

The International Mountain Bike Association in the UK

Trans Cambrian Ride

from the English Border to the Irish Sea



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Managed by the Ledbury Area Cycle Forum

The IMBA - UK Trans Cambrian Ride

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Introduction and Safety Notes

The IMBA Trans Cambrian Epic Ride is a 100 mile route developed by Jeremy Atkinson, from the English border to the Irish Sea across the remote hills and moorland of central Wales.

A reasonably fit rider will be able to complete the route in three days - but be warned, Day 2 will be tough, and a test of your endurance. We recommend leaving Rhayader no later than 08.30 to enable the ride to Llangurig to be achieved by early evening. Alternatively, you may prefer to take the more relaxed 4 Day option.

The route has been designed to avoid main roads, gated field systems and farmyards, and largely uses moorland tracks and trails. Many of these are remote and exposed, so it is essential to carry food, drink, maps, weatherproof clothing, tools, spares, first aid kit - and an exit strategy, should you find yourself running out of daylight. Do not rely on your mobile phone, as coverage is patchy in this sparsely populated area.

We recommend using Paul Bennetts Mucky Weekends service for carrying overnight gear. Paul also offers a rescue service should this be required, & is a mine of local information.

You will find some challenging descents, & will cross some five major fords on your ride - all of which can be treacherous following heavy rain. Fortunately, all have optional bridges or are crossable upstream. So if in doubt, always take the safer option.

Remember that the countryside is the workplace of the farmer, and be really careful about closing all gates securely behind you. We want to develop a good relationship with the local communities, who will not be supportive if they have to rescue sheep and cattle who have strayed through unsecured gates. Finally, please be aware of other users - walkers and horse riders, who may be just around that next bend. The route follows Glydwr's Way in places, so ride within your sight lines on the final descent to the sea, as this trail is a popular route.

You will find the Trans Cambrian Ride tough and a challenge - enjoy it!

Colin Palmer.

Route Coordinator IMBA UK 01531 633500 mtb@branchline.demon.co.uk

The IMBA Trans Cambrian Ride

Why the Epic Ride?

The IMBA Trans Cambrian Epic Ride was pioneered by IMBA UK members on a three day bank holiday ride in May 2005. Since then the route has been featured in mtb magazines and savoured by intrepid mtb'ers in all seasons as a result. See <http://www.mbswindon.co.uk/mountain-biking-the-trans-cambrian-way/> for an example of a trip in the snow!

What is it

The route crosses Wales from Knighton on the English Border, to Dovey Junction near Machynlleth on the Welsh coast. The trail network consists of bridleways, RUPP's, BOAT's and unsurfaced unclassified roads linked by country lanes.

Length = 175km (100 miles) Offroad = 115km (72 miles)
Country Lanes = 60km Height gain= 3,700m (12,000ft)

Which way, and how do mountainbikers follow the route?

We suggest riding from east to west. This means that the wind may tend to be against you, on some sections, but you will have the bonus of 500' more descent than climb!

- A series of A4 maps using Tracklogs are downloadable from <www.imba-UK.com>
 - 5 x A3 1:50,000 route maps are available from IMBA UK, or use the following OS maps.
 - Explorer: 200, 201, 213, 214, 215 and Outdoor Leisure 23 or Landranger 135, 147, 148.
- Informal waymarks may also be found to assist navigation.

Are there Pubs, Shops and Accommodation on the Route?

The 3 day ride provides an opportunity for pub lunches to be taken at Llanbadarn Fyndd (day 1), Pont rhyd y groes (day 2) and Dyliffe (day 3)

Much of the route is in remote countryside, but despite this, the recommended overnight stops will have camping, b & b's, pubs and shops. A list of facilities on or near the trail can be found in this guide.

How Many Days to Ride the Trail

3 day Option.

The original IMBA ride - the probable option for most fit riders..

Day	Route	On road	Offroad	Total	Climb
1	Knighton to Rhayader	20km	30km	50km	1300m
2	Rhayader to Llangurig	20km	50km	70km	1500m
3	Llangurig to Dovey Jn.	20km	35km	55km	900m

This works well as there is camping, b & b and pubs and shops at both overnight stops.

