Conwy’s Mussel Fishing Industry

The white building near the far end of the quay is the Conwy mussel purification facility. There has been a mussel industry here since Roman times and today Conwy mussels are nationally famous. 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 Trerfriw, 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 anchorage.

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.

Britain’s Smallest House

Measuring just 1800 cm x 300 cm (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 fisherman. Pretty fishermen’s cottages line the quayside up to the town walls. Number twelve used to be the Royal Dial Inn. The forehouse 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.

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.

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 slipway on the Gyffin river.

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

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 600 feet. The London to Holyhead express, and other trains, still travel inside the tubes.

A third new road bridge was built in 1956. 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 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, 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.

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 Dagorwen 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 Tescos 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 ISLAND 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 map trail.

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 start.

By bus - The main route is the S/K which runs frequently between Llandudno, Conwy, Bangor and Caernarfon. For time tables and stops visit www.travelines.gwyn

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

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.

Increasingly, Conwy’s main activity became fishing and more recently pleasure boats. The Tower Coffee House was 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.
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.

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 Palais 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.

Turn right into Castle Street.

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 the Princes of Gwynedd. But in 1485 the wars were ended with the accession of the Tudor King Henry VII. Henry Tudor was descended from the Princes of Gwynedd. But in 1485 the wars were ended with the accession of the Tudor King Henry VII. Henry Tudor was descended from the Princes of Gwynedd. But in 1485 the wars were ended with the accession of the Tudor King Henry VII. Henry Tudor was descended from the Princes of Gwynedd.