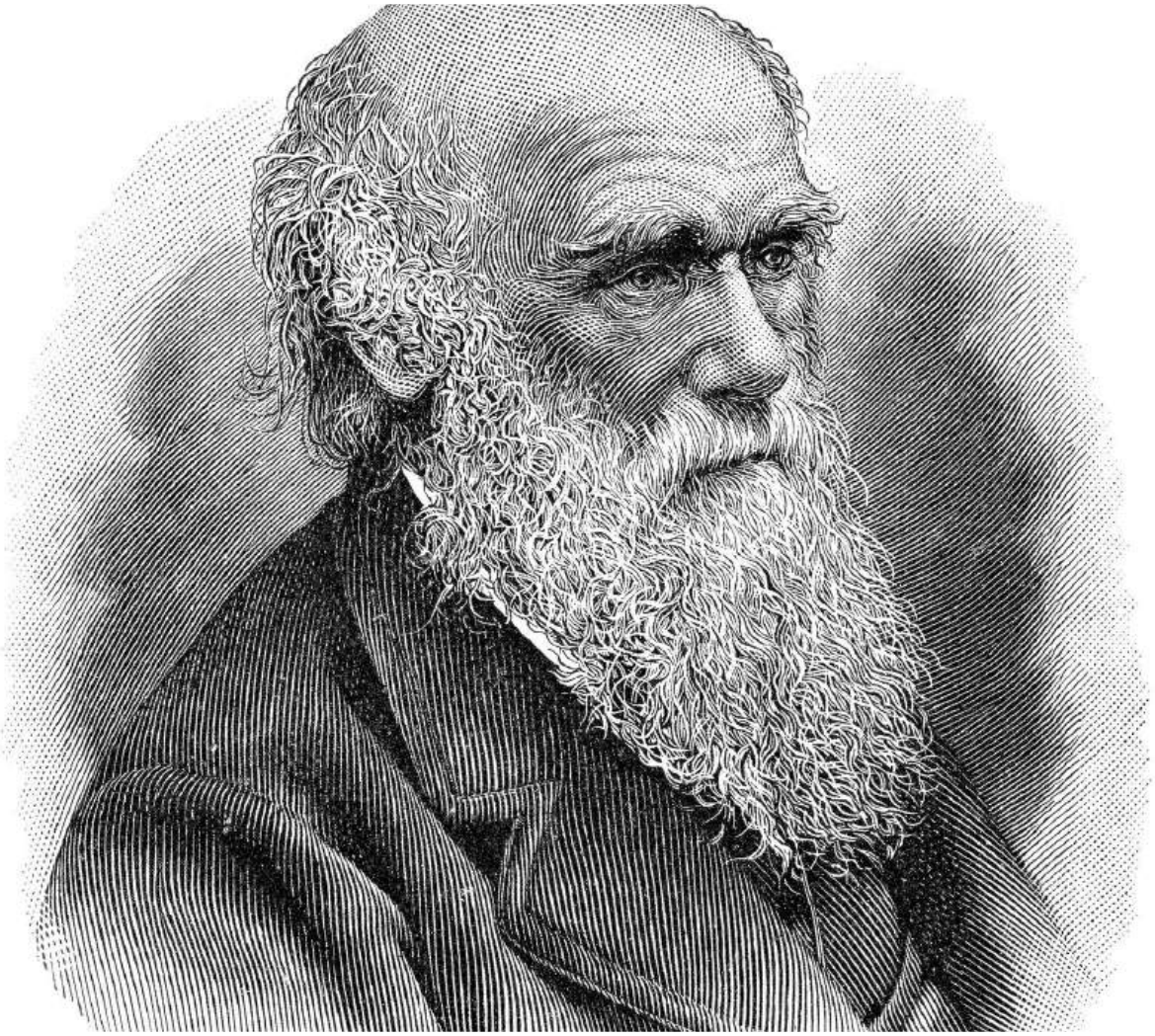
GeoCultura

TAKING YOU BEYOND THE LANDSCAPE

6-Days Retracing Charles Darwin’s Travels in North Wales



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Highlights

- Walk in the footsteps of famous scientist and geologist Charles Darwin and discover sites from his childhood and the places where he trained for his legendary voyage on HMS Beagle.
- Witness the spectacular landscapes of north Wales, including the mountains of Snowdonia’s National Park, the tranquil Llyn Ogwen Lake, and the rugged coasts of Anglesey.
- Relive the experience and evidence that Charles Darwin used to unravel the origin of these landscapes in 1831 and 1842.
- Stay in style at highly recommended hotels, including a Darwin-themed guest house in Shrewsbury, and a welcoming country house hotel in north Wales.
- A 6-day guided tour of Wales accompanied by a Charles Darwin expert and our geologist tour leader. Price includes 5 nights accommodation, 5 breakfasts, 4 lunches, 5 dinners and all transport. We organise everything! Group size maximum 12.



Begin Your Journey in Historic Shrewsbury

Darwin’s Townhouse, Shrewsbury

