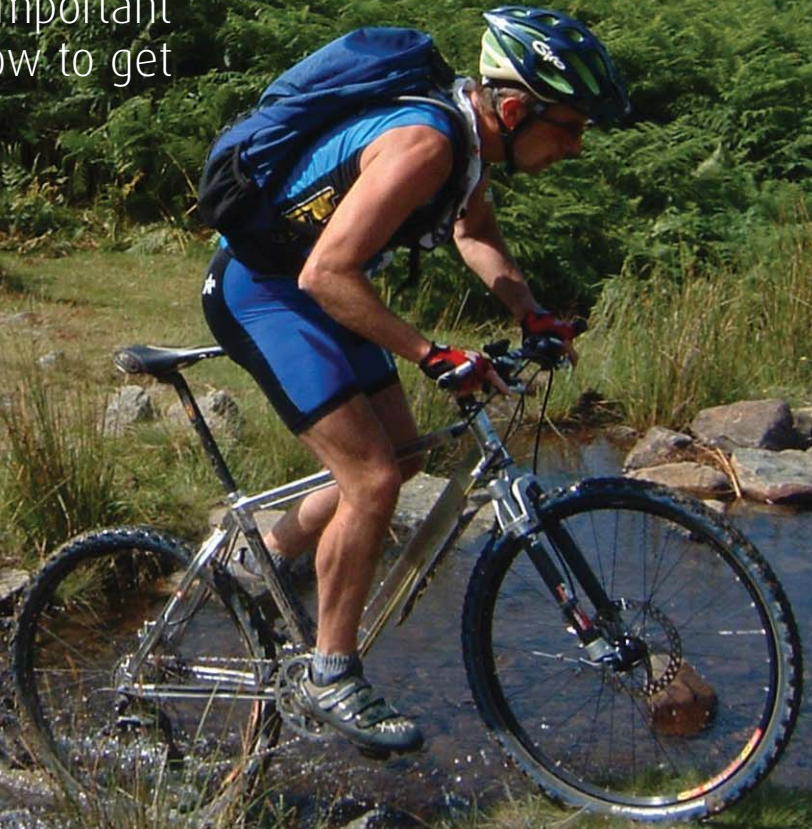


Mountain biking in Wales Is your business geared up for the challenge?

Why mountain biking is important
to your business - and how to get
the most out of it.



www.mbwales.com

What's this guide for?

Mountain biking is a big and growing sport and pastime – and that's big news for Wales in particular. Every year, hundreds of thousands of mountain bikers come here, attracted by the world-class mix of off-road experiences on offer at man-made specialist biking centres and in the natural surroundings of Wales' countryside and coastline.

This breadth of appeal extends to all kinds of mountain bikers of all ages, from adrenaline junkies on expensive, state-of-the-art downhill machines to families on beginner bikes looking for a gentle cruise through the woods on easy, well-maintained trails. Mountain biking is an important element in Wales' booming outdoor activities scene. This guide will help you become part of it, whether you're an accommodation provider, restaurant or café, or someone who wants to start or expand a business based on the sport.

This guide is designed to provide key information on mountain biking in Wales and show how you can benefit from it. It has been written in a clear, concise and – we hope – reader-friendly way so that you can dip in and out of it easily, focusing on the topics that are particularly relevant to your business.

By following the advice on the following pages you'll be well on your way to capturing a bigger slice of a growing mountain biking tourism market.



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Why bother?

fastfacts

THERE ARE 5.5 MILLION MOUNTAIN BIKERS IN THE UK

The mountain biking in Wales is great. But the activity itself is only part of the overall picture. Bikers need places to stay, good food to eat, equipment to buy or hire and detailed local knowledge. Gearing your business to provide for these needs will bring significant and lasting benefits.

It's a market worth tapping into. According to data from the United Kingdom Tourism Survey, UK residents who came mountain biking in Wales spent an annual average of almost £24 million in 2006 and 2007.

Moreover, that figure is likely to be higher today as visitor numbers have grown considerably in recent years. For example, an impressive 73,000 mountain bikers visited the Cwmcarn centre alone during 2010/2011. Mountain biking in Afan Forest Park – one of the biggest success stories in the last decade – has brought new business opportunities and new life to a former coalmining valley.

Throughout Wales you will see increasing numbers of cars fitted with bulging bike racks, all heading for forest centres or key towns like Brecon, Llanwrtyd Wells, Rhayader, Machynlleth, Dolgellau and Betws-y-Coed.



