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Wales

Special places by the sea

// Discover, explore and enjoy



www.cyfoethnaturiol.cymru
www.naturalresources.wales



**Cymru
Wales**

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Welcome to our epic shores

Wales is surrounded on three of its four sides by the sea. It's a dominant feature, giving shape and character to our country.

Find out more

www.naturalresources.wales
enquiries@naturalresourceswales.gov.uk
0300 065 3000 (Monday-Friday 9am-5pm)

If you would like this information in an alternative format, please contact us.

Trail closures and diversions

Information about visiting our woodlands or reserves was correct when we published this leaflet. If you are planning a visit to do a particular activity, please check our website for the latest information.

Please note:

- Sometimes we need to close or divert trails for your safety whilst we undertake maintenance work or other operations.
- Occasionally we may have to close a site in extreme weather, such as high winds or snow and ice, due to the risk of injury to visitors or staff.
- Please always follow any instructions on site and make sure you follow any temporary diversion signs in place.

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Explore ten special places by the sea

We've picked ten special places that we look after around the coastline of Wales for you to enjoy. They include National Nature Reserves with huge sand dunes, dramatic cliffs, forests near beautiful beaches and Wales' only Marine Conservation Zone. Each place has walking trails and there are family cycling trails in Newborough and Pembrey.



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Discover the shape of a nation

Wales is the first country in the world to have a dedicated footpath that hugs the entire coastline. The Wales Coast Path passes seascapes of breathtaking variety on its route around Wales and it goes through or close by the places in this leaflet.

Looking for more?

Our natural environment with its fantastic landscapes and wildlife is a key asset for Wales and we are working to keep it that way, for now and for future generations. We look after woodlands and National Nature Reserves and we are one of the biggest providers of outdoor recreation facilities in the country.

Our hundreds of walking trails, world-class mountain biking trails, visitor centres and picnic areas are set in some of the most stunning parts of Wales. Go to www.naturalresources.wales for more information.



Printed on Cocoon offset
100% recycled paper

Published March 2018

NRWR0062



Newborough National Nature Reserve and Forest, Anglesey

Dramatic coastal landscape shaped by wind and sea



Newborough Warren and the island of Ynys Llanddwyn are part of Wales' first coastal National Nature Reserve.

The sand dunes, coastal marshes and rocky shores are home to plants and animals that have adapted to the constantly changing environment. Alongside the reserve is a large conifer forest, home to a red squirrel conservation site.

What to see and do

Stroll along the beach or set off on one of our waymarked walking trails. Look out for colourful flowers carpeting the dunes in summer and migrating birds in the estuaries during autumn and winter. Follow the woodland trail and keep your eyes peeled for an elusive red squirrel. There's also a running trail, a trim trail, and family-friendly cycle routes. The Wales Coast Path passes through Newborough.

Plan your visit

Refreshments in beach car park during the season. Toilets in beach car park. Restricted access for dogs April to September. The beach car park fills up quickly in peak seasons and traffic can be very heavy.

How to get here

Newborough National Nature Reserve and Forest is ½ mile south of the village of Newborough. There are seven car parks – follow the signs from the village or see the map on our website.

OS grid reference SH 402 635



Morfa Harlech National Nature Reserve, near Harlech

Vast dune system with spectacular views of Snowdonia



Morfa Harlech National Nature Reserve is one of a handful of actively growing dune systems in Wales.

This system, together with the dunes at Morfa Dyffryn a few miles south, form an almost continuous area of sand dunes along the coastline. The bare sand areas provide a home for rare and highly specialised plants and animals including the dune tiger beetle and other invertebrates.

What to see and do

Take the public footpath from the car park to the beach to explore the reserve and enjoy views to Snowdonia. In spring and summer, discover colourful flowering plants in the dune grasslands and slacks. In winter, look out for wading birds feeding along the shoreline and wildfowl in the estuaries and saltmarsh. The Wales Coast Path goes through Harlech, just outside the reserve.

Plan your visit

The toilets in the car park may be locked in winter (alternative toilets are on the A496). Parts of the reserve are fenced off for grazing and to protect the sand dune vegetation.

How to get here

Morfa Harlech National Nature Reserve is less than 1 mile west of Harlech. Follow the minor road (Ffordd Glan Mor) from the A496 to Min y Don car park which is run by Gwynedd Council.

OS grid reference SH 574 316



Morfa Dyffryn National Nature Reserve, near Barmouth

Huge sand dunes in striking coastal landscape



Just up the road from Barmouth, but far from the holiday hustle and bustle, are the huge sand dunes at Morfa Dyffryn.

