

# British Culture 10 - Visit Wales

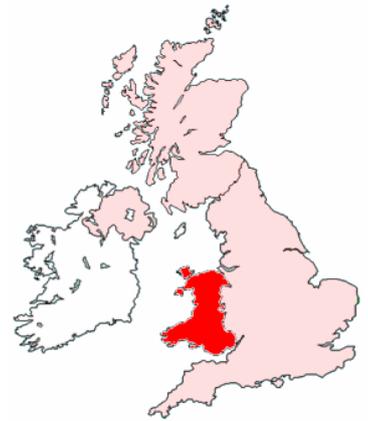
## A General Introduction

Wales is located on the western side of Great Britain and is one of the nations making the United Kingdom. The capital is Cardiff and it is situated in the south of Wales.

Wales has over 700 hundred miles of coastline and has a temperate (maritime) climate. The country has been inhabited by humans for tens of thousands of years.

There are 3 million inhabitants in Wales. The inhabitants of Wales are the Welsh. They speak two languages: English and Welsh.

Welsh people are fond of culture and sports. Wales' most famous poet is Dylan Thomas who lived in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The most popular sport in Wales is definitely rugby!



## Cardiff



Cardiff is famous for its castle, Cardiff Castle, which is right at the heart of the city. There are Roman foundations under the castle. Some parts of Cardiff Castle date back to the Middle Ages but most of the castle was rebuilt during the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

The Millennium Stadium is another important place in Cardiff. It was built in 1999 and it is used for rugby and football matches, as well as pop concerts.

In the past, Cardiff's docks were famous for exporting coal all over the world. The docks have since been rebuilt and have become a popular tourist attraction with lots of shops, bars and restaurants.

The Wales Millennium Centre is an arts centre which was opened by Queen Elizabeth II in 2004. The centre hosts performances of opera, ballet, dance, comedy and musicals.

The National Assembly for Wales opened in 1999. There are 60 Assembly Members. The National Assembly for Wales is now situated in the Senedd, a sustainable building inaugurated in 2006.



## St Fagans



St Fagans is an open-air museum which opened in 1948. It spreads over 100 acres. Over 40 original buildings from different historical periods have been re-erected. They include houses, a farm, a school, a chapel and a splendid Workmen's Institute. There are also workshops where craftsmen still demonstrate their traditional skills.

The objective of St Fagans is to show how people in Wales have lived and worked.

# Caernarfon Castle

Caernarfon Castle is located in the north of Wales. It is one of the best preserved castles in Europe. Caernarfon Castle is over 700 years old. It took 50 years to build the castle.

During the Middle Ages, the Welsh fought against the English. In 1282 Wales became subject to Edward I of England. In 1285, the first English Prince of Wales was born at Caernarfon Castle.



# The Welsh Language



Welsh people do not only speak English. They also speak Welsh (also called Cymraeg). The Welsh language is not disappearing. On the contrary, it is developing around the country! 20% of the Welsh population (over half a million people) speaks Welsh. All school pupils in Wales must study Welsh as a first or second language for 12 years, from the age of 5 to 16.

Welsh is very similar to Cornish and Breton and it is one of Europe's oldest living languages. The Welsh that is spoken today comes directly from the language of the 6th century.

**LLANFAIRPWLLGWYNGYLLGOGERYCHWYRNDROBWLILLANTYSILIOGOGOGUCH**

**ST MARYS CHURCH IN THE HOLLOW OF THE WHITE HAZEL NEAR TO THE RAPID WHIRLPOOL OF LLANTYSILIO OF THE RED CAVE**

Llanfairpwllgwyngyllgogerychwyrndrobwlllantysiliogogoch is a village located on the island of Anglesey, in the north west of Wales. This village has the longest place name in Europe and one of the longest place names in the world. There are 58 letters (51 letters in the Welsh alphabet, where "ch", "ng" and "ll" count as single letters) in the name!



# St Dwynwen's Day

St Dwynwen's Day is celebrated on January 25. St Dwynwen is the Welsh patron saint of lovers. She is the Welsh equivalent of St Valentine.

Dwynwen lived during the 5th century. She fell in love with a prince called Maelon Dafodrill, but unfortunately her father had already arranged that she should marry someone else.

Dwynwen was so upset that she begged God to make her forget him. After falling asleep, Dwynwen was visited by an angel who gave her a sweet potion to forget Maelon and turn him into a block of ice.

God then gave three wishes to Dwynwen. Her first wish was that Maelon be thawed; her second that God meet the hopes and dreams of true lovers; and third, that she should never marry. All three were fulfilled, and as a mark of her thanks, Dwynwen devoted herself to God's service for the rest of her life. She founded a convent on Llanddwyn, off the west coast of Anglesey, where a well named after her became a place of pilgrimage after her death in 465AD. Visitors to the well believed that the sacred fish or eels that lived in the well could foretell whether or not their relationship would be happy and whether love and happiness would be theirs. Remains of Dwynwen's church can still be seen today.



(Adapted from <http://www.historic-uk.com/HistoryUK/HistoryofWales/St-Dwynwens-Day/>)