



Wild and Woolly Wales

Explore Celtic Weaving, Woolen Mills, Quilts, Knitting & more in the Legendary Realm of King Arthur and Merlin



"Uncommon Textile Journeys that Change Lives"

Did you know...

- Wales has more castles per square miles than anywhere else in Europe?
- 20% of the country is protected by National Parks?
- A mythical dragon is the country's national animal?
- There are miles of white sand beaches, unspoiled coastline, dramatic mountains and idyllic lakes?
- One can explore heaps of Roman Ruins and Arthurian sites?

May 8 – 22, 2018
15 Days

Perfect
for Non-Weavers, too!
Horseback riding,
fishing, walking and
more than 200 Golf Courses

The Rich History of Wool and Textiles in Wales



Sheep, Weaving and Woolen Mills

Sheep and wool have always played an historically important role in Wales. Evidence shows that sheep farming, spinning and weaving date back to prehistoric times. Scraps of textiles, bone needles, loom weights, spindle-whorls and the find of a Bronze Age weaving comb indicate that weaving has quite an ancient history. When the Cistercian monasteries were founded in the 12th century, wool became an important and crucial industry. With the introduction of water-powered mills, woolen manufacturing became one of the main rural industries in Wales with around 80 mills operating before 1350. It is known that most of the cottages and farms had a spinning wheel and most parishes had spinners, weavers and carders. Sheep shearing was quite a major social event. By 1660, two thirds of the exports from Wales was made up of wool. In Carmarthenshire alone, the 1831 census shows that there were 260 male weavers of over twenty years of age. It is interesting however to note that men were not always the owners of the mills. Records show that there were three women mill owners in 1840.

The power loom arrived in 1850 causing an industrial revolution instigating a massive expansion. This historic legacy remains today in the form of the many woolen mills. According to Welsh blogger Megan Kate Nisbet, "At its peak Wales had over 300 working woolen mills, weaving and quilting the finest tapestry in the land." Wool was the most prolific industry in Wales from the Middle Ages until mid-19th century. Today there are still nine commercial woolen mills in operation, some run by small families, producing traditional Welsh cloth on looms.

