

Reach for the BEACH

With sandy beaches galore on the doorstep, Penllwyn Cottages near the Ceredigion coast path provide a haven for walkers, watersports enthusiasts and those who just want to get away from it all

Words: Charlotte van Praagh

The sun is shining, the sky is clear and, gazing down to the water as we cruise along the coastal road that runs the length of Ceredigion, the sea is calm and blue. After an unseasonably cold start to the spring we've been blessed by a gloriously bright, sunny April afternoon. As the temperature rises, it feels as if the whole country's mood soars – ours certainly does. Mind you, it's hard not to be cheerful with views like the ones we're enjoying out of the window.

We're on our way to a tiny hamlet just outside New Quay, where Penllwyn Cottages, our home for the next couple of days, are situated. Approached down a

small country road set back from the A487, Penllwyn is a charming collection of Victorian-era Welsh whitewashed stone cottages nestled in pretty grounds and surrounded on all sides by acres of lamb-filled fields that stretch as far as the sea. On arrival, we're greeted at the gates by owners Gareth and Susan Edwards, both beaming, with their two young children, who introduce themselves shyly with polite handshakes.

The couple, who were searching for a property that would be suitable for starting a lifestyle business, bought the cottages and land four years ago. Already living in nearby Aberaeron, they were keen to stay in the area. They can't speak

highly enough of Ceredigion and lament the fact the county is often overlooked in favour of neighbouring Pembrokeshire.

UNSPOILT COUNTRY

"Cardigan Bay was the first Marine Heritage stretch of coastline in the UK," explains Gareth with pride. "As well as the dolphins, for which it's so famous, there are porpoises, grey seals and numerous seabirds. We're lucky to live in such an unspoilt part of the country."

After a lengthy programme of renovation to Penllwyn, a former smallholding and most likely a part of a large estate before that, they unveiled the luxurious accommodation in August 2011. Mwnt, a former pigsty, is now a four-star cottage sleeping two in a romantic, galleried, king-size bed. Then there's jewel-in-the-Penllwyn-crown Cei Newydd, a former cow barn that now offers five-star accommodation for four; this weekend, however, we're lucky enough to have it all to ourselves!

THOUGHTFUL DESIGN

Just as the buildings have been sympathetically converted so they don't look out of place in the landscape, inside the cottages have been thoughtfully designed to make the most of their surroundings. Cei Newydd – New Quay in Welsh – is bright and airy throughout, thanks to strategic positioning of skylights, windows that show off the views and French doors leading from the



READER OFFER
Book a week's stay in Mwnt or Cei Newydd during May and receive a free £30 hamper of local produce. Offer exclusive to Welsh Coastal Life readers.



**Bwthynnod Penllwyn Cottages,
Cei Newydd, Nanternis,
New Quay, Ceredigion SA45 9RR.
Tel: 01545 561042.
Email: info@penllwyncottages.co.uk
Web: www.penllwyncottages.co.uk**



ACTIVITIES AND ATTRACTIONS

WATERSPORTS

This part of Cardigan Bay is a hotspot for watersports. You can try kayaking, sailing, windsurfing and powerboating with Cardigan Bay Watersports (www.cardiganbaywatersports.org.uk); coasteering and kayaking with Cardigan Bay Active (www.cardiganbayactive.co.uk); or fun family adventure activities with Llain Activity Centre (www.llain.co.uk)

WALKING

Penllwyn Cottages are a five-minute walk from the 60-mile Ceredigion stretch of Wales Coast Path. It's a good way to explore the area and discover its heritage, from Iron Age forts to medieval fish traps. Download walks from www.ceredigioncoastpath.org.uk or use the maps and books in Cei Newydd.

WILDLIFE

Cardigan Bay is home to a diverse range of wildlife, such as seabirds and grey seals (which can be seen from Cwmtydu Beach) and lays claim to the highest number of dolphin sightings in the UK. Nature lovers shouldn't leave without taking a dolphin-spotting boat trip from New Quay (www.newquayboattrips.co.uk).



kitchen/dining area to a south-west-facing private decked patio area and garden. It's a real sun trap, and happily it's warm enough for us to sit outside and enjoy a quick brew amongst the emerging daffodils. For those staying in the summer, who'd no doubt spend most evenings out here, there's a barbecue and garden furniture for al fresco dining.

