

## Pod of Wales- Elan Valley

Cast:

Kiri Pritchard-McClean

Esyllt Sears

Guests:

David Winmorgan.

Rowan Jones

[Pod of Wales Intro Music]

Esyllt: Welcome to Pod of Wales.

Kiri: Thanks for having me [laughs].

Esyllt: [Laughs] We're still here.

Kiri: Yes this is the Elan Valley and Cambrian Mountains episode. Places I haven't knowingly been really. I think I've skirted around the outskirts doing various gigs. There was a few years where did loads of gigs in sort of Powys. I haven't experienced any of the things that we're going to experience before.

Esyllt: No. I think a lot of people do just drive through this area and they will probably comment on how beautiful this is but not actually stop. So we've stopped.

Kiri: We have stopped yeah. I mean I think I've driven on the way home past sort of a dam and been like 'Oh that's nice'.

Esyllt: [Laughs]

Kiri: And then given it no more thought. Assumed it's a hallucination because I'm tired when I'm driving.

Esyllt: [Laughs]

Kiri: But we're going to see the dams up close. I'm going to push to go inside them because don't ask don't get.

Esyllt: Oh you're going to get arrested.

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Kiri: That's the dream.

Esyllt: [Laughs]

Kiri: That is the dream. So yeah that's going to be one of the things that we're going to do. We're going to be going out on bikes.

Esyllt: eBikes.

Kiri: eBikes.

Esyllt: Yes.

Kiri: It sounds so Yorkshire when people say eBikes.

Esyllt: eBikes [laughs].

Kiri: We're going on a hike in a second.

Esyllt: Yeah.

Kiri: We're staying locally, we're eating lots of nice local food.

Esyllt: Yeah.

Kiri: We're really squeezing it in.

Esyllt: I know and then we're going to be revving it right up. Do you know what I'm going to say next?

Kiri: I hope so.

Esyllt: [Laughs] We're going to go scrambling.

Kiri: Yeah.

Esyllt: Like on motorbikes.

Kiri: It's a motorbike taster experience of off-roading.

Esyllt: I've never done that before.

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Kiri: No and I'm also slightly mediumly baffled that Yamaha have like a specialist centre in Llanidloes.

Esyllt: [Laughs] Aren't they (high tech? 01:47)

Kiri: And then obviously we go on the pianos afterwards. But I'm so excited.

Esyllt: Me too.

Kiri: We're just going to go to a pub now and meet our guide who is going to be taking us up Pumlumon, is that the name of the?

Esyllt: Yes Pumlumon Fawr.

Kiri: He's going to be taking us up there, we're going to meet him in a pub of his choosing.

Esyllt: Yeah.

Kiri: Which I like that he's gone for 'I'll meet you at the pub'.

Esyllt: [Laughs]

Kiri: And not like I'll meet you at some gatepost in a field.

Esyllt: [Laughs] Also I hope they have a kettle because I really need to make a flask of tea to take with me.

Kiri: Oh I thought you were going to be like I need to sterilise something before we can go up.

Esyllt: [Laughs] I need to give birth.

Kiri: [Laughs]

[Interim Music]

David: Right no swearing OK, this is going out live now.

Kiri: [Laughs]

David: Especially you.

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- Kiri: Well this is a lovely pub. Crackling fire.
- Esyllt: I would very much like to just sit here now for the next five hours please.
- Kiri: So would I but only because I know what we're doing in a bit.
- David: We could come back here though. But not in five hours, the walk won't last five hours. Unless! Unless!
- Kiri: [Laughs] You need to introduce yourself before you start making jokes. Come on who are you?
- David: No I'm not a joke, I guess I am a joke [laughs].
- Kiri: [Laughs]
- David: Some people think I'm a joke. My name is David Winmorgan and I'm from [Place? 03:02] and I live and work in the Cambrian Mountains of Wales. In the day I support local businesses and initiatives. But in the evenings I climb my favourite mountain in the world, Pumlumon Fawr and when it gets really, really dark I take people out to star gaze and enjoy the night sky we have here in the Cambrian Mountains.
- Esyllt: How many times do you think you've been up and down Pumlumon Fawr?
- David: I've stopped counting.
- [Laughter]
- David: I remember climbing Pumlumon Fawr when I was about eight years old, going up to fish with Uncle Ronnie up at the lakes up there. Since then I've climbed it, oh I've lost count. How can you count? It's nearly 50 years of climbing a mountain.
- Kiri: Do you get bored of it?

