

# NORTHERN AND CENTRAL EUROPE

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A DESTINATION SPECIALIST COURSE

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# Wales

Only slightly larger in area than the U.S. state of New Jersey, Wales is the smallest of the three countries that make up Great Britain. To the north and west, the Irish Sea and St. George's Channel separate the country from Ireland. To the south, the Bristol Channel cuts Wales off from the English peninsula of Cornwall and Devon. At the northwest tip of Wales, separated by a narrow strait, is the island of **Anglesey** and the port of **Holyhead**, where ferries cross the Irish Sea to Ireland.

The lush and lovely Welsh countryside, which is dominated by wooded valleys interspersed with mountain passes, sheep pastures, scenic lakes, and rivers, is perhaps the biggest draw for visitors. Along the coastline are craggy cliffs, white-sand beaches, and seaside resorts. Many Welsh castles overlook the sea; these remnants of a turbulent past once kept invaders at bay.

Wales's two largest cities, **Cardiff** and **Swansea**, about an hour from each other by train, lie along the country's south coast. The beautiful southwestern end of the coast, with its miles of beaches, estuaries, and rock-bound cliffs, is largely protected by the **Pembrokeshire Coast National Park**, Britain's only coastal national park. The southwest coast is lined with pleasant resort towns and villages, the most historic of which is **St. David's** at the end of St. Bride's Bay. The south-central region of Wales is dominated by the heather-covered hills of the **Brecon Beacons National Park** and the deep green valleys where coal mining once reigned.

North Wales is a region of high mountains, deep woodlands, and splendid castles. Its focal point is **Snowdonia National Park**, a favorite area for mountain climbing and hiking, which is accessible by car or mountain railway as well as on foot. The north coast of Wales is dotted with resort towns where a Victorian atmosphere still lingers, particularly at **Llandudno** with its wide beaches and pleasure pier. In northeast Wales, the town of **Llangollen** hosts an international performing arts festival each year and is known for the quality of its handicrafts.

## Geography

Just 160 miles long and 60 miles wide, Wales is packed with some of the most stunning mountain and coastal scenery in Great Britain. About

### FAST FACTS

**Land Area:** 8,019 square miles

**Population:** 3.2 million

**Capital:** Cardiff

**Languages:** English and Welsh

**Time Zone:** Universal time coordinated (UTC) +0; (Eastern standard time [EST] +5)

**Drive On:** Left

**Currency:** Pound sterling = 100 pence

**Electricity:** 240 volts AC

**Religion:** Christianity



© Wales Tourist Board

Walking in Brecon Beacons National Park

two-thirds of the country's interior is mountainous, while the rugged Welsh coastline totals more than 750 miles. Southern Wales has two mountain ranges, the Black Mountains and the Brecon Beacons, while the north is dominated by the loftier and more dramatic Snowdonia range. The population is mainly concentrated between the two largest cities, Cardiff and Swansea, on the southeast coast and in the deep valleys, formerly mining areas, that run north of Cardiff to the Brecon Beacons.

## Climate and Seasons

Temperatures and other climatic conditions vary widely in this small country. The southern and western coastal areas are similar to southern and central England, with temperate if cool and rainy conditions year-round. However, the mountain areas, particularly Snowdonia in the north, are subject to winter snowstorms and sudden drops in temperature. Temperatures in Cardiff average in the high 30s to low 40s Fahrenheit in December and January and in the mid- to high 60°F during the summer.

## Arrival Briefing

- **Gateways**—Most travelers from the United States arrive in Wales via London, usually Heathrow or Gatwick airport. Train travel from London's Paddington Station to Cardiff in southern Wales takes only two hours and service is frequent. Passengers arriving at Heathrow also have the option of traveling directly from the airport to Cardiff or Swansea by coach. For clients who wish to focus on northern Wales exclusively, flying from the United States to either Manchester or Birmingham in England may be the more convenient choice. Trains to destinations in central and northern Wales depart from London's Euston Station.

International service into Cardiff Airport is available from European cities, including Paris, France; Amsterdam, Holland; Brussels, Belgium;

and Dublin, Ireland. Flights into Cardiff are also available from cities in Scotland and the Channel Islands.

