A Welsh Exploration

From Snow-Capped Mountains to Rugged Coastlines

Avanti
Destinations

Cymru
Wales

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Welsh culture has long been rooted in the oral tradition, spreading stories and legends by song and poetry. To this day, Wales continues its cultural and literary tradition in many ways, including the Welsh National Opera and the Eisteddfod, a festival of literature, music, and performance.

Land of Song

Experience Wales

On the far western shore of the island of Great Britain is the proud and mountainous country of Wales, known as Cymru to the native Welsh. Recognized by many as the "Land of Song" due to its historical legacy for poetry and literature, Wales is teeming with culture. From metropolitan Cardiff to the scenic resort town of Llandudno to the majestic castle of Caernarfon, experiencing Wales to its fullest is a dense cultural opportunity, rich with history that stretches back a millennium. Even though it is part of the United Kingdom, around 19% of the population speaks Welsh, especially in the western and northern regions of the country. This makes Wales notably different than nearby England, while only being a convenient 2-hour train ride from London or Manchester.

With a diverse terrain ranging from craggy slate peaks to rugged coasts to undulating moors, Wales is begging to be explored. Relatively small in size, Wales makes the perfect trip for travelers who want to fit as many activities into their itinerary as possible. Driving from South to North Wales takes only around 4 hours and guides travelers through two of its impressive national parks: Brecon Beacons and Snowdonia. Along the way, countless castles, stunning vistas, and bespoke culinary opportunities await those that make the journey. Pack your bags for the perfect road trip waiting to be taken.

Home to friendly people, unique cuisine, and striking wilderness, Wales makes a great standalone trip or add-on adventure with other Great Britain destinations.

Home to amicable people, an unbroken literary tradition, incomparable cuisine, and astonishing wilderness.

Three Cliffs in the Gower Peninsula

Slate Peaks to Rugged Coasts

With three national parks all within a short distance from the other, Wales is easily explored through relaxing yet dense day-trips. No matter where you make your home base, Wales has a plethora of activities for you to embark upon.

Relax at the seaside resort town of Llandudno in North Wales, a favorite of Queen Victoria just a short drive from the grand landscapes of Snowdonia National Park, with a beautiful Victorian promenade called "The Parade" that stretches from the North Wales Theatre to the Victorian-era Llandudno Pier. Just across the River Conwy to the southwest is the town of Conwy, where the imposing Conwy Castle watches over the medieval town walls.

In South Wales, spend some time in Cardiff, the "City of Arcades," and take an all-access tour of Cardiff's most recognizable landmarks. Explore the independent boutiques, savor the local food, and catch a rock show in one of the city's many music venues. Then embark out into the rolling moors of Brecon Beacons National Park. Plentiful activities, some more active than others, await in Brecon Beacons. Explore the caves within the park, race on a mountain bike trail, go canoeing on the various rivers, or gaze at the stars in the night sky. Home to some of Great Britain's darkest skies, Brecon Beacons has little light pollution, and is an International Dark Sky Reserve.

Western Wales offers some of Great Britain's best beaches, clifftop castles, and rugged and craggy coastlines throughout the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park. Take a boat trip to Ramsey Island, a wildlife habitat with dramatic seaside cliffs that rise 390 feet above the water to find a vibrant ecosystem of birds that call the island their home. Near the cute hamlet of St. Davids, enjoy a romantic walk along Whitesands Beach – or if you're the adventurous type, try surfing at one of the best surfing beaches in Great Britain!

History of Wales

Proud people with a storied history, keeping Europe's oldest language alive.

Raglan Castle

Roman Roots

Despite its mountainous and rocky terrain, Wales has been inhabited by humans for at least 29,000 years, with Celtic tribes settling in its valleys until the Roman conquest began in 48 AD. Before relinquishing the country, the Romans began extracting large amounts of mineral wealth from the country, beginning the theme of industrialization within Wales. Remnants of this time can be seen at the city of Caerwent, 11 miles east of Newport, where some of the best-preserved Roman ruins in Europe are found.