So there's a clear upward trend in mountain bike-related tourism in Wales. In 2011, the country's established Forestry Commission Wales trail centres and bases welcomed 293,146 riders, up from 195,483 in 2006 and 213,830 in 2007. Mountain biking has also proved to be very stable and resilient, even during economic conditions that have generally been bad for tourism. Privately owned centres reflect a similar pattern.

Visitor figures for Forestry Commission Wales trail centres and bases from 2004 – 2011

2004	133,654
2005	166,590
2006	195,483
2007	213,830
2008	246,652
2009	288,379
2010	248,018
2011	293,146

fastfacts

IN 2006 AND 2007, UK MOUNTAIN BIKERS SPENT AN ANNUAL AVERAGE OF £24 MILLION IN WALES

Mountain biking in Wales

Just like the Welsh landscape, the activity comes in all shapes and sizes, from mountain biking on purpose-built forest trails called single-tracks to ancient, grassy drovers' roads that track across the wild, empty 'roof of Wales'. Basically, the Welsh mountain biking experience breaks down into the following categories.



Purpose-built trail riding

Wales is home to seven dedicated 'centres' and eight 'bases' which offer a wide variety of mountain biking experiences, from easy to tough, on man-made tracks featuring a mixture of technical, downhill and climb sections. Please see the 'Need to know' section at the end of this guide for full details. The centres are purpose-built single-site mountain biking locations, offering way-marked trails of varying difficulties, along with visitor centres and cycling facilities. The bases are more loosely defined areas and localities that are home to a range of mapped and way-marked trails. Supporting facilities at bases are supplied by independent providers.

Cycle trails are graded so that visitors can easily select a route that is suitable for their skill level (see 'Trail grading explained' in the 'Need to know' section). The terrain on offer ranges from easy forest trails accessible to all (including in some cases riders with disabilities), through to challenging downhill tracks aimed at only the most experienced riders.

fastfacts

THERE ARE SEVEN PURPOSE-BUILT TRAIL CENTRES AND EIGHT MOUNTAIN BIKE BASES IN WALES



Natural trails

The dedicated forest centres often capture the lion's share of attention when it comes to mountain biking. But we need to remind ourselves that Wales's natural assets – its hills and mountains, valleys and coastline – are equally compelling for mountain bikers (more so, if you ask off-road purists who prefer the freedom and sense of space of open countryside to specially created forest trails).

The great glory of Wales is that this style of riding – which relies on maps and GPS, not way-marked routes – is available almost everywhere, even in the heavily populated South Wales Valleys where mountain top tracks come with fabulous views. Bridleways and grassy routes offer sensational riding everywhere, from the Brecon Beacons National Park in the south to the Snowdonia National Park in the north, the Preseli Hills in Pembrokeshire to the timeless, rolling hills of the Welsh borders – not forgetting the empty expanses of Mid Wales, where you can ride all day and not encounter a soul (except, possibly, a Red Kite or two).



Extreme downhill riding

High-speed, purpose built downhill tracks aimed at experienced riders. Not for the faint-hearted.

Off-road cycle routes

Gentle trails suitable for inexperienced riders and families, for example canal towpaths and disused railway lines.

Timeline: Mountain biking in Wales

1985

Llanwrtyd Wells, the small town famous for its many and varied (not to say bizarre) events, leads the way by holding its first mountain biking event. These now range from fun enduros to the infamous MTB Bog Snorkelling Championships

1997

Opening of the UK's first dedicated trail centre in Coed-y-Brenin Forest Park. Other forests throughout the UK take note and soon follow suit

2000

Official opening of 9feet.com, the first single-track trail in Afan Forest Park

2002

The first holding of the Brecon Beast, a mountain biking enduro in the Brecon Beacons. It attracts 300 riders. Around 800 participated in last year's event, bringing substantial benefits to the local economy and raising the profile of the area with the mountain biking market in general

2003

Forestry Commission Wales develop their original five mountain biking centres in Gwydyr, Coed-y-Brenin, Nant-yr-Arian, Afan and Cwmcarn. Marketed on Visit Wales' mbwales.com these centres were at the forefront in developing mountain biking in the UK. In addition, the Ride the Clwyds were launched, a network of routes linking bridleways and small roads in a beautiful borderland landscape

