

Whether you're looking to peak in Snowdonia or unwind in island solitude, North Wales is the perfect caravanning holiday destination, says Don Jolly

ALL ANGLES covered

Cottages at Penmon Point on Anglesey's south-eastern tip



DON'T FORGET
You can book your pitch online at caravanclub.co.uk/searchandbook, by calling our Advance Booking Service on **01342 327490** or, for AS sites, calling them direct.

North Wales is renowned for the majestic summits of Snowdonia National Park. But there is another, just as attractive side to the region, and to reach it you must pass through Snowdonia and cross the narrow Menai Strait to the island of Anglesey. Ynys Môn, as it is known in Welsh, adds another dimension to a holiday, and when the mountain scenery isn't accompanied by the warm sunny weather you desire, the island can often oblige.

To help you enjoy both aspects of this beautiful part of Britain, this month's Club site quartet comprises two set amid Anglesey's gently rolling countryside – Cae Mawr and Penrhos – and two in Snowdonia, Coed-y-Llwyn and Min y Don AS.

The two Anglesey sites are on the B5110 either side of Brynteg, near Benllech. What they share is peace and tranquillity; how they differ is that the slightly smaller Cae Mawr lacks toilet facilities, so young families usually head for Penrhos, which has them. As a result, Cae Mawr is cheaper and even >>

THIS MONTH'S FEATURED SITES

CAE MAWR
See p234 of the *Sites Directory & Handbook 2013/14*

PENRHOS
See p245 of the *Directory*

MINY DONAS
See p242 of the *Directory*

COED-Y-LLWYN
See p235 of the *Directory*



FOR THE FAMILY



Deep stuff

Overlooking the Menai Strait, the small Anglesey Sea Zoo is home to 150 species from around local coasts. It also has a seahorse conservation programme, lobster hatchery and dolphin rescue service.

T 01248 430411
W angleseyseazoo.co.uk
Nearest featured sites Penrhos/Cae Mawr

Steam theme

The narrow-gauge Ffestiniog & Welsh Highland Railways take in a total of 38 miles of outstanding Snowdonian scenery.

T 01766 516000
W festrail.co.uk
Nearest featured sites Coed-y-Llwyn/Penrhos/Cae Mawr



BIRD SPOTTING



Boat trip

You can see Puffin Island just a short distance off Penmon Point on Anglesey. In summer there are pleasure cruises round the island from Beaumaris to see guillemots, razorbills, terns etc.

T 01248 810746/07860 811988
W beaumarismarine.com
Nearest featured sites Penrhos/Cae Mawr

Double up

Llanfair Slate Caverns and Children's Farm Park share the same site. The slate was removed more than a century ago to roof houses; the farm park has a variety of animals and children's games.

T 01766 780247
W llanfairlatecaverns.co.uk/childrensfarmpark.co.uk
Nearest featured site Min y Don



FOOD + DRINK



Meat treat

Look out for the Welsh speciality, **salt-marsh lamb**, reared in the coastal areas around Harlech. The lambs feed on vegetation rich in saline, which gives the meat a distinctive flavour (not salty!). Check out the local restaurants.

Nearest featured site
Min y Don

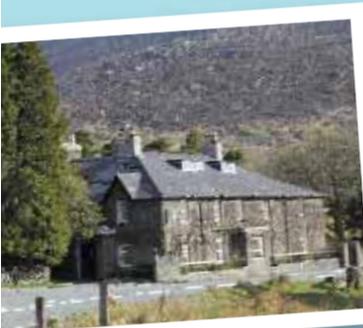
DINING OUT



Plas of interest

Plas Brondanw, near Garreg, was the home of Clough Williams-Ellis, the creator of Portmeirion. It's a delightful setting for a café, open seven days a week in summer. Local produce features on the menu.

T 01766 772772
W brondanw.org
Nearest featured sites
Min y Don/Coed-y-Llwyn



Highpoint

Enjoy a pint at the **Pen-y-Gwryd Hotel**, where the Llanberis Pass meets the A498. The hotel was a training base for the successful 1953 Everest climbing team.

T 01286 870211
W pyg.co.uk
Nearest featured site
Coed-y-Llwyn

Deri good

The **Derimôn Smokery** at Deri Isaf House on Anglesey is famous for its smoked products, including wild seabass fillets, cheddar cheese and bacon.

T 01248 410536
W derimonsmokery.co.uk
Nearest featured sites Penrhos/Cae Mawr



Peak viewing: glorious Snowdonia



“Cnicht, the Welsh Matterhorn, is a popular summit walk”

more restful, though it is advisable to book ahead at both in high season.