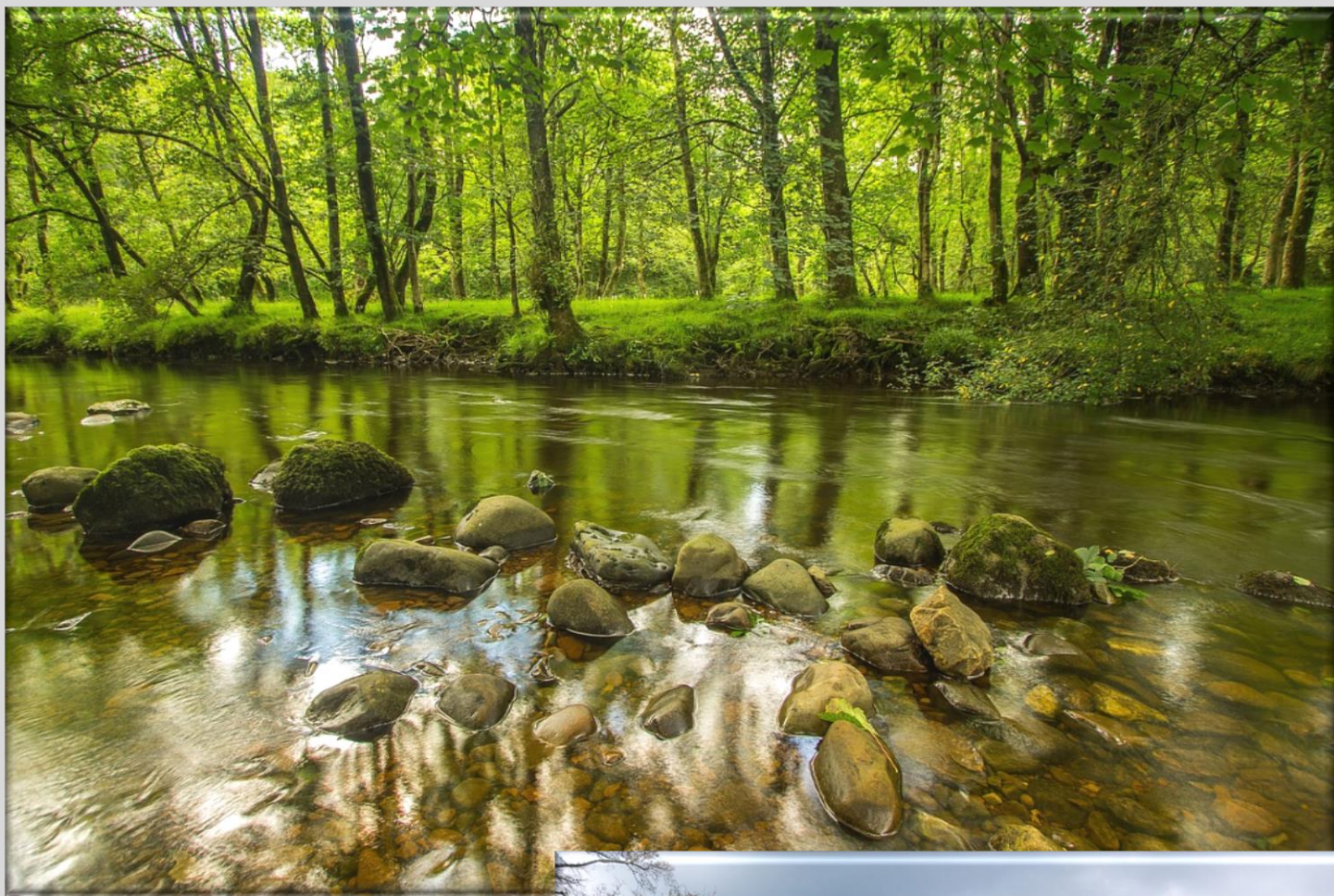
Knitting in Wales

Jenny Lloyd, Welsh author of *Leap the Wild Water*, offers a colorful glimpse into the history of knitting in Wales. She comments that even "such a laborious task as stocking knitting once played a big part in the Welsh economy." She recounts how so many people were involved with wool, from poor cottagers that found work carding and spinning wool to farmers that had weaving looms on their farms. According to Lloyd, "it was a common sight to see women knitting as they walked along the country lanes or hilltops. Great distances had to be walked in those days and the time taken was usefully spent on knitting. Knitting sheaths were popular; suspended from the hip, they bore the weight of the garment being knitted. These were handmade and carved, given as love tokens, much as the Welsh love spoons." We highly recommend reading her blog at <https://jennyllloydwriter.wordpress.com/2013/04/06/19th-century-knitters>.



Welsh Quilts

The Welsh Quilt Centre brings the rich history of this textile alive. Much thanks to their efforts, the art of the Welsh quilt and its historical influence is now recognized as significant world-wide. Born from the need to keep warm and to "create an inheritance for the 'bottom drawer'," incredibly beautiful and historic textiles were created. These quilts have become a virtual record of changing textiles over time.



Tuesday, May 8 Meet Up in London ** and Journey into Wales

Today is the official beginning of the tour. We will meet up as a group at London's Heathrow Airport and begin our adventure. From England we cross over the border into Wales driving into the southeast area of the country. Once in Wales, we will stop at tall, roofless Tintern Abbey. These haunting Gothic ruins along the river have inspired poets and artists for centuries.



