

THERE'S no better place to embrace autumn than Wales, where this time of year means everything from dining out on seasonal produce to immersing yourself in the changing colours of the great outdoors.

The food scene has never been stronger, with a new generation of creative, young suppliers dishing up everything from charcuterie and cheeses made using Welsh produce, to locally roasted coffee and craft beer. And it's being served in a stylish, simple way, everywhere from the big cities to the Valleys. So whether you take a culinary road trip, stopping off at farm shops and delis en route, or you dine out at Wales's best new restaurants and award-winning gastropubs, you won't go hungry.

For those who love landscapes,

For those who love landscapes, this is a place of jaw-dropping scenery and epic adventures. With three national parks taking up a fifth of the country, Wales isn't short on green space, which can be explored on foot, by bike and even from the treetops.

Marked trails will take you wherever you want to go, whether it's along the entire Welsh coastline, up to the summit of Snowdon, or along a mountain bike route accessible only to the hardiest of thrillseekers. Then, when the day is done, there

are plenty of places to turn in for the night, from glampsites and tree-houses to boutique hotels and converted landmarks.

Throughout 2017, Wales is marking its Year of Legends, celebrating the storytelling, history, dramatic scenery and creativity of the country. This season that includes Powys's Rhayader Dragon Festival (27-29 October; carad.org.uk) – look out for the parade and the crowning of

the Dragon Queen. Wales is easily accessible from the South East, and you'll find plenty to keep you busy no matter what kind of trip you're after – be it a romantic escape, an active holiday or a city break.

Over the page, you'll even find some great weekend trip itineraries to ensure you make the most of your short break. So there's no time like the present to experience a legendary autumn weekend in Wales.

# Find your way in a country full

# offlavour

With delicious local produce, an abundance of craft beer, wines and spirits, plus top-rated gastropubs and foodie trails, it's time to discover a real taste of Wales this autumn

former fisherman)

and The Beach Hut

Wales is ripe for a foodie road trip, with two dedicated trails that let vou taste the best the country has to offer. Taste Trail Ceredigion (tastetrailwales.co.uk) starts in the seaside town of Aberystwyth and ends close to Boncath, with more than 20 producers and eateries along the way, specialising in everything from cheese and honey to locally made sausages. The route takes in the Welsh coastline, so don't miss the chance to taste some bounty of the sea at stops such as New **Quay Fish Shop** (owned by a local

at Llangrannog. The Clwydian Range Food Trail (foodtrail.co.uk), meanwhile, takes you through an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and to the towns of Ruthin and Denbigh. Check out The Little Welsh Cheese Company, which produces cheddar and gouda in the cellar of a Flintshire B&B, or the Dangerous Food Company in St Asaph, which has gained cult status for its chilli jam.

### **Festivals**

Wales's calendar is packed with festivals throughout the year, and autumn is no exception. Among the gourmet highlights is North Wales's biggest food festival, the Gwledd Conwy Feast, which returns to the

fortified town at the end of the month (27-29 October; conwyfeast.co.uk). There will be street food stalls, an ale tent and skill demos, plus a music marquee with live bands.

### **Eating out**

Welsh food is abundant, diverse and above all delicious. The hardest decision you'll have to make is where to eat. Bodnant Welsh Food Centre (bottom, bodnant-welshfood.

co.uk) in the Conwy Valley offers a good introduction, with a cookery school, restaurant, tea room and farm shop all showing off the best of the country's offerings. Try Welsh laverbread (left), which

recently earned the same EU protected status as the Cornish pasty and Parma ham. Made with minced seaweed (sometimes mixed with oatmeal and fried), it's a key component of any full Welsh breakfast For a modern take check out the Pembrokeshire Beach Food Company (beachfood.co.uk), whose products are stocked in delis and

shops all over Wales. Fancy cosying up in a great pub? You'll find them wherever vou turn, from The Hardwick in Abergavenny (thehardwick co.uk) to The Bunch of Grapes in Pontypridd (bunchof grapes.org.uk), both of which were

listed in this

Gastropubs guide. There's also Felin Fach Griffin (felinfachgriffin.co.uk), just outside the Brecon Beacons National Park, where much of the produce comes from the pub's kitchen garden and there's a log fire

### **Local tipples**

to keep you warm.

