

# giants north wales

culture and heritage

sample itineraries 2008

## itinerary 1 - Village Life in Wales Tour 2008

company name: **Country Lane Tours**

name of tour: **Village Life in Wales Tour 2008**

dates of tour: **Apr 11<sup>th</sup>, May 9<sup>th</sup>, June 6<sup>th</sup>, July 11<sup>th</sup>,  
Sept 12<sup>th</sup> and Oct 3<sup>rd</sup>**

no. of days and nights: **8 days, 7 nights**

published rate: **£949p.p. sharing (single supp. £110)**

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### day 1 friday - activities and excursions

Arrive at our hotel any time after 12.00 noon; free time to unpack and relax until 4.00 when you will meet your guide and travelling companions for tea in the residents lounge. This is an ideal opportunity to review the week's itinerary and for general discussion. Your guide will take you on a short walking familiarisation tour of the town before dinner.

### day 2 saturday - activities and excursions

Our route today takes us through the Lledr valley to view Dolwyddelan Castle. The castle occupies a magnificent location on a ridge set against the rugged backdrop of Moel Siabod. It was built between about 1210 and 1240 by Wales' most powerful medieval prince, Llywelyn the Great, ruler of Snowdonia. A little further along we leave the coach and board one of 'The Great Little Trains of Wales' on a 12 mile scenic journey from the mountains to the sea. We board the coach again at Minffordd for the short journey to the village of Portmeirion. Welsh architect Clough Williams-Ellis built Portmeirion in the period between 1925 and 1975 primarily to show how 'the development of a naturally beautiful site need not lead to its defilement'. Portmeirion welcomes visitors both for the day and to stay the night, either in the Hotel Portmeirion on the shore; in the cottages that make up the village; or in Castell Deudraeth overlooking the estuary. The journey continues to Beddgelert, one of Snowdonia's prettiest villages. This village stands amongst the wooded hillsides at the south-western gateway to the central peaks of Snowdonia. We will have a little free time to browse the craft shops, taste Cadwaladers' home-made ice cream before our drive back through the Nant Gwynant pass and the rocky heights of Snowdonia.

### day 3 sunday - activities and excursions

Morning at leisure. Our hotel is located near to St Mary's Anglican parish church built by local builder Owen Gethin Jones in 1873; they hold bi-lingual services at 11.00. At 1.00 we depart for a drive through the dramatic Llanberis Pass, past sheer rock slabs and huge boulders; an area of Snowdonia that welcomes thousands of rock climbers, mountaineers and hikers every year. At the foot of the pass is the quarrying town of Llanberis where we visit the Welsh Slate Museum. This most Welsh of Welsh industries, the Museum building is sited in the Victorian workshops built in the shadow of Elidir Mountain, site of the vast Dinorwig quarry. There are regular demonstrations on the old craft of splitting and dressing the slate ready for the roof. We return in good time for an early dinner before attending a traditional Sunday night Male Choral Concert at St Mary's church.

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## day 4 monday - activities and excursions

On the Isle of Anglesey

The Isle of Anglesey (Ynys Môn in Welsh) is situated off the north-west coast of Wales and is separated from the mainland by a 12 mile long stretch of water known as the Menai Strait. Access to the island is by means of two picturesque bridges: the original, a Thomas Telford masterpiece built in 1826 is the Menai Suspension Bridge; and in 1850 Robert Stephenson constructed the Britannia Bridge specifically to take the railroad to the island which would connect with ferry crossings to Ireland from the port of Holyhead. Anglesey was known as Mam Cymru ('Mother of Wales') during the middle ages because its fertile fields formed the breadbasket for the north of Wales. Penmon: this small corner of the island was described by one of our previous travellers as the 'most peaceful place on earth'; a secluded area with views over the Menai Strait we view the sombre ruins of the Monastery, the ancient church of St Seiriol (1120 –1170) with its fine collection of Celtic Crosses and the Holy Well which date back to pre-Christian times. Just down the road is Beaumaris, another historic town and the site of the last castle built by Edward 1 in 1296. A stroll through this old town is a walk through history and an ideal place to have lunch. We then drive to Llangefni, a market town in the centre of the island, to visit Oriol Môn – (Anglesey Art Gallery) The Oriol is a showplace for local artists and craftspeople; it is also a fascinating museum illustrating the island's history, culture and wildlife. The gallery's origins date back to 1981 when a large collection of the work of Charles Frederick Tunnicliffe OBE. RA. (1901 - 1979) was to be auctioned by Christie's in London. Tunnicliffe had his studio at Malltraeth on the Cefni estuary at the south-west corner of Anglesey, where he worked for 35 years, becoming one of the most famous wildlife artists of his generation.

No visit to the island is complete without the obligatory photo-stop and visit to the shop at Llanfairpwllgwyngochgogerychwyrndrobwyllyllandusulloggogoch – the smallest village with the longest name in the world – so we are led to believe!! After an early dinner we travel over to the village of Bethesda to visit the Penrhyn Male Voice Choir at rehearsal.

