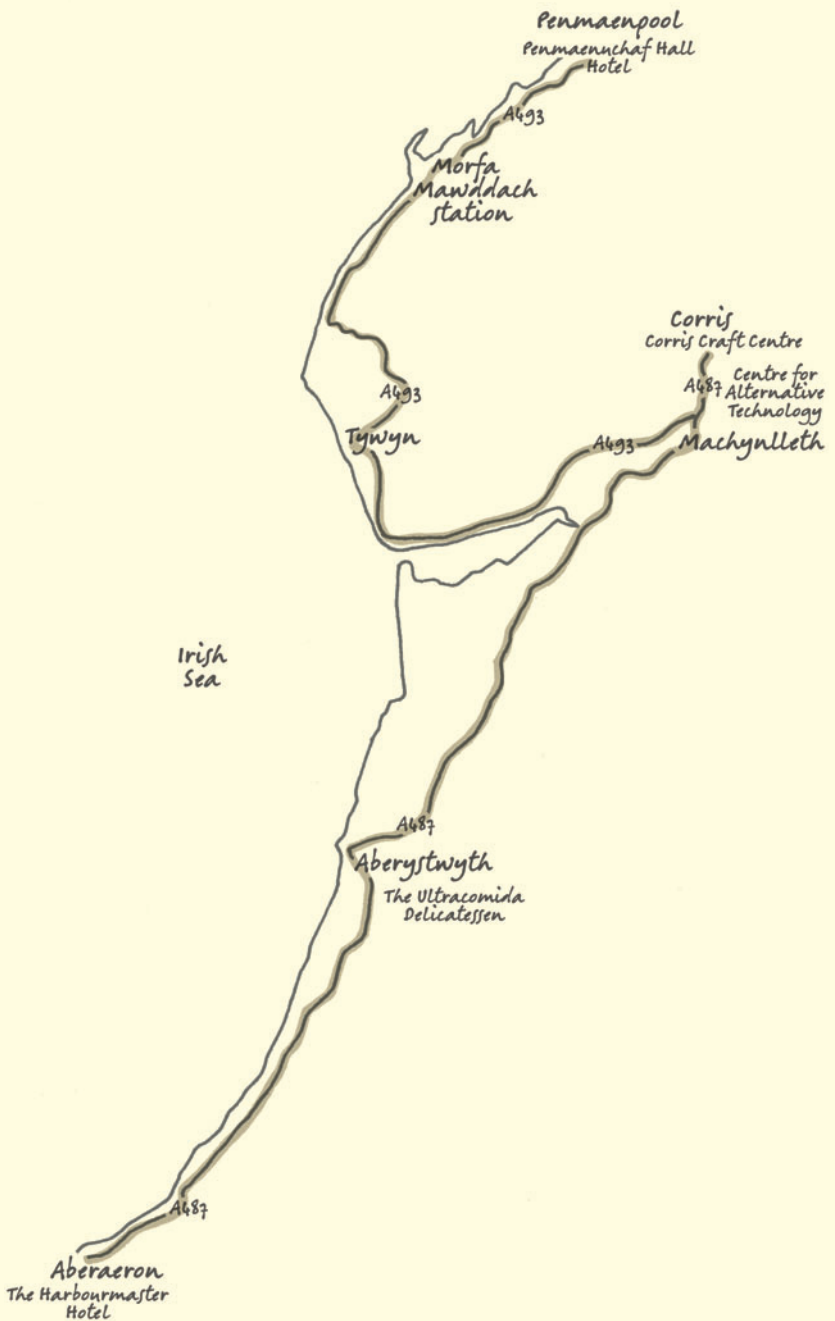
If possible stay overnight at **The Harbourmaster Hotel** in Aberaeron and rise to enjoy a hearty Welsh breakfast. Then, taking the A487 along the shore, you can enjoy delightful views over the heritage coast to Cardigan Bay (look out for dolphins) before coming to Aberystwyth. A sizeable market town, the capital of mid-Wales houses The National Library and The University of Wales and is very pleasant to walk around. **The Ultracomida Delicatessen** (31 Pier Street, Aberystwyth, Ceredigion SY23 2LN; 01970 630 686) serves great coffee and hot chocolate to take away, with a café due to open later this year. On the first and third Saturday of the month there is a farmers' market along North Parade (information at www.fmiw.co.uk).

Rejoin the A487 and follow it away from the coast through a string of pleasant villages and the town of Machynlleth. Beyond the core is the **Centre for Alternative Technology**, an institute specialising in innovative solutions to the problems facing the planet. You can eat lunch at the restaurant here, or alternatively carry on along the A487 to the **Corris Craft Centre** (Corris Craft Centre, Corris SY20 9RF; 01654 761437; www.corriscraftcentre.co.uk) where the café serves sandwiches and cakes as well as delicious traditional Welsh food.

Head back down the A487 towards Machynlleth, but turn right onto the A493 for a scenic drive that takes in Tywyn, a seaside town near the southern tip of the Snowdonia National Park, and runs alongside the charming Cambrian Coast railway line. Stop at Morfa Mawddach station for a breathtaking view, and walk across the Barmouth

Bridge, an intricate lattice wood structure that conveys trains and pedestrians over the River Mawddach estuary. To the south of the road is the multiple-peaked mountain range of Cadair Idris, a rising expanse of igneous rock imbued with many legends. The climb is worth the effort, but it is essential to wear appropriate clothing – the weather can change quickly, and the terrain can be challenging. Provided the cloud cover isn't too dense there will be views to enjoy over Cardigan Bay or the mountainous terrain of the separate Snowdon mountain range. After such exertion, any hunger will be muted just along the A493 in Penmaenpool, courtesy of the **Penmaenuchaf Hall Hotel** with its fine menu of modern British cuisine using fresh herbs and produce from its gardens. The accommodation is to the highest standard featuring elegant rooms with windows framing wonderful views of the sun setting beyond the wide flowing estuary as it meanders to the Irish Sea.

