

The thoughts of an Aussie through-hiker on the North Wales Pilgrim's Way

By Esther Price

Albany, Western Australia

This document reflects my experience completing the North Wales Pilgrim's Way (NWPW) end-to-end in September 2025, in unusually wild weather. It is not intended as a route guide, but rather as a personal reflection to complement the official handbook and website resources. This may be of most use to people planning to embark on this pilgrimage largely unsupported.

- Distance walked: 250km including Mt Snowdon.
- Time taken: 16 days including 2 rest days, one for Snowdon.
- Ambition: To walk end to end, from church to church and from bed to bed, without transfers; sleeping in sheets with a shower each night.
- Why I walked: I am not really religious, but I was curious about faith, history, culture and what it might feel like to walk a path that 20,000 pilgrims had followed for centuries before me.
- Pack weight: 10kg on the back for water, wet weather gear, some pub clothes and walking essentials. I should have added extra food and a mini tarp, given the weather and lack of healthy food enroute!

Other of significance

- I completely loved the peace and serenity the churches offered. Every. Single. Day.
- I discovered this walk via the BBC series the Pilgrimage. The show gave no clues about how to actually plan the walk but I loved the challenge of working this out from afar with no previous experience of UK walk trails (they are very different to Australian ones)!

Things I would do with the benefit of hindsight

- Start the first day late in order to get to St Winefride's Well for the 11am bathing time. The bathing ritual of the Well is such a significant part of the Pilgrimage story. There are daily scheduled times for a healing bathe in the freezing cold waters of the well also at 1pm and 3pm. This is something I wish I'd known about earlier.
- Pack 5-6 portions of my favourite breakfast. Healthy food choices were hard to come by at village shops (and many listed on websites were not open) and most of our AirBnBs did not supply breakfast. Sometimes we resorted to cooking hard boiled eggs in a kettle. That takes some skill!
- Carry cash - so you can donate to each church along the way. Nearly every church has a kettle and a supply of teabags and biscuits. I have never been so grateful for these, as often there was no other shelter and no other refreshments available in a village. You should donate at least as much as you'd pay for a Welsh coffee in a good café – which you would have gladly done if there were some!
- By being true to the trail as described in the guidebook, you miss some really cool things. I'd add another 4-5 days in order to have a break on Angelsey, discover Penrhyn Castle at Bangor; most definitely do a diversion to the Tre'r Ceiri Hillfort from Trefor and allow time for bad weather in Aberdaron in the hope to get good enough weather for the crossing to Bardsey Island.

Dilemma: We wanted to climb Snowdon the hard way (via Crib Goch) but this requires the right weather and in reality, unless you're a very capable mountaineer, a guide. We had the non refundable booking but we did our dough – as the weather was too bad on our allocated Snowdon day for anything other than the most basic route up. I think though, it's worth the risk of buying a ticket (there's only a limited number of days and people that Mountain Experience takes up via Crib Coch so you need to book that well in advance too). Give the non-refundable voucher to the NWPW team to sell to someone else with proceeds to NWPW, if you can't manage it on the day due to weather.

Things that may surprise an Aussie

- Coffee culture: Australians should lower expectations early. Barista coffee before 8am is rare, and sometimes coffee of any description is optimistic.
- Directions: Instructions like “walk towards the farmhouse” sound straightforward until there are three farmhouses in view. Likewise, a path, track, laneway, kissing gate, stile and ordinary farm gate are all very different things. And T Junctions have whole new meanings in Wales!
- Access: Walking between farmhouses and sheds feels intrusive to an Aussie. In Wales, it’s completely normal — and often leads to great conversations with farmers.
- Sundays: Going to church with locals was a favourite thing. Service times are hard to confirm remotely, but almost every church on the route does hold Sunday services, and they are worth prioritising.