Back indoors, natural materials have been used throughout, from rustic Welsh

slate to oak flooring. Alongside the additions, a small section of the original wall from its days as a home for cattle remains. Even the paints used are organic, with a subtle nautical design scheme of pale blues and white with tasteful wood panelling on the walls and attractive wall lights inspired by those used on ships. There's a further nod to the locale through the choice of artwork: cheerful paintings of New Quay done by Ceredigion artists Rhiannon Roberts (*Magical Bay*, pictured left) and Helen Elliott (both of whose work has been featured in *Welsh Coastal Life*).

The cottage is as comfy and well equipped as it is stylish. Soft leather sofas in the living area provide the perfect place to sit, both bedrooms have en suite bathrooms – one with both a bath and walk-in shower with full disabled access – and the fully fitted kitchen boasts all mod cons, including a washing machine and dishwasher. Another touch of luxury is the underfloor heating provided by means ▶





The pretty harbour and colourful houses of New Quay in Ceredigion

of an eco air-source heat pump – another string in Penllwyn’s green bow.

It’s not the weather for staying inside, however, and as soon as we’ve hopped in the car it’s evident why Gareth and Susan were so struck by this location. Although peaceful and secluded, there are lots of well-loved towns and villages a short drive or a decent walk away. The couple both know the area well and obligingly point us towards a few highlights: New Quay, a popular seaside town renowned for its dolphins and Dylan Thomas trail, is three miles away; quaint Llangrannog with its cosy pubs is four miles away; and the upmarket, picturesque harbour town of Aberaeron is 15 minutes in the car.

What’s more, you hardly have to step out of the door before stumbling onto one of Ceredigion’s finest beaches: National Trust beauty spots Cwmttydu, Penbryn and Mwnt, as well as sandy havens Aberporth and Tresaith. Since each

has something different to offer, whether it’s rockpools, rambles, wildlife, watersports or golden sands, they’re not just for visitors in high season.

OUT IN ABERAERON

Relaxation beckons, so it’s a drink in waterside gastro-pub the Harbourmaster in Aberaeron for us, while watching the sail-boats in the harbour against the town’s brightly coloured houses. After a stroll through the town, there’s time to taste Aberaeron’s famous honey ice cream at The Hive. Those staying a week at Penllwyn could easily spend a day or more here, perusing the up-market shops, sampling the pubs and restaurants or simply soaking up the views.

After an early dinner in New Quay, coming back to Cei Newydd feels like returning home, it’s so relaxed. And there’s nothing like curling up on one of the sofas with a glass of wine and settling

ROOMS AND RATES

Prices range from £300-£525 per week for Mwnt Cottage, which sleeps two in one galleried bedroom with a king-size bed) and from £345-£745 for Cei Newydd, which sleeps four (in a double and a twin or two doubles), where *Welsh Coastal Life* stayed. However, they also offer three-day breaks and run special offers throughout the year, so it’s worth getting in touch.



in for the night. The wood-burner is easy to use and, once loaded with logs from the basket provided, it kicks out plenty of heat. As well as the music centre, flatscreen TV and DVD player, the Edwards have provided a collection of DVDs – a nice touch. Alongside children’s favourites, there are several with a Welsh flavour, such as the Dylan Thomas biopic *The Edge of Love*, much of which was shot in New Quay.

A comfy and cosy king-size bed makes for an incredibly restful night’s sleep and it’s a rare treat awakening the next morning, not to a harsh alarm but to the sound of bleating lambs and birdsong. An exhilarating power shower and a hearty home-cooked breakfast later, we’re ready to face the day.

After reluctantly checking out and saying goodbye to the Edwards family, the only decision ahead of us is what beauty spot to embark on today, and which beauty spot to explore. If only every day were like this. ✨

DINING

Cei Newydd’s well-equipped kitchen has everything you need to whip up a feast, with space to dine at its farmhouse table. There’s a cooker, electric hob, grill and microwave, plus all the utensils, pots and pans, cutlery and crockery you could need. What’s more, you’ll find a welcome pack of local produce on your arrival to get you started, including organic Welsh milk, Rachel’s Organic yoghurt, Welsh toffee waffles or Welsh cakes and delicious Perl Wen cheese. Gareth and Susan have also provided information on where to get the best local produce, such as meat and seafood.

If you decide to go out, there’s a good choice nearby, including seafood restaurant The Hungry Trout (www.thehungrytrout.co.uk) in New Quay; gastro pub The Daffodil Inn (www.daffodilinn.co.uk) towards Llandysul and The Hive (www.thehiveaberaeron.com) and The Harbourmaster Hotel in Aberaeron (www.harbourmaster.com). You’ll find recommendations on places to eat, including takeaways, in the visitor information at the cottage.