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David: No! No I definitely won't be bored tonight.

[Laughter]

Kiri: Now that sounded like a threat but I'll take it.

Esyllt: I know.

David: You have been warned. Is anybody else coming up tonight?

Kiri: [Laughs]

Esyllt: Have you ever been caught up there?

David: Doing what? [laughs]

Kiri: [Laughs]

David: I plan, I plan well, especially these days. Especially when I take other people up. When I do what I do in the evenings or at sunrise as well, that's when there's a bigger risk because we'll be going up there tonight now and it's going to get darker, darker, darker and we will come back down, hopefully we'll come back down in the dark. Otherwise we'll have to spend the whole night up there.

Kiri: I've always wanted to go in a helicopter, it's fine.

[Laughter]

What time do you have to get up then if you want to go and catch the sunrise?

David: It's going to take us an hour to get to the summit so we want to be there an hour before sunset as well tonight. And of course it will feel very boggy as well so you're going to get, well like I said follow my footsteps and you shouldn't go too far wrong.

Esyllt: Right well I better eat my baguette then.

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David: Yeah and garlic mushrooms here in the George Borrow Hotel. Where better to start than the George Borrow Hotel.

Kiri: Are you getting paid for that?

Esyllt: [Laughs]

David: I get paid by the mushroom.

[Interim Music]

Esyllt: You know how podcast is really an audio medium.

Kiri: Yeah. We're on.

Esyllt: I wish people could see us now [laughs].

Kiri: The hair is doing something quite spectacular.

Esyllt: [Laughs]

Kiri: Also as we got here our wonderful guide who has, I'll have it on record, gone for a slash right now.

Esyllt: [Laughs]

Kiri: And he's promised not to pee in our direction. Said that this very mountaintop is mentioned in a Mabinogian as being the windiest mountain in Wales, something I feel like should have been raised before we climbed it and tried to do some audio.

Esyllt: Yeah it wasn't on the itinerary.

Kiri: It was not on the itinerary. So we're up here in a [speaks Welsh] an old burial chamber. Crouched over, eyeing up the free firewood that people have left up here.

Esyllt: [Laughs] There's always free firewood

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Kiri: There's always free firewood and it's our deep shared passion up in Wales. Cwtched up and I haven't said this before on record but I will now, I absolutely hate walking.

Esyllt: [Laughs hysterically]

Kiri: I get no joy from it whatsoever. And I was like on the way up I was just like really arguing probably with Jo the producer in my mind being like, I'm going to put my foot down and say I don't want to do anymore walking. It's not even worth it when you get to the top.

Esyllt: [Laughs]

Kiri: And actually it really is. It is amazing up here. You can see (Place? 06:45) Oh my God you got pee all over yourself [laughs hysterically].

Esyllt: Oh my God! Oh!

Kiri: We found his fetish.

Esyllt: Do we have to pay extra for that?

Kiri: [Laughs]

David: I thought I was pointing in the right way.

Esyllt: I mean the wind's going all directions yeah [laughs].

Kiri: Oh.

Esyllt: Yeah.

Kiri: But no it's absolutely amazing up here, we went up to the like stone concrete plinth of the summit.

Esyllt: Yeah.

Kiri: Nearly got blown off and not in a fun way.

Esyllt: [Laughs]

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Kiri: But it is really wonderful, the air is amazing. The view, you can see so far in every direction, you can see (place?) from here (place? 07:25)

Esyllt: Yeah.

Kiri: All places of cultural significance if you went to school in North Wales. And then right down the other way as well.

Esyllt: Yeah. Do you know what? After this when we get down I'm going to email the makers of my fake eyelashes.

Kiri: Yeah.

Esyllt: And I'm going to ask for a sponsorship deal.

Kiri: I genuinely think you should.

Esyllt: They have stayed on like troopers. Let's have a look, they are on aren't they?

Kiri: Yeah. But what glue are you using?

Esyllt: [Laughs] I know.

[Interim Music]

Kiri: Now you know I'm not a walker but it turns out I am very fast at going down mountains. I think I've found my thing.

Esyllt: Like I don't know how to describe it. You know those signs on the side of roads sometimes, with rock falling.

Kiri: Mm-hmm.

Esyllt: You're just one of those rocks.

Kiri: Yeah.

Esyllt: And you're not falling, you're just gliding down the hillside.