Tintern was founded by the Cistercians in 1131 and remained active as a monastic settlement until 1536. Another stop will be magnificent Raglan Castle, the last great medieval castle to be built in Wales between the 15th and 16th centuries. It is unusual in its architecture with great angular towers and Tudor-styling that is thought to be a result of the time the builders spent fighting in France. Our destination this evening is Llansantffraed Court where we stay for two nights. This lovely country house is built in the William and Mary style, and is Grade II listed, with many of the original features preserved. The hotel is surrounded by 20 acres of lawns and ancient trees, a stunning one acre walled kitchen garden, a private lake and fountain, and the 16th century St Bridget's Church. We'll gather for a welcome drink and brief orientation in the evening before enjoying a group dinner in the dining room where 75% of the carefully sourced ingredients come from within a 20 mile radius. Overnight at Llansantffraed Court Country House. (D)

****Please note that the tour starts on the morning of May 8 and you will need to be in London before this morning departure. You might consider arriving a day or two early to rest and explore London on your own before our meeting on the morning of May 8th at Heathrow Airport. We would be happy to make some suggestions.**



Wednesday, May 9 Fiber Arts Workshop at Humble by Nature Farm

We travel today to just outside nearby Monmouth to Humble by Nature Farm for a full day workshop. This is a working farm that was bought by Kate Humble and Ludo Graham with the goal of bringing the old farm back to life and create a business that would showcase rural skills, cookery and learning. The farm now offers a variety of courses including those in rural skills, animal husbandry, crafts, cooking and aquaponics. The farm also breeds Welsh Mountain sheep and Hereford cattle. His Royal Highness, the Prince of Wales and The Duchess of Cornwall even visited the farm to see first-hand how a small farm can be kept alive by diversification.

In this wonderful setting we will spend the full day immersed in a fiber arts workshop. As it will be sheep shearing season, we will take advantage of this timing and learn about the process of making yarn literally from the start of shearing a sheep to using a wheel to spin the yarn, then using plant dyes (like Rosebay willow herb, turmeric, nettles, willow & hawthorn) to create some really beautifully colored yarn that we can take home. Dinner is on your own tonight at the hotel or nearby restaurants. Overnight at Llansantffraed Court Country House. (B,L)

View a wonderful video about the farm at <http://www.humblebynature.com/about-us>



Photo © Llansantffraed Court Country House Hotel



Thursday, May 10

The Black Mountains of Brecon Beacons and Hay on Wye

Today is a full day of exploring the wonders of Brecon Beacons National Park in our van. Immersed in what is considered to be some of the finest scenery in all of Wales, we meander through the wild remote Black Mountains. We'll climb to dizzying heights and drop down into a lush valley. One of the highlights of the day is the border town of Hay on Wye situated on the banks of the River Wye. This pretty little town has become known as the "secondhand book capital of the world." It even has its own festival of literature. Our destination this evening is the fabulous Gliffaes Country House Hotel. Set in 33 acres of spectacular grounds nestled inside Brecon Beacons National Park, the beautiful Victorian building overlooks the tranquil River Usk, making it the ideal spot for fishing and relaxing in the countryside. Each room at Gliffaes combines the charm and whimsicality of beautiful period features with stunning views of the surrounding Welsh scenery. We will spend three nights at this luxurious hideaway. Tonight we enjoy a sumptuous dinner in the lovely dining room where the freshest and highest quality local and seasonal produce are featured. Overnight at Gliffaes Country House Hotel. (B,D)

Fri - Sat, May 11-12 Welsh Weaving Workshop

For these two days we are able to savor the ambiance of our country hotel while participating in a weaving workshop on site with expert Welsh weaver, Dunja Roberts of *Make It in Wales*. Dunja lives and works on a farm near Brecon. Using her Black Mountain Welsh wool as our weft, we will each weave a woolen shawl with a traditional Welsh blanket pattern. (Photo © Make It in Wales)

For the non-weavers in our group, there are a myriad of outdoor activities available in the area. As mentioned above, the fishing from the hotel is world-class. A group dinner is included at the hotel on Saturday night. Dinner is on your own on Friday. Overnight at Gliffaes Country House Hotel. (B,D Saturday Only)





