

Castles and Coast

This loop takes in three ruined castles plus the popular town of Porthmadog and the pretty village Beddgelert. You will also enjoy different views of Snowdonia!

All the castles mentioned here are managed by CADW, the Welsh heritage organisation.

To start, turn left out of the house and stay on the B5106 to Llanrwst. After crossing the stone bridge (note traffic coming towards you has right of way!) turn right onto the A470 towards **Betws-y-Coed**. At the junction with the A5 just outside Betws, follow the A470 towards **Blaenau Ffestiniog**.

1. Dolwyddelan castle (20 minutes from Trefriw)

After passing through the village of Dolwyddelan, turn right off the road for the castle. It's a short steepish climb up the hill but the views across the Lledr Valley and Snowdonia are worth it!

Carry on to **Blaenau Ffestiniog**, and follow the A487 towards **Porthmadog**. In **Maentwrog** (before Porthmadog) turn onto the A496 to **Harlech**.

2. Harlech castle (35 minutes from Dolwyddelan)

In the centre of this little town, up steep narrow roads, stands Harlech Castle. Do make sure you climb onto the ramparts to take in the spectacular views of the sea on one side and Snowdonia on the other. The effort and engineering involved in building a castle (without machines!) in such a spot is quite mind-boggling! Excellent new visitor centre.

Leave Harlech the way you arrived and on the A496 follow signs for **Porthmadog** (via A487/A497).

3. Porthmadog (20 minutes from Harlech)

This little town is justifiably popular with visitors - close to **Portmeirion**, gateway to sandy beaches to the south, and the starting point for the West Highland and Ffestiniog heritage steam railways.

You will also find some interesting independent shops (check out **Pop** and **Glostors** for locally made art and pottery) and numerous cafes - our favourite is the **Big Rock Cafe** on the High Street which bakes bread on site and offers a quirky but always tasty menu. It's a great lunch spot!

Porthmadog is also home to the **Purple Moose Brewery and Shop** - call in to buy a liquid souvenir or check online in advance if you're interested in a brewery tour.

Continue west on the A497 to Criccieth.

4. Criccieth castle (15 minutes from Porthmadog)

Another hilltop, another castle...! Tiny Criccieth is a low key knot of streets right by the sea. If you've not already had lunch - or if you're still hungry :-) - **Dylan's** seafood restaurant next to the beach offers fabulous views across the sea and around the coast towards Porthmadog. **Cadwaladers** is the place if you're in the mood for an ice cream!

Leave Criccieth the way you arrived, following the A497 back towards **Porthmadog**. Then take the A498 to **Beddgelert**.

