

Every dog has its DAY OUT

Our canine companions love nothing more than a bracing autumn walk and a good day out. Here, we suggest 10 of the best dog-friendly hotspots along the Welsh coast – so there's no need to leave your four-legged friend behind

Words: Sioned Bannister Pictures: © Crown Copyright (2013) Visit Wales

1 NEFYN BEACH, LLYN PENINSULA, GWYNEDD

Set into the wild coastline of the Llyn Peninsula are some of Wales' finest beaches, which means plenty of wide, sandy spaces that dogs will love to explore. The beaches at Nefyn and Morfa Nefyn are some of the best known along the peninsula and are a great space for dogs to chase balls or frisbees and even splash about in the shallow bay. There are lots of lovely cliff-top paths for extra sniffs and smells, not to mention stunning views for human walkers.

Porth Nefyn beach and Morfa Nefyn (Porthdinllaen) beach are accessible from the A497. Neither have dog restrictions.

While you're here: Why not try our walk along the beach at Porth Nefyn; more details on page 69?

2 THE DINGLE LOCAL NATURE RESERVE, ANGLESEY

There are 25 acres of stunning woodland, riverbanks and gorges for our four-legged friends to explore at the Dingle in Anglesey. For two-legged visitors there are nature trails, sculptures and a poetry trail organised by a local poet. A large part of the nature reserve is made up of beautiful oak, ash and wild cherry trees, and the whole area is a haven for wild flowers such as bluebells and daffodils, and there's a healthy wild bird population. Dogs welcome in all areas.

The Dingle Nature Reserve, Llangefni, Anglesey LL77 7QD. www.anglesey.gov.uk

While you're here: Enjoy a walk at beautiful Llanddwyn beach and forest.

3 THE GROES INN, CONWY

After a long winter walk there's nothing better than a cosy pub for a welcome drink and a hearty lunch, especially one that welcomes canine guests as warmly as human ones. The Groes near Conwy is a traditional coaching inn that has been open to travellers since the 16th century. Although it's been vastly expanded and extended since then, the historic period features such as wooden beamed ceilings, narrow corridors, rambling rooms and secret nooks remain. Meals available in the bar and restaurant (dogs welcomed in the bar areas) and some of the hotel rooms are dog-friendly, too, if you'd like to make a doggy weekend of it.

The Groes Inn, Tyn y Groes, Conwy North Wales LL32 8TN. Tel 01492 650545. www.groesinn.com



“The shallow waters of Harlech Beach are ideal for paddling pooches”

Food served midday-2pm and 6.30pm-9pm daily. While you're here: Visit Thomas Telford's masterpiece, stunning Conwy Suspension Bridge, and then enjoy a leg stretch along the banks of the Conwy river estuary.

4 CILGERRAN CASTLE, NEAR CARDIGAN

The haunting ruins of Cilgerran Castle overlook the plains of the River Teifi and the Cardigan countryside beyond. The dramatic structure is quiet and peaceful today, which belies its chequered history – the site passed between the English lords and the Welsh rebels for almost a hundred years. But, by the early 13th century, William Marshal, the First Earl of Pembroke, had recaptured the lands and the fortified site and built the imposing brick castle in an attempt to control the rebels. Dogs, as well as their human owners, can appreciate the fabulous views and the striking ruins, while reliving the area's more turbulent times. Dogs welcome but must be on leads.



Walks to make you woof – above, left to right: Rhossili at sunset, Cilgerran Castle and Harlech Beach. Below left: Fairbourne Beach looking north towards Barmouth. Previous page: a collie enjoys a stroll on the Ceredigion Coast Path

Cilgerran Castle, Cilgerran SA43 2SF. Tel: 01239 621339, www.cadw.wales.gov.uk Adults £3.50, children/OAPs £2.65, family £10.50. While you're here: Why not try our nearby walk at Poppit Sands (page 68), near Cardigan? Dogs will love the long, sandy beaches and coast paths.

