GeoCultura

TAKING YOU BEYOND THE LANDSCAPE



6-days retracing Charles Darwin's travels in North Wales

Immerse yourself in the life of Charles Darwin, seeing the areas of Wales he visited before embarking on his famous journey to the Galapagos Islands. Discover the fascinating geology of Wales on a small group tour with a Darwin expert.

ITINERARY



Day 1: Picturesque Shrewsbury - Darwin's hometown



Your journey begins in the welcoming town of Shrewsbury. Meeting around 5pm, with a check in to Darwin's Townhouse, your hotel for the night. Named after and dedicated to the man himself, this boutique hotel is the perfect springboard for your journey into Wales.

You will meet your fellow explorers, along with Michael Roberts, your Darwin expert guide. Michael will set the scene for Charles Darwin's tour of Wales with an engaging talk on the theories of the time, Darwin's own beliefs and ideas, and the importance of the 1831 Wales expedition to Darwin's landmark voyage on HMS Beagle, which departed later that year.

- Hotel: Darwin's Townhouse, Shrewsbury
- Group dinner

Day 2: Into Wales - on 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 .

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.

- Hotel: Ty'n Rhos Hotel, Caernarfon
- Group dinner

Day 3: Cwm Idwal - mountains, valleys and lakes



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.

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

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.

- Hotel: Ty'n Rhos Hotel , Caernarfon
- Group dinner

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



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 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.

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.

- Hotel: Ty'n Rhos Hotel, Caernarfon
- Group dinner

Day 5: Returning to Shrewsbury - sights of Snowdonia

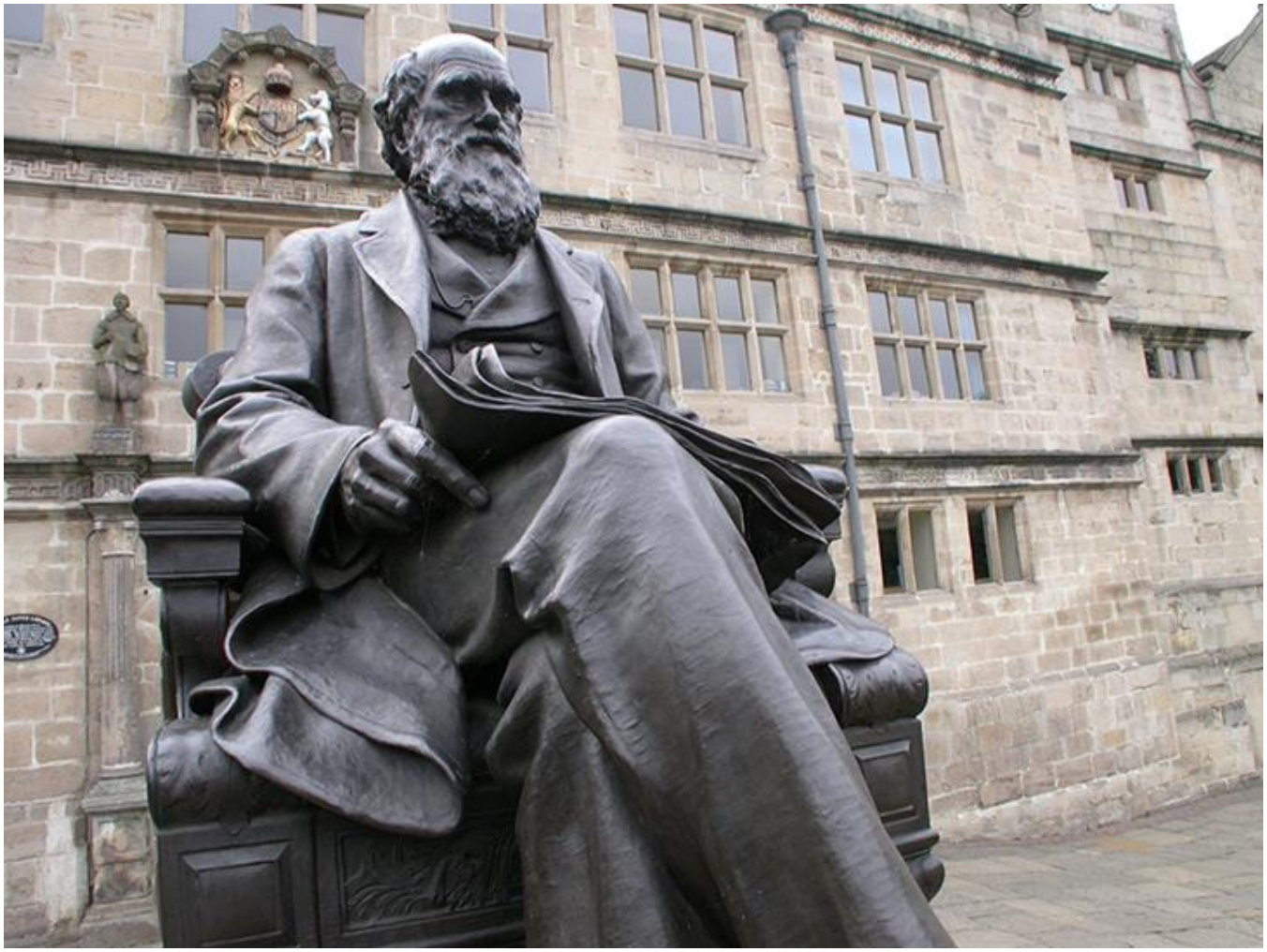


It's time to bid farewell to Ty'n Rhos and head back to Shrewsbury, but don't worry – the journey back is through the spectacular landscapes of southern Snowdonia.

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.

- Hotel: Darwin's Townhouse, Shrewsbury
- Group dinner

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



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.

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. Note: If required for reasons beyond our control, GeoCultura reserves the right to substitute alternative accommodation of equal or higher quality or adapt the itinerary if required.

Get in touch with our team

Want to contact GeoCultura? Our friendly team is here to answer your questions. You can complete our contact form or use the contact details below.

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