

12 Conwy's Mussel Fishing Industry

The white building near the far end of the quay is the Conwy mussel purification facility. **i**

There has been a mussel industry here since Roman times and today Conwy mussels are justly famous. **h** Sir Richard Wynn supposedly gave a Conwy pearl to Charles II's Queen, which is still in the Crown Jewels. In Victorian times paddle steamers sailed from Conwy up the river to Trefriw, where tourists took the spa waters. The steamers ended with the outbreak of the Second World War and the river is now too silted, although you can still enjoy a trip on a motor boat as far as Tal-y-Cafn bridge.

Walk past the lifeboat station towards the mussel sculpture and anchor. **h**

From here you have a good view of the cob (the thin strip of land between Conwy's bridges) built by Telford for his bridge.

Turn back to leave the quay by the Harbour Master's Office and through the Postern Gate.



ANCHOR MEMORIAL

MUSSEL SCULPTURE



MUSSEL PURIFICATION PROCESS ON CONWY ESTUARY CIRCA 1924

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BRITAIN'S SMALLEST HOUSE

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11 Britain's Smallest House

On your left is Britain's Smallest House. **h**

Measuring just 180cm x 300cm (72" x 122") it came into being when houses were built along the walls from either end. They didn't quite meet up and the gap was filled with a tiny house.

It was lived in until 1900 when the last occupant was a 6ft fisherman. Pretty fishermen's cottages line the quayside up to the town walls. Number twelve used to be The Royal Oak Inn. The foreshore here was defended by a long-vanished tower where the town walls reach the water.

If you have time, walk through the archway, up the short hill and through the gates of Bodlondeb, a former mansion (now council offices) surrounded by parkland and woodland - a nice place for a stroll or picnic (5 minutes' walk). Alternatively, you can walk beside the shore to the new marina (20 minutes' walk), built after the tunnel sections for the A55 bypass were cast there. The Mulberry harbours, used in the D-Day landings, were prototyped in that vicinity.

Continue the town trail by walking along the quay towards the castle.



TOWER REMAINS



9 Black Lion Inn

On the opposite side of the road, a little to the right, is the former Black Lion Inn **h** which features the date 1589. This is probably the date it was bought and enlarged by a wealthy local vicar called John Brickdall.

It actually dates to the middle of the 15th century and became an inn in the 18th century. The jackdaws on the gables are recent additions that refer to the traditional name for people born within Conwy's walls.

Return to the cross road and turn right to go through the second main gate of the old town - Lower Gate - (Porth Isaf) and onto the quay.



BLACK LION INN

10 Lower Gate and Quay

The Liverpool Arms is built through the old town walls, with the back door inside the town and the front door facing the quay. This caused the licensing authorities and police many problems, as drunks could easily escape arrest by fleeing through one or the other! **h** The inn was named by Captain John Jones, its former landlord who ran a packet ship between Liverpool and Conwy in the first half of the 19th century. It is said to be haunted and that the smell of vanilla means someone is about to die!

The quay was built by William Provis, Thomas Telford's engineer, and replaced the old quay on the Gyffin river.

Walk past the Liverpool Arms and continue along Lower Gate Street.



LOWER GATE (PORTH ISAF) AND LIVERPOOL ARMS

Getting to Conwy Town

By car

From Llandudno - Follow the A546 (Gloddaeth Avenue) to West Shore, at the roundabout turn left and follow the road past the golf courses and through the village of Deganwy until you reach the large roundabout. Turn right to drive over the bridge.

From the East (Colwyn Bay) Follow the A55 to junction 18, take the A546 exit to Conwy, pass Tesco to the next large roundabout and turn left to drive over the Conwy Bridge.

From the West (Bangor) Follow the A55 to junction 17, follow the A547 (Bangor Road) until you reach Conwy town walls, turn left and follow the one way system and map for parking.

From the South (Betws y Coed) Follow the A470 to Glan Conwy, join the A55 then follow directions from the East above.

The postcode for the main LONG STAY car park in Conwy (Morfa Bach) is LL32 8FZ. There is an easy access walk from the car park into Conwy Town which will bring you to Mill Gate (Porth y Felin). See trail map.

By rail - Conwy has its own station, on the North Wales main line, which is central to the town and close to where the town trail starts.

By bus - The main route is the 5/X5 which runs frequently between Llandudno, Conwy, Bangor and Caernarfon. For time tables and stops visit www.traveline.cymru

By bike - Follow National Cycle Network Route 5 to Conwy.



For more information about the heritage of Conwy and how to plan your visit throughout Snowdonia visit www.snowdoniaheritage.info

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CONSTRUCTION OF RAILWAY BRIDGE - 1848

© Courtesy of Conwy Archive Service

14 Three Bridges

The oldest bridge is Thomas Telford's Suspension Bridge, built in 1822-26. It was needed to improve links between London and Ireland, which had become part of Great Britain by the Act of Union in 1801. The main route was from Chester and involved a dangerous ferry across the river Conwy. Telford built his bridge to fit in with the castle: the towers are smaller versions of the castle towers and the toll house, at the far end of the bridge, is a miniature baronial castle.

