

Since moving to Carmarthenshire, we've been awestruck everyday by the sheer beauty on our doorstep.

Often missed by the crowds who rush on through to Pembrokeshire; our special Garden of Wales is a quiet, undiscovered corner, full of brooding castles, crashing waterfalls and interesting gardens. We wanted to curate list of our favourite little gems in the county which we have personally visited and wanted to share for you to enjoy.

### Llyn y Fan Fach

The full circular walk is long and not a gentle ramble! You do need to plan it as a day out with supplies and appropriate gear, however it is lovely to walk on the rolling tops, looking out over Gower, Swansea and to the North Devon Coast and inland back over the beautiful Carmarthenshire landscape, including the two natural lakes at the base of the mountain.

For an easier walk you can simply head up to the lake, Llyn y Fan Fach, keeping it a little more gentle whilst still getting a lovely vista (and a reasonable bit of exercise). Famous in folklore, the Lady of the Lake was thought to live in this spectacular stretch of water, with the mountain rising up steeply behind it making for a magical view.

### Dinefwr Park

This large estate on the edge of Llandeilo is great for a day out. **Dinefwr Castle**, which rises up above the parkland, was built in 877 and is free to access. Adjacent is the 18th century Newton House; Capability Brown landscaped this lovely estate, it is worth going for these wonderful vistas plus the medieval deer park is great to walk around, with boardwalks and interesting veteran trees.

There is a cafe at **Newton House** with plenty of outdoor seating. There are often events happening so it is well worth checking out before your visit. It is also only a short walk to Llandeilo from the house through nature reserves and heritage landscapes.

### The National Botanic Gardens of Wales

It only opened as the Botanic Garden of Wales in 2000, however this beautifully planned garden is spectacular all year round, whatever the weather. With the single largest span glasshouse in the world, an orchid house, acres of gardens, restored heritage landscape, vast areas of astonishingly lovely nature reserve and landscape restored for nature, falconry displays, daily events, with so much happening here it is one our top tips for the county. You can spend the entire day there and still not see everything.

### Brechfa Forest

Whether you enjoy walking, cycling, or just having a picnic in the woods with the rushing river passing you by, Brechfa has to be on your list. This large woodland is a mixture of native broadleaf and managed forestry, with miles of footpaths and cycle trails and plenty of wildlife.

Far above the forestry site is the fascinating Brechfa Forest Garden, a series of plots of different plantations of trees (from walnuts to redwoods) to test how they grow in Wales. The species list is long and very interesting, giving this section of the valley a very different feel to the rest of the forest.

There are two pubs in the valley, **The Black Lion Abergorlech** and **Forest Arms Brechfa**; both are very nice to visit although it is always worth checking if you need to book for food.

### Laugharne

This is a must see for any visitor to the valley, the cute little town is perched above a beautiful salt marsh, a really interesting area of intertidal habitat which is full of wildlife. The town is lovely in its own right; however, it is also home to Dylan Thomas' Boathouse which is also a great little walk out on the low cliff tops looking across this very active estuary with the lovely interlacing wetlands.

To top it all there is also the spectacular 13th century castle, towering above the marsh and Taf estuary. A stern, 'brown as owls' castle which was beloved of Dylan, keeping watch above the water.

And there's so many places to eat here, from the delicious Thai cuisine of Poon's Street Food or tea and cakes at the Ferryman, or Arthur's for a really hearty lunch.

### Llansteffan

This surprising little beach is well worth a visit when in the county. Also, part of the very tidal, estuarine landscape; this is where the Tywi converges with the Taff and Gwendraith Fawr. A very active tidal area makes for wonderful displays of wading birds. It's also a lovely landscape, take a walk around the headland on the beach to find further hidden coves and head up the headland footpath to return via the castle.

There is a chippy on the beach and a couple of little pubs and a cafe you can usually pick up snacks from.