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Kiri: Gliding down across, in very high winds and very quickly across rocks.

Esyllt: Yeah.

Kiri: And that I found really fun and I don't know why.

Esyllt: You're a bit like my dog. So I have a Border Collie.

Kiri: Thank you.

Esyllt: [Laughs] And whenever we go out for a walk he sniffs about, he takes his time, he's really enjoying it trotting about. As soon as he knows we're on our way home, he legs it. And if he's on the lead he's like a badger, like scratching the ground trying to claw his way back. That was you on the way back, you're like a badger going home.

Kiri: Thank you. That's a lot of insults you've managed to squeeze into that short section but I'll take it.

Esyllt: [Laughs]

Kiri: I basically think it's more accessible than I'd assumed this stuff is.

Esyllt: Yeah. And I think it does help when you have a guide who kind of brings you into his world and shares his passion.

Kiri: Urine, oh yeah passion yeah.

Esyllt: [Laughs] Obviously yeah so different, no it's not [laughs]. It's also because I do love walking but I only do it with the dog. Whenever I was past people going for a walk without a dog, I think they're up to no good.

Kiri: You're right as well.

Esyllt: Basically perverts.

Kiri: Yeah.

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Esyllt: But I was with friends today so that was fine, you were my dogs.

Kiri: Wow.

Esyllt: Shall I stop talking?

Kiri: Yeah enough. So we're back at Lawn Lodgers which is this beautiful little cottage and we've got lovely food. And I always measure my expectations as someone who doesn't eat meat and dairy. But Little Welsh Kitchen who are based in Llandrindad Wales, they have done us a little like hamper, and it's lovely.

Esyllt: Yeah because our producer couldn't be bothered to make sandwiches for us.

Kiri: Just buy it in. So yeah they've delivered it here and we're sat here in our little lodge refuelling and then we're going to go, and it is part of it, we're going to go in the hot tub so we're ready for tomorrow because tomorrow we're taking bikes.

Esyllt: We are.

Kiri: All the way through the estate.

Esyllt: Yeah and my knees need to be submerged in water I think before we do that.

Kiri: Yeah we need a hot tub actually, we do need one.

Esyllt: Do they prescribe hot tubs on the NHS?

Kiri: If they do I'm going to push for gin and tonic as well.

Esyllt: [Laughs]

[Interim Music]

Kiri: Hi.

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- Esyllt: Hiya. We've just dismounted.
- Kiri: Yes. I've just got [speaks Welsh]
- Esyllt: [Laughs]
- Kiri: No we're on bikes.
- Esyllt: Yeah.
- Kiri: Gosh I feel so wholesome, up a mountain, on a bike.
- Esyllt: I know. I feel I need some padding though. You know when you haven't been on a bike for a while it's the seat that gets you.
- Kiri: Yeah in a good way if I lean forward [laughs]. No I think that as well, I always forget how uncomfortable bike seats are even though I've got plenty of bum.
- Esyllt: [Laughs]
- Kiri: But this is amazing. So I've never been here before and we are in the Elan Valley.
- Esyllt: Yeah.
- Kiri: By this massive, huge, huge reservoir which still these days sends water to Birmingham.
- Esyllt: Yeah as it should do.
- Kiri: As it should do yeah. Great fact to find out from our guide, I'm going to name check Issac but I'm hoping that we can leave that in, your name but I don't know if you're in witness protection.
- Esyllt: Yeah I love the idea he's meant to be somewhere else today.
- Kiri: [Laughs] 90% of Wales's water is exported which I didn't realise.

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Esyllt: No.

Kiri: So cool.

Esyllt: It is quite cool. I just don't think we're making enough money out of it.

Kiri: No.

Esyllt: But let's not get into that now.

Kiri: [Laughs] Let's make this a purely political podcast yeah. But this is unbelievable, it's huge, we're cycling along the old railway track and it's like this sapphire blue with huge like rolling hills around it. So apparently this actual estate is 72 square miles.

Esyllt: Yeah.

Kiri: I've just never been anywhere of this scale before.

Esyllt: No its vast isn't it?

Kiri: Yeah but even though its manmade it's so beautiful.

Esyllt: Yeah. Was it you who said when we were cycling up that it looks like Canada?

Kiri: Yeah.

Esyllt: Because I feel like we should be on a canoe or something on the water.

Kiri: Absolutely eating poutine. No it does, it does.