Ferry routes connect Ireland to four ports in Wales: Pembroke, Fishguard, and Swansea in the south and Holyhead in the north.

- **Customs and Immigration**—Inbound travelers on flights from outside the United Kingdom landing at Cardiff Airport need to show a valid passport but do not need a visa. No documentation is required for travel to Wales from elsewhere in the British Isles. Tourists are generally permitted to stay for a maximum of six months in Wales or other countries in the British Isles.
- **Health**—No unusual health precautions need to be taken for travel in Wales. It is safe to drink tap water. Travelers who become ill or have an accident while traveling in the country are eligible for free emergency treatment at National Health Service Accident and Emergency hospital departments. Payment for other medical services and hospitalization is required. As with all their clients, clients should make sure they have adequate medical insurance that covers them while abroad.
- **Changing Money**—Banks, hotels, airports, and exchange bureaus all exchange foreign currency for pounds. In general, banks offer the best exchange rates, but they can vary. Exchange bureaus, except for those at airports, sometimes charge hefty commissions and fees. Traveler's checks in pound sterling are accepted, but it is best to cash them first at a bank. Clients can also use ATM machines to get money directly from their home accounts. Major credit cards, particularly MasterCard and Visa, are universally accepted.
- **Tipping**—There are no definite rules about tipping, which is up to the discretion of the traveler. In restaurants, if there is no service charge added to the bill, it is customary to tip 10 or 15 percent. Taxi drivers are normally given a tip on longer journeys or if they have carried the passenger's luggage; usually 50p (50 pence, which is half a pound) or a pound is sufficient.
- **Business Hours**—Most shops are open Monday through Saturday from 9:00 A.M. to 5:30 P.M., with some also open on Sunday afternoon. In small villages, some shops close for lunch. In general, banks are open weekdays from 9:30 A.M. to 4:30 P.M., with some also open on Saturday morning or on Thursday evening.

## DID YOU KNOW?

Wales is very close by **super highway** to all major arrival cities in England. It is less than 2 hours from London, 45 minutes from Manchester, and 1 hour from Birmingham.

Museums in cities tend to be open Tuesday through Saturday from 10:00 A.M. to 5:00 P.M. and also on Sunday afternoon. Clients should double-check the opening times of historic sites and be aware that some are closed completely during the winter.

- **Telephones**—The dialing code for countries in the United Kingdom is 44, so dialing Wales from North America means dialing 011 plus 44 plus the 10-digit number as listed. Pay telephones in Wales take either coins or phone cards that can be purchased at newsstands, post offices, tourist information centers, and various retail outlets.

## Local Transportation

- **Rail**—While some main-line train service exists in Wales, particularly



© Wales Tourist Board

Ffestiniog Railway

along the south coast between Cardiff and Swansea, getting around Wales exclusively by train is not a good option, particularly if clients want to enjoy the national parks and other rural areas. However, the country offers a wealth of historic narrow-gauge railways that offer scenic short trips throughout the country. They include the **Snowdon Mountain Railway**, which makes a four-and-a-half-mile journey from Llanberis up Mt. Snowdon; **Ffestiniog Railway**, which travels along the north coast in Victorian locomotives; and **Brecon Mountain Railway**, which travels to part of Brecon Beacons National Park. A

marketing group called **Great Little Trains of Wales** ([www.greatlittletrainsofwales.co.uk](http://www.greatlittletrainsofwales.co.uk)) offers travel passes on some of the narrow-gauge railways.

- **Rental Car**—Touring Wales by car is by far the best way to see the country, which is filled with fascinating historic castles, ruins, and national parks where train or bus service is infrequent or nonexistent. Rather than rent a car in London, clients may want to take the train to Newport or Cardiff and pick up a car there. That way they will avoid the traffic of the London metropolitan area.

As in the rest of the United Kingdom, renting a car in Wales is often less expensive if booked in advance in the United States. Along with requiring a valid driver's license, most rental car companies in the United Kingdom will not rent cars to drivers younger than 21 or, in some cases, 25. For most Americans, the biggest challenge is driving on the left. The majority of cars in Britain are manual, so if your clients require an automatic car, it is advisable to book in advance as availability can be limited, particularly when planning to pick up a car away from the major gateway airports.

