

A Wonderland of Castles

SNOWDONIA

01



Caernarfon Castle is recognised around the world as one of the greatest buildings of the Middle Ages. This fortress-palace on the banks of the River Seiont is grouped with Edward I's other castles at Conwy, Beaumaris and Harlech as a World Heritage Site. But for sheer scale and architectural drama Caernarfon stands alone.

Here Edward and his military architect Master James of St George erected a castle, town walls and a quay all at the same time. This gigantic building project eventually took 47 years and cost a staggering £25,000.

Caernarfon Castle (SAT NAV LL55 2AY)

02



Criccieth is truly a castle to capture the imagination. Crowning its own rocky headland between two beaches it commands astonishing views over the town and across the wide sweep of Cardigan Bay.

No wonder Turner felt moved to paint it. By then it was a picturesque ruin – destroyed by one of Wales's most powerful medieval princes, Owain Glyndŵr.

But it was built by two of his illustrious predecessors. First Llywelyn ap Iorwerth (Llywelyn the Great) created the immense gatehouse flanked by D-shaped stone towers. Then his grandson Llywelyn ap Gruffudd – or Llywelyn the Last – added the outer ward, curtain walls and two new towers.

By car from Caernarfon Castle 35 mins (SAT NAV LL52 0DP)

03



Harlech Castle crowns a sheer rocky crag overlooking the dunes far below - waiting in vain for the tide to turn and the distant sea to lap at its feet once again.

No further drama is really required but, just in case, the rugged peaks of Snowdonia rise as a backdrop. Against fierce competition from Conwy, Caernarfon and Beaumaris, this is probably the most spectacular setting for any of Edward I's castles in North Wales. All four are designated as a World Heritage Site.

Harlech was completed from ground to battlements in just seven years under the guidance of gifted architect Master James of St George. Its classic 'walls within walls' design makes the most of daunting natural defences.

By car from Criccieth Castle 30 mins (SAT NAV LL46 2YH)



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