Robert Stephenson's unique railway bridge was built in 1846-48. It consists of two giant iron tubes with spans of 400 feet. The London to Holyhead express, and other trains, still travel inside the tubes. **h**

A third new road bridge was built in 1958. It was discussed for years with various plans proposed, including the suggestion to demolish Telford's bridge! The bridge did little to solve Conwy's tremendous traffic jam problems and so a town bypass, the A55 tunnel under the estuary, was opened in 1989. It was Britain's first immersed tube tunnel, built in sections onshore and lowered into position on the estuary bed.

From the bridges, turn back towards the town past the Guildhall, **h an example of Victorian Gothic architecture, on the corner, and return to the Tourist Information Centre and the car park to complete the town trail.**



THE THREE BRIDGES



13 Harbour Master's Office

During the 19th Century Conwy was a busy port for shipping slate, salt and timber on which duties had to be paid, and the 19th century Harbour Master's Office before you was once the Customs Office. **h**

Increasingly, Conwy's main activity became fishing and more recently pleasure boats. The Tower Coffee House **h** is inside the postern gate tower. Unlike the other gates, the postern was a narrow, simple gate, potentially useful to attack the flank of an enemy trying to enter through Porth Isaf.

Turn left and cross the road at the pedestrian crossing, then turn left to see the three bridges across the River Conwy.



HARBOUR MASTER'S OFFICE



TOWER COFFEE HOUSE



CONWY MUSSELS AND QUAY

© Bert Kauffman



Conwy Town Trail



LANCASTER SQUARE CIRCA 1915

Take this 80-minute tour of Conwy to see some of the most interesting features of the walled town and UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Discover the town's fascinating history, from early medieval beginnings to the present day.

In places you will find HistoryPoints **h** QR codes on little plaques or window stickers. Use a QR scanner (freely available online) on your smartphone or tablet to find more detailed information or visit www.historypoints.org

In places you will find **i** information boards can be found nearby. If you are short on time and want to stick to the 80-minute tour, you can **follow the times on the stopwatch beside the text.**

Further Links

- Download a free audio tour about Conwy's Town Walls at <http://www.snowdoniaheritage.info/en/location/146/aberconwy-abbey/>
- Visit iTunes to download Cadw's Conwy app.



Conwy Town Trail





CONWY CASTLE

© S. McCarthy

The town was protected by walls built at the same time as the castle, making Conwy Britain's best example of a medieval walled town. Originally there were three gates into the town and regularly spaced towers, of which twenty one remain.

Cross the car park and opposite the castle entrance take the steps onto the walls and follow the elevated walkway alongside the car park.

As well as getting a good view of the town and the castle from the walls, you'll see square holes in the stonework of the towers. Originally probably scaffolding holes, they are now used by jackdaws (and pigeons) for nests. Traditionally, people born within Conwy's town walls are known as "Jackdaws"!

Leave the walls at the next set of steps at the other end of the car park. Turn left and go under the town walls by Mill Gate (Porth y Felin).

This is one of the three original entrances to the town. Turn to your right and look up at the top of the town walls.

Jutting out is a row of twelve latrines built in 1286 for use by the King's secretariat and wardrobe staff. **i**



JACKDAW



LATRINES ON TOWN WALLS



I Conwy Castle & Town Walls

The trail begins at the Tourist Information Centre on Rosehill Street.



Take a moment to look around the free Princes of Gwynedd exhibition for a fascinating overview of local medieval history before heading towards the castle.

Conwy Castle was built by King Edward I after he defeated the Welsh Prince Llywelyn the Last in 1284. This amazing feat of engineering is superbly positioned on a rocky outcrop protected on two sides by the Conwy and Gyffin rivers, and on the inland side by a large ditch. More than 1,500 workmen from all over England were employed in its construction, which was completed in just four years. It had eight towers and originally was painted white, so would have looked stunning!



ST MARY'S & ALL SAINTS CHURCH (SITE OF ABERCONWY ABBEY)

© Princes of Gwynedd Project Partners



WE ARE SEVEN GRAVE



THE FONT

© Princes of Gwynedd Project Partners

2 St Mary's & All Saints Church

Return through the arch, cross the road and take the path by the side of the Tourist Information Centre to St. Mary's Church.

The Cistercian Monastery of Aberconwy originally stood on this site and the 13th century Welsh prince, Llywelyn the Great, was buried here. After the conquest King Edward I moved the monks up the Conwy Valley to Maenan and the Abbey church here was rebuilt over the following centuries so that little of the original remains.