There are many excellent craft breweries, including some that

offer a tasting tour. Tomos Watkin in Swansea (tomos watkin.com), has a threehour experience ending at the open bar.

Welsh wine is little known, but a number of vineyards open their doors to visitors. including Ancre Hill Estates (ancrehillestates.co.uk), just outside Monmouth, which

Suggested itinerary:

Friday: Pay a visit to Tintern Abbey



produces award-winning sparkling wine, as well as pinot noir and others.

> country's spirits. Over the past decade, several small distilleries have sprung up, in the foothills of the Brecon Beacons. Making single malt whisky since 2004, it has

Lesser-known still are the including Penderyn Distillery.

Tours of the distillery are available, or you can pick up a bottle of Penderyn's Brecon gin alongside more than 200 others at Ginhaus Deli in Carmarthenshire (ginhaus.co.uk).

Make sure you try Da Mhile's seaweed gin (left) and Dyfi Gin. Named the best new gin of 2017, it's produced in Britain's smallest distillary. Iechyd da!

since expanded into vodka and gin.



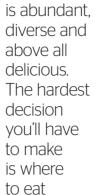
Friday: Check into Llys Meddyg (llysmeddyg.com), a restauran with rooms housed within an old Georgian coaching inn, in north Pembrokeshire.

Saturday: Set off for New Quay for a boat ride around Cardigan Bay in search of bottlenose dolphins seals and porpoises (cbmwc.org/ boat-trips), then have lunch at **Bara Menyn** (baramenynbakehouse.co. uk) in Cardigan, a bakery and cafe that serves its delicious fresh bread alongside light tarts and soups. Spend the afternoon exploring Pembrokeshire Coast National Park – including Porthclais Harbour (above) - on foot or bike before dinner back at Llys Meddyg.

The restaurant has its own smokery, so you'll find home-smoked fish on the menu as well as Welsh lamb.



**Sunday:** Make your way back to London, stopping off en route for a wander around the bookshops of Hay-on-Wye (above). One of them, Richard Booth's (boothbooks.co.uk) has a café serving all-day breakfast, light bites and cakes.



### Somewhere quirky Welsh food to spend the night

Whether you're looking for a boutique hotel or a luxury campsite, you'll find plenty of surprising places to stay

Wales is full of quirky accommodation, not least for glampers. Fforest (coldatnight.co.uk) is a collection of cabins, bell tents and glamping domes dotted around a Pembrokeshire farm, while for a truly magical getaway try the grass roofed Hobbit Houses at Florence Springs (florence springs.co.uk). Each cosy hideway is fitted with its own wood-fired hot

At Cwmcarn Forest campsite (your. caerphilly.gov.uk/cwmcarnforest) there are 10 timber-framed pods dotted along the banks of a stream it's camping with a little more luxury.

### **Historic hotels**

Though Bodysgallen Hall and Spa (bodysgallen.com) has a 13th-century tower at its heart, the main building was constructed in the early 17th century. A must for history-lovers, it's dotted with original features.

Fancy spending the night in a castle? Well you can do just that at Roch Castle (rochcastle.com), a converted 12thcentury Norman structure with six rooms and great views.

### **Boutique boltholes**

Staying somewhere unique needn't mean glamping. At the Harbourmaster Hotel (harbour-master.com) on Cardigan Bay the 13 modern rooms are spread across two waterfront buildings, as well as two cottages. In Capel Garmon, Betws-y-Coed, Snowdonia, relax in the five-star Tan Y Foel County Guest House (tanyfoelcountryhouse co.uk). Of the six luxurious en-suite rooms, The Loft, Four Poster and French Rooms all have spectacular views across to the mountains and



Knight and day: treat yourself to a room at the 12-century Roch Castle

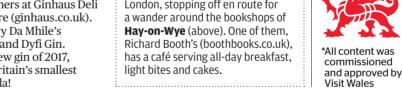
**Suggested itinerary:** Friday: Arrive in Tanygrisau near Blaenau Ffestiniog and check into Bryn Elltyd (ecoguesthouse.co.uk). This award-winning eco guesthouse is powered completely by renewable energy. Based at the foot of the Moelwyn mountains, it's ideally placed to explore Snowdonia and the rest of North Wales.



