



Harlech to Llanbedr (via Llandanwg), Llŷn Peninsula

Wonderful wildlife and a magical church hidden among rolling dunes.

"This walk is a treat for nature lovers. Look out for a wide range of wildflowers, insects, birds and lizards among the dunes of Morfa Harlech National Nature Reserve and keep your eye peeled for swans, seabirds and the occasional seal along the Artro river and estuary."

RHYS GWYN ROBERTS, WALES COAST PATH OFFICER

Start and Finish:

Harlech Beach car park to Llanbedr.

Distance:

4 miles or 7 km one way.



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St Tanwg's church, Llandanwg



Harlech beach

Along the way...

Starting from the beach car park, walk towards the sea through the Morfa Harlech National Nature Reserve. It's one of the most important dune systems in the country and a haven for plant and animal life.

In spring and summer, you might spot colourful maiden pink or rare bee orchids, alongside nesting ringed plovers, skylarks and stonechats, while autumn brings an array of unusual fungi and wading birds like oystercatchers, dunlins and sanderlings.

The walk continues south along the Wales Coast Path, climbing up over the train tracks on a winding route known as the Zig Zags (with fantastic bay views at the top) before descending into Llandanwg.

After you've visited the church, the path continues through fields and along the flood bank that borders the River Artro, offering some lovely views across the mudflats and estuary out towards Shell Island, one of Europe's biggest campsites, surrounded by sand dunes lying west of Llanbedr.

After Pensarn Station, the path follows the road for a short distance before leading you through fields, over the footbridge and onto the car park at Llanbedr.

From here you can turn left to visit the village, turn right to catch the train back to Harlech or simply retrace your steps back to the beginning of the walk.

About the Sacred Heritage Place:

Nestled amid the dunes just metres from the sea, St Tanwg's church is knitted into the coastal landscape. Since its foundation in the 5th century, it has been frequently dug out of the encroaching sand that threatens to bury it, while the waves can be heard from its stone interior on even the stillest day.

Despite its tiny size (just 57 foot or 17.4 metres by 23 foot or 7 metres) it's packed with fascinating features that illuminate different periods in its long history.

Inside you'll find inscribed stones dating back to the 5th century, an 8 foot or 0.3 metre pillar stone lying by the altar – thought to have made its way here from the Wicklow Hills in Ireland – a 13th century nave and 15th century oak rood screen. In the churchyard you can also see the grave of Welsh poet Sion Phillips (a contemporary of Shakespeare) who drowned while crossing from Shell Island to Llandanwg in 1620.

Essentially abandoned in 1840 when a new parish church was built in Harlech, St Tanwg's is still in use with strong local support and exudes a powerful spiritual energy.

Need to know:

There are public toilets at the car park at the start of the walk and you'll find plenty of pubs, cafés and shops in both Harlech and Llanbedr.

Both ends of the walk are linked by regular train services which also call at Llandanwg and Pensarn (perfect if you'd prefer a shorter walk).