Sunday, May 13 To the Pembrokeshire Coast

Today we head west all the way to the west coast traveling through the beautiful countryside of Pembrokeshire. Along the way, we'll make a few interesting stops. North Pembrokeshire is a landscape of stone circles, Iron Age forts, dolmens and the essential nature of "Welshness." Our destination is St. David's named after Wales' Patron Saint, Dewi Sant. He founded a monastery here in the 6th century which is now the site of a magnificent 12th-century cathedral that is considered Wales' holiest site. We are surrounded by the sea on three sides which provides a magical setting. We'll stay here for three nights in the Warpool Court Hotel, originally built as St David's Cathedral Choir School in the 1860s. The hotel features a unique display of over 3,000 heraldic and Celtic wall tiles and is situated in an enchanting spot overlooking one of Britain's loveliest stretches of coastline. Tonight we dine as a group at the hotel. Overnight at Warpool Court Hotel. (B,D)

Monday, May 14 Free Day to Explore

Today is at your leisure to stretch your legs and explore the beautiful Pembrokeshire Coast and St. David's, Britain's smallest city with a population of less than 2,000. For those that enjoy walking, the spectacular Pembrokeshire Coast Path has some excellent sections to discover in this area. Weather permitting, you might choose to relax on one of the white sand beaches or take a boat ride to Ramsey Island for birdwatching. A visit to the Bishop's Palace and the cathedral are wonderful diversions. The choice is yours. Dinner is on your own tonight so that you can try one of the local restaurants. Overnight at Warpool Court Hotel. (B)

Tuesday, May 15 Woolen Mills, Dolmens and Iron Age Forts

We hop back in the van today for a full day of exploring the woolly and ancient history of Wales. We'll visit several working mills including Solva, the oldest mill in Pembrokeshire in operation since 1907. We'll also visit Melin Tregwynt Woolen Mill where there has been a mill on this site since the 17th century and has been owned by the same family since 1912. Further on, known in Welsh as *Gwlad Hud a Lledrith* meaning Land of Magic and Enchantment, Cwm Gwaun, a narrow wooded valley is home to many prehistoric sites including several megalithic tombs, stone circles, Celtic crosses and a reconstructed Celtic Village reflecting the Celts strong ties to this land. Overnight at Warpool Court Hotel. (B)

Wednesday, May 16 Welsh Quilts, Blankets and a Georgian Port

We leave St. Davids behind and begin our sojourn north. Along the way, we'll enjoy several textile related stops. The Jen Jones Welsh Quilt Centre is considered one of the world's greatest quilt museums. It is the center of the Welsh quilting tradition which is recognized world-wide. The center opened in 2010 by His Royal Highness, The Prince of Wales and the Duchess of Cornwall. Here Jen Jones has been collecting Welsh quilts for more than 30 years and the Centre is dedicated to the preservation of this very important part of Welsh heritage. Nearby, Jan Beck offers the largest collection of Welsh blankets, new and vintage, anywhere in the world. Her main interest is in the social history that is linked to the woolen industry. Many of the local working mills produce her collections. Wherever we end up, it will be a fiber fantasia! Our destination for the night is a wonderful country house located within Snowdonia National Park. Penmaenuchaf Hall, built in 1860 for a wealthy cotton magnate, is situated on 21 acres of gardens and woodland with wonderful views of the famous Mawddach Estuary where the mountains sweep down to the water. We'll dine tonight as a group in the lovely dining room. Overnight at Penmaenuchaf Hall Country House Hotel. (B,D)



Thursday, May 17 Llŷn Peninsula

We head further north today along the West Coast. The first part of the day finds us exploring further in the southern part of Snowdonia National Park. From here, we will venture out to explore the wonders of the Llŷn (pronounced "khleen") Peninsula. This wild landscape juts into the Irish Sea with the Snowdonia Mountains at its edge. Almost 80% of the peninsula has been designated as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty with its Iron Age forts, fishing villages and 70 miles of coastline.