In the power vacuum that the Roman Empire left behind, the Welsh Princes began to take control. The only history we have from this time period, around 540 AD until the Norman conquest of England, is almost all legend, as Welsh poets and orators began to establish Wales' literary tradition.

The architectural wonder of Wales, its 641 majestic castles, were mostly constructed during the wars between the English Kings and the Welsh Princes before Wales was finally defeated and annexed by the English crown in the 1500s.

Norman Keep at Cardiff Castle

Caerphilly Castle

Brecon Mountain Railway

Industrial Revolution to Modern Day

Beginning in the in the 18th-century, Wales quickly became one of the world's largest producers of coal, iron, copper, and slate. Many often associate coal mining with Wales, but it is arguable that slate quarrying was just as prominent during the time of the Industrial Revolution. During this time, the major cities in South Wales: Cardiff, Swansea, and Newport, all experienced major growth and became commercial centers of Wales. The effects of this industrial growth can be observed today through the various mines and factories throughout Wales, but none more impressive than the Big Pit National Coal Museum, where you have the opportunity to explore one of Wales' largest coal mines firsthand. Because of the large amount of natural resources being extracted from Wales, traveling by train is essentially a national pastime to the Welsh. There are many tourist-friendly miniature steam trains that are perfect for sitting back, relaxing, and immersing oneself in the majestic landscape of Wales. From the Snowdon Mountain Railway, the Brecon Mountain Railway, the Rhyl Miniature Railway (Britain's oldest running miniature line), the 40-mile Ffestiniog & Welsh Highland Railways, and countless others, miniature steam trains are a uniquely Welsh way to experience this grand and one-of-a-kind country.

Welsh Highland Railway

Ffestiniog Railway

London to Cardiff by Rail

From the cosmopolitan travel hub of London, taking a holiday to Wales is simple. It is only a 2-hour train ride from London to Cardiff, from one capital to the next. While few cities in the world can compare to the metropolitan delights of London, Cardiff has a charm of its own. With an easily walkable city center, Victorian-era shopping arcades, a romantic waterfront, and a vibrant nightlife with music venues across the city, Cardiff is the cultural hub of Wales.

Mount Snowdon

Manchester to
Chester – Conwy by Rail

After exploring Northern England, take a 2-hour train ride from Manchester to Conwy. An old Welsh city, Conwy is dominated by the prominent Castle sitting at the mouth of the River Conwy. The old city center is walled-off, creating a dense and historic market town that looks like no other. Conwy is the perfect base camp for an adventurous Welsh vacation, located only 20 minutes away from Snowdonia National Park.

Transport

Getting to Wales

Unbridled adventure, just a few hours away.

Menai Straits

Pembrokeshire

Explore
Wales with Ease

Due to its compact size, many of Wales' quintessential cities, national parks, and outdoor activities are all near one another. This makes Wales the perfect vacation from your vacation! Need to get out of the city? Take a road trip from Cardiff to Conwy and visit all the castles in between, explore the majestic coastline of Pembrokeshire National Park, or trek to the summit of Mount Snowdon, Wales' tallest peak.
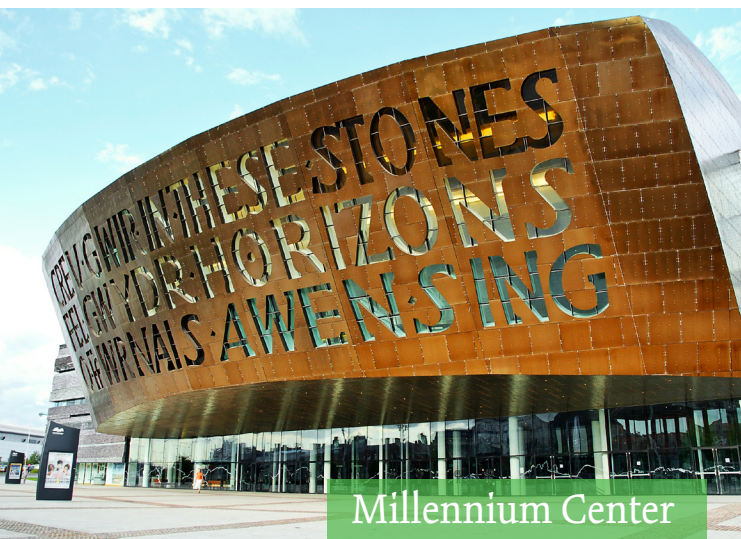
Cardiff