Check in to Darwin’s Townhouse, a boutique hotel named after Charles Darwin, offering a relaxing garden and well-appointed rooms in the heart of Shrewsbury.

Welcome Meeting and Introduction

Meet your fellow explorers and Michael Roberts, your Darwin expert guide, around 5pm. Michael will set the scene for Charles Darwin’s tour of Wales with an engaging talk on the theories of the time, Darwin’s beliefs and ideas, and the importance of the 1831 Wales expedition to Darwin’s landmark voyage on HMS Beagle.

Group Dinner

Enjoy a group dinner with your fellow travelers at Darwin’s Townhouse.



Day 2 - Into Wales - on Darwin’s trail

Explore Darwin’s Route Through Wales and Castles

Journey into Wales and Darwin’s Trail

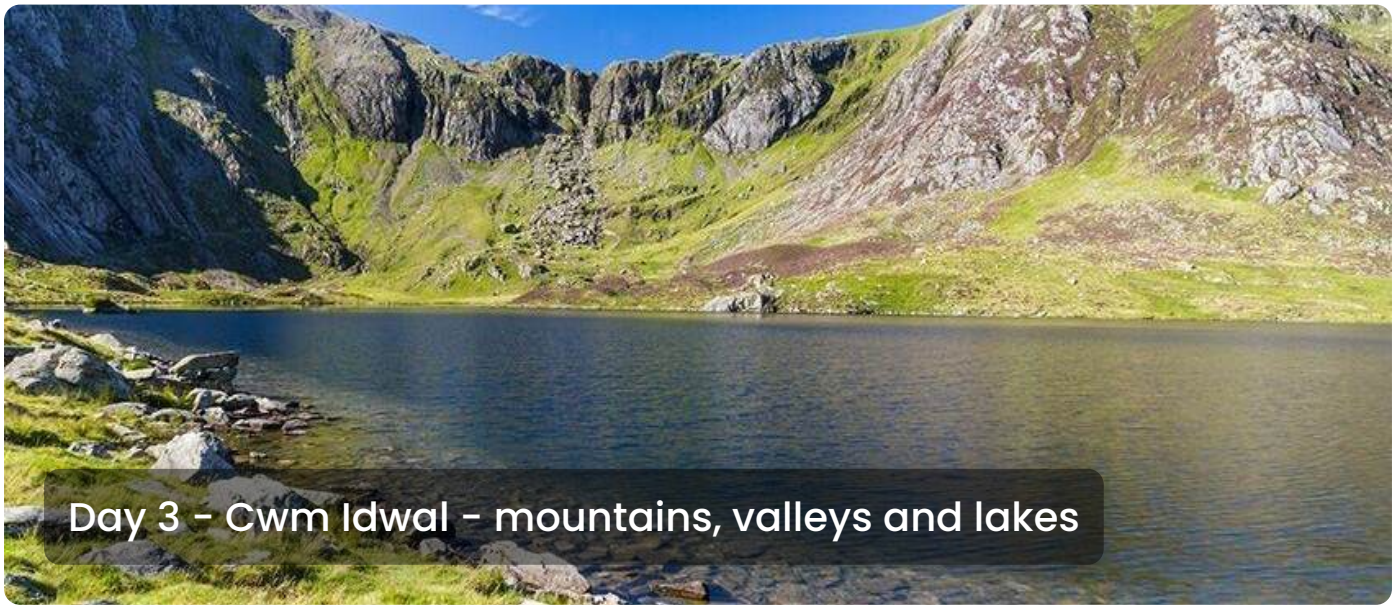
After a hearty breakfast in Shrewsbury, you’ll be heading over the border into Wales, and following Darwin’s route through the rolling foothills of the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). On the way, we’ll stop off at a number of sites where Charles Darwin was taught to ‘read the rocks and landscapes’ by Professor Adam Sedgewick, who was a significant figure in Darwin’s early scientific career. We will also see the impressive Chirk Aqueduct, 800-year-old Chirk Castle, and the hilltop ruin of Castle Dinas Bran.