Esyllt: Excuse me?

Kiri: [Laughs]

[Interim Music]

Esyllt: I can't see you [laughs].

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Kiri: I can just make out the rim of your sunglasses and it's dark in here so I don't know why you've got them on you absolute hipster.

Esyllt: [Laughs]

Kiri: But we are coming to you from inside the dam.

Esyllt: Yeah.

Kiri: Which I didn't realise you could go inside.

Esyllt: No.

Kiri: So that noise you can hear is wind but it's also water rushing around us.

Esyllt: Yeah.

Kiri: It is amazing, it's this hugely long Victorian tunnel with like an arched roof. You walk up to the middle of it and it's the valve room which controls the actual valve.

Esyllt: Yeah it's very hard to not want to touch something.

Kiri: No, no, there's some big red buttons which I was looking out for the whole time. Also some information boards.

Esyllt: Yeah.

Kiri: But it's incredible to see the actual mechanics of it. And because it was started in Victorian times, how everything is unnecessarily beautiful.

Esyllt: Yeah and just solid.

Kiri: Yeah.

Esyllt: It's really good engineering work.

Kiri: It sounds like you're describing me. Unnecessarily beautiful, solid and good engineering work.

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Esyllt: [Laughs] That noise though, you're talking about the water rushing over, it's like white noise. Like I feel like I could fall asleep you know like they do with babies.

Kiri: Yeah. And the view is unbelievable from that valve room.

Esyllt: Yeah. This corridor though is so creepy though I love it.

Kiri: It's like a prison.

Esyllt: It is. I could imagine like a ghost now.

Kiri: All right mate. You don't have to be so Welsh. Imagining ghosts everywhere.

Esyllt: [Laughs]

Kiri: Because you're gonna make me freaked out.

Esyllt: Oh do you not like ghosts?

Kiri: Well I'm not like bezos with them.

Esyllt: [Laughs]

Kiri: I'm not looking for one today, let's say that.

Esyllt: OK fine.

Kiri: I keep seeing something now out of the corner of my eye, can you see me looking round?

Esyllt: Yeah.

Kiri: It's like every time I look that way it feels like someone's walking over there.

Esyllt: Like a Victorian lady sashaying.

Kiri: No it's like a hooded figure it looks like.

Esyllt: A hooded figure?

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Kiri: Yeah I think I've probably just got a floater in my eyes again. So I'll be back at Halloween.

[Interim Music]

Esyllt: I am hungry again because we've just had the longest bike ride I think I've had in years.

Kiri: Oh roughly, roughly 16 miles.

Esyllt: Yeah.

Kiri: It was 8 back and it was a big loop. But we were on electric bikes which I've never used before and the electricity from the dams is put into the bike so it's all very ecofriendly.

Esyllt: It's so cool.

Kiri: They are absolutely brilliant.

Esyllt: Yeah.

Kiri: It's like a peloton but you can do an (errand?) on it. So it feels like being on an exercise bike.

Esyllt: Yeah and there wasn't too many inclines either so actually it was fine, it was doable without.

Kiri: We went into this, we went up a mountain yesterday and my legs are feeling that and I was like ugh now we've got to cycle. And then getting on an electric bike was like this is so great because I can just enjoy everything and take it in and I'm not concentrating on, I would normally be like I can see there's a hill up ahead and therefore I don't want to go any further.

Esyllt: Yeah.

Kiri: But I feel so buzzed I had such a lovely time.

Esyllt: Yeah.

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Kiri: The dams are incredible.

Esyllt: Yeah.

Kiri: The Valley itself is stunning, it's such a feat of engineering.

Esyllt: And we passed a little church as well that I think everyone should get married in.

Kiri: It's beautiful.

Esyllt: Yeah.

Kiri: And it was at the bottom of the reservoir and they moved it to sort of keep the community happy. Good luck mate, good luck if you're flooding a valley to give Birmingham water and then do more than a church.

Esyllt: [Laughs]

Kiri: And also one of my favourite highlights of the trip was we saw where Eustace Tickle lived.

Esyllt: Tickle yeah.

Kiri: Who built one of the dams and he lived there with his wife whose name was?

Esyllt: Fanny Tickle.

Kiri: Absolutely brilliant. Gold stars, no notes.

Esyllt: [Laughs] Also I love as an aside to kind of wrap up on everything we've done so far. So yesterday we walked up a mountain, today we were on bikes. I feel now like our bums are sponsored by Visit Wales.