As the capital of Wales and its largest city, Cardiff is the seat of Wales' cultural institutions and the Welsh media. From the walkable city center, one can visit the Cardiff Castle, the Principality Stadium (home of the Welsh Rugby Union Team), the National Museum of Cardiff, and shop for local artisan goods or records within The Castle Emporium, all of which could be visited in an afternoon! With tremendous creative energy, Cardiff's vibrant arts, music, and culinary culture are spread throughout the city.

The Welsh literary tradition is rich in Cardiff, as the beloved author Roald Dahl was born there, the legendary singer Tom Jones was born in the nearby village of Treforest, and newer bands such as Los Campesinos and many others formed in Cardiff. Not only are the citizens patrons of art and music, they also have a passion for sports, as Cardiff has been awarded the title of "European City of Sport" twice, once in 2009 and again in 2014. After exploring the city center, take a pleasant walk to the Millennium Center at the waterfront, Mermaid Quay. Built out of entirely Welsh building materials such as slate and copper, the Millennium Center is home to the Wales' National Opera, musical theater, and various musical performances. Offering a little bit of something for everyone, from castles, record stores, artisan craft breweries, quaint coffee shops, fine dining, and museums, Cardiff was voted as Britain's most sociable city, perfect for travelers who desire a bespoke cultural experience.

Millennium Center

Bute Park

Conwy Castle
Standout medieval architecture meets Welsh ingenuity.

Conwy

On the banks of the River Conwy lies the castle town of Conwy, an equally charming and impressive feat of Welsh ingenuity with one of the best-preserved castles in Wales. In addition to the 800-year-old castle is the Conwy Suspension Bridge built in 1826, spanning the length of the River Conwy and designed to match the style of the castle. Walk along the walls to get a full view of this quaint Welsh city before visiting "The Smallest House in Great Britain" and the only surviving 15th-century house in town, the Aberconwy House. Conwy is a picturesque starting point for any trip to Northern Wales, located just a quick 15-minute drive to the seaside resort town of Llandudno and a 30-minute drive from Snowdonia National Park.

Conwy Castle

National Parks

Rugged coasts, golden beaches, rolling hills, and magnificent mountains

Snowdonia

Snowdonia

Sharp, craggy peaks of Welsh slate form the crests of rolling glacial valleys in Snowdonia National Park. Home to Great Britain's second tallest (and Wales' tallest) mountain – Mount Snowdon. According to legend, Mount Snowdon was the site where King Arthur is said to have killed a fearsome giant and the nearby lake Llyn Llydaw is believed to be the final resting place of the sacred sword Excalibur. Whether you trek to the summit or take the Snowdon Mountain Railway to the top, travelers will find breathtaking vistas of Wales at the top of Mount Snowdon. This expansive national park is an ideal destination for hikers, mountain bikers, and even golfers, with beautiful scenery around every corner or every bend of the fairway.