Getting organised

1. Order the NWPW handbook by Chris Potter. (Also read his blog on the NWPW website. It’s far more spiritual than mine). His handbook is completely delightful. On first review from another hemisphere, it is hard to actually work out what it all means until you have it in your hands and walking the path. But trust me, it works! I also like a real map and I found it really handy to orientate myself on my Australian loungeroom floor with all the OS maps, which are now marked with the NWPW trail. You need numbers 17, 253, 254, 264 and 265.
2. In your planning, work well ahead – probably even 12 months if you’re thinking of making it to Wales in peak summer. There are very few accommodation options in the right spots on the path and many of them don’t like to do a single night only. The guidebook is more centred around people doing sections and being picked up at the end of their day’s walk and ferried elsewhere. You need to throw that schedule aside and base your day plan around where you can find a bed. This may mean some much shorter days than you’d like, but also some longer ones.
3. Don’t trust websites and google maps that say pubs and shops are open and operating. The sad part of the trail is that many pubs enroute have closed down; and many others don’t offer accommodation. So be prepared to get on the phone and call. It’s these conversations that result in great local knowledge and

other suggestions along the way. Be very wary of booking.com and Airbnb searches as they'll often suggest places that are miles away (in walking terms) from the town you are asking for.

4. AirBnB and Booking Dotcom take a huge percentage of the much-needed takings of these fabulous small businesses, so do whatever you can to keep searching and go direct to the pub or the individual business. When you find them, talk to them. And get them to recommend the next spot on the trail. Ask politely if they'd consider one night only if their rules are minimum 2. See where that takes you. It may also mean they kindly offer to collect you and bring you back to them for a second night in order to get your business - which is great if you have to – but I always prefer to keep consistently going in the one direction, by foot only!
5. Our experience was that many of the places along the way were not that used to multi-day hikers. They understood 'day' hikers being picked up and ferried to accommodation, but they didn't quite compute the needs of people with zero car; zero extra clothes; zero extra food. So, simply, explain yourself! Your priority is: Drying or even cleaning your clothes and making sure you have enough healthy nutrition for the evening and next day that doesn't involve walking 2km in the opposite direction to where you're heading to arrange that!
6. Don't forget: To complete your guidebook with a stamp from each Church along the way. Sometimes it's hard to find them but every spot has one.

Our diary and what we'd change

Day Zero: Take the train to Flint on Wales' north coast. If you can, stay at Stokyn Hall at nearby Holywell. Stokyn Hall is a short (and lovely walk if you take the coastal path) to the trail's start point at Basingwerk Abbey. Soak up the history of this beautiful old home; and eat fantastic home cooked food courtesy of Llinos and James in the family dining room. If Stokyn is not an option, then maybe expand your search for accommodation to include Flint and immediate surrounds. But essentially what you need to sort is that you can walk from where you stay to St Winefride's Well just before 11am next day.

Day 1 Stokyn Hall to Basingwerk Abbey/St Winefride's Well then Pantasaph and on to Druid Inn, Gorsedd. 12km

What we did: For us, this was a warm-up day, designed to ease-in, test the gear and understand the way-finder arrows. We left Stokyn quite early and crawled all over the

ruins of Basingwerk Abbey, before heading on to St Winefride's Well, which as you'll discover is a pivotal part of the Pilgrim's way. We were there just as it opened at 9am.

An important lesson on Day 1 was that many Welsh locals have little or no idea about the North Wales Pilgrim's way – and so asking a local for directions and onward distance for some 'lunch intel' doesn't necessarily set you right! We had made our expectations around lunch options being loosely linked to the size of the village on Google Maps – only to discover that is not a valid assessment! On arriving into Pantasaph we thought that we would find lunch there. That wasn't to be and after some more google research and against local advice, we carried on to the Druid Inn at Gorsedd (not far at all) and had lunch there (fabulous), before our Stokyn host collected us and returned us for our second night at Stokyn. They kindly took us back the next morning to continue, as we had not been able to locate a bed option near-by.

