

My Favourite Ride #11

Neath – Devil’s Elbow clockwise loop via Coelbren

A circular ride starting and finishing at Burger King Neath.

Distance 49 miles. Total ascent 3,900 feet. Max elevation 1,600 feet.

Terrain: Lanes, B Roads, some short sections of A Roads. Hard.

This ride starts at Halfords/Burger King Neath, SA10 7AY, 51.668543 -3.807700
Google Plus Code M59R+CW7 Neath

From the start at Neath we head through the villages of Cadoxton and Aberdulais on the A4230 then at Ynysygerwyn we keep left on the A4109 toward Crynant, after passing through the village we take a left turn up and over Rhos Common toward Ystradgynlais. Keep to the right after passing the Electrical Sub Station and just before the roundabout there is a right turn onto NCR 43 and we follow this route until we reach the A4221 inter valley road connecting the Neath, Dulais and Swansea valleys. We go right for a hundred and fifty yards then go left and follow the road through the village of Coelbren until we reach a T junction then go left past the small car park for Henrhyd Falls, there is a steep climb to the mast at the top, pause to take in the views from here. Then we have a steep descent and the road we need to follow bends to the right very sharply, take great care here, if you go straight on you have to climb back out and it will be a nasty climb! This lane undulates a little then a sharp descent and a very short sharp ascent to the T junction of the A4067 at Penycae. We go right onto the A4067, after 1.5 miles we can stop for a coffee at the café at Craig-y-nos County Park if needed, if not, continue along the A4067 for another 5 miles, 4 of which will be uphill and passing the Crai Reservoir on your left which was constructed for the water supply to the city of Swansea and was built between 1898 and 1908 by Swansea Corporation. The reservoir now supplies water to the towns in the valley of the River Tawe and north Swansea.

After passing the reservoir we take a right turn onto an unnamed road toward Heol Senni, a small hamlet so named as the road is alongside the river Senni, we have an upward slope with some great views then a very steep descent down and across the bridge then upward again, shortly we will see a road on the right SP Ystradfellte, we take this road. It undulates along nicely until we reach a junction and we keep left here and the undulating changes to an upward slope, it doesn't look very steep but suddenly the legs are getting tired, very deceiving, the wind coming up the valley plays a part here, by the time we reach the first switchback on the Devil's Elbow, we may be quite tired. Here we go then, up and up, a couple of switchbacks and a final climb to the top, pause for breath here and look back at the views, a suitable place for a quick snack or protein bar.

All the hard work is done, we can enjoy a relatively easy ride along the top and beside the Afon Lilia for a few miles and then a descent into Ystradfellte, just before the village the rivers Lilia and Dringarth join to form the Afon Mellte which is joined by the Afon Hepste, these flow down to Pontneddfechan where they join the Afon Pryddin and Nedd Fechan to form the River Neath. Pontneddfechan so named as the bridge over the Neddfechan. The New Inn at Ystradfellte has long been a popular stop on our rides but it is pot luck if it is open or not. There is a climb out of the village and on route we pass a popular parking spot and sign for the Bunk House, this is a great entry point for the four Waterfalls walk, put this on your bucket list! From here we have a lovely ride all the way down to Pontneddfechan, spoiled for choice here if a pub stop is on the agenda. There are also great walks from here following the rivers upstream as far as Pont Melin-fach.

From here we have a flatish cycle through Glynneath, past the statue of Max Boyce, and all the way back to Neath.