Kiri: [Laughs]

Esyllt: We should have that like labels on the back.

Kiri: I'm going to go for a good taste award.



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Esyllt: [Laughs]

[Interim Music]

Esyllt: We've just arrived at the Yamaha Offroad Experience in Llanidloes.

Kiri: Yeah it's a beautiful day, blue skies, we got lost let's just say we got lost.

Esyllt: Whoa, whoa, whoa, we just drove past.

Kiri: We drove past, we drove past. Because if you look it just looks like a farm, like an unassuming farm. And then someone comes and physically gets you.

Esyllt: [Laughs] With two dogs.

Kiri: With two dogs. And we follow it around and then you see it opening up to this incredible visitor centre with three very shiny bikes outside. And someone here to greet us, would you like to introduce yourself?

Rowan: Hi my name's Rowan Jones and one of the guys involved in running the Yamaha Offroad Experience.

Kiri: So this is a very amazing looking shiny building, but you've been here for, did you say 30 years?

Rowan: In I'd say the late '70s some local lads down the Valley came and asked my taid whether they could come and have someone to help them ride a bike. And they did and my dad and my uncle got in because it looked good fun and they thought they'd have a go, so they had a go on their bikes and they had their own bikes and from there they got into racing and raced fairly successfully for a number of years. And Yamaha came onboard and offered support to race but also wanted to put a small fee to hire bikes in so people come along and try the bikes and can you do a little bit more coaching, and that's how it started

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in the early '90s with a very, very small fleet of bikes and has grown from there really.

Kiri: Wow. So people can come along to this if they've never been on a bike before?

Rowan: Yeah they certainly can.

Esyllt: OK sorry that's basically me.

Kiri: Yeah.

Rowan: [Laughs]

Kiri: I was staring at Esyllt when I asked that question yeah.

Rowan: Yeah I would say typically the majority of our customers would be maybe road motorcyclists who have never ridden offroad but yeah we have plenty of customers that have never ridden a motorcycle before and are totally starting from scratch with no experience. And lots of them cope really well and progress really well at the day so yeah. But we can cater for pretty much anybody and everybody from the age of 12 upwards.

Esyllt: Great.

Kiri: Amazing.

Esyllt: I genuinely can't wait. What people can't see right now is what we're dressed in.

Kiri: Yeah.

Esyllt: I think we look so cool.

Kiri: Yeah so do I. We've got these massive I mean like...

Esyllt: They're like ski boots aren't they?

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Kiri: Yeah ski boots yeah so it's like hard plastic where you can't really move your feet in them. And then we've got kneepads on under our trousers.

Esyllt: I really want to do like a knee side you know?

Kiri: Yeah like at a wedding.

Esyllt: Yeah [laughs] I was thinking more like a rockstar but yeah sure.

Kiri: OK yeah. And then we've got an armoured shirt underneath our sort of breathable vest. And I'm swaggering about like you wouldn't believe.

Esyllt: Imagine going on stage looking like this.

Kiri: Imagine not.

Esyllt: [Laughs]

Rowan: [Laughs]

Kiri: Now I've put it on. So why do we need all this gear? What are we going to do?

Rowan: Right so essentially the gear is all aimed around comfort and protection really.

Kiri: I'd say protection [laughs].

Esyllt: [Laughs]

Rowan: Yeah for the worst case scenario but what we're going to do today we're going to have I suppose a taster session of what we do, we're going to try and get you guys out on the bikes, introduce the basics of offroad motorcycling, sort of starting, stopping, clutch brakes, using the gears. Hopefully then get you up and riding down the farm on the bottom here. And then if we progress fairly well we're going to get on the top of the farm into the mountains and get some slightly more technical riding, decent views,

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decent scenery and we may then get into the forest towards the end of the session as well depending on how you guys get on.

Esyllt: You ready?

Kiri: I'm so ready.

Esyllt: [Laughs]

Kiri: I feel so cool.

Esyllt: As you're leaning against the wall there.

Kiri: Yeah. No I'm really excited. It's a thrill like horse riding.

Esyllt: Yeah.

Kiri: You're feel like you're going so fast and to do it offroad like this is a real sort of privilege so I'm really excited.

Esyllt: OK. What do people say, eat my dirt? Yeah.

Kiri: Yeah I think so yeah.

Esyllt: I'll take that yeah.