Ty’n Rhos Hotel, Caernarfon

Rounding off the day, we’ll travel through Gwydir Forest Park to reach your accommodation for the next few days, Ty’n Rhos. This comfortable, 19-bedroom country house hotel is the ideal place to unwind after the day’s expedition.

Group dinner

Group dinner.



Day 3 - Cwm Idwal - mountains, valleys and lakes

Explore Cwm Idwal and Snowdonia’s Glacial Landscapes

Morning Visit to Cwm Idwal

Heading out from Ty'n Rhos, the morning's drive will take you to the Cwm Idwal, the very first Welsh National Nature Reserve, and an important site in Charles Darwin's scientific life. With its own plant life and distinctive, fossil-filled boulders, Cwm Idwal and Llyn Ogwen Lake helped to spark Darwin's understanding of rock movements and deep time. He also revisited the area in later years, and enhanced his knowledge on how glaciation created the extraordinary landscape.

Lunch at the Ugly House

Leaving the valley, we'll take lunch at the Ugly House, described on last page of 'Variations' 1868.

Plas y Brenin and Mount Snowdon Views

After lunch we pass an old coaching inn, Plas y Brenin, where Darwin stayed and dined. Plas y Brenin has stunning views of Wales's tallest mountain, the towering Mount Snowdon (Yr Wyddfa, in Welsh). Snowdonia is an uplifted, 400-million-year-old volcanic centre, and a product of a millennia of ice ages and glacial movement – all key inspirations for Darwin as he developed his understanding of landscapes.

Afternoon Tracking Darwin's Journey Across Snowdonia

We will spend the afternoon tracking Darwin's journey across Snowdonia. Highlights include assessing the glacial landscapes of Nant Peris and a visit to the National Slate Museum at Llanberis (2026 only), a site dedicated to one of Wales' most famous and contested exports (the origin of slates was large scientific controversy in Darwin's time). The Museum contains the largest working waterwheel in Britain, and exhibitions showing how slate workers lived and worked. The Slate Museum is closed in 2025 due to an exciting redevelopment project.

Ty'n Rhos Hotel, Caernarfon

Hotel: Ty'n Rhos Hotel, Caernarfon

Group dinner

Group dinner.



Day 4 - Anglesey - a land of rugged coasts, multicoloured mines and lonely lighthouses.

Explore Anglesey's Coasts, Mines, and Lighthouses

Anglesey Exploration and South Stack Lighthouse

Today we'll be exploring what is now considered part of Darwin's first tour. No official records show that Darwin visited the Isle of Anglesey, but Michael's research has uncovered plenty of evidence to suggest that he accompanied Cambridge Professor Adam Sedgwick to the island. Your Anglesey tour will take you to the north-west corner of the island and the dramatic coastal scenery and 1809 lighthouse at South Stack. Darwin and Sedgwick's tour was guided by John Stevens Henslow and his pioneering new geological map of Anglesey. Also, a Cambridge Professor, Henslow became Darwin's friend and mentor, a sounding board for his developing thoughts and ideas, and the man who 'fixed' Darwin's place on board the Beagle. Lunch near South Stack.

Darwin's Geological Discoveries on Anglesey

Darwin's finds on Anglesey, including small areas of rare serpentinite rocks holding fragments of ancient oceans, helped him propose a new hypothesis for the origin of the St Peter and St Paul Archipelago in the Atlantic, which he visited during his voyage on the Beagle.