This impressive coastal reserve is also home to areas of seashore, saltmarsh and grassland, and these very different habitats support an amazing variety of wildlife, all especially adapted to life at the edge of the sea.

What to see and do

Follow the path through the dunes and onto the open beach or take the short boardwalk from the car park to a viewpoint with picnic bench. Look out for spectacular marsh orchids in spring and summer and dune fungi in autumn. In winter, spot wildfowl in the estuary, feeding on the sand flats and salt marsh. The Wales Coast Path goes along the beach.

Plan your visit

The wooden boardwalk is flat and wide and suitable for wheelchairs. Dogs must be kept on a lead from March to July. The toilets are open April to October. There is a clearly signposted designated naturist beach on the reserve.

How to get here

Morfa Dyffryn National Nature Reserve is 5 miles north of Barmouth. Follow brown sign for Dyffryn Seaside Estate and Benar Beach from A496 to the car park run by Snowdonia National Park.

OS grid reference SH 572 224



Dyfi National Nature Reserve, near Aberystwyth

Stunning coastline with estuary and mountain views



This huge reserve is made up of three very different areas on the Ceredigion coast.

The Dyfi estuary with its mudflats and sandbanks provides feeding areas for wetland birds while the sandy slopes and hollows of Ynyslas dunes are home to many small animals. Nearby is Cors Fochno, one of the largest and finest raised peat bogs in Britain.

What to see and do

Start your visit from Ynyslas where there is a visitor centre and two waymarked circular walking trails. Look out for displays of flowers in spring and summer and colourful fungi in autumn. Enjoy the stunning views from the open sandy beach or venture out onto Cors Fochno bog via our circular boardwalk. The Wales Coast Path runs around the edge of the bog.

Plan your visit

Access from disabled car park to visitor centre via surfaced track and wooden ramp suitable for wheelchairs. Visitor centre and toilets open seasonally (normally Easter to end September). No swimming from beach due to strong tidal currents.

How to get here

Dyfi National Nature Reserve is 1 mile north of Borth. Follow the B4353 to the Ynyslas car park. The car park is situated on tidal sands, please take note of tide times on the warning sign at the entrance during high tides.

OS grid reference SN 610 942



Skomer Marine Conservation Zone, near Milford Haven

Unique underwater world, rich in marine life



The waters around Skomer Island and Marloes Peninsula off the Pembrokeshire coast have been designated a Marine Conservation Zone.

This is the only stretch of water in Wales with this special status which protects nationally important marine wildlife, habitats and geology. Skomer Island is a National Nature Reserve, famous for seabird colonies and wildlife.

What to see and do

Learn about marine life in our exhibition centre at Martins Haven. Explore the pebbly beach and rocky shore here or go grey seal watching in autumn when they come ashore to give birth on remote beaches. Enjoy coastal views on the National Trust's walking trails from the car park. Take a boat trip to Skomer Island or a non-landing cruise. The Wales Coast Path goes through Martins Haven.

Plan your visit

Exhibition centre and toilets open Easter to October. Mooring information and user regulations on our website. See South and West Wales Wildlife Trust website to visit Skomer Island (Easter to October; tickets sold first come first served).

How to get here

Martins Haven is 3 miles east of Marloes village. Go through the village and, after 2 miles, the National Trust car park is on the left.

OS grid reference SM 761 090



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Stackpole National Nature Reserve, near Pembroke

Enchanting mix of cliffs, headlands, dunes and beaches



Located in one of the most breathtaking parts of Wales, the landscape at Stackpole is incredibly varied.

The reserve includes woodlands, dunes, limestone cliffs, beaches and freshwater lakes, famous for white water lilies in summer. Wonderful for wildlife watching, Stackpole is home to one of Britain's largest populations of the rare greater horseshoe bat.

What to see and do

The National Trust owns the reserve and manages it in partnership with Natural Resources Wales. Follow footpaths along the coast, past the lakes or through woods. Spot sea birds on the cliffs and wildfowl on the lakes. Relax on the beautiful beaches at Broadhaven South and Barafundle Bay. The Wales Coast Path goes through Stackpole Quay.

Plan your visit

See the National Trust website for information about the walks and opening times of the car parks, tea room at Stackpole Quay and toilets. Some of the paths are accessible to off-road wheelchairs.

How to get here

Stackpole National Nature Reserve is 5 miles south of Pembroke. Take the B4319 to Castlemartin then follow minor roads to the National Trust's car parks (Stackpole Quay, Broadhaven South Beach, Bosherton Village and Lodge Park).

