

Title:

Traveller's Journal: Snowdonia National Park - Day 3

Word Count:

459

Summary:

I cannot recall the moment I discovered my fear of heights. I can remember falling from the top of a bunk bed once whilst on holiday as my sister slept on the bottom. I don't think that was the defining moment, though I'm sure it played some part in developing my phobia.

But one thing was for certain. I knew I couldn't come to Llanberis without a journey on the Snowdon Mountain Railway. "Did you go on the mountain train?" they would ask.

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Keywords:

Article Body:

I cannot recall the moment I discovered my fear of heights. I can remember falling from the top of a bunk bed once whilst on holiday as my sister slept on the bottom. I don't think that was the defining moment, though I'm sure it played some part in developing my phobia.

But one thing was for certain. I knew I couldn't come to Llanberis without a journey on the Snowdon Mountain Railway. "Did you go on the mountain train?" they would ask.

"Er, no," I would reply rather meekly.

"Why ever not?" the inquisition would continue.

"Er, I was scared." I could hear the sniggering even now. The heights are not a problem provided the land slopes gently and there is no dramatic change in gradient. But I had seen the postcards, and boy did some of those drops look spectacular.

So it was with a certain amount of trepidation that I approached the ticket

booth. The advent of internet bookings has left the railway struggling to meet demand, especially during the busy tourist season.

Each journey to the top is made by just a single carriage pushed along either by the more romantic steam engine or a modern diesel. The distinctive smell of the steam engines is evident throughout the station and can become a little overbearing at times. But there's no tiring of the traditional sounds of bells and whistles and the whoosh of the engines.

Ice at the summit of Mount Snowdon means a reduction in the return fare from £20 down to £14 as the train will only be going three-quarters of the way up. I purchased my ticket and waited anxiously for my carriage.

The journey began sedately enough with a gentle climb out of the station before the serious assault on Snowdon. As the ground fell away behind the carriage we began to make slow but steady progress.

The steep gradient meant we weren't travelling much faster than the ramblers away to the left who waved at us as they continued their assault on foot. Once we approached the three-quarter point the moment I had feared was upon me.

Without warning the ground through the left carriage window fell away, exposing a near 2,000 foot shear drop to the valley floor of Llanberis Pass. Cars were just visible snaking their way through the valley road. The last time I witnessed events from this height was through the window of an airplane.

Soon after the train came to a halt and we disembarked for half an hour of sightseeing before the decent back to the station. The views were magnificent but the difference in temperature at this altitude was remarkable. At ground level it was almost t-shirt weather but up here it was time for thermals.