Here Welsh is the everyday language spoken. We'll meander along its treasures taking time to breathe in its peacefulness. Along the way, we may travel to quirky seaside resort of Portmerion Village. This iconic architectural fantasia was designed and built by Sir Slough Williams-Ellis between 1925 and 1975 in the style of an Italian village. In the later afternoon we return to our country house to relax and soak in the atmosphere. Dinner is on your own tonight. You may wish to try one of the restaurants in the nearby market town of Dolgellau. Overnight at Penmaenuchaf Hall Country House Hotel. (B)

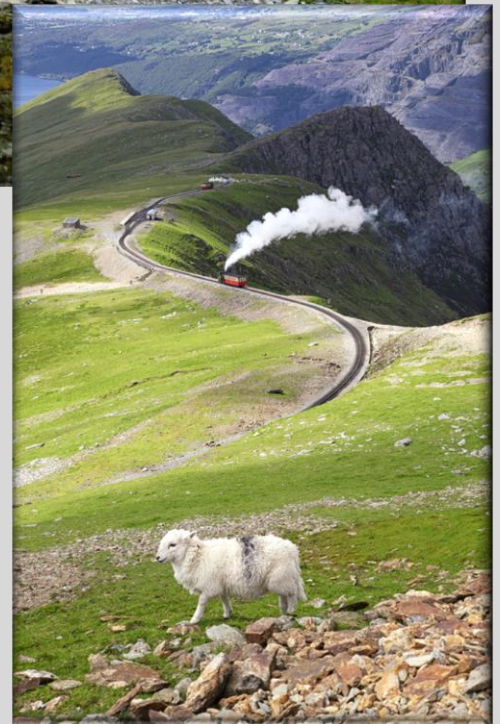




Friday, May 18

Snowdonia: Heritage Trains & Welsh Villages

Many feel that Snowdonia National Park is the most alluring region in Wales and boasts the finest scenery in the country. Its Welsh name is *Eryri* which means “the place of the eagles.” We will fully immerse ourselves in its rugged beauty filled with nine ranges of jagged mountains, coastal paths, craggy peaks, waterfalls, glacial landforms and more than 100 lakes. As Britain’s second largest National Park, Snowdonia covers 838 square miles. Today we have a treat as we ride a heritage train. Run by the oldest railway company in the world, operating for more than 150 years, we will travel on the Welsh Highland Railway through some of Snowdonia’s most breathtaking scenery. This is Great Britain’s longest heritage railway running 25 miles. We depart from Porthmadog, pass through the narrow spectacular gorge of Aberglaslyn Pass, skirting the foot of Snowdon (Wales’ largest mountain) and disembark in Caernarfon. “Riding the rails” in a traditional steam train is perhaps the best way to experience the magnificent scenery of Snowdonia National Park.



In the afternoon, our van will meet us at the Caernarfon Station. From here, we journey back into the park to the unspoiled village of Beddgelert, arguably the loveliest village in Snowdonia. This is a hamlet of culture, history and legend. Its dark stone cottages overlook the River Colwyn. Traveling through even more scenic wonders including Llanberis Pass, a spectacular mountain pass famous for its series of twisting S-bends and for the spectacular valley views beyond, we arrive at the northern part of Snowdonia and/or the coast of Wales. Here we will spend two nights, May 18 and 19 in this remarkably scenic area centrally located to the two upcoming workshops. (B daily; D one night)



Sat- Sun, May 19 & 20
Fiber Workshops:
SAORI Weaving and
Sculptural Needle Felting



Each day of these two days, we will split our group in two dropping half off for the day with Heather O'Leary, owner of Craftwerk, for a workshop in sculptural needle felting. And the other half for SAORI weaving (next page). Heather is internationally known for her exceptional needle felting kits based on her own sculptural work. Because they are created using undyed British wool, the products are truly organic and reflective of nature. Her work



celebrates the beauty, diversity and rich heritage of Wales. Heather's goal through her work is to breathe new life into Wales' woolen industry by highlighting a very contemporary use for British wool. We are fortunate enough to be able to work exclusively side-by-side with Heather in creating a very realistic animal sculpture.

