

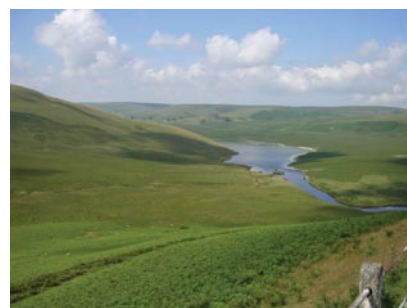


Ross Jeal describes just one of the great rides on offer at the Welsh Festival of Cycling in July: a route through the Elan Valley and past the Claerwen reservoir

The Elan Valley



(Left) Near Cwmystwyth. Try the Miner's Arms at Pont-rhyd-y-groes for food
(Below and bottom) You skirt Claerwen Reservoir on a rough moorland track



Photos: Andy Polakowski

Each year, towards the end of July, CTC Cymru organise the Welsh Festival of Cycling. This year it is being held at Rhayader, an historic market town on the river Wye. Rhayader is roughly midway between North and South Wales on the A470, 13 miles north of Builth Wells and 30 miles east of Aberystwyth on the A44. It is almost completely surrounded by 400-600 metre hills and it's a wonderful area for hiking and cycling.

The Welsh Festival of Cycling is a four-day event for all cyclists. There are four different rides each day: short (around 25 miles), medium (50) and long (75) rides on road and one off-road ride of around 25 miles. Other events include treasure hunts, map reading, hill climbing and downhill freewheel competitions. There is an overall competition for the person gaining the most points in different events over the four days. All of the events additionally qualify for the national CTC Tourist Competition.

The ride described here is the Elan Valley/Claerwen reservoir 69km route. This is a spectacular ride for the reasonably fit rider, taking the mountain road from Rhayader to Cwmystwyth and on through Pont-rhyd-y-groes, Ysbyty Ystwyth and Ffair-Rhos before turning

due east over well used tracks, which trace the northern outline of the Claerwen reservoir. A further 10km can be added to the outward or homeward sections should the rider wish to circumnavigate all of the Elan Valley reservoirs.

Doing the ride

The 69km route starts from the festival site at the Rhayader Football Club ground, effectively the centre of town. Having left the town on West Street, follow signs to the 'Elan Valley Trail' and head northwest, climbing gradually alongside a babbling mountain stream toward Penrhiw-wen at 488 metres altitude.

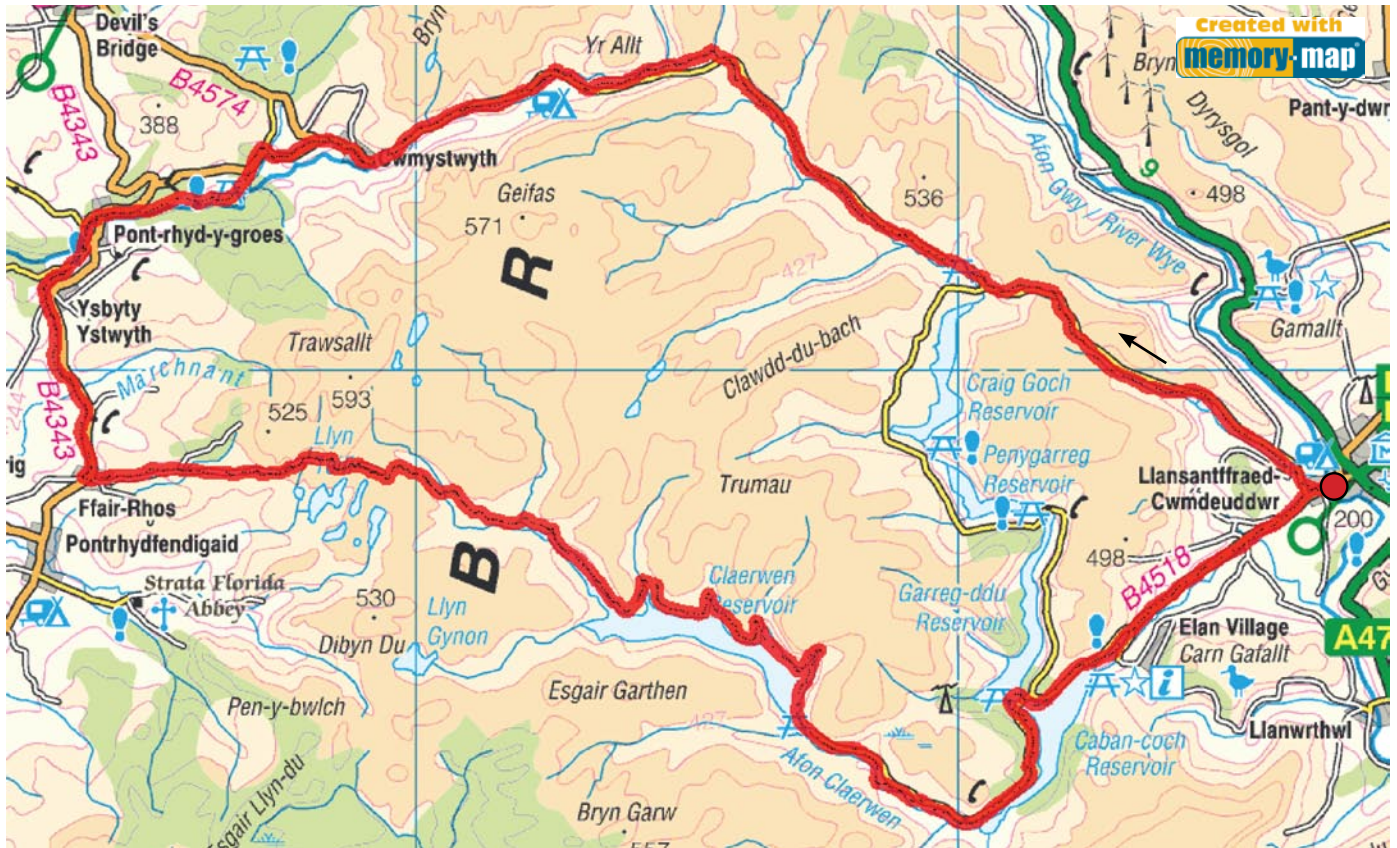
Continue on the 'Mountain Road to Aberystwyth' and descend towards the left turn, which leads to the small bridge: Pont ar Elan. Continue past this turning and proceed