OS grid reference SR 990 957 (Stackpole Quay)



Pembrey Forest and Penybedd Wood, near Llanelli

Easy to find woodlands on the Carmarthenshire coast



The huge pine forest at Pembrey is one of Britain's sand dune forests.

It sits beside the long sandy beach of Cefn Sidan and on the edge of Pembrey Country Park which offers a wide range of leisure activities. Just down the road is the small woodland of Penybedd with a grassy picnic area and a short waymarked walking trail.

What to see and do

Enjoy a peaceful stroll on sandy paths through the forest or in the country park where the rangers offer occasional guided walks. Some of the paths go past the remains of a former Royal Ordnance Factory. The Wales Coast Path goes along the beach and through Pembrey Forest.

Plan your visit

Pembrey Country Park is managed by Carmarthenshire County Council. Check their website for opening times and more details about leisure activities and facilities, including a campsite, or call in at the visitor centre when you arrive.

How to get here

Pembrey Forest is 6 miles west of Llanelli. Follow brown signs from the A484 to the car parks in Pembrey Country Park. The entrance to Penybedd Wood car park is on the right, shortly before reaching the country park.

OS grid reference SN 406 005 (visitor centre)



Oxwich National Nature Reserve, near Swansea

Sand dunes rich in wildlife and award-winning beach



The long sandy beach at Oxwich Bay is one of most popular in Gower, especially for watersports, but walk a little way inland and you'll be rewarded with a wildlife oasis in the dunes.

Here, wildflowers support butterflies and other insects and the reserve's lakes and marshes are a haven for birdlife and the rare hairy dragonfly.

What to see and do

Enjoy jumping in the surf, exploring the rock pools and taking in the views across the bay. Discover more of the reserve on our walking trails through the dunes and along the sandy beach or through woodland. Follow the boardwalk over the freshwater marsh and reedbeds to the bird hide. The Wales Coast Path goes through the dunes and along the edge of Nicholaston Woods.

Plan your visit

The main access to the reserve and car park is owned by the Penrice Estate which also owns part of the beach and provides visitor facilities. Some facilities are open seasonally – see the Penrice Estate website for details.

How to get here

Oxwich National Nature Reserve is 11 miles west of Swansea. Take the A4118 from Swansea towards Gower. Continue through Penmaen and Nicholaston. Turn left after church, signposted to Oxwich, and car park is on left.

OS grid reference SS 501 865



Merthyr Mawr Warren National Nature Reserve, near Bridgend

Wildlife haven with the highest sand dune in Wales



The extensive dune system at Merthyr Mawr Warren covers an area as big as 340 international rugby pitches.

Sand has settled on top of the ancient limestone cliffs creating a habitat for insects, fungi and plants. Areas of dune woodland and scrub add to the diversity of wildlife that makes this such a special place.

What to see and do

Climb the 'Big Dipper' sand dune and enjoy views that are well worth the effort. If you'd rather head for the beach, look out for colourful wildflowers in the dune grasslands in spring and clusters of dune fungi in autumn. A section of the Wales Coast Path hugs the edge of the reserve and there are three waymarked horse riding trails (permit needed).

Plan your visit

Candleston car park (owned and managed by Merthyr Mawr Estate) is the main access to the reserve. The toilets are open all year. Horse riding permit from Merthyr Mawr Estate Office CF32 OLR (tel: 01656 662413).

How to get here

Merthyr Mawr is 4 miles south of Bridgend. Exit M4 (junction 35) onto A473. At third roundabout, follow A48 (westbound). After second roundabout, take next left (Merthyr Mawr Road). Cross staggered crossroads and continue to Candleston car park.

OS grid reference SS 871 772



Newport Wetlands National Nature Reserve, near Newport

Great bird-watching from hides and platforms



Lying between the Severn Estuary and the River Usk, this wildlife haven of reedbeds, saltmarsh and saline lagoons is one of the best places in Wales to see wild birds.

They flock here because the reserve provides all that they need – plentiful food, shelter, and water – and, whatever time of year you visit, you will be sure to spot many different species.

What to see and do

Wander at will on the network of paths around the reedbeds and scan the pools from the viewing platforms or bird hide. If you want to explore further, then set off on the floating pontoon across the reedbeds to the East Usk Lighthouse from where there are views over the Severn Estuary. The Wales Coast Path passes along the edge of the reserve.

Plan your visit

The RSPB visitor centre, café and shop are open daily. See the RSPB website for opening times and facilities. Wheelchair access to the visitor centre and paths around reedbeds. Dogs on short lead welcome on Green Lanes and Coast Walk.