Last year, The Club invested in a new play area at Penrhos, which is separated from the pitching area by a high hedge to reduce the effects of any clamour. There's plenty to occupy youngsters, including climbing frames and nets, a goal and netball basket, large puzzle panels and more traditional play furniture such as a slide, swings and a seesaw.

Eating out need not require an expedition from either site. At Cae Mawr, the Parciau Arms is at the site entrance – it's fine if you don't wish to drive and fancy traditional

pub fare. From Penrhos, the nearest pub is The California, 400 yards away.

If you don't mind driving, the Ship Inn at Red Wharf Bay has a good menu, as does the neighbouring Old Boathouse restaurant. The Pantons Arms at Pentraeth is popular, and even Beaumaris, with its excellent selection of restaurants and cafés, isn't far. Ye Olde Bull's Head Inn's super Loft is a pushing-the-boat-out restaurant, but the inn's brasserie is moderately priced.

ISLAND HOP

Anglesey may not have as many attractions as Snowdonia – but that only adds to the peacefulness of the place. It's rather like

going back 50 years in the Tardis to simpler times (there are no theme parks either!).

Hiking is popular, and you're more likely to have fine weather to go with it than 'across the water'. The island seems to possess its own micro-climate; while you're bathed in sunshine, a glance towards the mainland and the peaks of Snowdonia will often reveal them (or not, if you see what I mean) cloaked in cloud.

The coast path, which offers wonderful walking, isn't far from either site. Lligwy Bay, near Moelfre, has one of the island's many lovely beaches, and there are great walks farther afield around Holyhead Mountain and the National Trust-protected seaboard in the north-west. Newborough Forest, to the south-west, is popular with dog owners as tracks through the woodland lead to coastal dunes and Llanddwyn Island.

At the other end of the Menai Strait (don't forget to view the iconic Menai Suspension Bridge), Beaumaris Castle, built in Edward I's reign to subjugate the Welsh, is a must. Close to the sea and surrounded by a moat, it eventually fell in 1403 to Owain Glyndwr, the last Welsh Prince of Wales.

And, if you can fit it in, you must visit the village with the longest name in Europe – Llanfairpwllgwyngyllgogerychwyrndrobwllllantysiliogogoch, near Menai Bridge. Go to the station to see the name in all its glory.



Penrhos Club site

Back on the mainland, an hour-ish south of the bridge, lies Min y Don, an affiliated site on the coast near Harlech Castle.

Don't be put off by Dewi the Dragon at the site entrance, nor the ranks of mobile homes leading to the touring area – this is a friendly place with very helpful staff. Eventually it will comprise hardstandings only but currently there's a mix of hard and grass pitches. The site's pride and joy is the state-of-the-art toilet block which has regularly won 'Loo of the Year' awards, this year in three categories. Not surprisingly, it's immaculate. Hopefully, you'll like constant Radio 2 to accompany your shower.

Along the road there's a small supermarket and a swimming pool and climbing wall. And there's a distinctive neighbour, too – the internationally renowned Royal St David's Golf Club, where former Formula One star Nigel Mansell is a regular. Visitors can play a round from £55 in summer.

Harlech itself offers a good choice of restaurants and coffee shops. Recommendations include Y Branwen brasserie on the main road, the Castle Restaurant & Armoury Bar (which offers Caribbean cuisine) and the Cemlyn Tea Shop, which offers magnificent views of the castle from its terrace.

BEST-KEPT SECRET

Coed-y-Llwyn Club site is in an unusual location – beside the disused Trawsfynydd nuclear power station. Amazingly, the facility isn't visible from most of the site, though when it looms into view its proximity comes as a shock. Otherwise, the site is delightful, featuring small enclosed areas on different levels. Once people discover it, they tend to visit regularly, some regarding it as The Club's best-kept secret.

For those with dogs, there is a new walk on site, a shortish loop through woodland next to the children's play area. While your pooch undertakes a few laps, there >>

OUTDOOR FUN

STACKS TO SEE



Best nests

The RSPB reserve at **South Stack Cliffs** on Holy Island is a great place to see nesting sea birds in late spring and early summer. Watch out for guillemots, razorbills and puffins as well as the rare chough.

T 01407 762100
W rspb.org.uk/southstack
Nearest featured sites
Penrhos/Cae Mawr

Cycling

The **Lôn Las Cymru** route (National Cycle Network Route 8) is a not-to-be-missed highlight. Check out the quiet country lanes of Anglesey, or the largely traffic-free section between Caernarfon and Porthmadog, and be prepared for some big climbs!

