

Wales

Information about Llanberis



Snowdonia is the English name for Eryri which in Welsh means 'the place of the eagles'. These are the rugged mountains of Gwynedd in the North West of Wales. Conquered by the English in the 13th Century it is still ringed in by ancient castles such as Harlech, Conwy and Caernarfon, built in 1283 by Edward 1st of England. However eight centuries later Gwynedd remains the heartland of Welsh culture and language.

Caernarfon on the coast is 6 miles from our base the Hotel Victoria in Llanberis, at the foot of Snowdon. Llanberis was the centre of the world's greatest slate quarrying enterprise, the great and spectacular quarries and mines last worked 40 years ago are a unique element of the landscape, an evocative piece of industrial archaeology. Fascinating to walk 'the fox's path' and wonder at the enterprise and hardihood of the men who worked here. Their work places now the home of Ravens, Peregrine falcons, foxes and a fast developing playground for climbers and other adventure sports.

This village, where 97% of people speak Welsh as their first language, stands in a landscape on which the history of Wales is engraved. On a hill a mile from the village are the remains of an iron age hill fort dating back to 500 BC. On a rocky knoll behind the Victoria Hotel, where we stay, is the Dolbadarn Castle built before 1230 AD by the Welsh prince, Llewellyn the Great. Facing the castle across the lake we have the 'Electric mountain' in which is the largest underground chamber ever excavated by man but only part of the Dinorwig Power Station the largest pumped storage hydro electric scheme in Europe. It took 10 years to build and was opened in 1984.

Over the last 100 years Llanberis and the Llanberis Pass has become a mountaineering centre of international significance. The Pen y Gwryd hotel was a training base for the Everest expedition of 1953 which made the first ascent of the worlds highest mountain. All expedition members signed their signatures on the bar ceiling (now covered by glass). The Vaynol hotel features photographs and displays commemorating the enthusiasts who made Llanberis and the 'Pass' famous as a cradle of hard rock climbing and climbers who have made their mark world wide.

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