

## THE 20 BEST KEPT TRAVEL SECRETS

Empty beaches, lost temples, hidden valleys...  
Where the travel professionals get away from it all

CHARLIE WAITE/GETY IMAGES

### 4 Mawddach



Where the sea meets the sky... The editor of Cool Camping, **Jonathan Knight**, pitches up in an awe-inspiring corner of Snowdonia

An expanse of pasture and woodland in the slice of solitude that is Snowdonia's Mawddach estuary, Graig-Wen Campsite is, in my opinion, one of the most beautiful spots in Britain. Being tidal, the waterscape is constantly changing: marshy, grassy flats become lethargic, meandering rivulets which are then lost to the swell of high tide – when a full reach of shimmering waters reflect the rich, green woodlands all around.

As a Site of Scientific Interest, the area is delightfully undeveloped, which leads to a magical stillness, a calm and tranquillity that's hard to find anywhere in these busy Isles – least of all just two hours' drive from Birmingham. The absence of man and the blend of woodland and wetland allows the wildlife to flourish, and this is a popular spot for twitchers on the lookout for buzzards, woodpeckers or Peregrine Falcons.

The real beauty of the campsite, though, is the freedom to pitch wherever you fancy on its 45 acres – down near the water's edge, inland among the shelter and privacy of the trees, or on the higher ground where the estuary views are at their finest. With all this ground to explore, plus the freedom to light campfires, it doesn't feel like a campsite at all, just a beautiful slice of countryside with a few tents scattered around. It's so hidden away that on our last visit there was no sign to indicate the presence of a campsite. Just keep this place to yourself. The owners seem to.



With 45 acres, and the freedom to light campfires, it feels like a beautiful slice of countryside with a few scattered tents

Graig-Wen Campsite, Arthog, Mawddach Estuary, near Dolgellau, Gwynedd (01341 250 482; [www.arajawen.co.uk](http://www.arajawen.co.uk))