



**DRAGON RIDE**

# WEEKENDER GUIDE

**OUR RECOMMENDATIONS  
FOR THE BEST THINGS TO DO  
IN THE BRECON BEACONS**



# WELCOME!

**W**hether this is your first ever Dragon Ride, or you've ridden with us before, we are very excited for you to join us in this incredible landscape of Wales. As this legendary event continues to grow, we have rounded up some of our favourite activities in the Brecon Beacons. The truth is there is an almost infinite number of options of how to enjoy the weekend, but we've done our best to highlight a range of options.

For the more logistically specific stuff for our riders we have created a separate event

guide which is also available on our website.

The Dragon Ride is one of the oldest and most iconic cycling sportives in the UK, partly due to the beautiful and rugged (and challenging!) scenery you get to ride through. We hope you will enjoy the electric feeling in the air on Sunday 19th June, and will enjoy every second of the monumental achievement you will never forget.

Have fun.

**Dragon Ride Team**





# WHERE TO EAT

**W**hilst your time in the Brecon Beacons may be spent mostly admiring the beautiful scenery of the national park, there's also a variety of pubs and restaurants for all to enjoy. We've rounded up a few of our favourites that we recommend you try!



## **THE BEAR** **CRICKLEHOWELL**

The Bear Hotel in Cricklehowell has been welcoming guests for 500 years. The pub has a cosy atmosphere with a flowery summer garden and is one of the best places for families in the Brecon Beacons.

## **THE THREE HORSESHOES** **GROSSFORD**

Gastro style dog-friendly pub with an open fire and lovely rural views. It also has a fun beer garden with beach huts to sit in!

## **THE FELIN** **FACH GRIFFIN** **ABERHONDDU**

A rural gastropub that offers gourmet dining in a cosy setting. Part of the "Eat, Drink, Sleep" group of pubs/restaurants, that has enjoyed success across the UK.

## **THE BELL AT SKENFRITH** **ABERGAVENNY**

Bringing your dog on your trip? The Bell at Skenfrith is



one of the best dog-friendly pubs around. As the Brecon Beacons is famous for being a fantastic place for dog walks, The Bell is perfect for a post-walk treat!

## **TOMATITOS** **TAPAS BAR** **HAY-ON-WYE**

Tomatitos combines the friendly pub atmosphere with delicious Spanish cuisine.

## **THE DRAGON'S BACK** **PENGENFFORDD**

The Dragon's Back has quite the fitting name, its location is the highest in all the Brecon Beacons National Park. It

stands over 1000ft above the sea level which guarantees some amazing views.

## **THE WALNUT TREE** **LLANDDEWI SKIRRID**

Located 3 miles north-east of Abergavenny town, the Michelin-starred restaurant was founded in the early 1960's and offers the menus of acclaimed chef Shaun Hills.

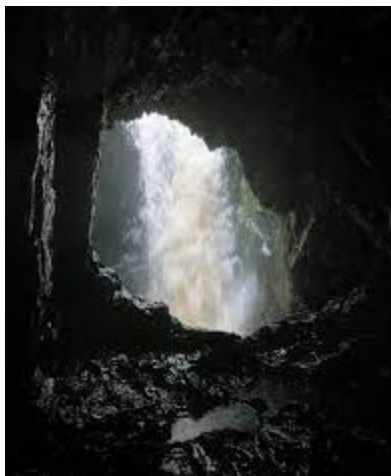
## **OLD ELECTRIC SHOP** **HAY-ON-WYE**

Known as Hay's hippest café serving modern vegetarian food, as well as its connected shop selling new and vintage clothing, furniture and books.

# WHAT TO DO

## THE QUIRKY TREASURES & OTHER SPORTS TO TRY

**N**ot only are you spoilt for choice with an abundance of walking and cycling routes in the Brecon Beacons, but there are also some quirky, hidden treasures that not many know about. Fancy trying something different? Check out these cool options:



### GO CAVING OR GORGE WALKING

There are thousands of caves and tunnels for you to explore in the Brecon Beacons, with the Brecons forming some of the most important cave systems in Europe. Or if you don't fancy going underground you could try gorge walking? Scramble over rocks, climb waterfalls and even experience raging rapids.

### GO ROCK CLIMBING

Reach new heights and get a completely different view of the Brecons. There are plenty of both indoor and outdoor rock climbing companies who are available to help guide you.

### GO STARGAZING

Did you know – the Brecon Beacons National Park has been recognised as one of only 11 international Dark Sky

Fay y Big



### GET A PHOTO ON THE 'DIVING BOARD' AT FAY Y BIG

It may not be the highest peak in the Brecons but the views are equally as spectacular and there are far less people here. The diving board is a rocky outcrop, that juts out so you can a birds eye view of the glorious scenery of the national park.