What you should/could do: Start this day much later so you plan to be at St Winefride's Well at 11am. This is because you are permitted to bathe in the freezing cold waters of St Winefride's Well at set times, the first opportunity of the day being 11am. Of course you'd need to think about bathing attire as 'conservative clothing' is requested. But as you'll read later in this journal – bathers can come in handy so do pack them. I really wish we'd known about these set bathing times as I would have loved to immerse myself in the significance of the healing waters and the story of the Well as this sets you up in the mind of the Pilgrims.

If you did that, you could then walk to arrive at the Druid Inn, Gorsedd for a very late lunch. If you look carefully on AirBnB you will find there are now several options that are within 1-2km of Gorsedd – close enough to be nearly on the trail. So be persistent if you don't want a car ride back to the lovely Stokyn and you reckon 12-14km is enough for the first day. I reckon it is – especially if you don't start until after your cold plunge at 11am! And, because it's nice to be slow.

Day 2: Pantasaph to Trelawnyd, via Llanasa. 18.5km

What we did: You will ideally need a packed lunch for this day, although there is a pet rescue place just out of Lloc that does a good scone and pot of tea that will get you through. The pub at Lloc was long shut, as was the one at Llanasa. There are some very cool things to see on this day including the 10th century wheel cross Maen Achwyfan and then the climb to YGop before you descend into Trelawnyd.

The newly refurbished Trelawnyd Inn is a great spot but doesn't do accommodation anymore. We found an AirBnB in the neighbouring village of Gwaenysgor. We could have walked there but our host kindly collected us from the Trelawnyd pub. These hosts were right into walking and had stocked our digs with victuals for a healthy breakfast and packed lunch for the next days, for which we were really grateful. We would have struggled without that! While the rule at this BnB was 2 nights minimum stay – this

came with the offer to collect us from our finish point next day and then back to the start point in St Asaph the following one. The bonus of all that meant we had two great dinners at the Eagle and Child Inn at Gwaenysgor – and took part in the local quiz night – where we made a very poor contribution due to all the questions being largely related to Wales. There was one question about an Australian sheep dog which we nailed!

What you could do: Maybe you could keep hunting for a BnB that would do one night within walking distance of Trelawnyd (noting the Trelawnyd Inn doesn't do accommodation) - and then you'd maybe find a bed in St Asaph for the following night.

Day 3: Trelawnyd to St Asaph via Tremeirchion. 19.1km

What we did: This is where we first really started to appreciate the shelter of the churches as the weather from this point on was highly inclement. With nutritious food thanks to our Gwaenysgor hosts, the trick was to find somewhere sheltered to eat it enroute! The answer was the church at Tremeirchion. We then walked on into St Asaph in pouring rain and was rescued by one of the founders of the NWPW, Sue – who lives in St Asaph. We had the privilege of attending an evening prayer with her at St Asaph cathedral and benefited from her wonderful generosity in driving us back to our digs in Gwaenysgor after that, saving our BnB host Peter from that task.

What you could do: Stay in St Asaph – (but only if you were able to negotiate a single night around Trelawnyd).

Day 4: St Asaph to Llanefydd via Cefn. 12.5km

What we did: This was a completely easy day, scheduled that way to fit in with accommodation options. We started late (after the coffee shops open in St Asaph), finished early and took it all in. We spent plenty of time reflecting in the beautiful church at Cefn on the way and enjoyed the really impressive dairy farm as you walk into Llanefydd and our accommodation at the Hawk and Buckle Inn. It has only a handful of rooms and appeared the only accommodation option in town. Great vibes and right opposite the church. We got there before the pub opened but we were happy to just relax in the church yard and soak up the history of this Church. That evening, we requested a picnic lunch option for next day and couldn't have been happier with a couple of hard-boiled eggs to take away and some fruit. There was no food purchasing options in Llanefydd.

Day 5: Llanefydd to Gwytherin via Llansannan was 25km including at least 1km of going wrong; and then another 1km on to the AirBnB.