## Accommodations

Hotels in Wales follow the same rating system as in the rest of the United Kingdom of one to five stars, with five stars designating exceptional quality and one star denoting fair quality. The cities of Newport, Cardiff, and Swansea offer a good selection of full-service hotels, some with spas and other amenities. Wales also features a growing number of deluxe resort hotels with golf courses, tennis complexes, and extensive conference facilities.

In rural areas or small towns, Wales offers a fine choice of often luxurious country-house hotels located on former private estates. Bed-and-breakfasts, country inns, and farmhouses are also among the options. Local companies such as **Welsh Rarebits** ([www.welsh.rarebits.co.uk](http://www.welsh.rarebits.co.uk)) offer collections of unique upscale properties, including country-house hotels, luxury farmhouse hotels, and historic abbeys. Wales Great Little Places ([www.wales.little-places.co.uk](http://www.wales.little-places.co.uk)) is a collection of the best small hotels, inns, farmhouses, and guesthouses in Wales.

## Historical Background

No one knows how long people have lived in what is now Wales. Crude stone tools found along the coasts show that primitive tribes lived there at least 12,000 years ago. By about 2000 B.C., tribes wielding bronze tools roamed the countryside, and in 600 B.C. the Celts invaded. Christianity came to Wales in the 6th century when St. David, the patron saint, founded a monastery at the site of the cathedral that bears his name.

Romans, Anglo-Saxons, and Normans all made attempts to conquer the Welsh people. The invaders built roads, walls, castles, and cathedrals, including many that survive to this day. But it was not until the end of the 14th century that King Edward I of England made a determined effort to bring Wales under the dominion of English rule. Since 1301, the heir to the

### DID YOU KNOW?

Many believe that the real **King Arthur** of legend was a 6th-century Welsh nobleman who led the Celts into battle against the invading Saxons. More than 50 sites believed to be associated with Arthurian legend exist in Wales.

British throne has been recognized as the Prince of Wales with the investiture taking place at Caernarfon Castle.

The Tudor kings Henry VII and VIII made attempts to abolish the Welsh language in an effort to subdue the people. In 1536, King Henry VIII, who was born in Wales at Pembroke Castle, united the country with England. Later in that century Queen Elizabeth I authorized a Welsh translation of the Bible, ensuring the survival of Wales' native tongue.

From the 18th century through the mid-20th century, Wales was an important coal-mining center, providing almost one-third of the world's coal exports at the end of the 19th century. During the latter half of the 20th century, the coal and related steel industries began to collapse, leaving the country to search for alternatives. Today agriculture and tourism are the most important economic forces in Wales. In 1997, the Welsh finally achieved some independence by voting in favor of a Welsh Assembly. The Assembly, which comprises representatives throughout Wales, meets in Cardiff and has limited powers devolved from the House of Commons in London.

## Culture

Making up just 5 percent of the population of Great Britain and often an overlooked population at that, people in Wales are deeply proud of their Celtic heritage and distinct identity. The national flag of Wales is a red dragon on a green and white field, and everywhere you go there are banners and souvenirs displaying the red dragon, a symbol of the country's ancient past and the emblem of Wales. The ancient Welsh language, which is spoken by about 20 percent of the population, is undergoing a revival and almost all signs in the country are bilingual. While almost everyone speaks English, there are Welsh television and radio stations as well as language programs in the schools. Long in the shadow of neighboring England, Wales voted to establish its own governing body in 1997 and now elects representatives to the Welsh Assembly in Cardiff.

The lilting and lyrical nature of the Welsh language itself is an indication of how deeply poetry and music are ingrained in the local culture. The country's most famous poet, Dylan Thomas, hailed from Swansea, while the renowned Welsh travel writer and historian Jan Morris makes her home in the tiny hamlet of Hay-on-Wye. Along with nurturing writers, Wales celebrates its love for literature with the Hay Festival of Literature and the Arts, which draws authors from around the world to this small town that is said to have more bookstores per capita than any place on earth.