5 BLACK ROCK BEACH, PORTHMADOG, GWYNEDD

Your four-legged friends will love the two-mile stretch of beach at Morfa Bychan, known as Black Rock Sands (thanks to the dark and brooding cliffs at its western end). It's been a popular location for cameramen: it featured in a music video by Supergrass and in a film version of *Macbeth*. It was also the backdrop for the Manic Street Preachers' album cover *This is My Truth Tell Me Yours*. It might not be the weather to get out the deckchair, but a bracing walk along the beach is a great way to blow away the winter cobwebs and tire out the dog.

Black Rock beach is accessible from the village of Morfa Bychan near Porthmadog (postcode LL49 9YA). Dog-control restrictions apply to some sections of the beach during summer months (May to September). Take care around the exit/entry roads as cars are permitted on the beach. While you're here: Why not walk to the eastern end of the beach and continue to the coves and beaches of Borth-y-Gest, where

you'll find more long, sandy bays and rockpools where you can give the pooch a really good run?

6 THE KINGS HEAD INN, GOWER, SWANSEA

Treat your best friend to an afternoon out at this fabulous dog-friendly pub in the heart of Gower. The historic building was originally three Welsh stone cottages that have been converted over the years. The 17th-century building still boasts much of its ancient character and even if your dog doesn't appreciate the wooden beams and exposed stone he will probably love curling up in front of the cosy open fires.

Dogs are welcome in the pub and bar, and in some of the hotel rooms. **The Kings Head Inn, Llangennith, Gower, Swansea SA3 1HX. Tel: 01792 386212.**

www.kingsheadgower.co.uk Food served 11am to 9.30pm daily. While you're here: Why not visit Britain's best beach? Rhossili Bay is just a mile away from the Kings Head Inn and was voted the best beach in the country. There are no dog restrictions.

7 FAIRBOURNE RAILWAY

There's no need to leave the pooch behind if you go on this railway trip. The Fairbourne Railway on the Mid Wales coast is a two-mile narrow-gauge steam railway that runs from Fairbourne along the coastline to the tip of the estuary, from where you can hop on a ferry to Barmouth on the opposite side.

The railway was originally constructed to transport building materials but the lucrative power of the tourist was soon discovered and the service was opened to passengers in the early 20th century. Dogs on leads can travel on the train for a small charge.

Fairbourne Steam Railway, Beach Road, Fairbourne, Gwynedd LL38 2EX. Tel: 01341 250362. www.fairbournerrailway.com Adult £5, children £3, OAPs £5, dog £1. While you're here: One of our great walks this month is a circular route from Fairbourne. See page 66 for more details.

8 ST FAGANS NATIONAL HISTORY MUSEUM, CARDIFF

This fabulous open-air museum is dedicated to the history, lifestyle and culture of Welsh people and is one of Wales' best-loved museums. Although dogs aren't allowed inside the historic buildings, there's still plenty for your pet to appreciate, such as the grounds of St Fagans Castle, the working water mills, the nature trails and woodlands and the 100 acres of parkland that the museum is situated in. The rest of the family will love going back in time to explore the way people have lived through the ages, from the roundhouses in the Celtic village to the ironworkers' cottages.

Dogs must be kept on a lead. **St Fagans National History Museum, Cardiff CF5 6XB.**

Tel: 029 2057 3500. www.museumwales.ac.uk Open 10am to 5pm. Free entry. While you're here: The grounds of Tredegar House, Caerphilly Castle and Cosmeston Lakes Country Park all allow dogs on leads.

9 CASTLEMEAD HOTEL, PEMBROKESHIRE

In the peaceful seaside village of Manorbier is the beautiful boutique hotel Castlemead. It's a former 'gentleman's' residence and guests can make the most of the lovely gardens and stunning views across Manorbier Bay. There is plenty to explore in Manorbier village, too – the beach is a popular spot for dogs and walkers as well as surfers, and the entire bay is overlooked by the dark, brooding castle.