What I did

I've got to say this was a testing day for me as my partner had to depart the trail unexpectedly for a couple of days – leaving me to discover the nuances of the NWPW arrows that could send you just 10degrees in the wrong direction and before you knew it

you'd be over hills and down dales with no corresponding styles to climb over. I resisted looking at the dot on my OS Maps app because when you do that, your head is down and you are not taking in the beauty of your surrounds or just living the moment.

There is a great little grocery shop in Llansannan at about the half-way point, where I made the mistake of *not* buying victuals for dinner, thinking I'd easily solve that at Gwytherin.

I then went badly wrong again about halfway between Llansannan and Gwytherin – where I know the orange dot on my phone would have sorted me, but the combination of way-finder signs not quite matching (in my eyes anyway) the description in the guidebook, did my head in. It was some consolation to discover fellow walkers at Gwytherin who made the same mistake as me. That aside, it's a stunning section and would be really excellent in beautiful weather, where one would likely be in a better frame of mind to match arrows to guidebook words!

I'd left my run too late to get a bed at the Lion Inn in Gwytherin and instead found a fabulous BnB about 1km out of the village – a distance that didn't concern me when I booked in from another hemisphere away. What's an extra 1km I thought then? But it's a lot after 25km in bad weather, especially when you are hungry and in need of a warm shower! I remember thinking it'd be no problem to check in, walk *back* to the pub for dinner and walk home again. But when it came down to it, I didn't have that in me. Fortunately, there was this fantastic roadside farmer's shop running an honesty system with EFTPOS between the village and my accommodation. I bought every option on offer - which was lamb patties, bread and eggs. This would be dinner, breakfast and picnic lunch next two days. Oh, for some salad and fresh fruit!

This BnB was a classic example of a 2-night minimum bringing about a great opportunity to meet the host, make a new friend and accept some assistance. While I would have much preferred one night only in Gwytherin and to be entirely self-sufficient with no transfers, the upside was staying in this great cottage and meeting the owners.

Day 6: Gwytherin to Eglwysbach via Llangernnyw. 24km

What I did: This was a Sunday and raining and blowing hard for most of the day. I walked into Llangernnyw Church just at the end of their morning service where I plopped down like a wet shag and was welcomed for a cup of tea and biscuit by the parishioners. This was the only church enroute that didn't have as a standard offering a kettle and a tea bag for pilgrims 24/7 - but as soon as they heard my story my bet is that it will be fixed by now.

Recharged, I carried on to Eglwysbach arriving there in time for the 3pm Sunday service. This was a complete and lovely surprise as my information from afar in the pre-planning stage suggested there was no such option for a Sunday service here. I promptly called

my BnB host and invited her to join me at church before she drove me home (which was the enticement that got me over the line for 2 nights). She and I both loved this service – not only for the quality of the singing, particularly from the Church warden, but also for the sermon.

Once in the car when Llinos heard about my struggle for dinner the previous night, she immediately suggested she drop me at the Lion Inn for dinner so I didn't have to do the 2km round walk from and back to my accommodation. After battling wild wind and rain all day a shower before wine and dinner would have been ideal, but the opportunity to not walk trumped that. Bonus was that Ben from the Lion Inn dropped me home, replete from red wine by the fire and the best pub meal of the trip.

What you could do: I'm in two minds here as to what to advise as I love supporting the local BnB community, but I do much prefer one night only and walk without transfers. If that's you, try to stay at the Lion Inn and then do next night in Eglwysbach; but sometimes 2 nights in the same bed is good, especially if it means you can do some washing and get to hang out with really lovely hosts.

Day 7: Eglwysbach to Llanfairfechan via Rowen. 23km

What I did: This I would have to say was the best day of the walk. That rating was helped no end by a rare dose of brilliant sunshine and less-than-gale-force wind. I had packed and was very grateful for, the last of my cooked-up lamb patties, hard boiled eggs and by now fried bread, with as much salt and pepper as I could muster to give it some attitude. This was all purchased from the honesty shop of 2 days ago and not one bit was wasted.

My host kindly drove me back to Eglwysbach church where she'd collected me the day before and the point from which I would carry on.

