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Sir Gâr
darganfodsirgar.com

This is
Carmarthenshire
discovercarmarthenshire.com

For experienced road cyclists seeking a challenge, the northern and eastern reaches of Carmarthenshire offer epic climbs – and epic views to go with them.

Combine two of our most demanding but rewarding routes – handily mapped online, with elevation profiles and directions – for a short

break of cycling adventure, including the dramatic ascent of Y Mynydd Ddu/Black Mountain at the western edge of the Brecon Beacons. To help you plan, here you'll find ideas for places to stay, eat, drink and visit during your upland odyssey.



Day 1: **Big Wilderness Adventure**
Distance: 105km/65 miles
Estimated Time: 4 to 7 hours

Conquer the Mountains

Packed with wild drama, this testing loop along quiet backroads delves into the southern reaches of the Cambrian Mountains, and provides a real sense of escape and adventure. Pack supplies before heading out from **Llandovery** – chances to refuel are scant on this remote circuit, and this thriving market town, guarded by the ruins of a medieval castle, has several great cafés, restaurants and shops. Meandering north alongside the Towy River towards **Rhandirmwyn**, the road begins with a gentle rise before the valley sides steepen – and so does the climb, ascending past wooded **RSPB Gwenffrwd-Dinas Reserve** to the **Llyn Brienne Reservoir**. It's a magnificent, undulating ride along the eastern shore, veering around its various branches and drinking in fine views across its glittering waters, before you cross the Towy at the reservoirs northernmost fingertip and head west. Keep an eye out for a low white building near the roadside – the drovers' **chapel at Soar-y-Mynydd**, reputedly the most remote in Wales, many miles from the nearest settlement.

This stretch through the **Cambrian Mountains** is starkly beautiful and isolated, with few houses to be seen from the hilly road to **Tregaron**, where you turn left into the more-populated Teifi Valley. Pass **Llanddewi-Brefi** – its medieval hilltop church reputedly built on the site of a sixth-century miracle associated with St David – and



continue through a series of towns and villages along the north-western Carmarthenshire border, perhaps pausing for supplies at **Llanbydder**, the last significant settlement of the route.



Turning east once more, you'll tackle a long climb (though along a blessedly tree-lined road) into more wooded countryside, before descending to the villages of Rhydcymerau and **Llanawel**. We're on the last leg now, passing close to **Pumsaint** – site of the fascinating **Dolaucothi Roman gold mine** – and briefly joining the A482 before the final few humps approaching Llandovery, rewarded on clear days with views right across to Carmarthenshire's tallest summit, **Bannau Sir Gar** in the Black Mountain. Park your bike, and settle in for a coffee or something stronger, perhaps at **Penygawse Tea Rooms**, **West End Café** or **Bear Inn**.

discovercarmarthenshire.com/explore/road-cycling/big-wilderness-adventure/

Duration: Two to three days
Total Distance: 206km/128 miles or 158.5km/98.5 miles (short version)
Base: Llandeilo/Llandovery
Difficulty Rating: 8/10 (or 7/10 for short version)



Day 2:

Big Hills & Big Views

Distance: 101km/62 miles (short version: 53km/33.5 miles)

Estimated Time: 5 to 9 hours



The name doesn't deceive: this is a route for experienced and fit cyclists, involving 2000m/6560ft of elevation gain bringing a succession of spectacular views – but with some sensational places to eat and drink en route, you won't want for incentives to keep going. If the big climb through the Black Mountain is a haul too far, an abbreviated option covering just over half the distance still provides plenty of scenic highlights.

Start out from Ammanford – though not before energising with a caffeine hit at **Coaltown Coffee Roasters' Espresso Bar** (the Roastery Canteen just east of town does fine food, too). The town's proud coal-mining heritage is evident on the initial run north-east along the Amman River valley, but soon you're out and climbing north along the Wern-Ddu Road. As the route bends gradually west, you're within touching distance of **Carreg Cennen**, one of the region's most magnificent (albeit ruined) hilltop castles – a short detour if you've excess energy. Keep enough in reserve, though: turning north at Derwydd, you've a long, straight uphill, rewarded with great views of **Llandeilo** (and the chance to make another

How to get here

Llandeilo is 19km/12 miles from the western end of the M4 near Swansea; the A40 and A483 provide good access. Direct trains on the Heart of Wales line, which carry bikes, link Llandeilo with Llandovery (20 minutes), Swansea (1 hour) and Shrewsbury (3 hours), with connections across the UK.



Cycle repairs

County Cycles, Cross Hands
Excellent, friendly bike shop
20km/12.5 miles east of Carmarthen, housing a wonderful café, Bean on a Bike.
county-cycles.com

Beiciau Hobbs Bikes,
Carmarthen
Handy bike shop offering repairs and services.
[facebook.com/BeiciauHobbsBikes/](https://www.facebook.com/BeiciauHobbsBikes/)

short detour to **Dinefwr** and its craggy castle).

That colourful hillside market town is a good place to pause for some of Wales's finest coffee at **The Hangout**, and fabulous picnic supplies at **Ginhaus Deli**.



Continue north, on the winding, rollercoaster road through **Talley** – the 12th-century abbey remains call for a photo-stop – to join yesterday's final stretch east to **Llandovery**, where you'll find more places to scratch that caffeine itch. You'll be grateful for the boost: from here, after a gentle few country miles to **Llangadog**, it's time to face your biggest challenge. The haul up **Y Mynydd Ddu/Black Mountain**, on a switchback road topping out at 502m, is one of the most enthralling climbs on Britain's roads with equally dramatic views to both north and south, followed after just a brief downhill to **Brynamman** by the ascent of Mynydd Betws. You'll need no excuse to take it slow on the twisting descent back to Ammanford.

www.discovercarmarthenshire.com/explore/road-cycling/big-hills-big-views/

Where to stay

Cyclists are spoilt for choice in Carmarthenshire, with a range of bike-friendly accommodation options across the county, from welcoming hotels and pubs in lively market towns to self-catering apartments and cosy cottages, all with secure storage, some offering wash-down facilities, dry rooms and information on the best local routes. Search the full range of accommodation online at: discovercarmarthenshire.com/staying/

What to see & do

RSPB Gwenffrwd-Dinas Reserve

Lovely woodland and riverine habitat with profuse birdlife.
rspb.org.uk/reserves-and-events/reserves-a-z/gwenffrwd-dinas/

Carreg Cennen (detour)

One of most dramatic ruined castles in Wales, 4km off the trail near Trap.
cadw.gov.wales/visit/places-to-visit/carreg-cennen

Dinefwr, Llandeilo

Beautifully landscaped deer park and ruined castle surrounding 17th-century Newton House with appealing café.
nationaltrust.org.uk/dinefwr

Dolaucothi Gold Mines, Pumsaint (detour)

Fascinating gold mines dating from the Roman era, 4km off the trail near Crug-y-bar.
nationaltrust.org.uk/dolaucothi-gold-mines

Talley Abbey

Picturesque ruins of a 12th-century abbey founded by the monastic order of the Premonstratensians, or White Canons.
cadw.gov.wales/visit/places-to-visit/talley-abbey

Llanddeusant Red Kite Feeding Station (detour)

Watch dozens of these beautiful birds of prey, 5km off the trail.
redkiteswales.co.uk/