

THE PERFECT WEEKEND IN...

NORTH WALES

The route: Puffin Island, Caernarfon, Llanddwyn Island, Porth Dinllaen

Any boater visiting the Menai Strait is faced with the enviable choice of heading south towards Caernarfon Bar, or north up to Puffin Island. Both areas offer plenty of coves and protected anchorages, places to bbq, scenic walks and welcoming public houses and restaurants. But which direction you take depends primarily on the winds and tides. But with a stroke of luck light winds will mean you can cruise north and south and take in the best of both worlds.

SATURDAY MORNING

On a bright, sunny morning with a light breeze barely ruffling the water we'd head off for Puffin Island at the far north-east end of the Menai Strait. Puffin Island is a must for anyone visiting the area and is a very popular destination for many local boaters. Stick to the marked channel until you've passed through Puffin Sound, then drop the anchor off the north side of the island, being careful to avoid the numerous lobster pots which are laid in the area. The island is home to a protected seabird colony and visitors are not allowed to go ashore, but you can anchor close enough to relax and take in the wonderful views of the birds and the seals basking on the rocks. You might even be lucky enough to see the comical puffins from which the island takes its name. A spot of fishing will see a few of the cheekier seals approaching for a free meal, some will even take fish from your hand – but mind your fingers!

There is a pleasant anchorage by the lighthouse opposite the island at Black Point where you can go ashore to stretch your

legs or exercise the dog, and there is a cafe adjacent to the beach should refreshments be required.

SATURDAY AFTERNOON

Time to lift the anchor and head south down the Menai Strait towards Caernarfon. The scenery is stunning with views stretching out to Snowdonia and the Great Orme on the mainland and Beaumaris on Anglesey. Just past the castle at Beaumaris it's time to pick up a mooring for lunch. If there is nothing to eat on board, take a short tender trip to shore – the historic town is peppered with good pubs and restaurants. Alternatively, find a mooring on Anglesey and dinghy ashore to The Gazelle for lunch.

Confidence restored with a healthy meal, now is your chance to tackle The Swellies, a notorious rock-strewn stretch of water through which the tide funnels at up to 8 knots on springs. I'd recommend boaters unfamiliar to the area to download the passage notes and plan from The Caernarfon Harbour Trust website. There is much to see on this leg of the passage but the skipper may be a little too busy to take it all in whilst passing beneath the bridges and navigating The Swellies. Look for the lion statues on the suspension bridge and the National Trust's Plas Newydd country house on the Anglesey side. In a short while the historic Port Dinorwic will pass on the port side. This is well worth a visit and good for an overnight stop but this time we opt for Caernarfon and call Victoria Dock marina on Channel 80 to see if a visitor's berth is available further down the coast in the

The captivating Mermaids Cove on Llanddwyn Island



PROFILE

THE AUTHOR
Phil Sharkey

and his wife Liz have only been boating for two years. During that time they have only missed four weekends on the boat with their dogs and parrot and have made many passages from their base at Port Dinorwic. The longest trip to date was a circumnavigation of Anglesey. Current boat – *Mirrormile Bénétiau Antares 9*



Magnificent scenery and unspoilt islands are home to lots of wildlife

Look out for Puffins on the eponymous island

1 SATURDAY MORNING



The anchorage at Black Point on Anglesey, adjacent to Puffin Island

2 & 3 SATURDAY AFTERNOON



The National Trust's Plas Newydd

The bay is magical with its unspoilt beach, crystal water and colourful fishing boats. Below, huge spider crabs can be seen foraging on the sandy bottom



Mermaids Cove is part of the Newborough Warren National Nature Reserve



Passing under Britannia Bridge and leaving The Swellies

4 SUNDAY MORNING

Dinghy ashore on Llanddwyn for a spot of mussel picking

FAVOURITE MARINAS

Port Dinorwic (+44 (0)1248 671500) VHF channel 80. Historic main dock accessed via a lock and outer tidal basin. Fuel (diesel), toilets, showers & laundry available. Pub/restaurants and shop within easy walking distance.

Victoria Dock, Caernarfon (+44 (0)1286 672346) VHF channel 80. Flap gate entrance, toilets, pump-out facilities, and chandler's. The yacht club welcomes visitors. Easy access to nearby pubs restaurants and shops.