Visit to Parys Mountain and Oriel Môn

We will also visit the fascinating Parys Mountain, a huge source of copper which has been mined for ~4,000 years, leaving vivid streaks of colour spattered across the landscape. On our way off the island, we'll pick up some culture at the Oriel Môn, a gallery dedicated to Welsh art and artists, such as the famous landscape painter Sir Kyffin Williams.

Ty'n Rhos Hotel, Caernarfon

Hotel: Ty'n Rhos Hotel, Caernarfon

Group dinner

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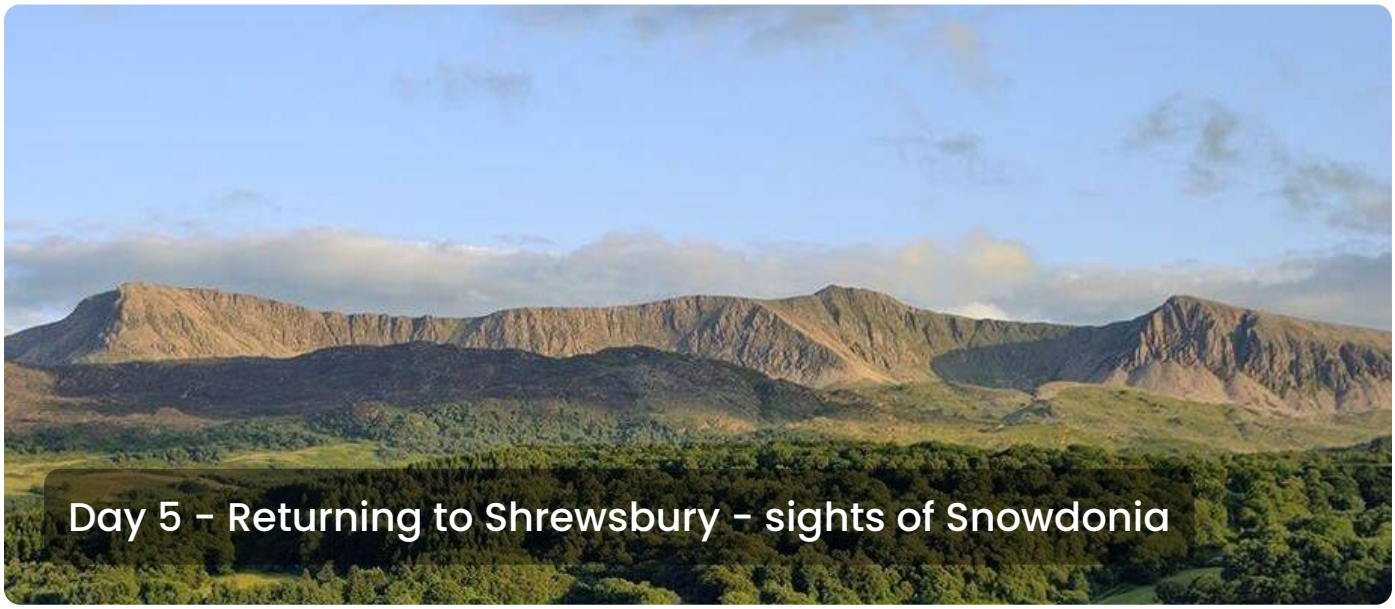


Day 5 - Returning to Shrewsbury - sights of Snowdonia

Journey Through Southern Snowdonia and Cadair Idris

Return Journey Through Southern Snowdonia

It's time to bid farewell to Ty'n Rhos and head back to Shrewsbury, but don't worry – the journey back is through the spectacular landscapes of southern Snowdonia. After a pleasant morning stop in, yes, a Welsh vineyard, we'll head south through Snowdonia, following part of the 'long walk' Darwin made in 1831 to meet his Cambridge friends in Barmouth. A few stops along the way will reveal some of the key geological wonders Darwin and other geological

