

The name Llandudno derives from 'llan' meaning church or parish and Saint Tudno who brought Christianity to the area. During our travels we come across some foreigners but mainly visitors from the Midlands, Lancashire and Yorkshire. So there are a lot of different accents to listen to, which always makes the children sit up and pay attention, as they are intrigued.

We learn that Llandudno is in the fairly sizeable county of Conwy. There are a number of stops on the bus tour but the two key ones are at West Shore and Conwy itself. Taking the bus allows us to leave the car at the hotel and mooch about at leisure.

At West Shore there is the beach as well as a popular play area - where the children make new friends. There's also the miniature railway. We all love our visit here. Run by volunteers various tiny trains run all day carrying passengers around the track. It's remarkable how something so small can stand the weight of us but it does and it's great fun. A little lesson on how these mini trains work is given but it's very technical.

We really enjoy acquainting ourselves with the fabulous walled market town of Conwy, its castle and suspension bridge. It is also home to Britain's smallest house where the owner does brisk trade thanks to a never-ending queue of visitors. Here there is also a fantastic vintage toy shop

and the Royal Cambrian Academy gallery exhibiting some of its members' high quality work. There's a pottery gallery, too. Back in Llandudno modern art can be found at Mostyn Cymru.

Another aspect of Llandudno is its plethora of independent shops, which makes shopping a real treat. So I agree to take the children back to the hotel for a rest while Caroline assaults the credit card. I'm almost able to finish reading an Inspector Rebus novel this holiday.

When we sadly leave The Somerset Hotel and say our goodbyes we head



for Bodnant Garden, only about 25 minutes away by car. Eighty acres of superb gardens certainly keep us amused and there's pond dipping where we find Phantom Midge Larvae otherwise known as baby mosquitoes. Breathtaking landscapes here include waterfalls, lakes, lily ponds and views of Snowdonia in the background. A list of recommendations to carry out before you reach 11 ¾ includes rolling down a hill. We duly do this; the children love it and repeat it time and again. Caroline and I do it once and are happy to leave it at that. Butterfly and dragonfly spotting complete our enjoyment here. We have to head home. But we can't leave without seeing more of Snowdonia so we drive round it, through some quaint little villages with their stone cottages, down low and then up to points at high as 1,300ft. More eye-catching views of Wales' largest mountain, which is a staggering 3,560ft high. Perhaps one day we'll return to climb it but for the moment we're quite content with our discoveries in North Wales.

Facts a glance

Four nights at The Somerset Hotel, Llandudno: £319 per adult. All children aged five and under stay free when sharing a room with two paying adults. For children aged six to 12 the first one stays free while the second and third pay 50 per cent of the adult price

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