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Where to drink when you are scaling the heights in Snowdonia
By Richard Brass

There are various ways to get close to the mountains in Snowdonia. You can clamber up them, crash down the sides on a fat-wheeled bike, disappear down a hole at the end of a rope, or take the hands-off approach and admire them through a car window while eating Toblerone. But Cobden's Hotel in the village of Capel Curig at the heart of the range offers punters the unusual opportunity of being almost inside the mountain without having to stir from their pints, one that appeals to the mountain-goatish and car-bound alike.

What's it like? A fine old inn tucked deep in a valley, Cobdens offers splendid views of the slopes, forests and River Llugwy from its front bar and restaurant, and the tables across the road on the riverbank are perfect when the fierce Welsh sun is blazing. But the real attraction for the mountain-chasing community is the back bar, built right into the rock. The rear wall of the bar is a raw piece of craggy mountain rockface, complete with wild water trickling down the cracks and ferns growing happily on the ledges. A floor made of slate mined just down the road, and a bar faced and topped with stone help to create a powerful sense of actually being enclosed by the mountain, although a statue of a creepy Gollum-like creature lurking in a little alcove might make you wonder if this is wise.

What to drink? Furnished with a coal-burning stove to keep out any chill coming through the rock, a pool table and a decent jukebox, Cobden's is a very cosy refuge after a hard day on the mountain covered in mud, or on the car seat covered in crisps and chocolate. And it has the beers to match, being supplied by the tiny Conwy Brewery with the flavoursome Cobden's Ale, specially brewed for the hotel, and Cwrw Castle, a beer which, after an hour or two in the bosom of the mountain, you might even be able to pronounce.