Today was the day I found my most favourite church – right at the top of the Coffin Path (one of the steeper climbs of the trail), on the other side of Rowen. The Llangelynnin Church sits alone in its history, surrounded by sheep and dry-stone walls and a sign that says beware of the bull. I stayed there soaking it all in and reading everything I could about the place before carrying on alongside ancient stone walls, fascinating sheep yards which blended modern drafting gates with ancient stone and then a slight detour to the stone circles, where I ate the last of my lamb patties and latest batch of hard-boiled eggs. From here I continued on just past Llanfairfechan to the Rhiwiau Guest House, where I'd have a rest day and my partner would re-join me on the trail.

It was interesting the difference a day of sun plus some decent hills made, and I drank the last of my water just *before* starting the last km – which was up a very steep hill to the guest house! I was definitely puffing at the top of that one!

The rest day was kind of enforced as this accommodation also had a two night minimum, but on this occasion I didn't mind as my clothes got washed in a real washing machine, there were great books to read with my feet up; and the meals provided by our hosts with a view over the Menai Straights to the Isle of Anglesey, were fantastic.

What you could do: Definitely stay at Rhiwiau and enjoy the two-night pamper (and to be honest there's not really any other option actually *on* the trail that I could find). If you didn't need rest per se – then on the 'rest day' it's not too far to walk to the train station (although the walk back up the hill to Rhiwiau is only something you need to do once – it's essential on your arrival day at the end of 23km!) But just suppose you do walk to Llanfairfechan, you could then train to Bangor and hire a car and visit Anglesey. Maybe a taxi back after you've dropped your hire car.

Day 8 rest; Day 9: Rhiwiau Guest House to Bangor (21.5km) and on to Bethesda

What we did: Sorting out this leg really had me stumped for a while. I couldn't find a bed in Bangor (which is weird as you would just assume that is possible, especially on the shoulder season) but I found a funky little cabin in Bethesda, with a half-baked idea of walking on from Bangor to Bethesda for another 10 or so km, or at least taking the bus. Bethesda is just off the trail so it was geographically fairly sensible. However our BnB host at Bethesda, Jim, insisted on picking us up from Bangor, which was fantastic of him. But once again, after having walked 20 plus km for the day in the wind and rain, the last thing you fancy after arriving at your digs, is walking another 2-3km to find something to eat for dinner. This was a classic case of a fantastic host who had no sense of how much you don't feel like walking to find food after a shower when you've walked all day! But walk again (in the rain) we did and food and wine we found.

As a side note – one of my favourite surprises this day was discovering the little seafood hut as you walk into Bangor. I had half a dozen of the freshest/best oysters at 3pm in the afternoon and loved every one of them!

What I wished we did: Was to plug in an off-trail section and walk Rhiwiau to Bangor and then bus over to Anglesey and spend a day or two touring Anglesey. You'd then be well ready to continue on the trail from Bangor to Llanberis.

Day 10: Bethesda to Llanberis. Distance irrelevant, we took the bus!

What we did: The previous night over dinner after walking quite some distance in the rain to get it, we checked the weather forecast and decided we needed an easy day. So, rather than walk from Bethesda to Llanberis in a howling gale with horizontal rain, we decided over a second wine, that we'd have more fun taking the local bus. Plus, we wanted to be in decent shape for Mt Snowdon the following day.

We met some great locals on the bus and took the route via Betws-y-Coed where we stopped off for possibly the best (well actually only) barista coffee of the route and a wander around this town before hopping back on a bus to Llanberis.

What you could do: As per described above, perhaps try to stay on Anglesey and have an extra day exploring – and then walk as per the guidebook, from Bangor to Llanberis, which is a bit over 20km.

Day 11: Mt Snowdon

This was to be our big adventure scaling Snowdon via Crib Coch, but our guide, Simon from Mountain Experience, was very clear. His small group guided climbs (max 6, not for the faint hearted) only go when the weather is right. For now, our climb with him is in credit and we hope to have a stab at it again in 2027. There are many route options up the Mountain but in poor weather, take the easiest version – or the train, as we did. One thing that surprised us is you can't walk up and take the train down. It's all or nothing. We were lucky for the weather to clear for about 2 minutes when we were at the top so there is a precious picture of the amazing view in our album.

