

CWTCH UP *in Carmarthenshire*

Bask in the cosy warmth of a Welsh 'cwtch' or hug with a break in the green heart of Wales

Welsh for a cuddle or hug, 'cwtch' sums up feel-good Welsh hospitality and a sense of contentment. You'll find all this, plus epic scenery, historic ruins and characterful towns in this part of southwest Wales.

Literary Laugharne

Start with a visit to Laugharne, a magical coastal town on the River Taf estuary. Serenely beautiful, there's a medieval castle looking out over the salt marsh towards the Gower peninsula. But its real claim to fame is as the home of Welsh poet Dylan Thomas, and fans flock from all over the world to pay homage (past visitors have included King Charles, Mick Jagger and ex-US president Jimmy Carter). Thomas' home, the Boathouse, is now a museum with a snug 1950s parlour and a tea room serving sugar-dusted Welsh cakes and bara-brith. A short walk away is the poet's tiny writing shed, teetering on a clifftop. Peer through the window to see his desk strewn with pens and papers, and his jacket hanging on the back of a chair. Finish with a pint of local ale in Brown's, Dylan's favoured hostelry and now a boutique hotel and bar.



Welsh poet Dylan Thomas' house is now a museum

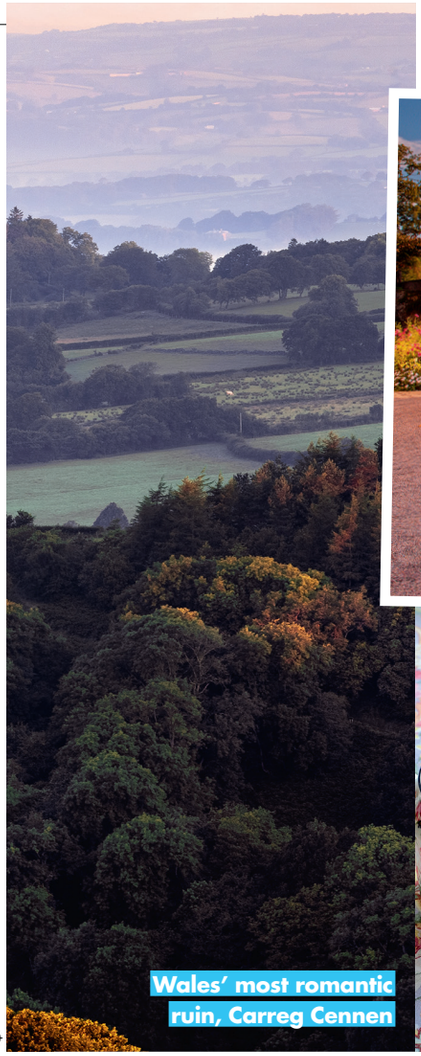


Talley Abbey, near Llandeilo

Remarkable ruins

Away from the coast, past Carmarthen (where fabled Welsh wizard Merlin is said to have been born), is the rolling green Tywi Valley. Dotted among the small farms and villages are astonishing ancient ruins, such as the 12th-century abbey built for the White Canon monks in Talley. This skeletal monument sits next to

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Wales' most romantic ruin, Carreg Cennen



Best for GARDEN LOVERS

Aberglasney Gardens near Llandeilo has a unique Elizabethan cloister garden and the Ninfarium, a wonderful indoor garden built under a glass atrium among the ruins; aberglasney.org





Picturesque Llandeilo

a lakeside nature reserve, at the foot of wooded hills. A walking trail snakes to a windswept brow for photogenic views towards the Cambrian mountains.

A short drive away is Carreg Cennen, a 13th-century stronghold dubbed Wales' most romantic ruin. Perched high on a limestone crag, it commands the skyline for miles and you can almost believe the legend that it was built by an Arthurian knight.

Ancient town

Once the capital of the Welsh kingdom of Deheubarth, the pretty market town of Llandeilo is a hub for shopping, wining and dining. Colourfully painted Georgian buildings house independent shops, such as the aptly named Heavenly, which sells homemade chocolates and ice cream. Lovers of Toast clothing will make a beeline for the brand's original shop, which sells rails of bargains from its archive.

Best for FOODIES

Sip and scoff your way around Carmarthenshire on a 'Larder Trail'. From Welsh rum to dry-aged beef and vegan burgers, there's plenty to tempt; discovercarmarthenshire.com

Welsh larder

A trip here should definitely carry a waistband warning as the local produce is absolutely delicious – think Welsh Black beef and cheeses like the creamy Perl Wen and crumbly Caerphilly. And in the spirit of 'cwtch', portions are generous. Stock up on meats and cheeses at Carmarthen's indoor Saturday market – the wafer-thin, home-cured ham is mouth-meltingly good – or the Sunday pop-up at Talley. For coffee and homemade cakes, pop in to Y Sied Goffi in Carmarthen, run by food writer and cook Lisa Fearn, who also has a cookery school on the family farm (ysied.co.uk).

Or treat yourself to dinner at The Warren, a sustainable eatery with a menu bursting with local delights, such as venison bourguignon sourced from the nearby Dinefwr estate.

WHERE TO STAY

⁘ Brown's (below) in Laugharne was Dylan Thomas' home from home. Now it's a boutique hotel with a superb restaurant, Dexters. Double rooms from £130; browns.wales

⁘ The Cawdor is an old coaching inn in Llandeilo. Its public rooms buzz with people enjoying afternoon tea, drinks and meals. Double rooms from £125; thecawdor.com



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