4 day option

For a more relaxed timetable a would be:

Day	Route	On road	Offroad	Total	Climb
1	Knighton - Rhayader	20km	30km	50km	1300m
2	Rhayader - Pontrydygroes	10km	35km	45km	700m
3	Pontrydygroes - Staylittle	20km	25km	45km	1100m
4	Staylittle - Dovey Junction	10km	20km	30km	600m

There are b & b's at Pontrydygroes but the nearest camping is at Tyllwyd (NE of Cwmystwyth and no pub!), or at Devils Bridge.

2 days?

Yes - it can be done if you are really fit, and a strong rider - but we don't recommend it!

Do I have to carry my Luggage?

No - we have arranged portage through local taxi operators and we recommend Paul Bennet & Son, who will arrange portage, advise on accommodation and provide rescue and backup service. www.muckyweekends.co.uk

		Knighton to Rhayader	Rhayader to Llangurig	Llangurig to Machynlleth
Paul Bennett & Son	01686 412047	✓	✓	✓
Possible options are:	07752 345830			
Owen Motors (Knighton)	01547 528303	✓	-	-
SP Cars (Rhyader)	01597 810666	✓	✓	-
Mach Taxis (Machynlleth)	01654 702048	-	-	✓

How about getting back?

We suggest using Paul Bennett for the return to Knighton.

1. Paul Bennet & Sons (Llanidloes). See www.muckyweekends.co.uk

6, 6 & 16 seat minibuses and large box trailers for bikes.

2. Mach Taxis (Machynlleth)

A minibus service which will return up to six cyclists and bikes.

3. Train. Dovey Jn / Machynlleth to Knighton

Costs under £40 per person (£10 advanced fare). Change at Shrewsbury
Trains can be very crowded - particularly in summer and bank holidays, so bikes should be booked prior to travel at the earliest possible date.
See summary timetable in Service Guidelines. Depart 4pm-ish arrives 7pm-ish

4. Train. Dovey Jn / Machynlleth to Craven Arms

Costs over £40 per person. Change at Shrewsbury
NB The car needs to be left at Craven Arms at the beginning of the ride. Rail to Knighton £4.
There are mostly 4 trains a day from Craven Arms to Knighton (20 minute journey) as follows:
Monday to Saturday Around 06.00, 09.30, 14.30 and 19.00
Sunday Around 12.30 & 16.30

This provides more train options than using the Craven Arms to Knighton service.

5. Train to Newtown & cycle via the scenic B4355 to Knighton

Train Fare around £10 per person. 22 miles of hilly cycling.
There is also a bus which leaves on Tuesdays at 14.30 (Owens Motors 01547 528303)

6. Cycle back on A & B roads. 54 miles

Machynlleth A489 to Cemmaes Road, then A470 to Caerws, A489 to Newtown then A483 / B4355 to Knighton.

7. Cycle back on minor roads and B roads. 60 miles and hilly!

Machynlleth - Dyliffe - Staylittle then B4518 via Llanidloes to Pant y dwr. Then Bwlch u Sarnau to join B4356 NE of Llanbister - Llangunlo - Knighton

8. Two cars

Leave one at Knighton and one at Machynlleth. About 50 miles each way.

What about Day Rides

The route can be ridden as a series of one day rides as follows:

Knighton to Rhayader

Ride to Bwlch y Sarnu.

Cycle to Peny Bont (cafe at Crossgates) near Llandridod Wells. Use train to Knighton.
or

Ride from Knighton to Rhayader. Return using Paul Bennet Taxi service.

Rhayader to Llangurig

Paul Bennet Taxis tow a trailer which will carry bikes back to Rhayader

or

Ride to Cwmystwyth. Cycle back to Rhayader along the mountain road.

Llangurig to Dovey Junction.

Use either Paul Bennet Taxis or Mach Taxis for the return to Llangurig

or

Train to Caerws and taxi + trailer to return to Llangurig.

What other mtb options are available.

1 Jack Mytton Way

This Shropshire bridletrail inks into the beginning of the Trans Cambrian Way and is a 95 mile / 150km route from Cleobury Mortimer via Much Wenlock and Church Stretton to Llanfair Waterdine - some 5km into the Trans Cambrian Trail.

There is accommodation locally should you prefer to avoid the return trip to Knighton.

The Mortimer Trail will take 3 days for the whole trail, or 1 day if you start at Church Stretton (on the Shrewsbury / Knighton rail line).