Submit a route

If you want to submit one of your local group's favourite rides, write or email the editor – details on page 82 – for advice on how to go about it. Each one printed wins a boxed set of three Cassini historical maps of the area of your choice. To see the whole range, visit www.cassinimaps.com. To order by phone, call 0845 458 9910.



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Route directions

- 0.0k START: From Rhayader centre or Football Club grounds.
- 0.1k Westward on West Street then Bridge Street, where 400m to...
- 0.5k R just past car park, SP 'Elan Valley Trail'
- 6.6k Continue with steady ascent to Penrhiw-wen at 488m
- 8.2k Continue with moderate descent to north of Craig Goch Reservoir. Continue on mountain road northwest along Elan Valley
- 15.3k Continue on mountain road westerly to pass through Cwmystwyth
- 23.9k Soon L, on B4574 for approx 2km
- 25.4k Bear L onto Cycle Route 81 through forestry for approx 3km
- 28.1k L onto B4343, then 500m to Yarra Café on right.
- 30.4k Continue south on B4343 to Ysbyty Ystwyth and to Ffair-Rhos, where...
- 34.2k Tafarn Inn public house and L at crossroad, SP Teifi Pools
- 37.5k Continue SO on track where roadway ceases just before Teifi pools
- 43.4k Continue eastward for approx 7km to Claerwen Reservoir. Continue generally easterly along northern shoreline of the reservoir
- 53.4k In approx 10km further, at the west end of Claerwen Reservoir, find public car parking and toilet facilities.
- 68.9k Follow SP for Rhayader from here and return to town centre.

FACT FILE

Elan Valley/Claerwen Reservoir

DISTANCE: 69km **AVERAGE TIME:** 6hrs **TERRAIN:** On and off-road, exposed moor land crossings, undulating, fords
WHEN: Monday 27th July 2009, free with festival registration
MAPS: OS Landranger 147 **START/FINISH:** Rhayader, Powys, Wales **CYCLE SHOP:** Clive Powell Mountain Bikes, West Street, Rhayader **ESSENTIALS:** Tool kit and spare tubes
MORE INFORMATION: www.ctc-cymru.org.uk, tel: 01544 370666 **WELSH FESTIVAL OF CYCLING BOOKING:** www.cyclefestwales.org.uk, tel: Emrys Jones on 01952 257522

north westerly on the moorland road, which runs alongside the Elan River for approximately 8km, passing through spectacular scenery. The road turns westerly alongside the Ystwyth River, passing the old lead mines to the small village of Cwmystwyth. Continue on the main road, or the parallel cycle route NCR 81 through forestry to the south of it, to Pont-rhyd-y-groes where refreshments are available. The Miner's Arms public house serves food or a quaint little café adjacent the bridge called Yarra Gallery is worth a visit.

Crossing the bridge and riding south westerly on the main road, the B4343, will bring you to Ysbyty Ystwyth in a couple of kilometres. Then continue south for about 4km, where you'll see the Tafarn Cross Inn, otherwise known as the Teifi Inn, situated right on the northing grid line. If you plan to pop in for refreshments or to top up your water bottle before continuing the trek around the Claerwen Reservoir, you might like to call ahead on 01974 831608.

With or without having taken refreshment, turn left here and head due east for about 4km whereupon the road gives way to an undulating moorland track. Depending on recent rainfall, the ford may be deep enough to wet your feet. This track continues in a generally easterly direction for some 16 spectacular kilometres, skirting around the Claerwen reservoir's northerly shoreline. It offers no shelter whatsoever from the sun or the rain until you reach the public car parking area and toilets at the southernmost tip of the reservoir.

From this point there are signs that will return you to Rhayader and civilisation by road, although there are still detours available for the hardy – who should consult their Landranger map number 147.