

# The Castles and Town Walls of King Edward in Gwynedd



# The Castles and Town Walls of King Edward in Gwynedd

Some of the most magnificent castles of Wales are reminders of a turbulent time, when English kings and Welsh princes vied for power. Beaumaris, Caernarfon, Conwy and Harlech were the finest castles built by King Edward I in Wales. At Caernarfon and Conwy, new towns were built within massive walls at the same time as the castles. All were begun and substantially completed between 1283 and 1330. The result, both individually and collectively, is the finest surviving example of late thirteenth-century military architecture in Europe.

## What makes this UNESCO Designation special?

The decision of King Edward I of England (1272-1307), announced on 17 November 1276, to go against Llywelyn ap Gruffudd, prince of Gwynedd (d.1282) *'as a rebel and a disturber of his peace'* had, as one of its consequences, the start of a programme of castle building in Wales on an unprecedented scale. During the next 20 years, eight new castles were begun by the king, some of which were accompanied by substantial fortified towns. Of these the finest were Beaumaris, Caernarfon, Conwy and Harlech.

These castles as a group are a supreme example of medieval military architecture designed and directed by James of St George, King Edward I of England's chief architect, and the greatest military architect of the age. Together with the detailed documentation that accompanied their construction, they are one of the major references of medieval history.

The plans, materials, scale and completeness of the castles are largely unaltered from their medieval forms and display a range of defensive features including barbicans, fortified


gates, dungeons and towers. Together with the town walls of Conwy and Caernarfon they combine architectural beauty with defensive power and intimidating presence.




The Castles and Town Walls of King Edward in Gwynedd

Counties: **Gwynedd, Conwy, Ynys Mon**



 [cadw.gov.wales/visit/best-history/castles-town-walls-king-edward-gwynedd](https://cadw.gov.wales/visit/best-history/castles-town-walls-king-edward-gwynedd)

 [CaernarfonCastle@gov.wales](mailto:CaernarfonCastle@gov.wales)  
[BeaumarisCastle@gov.wales](mailto:BeaumarisCastle@gov.wales)  
[ConwyCastle@gov.wales](mailto:ConwyCastle@gov.wales)  
[HarlechCastle@gov.wales](mailto:HarlechCastle@gov.wales)

This factsheet was produced by the UK National Commission for UNESCO as part of its Local to Global project, made possible with The National Lottery Heritage Fund, with thanks to National Lottery players.