As you enter the churchyard you will see a low iron cage with 'We are Seven' on it. This is the title of a poem by Wordsworth which he is supposed to have written after a conversation with a child he met here. The seven refers to the child and her siblings, alive and dead. It became a tourist attraction and the iron bars were put over it for protection. **h**

Walk round the church towards the left.

The west door and three lancet windows are remains of the old abbey church. Today's main entrance is through the north porch, a little further around the corner. Inside is a lovely 15th century rood screen and family tombs of the most important local landowning family, the Wynns of Gwydyr, including Sir Robert Wynn who built Plas Mawr, the elegant town house in Conwy's main street. There's also a bust of John Gibson, a well-known Victorian sculptor who was born in Conwy and is probably better known today for the sinister stone angel in the TV series Doctor Who.

Leave the churchyard by the gate by the west door and turn right into Lancaster Square.



LLYWELYN THE GREAT STATUE

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3 Lancaster Square

In the centre of the square is a statue of Llywelyn the Great. **h** The main road through the square is Bangor Road, built by Thomas Telford at the same time as the Suspension Bridge. An opening was made in the town walls for the road.

Turn right out of the square towards this new arch.

On the corner of Upper Gate Street is the Albion ale house. The Albion was built in the 1920s on the site of earlier inns which were conveniently sited near Upper Gate (Porth Uchaf), one of the original town entrances just up the hill. The Albion has interesting Art Deco and Art Nouveau fittings.

If you have time, there is another entrance to the elevated walkway along the town walls by the Upper Gate. Otherwise, turn right into Chapel Street.

4 York Place

Behind the police station is York Place. This is named after Dr John Williams, Archbishop of York, who played an important role during the Civil War between King Charles I and Oliver Cromwell. Archbishop Williams was born in Conwy but only parts of the walls of his home, called Parlwr Mawr, remain. You can read more details about his escapades in the Civil War on the information board. **h i**



PLAS MAWR



INTERIOR DECORATION

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6 Plas Mawr

The next building along Crown Lane is Plas Mawr, built for Robert Wynn of Gwydyr Castle, Llanrwst, in 1576-80. You can see his coat of arms and the date above one of the windows.

It's a very impressive house for a small town like Conwy and is a sign of the wealth and importance of the Wynn family who made their fortune at the Tudor court. Plas Mawr has been carefully restored and is interesting for the way Renaissance influences have been interpreted, far away from London. It's managed by Cadw and is well worth a visit.

Continue down Crown Lane to High Street & turn left.

7 High Street

Most of the buildings in High Street are 19th century and replace earlier, less well-built, half-timbered houses, shops and inns. At times in the 18th and 19th centuries there were over 50 inns in Conwy, which was an important town along trade routes between England and Ireland. The Mail Coach Inn is a reminder of when the London to Holyhead mail service followed this route to Ireland until the railway replaced the horse drawn coaches. The present beer garden was the yard for the horses and coaches. The Castle Hotel, a Victorian Jacobean style hotel, replaced an old medieval inn. In 1935 old buildings were demolished to build the former Palace Cinema, which is fronted by an entrance building with stepped gables to harmonise with Plas Mawr. It was designed by architect Sidney Colwyn Foulkes. Notice in the gable end the squirrels and peacocks over a tall window opening. **h**

Turn right into Castle Street.



SQUIRRELS AND PEACOCKS WINDOW

© Rhodri Clark



HIGH STREET

© Rhodri Clark



ABERCONWY HOUSE

ADDED TIMBER SECTION

© National Trust Images/Matthew Antrabus

8 Aberconwy House

At the corner of High Street is Aberconwy House, a 15th century merchant's house. It combined a cellar for storing goods with living quarters above. It was probably built about 1420 after Owain Glyndŵr's rebellion. Glyndŵr supporters captured Conwy Castle for a short period and many of the town's buildings were destroyed.

The second half of the 15th century brought further unrest as Welsh nobles were drawn into the dynastic squabbles of the Wars of the Roses. But in 1485 the wars were ended with the accession of the Tudor King Henry VII. Henry Tudor was descended from an Anglesey family and Welshmen were keen to take advantage of the Welsh connection and a more politically stable country to make their fortunes at court in London or in trade. Aberconwy House was most likely extended at this time when the timber-framed upper building was added.



5 Royal Cambrian Academy

Continue along Chapel Street until you reach the art gallery and Crown Lane on your right.

The building on the corner is the Royal Cambrian Academy **h** which houses works of contemporary Welsh artists. It was founded in 1881 by a group of Welsh artists who had established a 'colony' based in Betws-y-Coed and other villages in the Conwy Valley.

It was by no means certain that the academy would find a permanent home in North Wales. Some people favoured South Wales but the decision was made when Lord Mostyn, who owned Plas Mawr, offered the artists a home there. It moved to this converted chapel in 1993.