Brecon Beacons

Just north of the coastline of South Wales is Brecon Beacons National Park, with miles of open moorland, gentle mountain ranges, rolling green hills, and century-old Welsh villages in the valleys below. Outdoor and cultural activities abound, including natural caves, castles, museums, and old industrial mines to explore. With its picturesque landscapes and quaint towns, Brecon Beacons has been designated as a Dark Sky Reserve, a stargazer's paradise. For bibliophiles, check out the small town of Hay-on-Wye at the northeastern tip of the national park. Described as the "Town of Books", Hay-on-Wye has over 20 bookstores and hosts the annual Hay Festival in June, where over 80,000 visitors venture to the town to find rare books and hear lectures from prominent writers.

Brecon Beacons

Pembrokeshire

Pembrokeshire Coast

From the golden beaches to the rugged cliffs surrounding natural rock formations and sea caves, Pembrokeshire Coast National Park is Great Britain's premiere coastal getaway. As the only predominantly coastal national park, tourists from Britain and all around the world visit Pembrokeshire for a cozy cottage break, relishing the golden beaches and islands like Caldey Island. From the region's center, Haverfordwest, it is easy to visit the national park's many attractions. Discover ancient Neolithic ruins such as Pentre Ifan and the Iron-Age Castell Henllys, walk along the Pembrokeshire Coast Path, or go coasteering.

Within Pembrokeshire is St. Davids - which claims to be Great Britain's smallest cathedral city, a charming coastal farm town with local boutiques and cafés bringing traditional Welsh culture to life. Near the cute hamlet of St. Davids, travelers can appreciate the stunning scenery or watch locals and other visitors surf at one of the best surfing beaches in Great Britain. Western Wales offers some of Great Britain's best beaches, clifftop castles, and craggy coastlines throughout the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park. Ramsey Island, a wildlife habitat 390 feet above the water and home to a vibrant ecosystem of birds is easily accessible by boat.

Hiking North Wales

Colwyn Bay, Llandudno, Conwy, Llanfairfechan & Bangor

6 Days / 5 Nights

Trek along the scenic coast of North Wales from Colwyn Bay, to the resort town of Llandudno, to Conwy, Llanfairfechan, to Bangor and everything between. Just because you're hiking doesn't mean you can't experience the luxury these towns provide! Eat at the Michelin-recommended Bryn Williams in Colwyn and take a tour of Conwy Castle. Along your way you'll pass ancient sites such as a hill fort, a Mystical Druid's Circle, and the Lavan Sands – a tidal expanse that hides a drowned forest visible during low tides.

EXPLORE FURTHER!

Brecon Beacons

Pembrokeshire

Brecon Beacons Railway Tour (Pant to Torpantau) - 1.5 Hours

The journey takes you into the Brecon Beacons National Park, along the full length of the Taf Fechan Reservior before climbing the summit of Torpantau, high in the mountains of the park. The return trip will stop at the intermediate station in Pontsticill where you can visit the Lakeside Café, admire the view, or go for a walk alongside the reservoir.

Welsh Foraging & Food Tour with Lunch and Dinner from Pembroke - 10.5 Hours

Spend a day on the on the Welsh coast, fishing and foraging for a uniquely Welsh dinner. Begin the day fishing for bass on the Pembrokeshire coast with a professional guide. Continue the tour searching for seaweeds and edible plants. Stop for a midday meal before beginning a fungi hunt. Finish your day with a multi-course dinner, prepared with the foraged food from the day paired with local ingredients.

Raglan Castle

Snowdonia

Roman Sites and Tintern Abbey Full-Day Tour from Cardiff - 8.5 Hours

Explore Britain's best-preserved Roman ruins, including the remnants of Caerleon and Caerwent, cities with almost 2,000 years of history. Afterwards, tour the monastic ruins at Tintern Abbey, enjoy lunch at the nearby Abbey Mill Craft Centre, and then visit Raglan Castle – with beautiful views of the Monmouthshire countryside along the way.

Guided Gwinllan Conwy Vineyard Tour & Wine Tasting - 1.5 Hours

If you`ve been wine tasting in the US, why not try the Welsh version? This guided Welsh vineyard with award wining sparkling and white wines and tour offers a unique vineyard experience the stunning backdrop of the Snowdonia National Park.

