



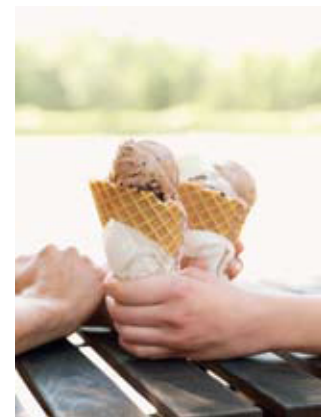
A lot of people go to north Wales to climb Snowdon. For us, this would be a weekend of gentle strolls, long lie-ins and appreciating the views from steamy cafés.

We began with a walk around the charming town of Llanberis, stopping at Pete's Eats for its famed 'pint of tea'. Then a wander into the 800-acre Padarn Country Park, with panoramic views over Snowdon. We ate lunch at Caban in the village of Brynrefail, close to the foot of Snowdon. Bagging a table by the window, we admired the view, devouring a huge pork pie followed by the Welsh fruitcake, bara brith. In the afternoon we drove to Penrhyn Castle, just outside Bangor, an imposing 19th-century structure with stunning gardens. Inside, we marvelled at elaborate objects, including a slate bed, which was made for Queen Victoria's visit. For dinner, we headed to Ty'n Rhos, another close-by cosy country-house hotel, for delicious Welsh spring lamb in front of a roaring fire.

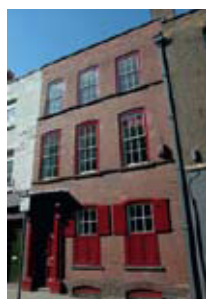
On Sunday it was off to the marina town of Porthmadog for an ice cream at Cadwalader's, a legendary family-run café. We finished our trip with a visit to Llechwedd Slate Caverns, and joined a tour of the deep chambers where slate was mined in Victorian times. **CQ**

A two-night stay at Seiont Manor Hotel, Caernarfon, costs from £198 for two people, including breakfast (0845 458 0905; handpickedhotels.co.uk). For more information, visit attractionsofsnowdonia.com and visitsnowdonia.com

Wales-watching, clockwise from left: Christina Quaine and boyfriend Will; sampling the local delicacies; the dramatic scenery of Snowdonia



Home from home, clockwise from above right: Suzanne King and boyfriend Simon; their hired east London townhouse; the cosy sitting room



Say romantic weekend in London and most people think swanky West End hotel. Ever contrary, and having a fascination with period dramas and all things 'old London', we went for an East End house instead. But not just any old house. Our chosen bolthole was a Landmark Trust property, an 18th-century townhouse in Spitalfields that was once home to Huguenot silk weavers and has now been lovingly restored with all its Georgian panelling, creaky floorboards and wonky windows intact.

A four-storey house might seem a tad excessive for two people – but it was fun to pretend it was ours for a few days, opening up the shutters in the morning, popping a bottle of fizz in the kitchen in the afternoon and snuggling up in front of the fire in the evening.

History meets hip in this part of town. On the one hand, there's an impressive Hawksmoor church, the atmospheric time capsule of Dennis Severs' House and echoes of Charles Dickens and Jack the Ripper round every corner. On the other hand, many of the old weavers' houses have been snapped up by contemporary artists

such as Tracey Emin, Gilbert and George, and Jake and Dinos Chapman; trendy young things flock to Brick Lane and Spitalfields Market to pick up vintage clothing and jewellery.

For us, the big draw was Spitalfields' new status as foodie hotspot, with chichi delis and big-name chefs moving in to join the familiar curry houses and bagel bakeries. We picked up bits and bobs to eat at home: fresh-from-the-oven bagels on Brick Lane, crusty sourdough bread, smelly cheeses and sticky chocolate brownies in the market. But for the most part we took the lazy route and ate our way round the restaurants, from leisurely brunch and Eccles cakes at Fergus Henderson's St John Bar & Restaurant, to a people-watching lunch and fine chips at John Torode's The Luxe.

The highlight of the weekend was dinner at Galvin La Chapelle, which ticked all our boxes for a romantic meal: wonderful modern French food, a stunning setting (in a converted Victorian school building), a gently buzzing atmosphere and friendly, non-intrusive service. Result: one very happy couple waddling their way back to their temporary des res to close the shutters and light the fire. **SK**

Princelet Street (sleeps six) costs from £838 for a three-night weekend (01628 825925; landmarktrust.org.uk). Galvin La Chapelle (020 7299 0400; galvinrestaurants.com) ▶