

The view down to the beach and harbour at Tenby



Pembrokeshire panorama

With 260 miles of spectacular coastline, Pembrokeshire is one of Britain's most eye-catching counties. **Norman Wright** explores the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park

AS YOU look down on the wide golden beach at Tenby and along to the pastel-coloured buildings of the old town clustered around the harbour, it's easy to see why Pembrokeshire is recognised worldwide as one of the loveliest areas in Britain.

Beautiful old seaside towns like Tenby

and its near-neighbour Saundersfoot as well as smaller coastal villages are just part of the story of this, one of the most westerly of our counties.

Two hundred and sixty glorious miles of coastline also provide limestone cliffs, rocky headlands, superb sandy beaches – there are 11 Blue Flag beaches and 14 Green Coast beaches – as well as wildlife-rich estuaries and islands. Several

historic castles and the ancient St David's Cathedral reveal heritage as rich as the natural beauty and wildlife.

In contrast to the coastal landscape, the Preseli Hills in the north of the county add wild moorland and heath.

The Pembrokeshire Coast Path National Trail hugs the coastline for 186 of those miles. From St Dogmaels in the north to Amroth in the south, the trail

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covers almost every kind of maritime landscape: from steep limestone cliffs, undulating red sandstone bays and volcanic headlands to beaches, estuaries and flooded glacial valleys.

The coast path winds through the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park, one of the smallest of our National Parks and certainly the most unusual shape. At its widest it is ten miles and narrowest barely 100 yards.

With great names such as the Puffin Shuttle, Poppit Rocket, Strumble Shuttle, Celtic Coaster and Coastal Cruiser, bus services run up and down the National Park coastline.



St David's Cathedral makes Saint David's, with its 1400 inhabitants, one of the UK's smallest cities

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This means the entire length of the coast path is accessible by public transport and that you can walk and enjoy the coast in chunks that suit you.

The buses run seven days a week from May to September and two days a week in winter. It's a hail-and-ride service so just flag the buses down along the coast road

and hop on. You can take dogs and buggies on board, too.

Wildlife

The Milford Haven Waterway is the second deepest natural harbour in the world (after Sydney Harbour, in Australia). On the north bank is the town of Milford Haven

and, almost opposite, Pembroke Dock. Further inland the waterway becomes the Daugeleddau estuary which is the confluence of four rivers: the Western and Eastern Cleddau, Carew and Cresswell.

The upper reaches of the Daugeleddau estuary are beautiful, with steep, wooded banks. The many creeks, and the foreshore of the main channel, are nationally important for the thousands of wintering waders and wildfowl which feed on the mudflats at low tide, and roost on the banks and fringing marsh at high tide.

Carew Castle, on the Daugeleddau estuary, is a haven for wildlife

Walking

Apart from the coastal path the Preseli Hills offer excellent walking. For one of the best views in Pembrokeshire take the short walk to Foel Eryr, where on a clear day you can see across the sea to Ireland and north to Snowdonia.

The Golden Road walk runs across the spine of the Preseli Hills – eight miles of ancient track that follows a route dating back to the Neolithic period, 5000 years ago, and the main route for travellers in prehistory to and from Ireland.

At the eastern end of the Preseli range in the National Park is the fantastic hilltop fort of Foel Drygarn, a real must-see. The Bronze Age remains of stone ramparts, banks and ditches circle the crest, adding to the surrounding landscape of natural cliffs and crags.

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St Govans Chapel near Bosherton is a small 13th century chapel built into the sea-cliff



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One-third of Britain's nesting pairs of choughs are in Pembrokeshire and the offshore island of Grassholm has the world's largest gannet colony.

In early summer the puffins return to Skomer Island.

Autumn is pupping season in Pembrokeshire. Hundreds of Atlantic grey seal pups are born on the remote beaches and in the caves of north Pembrokeshire, and are visible from the coastal path.

Heritage

Pembroke Castle and Carew Castle are classic fortresses, while Cilgerran Castle near the border with Cardiganshire probably commands the most dramatic location,

perched high above the Teifi Gorge. Manorbier Castle on the south coast is a Norman baronial residence overlooking the beach. St David's Bishop's Palace was home to the bishops of St David's and initially built as a private residence but later in 13th century became a much grander building for stylish entertaining.

St Govan's near Bosherton is a small 13th century chapel built into the sea-cliff and accessible only by steps from the towering cliff above.

Castell Henllys is a reconstructed Iron Age hill fort which was a thriving settlement 2500 years ago. It has the only roundhouses in Britain reconstructed on the site where they were excavated.

Passport to Pembrokeshire

Getting there

■ **By car:** The main road route is to take the M4 through South Wales all the way to its end near Llanelli. Then pick up the A48 to Carmarthen and from there take the A477 through to Tenby and Pembroke or branch off on the A40 to Haverfordwest and access to St David's and the north of the county

■ **By train:** The main direct rail route to Wales is the service from London Paddington, Reading, Bath and Bristol to Newport and Cardiff, with easy connections to Pembrokeshire. Contact National Rail Enquiries, tel: 08457 484950, website: (www.nationalrail.co.uk)

■ The National Express coach network links major towns and cities in the UK including Pembrokeshire, website: (www.nationalexpress.com).

Getting around

■ Details of bus services, including the various coastal hop on, hop off buses, are available on the website: (www.pembrokeshire.gov.uk).

Find out more

■ Pembrokeshire tourism website: (www.visitpembrokeshire.com)

■ Pembrokeshire Coast National Park: (www.pembrokeshirecoast.org.uk).



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The beautiful beach and headlands at Newgale near St David's