Photos of needle felting © Craftwerk

Our workshop venue



SAORI “Weaving With No Mistakes”

Each day the other half of the group will carry on to another location to spend a day of SAORI weaving with Rosie Green, owner of SAORImôr Freestyle Weaving for Everyone. For a full day, we will immerse ourselves in the world of color, yarn and texture. For those not familiar with SAORI weaving, it is a style of weaving with no rules and no mistakes; it is simply self-expression through freestyle weaving. In Japanese, the “ori” in SAORI means “weaving.” The “sa” has the same meaning as the Zen word “sai” which is that everything has its own individual dignity. We will learn the philosophy of this unique weaving and create a wall hanging, scarf or just fabulous yardage. The choice is yours.



SAORI Photos © SAORImôr



Trefriw Woolen Mill

On these two days, we will also enjoy visits to some of the other wonderful sites on the north coast of Wales. We'll visit Trefriw Woolen Mill which has been in operation since 1825 and is still run by the descendants of Thomas Williams who bought in in 1859. Traditional Welsh bedspreads, travelling rugs and tweeds are manufactured here from the raw wool which is carded, spun, doubled, dyed, warped and woven on the premises.

Betws-y-Coed

Another stop will be in the quaint town of Betws-y-Coed (pronounced *bet-us-ee-koyd*) which has been Wales' most popular inland resort since the Victorian times. It was once a coaching stop on the Irish Mail Route from London to Holyhead and is idyllically located at the junction of three river valleys surrounded by forest.

Conwy

Britain's most intact medieval walled town, Conwy has a World Heritage-listed castle dating back to the late 13th century. The castle was built by Edward I as part of the “iron ring” of fortresses built around the Snowdonia area to contain the Welsh. With its narrow cobbled streets, many historic buildings and a trio of picturesque bridges over the river Conwy, the ancient town simply radiates a rich past.





Accommodations for our last two nights (May 20 and 21) are in a fairytale castle located on the island of Angelsey. Chateau Rhianfa, a Grade II-listed Chateau, is a turreted Victorian mansion in the style of a French chateau. It enjoys spectacular water views looking toward the mountains of Snowdonia that we just explored. The chateau was built in 1849 by Sir John Hay Williams, Baronet of Bodelwyddan as a gift for his wife Lady Sarah. We'll enjoy dinner one night in the romantic dining room. Overnight at Chateau Rhianfa. (B,D one night)

Monday, May 21

A Full Day Exploring Legendary Angelsey



Today we spend the day exploring the Island of Angelsey that boasts Wales' largest concentration of ancient sites. The English name Angelsey was given to it by the Vikings. There are almost 150 of these monuments including Neolithic



*"Weaving together uncommon journeys
with hands-on experience"*

Dear Fellow Adventurer,

As an avid explorer and a weaver, I feel there is a timeless connection between these two passions. For the past 25 years, with my adventure travel company, NatureQuest, we have shown countless travelers the many treasures of this planet. I decided to combine my travel industry expertise with my love for, and appreciation of, weaving and textiles to create unique hands-on fiber arts workshops around the world.

Each odyssey focuses on, and explores in depth, the various weaving centers of the world. These journeys offer the discovery of colorful destinations combined with an opportunity for a "hands-on" textile experience in the style and tradition of that country with a local master. These are small group, intimate travel experiences with a limited number of fiber Enthusiasts. I will lead most odysseys and invite you to join me for an epic celebration of global fiber arts.