Wales also enjoys a rich musical heritage, especially evident in the number of excellent male choirs that the country is known for. Much of traditional Welsh music, song, and dance springs from its Celtic heritage and is showcased during the various *eisteddfodau* (Welsh festivals) that are held throughout the country. The most important of these is the National Eisteddfod of Wales, which takes place in a different location each August and combines colorful ceremony with competitions in poetry, dance, and music.

As is true elsewhere in the British Isles, Wales is a wonderful place to enjoy historic architecture. In particular, the medieval period left the country with Europe's highest concentration of castles and fortified sites. They range from romantic ruins such as the majestic Tintern Abbey to the mighty fortresses of Caernarfon and Conwy.

## Celebrations and Special Events

### March

- **St. David's Day**—Special activities take place **throughout Wales** on March 1 to commemorate the country's patron saint.

### May

- **Hay Festival of Literature and the Arts**—Authors and book lovers from around the world converge on the town of **Hay-on-Wye** in late May and early June for readings, lectures, book sales, and other literary events.

### July

- **Llangollen International Musical Eisteddfod**—One of Europe's top performing arts festivals, the event features music, dance, and song in the town of **Llangollen** in early to mid-July. A highlight is the international choir competition.

### August

- **Brecon Jazz Festival**—The market town of **Brecon** is the venue for this acclaimed annual festival held in mid-August that draws top jazz performers.



© Wales Tourist Board Photolibrary  
Llangollen International Musical Eisteddfod

**DID YOU KNOW?**

**Llanwrtyd Wells** (*thlan UR tidd wells*) in central Wales is the site of the **World Bog Snorkeling Championship**, an annual event in August in which competitors snorkel the length of a murky trench.

- **National Eisteddfod of Wales**—Taking place in early August in a **different region of Wales** each year, the event showcases Welsh music, art, crafts, dance, drama, and traditional ceremonies.

**October**

- **Dylan Thomas Literary Festival**—Poetry readings and other events highlight this annual celebration of Dylan Thomas in his hometown of **Swansea**. The event runs from late October through early November.

**Dining and Entertainment**

Wales is especially known for the quality of its lamb and farmhouse cheeses. Visitors may want to try cawl, a warming soup made from winter vegetables and chunks of lamb, or Welsh rarebit, a savory mixture of different melted cheeses and a splash of ale served over toast. Fish is also a good dish to order in Wales and can include salmon, sea trout, sewen, or cockles, which are bivalves similar to clams. Tea in Wales is rarely served without Welsh cakes, flat griddle scones studded with currants.

**DID YOU KNOW?**

The Welsh specialty **laverbread** is not bread at all, but a mixture of cereal, edible seaweed, and bacon fat, while **Glamorganshire sausage** is actually made with a mixture of cheeses, not meat.

Emphasizing the country’s quality local ingredients, a movement called Taste of Wales has encouraged many restaurants to make the most of fresh Welsh produce, meat, and dairy products in both traditional and modern dishes. Those that meet the standard display the Taste of Wales logo on their facades.

A popular visitor activity is the Welsh medieval banquet, a traditional feast with mead and entertainment, which can be enjoyed at Cardiff Castle and other historic sites. In a country known for musical talent, especially singing, it is a particular treat to attend a Welsh choir concert or a traditional evening of Welsh songs and harp music. Wales is also the scene of several international music festivals.

**DID YOU KNOW?**

**Welsh gold** has been highly valued since ancient times. Royal brides, including Princess Anne and the late Princess of Wales, had wedding rings made of Welsh gold.

**Shopping**

Pieces of handcrafted silver or gold jewelry in traditional Welsh designs are perhaps the most distinctive items to shop for in Wales. Welsh pottery and woolen sweaters are also of good quality. Book lovers will especially enjoy browsing for new, used, and rare books in the dozens of bookshops in Hay-on-Wye. Antique enthusiasts will enjoy shopping in Abergavenny and other towns throughout Wales.

## Around Wales: Attractions

### Cardiff

One of the most surprising cities in Great Britain is Cardiff. The Welsh capital has been transformed in recent years from an industrial city to an attractive destination for visitors. Its central area is graced by historic and modern shopping arcades, new concert and sports venues, museums, and landmarks. Its star attraction is **Cardiff Castle**, which started as a Roman fort and then was greatly added to and embellished over the years. Its reception rooms were sumptuously decorated during Victorian times and are well worth a tour for their painted ceilings alone.