Dec 2004

Afan Forest Park was the only UK trail destination to feature in the What Mountain Bike magazine as one of the ten best places to ride 'before you die', along with the Himalayas and California

2005

The first privately owned mountain biking centre, established by Tilhil Economic Forestry and managed by Oneplanet Adventure, opens at Coed Llandegla, North Wales. It becomes hugely popular and now attracts over 200,000 visitors a year. Dyfi Mountain Biking create the Cli-machx trail in Dyfi Forest near Machynlleth

2006

Forestry Commission Wales and Carmarthenshire CBC develop the Brechfa Forest mountain biking trails. Coed-y-Brenin receives a brand new visitor centre to cope with demand

Knowing your market: who are mountain bikers?

Though sometimes seen only as a sport for committed enthusiasts, mountain biking appeals to visitors from all ages and backgrounds. It can be a serious sport or casual pastime, encompassing everyone from extreme downhill riders to families with children. The mountain bike market can be split into three main segments:

Expert/Enthusiast

- > Rides at least once a week
- > Usually takes part in competitive events
- > Has own expensive bike
- > Willing to travel long distances on a weekend in order to ride or compete

Dabbler/Regular

- > Rides when possible, usually a few times each month
- > Tends not to ride competitively
- > Less likely to travel large distances on a weekend in order to ride

Family/Casual

- > Rides once a month or less
- > Interested in the health/activity benefits mountain biking offers
- > Likely to move into Dabbler/Regular category if their experience is enjoyable and easily accessible

This wide spread of participants is good news for the tourist industry, bringing a huge range of opportunities for tourism businesses of all kinds. Casual riders will often need to hire equipment, while enthusiasts and regulars want bike-friendly accommodation, facilities and up-to-date information on trails and routes.

Biking bullet points

- > Reasonably affluent males aged 30 to 50 currently make up the bulk of regular mountain bikers. These riders will generally use purpose-built trail centres and make trips to Wales for the sole purpose of mountain biking
- > However, the market for family and casual riders is now showing significant growth potential. For this segment, mountain biking generally forms part of a holiday that features a range of other activities. Mountain biking appeals as a fun and healthy outdoor pursuit that allows riders, young and old, to get a closer look at Wales' natural environment. It's a key element in Wales' growing outdoor activities scene
- > Mountain bikers are interested in all types of accommodation, from simple bunkhouse-style to luxury country house hotel. Don't forget, there are many city-based affluent mountain bikers out there who have spent in excess of £3,000 on the bike alone.



Timeline: Mountain biking in Wales

2008

The community around Penmachno develop the Dolen Machno and Dolen Eryri loops in Penmachno Forest

2011-2014

Massive investment in mountain biking in Wales through Visit Wales Centres of Excellence including new trails, centres and facilities

2012

Latest trail – the 4 downhill trails and jump site at Llechwedd, Blaenau Ffestiniog – and small visitor centre scheduled to open in spring/summer

fastfacts

AVERAGE SPEND PER GROUP BY MOUNTAIN BIKERS VISITING AFAN FOREST PARK IN 2009 WAS £86.08

fastfacts

UK MOUNTAIN BIKERS MAKE 78 MILLION RIDES PER YEAR

Advantage Wales: key strengths at a glance

Wales benefits from a number of strong advantages as a destination for mountain bikers.

Accessibility

Crucially, for much of the UK it offers the closest really 'wild' terrain. Visitors from most parts of England can reach Welsh mountain biking locations in no more than two or three hours. By contrast, travelling to similar destinations in Scotland, for example, necessitates a much longer journey, sometimes up to a day. Bearing in mind that most visitors now come on time-sensitive short breaks, this translates into a real advantage for Wales. In addition, it's easy to get around Wales due to its compact size and quiet roads.

Variety and scenery

Wales has a large number of trails at forest centres plus boundless, beautiful and easily accessible natural terrain, all of which gives visitors unrivalled choice.

Climate

Limited severe snow and extreme weather conditions allow year-round mountain biking. Also, bear in mind that mountain bikers don't mind getting muddy!

In fact, it's a case of more mud the better for some.

Reputation

Wales is already recognised as a major hub for mountain bikers from across the UK. 'Mountain Biking Wales' is a brand in its own right, with strong values, making it much easier to sell to your potential customers.