W sustrans.org.uk



Splashing times

The **National White Water Centre** at Frongoch, near Bala, offers a variety of activities including rafting, canoeing, kayaking and canyoning. Prices start at £32 for a one-hour taster session.

T 01678 521083
W ukrafting.co.uk
Nearest featured site
Coed-y-Llwyn



Zip tip

Zip World Snowdonia is Wales' latest adrenaline attraction, recently opened at Penrhyn Quarry, Bethesda. Those up to the challenge travel 500ft above a lake at up to 75mph on a mile-long zipline – the highest, fastest, longest in Europe!

T 01248 601444
W zipworld.co.uk
Nearest featured sites
Penrhos/Cae Mawr/Min y Don



Min y Don Affiliated Site

CULTURE



Whistler stop

Overlooking the Menai Strait, the National Trust-owned Plas Newydd Country House and Gardens contains the largest permanent collection of Rex Whistler's paintings.

T 01248 714795

W nationaltrust.org.uk/plasnewydd
Nearest featured sites Penrhos/Cae Mawr

Little Italy

Fascinating Portmeirion village and gardens on the Welsh coast became famous as the setting for the 1960s cult television series, *The Prisoner*, starring Patrick McGeehan.



T 01766 770000

W portmeirion-village.com
Nearest featured site Coed-y-Llwyn

Old school

Anglesey has numerous prehistoric burial chambers, standing stones and hut circles scattered across its landscape. Highlights include Din Ligwy hut group and the partially reconstructed Barclodiad y Gawres burial chamber.

W cadw.wales.gov.uk
Nearest featured sites Penrhos/Cae Mawr



Fort of call

Harlech Castle, overlooking Cardigan Bay and in sight of Snowdonia, was subjected to a seven-year siege, the longest in British history, during the War of the Roses.

T 01766 780552

W cadw.wales.gov.uk
Nearest featured site Miny Don



are views to enjoy, along with plenty of birdlife.

Local dining was tricky at the time of writing. The Bryn Arms, just outside the site, was changing hands but may be up and running again by now, while another favourite, The Grapes at Maentwrog, was also temporarily closed. If neither has re-opened, try The Oakeley Arms at Tan-y-Bwlch.

Walking, especially around Snowdonia's less frequented southern half, is what people mainly visit the site for. Cnicht (2,260ft), between Beddgelert and Blaenau Ffestiniog and known as the Welsh Matterhorn, offers a popular summit walk.



There's great cycling, too, including the Mawddach Estuary route, which follows a former railway line. For more testing mountain biking, Coed y Brenin Forest Park has 140km of trails, while there is also a National Cycle Network route passing the site. ■

MEMBERS' VIEW

Carol and Barry Bond from Rotherham were staying at Penrhos while Carol was singing in a country music festival. They enjoy the quietness as well as star-gazing – Anglesey has little light pollution. They were hoping to visit Puffin Island and Beaumaris Castle, too.



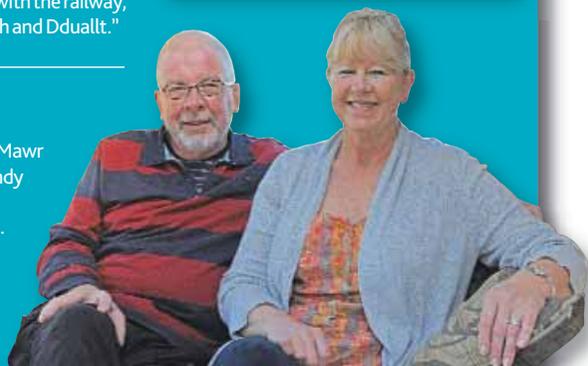
Helen and Mike Dufton from Altrincham, at Miny Don on their first caravan holiday with four-year-old son Charlie, thought it a real adventure. "It's easy to plan a week here," they said, though Charlie preferred playing football with Daddy! They reckoned the beach an absolute winner.

Alan and Gwen Rogers from Chorley, Lancashire, visit Coed-y-Llwyn every year, mainly for the Ffestiniog Railway.



"The area is absolutely marvellous," they said, "with great walks combining with the railway, especially around Tan-y-Bwlch and Dduallt."

Pauline and Dave Riley from Littleborough, Lancashire, regularly visit Anglesey's Cae Mawr during the off-season. It is handy to get to from home and they love the site's peace and quiet. They also enjoy the coastal walking, particularly nearby at Benllech and at Newborough Forest.



To read even more member views, see our fantastic online forum at caravanclub.co.uk/together