2. The Mach mtb Trails

Four trails, 16km, 23km and 30km & the cll-machx, which start and finish at Machynlleth, parts of which are also used by the Trans Cambrian Trail. Routes leaflet available from Machynlleth TIC. See www.everythingaberystwyth.co.uk/cycling-machynlleth-trails.

3. Coed y Brenin & Dolgellau

Some 10 trails graded from green to black are readily accessed using the T2 coastal bus service which stops in the town and at the visitor centre.

The 14.30 T2 Express Coaches bus may take bikes to the Forestry Commission trails at Coed y Brenin if there is room. Other T2 services operated by Lloyds coaches will not take bikes.

4. Gwyder MTB Trail Llanwrst.

Use the T2 bus service to Blaenau Festinio or Bangor where there are connections for the rail service to Llanwrst.

Many other mtb trail options in Wales can be found at www.trailguru.co.uk.

The IMBA Trans Cambrian Ride - Guide to Services

Tourist Information Centres (All numbers refer to the Route Map)

Knighton (1)	www.offasdyke.demon.co.uk	01547 528753
Elan Valley (12)	Elan Valley Visitor Centre	01597 810898
Machynlleth (29)	Under review	
Aberystwyth	Terrace Rd SY23 2AG aberystwythtic@ceredigion.gov.uk	01970 612125

Accommodation

Knighton (1)	
Bryn Heulog, Llanfairwaterdine	01547 528155
Castle Inn, Knucklas	01547 528150
Fleece House, Market Street	01547 520168
Garden Lodge, Llanfairwaterdine	01547 520621
George and Dragon Inn, Broad Street	01547 528532
Horse & Jockey Inn, Station Road	01547 520062
Kinsley, Station Rd LD7 1DT*	01547 520753
Knighton Hotel, Broad St	01547 520530
Mill Guest House, Lloyney	01547 528049
Milebrook House Hotel, Milebrook	01547 528632
Stow View, Presteign Rd	01547 520834
Whytcm Cottage, 7, George Rd	01547 520012

Llanbadarn Fyndd (9)

Hillside Lodge	01597 840364
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Rhayader (11)

Bryncoed Guest House, Dark Lane	01597 811082
Brynafon Country House	01597 810735
Brynteg, East St	01597 810052
Crown Inn	01597 811099
Eagles Inn, Church St	01597 810400
Elan Valley Hotel, West St	01597 810109
Elan Valley Hotel, Elan Valley	01597 810448
Elan Valley Lodge (groups of 10+ only)	01597 811143
Lamb & Flag, North St	01597 810819
Liverpool House, East St*	01597 810706
Penybont, Elan Valley	01597 811515
Riverside Lodge, Glanrhydwen, Elan Valley	01597 810770
Sun, St Harmon	01597 870366
Ty Morgans*	01597 811666

* Recommended by MTB users.

[illegible]

Pont-rhyd-y-groes (15)
Miners Arms Guest House 01974 282238

Cwmystwyth (17)
Old Post Office SY23 4AD 01974 282231

Llangurig (20)
Glangwy Fm (on actual route) 01686 440697
Blue Bell Inn 01686 440254
Old Vicarage 01686 440280
Plas Bwlch (2 miles west on A44) 01686 440659
Black Lion Hotel (!) 01686 440223
(!) Some negative reports received.

Staylitttle / Dyliffe (24)
Star Inn, Dyliffe 01650 521345
Cwmbiga Farm, Penfforddilas 01686 430615
The Old Weather Station Bunkhouse (groups only) 01939 220421

Machynlleth (29)
Brynlwydlyn (3 miles SE) 01654 702042
Dolgelynen Farmhouse 01654 702026
Dyfiview, 21, Ffordd Mynydd Griffiths 01654 702023
Eryl House, Newtown Rd 01654 703591
Felin Crewi, Penegoes 01654 703113
Maenllwyd, Newtown Rd 01654 702928
Marchlynn Farm House Aberdyfi Rd (A493) 01654 702018
Moelfre Cottage, Tal y wern. 5 miles to east. 01654 511288
Plas Mawr (on A493) 01654 781286
Reditreks Bunkhouse,31 Heol Powys SY20 8DD 07590 282374
Sunny View, Forge 01654 700387
Talbondrain Guesthouse, Nr Forge 01654 702192