Technical trails

Wales' range of purpose-built trails, specially designed to withstand the elements, have a year-round appeal and are regarded as some of the best in Europe.

Wide customer base

The country is attractive to the casual mountain biking market too due to ease of access and the range of trails specially designed for inexperienced riders.

Environment and green appeal

Wales' trail centres are compact, sustainable and environmentally friendly. Shorter journey times compared to other mountain biking destinations such as Scotland add to Wales' green credentials.

case study

BIKES & HIKES, BRECON

WWW.BIKESANDHIKES.CO.UK

Bikes & Hikes, based in the Brecon Beacons National Park, offers a range of different outdoor activities, but its key focus is on mountain bike hire and guiding.

The company sells and hires cycling equipment, as well as providing guided rides in the National Park and information on local cycling trails. According to owner Keith Lee, recent years have seen an increasing number of families and groups taking an interest in mountain biking, part of the upward trend in activity-based holidays and breaks that Wales is benefiting from in general.

'Families and groups are definitely a growing market in this area,' says Keith. 'It's traditionally not been seen as a market worth exploiting, but I've really changed my tack on it. Families are desperate for something to do when they come to new areas.'

Reflecting this trend, Bikes & Hikes provides bikes suitable for novice riders, as well as trailers and cycles for children. For the more experienced riders who tend to arrive with their own gear, the shop serves as a valuable repository of local cycling knowledge. It is quite common for riders who have already visited one of the nearby trail centres to drop in looking for information on local cross-country routes.

Bikes & Hikes mainly promotes itself through its website, but it also sends previous customers a regular newsletter containing up-to-date trail information. According to Keith, it's something that has proved popular with local people as well as visitors.

The company also works with local accommodation providers to make the mountain biking experience more convenient for visitors. 'If people want to ride from their accommodation we just go round with the trailer, drop off bikes and pick them up at the end of the day,' explains Keith. 'We leave a permanent fleet of bikes at one campsite because demand for it has grown so much over the last five years. We're seeing people staying longer so they can have an extra day's riding.'



'Families and groups are definitely a growing market in this area'

Capturing the market: practical advice



Easy-to-implement tips & initiatives to make your business more attractive to mountain bikers:



fastfacts

WELL OVER 70,000
MOUNTAIN BIKERS VISITED
CWMCARN TRAIL CENTRE IN
SOUTH WALES IN 2011

For accommodation providers:

- ❖ Good post-ride facilities matter. Provide an outdoor hose for washing bikes (on a good surface that's well-drained, if possible) as well as somewhere cyclists can dry wet clothes and equipment overnight
- ❖ Convert a spare room or outbuilding into a SECURE STORAGE space. Mountain bikes can cost thousands of pounds, so visitors will appreciate having somewhere SAFE to store them
- ❖ Join the Visit Wales-accredited Cyclists Welcome scheme (see page 10) so mountain bikers know that you are well equipped and committed to welcoming them
- ❖ Offer free WiFi internet access so that guests can research the local area, plan activities and hire equipment. Lots of your potential customers are in an age range that expects good internet access. Without it, you may well lose the booking
- ❖ Provide a notice board with local trail maps, up-to-date weather forecasts and information about other local mountain bike businesses
- ❖ Stock copies of the local OS 1:25,000 map(s) available for guests to purchase
- ❖ Mountain biking holidays appeal to everyone from novices to hardcore riders. Get to know the different cycling experiences in the area so you can give targeted advice to guests of all skill levels
- ❖ Build relationships with mountain biking businesses in your area. Offer inclusive accommodation packages that include trail guidance and/or equipment hire
- ❖ Offer hearty, energy-loaded meals and packed lunches (serve bananas for breakfast!). Be flexible, so guests can fit in eating around early starts and late finishes
- ❖ Make sure you're part of the Visit Wales star grading scheme – quality is key to boosting your business and increasing your profits. Call 0845 010 8020, email quality.tourism@wales.gsi.gov.uk, or go to www.wales.gov.uk/topics/tourism/grading.

fastfacts

IN 1985, LLANWRTYD WELLS HELD ITS FIRST MOUNTAIN BIKING EVENT. THE SMALL TOWN HAS SINCE BENEFITED IMMENSELY FROM ITS ANNUAL EVENTS-BASED TOURISM PROGRAMME



case study

MUDTREK, BLAEN NANT GWYN, LLANLLWNI MOUNTAIN, CARMARTHENSHIRE

WWW.MUDTREK.COM

MudTrek, situated close to Brechfa Forest, offers ski resort-style chalet accommodation and guided 'off-piste' mountain biking on natural trails. The business is run by Nikki Channon and Jason Mulvey, who picked the location specifically to cater to the MTB market. 'The one thing that is often underestimated is the amount of money that these people have to spend,' says Nikki. 'They are coming from London, earning plenty and think nothing of paying a few hundred pounds to stay for the weekend. If you are aiming for that kind of market, people will expect good food, showers that work and very comfortable accommodation.'



