



**Clockwise from this photo:**  
Coed y Brenin. Hill between  
Llyn Crafnant and Capel Curig.  
Three different perspectives of  
Gwydir Forest



for us, up through Gwydir Forest. The forest was fairly open in places, revealing stunning views of the surrounding mountains. We were rewarded with a long descent into Capel Curig, as the afternoon light turned golden around us.

When we reached the bottom, there was one thing left to do: a quick swim in the lake to soothe tired muscles. It was one of the most scenic places I've ever swum, looking out across the lake to the Yr Wyddfa (Snowdon) horseshoe as the sunlight glimmered across the water.

### BETHESDA, BANGOR AND A ROMAN NON-ROAD

The final day was into more familiar territory for me, as I'd ridden part of it on a previous trip, but it still took my breath away. The constantly changing light patterns playing across the formidable steep mountainsides of Tryfan and the Glyderau to the left and the Carneddau soaring away to the right were stunning.

Gliding further down the valley, the mountains became man-made: towering piles of slate surrounded us as we zig-zagged through the Penrhyn slate quarries at Bethesda. It was a visceral reminder of just how big the industry was in this area. These slate quarries used to be the largest in the world at the end of the 19th century, and now

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*Towering piles of slate surrounded us as we zig-zagged through the Penrhyn slate quarries at Bethesda*  
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form part of the Slate Landscape of Northwest Wales World Heritage Site.

Our gentle descent ended abruptly as we approached the coast near Bangor, and then turned inland to give the legs a rude awakening with a steep road climb. A tree-lined stream valley opened out to become a wide gravel track contouring along an open hillside, with amazing views out towards the North Sea and Ynys Môn (Anglesey).

If you looked beneath the incongruous line of pylons, this track had a timeless feel to it. It used to be a Roman road. However, despite being travelled by people for millennia, this route is bizarrely not a public right of way. Cutting across land which has open access rights for walking, it's the kind of route which you logically ought to be able to cycle on. The Welsh Government has recognised that, and made a commitment in 2019 following Cycling UK's Trails for Wales campaign that it would make changes to enable people to explore the countryside more easily – including allowing cycling on existing tracks and paths across open access land, such as this one. (See [cyclinguk.org/blog/trails-wales-time-reignite-campaign](https://cyclinguk.org/blog/trails-wales-time-reignite-campaign).)

Unfortunately, that commitment has not yet translated into change on the ground, and it proved difficult to identify who owned this area of land to try and secure permissive access to include the Roman ▶