Camping

Rhayader (11)	Wyeside Campsite	01597 810183	Feb - Nov
Cwmystwyth (17)	Tyllwyd	01974 282216	May - Sept
Devils Bridge (16)	Woodland Caravan Park	01970 890233	Mar - Oct
Llangurig (20)	Glangwy Fm	01686 440232	All year
Aberhosen	Esgairfochnant Fm	01654 703819	On request
Dovey Junction (28)	Morben Isaf Caravan Park	01654 781473	Mar - Oct
Dovey Junction (28)	Furnace Farm	01654 781264	April - Oct
Machynlleth (29)	Llwyngwern Farm	01654 702492	Apr - Oct

Shops & Cafes

Bwlchysarnau	Cafe (ring to check)	01597 870432
Knighton (1)	All services	
Llanbadarn Fyndd (9)	Community shop	01597 840448
Rhayader (11)	Good selection	

Elan Valley (12)	Visitor Centre & Cafe	01597 810898
Llangurig (20)	Stores & Post Office	
Staylitttle (24)	Stores & Post Office	01686 430208
Machynlleth (29)	Good selection	

Pubs serving Food

Knighton (1)	Good selection	
Lloyney (3)		
Llanbadarn - Fynydd (9)	New Inn	01597 840378
Abbeycwmhir (10)		
Rhayader (11)	Good selection	
Elan Valley (12)	Elan Valley Hotel	01597 810448
Pont-rhyd-y-groes (15)	Miners Arms	01974 282238
Devils Bridge (16)	Several	
Llangurig (20)	Several	
Dyliffe (26)	Star Inn	01650 521345
Machynlleth	Good selection	

Bike Shops

Before you start

Ludlow	Pearce Cycles	01584 879288
Craven Arms	Fort Royal	01588 673500

On the route

Rhayader (11)	Clive Powell MTB's (+cafe)	01597 811343
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In the vicinity of the route

Llandrindod Wells	Greenstiles	01597 824594
Newtown	Sapphire Cycles	01686 610021

At the end

Machynlleth	Opening 2014 next to Reditreks	
Aberystwyth	Halfords	01970 627187
Aberystwyth	Summit Cycles	01970 626061

Jetwash, showers and changing facilities at Machynlleth

Jet wash for bike.	H J Jones Garage	01654 702108/9
Showers	RugbyClub (small quick groups only)	01654 702006
"	Leisure Centre (£1.00)	01654 703300

Rail Services

Enquiries 08457 48 49 50. The route is served by two railway lines operated by Arriva Trains Wales <www.arrivatrainswales.co.uk>

Aberystwyth to Shrewsbury (8 trains Mon - Fri, 7 trains Sat, 3 trains Sun in each direction)
Aberystwyth - Dovey Junction - Machynlleth - Caerws - Newtown - Shrewsbury.

Shrewsbury to Swansea (4 trains Mon - Sat, 2 trains Sun in each direction)
Shrewsbury - Craven Arms - Knighton - Penybont - Llandrindod Wells - Swansea.

Shrewsbury to Cardiff (generally an hourly service)
Shrewsbury - Craven Arms - Hereford - Newport - Cardiff

Approximate Train Departures Mon - Sun as at Jan 2014 (to the closest half hour)

Dovey Jn 05.30* 08.00* 10.00 12.00 14.00 16.00 18.00 20.00

Machynlleth + 10 mins

Caerws + 30 mins

Newtown + 45 mins

Shrewsbury + 90 mins

* Mon to Sat only. Not Sunday.

These services are advertised to take 2 bikes and this may be reservable.

In practice, the Knighton line is lightly used and the guard may allow more bikes, while the Machynlleth and Hereford lines are much busier - and more than 2 bikes could be a problem on peak time trains.

Navigation & GPS

You may find yellow arrows to assist with navigation. Some have faded, but the forest ones are mostly OK.

GPS downloads do not tally exactly with the correct route as marked on the maps, so use with caution. The map is correct!

Route Diversions

Locked gates at east & SW entrance/exit to/from Bondre-fawr woods (centre / top of Map 2). It is possible to lift bikes over, but preferable to continue along the road for 1 mile & TR along the bridleway to rejoin the route at the locked gate.

New diversion around the former farmhouse "Storehouse" at the end of the tarred road NE of Ysbyte Ystwyth (top left Map 3).