Castlemead welcomes dogs in the bar/lounge and some of the ground-floor rooms. **Castlemead Hotel, Manorbier, Pembrokeshire SA70 7TA. Tel: 01834 871358. www.castlemeadhotel.com** While you're here: Explore the Pembrokeshire Coast Path, just a stone's throw from Castlemead.

10 HARLECH BEACH, GWYNEDD

The wide, sandy beach at Harlech is one of the best beaches along this stretch of Cardigan Bay. Four-legged visitors will love exploring every yard of the four-mile beach, which has one of the finest sand-dune systems on the Welsh coast. The

Above: Dogs will love exploring the famous sand dunes at Harlech Beach. Below: St Fagans is one of Europe's leading open-air museums; dogs can visit on a lead. Bottom: Admire Manorbier Castle while walking from Castlemead Hotel

waters here are shallow, so are ideal for paddling pooches. Because there's so much space, the beach is often quiet and peaceful – a perfect place to escape from the crowds. Harlech beach is accessible from Harlech, Gwynedd (nearest postcode LL46 2UH). Dog restrictions apply to some sections of the beach during summer months (May to Sept). While you're here: Walk up the steep hill towards the castle for a closer look at this impressive medieval fortress. Dogs aren't allowed inside the castle buildings. ▶



The walks

Pooches will love our trio of doggy-friendly walks

ROUTE 1

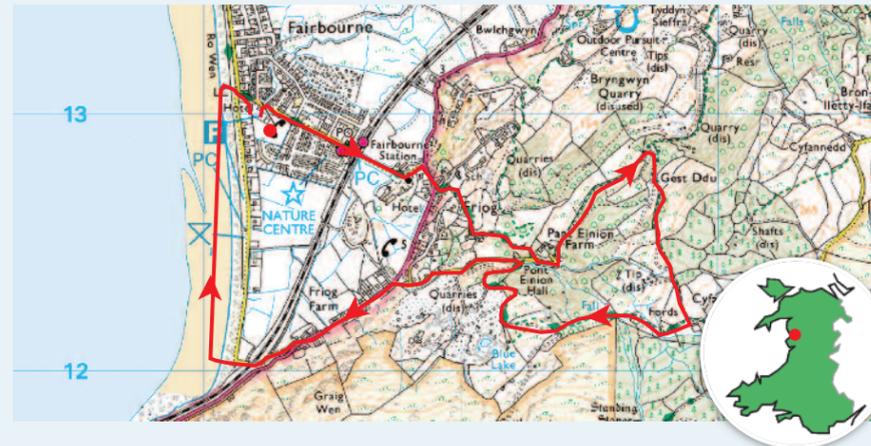
A woodland wander followed by a run on the beach – doggy heaven!

WHERE Fairbourne, Gwynedd
DISTANCE: About 4 miles
DIFFICULTY: Moderate
START: Fairbourne P&D beach car park (leave the A493 signposted for Fairbourne; cross railway line and continue, to find car park on right). Nearest postcode for sat nav is LL38 2EQ

GRID REF: SH 612 129
MAP: OS Explorer OL23: Cadair Idris & Bala Lake

DIRECTIONS:

- 1:** Leave car park, turn right away from sea and over railway line to walk back along road to junction with A493. Turn right; opposite petrol station take left turn for Ffordd yr Ysgol then shortly turn right through gate then left along path beside fence.
- 2:** Go through gate, then walk up through woodland and through gate leading up short hill to see old quarries ahead. Veer right to go through gate beside house, then at far corner bear left through gate to barns. Cross track and find way-marked path passing barns and then through gate.
- 3:** Continue on woodland path then at lane turn left and follow it as it eventually bends sharp left. Soon afterwards (and just before house)



- 4:** At junction, go right to meet gate; go through then follow left fork for track up hill. After passing trees, cross stream, through gate and pass entrance to old mine. Follow track to end and just before barn go right for way-marked path and walk beside wall then through gate.
- 5:** Bear right at fork, through gate and ford stream, then along path beside it. Continue to reach barn, turning left then right at its corner (can be overgrown here) to find a small way-marker on small hill. Walk just past way-marker, bear left for track through woodland and then gate.
- 6:** Cross stream and follow path to meet gate eventually. Walk through, along path to track that leads to gate. Go through this one and follow stone track under tips to a lane (Ffordd Panteinion). Walk along this for 500 yards to main road.