Beaumaris Castle

A UNESCO World Heritage Site completed in 1330, this castle overlooks the Menai Strait that separates mainland Wales from the island of Anglesey, not far from the city of Bangor and a short 30 minute drive west of Conwy. UNESCO considers Beaumaris Castle to be one of "the finest examples of late 13th-century and early 14th-century military architecture in Europe" featuring concentric moats, outer walls, and inner walls. Certainly an imposing site for any invading army, but an insightful and breathtaking tour for history buffs.

Castles of Wales

Of course, one of Wales' most notable attractions are the hundreds of medieval and gothic castles that dot its landscape, 641 to be exact! The best way to explore Wales' castles is with the Cadw Explorer Pass, which gives access to more than 100 historic sites across Wales. It would be impossible to visit all 641 castles in just one trip, so here are our top recommended to visit!

Harlech Castle

Also a UNESCO World Heritage Site, Harlech Castle was built quickly between 1282 and 1289 and played an important role in several wars. Sitting atop a rocky knoll overlooking the town of Harlech in western Snowdonia, the castle was the site of the longest siege in British history during the War of the Roses. With a similar concentric design to Beaumaris Castle, Harlech Castle is a picturesque castle with a storied history.

Caernafon Castle

Straddling the mouth of the River Seiont, Caernafon Castle extends its walls into a small market city with narrow streets, tucked-away bistros, and centuries of untouched architecture. According to legend, during construction of the castle the body of Roman Emperor, Magnus Maximus, was discovered and subsequently reburied in a local church. Caernafon is not far from the ancient Roman ruins of Segontium, which played a pivotal role in Welsh poetry and literature during the Medieval ages.

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Conwy Castle

Sitting atop a coastal ridge and overlooking an important crossroads near the River Conwy, Conwy Castle is similar to Caernafon in that it also has a walled-off market town in addition to the grand castle itself. Within the quaint market town is the aforementioned "Smallest House in Great Britain" and one of the oldest surviving houses in Wales, the Aberconwy House.

Caerphilly Castle

Only a 20-minute drive from Cardiff, Caerphilly Castle is surrounded by extensive artificial lakes and is the largest castle in Wales (2nd largest in Great Britain). The castle, completed in 1290, is famous for introducing concentric castle defenses to the country, incorporating a huge gatehouse, and featuring a network of moats and dams for defense. In addition to the defenses, the equally impressive castle interiors make this a must-see for any visitor.

Castell Coch

A 15-minute drive from Cardiff, Castell Coch is a Gothic Revival castle built in the 19th century, making it by far the youngest castle on this list. Built atop the site of a ruined castle, Castell Coch has been used as a vineyard and summer home for the Marquess of Bute, now administered by the Welsh government. With elaborate and symbolic interiors coupled with the striking Gothic façade, Castell Coch is one of Wales' most unique architectural feats.

Best of North Wales

Llandudno & Snowdonia

3 Days / 2 Nights

See the best of Snowdonia and Northern Wales in this short but extensive package. Stay in Llandudno, dubbed the "Queen of Welsh Resorts", and visit the nearby medieval Conwy Castle and the Welsh Mountain Zoo. Then explore the vast Snowdonia National Park. Take the 120-year-old Snowdon Mountain Railway to the top of Mount Snowdon, where you can see all the way to Ireland. From here, you can also easily take a trip to Harlech Castle, site of the longest siege in British history, before returning to Llandudno for an evening on the Victorian Promenade.

EXPLORE FURTHER!