## Carreg Cennen Castle

Slip back in time, to a landscape that seems to have largely escaped the modern world. This majestic 13th century castle towers on a limestone crag with incredible views back up to the mountains. This is another lovely day out, there are several walks that can be done from the site, and with the cafe at the castle as well as the castle itself, there's plenty to keep you occupied.

## Black Mountain / Quarries

For the modern history buffs the limestone quarries known as Herbert's Quarry, are worth a visit, these quarries have been worked for centuries, their valuable minerals used in farming and in metal working. It's easy to access from the road and once you are up there it's a wild spot with open, vast views across the valley. The rugged, rocky landscape is wild and open with the industrial heritage scored upon it.

It's the tail end of the Fforest Fawr **Unesco Global Geopark** which stretches from Brecon, to Llandeilo. This vast swathe of sweeping upland which has fascinating geological features, where red sandstone meets carboniferous limestone creating an interesting fault line.

## Cwm Rhaedr

Rhaedr is one of the Welsh words for waterfall and Cwm is the Welsh for valley, this wooded valley is a real hidden gem. There is a series of walks around this woodland, which is again a mix of broad leaf and managed forestry. Once up the valley you are presented with views of lovely hills and the very high waterfall, which plunges and crashes down the hillside.

If you are a mountain biker there is a very short, but very fun red run - and you'll probably want to do it twice. This is a lovely valley, parts of it really feel very wild and remote, whilst only being ten minutes' drive from the market town of Llandovery.

**Come and stay with us, whatever your interest, there's something for everyone here. We look forward to meeting you.**

Angela and Ian x

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## Gwenffrwd-Dinas Nature Reserve

This wild nature reserve is another for visiting at all times of year. The nature reserve is in itself a lovely mix of woodland, wild, rocky hillsides covered in heather and roaring rivers crashing through house sized boulders. It is full of birds throughout the year, and spring is particularly fine as the woodland is full of bluebells but the crashing, mountain river and fabulous views make it wonderful to visit all year round.

The start of the walk is easy through a wet woodland on boardwalks, but it does become more challenging as you proceed. There is one spot which is very good for a bit of wild swimming on very warm days.

## Y Garn Goch

Also, in the Fforest Fawr Geopark, is Y Garn Goch (The Red Cairn) where you can be transported back 2500 years and imagine a hilltop settlement on the red and rocky mountain. Y Garn Goch is an ancient iron age fort on a wild hilltop, once a busy place with a couple of hundred people living in the limestone walls.

There is a pleasant and easy circular walk around the lovely hillside which is managed under conservation grazing. There are also longer walks which are well worth exploring that take you onto the heather and bilberry hillsides. The landscape is full of folds here, and pathways slip through small cwms, and follow sunken, ancient drovers' ways.

## Cwmdru Inn

And as a little bonus, how could we forget the **Cwmdru Inn!**

Set in the heart of the community our village Inn and has been run by the members of the community and volunteers since 2000 along with the Post Office and Shop.

No bigger than your sitting room and voted the 9th Best Pub in Wales 2021, the Cwmdru Inn serves a range of award-winning ales from a local brewery with guest Ales from other Carmarthenshire brewers. A great selection of ciders and bottled beers are on offer as well as a welcoming and friendly atmosphere.

Warm yourself in front of an open fire, huddle round the fire pit in the garden or immerse yourself in conversation with us locals. Join in the fun and spirits of Folk Nights with musicians from around the area or perhaps a good old pub quiz may be your thing.

Events are held throughout the year to mark every conceivable celebration including Burns Nights, St David's, Beer Festival, Apple Day and even an open-air cinema night.

The inn opens only at lunchtime from 11.30am to 1.30pm Tuesday to Friday and in the evenings from 7pm to 11pm Wednesday to Saturday with tasty food prepared and served on a Saturday evening prepared and served by community chefs, which will always have a genuinely interesting vegetarian/vegan option.