## day 5 tuesday - activities and excursions

Our day begins with a visit to Elaine and Morgan who are fifth generation of the Williams family at Trefriw Woollen Mills. The business, established in 1859, manufactures traditional Welsh bedspreads and tweeds starting with the raw fleece. An introductory talk by Morgan in the blending shed describes the history of the mill, and how the raw wool is processed and the various products which are manufactured. Weaving on a Dobcross loom is demonstrated by Morgan with an explanation of the weaving process. Just down the road is the home of Vicky Buxton and Phil Owen in remote woodland by the Porth Llwyd Falls where Vicky has her pottery studio and workshop. Vicky makes a large selection of ceramics, from a full range of domestic and decorative stoneware and porcelain to more unusual pieces for home and garden. Phil is involved with various art projects involving wood, metals and enamels. This will be followed by a visit to the historical town of Llanrwst. One of its many attractions is its three-arched bridge, (b 1636) believed to be the work of Inigo Jones. Being a market town, it's the place for the farmers to meet and exchange gossip at the regular weekly livestock auction. Nearby is 'Tŷ Hwnt i'r Bont', a former 15th century courthouse restored by the National Trust and now considered to be one of the best 'Traditional Tea Rooms' in Wales serving mouth-watering home-baked scones and the Welsh delicacy, 'Bara Brith'. after lunch we visit Gwydyr Castle, the ancestral home of the powerful Wynne family, descendants of the kings of Gwynedd. Unusually perhaps, it's not the history of the house that is as important to today's visitors as understanding and appreciating the gigantic restoration project undertaken by the present owners, Judy Corbett and Peter Welford, to restore the crumbling building, an account of which is beautifully written in Judy's book 'Castles in the Air'. (We strongly recommend to our guests to obtain a copy of this book to read in advance of the visit ISBN 0-091-89731-9 published by randomhouse.co.uk)

To end the day we visit Bodnant Garden, often described as one of the world's most spectacular gardens set high above the Conwy River. Bodnant was created in the early years of the 20th century by the 2nd Lord Aberconwy. Below five Italianate-style terraces and formal lawns are a wooded valley, stream and wild garden. Superb mature trees are a notable feature and include native trees over two hundred years old, as well as Britain's largest sequoia. The national collections of Rhododendrons, Magnolias and Eucryphias are all held at Bodnant.

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## day 6 wednesday - activities and excursions

Hidden away in a small village in Snowdonia is a thriving 'cottage industry' which came about when five farmers' wives came together to set up a unique business which they named 'CWLWM' (knot in English) They provide a complete Celtic Wedding service: Eirian for stationery and cards, Angharad is the harpist, Ela designs and makes the dresses, Hafwen for the 'perfect gifts' and Eleri takes charge of the catering. We'll meet Eleri who will demonstrate the making of the traditional 'Welsh Cakes'; we'll join her for morning coffee and enjoy tasting the cakes. We journey up the valley to Llangwm to meet farmer Aled Owen on his traditional 700 acre mountain farm to enjoy a sheepdog demonstration with his 'world champion dogs'. Learn about the technique of shearing and enjoy the 'Ram Parade'; see the different breeds and learn about their characteristics. This will be followed by lunch on the farm. We continue the day's travels with a visit to Llangollen, the picturesque town in the Dee valley of north east Wales that 'Welcomes the World' in July each year when it hosts the International Music Festival. There will be a little free time in the town before journeying along the canal system in a horse drawn barge.

## day 7 thursday - activities and excursions

At 11.00 we depart for Llandudno, one of the classic British seaside resorts with its wide promenade and elegant Victorian facades, all perfectly framed on a curving bay between the Great and the Little Orme headlands. We drive to the summit of the Great Orme to enjoy spectacular views of the town and Snowdonia Mountains in the distance, then onwards to Conwy. Few sites convey the essence of the middle ages better than the medieval walled town of Conwy with its mighty castle and narrow cobbled streets; we take a tour of the castle and walk the walls. On our way back we visit a country pub for our farewell dinner.

## day 8 friday - tour ends after breakfast.

Village Life in Wales Tour Inclusions:

- Seven nights at the 3 star Gwydyr Hotel, Betws-y-Coed.
- Traditional or buffet style breakfast daily.
- Six three-course dinners at the hotel.
- Lunch at the sheep farm.
- Private 'tea and cake' reception.
- Farewell dinner at country pub.
- Free car parking at the hotel.

Inclusive Tours, Excursions. Activities and Special features:

- Visit to Dolwyddelan castle.
- Travel on the Narrow gauge Ffestiniog Railway.
- Visit village of Portmeirion.
- Visit the Welsh Slate Museum at Llanberis.
- Sunday night Concert featuring a Male Voice Choir.
- Visit St Seiriol Church at Penmon.
- Visit Oriel Mon (Anglesey Art Gallery)
- Visit Gwydyr castle, Llanrwst.
- Visit Livestock market.
- Visit Bodnant Garden.
- Visit CWLWM and enjoy tea and cake
- Visit traditional mountain sheep farm.
- Enjoy a ride on a horse-drawn barge.
- Journey to the summit of the 'Great Orme' headland.
- A tour of Conwy Castle.
- Visit male Voice Choir at rehearsal

**Optional extra:** Manchester Airport return transfer and a visit to the historic City of Chester £65 p.p.