Day 12: Llanberis to Penygroes via Waunfawr. 20.5km

What I did: My partner had to return to Australia at this point, so from here to the end I was literally a solo woman, walking on a path (mid-September) that I shared with no one. Initially that really surprised me, but then, what other crazy person would have been out in the elements that I was facing, with wild weather warnings by now all over Wales!

This should have been a straight-forward day, with a nice stop off at Waunfawr and an easy-to-navigate route through paddocks and slate mines to Penygroes. With the weather forecast suggesting the day would get worse the longer it went, I left Llanberis before there was any hint of coffee available although I did manage some fruit from the early morning deli that would get me through. I had figured I'd fix the coffee deficit in Waunfawr. Nope. There was a shelter of sorts though in this little village that happened along just as the first big rainstorm hit. Once that had eased I carried on, coffee-less and snackless (bad assumption that I'd be able to resupply in Waunfawr). A couple of big hills later I was once again admiring views and dry-stone walls on a great farm when horizontal rain hit – right at the point where you had to choose one farm house over another to walk behind or in front of and head diagonally over a field, as long as it was the right gate/style/sign/field/farmhouse combination. The rain and wind was so hard it would have destroyed both phone or guidebook, even when crouching on the right side of a stone wall. In normal conditions one may have combined instructions with arrows and got the right result, but I ended up doing an extra few kilometres on the way to Penygroes.

I was never so grateful to find a real café, community owned, in Penygroes where I could have a late lunch that included fresh salad and bread. Happy days. I don't do coffee after midday.

Penygroes looks quite big on the map but once again, there was very limited accommodation. I had found a central BnB and had figured there'd be some great dinner options with the Goat Inn and various restaurants listed on-line all within a short walk.

But dinner was another trick – as the Goat Inn doesn't do dinner and remaining options were few and far from healthy. The local deli did do eggs and a meagre selection of fruit (amongst the vast array of highly processed sugar foods in plastic); and my BnB did have a kettle – so it was back to boiling eggs in the kettle. By now I'd worked out how to finesse that, as you can easily bust open the eggs in a robustly boiling kettle.

What you could do: To be honest – not really any other options that I could find in hindsight. In better weather you'd enjoy a more leisurely breakfast in Llanberis, not be rained off in Waunfawr so get to enjoy that village a bit and you'd really enjoy the walk and vista from Waunfawr to Penygroes. Just get to Penygroes before the café shuts (worth checking the times) and enjoy a late lunch and buy enough that does you for dinner and breakfast. Manage your caffeine addiction if you have one and carry on.

Day 13: Penygroes to Trefor via Clynnog Fawr. 16km

What I did: With the weather bureau sounding big warnings and noting the worst of that day's storm was due to hit from 11am onwards, I left Penygroes at sparrows and enjoyed a couple of hours of no wind but looming clouds. I loved this part of the walk. Lots of great farms and history and I arrived at Clynnog Fawr which was about the half-way mark - to enjoy a cup of tea in the church dedicated to St Beurno.

Here I reflected on the importance of Australian verandas. In our country, every town has at least one shop with a 'veranda'. A primary purpose for us to be able to get out of the sun, but they also serve pretty well if it's raining too. A point of random interest for me was that not one single village had a building with a veranda where you could just momentarily escape wind or rain. It made the churches essential for that purpose.

By the time my cup of tea in the Church was down, the weather was up. With wet weather gear back on, I embarked on an easy leg into the little seaside village of Trefor. I was way too early to book in to my Trefor railway carriage I'd managed to rent from Berts and Gerts.

