

## EXPERIENCING NORTH WALES



### Experiencing North Wales: 7 Day Tour

Betws-y-coed, LLangollen, Bodnant Gardens, Snowdonia, Conwy, Penmon Priory, Bangor, Porthmadog railway, Caernarfon castle, Museum of Slate, Llandudno, Portmeirion.

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#### 7 day Itinerary

##### Day 1:

Afternoon: Arrival and registration at hotel in Betws-y-coed.

Evening: Dinner followed by welcome and short introductory talk.

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##### Day 2:

Morning: This morning will be spent in historic Llangollen, home of the annual International Eisteddfod that attracts competitors worldwide. There is much to see in and around the town and we will be visiting Plas Newydd, one time home of Lady Eleanor Butler and Miss Sarah Ponsonby, “the two most celebrated virgins in Europe” who moved there in 1780. Their guest list was impressive and they played host to many famous travellers. Lovely gardens surround the house.

Afternoon: After lunch we embark on a horse drawn narrow boat for a trip along the Llangollen Canal that runs through the really beautiful Vale of Llangollen. This is a wonderful, peaceful way to view the countryside and place of interest at leisure. The trip terminates after crossing the magnificent Pontycysslite aqueduct that carries the canal in cast iron through 1000’ long supported on slender pillars 127i high. It was the brainchild of the great 18th/19th century engineer Thomas Telford. Travelling over it is a breathtaking experience.

Evening: Dinner followed by a talk on the area.

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Day 3:

Morning: Our day begins with a visit to Bodnant Gardens in the care of the National Trust. There will be time to explore these delightful gardens full of plant species from many parts of the world. This is a wonderful landscape that is enhanced by its location overlooking the mountains of Snowdonia.

Afternoon: The medieval town of Conway with its superb castle and complete town walls. The castle was one of the ring of fortifications built by Edward 1st in the late 13th century as part of his invasion into Wales. We will spend time in the castle and walking the complete ring of the town walls. From the towers there are good views of the town and the surrounding countryside including the estuary of The River Conway spanned by two spectacular bridges. We will also explore the narrow streets of the town and visit St Mary' Church with its fascinating graveyard memorials. There will be free time to wander at leisure through the town.

Evening: dinner.

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Day 4:

Morning: Remote on the coast of Anglesey is the 6th century religious site of Penmon with its priory that dates from the 10th century and the holy well and cell of St. Siroil. This is one of those very special places that retains a great sense of peace and quietude. As a contrast we spend time in the medieval town of Beaumaris with its splendid concentric castle. Here we will experience a complete contrast when we explore the chilling 19th century jail complete with its totally soundproofed and pitch black Punishment Cell and working treadmill.

Afternoon: After lunch we visit the town Courthouse that has been recreated to show a 19th century trial. Here we will get an idea of the strict regime of laws and punishment. We then travel to Bangor on the mainland recrossing high above the treacherous Menai Straits. In the centre of the town is the ancient cathedral that was founded seventy five years before Canterbury. Our tour will be preceded by a talk on its history.

Evening: Before dinner this evening there is the option (no charge) of a short walking tour around Betws-y-coed.

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Day 5:

Morning: This day we find out about the story of slate. Before departure from our hotel there will be a talk on the history of the industry thence to Blaenau Ffestiniog to catch the famous narrow gauge steam powered railway to Porthmadog.

Afternoon: We travel via the historic town of Caernarfon to walk around the outside of the great castle before moving on to Llanberis located at the foot of Snowdon the highest mountain in Wales and England. the town is now a thriving tourist area and was once also famous for its huge slate quarries. We will be visiting the Museum of Slate that is run by the National Museum of Wales. In the preserved workshops of the great Dinorwig Quarries we will see how massive slabs of slate rock were split and dressed to produce the high quality roofing material.

Evening: dinner.

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Day 6:

Morning: High above Llandudno is a massive outcrop of limestone called the Great Orme. We climb via a funicular tramway to visit the Bronze Age Copper mines where we will walk through the passages and chambers excavated by hand using rocks and animal bones over 5,000 years ago. This is a fascinating insight into the way our ancestors exploited the copper and manufactured highly sophisticated bronze axes.

Afternoon: After lunch there will be free time to explore the elegant seaside town of Llandudno with its marvellous Victorian and Edwardian architecture and parks and gardens. A long pier reaches out into the sea from which there are superb views of the coastline and sweep of beach and promenade. Running parallel with the seafront is the main shopping street.

Evening: dinner followed by an evening of traditional Welsh harp music and singing.

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Day 7:

Morning: Our last morning together we visit the fairytale Italianate village of Portmeirion that was the location for the 1960s cult television series "The Prisoner".

Afternoon: After lunch we say goodbye and bon voyage.