Welsh Roadtrips
Choose Your Own Adventure

From rugged coastlines that hide dazzling beaches of Pembrokeshire, to the towering peaks of Snowdonia, and to the rolling hills and valleys of Brecon Beacons, Wales is the perfect destination for travelers who want to blaze their own path. Even if cars drive on the other side of the road than they do here in America, it is easy to appreciate the grandeur of the landscape that these meandering roads will take you upon. There's a term in the Welsh language called "Igam Ogam", which roughly translates to "Zig-Zagging", a motto for any traveler who wants to explore every nook and cranny of Wales.

The Coastal Way

Running the entire length of Cardigan Bay on the west end of Wales, the Coastal Way is a 180-mile trek with the Irish Sea on one side and the Snowdonia Mountains on the other side. Start in the north, at the city of Aberdaron and drive along the coast to Great Britain's smallest city, the lovable St. Davids. The Welsh coast is dotted by quaint fishing villages, grand castles, secret coastal caves, and romantic beaches. For foodies, stop at the Michelin-starred Ynyshir, a home once owned by Queen Victoria. With plenty of secrets to explore, the Coastal Way is full of hidden gems waiting to be discovered.

Llanddwyn Island

Skomer Island

The Cambrian Way

See the heart of Wales, from north to south, driving along highway A470 in this 185-mile journey. This trip could be completed in just one day, if you so choose, taking you through the mountain passes of both Brecon Beacons National Park and Snowdonia National Park. Of course, there's no rush to complete this road trip in one day! Along this route, there are plenty of quaint villages and other points of interest. Make a stop at the haunted Devil's Bridge in the middle of the Cambrian Mountains, explore the vast, untouched wilderness of the Elan Valley, or explore the waterfalls tucked away in Brecon Beacons National Park.

The North Wales Way

Follow an old trading route along 75-miles of the northern Wales coast into the island of Anglesey. Although the shortest of these journeys, your attention will be captivated immediately by a trio of imposing castles: Beaumaris, Caernarfon, and Conwy. Along highway A55 you'll drive near the cities of Llandudno, Conwy, and to Anglesey – all of which are home to Welsh art museums. Plenty of great food awaits you on this journey, including the restaurant Porth Eiras in Colwyn Bay and Sosband & The Old Butchers in Menai Bridge. Not far from Snowdonia, The North Wales Way is a great way to start an epic Welsh odyssey with mouthwatering food and spectacular vistas.

Wales for Foodies

Bite of Wales

Cardiff & Brecon

3 Days / 2 Nights

Take a scenic tour of cosmopolitan Cardiff, including outings to the Cardiff Castle, an all-access tour of the Principality Stadium, the National Assembly of Wales, and the Millennium Center. Enjoy a traditional Welsh banquet within the ancient halls of Cardiff Castle and tour the Blaenavon Cheddar Company, an award-winning family-run cheesemaker. Then travel through the majestic Brecon Beacons National Park to visit the "Big Pit", a museum dedicated to Wales' industrial history featuring a tour of the coal mine. Finally, spend your last day on various culinary tours, including a tasting at White Castle Vineyard and the Penderyn Distillery.

EXPLORE FURTHER!

Sips & Samples of Wales

Cardiff, Saundersfoot & Cardigan

8 Days / 7 Nights

Take a deep-dive into the distinct culture of Wales while sampling a variety of traditional Welsh cuisines. Spend a day foraging on the Welsh coastline, discover Cardiff's food scene, take a wildlife boat trip, and sipping at breweries and vineyards along the way. Scenic views of the rugged coast are the backdrop for this splendid and thorough vacation through southern Wales.

EXPLORE FURTHER!

Taste of Welsh Classics

Caernarfon & Llandudno

6 Days / 5 Nights

Explore the stunning north coast of Wales and Snowdonia National Park, including the historic city of Caernarfon and the picturesque seaside resort town of Llandudno. Taste-test some of the finest salt in Britain, tour and sample award-winning Welsh wines, and trek to the peak of Mount Snowdon – Wales' tallest mountain.

EXPLORE FURTHER!

Cymru
Wales

Contact your travel
professional to book.