“If people like us, they tell their friends...”

Serving the right food plays a big part in MudTrek's appeal to mountain bikers. 'It's not necessarily fancy or expensive,' explains Nikki. 'It's just carb-fuelled meals like pasta and curry with rice. I provide energy-filled packed lunches full of things that won't get soggy. I also set guests up with a big breakfast, which always seems to go down very well.'

As a comparatively new business, MudTrek has had to explore alternative strategies to get the word out. 'The social media side has been a phenomenal success and is the way forward regardless of whether or not you have a marketing budget,' maintains Nikki. 'The large proportion of our bookings comes through social media and the viral effect. If people like us they'll tell their friends about us via Facebook or Twitter.'

For cafés, restaurants and other places to eat:

- ❖ Serve hearty portions of energy-rich food
- ❖ Offer packed lunches for cyclists who don't want to stop for a sit-down meal. Stock healthy, high-energy snacks and drinks, including products from specialist food brands aimed at the cycling community
- ❖ Be flexible. Fit in around mountain bikers' schedules by offering early breakfasts and late evening meals
- ❖ Get to know the local mountain biking community. Become a pit stop for mountain bike guides and local rides, team up with local cycle-friendly accommodation to offer package deals
- ❖ Reassure your customers that they're more than welcome, even with muddy boots and gear
- ❖ Offer safe storage for bikes, or a place where bikes can be easily locked
- ❖ Provide local information on where to ride
- ❖ Contact local cycling clubs and tell them about your bike-friendly business.

Top tips for mountain biking operators (bike shops, tour guides, cycle hire):

- ❖ Provide a drop-off and pick-up service so customers can have rental equipment delivered to their accommodation
- ❖ Become an information hub. Attract cyclists to your business by offering local knowledge on trails and places to ride
- ❖ Cater for the diverse mountain biking market by stocking a range of equipment for different customers. Offer trailers and bikes for children, as well as cycles aimed at more experienced riders
- ❖ Raise your profile by becoming involved in mountain biking-based events/local cycling clubs.

Getting the word out



The internet is especially important to your mountain biking audience.

The demographics of the market mean that most mountain bikers are very internet and social media savvy. Before they make any trip, they are likely to do extensive online research to decide where they are going to ride and stay. There are plenty of simple things tourism businesses can do to make sure that they are highly visible to prospective customers.

- > Highlight your business' MTB-friendly features on your website. List relevant facilities or add a dedicated mountain bike page
- > Use social media tools like Facebook and Twitter to connect with MTB enthusiasts and potential customers
- > 'Like' the mbwales.com Facebook page to keep up with all things mountain biking
- > Maintain a customer database. Send a regular newsletter with information about events, trails and special offers
- > Spend time on dedicated mountain biking forums and websites getting to know just what mountain bikers are looking for
- > Many trail centre and mountain biking websites list local MTB businesses. Make sure you're included – and reciprocate by listing them on your site.

Cyclists Welcome

Joining the Visit Wales-accredited Cyclists Welcome scheme will immediately mark your business out to mountain bikers. Being part of the scheme demonstrates that you've made a special effort to offer the facilities that cyclists are looking for when they decide to book. You'll also be able to display the Cyclists Welcome logo at your business and on your website and marketing materials. Best of all, it's free to join. For more information, email quality.tourism@wales.gsi.gov.uk or call 0845 010 8020.



case study

BEICS BRENIN, COED-Y-BRENIN, NEAR DOLGELLAU
WWW.BEICSBRENIN.CO.UK

Beics Brenin is a mountain bike hire shop that has been based at the Coed-y-Brenin trail centre since 2006. The shop is run by Joe Hayward, who has noticed a gradual change in MTB tourism during recent years.