Kiri: Bart Simpson [laughs].

[Interim Music]

[Revvng motor sounds]

Rowan: So a little bit more gas and remember to ease that all the way out, don't let it go. You're easing it all the way as such...You're doing really good.

Kiri: So I've, I mean is conquered a strong word?

Esyllt: I don't know what just happened [laughs].

Kiri: We've been out in the field practising stopping, starting, changing gears.

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Esyllt: Yeah.

Kiri: And now we're so good we're being allowed loose. How are you feeling about that? Because you taught us.

Rowan: [Laughs] Hopeful.

Esyllt: I genuinely thought you were going to turn to me at the end there and say 'I think that's enough for today'.

Kiri: [Laughs] That'll do.

Esyllt: [Laughs]

Rowan: No you did really, really well before. We got the stopping and starting all under control. Changing gear. The main thing looking in control. So yeah we're going to now head out from the farm up to the top of the hill, out on top of the mountain, slightly more advanced trails and some great views and scenery.

Kiri: I'm so invigorated by the actual feeling like [mooing in background] It sounds like it's me making that noise now.

Esyllt: [Laughs]

Kiri: Just so invigorated. I've done my primal scream. But like not only was it like I feel like we conquered, well not conquered a skill but like conquered that fear definitely and felt like we achieved so much.

Rowan: Yeah.

Esyllt: That vision of you going up that steep hill, oh my God that's seared on my brain now. I will never forget it. It's so cool.

Kiri: It's quite fit this isn't it? [Laughs]

Esyllt: [Laughs]

[Interim Music]

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- Kiri: I have never wanted a meal so much in my whole life.
- Esyllt: I'm ravenous [laughs].
- Kiri: Starving. We've just had an amazing time at the Yamaha Offroad Experience in Llanidloes. I love that it's sort of tucked away on a farm in some of the most beautiful farmland I've ever seen in my life.
- Esyllt: Yeah because while we were driving there I remember telling you 'This doesn't look like a place where our adrenaline is going to spike like never before'.
- Kiri: No.
- Esyllt: And suddenly, yeah.
- Kiri: It looks like I would go and be elbow deep in a cow.
- Esyllt: [Laughs]
- Kiri: Which weirdly doesn't spike my adrenaline these days, it's so old hat.
- Esyllt: [Laughs]
- Kiri: But no, God I had such an amazing time but between that and the bikes in the morning, I'm a vegan but I could eat a horse and a cow and a sheep.
- Esyllt: Yeah. I'll do it for you, that's fine.
- Kiri: Well you can because we're going to the Triangle Inn. And they sort of pride themselves on sourcing everything locally. The meat selection is great. There's a really good vegan selection as well.
- Esyllt: Yeah. And they've been there since the 16<sup>th</sup> century.
- Kiri: Oh really?

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Esyllt: Mm. So I think if you've gone that long you must be doing something right.

Kiri: Yes [laughs] yeah and still have a five star hygiene rated. I think that is very, very impressive.

[Interim Music]

Kiri: How nice is the Triangle Inn?

Esyllt: That food was amazing.

Kiri: Yeah again living vicariously through you.

Esyllt: Yeah.

Kiri: Watching you eat a lamb shank.

Esyllt: [Laughs]

Kiri: Going 'That mash looks good. That gravy looks good.'

Esyllt: You kept commenting on the different colours on my plate [laughs]. Like how yellow the mash was and how dark the gravy was.

Kiri: Yeah but it looked incredible. It looked so good. And also they were flying out. It was really busy.

Esyllt: Mm.

Kiri: [Speaks Welsh] A word I've learnt from you. It was really busy and everyone was having lamb shanks because they would see them come out and be like 'I will have one of those actually'. And really lovely service, the people who work there are gorgeous.

Esyllt: Yeah.

Kiri: It's a really nice pub.

Esyllt: How was your burger?