This drive has been created in association with Jane Eyres who champions Welsh food everyday through her work with the Welsh Food Guide.



BEST BRITISH FOOD YOU'VE NEVER TASTED THE BEST FOR DRINKING
CHAMPAGNE BY THE RIVER THE MOST LITERARY CUP OF TEA THE GUEST-
FRIENDLIEST SERVICE THE TASTIEST KIPPER TEA THE BEST MODERN SEASIDE
EATING THE MOST ATMOSPHERIC MARKET THE MOST NOVEL FLAVOURS THE
BEST BACON SANDWICH THE TASTIEST SMOKEHOUSE THE MOST STYLISH ICE-
CREAM VANS THE MOST WELCOMING FIRE ON A COLD DAY THE BEST PASTRY
WITH A MOVIE ON THE SIDE THE BEST SOUTH EAST ASIAN THE BEST PLACE TO
EAT AT THE STREET THE BEST TRADITIONAL SEASIDE FISH AND CHIPS THE MOST
ENTERTAINING PROPRIETOR THE MOST ROCK 'N' ROLL BREAKFAST THE BEST
EAST OF THE YORKSHIREMAN'S YORKSHIRE PUDDING THE MOST SECRET RECIPE
THE BEST VIEWS THE MOST IDYLIC VEGETARIAN THE BEST HAGGIS THE
GREATEST AUTHORITY ON CHIPS THE BEST FOR ART THE MOST AUTHENTIC
SEAFOOD SHACK THE BEST CARIBBEAN THE MOST QUINTESSENTIALLY ENGLISH
TEASHOP THE CHEFS' FAVOURITE GARDEN THE CHOICE OF CHOCOHOLICS
THE MOST INTERESTING SALAD THE WILDEST WEEKEND THE BEST FOR EAVES-
DROPPING THE MOST REMOTE THE BEST VILLAGE SHOP THE BEST PLACE FOR A
CLEAN WEEKEND THE MOST FABULOUS CANAPÉS THE BEST DESIGNED THE
MOST DEDICATED APIARIST THE MOST AUTHENTIC COUNTRY MANSION THE
BEST SUNDAY LUNCH THE BEST CINNAMON SCONES THE BEST DRIVE THE BEST
PLACE TO MEET A FUTURE STAR CHEF THE BEST VEGETABLES AS DESSERT THE
MOST CORNISH CORNISH PASTY THE BEST PICK & PECK YOUR OWN THE BEST
ROADSIDE DINING THE CONNOISSEUR'S CAFE THE ECO-FRIENDLIEST LUNCH
THE BEST CABBIE'S CURRY THE BEST DIM SUM THE MOST PICNIC-FRIENDLY
DELI THE MOST SPECTACULAR INSIDE-OUT EXPERIENCE THE BEST WEE BU
THE FASTEST GRAIN-TO-LOAF BREAD THE GORIEST HISTORY THE BEST HISTORICAL
SETTING THE MOST WONDERFUL LUNCHTIME BOWL OF SOUP THE FARM-
FRESH ST FARM SHOP THE FINEST KEBAB THE BEST HOME FROM HOME THE BEST
RIVERSIDE HIDEAWAY THE BEST OYSTERS THE BEST DESSERT THE MOST
WILD AND WONDERFUL SEAFOOD THE MOST ENERGETIC LUNCH THE MOST
IDYLIC PICK-YOUR-OWN THE MOST ORIGINAL FOOD-AND-SPORT COMBINATION
ON THE PERFECT SWEETSHOP THE LOUDEST ITALIANS THE LONGEST DINNER
THE BEST ICE-CREAM PARLOUR THE BEST POST-DINNER COFFEE THE MOST
EUROPEAN-FEELING THE BEST MARKET DINING THE MOST DELECTABLE PLACE
FOR A FIRST DATE THE QUAINTEST NOOK-AND-CRANNY-FILLED BOOKSHOP
CAFÉ THE BEST CLASSIC-WITH-A-TWIST THE BEST FOR KIDS THE PLACE THAT
CHEESE-LOVERS ALWAYS DREAMED OF THE MOST SUMPTUOUS AND GENUINE
FARMHOUSE TEA THE BEST HUNG CEILING THE BEST FRUIT JUICE THE BEST TO
ARRIVE AT BY BOAT THE BEST CHEF-GARDENER THE MOST SENSORILY STUNNING
DELICIOUS DELI THE MOST THEATRICAL CHEF'S TABLE DINING THE BEST FARMERS'
MARKET THE BEST RESTAURANT TO FLY INTO THE MOST WILD AND WIND-
WEPT THE BEST KEPT SECRET IN SEAFOOD THE MOST ROMANTIC THE MEAT
AND POTATO FOOTBALL PIES THE BEST FOR A POST-DINNER WALK THE BEST PLACE TO
BUY FISH FROM FISHERMEN THE JOLLIEST FOOD FESTIVAL THE BEST AT
CHRISTMAS POSSIBLY THE FINEST VEGETABLES ON THE PLANET THE ONE