'There's been a growth in more recreational mountain biking,' he says. 'Alongside the properly committed bikers we're seeing more people interested in less serious trail riding, who see mountain biking as just one of their outdoor activities.' As a result, it's vital that a shop like Beics Brenin caters to the widest possible audience. 'Bike hire is very important,' says Joe. 'We offer a range of options from entry level stuff up to very high end specialist mountain bikes. We find that a lot of visitors who you'd describe as occasional dabblers will hire a much more expensive bike rather than bringing their own gear, just because they're at Coed-y-Brenin.'

As well as providing essential supplies like waterproof clothing, energy bars and spare inner tubes, the shop serves as an unofficial information point for visitors to the centre. 'All of our staff are mountain bikers who have ridden Coed-y-Brenin extensively, so we are able to give a lot of information on things such as routes they can make by combining existing trails to fit their timescale or level of ability.'

The shop does most of its marketing through its website, but Joe also runs mountain bike events which help spread the word. 'They get our name out to a pretty wide audience,' he says. 'Though they are non-competitive events, the people that ride them range from experts to dabblers and beginners. That really helps to raise our profile.'



'Bike hire is very important'

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COED-Y-BRENIN NEAR DOLGELLAU WAS WALES' FIRST PURPOSE-BUILT MOUNTAIN BIKING CENTRE

Need to know:

further information, useful links and contacts

Mountain Biking Wales

www.mbwales.com

Visit Wales partnered with Forestry Commission Wales site with information on trail centres and bases. For general information on cycling tourism see www.cycling.visitwales.com

Forestry Commission

www.forestry.gov.uk/mtbwales

Information on Forestry Commission-operated trails and visitor centres.

International Mountain Biking Association

www.imba.org.uk

Non-profit organisation providing information on trail building and public rights of way.

Cognition

www.cognition.co.uk

Information on mountain biking developments and facilities in South Wales.

Ride the Clwyds

www.ridetheclwyds.co.uk

Cycling in the Clwydian Range, soon to become Ride North Wales www.ridenorthwales.co.uk

Mountain Biking Brecon Beacons

www.mtbbreconbeacons.co.uk

Trail and tourist information for the Brecon Beacons National Park.

Mountain Biking Snowdonia

www.eryri-npa.gov.uk

Trail and tourist information for the Snowdonia National Park.

Countryside Council for Wales

www.ccw.gov.uk

Information on countryside access and public rights of way.

Welsh Cycling

www.welshcycling.co.uk

Information on cycling venues and events.

Visit Wales star grading and quality assurance

www.industry.visitwales.co.uk

Business information

www.business.wales.gov.uk

Information and advice for new and existing businesses.

case study

ONEPLANET ADVENTURE CAFÉ, COED LLANDEGLA, NEAR WREXHAM WWW.ONEPLANETADVENTURE.COM



The Oneplanet Café is part of a number of facilities at the Coed Llandegla trail centre in North Wales. The café offers a range of home-cooked dishes, most of which are made from locally sourced ingredients. The key philosophy is on serving the kind of food mountain bikers want to eat after a ride.

According to manager Ian Owen, that is rarely the 'health-food' option, though in the case of mountain bikers there are

'It's about good food, good attitude and good service'

extenuating circumstances to bear in mind. 'We have an award for the Best Bacon Bap in the UK and the Best Breakfast in Wales,' he says. 'Those are the two products that are most favoured by our customers. When they've just been out and burned 2,000 calories that's the kind of food they crave.'

It also pays to take the weather in consideration.

Ian says that the café gets through five times as much milk on a cold day as a warm one, as customers pick lattes and hot chocolates over soft drinks and tea. Making sure the menu matches the climate makes a big difference.

Most importantly, it's about making a good first impression. The mountain biking community operates very much on word-of-mouth. Giving visitors a good experience can pay big dividends.

'It's all about quality service,' says Ian. 'We try to offer a good experience to the people who come here so that they go away and tell their friends about it. It's about good food, good attitude and good service.'

Mountain biking centres

Afan Forest Park

www.afanforestpark.co.uk

More than 80 miles of trails ranging from gentle forest roads to red- and black-graded single-track. Home to some of the most challenging descents in the UK as well as the 29-mile Skyline trail, one of Wales' longest purpose-built trails. Visitor centres at trailheads near Cymmer and Glynccorwg.