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- Kiri: It was great. I had I think it was like oriental style vegan burger. That's a lot of words I'm not used to hearing together. But it was delicious, it was great. Yeah banged that down. And also, sorry to be my dad about this, wonderful portion size. Because I was starving.
- Esyllt: Yeah.
- Kiri: And now all I want to do is I am going to fall asleep.
- Esyllt: Yeah you're going to go for a nap aren't you?
- Kiri: Yeah absolutely because we're star gazing this evening.
- Esyllt: Yeah.
- Kiri: And I don't want to be lying on a blanket gazing up into a dark sky area and you'll hear me going [snoring].
- Esyllt: [Laughs]
- Kiri: So I need some kind of a nap before we go.
- Esyllt: I'm so looking forward, I love watching the stars. I will spend time in my garden sometimes when the kids are in bed I'll just stand out there after I put the chickens away.
- Kiri: And I think they look out and go 'Mum's not all right'. They see you standing in the garden staring out at the sky. It's been a tough time hasn't it?
- Esyllt: [Laughs] With no shoes on.
- Kiri: [Laughs] No chickens.
- Esyllt: So I do love it when it's noticeably dark outside and you can see the stars. So to go to somewhere that is going to be pitch black and that is renowned for being a dark sky like officially. Does it have a certificate?
- Kiri: I think so well I don't know it's got specifically a certificate.



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Esyllt: Where would you pin it? [laughs].

Kiri: It has status doesn't it? And it's an international status and there's not many places that have it. So not just the fact that we're going to go, I love stargazing as well but we're going with someone who knows their stuff.

Esyllt: Yeah.

Kiri: Who knows the good places. And fingers crossed he'll be covered in his own urine again.

Esyllt: Oh God [laughs].

Kiri: But then it's a pattern isn't it? And not a mistake.

Esyllt: I just worry that we're going to leave here and he will have just with all the hugs we give him when we leave, like he will have just marked us [laughs]. My dog is going to go absolutely mad when I go home.

So let's go and see David Winmorgan. We're meeting him in (place 25:50) hopefully there's somewhere to park the car.

Kiri: There is a specific carpark for the Dark Skies.

Esyllt: OK that sounds a bit [laughs].

Kiri: Well I mean it's hanging in the air isn't it what these kind of places normally were.

Esyllt: Yeah.

Kiri: Certainly as a teenager growing up in the countryside is where I'd go to get off with people.

Esyllt: [Laughs] Oh really? Oh it was the castle for me.

Kiri: Oh really?

Esyllt: Yeah. Yeah.

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Kiri: Ideas above your station.

Esyllt: [Laughs]

Kiri: Sorry I just can't get aroused unless I'm near a moat.

Esyllt: [Laughs] The threat of Norman invasion.

Kiri: [Laughs] He sounds like a nice guy.

Esyllt: [Laughs]

[Interim Music]

David: And you've been on motorbikes as well?

Kiri: Yes.

Esyllt: We have.

Kiri: And I'll tell you what everyone knows you.

Esyllt: [Laughs]

Kiri: Do you know what 'c' word they all use about you?

David: [Laughs] Celebrity?

Kiri: Not far off. You must know what they all call you. 'He's a character'.

David: Oh.

Kiri: That's what they all say which I think is lovely.

Esyllt: Yeah that's great.

David: OK thank you for that.

Kiri: Is that the Winter Circle there?

David: Yeah most of the Winter Circle is here now.

Esyllt: So what does that mean?

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David: A lot happens in the Winter Circle. So you've got Mars, you've got Beetlejuice over there which is a part of Orion constellation.

Kiri: Wow.

David: OK you can see Beetlejuice there.

Esyllt: Yeah, yeah.

David: You can see just about, it's the Belt of Orion constellation.

Esyllt: So all these years you've been coming up here, have you noticed a difference in how dark the sky is?

David: I've seen an increasing amount of light pollution is the phrase we use.

Esyllt: Is it Aberystwyth?

David: Yes it's Aberystwyth. You can see it there now can't you?

Esyllt: Yeah.

David: There's a glow there.

Kiri: That's that great spa they've got on the High Street.

[Laughter]

Kiri: I'm peer pressure.

David: That is peer pressure. I think we need to put a bit of pressure on peer pressure. That's one difference I've seen. I've also seen the difference in the popularity of the Dark Sky park. I've often been asked to go and have a chat with a landowner, a farmer who has possibly security lights on at night which in this instance here would affect the darkness and the chance to take a photograph in the darkness because I think it was Martin Luther King Junior who said 'Only in the darkness can you see the stars'.