Arriving early to avoid the big rain was one thing; but – where could one hang out to wait out check-in times? Certainly there was no veranda in front of the deli, where the owner knew not even where the church was, let alone how I might find the church stamp for my memorabilia collection. This church was the only one on the entire trail that was

locked (due to renovation) and so all I managed there was a little wee in the church yard and to use the side wall as a wind barrier while I ate yet another hard-boiled egg!

I knew I had some basic cooking facilities beyond a kettle in my railway carriage, so I headed back to the deli for a really good look. I found some pork sausages, more eggs and some tomatoes. That would do for both dinner and next day breakfast. I bought all and then decided to make a dash for it in the hope I could check-in early.

I couldn't. But after some messaging with the owners discovered there was a sea container that did coffee by the beach some 500m away. I could wait there. It wasn't yet midday so coffee was permitted. This was a welcome bit of peace out of the elements. Warm. No wind. Good coffee. And the discovery of a mobile sauna nearby. Sadly, not operating, but after conversation with that sauna operator, discovered the opportunity to book in to one in Aberdaron – two days walk away. Making that reservation in anticipation of celebrating journey's end with some decent heat, was good for the soul!

What you could do: I'm not sure there's really any other option. Enjoy the shorter walk day. In better weather you'd have a swim and a sauna and probably find some people to talk to. Book a carriage at Berts and Gerts – and pay the price. It's actually worth it. If you are there before August 30, you'd also be able to eat in what looks like an amazing restaurant. But the accommodation will be much more expensive then. So, if you are walking in September – you'll secure a much cheaper carriage. And just cook your own pork sausage and egg for dinner and breakfast, purchased from the deli!

Day 14: Trefor to Tudweiliog via Nefyn. 26km

What I did: After a night in the Berts and Gerts railway carriage where the wind blew so hard it rocked all night, there was no sign of weather let up. In fact, the wind was about to get stronger according to the weather experts. This was without doubt the hardest day of the walk for me. It should have been up there with the most beautiful. It was actually – it was just difficult to even have a moment to enjoy the view. I was walking into the wind for much of the day – which at times was so strong you couldn't actually step forward. Literally. Anyway, I was ready for it. Warm and refreshed after a good sleep in a great bed and the best shower of the entire trip, I just put on my mojo. I packed up my takeaway container full of cut up pork sausage left over from last night's dinner, hard boiled eggs and tomato slices – with a plan to eat that for breakfast at the first shelter opportunity and that I would aim for some dietary diversity at Nefyn. That looked big/significant on the map in terms of sizes of towns.

You start this day with a very big hill and a completely amazing view as a consequence. My pictures were scant as it was impossible to hold yourself steady in the wind to even photograph the stunning coast and the village below. I was looking forward to the church at Pistyll – the one you'll read about that has straw on the floor. I made it there by soon after 9am and flopped down on the straw to a breakfast as described above

together with the cup of tea that by now I'd become to rely upon in each church. I sat there for longer than I should of as the storm continued but with an eye on the distance to come, some discipline was required. The story of the church at Pistyll is one you need to spend time on. From there I continued to Nefyn. I found Nefyn largely unaccommodating. The church there is now a visitors centre, where I had to work hard to encourage the Centre's operator to let me in to collect my pilgrim's stamp (it was a week-day, business hours). I went on to the deli and found a mandarin and had a machine coffee, asking the deli owner where she would suggest I might sit out of the wind to drink it. She suggested a bench directly opposite, next to an overflowing rubbish bin. No roof or wall to offer any let-up! The coffee was poor anyway, so I just added to the rubbish bin and carried on. I had a long way to go!

Next challenge was navigating the Nefyn golf course. On any normal Wales weather day (still a bit cold and windy) one would stop in at the famous Ty Coch on the beach by the golf course. I could see it in the distance at the end of the beach, but this would negate the short-cut I'd planned through the golf course. By now all I wanted was to get where I was going – the Y Lion at Tudweiliog.

Crazily there were a few mad golfers out on the golf course. I shared a fairway with some of them as I powered up over a couple of par fives to join the coastal path that would take me the rest of the way.