Be aware of Mack Trail waymarks which diverge from the TransCamb route after crossing the stream near Aberhosen (Map 5)

Guided Rides

Phil Stasiw operates guided tours over the route. For details see:

<http://www.mountainbikewales.org.uk/imba-trans-cambrian.html>

Aberystwyth Cardi Taxis 01970 625625

Cardi Taxis have a large estate car and can transport 2 clean bikes and riders.

Aberystwyth also has a very cheap taxi bus which will take passengers (not bikes) to places such as Cymystwyth for just over £2. To book, ring 01970 633555 before 4.30pm.

Bobs Taxis, 01970 615537 offer a passenger only service.

The IMBA Trans Cambrian Ride - Places and sites of interest.

Knighton (1)

A pleasant market town situated halfway along Offas Dyke and on the Shrewsbury to Swansea Central Wales Railway.

Its position on the River Teme made the town strategically important in Saxon and Norman times, with Offa King of Mercia building his dyke to defend the English borderlands from the marauding Welsh towards the end of the 8th century. Later, in the 13th Century, Ralph Mortimer of the powerful Mortimer family cunningly "won" the town by marrying the daughter of Welsh warlord Llewellyn the Great, and claiming it as his dowry.

The shops on the narrow streets show little regard for the typical high street multiples, with the clock tower and the "Narrows" providing a pleasantly rural feel to the town.

River Teme (2)

The river Teme rises in the Kerry hills and at 50 miles Plus, is the second largest tributary of the River Severn which it joins at Worcester. On leaving Knighton it flows through Ludlow and Tenbury Wells, passing the orchards, hopyards, woods and countryside of Herefordshire and Worcestershire & supports wily brown trout and grayling.

It has been an important trading route since pre Norman times, and from the 14th century was used for the transport of wheat, silver, gold and enormous quantities of lead, as well as being strategically important in the prolonged squabble over who owns Wales.

Knucklas Viaduct (3)

Probably the most impressive and photogenic piece of engineering on the Central Wales Railway, built in 1862.

Knucklas Castle (4)

Some earthworks and a little remaining stone walling is all that remains of this castle on the site where King Arthur is reputed to have married his Guinevere.

The castle was commissioned in about 1240 by Ralph Mortimer, who then disappeared off to Europe for a spot of warring and leaving his 11 year old son Roger to supervise the construction.

It was sacked around 20 years later by a vengeful Llewelyn II, and was likely to have been a ruin by the time the revolting Owain Glyndwr started to be difficult in 1402.

Beacon Hill (5)

Your route climbs along the original ancient main highway from Knighton to Newtown area of high moorland and managed as a wildlife reserve by the Crown Estate. The ruined Beacon Lodge in Beacon Woods was served by the oddly sited Llanbister Road Station, built specifically for the Victorian shooters.

Lookfor white (male) Hen Harriers as well as the usual buzzards, kites & kestrels.

Source of the Lugg (6)

The 45 mile River Lugg rises near just to the south of the highest point on Beacon Hill and then flows through Herefordshire via Leominster, to become a tributary of the River Wye, which it joins some 9 miles downstream of Hereford.

Much of it is enjoyed by canoeists, but can be very dangerous when in flood

Moelfre City (7)

A couple of kilometres to the south is surely the smallest city in the world. Once a major prehistoric settlement with around 14 barrows and later a mediaeval platform settlement.

River Ithon (8)

Fording this river which flows from Newtown to reach the Wye at Newbridge on Wye can be tricky - and entertaining.

Llanbadarn Fynydd (9)

An extremely lively village which dragged itself out of seemingly terminal decline to become UK Village of the Year in 1998. It now runs a community shop in addition to the pub, garage and a thriving project telemarketing locally hill reared "sweet lamb".

Abbey cwm Hir (The Abbey in the Long Valley) (10)

The ruined Cistercian abbey 3km to the east was once the site, around 1143, to the second largest religious building in Europe and is thought to contain the grave of Llewellyn ap Gruffyd, the last of the Welsh Princes who died in battle in 1282.

It was attacked in the late twelfth century by Hugh de Mortimer after which the earlier wooden building was replaced by a significant stone structure close in size to the abbeys at Durham and Winchester.

During the 13th century, Llywellyn Fawr embarked upon an ambitious building programme which was spotted by Henry III, who imposed a huge fine upon the abbey, and effectively stopped its development as a national cathedral.