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- Esyllt: Well we understood as well that there's an eclipse today.
- David: Yes, yes.
- Esyllt: But you can't see it here obviously. But even if you can't see it here, does it have an effect on the lighting?
- David: Not here.
- Esyllt: On this of the world?
- David: Not here. The only time when we get, '99 was the big eclipse in Cornwall.
- Esyllt: Oh I remember that. Do you remember when you had to prick a hole through a piece of paper to see it?
- Kiri: Was that a solar one?
- Esyllt: Yeah.
- Kiri: My dad gave me his welding mask. I had to look at the sky through that.
- [Laughter]
- Esyllt: Obviously it was like a tiny prick in a piece of paper.
- Kiri: No.
- David: I went down to Cornwall.
- Esyllt: Oh did you?
- David: Yeah with my mountain bike on the back of the car. And as we were on a mountain outside Redruth in Cornwall, we were all excited, we were waiting for the eclipse, it did get dark, dark, dark and the clouds rolled in.
- Kiri: Oh no.

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David: And you could sense the disappointment. By the time I got back to my car, somebody had nicked my mountain bike.

Kiri: No!

David: In the darkness.

Kiri: [Laughs]

David: So yeah I'll never forget the '99 eclipse but we do get partial eclipses as well. We've had them here in Wales. I've been twice now to the Elan Valley to see a partial eclipse of the sun. They are quite spectacular. Yes you have to wear special eyeglasses.

Kiri: Or welding masks yeah.

David: Or welding masks. But the best way to see them is to go to an event like we have in the Elan Valley where they have professional astronomers with telescopes, filters, and all the safety gear. You know it's so exciting to see.

Kiri: Yeah.

Esyllt: Well this has been, I don't want to use the word magical but it is magical. I always find it incredible. Because the stars are always there. I know that's just you know a fact. But we go about our daily lives and you rarely really take this amount of time to observe it and to actually take it in properly and to be able to see so much. Because the clouds are kind of rolling over but you can still see so many stars.

Kiri: Yeah.

Esyllt: Well thank you very much for sharing it us with us.

Kiri: Yeah.

Esyllt: I feel very privileged.

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- David: Well people come back again.
- Esyllt: We will do, we will do [speaks Welsh]
- David: It's a very special part of Wales. An area of astounding natural beauty and you've tasted and experienced a lot of this over the last few days.
- Kiri: I feel like I'm a local because I'm fuming at this car.
- Esyllt: Yeah [laughs].
- Kiri: With its headlights.
- David: Look at that. It's like pulling in for ice cream isn't it?
- Kiri: [Laughs]
- [Interim Music]
- Kiri: I'm probably not allowed to say this is my favourite episode am I?
- Esyllt: No!
- Kiri: OK.
- Esyllt: It's like choosing your favourite child.
- Kiri: OK well this child's coming with me.
- Esyllt: [Laughs]
- Kiri: Do you know what, it's because I knew nothing about this area at all.
- Esyllt: Right.
- Kiri: I've gigged around here. I've done gigs in [Places 31:12] you know those kind of areas.
- Esyllt: Yeah.
- Kiri: And occasionally I'd be like, what am I driving over?

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Esyllt: [Laughs]

Kiri: On the way home and [place 31:20] I've done gigs there but nothing like never visited here. It is amazing.

Esyllt: Yeah. I don't think I've mentioned this on mic yet but the Elan Valley, I love the Elan Valley so much that I gave my daughter her middle name Elan.

Kiri: Really?

Esyllt: Yeah because I adore it. I love how untouched and wild and just beautiful it is and how it changes so much in the seasons as well. Like you should definitely come back here in winter when there's snow. Oh it's just incredible, yeah.

Kiri: I think it's been so enjoyable for me. It's been that great mix of I am exhausted because we squeezed so much in. But I still feel completely, I find it really restorative.

Esyllt: Mm.

Kiri: And I feel relaxed and like a bit glowy, like all the best holidays where you're like, oh I'm knackered because there was so much to do and we squeezed everything in but I also feel amazing, I don't feel drained.

Esyllt: No.

Kiri: I don't feel like I do at the end of the Edinburgh Fringe Festival.

Esyllt: [Laughs]

Kiri: Where like I feel violated and like there's nothing left inside.

Esyllt: [Laughs]

Kiri: I can't wait to go home and tell people about it and recommend it and then come back.

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Esyllt: Yeah. Please come and enjoy this amazing area.

[Outro Music]

Kiri: this has Been Pod of Wales, Elan Valley and the Cambrian Mountains.

Esyllt: I've been Esyllt Sears.

Kiri: I've been Kiri Pritchard-McLean.

Esyllt: This is a Little Wander production in association with Visit Wales.

[End of Podcast]