

## Photographing the Llangollen canal



# DENBIGHSHIRE DIGITAL ADVENTURES

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This activity is all about using your camera or camera phone to capture how industrialisation transformed this corner of North Wales and how, thanks to the efforts of the famous engineer Thomas Telford, this change was not at the expense of the stunning Welsh landscape.

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### Before you start



### How to get there

This adventure takes place at the Horseshoe Falls and on the wonderful Llangollen canal.

To get to the starting point, take the A542 from Llangollen towards Ruthin, and after about 1 ¼ miles, turn onto the B5103 following the sign for the Corwen, Llantysilio and Rhewl). You will come to a junction with three road signs – for Corwen (B5103), Ruthin and Horseshow Falls (the way you've come) and Llantysilio and Rhewl. Make sure you keep going straight on, following the signs for Llantysilio and Rhewl. After about 200m, you'll come to parking on your left (there is a brown sign for a picnic area, and there are also toilets available here). You may also want to check out the map of the area in the car park too.

Then on foot, turn left out of the car park, and start walking towards the lovely church of Llantysilio. Take care as there are no pavements on this road.

### Postcode:

LL20 8BT

### Public transport:

For public transport options, call Traveline Cymru on 0871 200 2233 or National Rail Enquiries on 08457 48 49 50.

### Let's get started

As you walk along the road, you see the Horseshoe Falls in the distance. The Falls were built in 1806 by Thomas Telford. They are a huge, curved weir set above some rapids on the River Dee. We often think of industrialisation as something which can be destructive to the natural environment but Telford saw things differently. He was a man in tune with the landscape around him and didn't believe that progress meant destroying natural beauty. And at the Horseshoe Falls, many believe he has actually improved upon Mother Nature.

Isn't it a great view?! It really shows how the weir creates a mill pond of backed up water, which is then drawn off through a sluice and into the Llangollen Canal. **(1)**

Take a moment to consider what it is that makes you want to photograph this landscape. Think of a couple of adjectives that describe your feelings and try photographing the subject to illustrate these words.

Try and resist zooming in because camera phones often don't have very good digital zooms.

You need to turn off the road when you reach Llantysilio church. The church is on your left – go down the small path, and then through the small gate to the left of the church's main entrance (don't go into the church yard). Then follow the track down to the River Dee.



## Activity starting point

Start this activity as you turn out of the car park; you'll start to get some great views over to your left as you walk along the road towards the church. Take care, as there are no pavements on this stretch of road, and you'll need to be cautious of taking any shots from this position.

## How long will this activity take?

The walk will take around 40-50 minutes (although you'll also need to account for the time to walk back), but you can take as long as you like to make sure you get as many great shots as you want.



## What you need

A fully-charged camera phone or camera.  
Comfortable shoes for walking.

## Top tips:

If possible, try and time your visit with the so-called 'Magic Hour', that period just after sunrise or before sunset when the landscape can be bathed in a soft, golden light.

Check your lens is clean. The lens on your mobile phone doesn't have a cover, making it vulnerable to greasy fingerprints, which can seriously affect the sharpness and contrast of your pictures. Wipe it gently with the softest, cleanest piece of material on hand.

Some of these paths can be extremely muddy, so take care and wear appropriate footwear. Parts of this walk may also be unsuitable for buggies or wheelchairs.

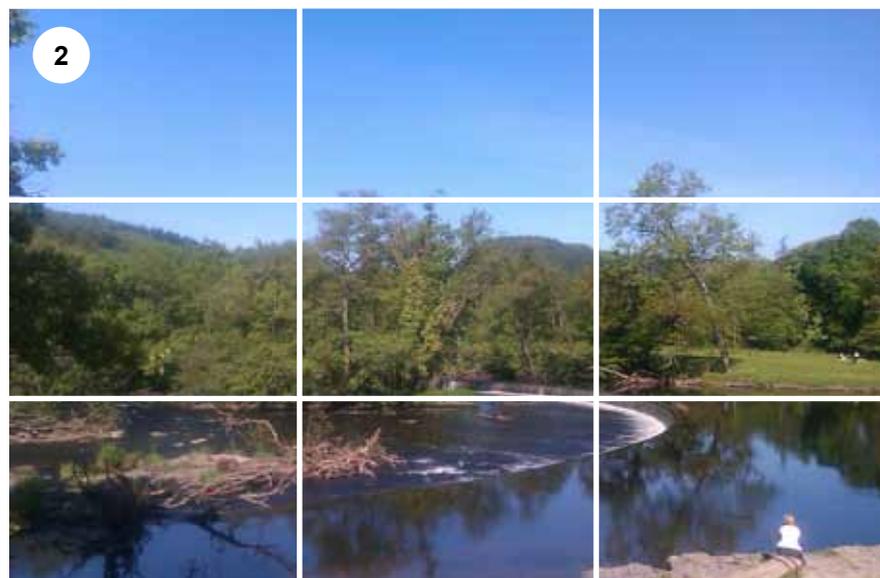


## Getting back to the start

Once you've reached Pentrefelin Wharf, you need to turn and retrace your steps to the car.