Crai Reservoir



Looking back down the Elbow



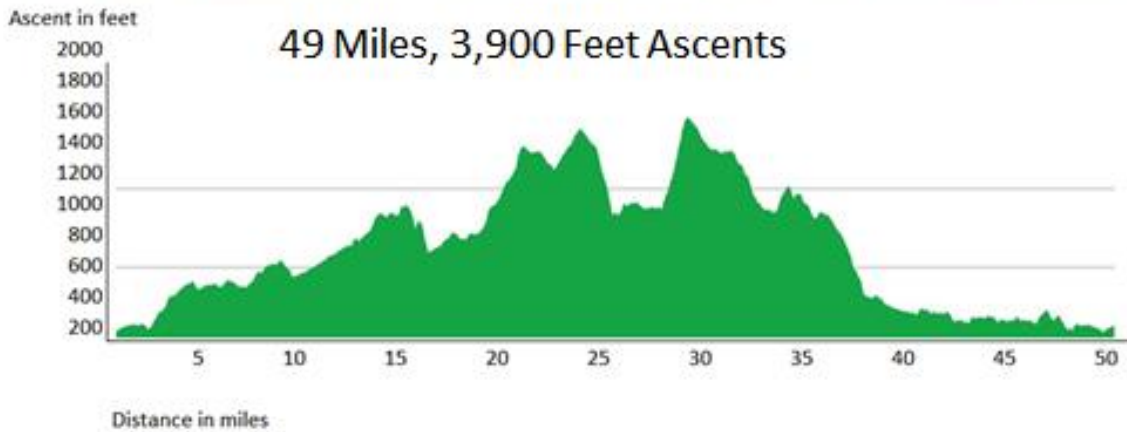
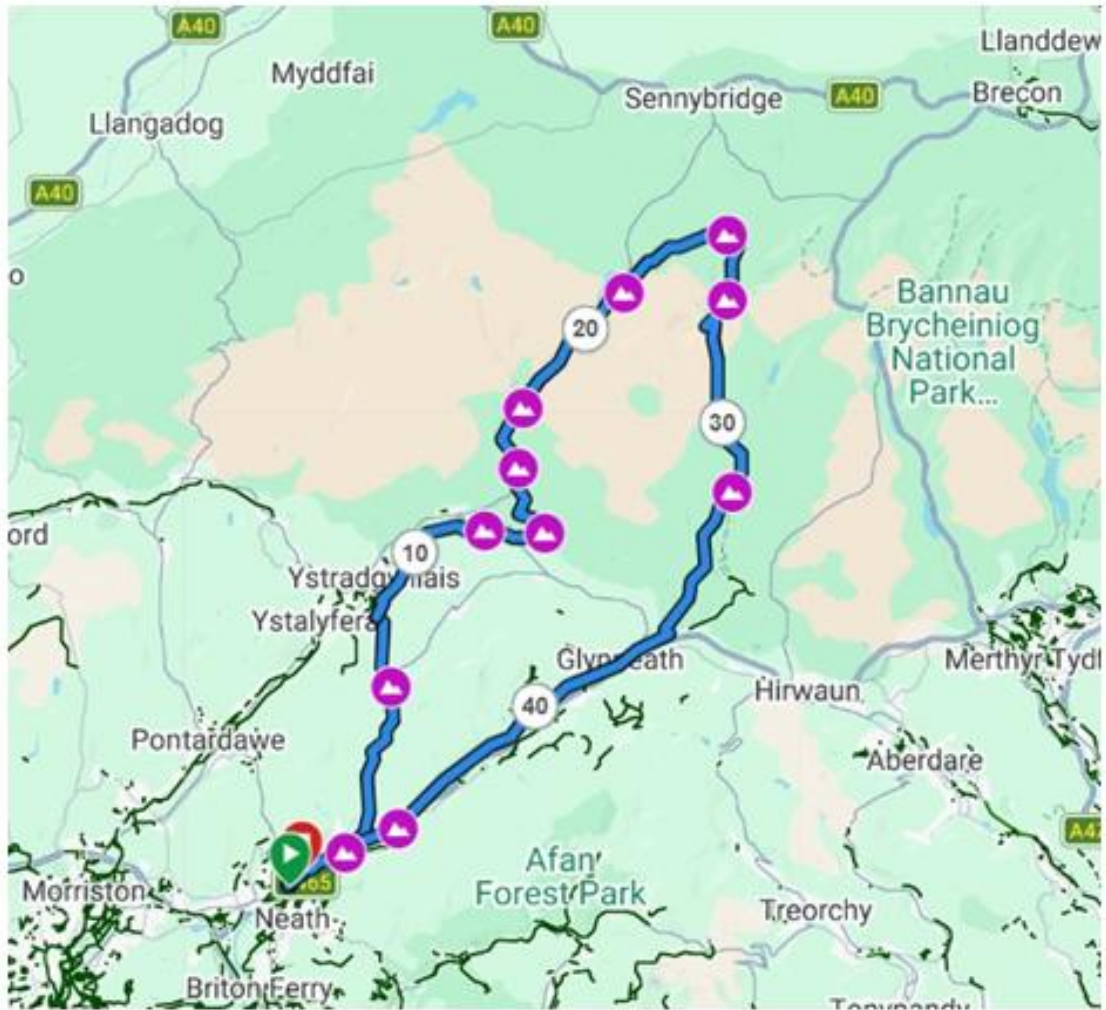
The views from the top of the Elbow



Ystradfellte is chiefly known in history as the place where the Welsh nobleman and rebel leader Llywelyn Bren surrendered at the end of his revolt of 1316. Llywelyn gave himself up on the condition that his men be spared, but was himself put to death in 1318 at Cardiff.

The village was connected to mains electricity in 1960, as one of the last communities in the whole of England and Wales to be wired. Outlying properties in the Nedd Fechan valley had to wait until December 2005 for their connection

The area is seen as part of Waterfall Country. A popular attraction near the village is the **Waterfalls Walk**, an easier walk along the Afon Mellte past two main falls on the river, *Sgwd Clun-gwyn* and *Sgwd Isaf Clun-gwyn*, to *Sgwd yr Eira* on the Afon Hepste, where the footpath passes behind the waterfall



Download the gpx file

<http://routes.swanseacycling.co.uk/events/event/devils-elbow-ystradfellte-from-burger-king-neath>