



**NORTH
EAST
WALES**

Year of Legends

12
legendary
journeys

Find your epic

Everywhere you look in North East Wales, there are stories to be told. Some are true and some – well, they might be tall tales. Which is just another way of saying they have a different kind of truth.

They are part of the fabric of our landscape. Part of who we are.

But as you journey around North East Wales, you won't just find these stories in our castles and churches, our winding rivers and open moorland, our theatres and art galleries. You'll find them inside yourself.

Write your own story. Make your journey into the stuff of legend. Here are 12 epic ideas to get you started.

Before you go, watch our movies on You Tube or download a multi-media brochure from our website to discover what 2017 Year of Legends means to North East Wales.

find out more at

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Offa's Dyke Path National Trail

All good stories require a compelling beginning and a satisfying ending. In this particular legendary journey, the seaside town of Prestatyn provides both.

It all depends which direction you are walking in. Prestatyn is one end of the epic 177-mile Offa's Dyke Path National Trail that stretches from sea to sea, crosses the England-Wales boundary 27 times and for 50 miles follows the eighth-century dyke itself – Britain's longest ancient monument.

So this is either the place where your adventure begins or the culmination of your dreams. If the latter, do nip into the seafront Nova Centre to record your achievement – perhaps after dipping your aching feet in the Irish Sea.

Prestatyn also marks the point at which Offa's Dyke Path National Trail joins the Wales Coast Path, enabling a 1,030-mile circumnavigation of Wales. No wonder it was the first town in Wales to achieve Walkers Are Welcome status.

Start: Nova Centre, Prestatyn LL19 7EY

www.nationaltrail.co.uk





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St Winefride's Well

The story of Holywell is so powerful that it's the only place in Britain with an unbroken history of pilgrimage stretching back more than 13 centuries.

Seventh-century Saint Winefride was real enough. But whether she was beheaded by a spurned lover and brought back to life by her Uncle Beuno, a healing spring gushing from the spot where her head fell, is a matter of faith rather than historical record.

King Richard I certainly thought so. He came to the "Lourdes of Wales" in 1189 to pray for the success of his crusade. In 1416 Henry V went one better, walking all the way from Shrewsbury to give thanks for his victory at Agincourt.

You can trace their footsteps on the Holywell Heritage Trail, which also features the evocative remains of 18th-century mills and foundries in Greenfield Valley. And you can bathe in Saint Winefride's miraculous waters beneath a Late Perpendicular Gothic shrine building that's unique in the world.

Start: St Winefride's Well, Holywell CH8 7PN

www.exploreflintshire.co.uk

Wales Coast Path

The Wales Coast Path is the world's first footpath to follow an entire nation's coastline. It's an incredible 870 miles long. And every cove and clifftop comes with stories of saints, sinners and shipwrecks.

At Flint on the shore of the Dee Estuary even Shakespeare contributed a tale. It was at Flint Castle in 1399 that King Richard II was captured by the usurper Henry Bolingbroke, later Henry IV, a scene memorably described in the bard's *Richard II*.

Medieval Europe's most ambitious building project, the "iron ring" of castles along the North Wales coast, began at Flint in 1277. From here you can walk – or pedal on National Cycle Route 5 – beyond the mouth of the estuary to wildlife-rich Gronant Dunes and on to the famous seaside resorts of Rhyl and Prestatyn.

Start: Flint Castle CH6 5PH

www.walescoastpath.gov.uk

www.sustrans.org.uk



4 Corwen town trail

Sometimes the greatest legends are contained in the tiniest details. Explore around the back of the 13th century church of Saint Mael and Saint Sulien in Corwen and you'll find the priest's doorway. The lintel above is carved with a cross.

This is said to be the mark made by Wales's national hero, Owain Glyndwr, when he hurled down his dagger from Pen y Pigyn hillside in a rage.

Follow Corwen's town trail (one of eight in Denbighshire) to see the ancient church and gaze in wonder at the life-size bronze statue of Owain, last native-born Prince of Wales, astride his battle horse in the square.

And from the oak woodland of Coed Pen y Pigyn high above the town, with the River Dee laid out before you like a ribbon, look east towards his ancestral home and the earthwork mound where he launched a national revolt against English rule in 1400.

Start: Green Lane car park,
Corwen LL21 0DN

www.discoverdenbighshire.wales



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The stream in the sky

Thomas Telford and William Jessop were legends of the Industrial Revolution – and the Llangollen canal was their crowning glory. It cuts through superbly rugged terrain with a series of great aqueducts, tunnels, bridges and embankments.

The jewel in the crown may be Pontcysyllte aqueduct, “the stream in sky”, whose immense stone piers tower 126 feet above the River Dee. But no fewer than 11 miles of the rest of the canal have also been awarded World Heritage Site status.

You can walk, cycle or paddle them all – starting at the Horseshoe Falls and finishing at Gledrid in Shropshire. Or you can hitch a ride on a canal boat from Llangollen wharf if you fancy drifting along in style.

Just don't look down as you cross mighty Pontcysyllte unless you have a serious head for heights. The visitor centre at Trevor Basin tells the whole story with videos, artifacts and children's activities.

Start: Llantysilio car park near Horseshoe Falls LL20 8BS,
Trevor Basin LL20 7TY

www.pontcysyllte-aqueduct.co.uk

Moel Arthur

Legend has it that Moel Arthur, the only hillfort in Wales to carry King Arthur's name, was mined during the short-lived Cilcain Gold Rush of the late 19th century.

Sadly no precious nuggets were ever discovered. But three Bronze Age axes did turn up in 1962 after a ferocious rainstorm, proving these dramatic slopes were in use long before Iron Age people built their hillfort about 500 BC.