By 1400 it was a stronghold of the Mortimer family, and was attacked during the Owain Glyn Dwr uprising after which it became the source material for much of the stone walls and farm buildings in the area.

Rhayader (11)

Rhayader developed in the 5th century and is regarded as the oldest town in Mid-Wales. The waterfall that can be seen today is the remains of the original that was blown up in 1780 to make way for the bridge and which gave the town its name Rhaeadr Gwy - Waterfall on the Wye. Below Water Lane can be found the ancient ford which provided the original crossing of the River Wye.

For mountain bikers, the town is famous for Clive Powell's Dirty Weekends - and Clive's shop can be found near the bridge.

Elan Valley Dams (12)

Built to supply Birmingham with clean water to eliminate typhoid & cholera, the four dams on the River Elan were completed by 1904 and later supplemented by the Claerwen Dam built by Italian masons (the Brits were busy sorting out bomb damaged London) and opened in 1952 by the newly crowned Queen Elizabeth II. They now provide up to 365

thousand tonnes of water daily to the second city sourced from the local rainfall averaging 1.8m per year.

The estate, once owned by the Cistercian monks of Strata Florida Abbey, is now managed by the Elan Valley Trust on behalf of Welsh Water for conservation, farming and recreation.

Monks Trod (13)

To the north of the permissive track on the Elan Valley estate this ancient 10km highway to the mountain road was used by the monks in their travels between the sister abbeys of Strata Florida and Abbey Cwm Hir.

Unfortunately the combination of poor drainage and use by recreational vehicles does mean that the route is unpleasant in all but the driest of summers.

Strata Florida (14)

Some 2km to the south, this ruined Welsh Cistercian abbey was first founded in 1164 and developed into a major abbey under the patronage of Lord Rhys of Deheubarth

In 1285 the abbey church was struck by lightning, and was severely damaged by the following fire. No sooner had this been repaired than the Abbey suffered further damage as a result of the Welsh rebellion and then from the attentions of English royal forces.

In 1401, during the rising of Owain Glyndwr, it was occupied by 120 English men-at-arms, at which point the Abbot cried enough, upped stick and took his monks to pray in less stressful conditions, which was far sighted considering the forthcoming effect of 'enry 8.

Despite the frequency and severity of these wars, it is nothing short of a miracle that the beautifully preserved west doorway and other structures remain at Strata Florida to be worth viewing.

Pontrhydygroes & Ysbyty Ystwyth (15)

"Ysbyty" means place of hospitality, and the name dates back to the days when the village was a stopping place on an important route used by the monks of Strata Florida Abbey.

Pontrhydygroes, which means "bridge by the ford of the cross" became the centre of the 19th century Lisburne and Grogwynion lead mines - whose spoil heaps are visible today.

Devils Bridge (16)

Around 5km to the northwest this famous beauty spot with the spectacular Mynach waterfall also offers an opportunity for a trip to Aberystwyth on the narrow gauge railway.

Cwmystwyth Mines (17)

The enormous spoil heap by the side of the road is all that remains of a mine which dates back to 1500BC, was probably worked by the Romans, but only became intensively developed in the 16th century and peaked in Victorian times.

Both lead and copper were extensively mined, both through open cast workings, and also through a honeycombe of workings inside the hill to the north much relished by your scribe and other cavers in the 70's and 80's.

The mines finally closed in the 1960's.

The Mountain Road (18)

Once the main highway between Aberystwyth, Rhayader and England, this was used to

drive cattle and sheep from the Welsh Hills to the English markets, and later was the route of the Aberystwyth Stagecoach. Its importance fell when Telford built the current A44.

Esgair Ychion Forest (19)

Planted by the Forestry Commission in the 1960's this 25ha forest is now gradually being felled and replanted, and is the home to some 35 groaning wind turbines.

Llangurig (20)

Quite rightly claiming to be the first village on the Wye, Llangurig nestles llanguidly in the junction between the A44 and the A470 and boasts two pubs, a 15th century church and a splendid 20th century roundabout.

Hafren Forest (21)

Named after the Severn (Afon Hafren), planting started in the 1930's and now totals some 40ha which is much enjoyed by offroad motorbikes for enduros and trials.

The forest is a haven for birds including crossbills feeding on the pine cones, together with the raptors Red Kite, Merlin and Goshawks while the damp climate encourages Tormetill, Marsh Violets and Bog Asphodel on the streamside banks.