Reserves in the world, making it one of the best places to go stargazing. Apparently some nights you can see as far as the Milky Way! Dark Sky Wales organise numerous group stargazing and astrophotography events at the Usk reservoir and other sits.

### TAKE A RIDE ON A VINTAGE TRAIN

Go on a journey with Brecon Mountain Railway into the Brecon Beacons National Park, through Pontsticill and along the full length of the Taf Fechan Reservoir before climbing to Torpantau high in the Brecon Beacons and the summit of the original line.

### CHANNEL YOUR INNER BATMAN

Wales has been the location for hundreds of films, but did you know that the Brecon Beacons formed part of the set for the Batman movie The Dark Knight Rises? In the 2012 movie, the Batcave is hidden behind the 88-foot waterfall known as Henryhd Falls, one of the highest waterfalls in the Brecons.



# BEST CYCLE ROUTES

**F**or those that can't get enough of riding in the Brecon Beacons, there are a number of great cycling routes of varying difficulties that pass through many of the beautiful

landscapes and landmarks of the national park. Here are three cycling routes that can help in your preparation for the Dragon Ride, or rides for the future if you wish to visit the Beacons again!

## GOSPEL PASS LOOP ⇄ 62.0MI ↗ 4,125FT



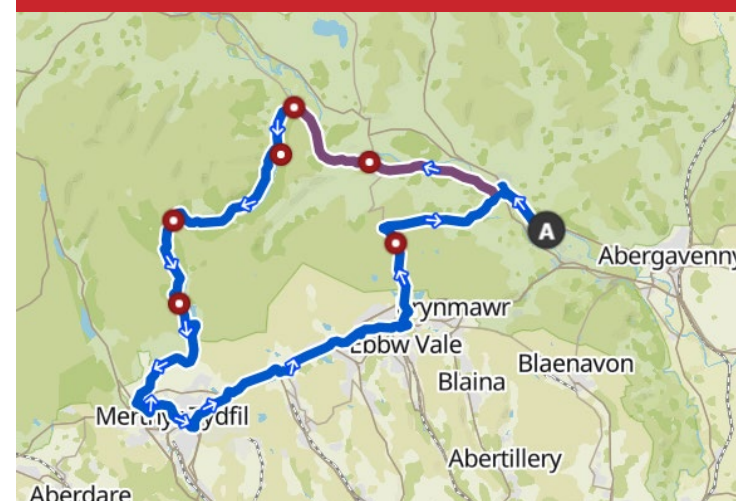
Starting at Brecon Interchange, which is accessible via public transport at Interchange Bus Stop (LD3 7BL). The route takes riders along scenic country roads with some great landmarks including the historic Llanthony Priory.

## TALYBONT VILLAGE STORES LOOP ⇄ 30.3MI ↗ 1,275FT



A shorter route with mostly well paved surfaces that also starts at Brecon Interchange (LD3 7BL); this ride will take you past some fine eateries such as the Walnut Tree Café, The Pantry Café and Brunchery and the Talybont Village Stores.

## BLAEN-Y-GLYN CLIMB LOOP FROM GLANGRWYNEY ⇄ 46.0MI ↗ 3,650FT



This tour is accessible by public transport by the Old Abbey bus station (NP8 1EH); it takes riders through some scenic views on the Blaen-y-glyn climb and over the moors down to the Usk.



# BEST WALKING ROUTES

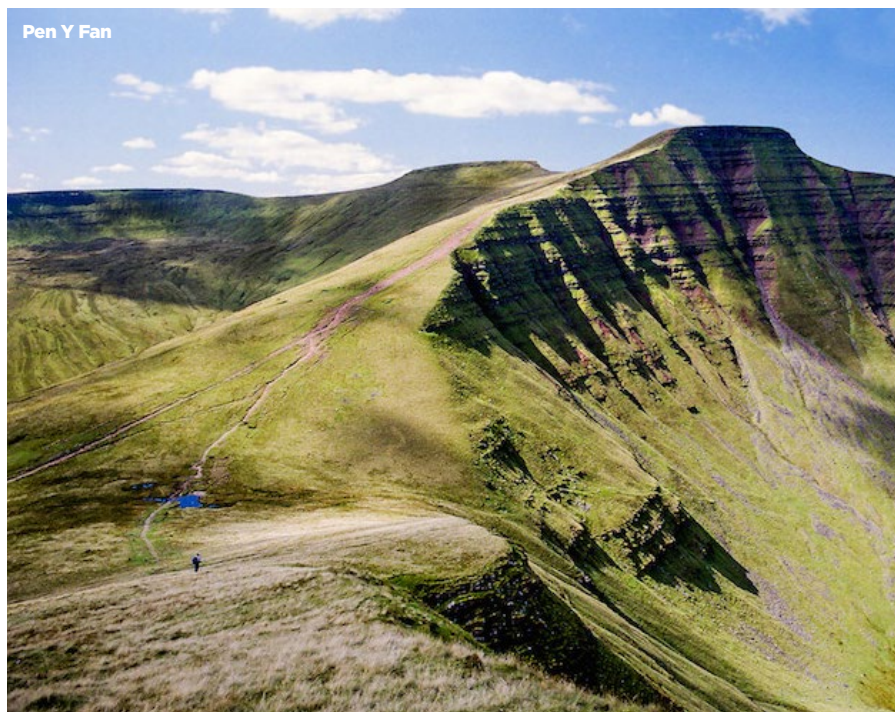
**F** For those wanting to stretch their legs in a different way over the weekend,