Cardiff's museums include the **National Museum & Gallery of Wales**, which features not only Welsh artworks but also one of the finest collections of Impressionist paintings outside of Paris, France. Five miles from the central city, in St. Fagan's, is the **Museum of Welsh Life**, an important open-air museum that preserves more than 30 buildings illustrating life in Wales over the past 500 years. The 100-acre complex includes farmhouses, craft workshops, schools, churches, and a magnificent manor house, **St. Fagan's Castle**.

### Local Transportation

Cardiff Bus operates public bus service throughout central Cardiff and to outlying neighborhoods, with passes for seven-day unlimited travel available. The company also offers the Capital Card that is valid for both bus travel and regional train travel in South Wales operated by Valley Lines for various periods. Taxis can be found at stands or hailed from the street when an illuminated "For Hire" sign is on.

### Day Trips from Cardiff

- **Caerphilly Castle**—Just north of Cardiff, this castle, the largest in Wales, dominates the town of Caerphilly with its 30 acres of grounds, fortifications, lakes, gatehouses, and an intricate defense system.

### DID YOU KNOW?

The magnificent banqueting rooms of **Cardiff Castle** are the scene of a traditional Welsh evening during which visitors can enjoy a feast with wine and melodies sung to the sound of the harp, the national instrument.



© Wales Tourist Board

Old May Day Fair at the Museum of Welsh Life

- **National Botanic Garden of Wales**—This new attraction, located on the 200-acre grounds of an 18th-century estate west of Cardiff, contains the world's largest single-span greenhouse and is home to rare and endangered plants from around the world.
- **Tintern Abbey**—Located in the Wye Valley, an area of outstanding beauty along the border of Wales and England, the ruins of Tintern Abbey are a magnificent sight.

## Brecon Beacons National Park

Encompassing more than 500 square miles of mountain ranges, moorlands, wooded gorges, forests, and lakes, the park stretches from the English border to more than halfway across Wales. Hiking, pony trekking, boating, and canal cruising are a few of the outdoor options it offers. At the northern tip of the park is the little town of **Hay-on-Wye**, which is known as the unofficial used book capital of the world, with 39 bookshops within its compact confines. It is also the site of a major literary festival in early June each year, which draws internationally famous writers each year. The historic market town of **Brecon**, with its 13th-century cathedral and annual jazz festival, is also on the northern edge of the park and makes a good base for touring the region.

## Llandudno

A resort town on the north coast, Llandudno (*thlan DID noh*) has a stunning setting with two sweeping beaches and an imposing limestone headland called the **Great Orme**. A tramway takes visitors to the top of the headland, where they can explore a Bronze Age mine and enjoy the spectacular views of the coast and nearby mountains of Snowdonia. The town, with its pleasure pier and beachfront promenade, retains an old-fashioned 19th-century atmosphere.



© Wales Tourist Board

A view of Llandudno from the Great Orme

## Llangollen

Just a few miles from the northeast border with England, Llangollen (*thlan GOTH lehn*) is most famous for its international performing arts

festival in July, but it is also a good base for touring the surrounding area, where visitors can enjoy boating or canoeing on the River Dee. The town is known for the quality of its craft shops and such attractions as **Plas Newydd**, a stately black-and-white cottage where a group of eccentric and witty women known as the Ladies of Llangollen lived at the turn of the 19th century and played host to such guests as Sir Walter Scott and William Wordsworth. Just north of the town is the scenic **Horseshoe Pass**, a magnificent setting for the ruins of **Valle Crucis Abbey**.

## Pembrokeshire Coast National Park

The only coastal national park in Britain, the park stretches for 180 miles along the Pembroke peninsula in southwest Wales. A footpath that follows the coast for the entire length of the park offers gorgeous views of flower-covered cliffs, seals, razorbills and other bird species, sandy beaches, and estuaries. Surrounded by the park is Wales's westernmost enclave, the cathedral city of **St. David's**, where the patron saint of the country, St. David, founded a monastic settlement around A.D. 550. The city is Britain's smallest, and its web of narrow streets and the beautiful **St. David's Cathedral**, dating from 1174, are well worth exploring.