In the Spirit of Adventure and Creativity,
Cari Sample Malver
Director

burial chambers, standing stones and Celtic hillforts. Add to that miles and miles of sandy beaches, sleepy fishing villages, towering rocky cliffs, and you have the perfect recipe for exploration. About a third of the island, including nearly all of its incredible 125-mile coastline, has been designated as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. We will meander through this scenic landscape discovering its hidden gems and learn about how the island was one of the last vestiges of Celtic religion in Roman times. (For a great article on this subject, see <http://philipcoppens.com/anglesey.html>) Overnight at Chateau Rhianfa. (B,D)

Tuesday, May 22 To Manchester Flights Home or Overnight

Today we bid farewell to the legendary magic of Wales. We drive approximately 2 hours to the airport in Manchester, England. We will drop those off those that have afternoon/evening flights. For those departing the next morning, we carry on to the charming leafy suburb of Didsbury for an overnight stay not far from the airport (**hotel not included**). From here, one can take a taxi to the airport the next day (not included). If you prefer to travel back to London, you can catch a train from Manchester. (Train fare not included). (B)



As with all true adventures, this itinerary is subject to change without notice based on a variety of factors. Although NatureQuest/Loom Dancer Weaving Odysseys will do our best to adhere to the scheduled itinerary, we are all at the mercy of Mother Nature and varying weather conditions. This itinerary should be considered an approximation of activities only. The itinerary or accommodations may be changed subject to unexpected and worthwhile opportunities, weather, group desires, and circumstances beyond our control, etc. Loom Dancer Weaving Odysseys and its guides reserve the right to alter the itinerary without prior notice. Also please be aware that any voluntary changes on your part to your itinerary while in Wales will be made at your own expense.

There is no refund for any unused portion of the itinerary including hotels, activities, etc.

Land Costs Include:

- 14 Nights in 4 Star accommodations, double occupancy (all in individually atmospheric - no large impersonal chain hotels!). Single accommodations available at additional cost (see below)
- Private tours and museum visits
- 5 Days of fiber arts workshops including all materials (all workshops are optional – you need not participate in all of them)
- Private van and local expert guide
- Private visits and demonstrations with talented knitters, weavers, spinners, jewelers and textile designers
- Daily breakfast (B) and other meals as described, lunches (L), dinners (D)

Land Costs Exclude:

- Any air transportation
- Meals not designated on the itinerary
- Any activities such as golf, horseback riding, fishing and any others not specifically included in the itinerary are at an additional cost.
- Any item not specifically included in your program including all snacks, extra personal beverages & bottled water, etc. other than during designated meals, alcoholic beverages
- Excess baggage fees, laundry, and other items of a personal nature not specifically listed
- Tips for your guide, drivers, hotel porters and other service staff
- Additional insurance of any kind

Cost*: \$4,995 Per Person Based on Double Occupancy; \$4,495 Per Person for Non-Fiber artist

If you prefer a single room, there is a single supplement of \$1,295.**

**Accommodations in Wales typically charge very close to the same rate whether there are one or two people sharing the room (usually within £10-20). Thus the Single Supplement is rather costly. Please contact us with any questions.

Activities such as golf, horseback riding, fishing and any other activity not included in the itinerary are at an additional cost, but we will be happy to help with the arrangements.

Save Your Spot! Please call our office for details or questions!

800.369.3033 (from US Only) ~ 970.728.6743



PO Box 22128, Telluride, CO 81435 ~ loomdance@aol.com ~ www.loomdancerodysseys.com
Natureqst@aol.com ~ 800.369.3033 ~ 970.728.6743 ~ Fax 970.728.7081



Loom Dancer Odysseys

does not believe in large group, bargain or "ordinary" tours. Instead, we strive to immerse the creative and adventurous traveler into the wondrous world of global fiber arts with quality cultural encounters. Our typical group size is limited to 12-16 participants to allow for a more hands-on, intimate travel experience.

We invite you to join us;
be a creative traveler, not a tourist.