Antur Stiniog, Blaenau Ffestiniog

www.anturstiniog.com

Opening spring/summer 2012, Blaenau Ffestiniog's new downhill centre boasts two black-graded downhill runs and two freeride trails. Facilities include a minibus uplift service, jump site and a visitor centre with café and showers.

Coed Llandegla, near Wrexham

www.coedllandegla.com

The 650-hectare Coed Llandegla Forest has a variety of routes rated from green to black. Visitors can hire bikes on site, refuel at the award-winning Oneplanet Adventure Café, buy any equipment needed from the bike shop, or get a bike fixed. It's the complete package.

Coed-y-Brenin Forest Park, near Dolgellau

www.forestry.gov.uk/coedybrenin

Wales's first purpose-built trail centre, Coed-y-Brenin has an international reputation. The blue-graded MinorTaur route, which will be completed in 2013, allows riders with disabilities to take part in mountain biking. Superb, well-designed visitor centre.

Coed Trallwm, north of Llanwrtyd Wells

www.coedtrallwm.co.uk

Purpose-built single-track trails graded from blue to black cut through the sparsely populated countryside surrounding Coed Trallwm. The visitor centre features a café, bike washes and self-catering forest cabins. The ten miles of forest trails at Coed Trallwm are a good starting point for exploring the 'wild Wales' of the Elan Valley lakelands, the empty high country between Rhayader, Cwmystwyth and Tregaron.

Cwmcarn, South Wales

www.cwmcarnforest.co.uk
www.forestry.gov.uk

With only red and black trails on offer, Cwmcarn is aimed at the more serious mountain biker. A year-round uplift service is also available (www.cwm-down.co.uk).

Nant-yr-Arian, near Ponterwyd, Mid Wales

www.forestry.gov.uk/bwlchnantyrarian

Offering high-level wilderness biking on mountain tracks, Nant-yr-Arian is popular with riders who like it rugged. The 22-mile, black-graded Syfrydin trail provides an epic challenge in breathtaking surroundings.



Mountain biking bases

Betws-y-Coed

www.betws-y-coed.co.uk

Wales' outdoor adventure capital sits in the heart of Snowdonia. More than 60 miles of fire road trails are complemented by two red-graded purpose-built routes, the Marin trail and Penmachno.

Brechfa, east of Carmarthen

www.forestry.gov.uk
www.visitbrechfaforest.com

The Brechfa Forest offers mountain biking to suit all appetites. Beginners can sample the gentle Derwen while adrenaline junkies can test themselves on the descents and jumps of the black-graded Raven trail.

Brecon Beacons

www.mtbbreconbeacons.co.uk

With dozens of open mountain trails, lakeside and forest routes, the Brecon Beacons offers a huge range of off-road biking experiences – from rides like The Gap and Sarn Helen Roman Road that cut through the heart of the Beacons to gentle, grassy routes across scenic commons.

Clwyds

www.ridetheclwyds.co.uk

Riders can explore the Clwydian Range of hills, an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, on a variety of rugged trails and quiet roads. These include the short, family-friendly Coed Nercws trail and the black-graded Almost the Delyn, which clocks in at nearly 50 miles.

Cwm Rhaeadr, near Cilycwm, north of Llandovery

www.forestry.gov.uk

A spectacular – and relatively undiscovered – trail winds upwards through the forest at Cwm Rhaeadr, the 'Valley of the Waterfall', to a rocky ridge with inspiring views before plunging downhill on a testing single-track.

Hiraethog, North Wales

www.ridehiraethog.com

The moors and reservoirs of Mynydd Hiraethog west of Denbigh provide a peaceful setting for six trails. The green-graded Around the Lake takes riders on a lap of Llyn Brenig reservoir while the red-graded Tough at the Top demands a gruelling 1,500-metre climb.

Machynlleth

www.dyfimountainbiking.org.uk

The natural Mach 1–3 trails ranging from blue to black wind through the hilly countryside surrounding Machynlleth. The purpose-built single-track of Cli-machx features rocky jumps and the longest descent in Wales.

Radnorshire

www.roughrides.co.uk

With dozens of different off-road routes, the border county of Radnorshire offers miles of secluded single-track riding. It also plays host to major competitions like the Radnor Roughride and Autumn Epic.



fastfacts

Y WÂL (THE WALL) AT AFAN FOREST PARK FEATURES IS APPROPRIATELY NAMED – IT'S ONE OF THE BEST DESCENTS IN THE UK