There are lots of 'rules' of photography to help you get the best shot – but if you only use one, make sure it's the Rule of Thirds.

This is a simple but effective technique to help you compose better pictures. Imagine dividing your screen into a nine square grid (3x3) just like a noughts and crosses grid. Place strong lines in your landscape along these gridlines, and elements of interest where gridlines cross. **(2)**



Now follow the riverside path over a small bridge by the sluice house (on your left) and pick up the start of the Llangollen Canal, and the beginning of a trail that will eventually bring you out at the Pontcysyllte World Heritage site (which is about 6 miles away).

You'll see that the opening stretch of the canal is very narrow, and it was little used by commercial boats. This section was designed as a water course and runs along a level terrace carved out of the rock face by Telford's men, high up above the waters of the River Dee on the right. It looks as if it's been there for thousands of years.

This is a great stretch of canal for capturing reflections in the water – look out for bridges, and the different shapes and colours of trees.

One of the many incredible features of the canal is that there is not one lock spoiling the view along its whole 11 mile length. Telford and his team planned the whole route, taking measurements and levelling surveys all the way, to ensure the slightest of gradients kept the water running.

Carry on along the towpath past the Chain Bridge Hotel (the large building on your right), where you can stop for refreshments, before walking on to an area called Pentrefelin Wharf, where the landscape opens out. There isn't a sign indicating when you've reached Pentrefelin Wharf, but you'll have reached the right spot when you have just passed the motor museum (its approximately 10mins walk from the Chainbridge Hotel). If you're visiting during a season when the trees aren't in full leaf, look to your left and you may just about be able to see the embankment in the distance where a tramway once trundled down from the quarries up in the hills. A good landmark to look out for is the red gate in the stone wall on the other side of the canal. Unfortunately, the trees obscure the views in summer!

The tramway was built in 1852 and brought slate to the finishing shed, which today houses the nearby Motor Museum.



### What did you think?

Tell us what you thought about this activity, and share your photos on the Discover Denbighshire Facebook page.

The finished slate was then loaded onto waiting barges, before beginning the long journey to London. While the slate around Llangollen was not suitable for roofing – it tended to turn back to mud when wet! – it was particularly prized for ‘internal’ jobs such as mortuary tables and, more happily, billiard tables, (so remember Llangollen next time you’re playing a game of billiards in your local pub!)

Pentrefelin is a good spot to get some wider pictures, especially if your phone has panorama mode.

It’s important to think about where the horizon is going to appear in your pictures. Shots can look uninspired if the horizon simply splits the picture in two, so play around with it a bit. If there’s a lot of interesting foreground detail such as a wall or some plants, place it towards the top of the screen.

But if there’s a dramatic sky you want to include, or simply a great swathe of blue that you think will enhance the rest of the shot, then place the horizon lower on your screen.

There are more great landscape shots to be had along this picturesque section of the canal, with its crags, woods, and the rushing waters of the River Dee.

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### Don’t miss

Whilst you’re in the area, there’s lots of other great places that you could visit...

### Llangollen steam train

The canal was just one factor that turned Llangollen into such an important transport hub in Victorian Britain.

The railway first arrived in the town in 1848 and was a sensation for day trippers, who arrived in their thousands to take in the air and the fantastic views.

The line and station closed in 1965 and were left to decay until enthusiasts re-opened them in the 1970s as a popular tourist attraction. The station has now been beautifully restored, with its own tea room and a regular timetable of trips of old steam locos.

The station is on the opposite side of the River Dee to the main High Street in Llangollen.

The Station, Abbey Road, Llangollen, Denbighshire, LL20 8SN

For more information visit [www.llangollen-railway.co.uk](http://www.llangollen-railway.co.uk) or call 01978 860979

## **A trip on a horse drawn barge**

A trip on a horse drawn barge from Llangollen is a great way to take in what has been described as one of the most beautiful stretches of canal in the world.

There's a choice of 'cruises' starting from Llangollen Wharf, with the two-hour trip taking you up the Horseshoe Falls and back.

It's the chance to take part in a real slice of history, as these pleasure trips have been running for well over 100 years.

For more information, visit [www.horsedrawnboats.co.uk](http://www.horsedrawnboats.co.uk) or call 01978 860 702

## **Plas Newydd**

For nearly 50 years, this unique black and white cottage was the home to Sarah Ponsonby and Lady Eleanor Butler, otherwise known as the Ladies of Llangollen.

The couple spent their 'sweet and delicious retirement' at Plas Newydd, reading, writing and painting. They became celebrities of the age, with romantic poets such as Lord Byron and Wordsworth, as well as the Duke of Wellington, among their visitors.

The house was given its Gothic exterior by later owners but the oak carvings that fill the interior were all collected by the Ladies. The gardens are also worth a stroll, and there's a café and bowling green, too.

Plas Newydd, Hill Street, Llangollen, Denbighshire, LL20 8AW.

For general enquiries, bookings or special occasions please call: 01978 862834 (April – Sept), or 01824 708274 (October – March).

For more information, visit [www.denbighshire.gov.uk/heritage](http://www.denbighshire.gov.uk/heritage)