



£10 Wetherspoons Afternoon Deal (2-5pm) that includes a drink.

It's nice to support local cafés and pubs as well, of course. Their happy hours often make me happy, and for more than an hour. In Criccieth and Barmouth I had excellent local cask ales this way for £4 a pint, and around Llŷn, some inexpensive coffees from local cafés where I enjoyed trying to get by in Welsh. You may not get a discount doing this but it's a gesture much appreciated.

Picnics at some highlight locations aren't just low cost. For me they're one of the joys of cycle touring. On my North Wales jaunt I had a stunning panorama to accompany my lunch at the summit of Mynydd Rhiw. And across from Barmouth, there was the glorious sunny backdrop of the viaduct for my al fresco afternoon tea.

FINAL ACCOUNTS

In my week round north-west Wales I had a month's worth of cycling experiences, in addition to mammoth place names. Menai Bridge, castles, mountains, beaches, Llŷn's imposing hills, with agreeably flat lands and

Clockwise from top left: Fford Pen Llech's steepest bit. Mynydd Rhiw. Britain's only 40% gradient sign (in Harlech for Ffordd Pen Llech). Aberdaron on the Llŷn Peninsula

“Clanking across the loose boards of Barmouth's 150-year-old wooden viaduct is like playing a giant marimba”

quiet lanes between and around them that make it surprisingly pleasant to cycle round. I also visited Beddgelert's quaint village below Snowdonia containing 'the grave' of Gelert, faithful but nonexistent dog of legend.

Two unique cycling highlights stood out. There was Barmouth's astounding half-mile-long, 150-year-old wooden viaduct. It carries trains, bikes and pedestrians – but not cars – across the mouth of the Mawddach Estuary, with hills either side. Clanking across its loose boards is like playing a giant marimba.

At Harlech, I rode down (not up: it's one-way) what's claimed as the 'world's steepest street': Ffordd Pen Llech, which winds its way from some cafés and shops up by the castle to the flats below. It's Britain's only signed 40% road gradient. However, depending on definition of 'steepest' and 'street' (centre of road? edge of hairpin? gradient over what distance? houses both sides? cobbles allowed?) it's arguably not even Britain's most extreme, never mind the world's. Baldwin Street in Dunedin, New Zealand, is the official global record holder, and various English candidates (Church Lane in Whitby, Vale Street in Bristol) have even dizzier sections.

Ffordd Pen Llech is certainly steep. But the cost of cycle touring isn't. I enjoyed a week of it – well, six days and five nights – for £100. On a bike, you don't need a fortune to have a ton of fun. Iechyd da! ●