Saturday: After breakfast, spend the morning hiking in **Snowdonia** National Park - climbing Snowdon itself will take around six hours, but there are plenty of shorter trails. Pick up a light lunch in town and spend the afternoon bouncing, zipping and sliding your way around **Zip World** in Blaenau Ffestiniog. Then stay local and head to hip hostel CellB (cellb.org), not for the stylish beds, but for the bar and restaurant serving burgers and beers. There's also a cinema.

**Sunday:** Spend a few hours mountain biking within the national park at Coed Y Brenin - hire a bike at **Beics Brenin** (beicsbrenin.co.uk) and discover the tracks for all levels. Treat yourself to a Sunday roast at the nearby pub, George III (georgethethird.

co.uk), before you head back home.



### Get active in the great outdoors

### Walking

Whether you're keen on multi-day, long-distance hikes, or half-day jaunts, Wales has a walk for you. It was the first country to open a continuous path along its coastline, with the 870-mile Wales Coast Path (walescoastpath.gov.uk) unveiled in 2012.

Snowdonia National Park (eryri-npa.gov. uk) is home to Snowdon, Wales's highest mountain. 1,085m above sea level. The most demanding route to the top is the Watkins Path. which cuts through woodland and past waterfalls; the Miners' Track takes you over a lake, Llyn Llydaw.

### **Cycling**

With so many peaks, Wales is a haven for mountain bikers. Just south of the

Brecon Beacons, BikePark Wales (bikeparkwales.com) was built by experienced riders and visitors of all levels can get their thrills on the jumps and drops. Trails are colourcoded according to the level of

expertise needed. Yet, Welsh cycling isn't all about going off-road. There are plenty of other routes, including 1,400 miles of the National Cycle Network (sustrans.org.uk). Try the Peregrine Path, which is mostly Tarmac and largely traffic-free, starting in Monmouth and taking in the Wye Gorge and River Wye.

For a longer option, try the 220-mile Celtic Trail, which travels the entire width of Wales, from the Irish Sea to the English border, via quiet lanes, traffic-free trails and old rail lines, taking in the Pembrokeshire coast, Carmarthenshire and the Valleys.

### **Unusual activities**

This is a country that's skilled at (below), the beautiful roofless ruins combining its history with modernity, that inspired Wordsworth, on your and nowhere more so than its quirky way to **Gliffaes Country House** outdoor activities. With three **Hotel** (gliffaeshotel.com), a locations in Snowdonia, Zip World **luxurious Victorian manor** (zipworld.co.uk) has taken over an old overlooking the River Usk, just slate quarry, a mine and a forest with outside Abergavenny. its extreme zip wires and other adrenalin-raising activities. At the Penrhyn Slate Quarry site you can try Velocity, the world's fastest zip line, which can reach more than

100mph; at Fforest in Betws-v-Coed

you can have a treetop adventure;

Ffestiniog you can leap your way

through Bounce Below, a series of

former aluminium factory, Surf

And, opened in 2015 on the site of a

Snowdonia (surfsnowdonia.com) is a

300-metre-long inland lagoon with a

machine that produces a wave every

minute. So great surf is guaranteed.

and in the caverns at Blaenau

giant nets and slides.



**Saturday:** After breakfast, spend the morning exploring the surrounding Brecon Beacons National Park (you're very close to Sugar Loaf mountain here) before driving over to the seaside town of **Laugharne**. For lunch choose from

the Welsh cheeses, meats, pies and tarts on offer at The Ferryman deli, before heading out on the **Dylan Thomas Birthday Walk** (dylanthomasbirthdaywalk.co.uk), a scenic route to spots that inspired the writer when he lived in the town. His old home, **The Boathouse**, is now a museum (dylanthomas boathouse.com).

day: Set off early for Cardiff and spend the day exploring the city, from the gothic Cardiff Castle (cardiffcastle.com) to historical treasures in the National Museum (below, museum.wales/cardiff). Hungry? Enjoy some modern Welsh cooking at **The Potted Pig** (thepottedpig.com)

beware, though, this is one of Cardiff's hottest tickets, so vou'll need to book weeks in advance.