The one saving grace was from this point on, I didn't need to navigate. I just kept the water on my right and pushed on – above the cliffs and then down into the crevices across the many and varied water ways. The handbook stayed in the plastic holder and the phone in its water proof pouch and I glanced up enough to know that I was walking in one of the most beautiful parts of Wales. Sometimes the wind would be pushing me sideways, other times it would be stopping me moving forward.

I walked into the Lion at Tudweiliog at about 4pm absolutely and completely stuffed. On any normal day that feeling would have been one of pure invigoration as the walk was just stunning. Upstairs at the Lion was a really comfortable bed and an amazing shower. I had a long one, thawed out and probably had one extra glass of wine over dinner to celebrate the longest and hardest day of the walk. The pub was an ideal one for striking up conversations with fellow travellers.

Here I wisely asked for a takeaway breakfast and was beyond excited to be offered fresh fruit and muesli bars to keep me going next morning. Not a boiled egg to be seen.

What you could do: This is where in hindsight I wished I'd taken an extra day, because from Trefor I would have done a 16km circuit walk up to Tre'r Ceiri Hillfort and back if I'd known about it. That would have meant 2 nights at Berts and Gert's Garden railway carriage however – so you need to factor in that expense and catering. Of course, had I done that it would have been not fun due to the wild weather. But the weather I

experienced was completely actually not normal, even by Welsh standards. The other thing I'd definitely plan to do is *not* have coffee at the deli in Nefyn, but rather, continue to Ty Coch on the beach and soak that up for a while ahead of the long stretch along the coast to Tudweiliog.

Day 15: Tudweiliog to Aberdaron. 21km

What I did: This walk is completely stunning. You are simply following the coastal path so you don't really have to think or navigate. Just enjoy. Plan for a late lunch at the Whistling Sands café on the beach and if you still have walking mojo you can continue from there around the coast. But the NWPW trail heads you up over the hill and down onto the other side of the peninsula and walking into Aberdaron from there. I had booked two nights at the Ship Inn, room 6. The best room, overlooking the church and the ocean. First job after checking in was to check the sauna I'd booked on line 2 days before was actually operating. It was. I couldn't wait for my booking next day. What I'd long since worked out was that the wild weather would mean a crossing to Bardsey Island and the official NWPW end point, was highly unlikely. This suspicion proved correct, so my Day 16, which was to have been that crossing, would instead comprise a combination of sauna and wild ocean swimming; barista coffee, fresh vegetables and salad and wine. I spent the remaining time of day 15 lining all of that up, as well as an appropriate time of peace in the beautiful Aberdaron church, with its foundations literally on the beach.

Day 16: Aberdaron to Bardsey – or alternative activities if the weather gods are against you.

This for me was a day of rest and reflection and a plan to return in order to do the final leg. For you, hopefully it includes a trip to Bardsey – as well as a sauna on the beach because that was just brilliant.

Day 17: Return to Flint via bus and train.

I had left the balance of my luggage at Stokyn Hall, so from Aberdaron I took several buses to Bangor and then a train to Flint, for a final night in Wales at Stokyn.

What Else?

I haven't discussed cost in any of the above. But suffice to say, this was not a cheap adventure holiday. When I read other Pilgrim's blogs I saw how through the Parish network people do stay cheaply – either on church floors or drawing on Church connections for dormitory style accommodation. I had no such connections nor any desire to carry a mattress and sleep on a floor with no ablution blocks. I am happy to do that on Australian bush hikes when I'm miles from anywhere, but not when I'm in civilisation. As a consequence, I generally spent over AUD\$200/night on

accommodation and because I was so hungry by each evening, quite a bit on dinner too.

As it turned out with the weather, if I'd packed my tent and my cooker and my usual quantity of self-supported home-cooked dehydrated food for the trip, it would have been really hard, although I know people do. But I reckon you'd need more local knowledge than was on offer in order to find appropriate camping spots and quality food resupplies. Perhaps another pilgrim with a tent could document their experience in order for others to compare and decide which way for them.