there is an overwhelming choice of diverse walks to choose from. The Brecon Beacons spans over 520 square miles and is home to a wealth of mountains, waterfalls, and stunning scenery – all of which

makes for some spectacular adventures. Here are 3 of the highest recommended routes for you to explore:

## PEN Y FAN

This 16km trail ticks off four of the park's most thrilling climbs: Corn Du (873m), Pen y Fan (886m), Cribyn (795m) and Fan y Big (719m). You'll need stamina and a head for



heights (Fan y Big's 'diving board rock' is a hair-raising viewpoint) – and around five or six hours to tackle the lot. Route details.

## BRECON TO PENCELLI

A gentle, leafy ramble alongside the Monmouthshire and Brecon Canal, this 7km route runs between Brecon Canal Basin and Pencelli –

taking in Usk Valley views, towering aqueducts, and colourful narrowboats. It's accessible for wheelchairs and pushchairs, and the local bus can whisk you back to your starting point.

## SUGAR LOAF

At 596m, Sugar Loaf is one of Brecon's more diminutive peaks – but its views are legendary. From the top you can gaze across the central Beacons, Black Mountains and the Usk Valley: not a bad result for the modest climb and 14km round-trip. It's not all about the summit, though – the Deri Fach woodlands are beautiful, with red kites often seen wheeling overhead.





# MOST BEAUTIFUL PLACES TO SNAP A PHOTO

**W** We have mentioned it above but you really will struggle to find views as beautiful as the rugged scenery of Wales. It has been a real struggle to narrow down the most 'Instagrammable' spots but we have done our best!

## PEN-Y-FAN

The mountain of Pen-y-Fan holds the highest peak in South Wales, one of several walkable peaks in the Brecon Beacons. Views from the top

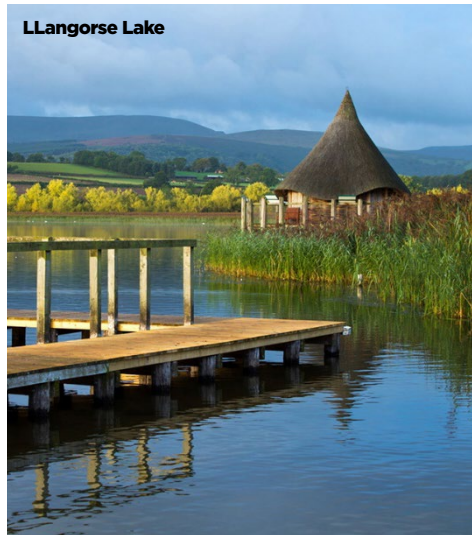


Pen-y-Fan

of the mountain are so impressive that you will never want to leave, it certainly guarantees a beautiful picture.

## LLANTHONY PRIORY

Located in Llanthony, Abergavenny, the Llanthony Priory is a remaining part of the ruins of a former



Llangorse Lake



Llanthony Priory

Augustinian priory that dates back to the 1100s. It's easy to see why the Llanthony priory was one of Wales's great medieval buildings.

## LLANGORSE LAKE

Between the Central Beacon and the Black Mountains,



Skirrid Mountain Inn

east of Brecon is the largest natural lake in Wales. The calm Llangorse Lake is not only known for its beautiful scenery, but is also renowned for its pike fishing and water sports.