## Win a weekend in Wales

This year marks the Year of Legends in Wales - a celebration of the country's epic past, present and future.

As a land of majestic mountains and mighty skies, fringed with a beautiful coastline, there's no better time to embrace Wales than autumn, where you can enjoy everything from dining out on seasonal produce to immersing yourself in the changing colours of the great outdoors.

To celebrate the Year of Legends, Visit Wales is giving you the chance to win a £500 Welsh Rarebits voucher. Welsh Rarebits represents Wales's leading collection of Worth places to stay, membership is by invitation only and those hotels featured are chosen according to their superior levels of comfort, attention-to-detail, food, décor and those small touches that make the difference. So whether it's a cosy country house, a charming seafront hotel, a boutique bolthole or a restaurant with rooms you choose as the base for your Welsh adventure, you'll be sure to

experience legendary hospitality.







# Nightlife that's not to be missed

Think Wales is all just hiking and stunning scenery? From cocktail bars to buzzing clubs, here's where to find the cool crowd

### **Cardiff**

As the Welsh capital, it's no surprise Cardiff is home to the country's most vibrant nightlife, with everything on offer from quiet pubs to thumping nightclubs. Lab 22 (lab22cardiff.com) is one of the city's best cocktail bars, taking mixology to the extreme in a low-lit, atmospheric setting. The menu has a scientific

The menu has a scientific slant, with drinks listed like chemical elements. Or, head to The Dead Canary (thedeadcanary. co.uk), which has taken the Year of Legends theme to heart by developing cocktails based on Welsh folklore.

If your vibe is more craft beer than cocktails, try the Cambrian Tap (facebook.com/The CambrianTap), an historic city centre boozer that's been given a modern makeover and specialises in beer, with 18 draught taps serving Brains Craft Brewery products plus other microbrews from across the UK. Fancy a taste of further afield? Try the range of bottled and canned beers from around the world.

Clwb Ifor Bach (clwb.net), in the Castle Quarter, is an award-winning, three-floor live music venue and club, where you can hear practically any genre, including rock'n'roll,

R&B, indie and pop classics.
Open until 4am at
weekends, this is the
place to come if you're
in it for the long haul.

### **Swansea**

Serving coffee by day and cocktails by night, chic No. 6 Bar (no6bar.com) draws in Swansea's cool crowd with its bare brick walls,

stripped wood tables and Instagramable drinks. It also serves street food-style snacks, so you can sate your appetite and your thirst.

Another classy cocktail joint is The Perch (theperchswansea.co.uk), which dishes up live music, stand-up comedy and mixology masterclasses alongside drinks and sharing plates.



It's elementary: for craft beers head to The Cambrian Tap (left), or enjoy a cocktail with a scientific slant at Lab 22 (inset), both in Cardiff As well as a comprehensive cocktail list, there's a range of wines. And, billing itself as "the first micro-pub in Wales", Mumbles Ale House (mumblesalehouse.co.uk) feels more like a cosy living room than a pub, and is indeed the city's smallest. But despite it's size, it was Swansea Camra's Pub of the Year 2016.

### **Best of the rest**

Tiny Rebel (tinyrebel.co.uk) is arguably Wales's best-known craft brewery, and since starting out as a pop-up at **Newport** market in 2015 it's opened a flagship bar in the town. Just minutes away from the company's brewery, it serves an international selection of beer and cider, as well as Tiny Rebel's own (very) locally made brews. Hungry? There's hearty grub on offer here too.

For a touch of Prohibition era-chic, head to Nolton Corner in **Bridgend** (noltoncorner.com), where the bar is tiled, glasses hand from the ceiling and a great range of drinks lines the bar. Look out for the regular live music sessions, comedy nights and wine tastings.

The Libertine (bit.ly/LibertineAber) is perhaps the most chic bar in **Aberystwyth** and has been shaking up cocktails just off the seafront since 2015. Here the Heston Blumenthalesque molecular creations are served in vintage-style surroundings.



\*All content was commissioned and approved by Visit Wales