- 7:** Turn left (crossing road to use pavement) to pass houses and B&B. Continue for 500 yards then bear right for narrow lane by toll-house. Follow lane under railway bridge then head up to the seafront by the corrugated iron hut. Turn right and walk along beach (if tide out).
- 8:** Continue for just over half a mile and leave the beach by main entrance to find car park ahead on right. ▶

MAP POINTS OF INTEREST

- Fairbourne was built by Arthur McDougall of the flour empire. He bought the land at the end of the 19th century but his grand plans for an exclusive seaside resort were never quite realised.
- The beach at Fairbourne stretches for two miles, and has a blue flag.

WELSH COASTAL LIFE'S HIDDEN GEMS

Drink: The Penrhos Arms Hotel, Cemmaes, Machynlleth, Powys SY20 9PR. Tel: 01650 511243. www.penrhosarms.com
 A 15th-century inn with lots of traditional charm.

Visit: Talylyn Railway, Wharf Station, Tywyn, Gwynedd LL36 9EY. Tel: 01654 710472. www.talylyn.co.uk
 The world's first preserved railway.

Stay: Bwlch Gwyn Farm, Llanaber, Barmouth, Gwynedd LL42 1RR. Tel: 01341 250107. www.bwlchgwynfarm.co.uk
 Self-catering cottages, a caravan park and campsite – plus pony trekking.



ROUTE 2

Dogs can run free on the long sandy beach at Poppit Sands

WHERE: Poppit Sands, near Cardigan, Pembrokeshire
DISTANCE: About 6 miles
DIFFICULTY: Moderate
START: Poppit Sands Beach P&D car park (from Cardigan follow B4546 to St Dogmaels, then follow signs for Poppit Sands). Nearest postcode for sat nav SA43 3LP)
GRID REF: SN 152 485
MAP: OS Explorer 198: Cardigan & New Quay

DIRECTIONS:

1: Leave car park, face the sea and turn left along lane to follow it uphill, past Youth Hostel/No Through Road sign. Continue along this road for about one mile.

2: Cross cattlegrid at end of Tarmac road. Continue ahead, ignore track on left, then at campsite entrance go downhill to turn right along track. Pass campsite before going through gate on right by house and walk across yard to another gate and go through.

3: Continue ahead to soon pass building on left. Through gate, slightly uphill then turn right for grassy track. Over stile on right and stay ahead for another stile by gate and follow path as it veers left. Over another stile and continue ahead.

4: Walk towards look-out post and continue along coast path, ignoring stile on left, just continue ahead. At National Trust sign, go over stile into Pen yr Afr then follow clear path for quite some time.



Eventually the path will split by sign for Gernos and you walk downhill towards Pwlllygranant.

5: Leave the coast path and walk ahead inland. At bridge, cross higher one, then up steps. At top bear right for more steps. Continue to stile; cross it then turn left. Soon find stile in corner, cross it and turn left along track but then very soon turn right to cross two more stiles.

6: Straight over track to cross stile opposite and find a gate further along on right. Walk through it and walk with hedge on right to stile. Over stile, walk up slope then along path (don't follow bridgeway on right). When you reach gate, walk through and stay ahead.

7: Walk along grassy track to eventually reach ruins. Go over stile near these then turn right for farm road. Soon (about 40 paces), go

over stile on left and walk along path as it winds through trees.