## SKIRRID MOUNTAIN INN

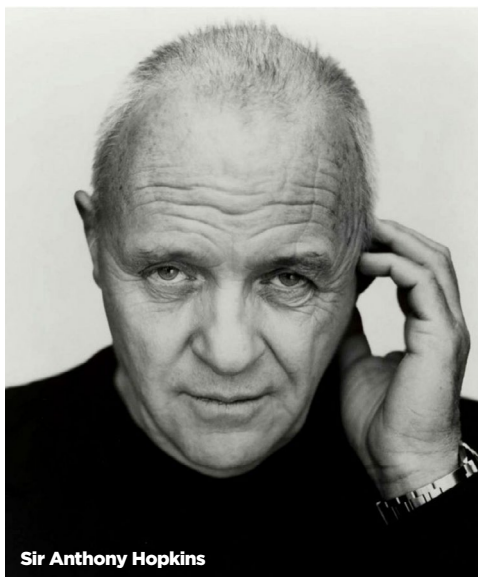
The Skirrid Mountain Inn located in Abergavenny is shrouded in history and mystery. Standing tall for over 900 years, it is one of the oldest pubs in Wales, with many tales of the inn being haunted and being built on the mountain that once 'shivered'. Snap a picture here and check the photo for any ghostly apparitions!



# 7 FAMOUS FACES

## PLACES TO SPOT IN THE BRECONS

**T**he Brecon Beacons is close to the origin towns and villages of many Welsh legends, below we have rounded up some of the many famous names and landmarks associated with the south of Wales. If doing our Medio Fondo route, you will pass through or near these landmarks!



Sir Anthony Hopkins

### SIR ANTHONY HOPKINS

Just 7.5km along the route, situated outside of Swansea, is the town of Port Talbot, where the world-famous actor Sir Anthony Hopkins grew up. The double Academy Award winner best known for his portrayal of Hannibal Lecter in 'Silence of the Lambs' and more recently for his Oscar-winning performance in 'The Father'.

### ROB BRYDON

Only 1.5km further along the route from Port Talbot is the village of Baglan, where comedian and actor Rob Brydon grew up. The Gavin & Stacey star, and host of popular panel show 'Would I Lie To You', is known for his strong Welsh dialect.

### MAX BOYCE

Almost 40km in the South Wales mining town of Glynneath, is where comedian and entertainer Max Boyce

was born. Boyce rose to prominence in the 1970s combining his passions for comedy, music and his love of rugby union.

### 5000-YEAR-OLD YEW TREE

10km before the route's harshest ascent, the Devil's Elbow, lies the Defynnog Yew tree. There are hundreds of ancient yew trees in the UK that date back to over 600 years old, yet the Defynnog Yew has supposedly stood tall since the Bronze age, which would make it the oldest tree in the UK at more than 5000 years old.

### ST PATRICK

As St Patrick's day has recently passed, it is appropriate to include the village of Banwen. Found 45km into the ride, it is rumoured that the village was actually the birthplace of the patron saint of Ireland.

### ADAM JONES

52km in at Abercrave, is the birthplace of former Wales and British & Irish Lions rugby player, Adam Jones. Jones is part of a group of only 6 Welsh rugby legends to win three grand slams for the country.



5000-year-old Yew tree

### MICHAEL SHEEN

Nearing the end of the route, looping back around to Port Talbot 151km in, is the birthplace of actor and political activist Michael Sheen. Starting as a theatre actor, Sheen is now better known as a screen actor and has starred in a trilogy of films as former UK prime minister Tony Blair in which he received BAFTA and Emmy nominations.



Michael Sheen

For a small Welsh town of 35,000 people, Port Talbot has produced a wealth of acting and entertainment talent!



# BEST BRECON BEACONS

## TOWNS AND VILLAGES TO VISIT

**B**rimming with history, there are some gorgeously quaint towns to visit in the Brecons full of traditional shops and local cafes.

### HAY-ON-WYE

Located close to the border of England and Wales this little town has become known as the 'Town of Books'. Hay-On-Wye is world famous for its second-hand bookstores, and range of galleries, clothing, and craft shops with many original and unusual items for sale.

### BRECON

A bustling market town set in the heart the Usk Valley, Brecon's narrow streets showcase the history of the two with its 12th century cathedral, South Wales Borderers Military Museum, and Brecknock Museum and Art Gallery. Also, if you time it right, on the second Saturday of every month Brecon hosts

the largest farmer's market in the area.

### CRICKHOWELL

The picturesque market town of Crickhowell, lies in the Usk Valley, and has an array of shops and restaurants, as well as being a great starting point for a variety of outdoor activities. Another well-known



feature of the town is the 16th century bridge that spans the River Usk.

### LLANGORSE

The Llangorse community comprises several small villages, and is a haven for sports lovers. The lake has a variety of water sports including sailing, boating, canoeing and water-skiing, with the surrounding hills ideal for walking and horse riding.





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