## Snowdonia National Park

Wales's largest national park covers some 840 square miles in north Wales and takes its name from the highest mountain range in Wales and England, which includes the 3,560-foot peak of **Mt. Snowdon**. While some of the mountain peaks draw experienced mountain climbers, there are numerous paths up to the top of Mt. Snowdon that can be hiked by anyone in good condition and without technical gear; however, as with any mountain environment, walkers should always be suitably outfitted and prepared for sudden changes in the weather. An easier way to climb the mountain is to take the narrow-gauge **Snowdon Mountain Railway**, which departs from the town of **Llanberis**. The quaint village of **Betws-y-Coed** (*BETT oos a koid*) in the center of the park is a popular place to stay and offers a good choice of hotels and B&Bs.

At the foot of Mt. Snowdon, the town of **Blaenau Ffestiniog** (*BLINE eye fest INN yogg*) was once known as the slate capital of the world. Although the slate industry died out in the 1960s, the town's **Llechwedd Slate Caverns** give visitors a look at the skill and courage required by the slate miners to carry out their jobs. It includes a tram exhibition, a mining tour, a theater, and a Victorian village.

Several of the most outstanding medieval castles in all of Europe lie just to



© Wales Tourist Board

Beaumaris Castle

the north and west of Snowdonia National Park. Each of them was built by Edward I in the late 1200s as a means of tightening England's grip on Wales. The town of Caernarfon on the northwest coast of Wales is known for **Caernarfon Castle**, where the investiture of Prince Charles as Prince of Wales took place in 1969. Across the strait on the island of Anglesey is **Beaumaris Castle**, whose watergate enabled warships to sail up to the castle at full tide. It is considered a masterpiece of medieval military architecture. Surrounded by soaring walls, battlements, and guard towers, nearby **Conwy Castle** in the coastal village of Conwy is also an

impressive sight. Together with Harlech Castle, all four castles have been justly awarded the status of UNESCO World Heritage Sites.

## Swansea

Swansea, the second-largest city in Wales and just 40 miles west of Cardiff, is best known as the birthplace of the poet Dylan Thomas. Commemorating the native son, the **Dylan Thomas Centre** maintains an excellent museum with interactive exhibits on the poet's life and times as well as a bookshop, a restaurant, a theater, and conference rooms. The new focal point of Swansea is the redeveloped **Maritime Quarter**, which is built around a 600-berth marina and is adorned with such architectural features as a whimsical lighthouse, a copper statue of Dylan Thomas, and attractive stone buildings with brightly painted doors. Its attractions include the **Maritime and Industrial Museum**, which features exhibits on the world's first railway. Southwest of Swansea, the 14-mile-long **Gower Peninsula**, designated an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty by the U.K. government, is a scenic area of small villages, tidal marshes, headlands, and sandy beaches.

## Selling Wales

### What's Special about Wales?

With much of its land environmentally protected, Wales is one of the best places in Europe to enjoy natural, unspoiled beauty. Within its compact

borders are three national parks, which preserve miles of magnificent mountain and coastal scenery. Several endangered species, including the bottlenose dolphin, thrive in this natural environment.

Steeped in Celtic history and legend, Wales offers an abundance of romantic sites that reflect its long storied past. Wales has more castles per square mile than does any other country in the world. Roman ruins, ancient abbeys, and prehistoric megalithic structures are also part of its fascinating landscape. The country's love of music and literature is another distinctive feature, which is manifested by the outstanding musical and literary festivals that draw visitors from around the world.

### **Sales Strategies and Sample Itinerary**

Visitors unfamiliar with Wales may think of the country as a coal-mining backwater. They could not be more wrong. The country has successfully evolved into a tourism destination of surprising sophistication and charm. Its accommodations, which now include everything from deluxe resorts with championship golf courses to upscale urban hotels with elaborate spas, can match the quality of those in many countries in Europe. Many of these properties offer attractive spa, golf, or meeting packages. Restaurants, particularly those with the Taste of Wales designation, can also be excellent, drawing as they do on the superb local seafood, lamb, produce, and dairy products. Of course, those who are primarily interested in enjoying the great outdoors or exploring a hidden corner of the United Kingdom will enjoy Wales as well.