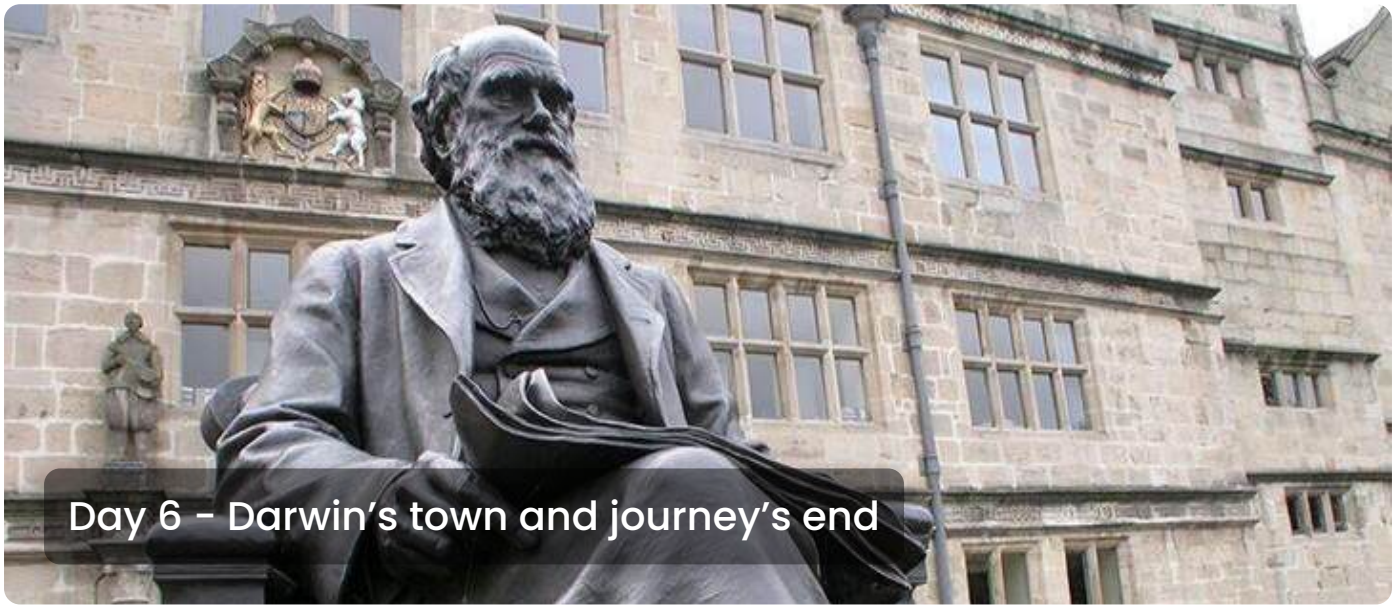
giants of the 1800's visited. Like Darwin, we will lunch in Barmouth. From here, we will pass around the Cadair Idris mountain, with its shark-toothed profile, and hear the tales about earlier giants from Welsh folklore that have 'inhabited' this landscape.

Darwin's Townhouse, Shrewsbury

Hotel: Darwin's Townhouse, Shrewsbury

Group dinner

Group dinner.



Day 6 - Darwin's town and journey's end

Guided Tour of Shrewsbury and Darwin's Legacy

Guided Tour Around Shrewsbury

After a restful night at Darwin's Townhouse, you'll have the morning to take a guided tour around Shrewsbury. Accompanied by your expert, take in the significant sites from Darwin's childhood. Darwin was born in Shrewsbury in 1809 and the town still holds his historic home, The Mount, and the distinct rounded church of St Chad's where he was baptised. Other places of interest are Darwin's old school (now the town library), and the enigmatic 'Bellstone', a mysterious rock that was later demystified when Darwin returned to the town armed with geological knowledge. Famously, Darwin's tour of Wales (which you have just retraced) concluded in Shrewsbury, where he received the coveted invitation to join the Beagle voyage and sailed into history.

Explore Shrewsbury's Historic Charms

The tour will conclude at 12pm, giving you the opportunity to continue exploring the historic charms of Shrewsbury or begin your journey home. If time permits, we highly recommend Shrewsbury Castle. This 11th-century red sandstone fortress is home to the Shropshire Regimental Museum, where you can discover military artifacts and historical exhibits. Also located in the town centre is the Shrewsbury Museum and Art gallery, a must-see for anyone interested in local history, archaeology and fine art.