FUEL BERTHS

Port Dinorwic (+44 (0)1248 671500) VHF channel 80 (diesel). *Porth Daniel*, Menai Bridge (+44 (0)1248 717784) (diesel & petrol). *Dickies of Bangor* (+44 (0)1248 363414) (diesel).

FAVOURITE EATERIES

The Gazelle Hotel (+44 (0)1248 713364) is a cosy bar and a la carte restaurant. *The Black Boy Inn*, Caernarfon (+44 (0)1286 673604) was built circa 1552 and is one of the oldest pubs in Wales with excellent food and drink. *Fu's Restaurant* (+44 (0)1286 669410) offers Cantonese food in superb surroundings.

Ty Coch, Porth Dinllaen (+44 (0)1758 720498). Good food and drink.

**NAVIGATION NOTES**

Navigation notes for the Menai Strait and The Swellies can be obtained from The Caernarfon Harbour Trust (www.caernarfon-hbr.demon.co.uk)

Visitors to the area should obtain the pilotage notes for The Swellies and Caernarfon Bar as well as carry charts for the area. Buoyed channels must be strictly adhered to. The Swellies is a notorious stretch of water which can be unforgiving. Particular attention is drawn to the South Cardinal just north of Caernarfon as this also marks the changeover of the lateral markers as there are two entrances to the port of Caernarfon.



Llanddwyn Island offers peace and tranquility

Drop anchor off the beach and if timed correctly, it's possible to collect some of the best mussels in the world

5 SUNDAY AFTERNOON

Simply stunning: Porth Dinllaen

Dinghy ashore to the charming fishing hamlet of Porth Dinllaen



shadow of Caernarfon Castle. Mark, the harbourmaster, is very accommodating and is likely to be waiting to catch a line, but be prepared to raft up. Then it's time to go ashore and take in the sights of Caernarfon and its castle, maybe visit a few shops and the chandler's. Evening would see us dining in The Black Boy Inn – one of Wales's oldest pubs – or Fu's Chinese restaurant on the marina before returning to the boat for a nightcap and a good night's sleep.

SUNDAY MORNING

Victoria Dock is gated and is generally accessible three hours either side of high water. Leaving around high water should provide a relatively smooth passage over Caernarfon Bar, towards Llanddwyn Island. Fort Belan with its cannon on the port side and Abermenai on the starboard mark the exit to the Strait. Llanddwyn is not quite an island – it remains attached to the mainland on all but the highest tides and is part of the Newborough Warren National Nature Reserve. There are numerous picturesque coves and beaches to explore here, with Pilots Cove and Mermaids Cove proving the most popular. Stay rigidly to the marked channel though as there are a number of sandbanks in the area resulting in the water being much shallower than it appears. After the lateral marker C2, turn to starboard and pass the lighthouse on the port side. Approach with care as there are sandbanks and a few submerged rocks, but these are charted. Drop anchor off the beach at Pilots Cove and take in the views or maybe dinghy ashore for a spot of sunbathing or better still collecting some of the best mussels in the world.

SUNDAY AFTERNOON

Sunday afternoon sees us heading off to Porth Dinllaen. Head back towards C1 and C2 lateral markers then east towards the Lley Peninsula – a simple passage plan is advisable for this, the longest leg of the cruise. Dolphins regularly appear alongside in this area – stick to around 8-10 knots for the best chance of a visit. On entering the bay at Porth Dinllaen I tend to drop the anchor between the RNLI station and the fishing boat moorings. The water is crystal clear here and huge spider crabs can be seen foraging on the sandy bottom. The bay is magical with its unspoilt beach and colourful fishing boats and is well protected by the hills which surround it. A short dinghy ride ashore and there are rock pools to explore, walks on the beach or over the golf course to build up a thirst before a visit to the Ty Coch pub for drinks and food. Then it's time to get back on board for a relaxing evening cruise back to base. **MBY Next Month:** Salcombe

DO YOU HAVE A PERFECT WEEKEND?

If you'd like to show fellow MBY readers how to spend the perfect weekend in your home waters please email a few sample words and digital photographs to hugo_andreae@ipcmedia.com

5 SUNDAY EVENING

The Sharkeys top off a fantastic trip