### **Tour Products and Niche Markets**

Clients with an interest in a range of outdoor activities will especially enjoy Wales. Soft adventure tours emphasize hiking, bicycling, and other outdoor activities. For those who enjoy fishing, there are 750 miles of coastline as well as numerous lakes, reservoirs, and rivers teeming with fish. In particular, the country is one of the world's best destinations for trout fishing. Horseback riding, hiking, mountain climbing, and sea kayaking are a few of the other popular options here. Wales is also a major golf destination, with more than 200 golf courses scattered throughout the country. The north coast and southern Wales have the largest concentration of golf courses. In addition, several golf resorts offer not only superb courses but also instruction and amenities such as health spas. Voted the "Undiscovered Golf Destination of the Year" in 2003 by the International Association of Golf Tour Operators, Wales will host the Ryder Cup in 2010 at the Celtic Manor Resort in Newport in southern Wales.

Because so many Americans have some Welsh ancestry (names such as Jones, Williams, and Davis are of Welsh origin), genealogy is an important niche as well. Genealogy enthusiasts can trace their ancestors by contacting the County Records Offices, a list of which is available from both the Wales Tourist Board and VisitBritain. Family history aside, many people have an

## SAMPLE ITINERARY

### Highlights of Wales: 7 Days

#### Day 1

Arrive in Cardiff in late morning. In the afternoon, visit the National Museum, known for its Impressionist art collection and other treasures, and ancient Cardiff Castle. In the evening, enjoy the restaurants, clubs, and bistros; take in a show at St. David's Hall or the New Theater; or attend a medieval Welsh banquet at Cardiff Castle.

#### Day 2

Drive northeast from Cardiff and head for the beautiful Wye Valley, stopping at the ancient ruins of Tintern Abbey along the way. Visit the historic border town of Monmouth, birthplace of Henry V. On the way back to Cardiff, stop in the town of Caerphilly to explore the largest castle in Wales. Overnight in Cardiff.

#### Day 3

From Cardiff, drive along the south coast to Swansea. Arrive in Swansea with time to explore the Dylan Thomas Centre and Maritime Quarter. Swansea stands at the gateway to the Gower Peninsula. Explore its spectacular

beaches and headlands. Overnight in Swansea.

#### Day 4

From Swansea, head west to Pembrokeshire Coast National Park to enjoy some of Wales' most stunning scenery. On the way, stop at the new National Botanical Garden of Wales in Llanarthne, near Carmarthen. Restored Regency buildings and a historic parkland convey the wonder of plant life in all its forms, but the main attraction is the Great Glasshouse, one of the world's largest greenhouses. Overnight in St. David's, enjoying the historic sites in this cathedral city dating from medieval times.

#### Day 5

Drive northward through central Wales to the north coast town of Llandudno, stopping at the town Machynlleth to visit such attractions as Celtica, a multimedia interpretation of how the early Celts lived, and the Centre for Alternative Technology. Overnight in Llandudno, a charming seaside resort town with a Victorian atmosphere in a

setting of beautiful beaches and headlands.

#### Day 6

Spend the day exploring Snowdonia National Park, hiking or taking a ride up Mt. Snowdon on the narrow-gauge railway that departs from the town of Llanberis. Visit the town of Blaenau Ffestiniog, where the Llechwedd Slate Caverns depict the lives of Victorian miners, or take a ride on the nearby Ffestiniog Railway. Overnight in Llandudno.

#### Day 7

Head southeast to Ruthin in the verdant Vale of Clwyd (*CLUE id*), a distinguished market and country town filled with historic buildings and eye-catching architectural detail. Continue to Llangollen, spending the afternoon enjoying the quaint shops, canal boat rides, a steam railway, and sites such as Plas Newydd (*plass NEW ith*), the 18th-century half-timbered home of the eccentric Ladies of Llangollen. Overnight in Llangollen.

interest in Celtic culture and history, and Wales abounds in important Celtic sites, including some that are believed to be associated with King Arthur. The Welsh language, which is still spoken by 20 percent of the population, is closely related to the Celtic languages of Scotland and Ireland and, along with the traditional music and poetry, will intrigue anyone with an interest in Celtic heritage.