More than legendary enough for a visit. In fact, if you tackle Arthur 2 Times, a 31km intermediate mountain biking route starting in the foothills of the Clwydian Range, you get to ride around Moel Arthur not just once but twice.

It's part of a breathtaking range of trails covering all levels of ability brought together under the banner of Ride North Wales. And if you spot something small, yellow and gleaming on any of those sweeping descents, do let us know.

Start: pump house just outside Cilcain,
grid reference SJ 176 648

www.ridenorthwales.co.uk



Larry the Lizard

Small children, and big kids of all ages, will love exploring the sandy dunes of Horton's Nose at Rhyl harbour and hearing the story of Larry the Lizard and his missing tail.

Beginning near the iconic Pont y Ddraig, or Dragon's Bridge, which opens and closes like a giant metal flower to allow boats to pass underneath, they can follow the brave young lizard over the wooden boardwalks as he asks his animal friends for help.

Each encounter in the story with a seal, salmon, oystercatcher, burnet moth, turnstone and skylark is marked by a beautifully illustrated signpost.

It's a wonderful way for children to find out more about the wildlife that inhabits this remnant of an ancient dune system that once stretched all along the North Wales coast.

Start: Rhyl harbour LL18 5AS

www.northeastwales.wales





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Jubilee Tower

The iconic silhouette of the Jubilee Tower, visible for miles around, is a monument to the frailty of human ambition and the power of nature.

It was built on the summit of Moel Famau, highest point of the Clwydian Range, to celebrate the golden jubilee of “mad” King George III in 1810 – but blew down in a storm about 50 years later. Walking to it, and experiencing the panoramic views, has been a legendary journey for generations.

But after a mere two centuries this atmospheric ruin hardly qualifies as old at all. Not compared to the Iron Age hillforts that crown six of the other peaks in the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley AONB. Even the most recent of these is 2,000 years old and you can explore one of them, Moel Fenlli, from the same start point below.

More information from the visitor centre at Loggerheads Country Park CH7 5LH, 01352 810614.

Start: Bwlch Pen Barras car park, grid reference SJ 162 605

www.clwydianrangeanddeevalleyaonb.org.uk

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Flintshire Leisure Tour

Despite its buzzing market towns, stunning countryside and quiet coastline – not to mention its proximity to the English border – Flintshire remains relatively undiscovered. Hence the Flintshire Leisure Tour, an 83-mile car trail that showcases the best the county has to offer.

However, once you've made the odd detour, done some shopping, had a good pub lunch, wandered around a castle or walked up a hillfort, you may not have made as much progress as you expected.

That's why the tour's broken into nine manageable sections. Section eight, for instance, starts in the picturesque village of Hawarden.

There you'll find Gladstone's Library, the national memorial to Victorian prime minister William Gladstone – whose great-great-grandson Charlie runs the equally legendary (at least among foodies) Hawarden Estate Farm Shop.

Start: Tinkersdale car park, Hawarden CH5 3DH

www.exploreflintshire.co.uk



Ceiriog Valley Walk

The B4500 is a very special road. Not that you'd guess it from the map. It begins just off the A5 at the town of Chirk and disappears about 18 miles later into a network of narrow country roads.

It's special because it runs the length of the Ceiriog valley through a remarkable variety of landscapes – gentle pasture, woodland, sheer rock faces and glimpses of high mountain ridges and brooding moorland.

The place Lloyd George called “a little piece of heaven on earth” remains so miraculously unspoilt that travelling beside the trout-filled River Ceiriog feels like a journey into the distant past.

You can stick to the car if you like. But if you really want to know the story of this secret valley, to hear its ancient language and see the sheepdogs working in the fields, follow the Ceiriog Valley Walk. It links all the villages between Chirk and Llanarmon and, as a bonus, provides spectacular views of 13th-century Chirk Castle.

Start: Colliery Road car park, Chirk LL14 5PA

www.wrexham.gov.uk





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Coed Llandegla Forest

Coed Llandegla is 650 hectares of epic adventure waiting to happen. But you get to choose exactly how epic you want to feel.

From the forest visitor centre with its award-winning café, you can strike out on a waymarked family walk such as the two-mile Black Grouse Trail or take a gentle ride around the reservoir. You can even trot along the equestrian trails.

But if adrenalin is more your thing, you can tackle some of the best man-made mountain bike trails in the UK with routes for all levels from green to black – and a dedicated skills area so you can try out the obstacles before you commit.

If you really want to push yourself, book a "jumps and drops" session with mountain bike legend Al Bond and learn how to get airborne with confidence. That should be a journey you'll never forget.

Start: Oneplanet Adventure visitor centre, Llandegla
LL11 3AA

www.oneplanetadventure.com

Castell Dinas Brân

Tintagel, Glastonbury and other places lay their claims but surely everyone knows that King Arthur was really Welsh.

There are lots of places in North East Wales where you can tread in Arthur's legendary footsteps. The hillfort at Moel Arthur is named after him and his sword Excalibur is said to be buried under a rock on neighbouring Penycloddiau.

Best of all, some maintain the Holy Grail still lies buried in a cave deep below Castell Dinas Brân, the charismatic ruin crowning a craggy hilltop above Llangollen. Good luck finding it, whether you make the short but steep climb from Offa's Dyke Path or follow the signposts from Llangollen canal wharf.

But even if you draw a blank, the 360-degree views from the top will be reward enough: west to the Horseshoe Pass, north to the scree slopes of the Eglwyseg Rocks, south to the wild Berwyn Mountains and east all the way down the Dee Valley to Pontcysyllte aqueduct and beyond.

Start: Mill Street car park, Llangollen LL20 8SD





www.clwydianrangeanddeevalleyaonb.org.uk





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Ariennir yn Rhannol gan
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