8: Continue along clear path, through gate and over stile, turning right for another grassy path. At junction go straight over, pass Cippyn Fawr house and pass through two gates. When you reach lane continue ahead and then bear left at next junction. Follow lane back to car park. ▶

MAP POINTS OF INTEREST

- Dog restrictions apply to certain areas of Poppit Sands beach between 1st May and 30th September (although they're still allowed along large areas of beach). No restrictions during winter.
- Poppit Sands is the start of the Pembrokeshire Coast Path, which runs along the coastline for 186 miles finishing in Amroth.

WELSH COASTAL LIFE'S HIDDEN GEMS

Drink: Webley Waterfront Hotel, Poppit Sands, Cardigan SA43 3LN. Tel: 01239 612085. www.webleyhotel.com
 Dogs are welcome in the bar area.
Eat: The Ferry Inn, Poppit Road, St Dogmaels, Pembrokeshire SA43 3LF. Tel: 01239 615172. www.ferry-inn.com
 Historic pub on the banks of the River Teifi. Dogs welcome.
Stay: Oriel Milgi, Telynfa, High Street, St Dogmaels SA43 3EF. Tel: 01239 612556. www.orielmilgi.co.uk
 Boutique B&B – with three whippets!



ROUTE 3

A lovely stretch of beach and some coastal exploring for four-legged friends

WHERE: Nefyn, Gwynedd
DISTANCE: About 4 miles
DIFFICULTY: Easy
START: Beach car park, Nefyn (from the roundabout in Nefyn village centre follow the B4417 for Aberdaron; pass war memorial and pedestrian crossing then turn right at Beach signpost; find car park at bottom of road). Nearest postcode for sat nav LL53 6ED
GRID REF: SH 301 407
MAP: OS Explorer 253: Lleyn Peninsula West

NOTE: Check tides before setting out at www.tidetimes.org.uk/porth-dinllaen-tide-times. This walk should be completed at low tide

DIRECTIONS:

1: At low tide, walk down to beach and turn left along it. Walk along it to the houses and small harbour below the headland. Walk up the first slipway and find the path that meets the coast path.

2: Bear right along the coast path and then at a lane, bear right. At bend follow path around the headland of Penrhyn Nefyn to the edge and then continue along the edge of the headland and follow the coast path signs and route (or drop



down to the beach below if tide allows) until you meet Tarmac lane.

3: Turn left along it, pass the Cliffs Inn and continue to road. Turn left along it (cross road to use pavement). Shortly after entrance to Llwyn Gwalch on the left, turn left for a public footpath along a grassy track. Continue to house then follow way-marked path that leads back to coast path.

4: Turn right along it and stay with the coast path as it rounds back along the headland and retrace steps to head back to the beach. Walk along it to reach car park.

(Alternatively, turn right along the coast path and retrace steps past large house and onto lane. Stay ahead and walk to end of lane – just over half a mile. Turn left along main road and then left again for Lon-y-Traeth to return to car park). ✨

MAP POINTS OF INTEREST

- Welsh is the first language of almost 80 percent of the people who live in Nefyn.
- Nefyn is twinned with Puerto Madryn, a Welsh settlement town in Patagonia, Argentina.

WELSH COASTAL LIFE'S HIDDEN GEMS

Drink: Y Bryncynan Inn, Morfa Nefyn, Pwllheli, Gwynedd LL53 6AA. Tel: 01758 720879. www.bryncynan.com
 A traditional traveller's inn between Nefyn and Morfa Nefyn. Dogs welcome in the bar.
Eat: The Cliffs Inn, Beach Road, Morfa Nefyn, Pwllheli, Gwynedd LL53 6BY. Tel: 01758 720356. www.cliffsinn.co.uk
 There's a lovely sea view from this beachside restaurant and bar. Dogs allowed in the public bar.
Stay: Cae Ifan Self Catering Cottage, Lon Isaf, Morfa Nefyn Pwllheli, Gwynedd LL53 6BW. Tel: 01613 432180. www.gocoastal.co.uk
 A beautifully renovated farmhouse by the coast, sleeping up to seven people; well-behaved dogs welcome.