A picnic spot is available on the banks of the Severn, together with riverside walks for those wishing to stretch some different muscles.

Rivers Severn & Wye (22)

Both rivers rise on the Plynlimmon Hills some 4 to 5km to the west of the route, and the Severn is crossed by a cantankerous ford (or bridge if you walk). By some strange chance the two rivers take quite different routes before meeting some 200km later in the Bristol Channel.

Lyn Clwedog (23)

The Clewedog dam was opened in 1968 to satisfy the growing trend for brummies to invest in flush loos and washing machines, and resulted in the loss of some 2.5sq km of farmland.

This rather upset Plaid Cymru who organised a concerted campaign to prevent the construction. Serious damage was subsequently caused in 1966 by a bomb explosion, probable placed by 'MAC' (Mudiad Amddiffyn Cymru), a group of political extremists under the leadership of John Jenkins. 'MAC' eventually got their come uppance when their bomb intended for Prince Charles decided to do its own thing and blew up its handlers.

However, it was all worthwhile, 'cause Jimmy Carter later caught a fish on the new lake.

Staylitttle (24)

Staylitttle owed its prosperity to lead mining, and particularly the Van mine which began production in the 1860's. At its busiest time it is said to have employed 1000 men and was for a short time the most productive lead mine in Europe, with a railway line laid from Caersws to take the lead to market.

It was largely dismantled in 1921, although some working continued for another decade, and all that now remains are two chimneys and the inevitable spoil heaps.

The village shop is well worth a visit.

Roman Fortlet (25)

The Roman Pen Y Grogben Fort was constructed by the Romans to protect the Roman Road and their lead mining operations at nearby Dylife. The 63ft diameter Red Wheel, was probably the largest in Wales and the wheel pit can still be seen, along with the top section of the pump rods driven by the wheel which can be spotted as you climb the hill.

In later years the hill became known as Gibbet Hill - where a local blacksmith was forced to construct his own gibbet before being hung for the crows to savour for murdering his ex lover and her children in 1720. The hanging irons were rediscovered in 1938 are on display at St Fagens Folk Museum near Cardiff.

Dylife (26)

Mining peaked in between 1820 and 1890 when some 1000 to 1500 workers were employed - particularly at the Dylife Mine. From 1845 over 36,000 tones of lead ore were extracted, along with substantial quantities of copper and zinc ore, and some silver.

A Dylife miner who was killed in a mining accident was buried in the local graveyard, and his clothes buried separately, according to a local custom, near a place called Ty Maggi. His ghost appeared on several occasions, waving a jacket at his mates and telling them to dig it up. When finally they did so, they found his life's savings in his pocket, which they shared between themselves.

His ghost only appeared once again, just to smile and wave goodbye!

Glaslyn (27)

The area around this lake is a nature reserve managed by the Montgomeryshire Wildlife Trust, and includes a footpath around the lake leading to a viewpoint. The reserve is largely managed to encourage heather regeneration to attract Rd Grouse, Meadow Pippets, Wheatears and Ring Ouzels. Underfoot will also be found the insect eating plants, sundew and butterwort.

Just along the track to the north is a memorial to Wynford Vaughan Thomas, the BBC contributor who died in 1987.

Dovey Junction (28)

This recently refurbished railway station lies close to the mouth of the Dyfe estuary, where it meets the Irish Sea. It services the main line from Aberystwyth to Shrewsbury where it connects to the coastal branch line to Pwllheli, and is approached along a 1km long track. If the legs are weary, then Machynlleth is only one stop away!

Machynlleth (29)

Machynlleth became the capital of Wales during the short lived 1404 rebellion against English rule under the leadership of Owain Glyndwr. The only reminder of this is the Parliament House "The Plas" which stands on the site of the rebellion HQ, and now houses "Celtica" an audio visual display through the Celtic heritage of Wales.

The town owes its existence to having the final ford on the River Dyfi before it reaches the Irish Sea, and was settled in Celtic times, and by the Romans as Maglona.

Just out of town is the Centre for Alternative Technology, where reduced admission is granted for travellers by cyclists, who can ponder over the cliff railway, wind and water powered 'lectric, and composting loos.

A good reputation for mountainbiking is maintained by the two cycle shops, the Mach I, II & III mtb trails, in addition to a presence on the National Cycle Network.