How to get here

Newport Wetlands National Nature Reserve is 5 miles south of Newport city centre. Follow brown signs from A48 to the RSPB car park on West Nash Road.

OS grid reference ST 334 834
Postcode for sat nav NP18 2BZ



Long distance routes in Wales

Wales is home to four long distance routes, each of which can be enjoyed in bite size chunks. They are all open to walkers and some sections are open to cyclists and horse riders.



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At 870 miles long, the **Wales Coast Path** is the longest continuous path along a nation's coastline. Signposted with distinctive blue and yellow dragon shell signs, it goes from Chester to Chepstow, passing through or close by the places included in this leaflet. The northern section offers craggy and dramatic coastal views with the stunning backdrop of Snowdonia National Park. The path through mid and west Wales boasts many beautiful beaches from sheltered coves to huge sandy stretches, and Cardigan Bay is home to the UK's biggest pod of dolphins. The route through South Wales is full of variety, taking in city landscapes, village life and magnificent estuary views.

The **Pembrokeshire Coast Path** is a 186 mile long National Trail from St Dogmaels to Amroth; it also forms part of the Wales Coast Path. Lying almost entirely within the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park, it twists and turns through breathtaking coastal scenery ranging from rugged cliff tops to winding estuaries.

Offa's Dyke Path runs for 177 miles from the South Wales coast at Chepstow to Prestatyn on the North Wales coast. This National Trail traces the border with England and the spectacular 8th century earthwork constructed by King Offa.

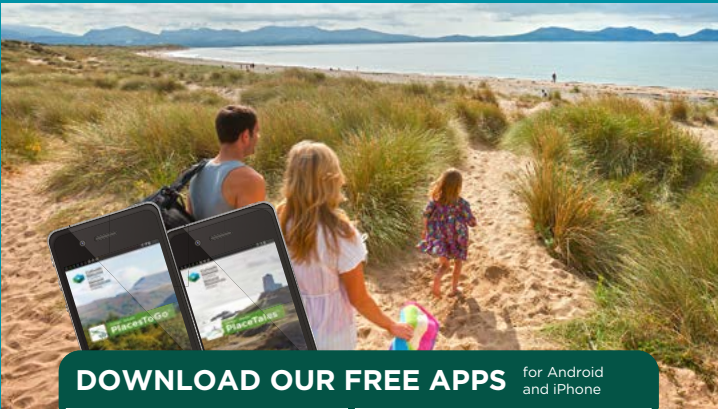
Glyndŵr's Way is the 135 mile long National Trail from Knighton to Welshpool. Named after a 15th century Welsh prince, the route offers exhilarating walking in rolling hills with glimpses of the Dyfi estuary near Machynlleth where the trail meets the Wales Coast Path.

PLAN YOUR VISIT

The fold-out map shows the National Nature Reserves and forests featured in this leaflet. Each site entry has information to help you plan your day in the great outdoors.

You can also check out our website or download our apps to find out more.

Look out for our information panels when you arrive to make the most of your visit.



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PlacesToGo

To find other great NRW places to visit in Wales.



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PlaceTales

To discover fascinating features in NRW forests and National Nature Reserves.

FIND OUT MORE

www.naturalresources.wales | 0300 065 3000
enquiries@naturalresourceswales.gov.uk



The public transport information service for Wales

Call or click to plan your journey and get latest timetable information

www.traveline.cymru

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RESPECT. PROTECT. ENJOY.



The Countryside Code helps you respect, protect and enjoy the countryside, enabling you to get the most out of your visit.

Respect other people

- Consider the local community and other people enjoying the outdoors
- Leave gates and property as you find them and follow paths unless wider access is available

Protect the natural environment

- Leave no trace of your visit and take your litter home
- Keep dogs under effective control

Enjoy the outdoors and stay safe

- Plan ahead and be prepared
- Follow advice and local signs

The Countryside Code family

The Countryside Code family includes specific codes for some of the exciting activities you may be taking part in, such as wild swimming, angling and canoeing. There is also a dog walking code for safe and happy walks with your dog, and to avoid causing problems for others.

DOWNLOAD YOUR COPY of the Countryside Code
www.naturalresources.wales



Wales has the best bathing water quality in the UK

Over 99% of our bathing waters meet the minimum standards. In 2017, 77% also met the toughest "excellent" standard. Welsh beaches have 45 Blue Flags, 25 Green Coast Awards and 85 Seaside Awards. Go to our bathing water quality website for more information.



<http://environment.data.gov.uk/wales/bathing-waters/profiles/>