Wales is also a destination much appreciated by train enthusiasts, particularly of historic narrow-gauge railways. Nearly a dozen specialty railways, some dating back to pre-Victorian times, provide delightful short excursions through the country's most scenic areas.



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Ruins of Tintern Abbey in the Wye Valley, near Cardiff

Most general-interest tours combine Wales with other parts of Great Britain.

## A Word to the Wise

Although generally temperate, the best way to describe weather in Wales is changeable. Visitors, particularly those hiking in mountain areas, should be prepared for sudden changes in wind, temperature, and precipitation.

## Secrets of Wales

- **Choir Concert or Rehearsal**—One of the highlights of any trip to Wales is the chance to enjoy the sounds of a Welsh male-voice choir, a moving experience that allows visitors to hear the heart and soul of the country. More than 100 choirs exist in towns and valleys throughout the land. Rehearsals typically take place weekly, and visitors are often welcome to attend.
- **Portmeirion**—This private village, located at the southern point of the Llyn Peninsula in northwestern Wales, was created by the architect Sir Clough Williams-Ellis between 1925 and 1972 using an array of buildings, fake facades, fountains, statues, and columns brought in from around the world. Visitors can explore the eccentric village and its lovely woodland setting.

## Pronunciation

### Pronunciation Guide

Betws-y-Coed  
*BETT oos a koid*

Blaenau Ffestiniog  
*BLINE eye fest INN yogg*

Llandudno  
*thlan DID noh*

Llangollen  
*thlan GOTH lehn*

Llanwrtyd Wells  
*thlan UR tidd wells*

Plas Newydd  
*plass NEW ith*

Vale of Clwyd  
*CLUE id*

The Welsh language, which is spoken by about 20 percent of the people, looks and is difficult to pronounce. Along with English, it appears on most signs. A few things to remember: “dd” is pronounced as “th,” “w” is sometimes a vowel pronounced as “oo,” “f” is pronounced as “v,” and “ll” is pronounced as “cl.”

### ► KEY POINTS ABOUT WALES

City/Area	Attractions
Brecon Beacons National Park	500 square miles of mountains and moors; hiking, boating, and pony trekking; bordering town of Hay-on-Wye known for its bookshops and literary festival
Cardiff	Largest city and capital; Cardiff Castle, and National Museum & Gallery of Wales
Llandudno	Attractive coastal town with Victorian-era promenade and pier; tram ride up Great Orme headland
Llangollen	Northeast border town with quaint shops; Plas Newydd, half-timbered historic home
Pembrokeshire Coast National Park	180 miles of stunning scenery along southwest coast; historic small cathedral city of St. David's, where Welsh patron saint founded a monastic settlement
Snowdonia National Park	Largest national park in Wales with the highest mountains in England and Wales, including 3,560-foot Mt. Snowdon; Snowdon Mountain Railway; nearby medieval castles, including Caernarfon, Beaumaris, and Conwy
Swansea	Second-largest city in Wales; sites associated with poet Dylan Thomas; redeveloped Maritime Quarter

## For More Information

The Wales Tourist Board and VisitBritain, formerly known as the British Tourist Authority, are the main sources for travel information about Wales. The Wales Tourist Board is offering self-study training modules on their Web site.

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Web sites: [www.traveltradewales.com](http://www.traveltradewales.com) (travel agent site)

[www.visitwales.com](http://www.visitwales.com) (consumer site)

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## Regional Web Sites

Cardiff

[www.visitcardiff.info](http://www.visitcardiff.info)

Conwy

[www.conwy.com](http://www.conwy.com)

Pembrokeshire

[www.visitpembrokeshire.com](http://www.visitpembrokeshire.com)

Snowdonia Mountains and Coast

[www.gwynedd.gov.uk](http://www.gwynedd.gov.uk)

Southern Wales

[www.southernwales.com](http://www.southernwales.com)

