

1. **Wales** (the Welsh name for Wales is **Cymru**) is a country located in the western part of Great Britain and is one of the four constituent countries of the United Kingdom. Wales has only one neighbouring country, England, to the east. To the north of Wales is the Irish Sea, to the west - St. George's Channel and to the south - the Bristol Channel. It covers an area of approximately 20,779 square kilometers (8,022 square miles). It is known for its rugged coastline, mountainous national parks, and rich cultural heritage.
2. **Language:** Welsh (Cymraeg) is one of the oldest languages still spoken today, and both Welsh and English are official languages in Wales. Welsh is one of the oldest living languages in Europe.
3. **Capital:** The capital city and the largest city of Wales is **Cardiff**. The capital city of Wales, Cardiff is known for its beautiful waterfront, vibrant cultural scene, and historic sites such as Cardiff Castle and the National Museum Cardiff.
The other four major cities in Wales are: Swansea, Bangor, St. David's and Newport.
4. **Hen Wlad Fy Nhadau** is the unofficial national anthem of Wales. The title, taken from the first words of the song, means "The Old Land of My Fathers" in Welsh, usually rendered in English as simply "**Land of My Fathers**".
5. **Natural Beauty:** Wales is home to three national parks: Snowdonia, Brecon Beacons, and Pembrokeshire Coast, each offering stunning landscapes and outdoor activities.
Snowdonia National Park is Wales largest National Park, established in 1951, is not only the first national park in Wales but also in all of the UK. Snowdonia is now called **Eryri**. The official change was made by the park authority in November 2022 and reflects the names traditionally used by Welsh speakers. The aim is to promote the Welsh language, respect the area's cultural heritage and preserve Welsh heritage for future generations.
6. **Rivers and Lakes:** Major rivers in Wales include the **Severn**, which is the longest river in the UK, and the **Wye**, known for its scenic beauty. There are also numerous lakes, including **Llyn Tegid** (Bala Lake) in Snowdonia, which is the largest natural lake in Wales.
7. **Culture and Heritage:** Wales has a rich tradition of music, poetry, and the arts. The annual **Eisteddfod festival** celebrates Welsh literature and music.
8. **National Symbols:** The national flower of Wales is the **daffodil**, worn on St David's Day (1 March) in Wales; and the national animal is the **red dragon**, which appears on the national flag. The **leek** is the national emblem of Wales. According to legend, King Cadwaladr of Gwynedd ordered Welsh soldiers to identify themselves by wearing the leek on their armour in an ancient battle. The **Sessile Oak**, also called the **Welsh Oak** is the national tree of Wales. The **red kite** is sometimes named as the national symbol of wildlife in Wales.
9. **St David:** the patron saint of Wales. He is celebrated on March 1st. He was a priest and bishop who founded many religious communities. He was canonized as a saint by Pope Callactus II in 1920.
10. **Population:** As of the latest estimates, the population of Wales is around 3.1 million people.

11. **Cultural Heritage:** Wales is known for its strong cultural traditions, including music (notably the Male Voice Choirs), poetry, and festivals such as the Eisteddfod, which celebrates literature, music, and performance in Welsh.
12. **Economy:** Key sectors in the Welsh economy include manufacturing (especially aerospace and automotive), energy production, particularly from renewable sources, agriculture, and tourism.
13. **Cardigan Bay** and the **Gower Peninsula** offer picturesque coastal scenery and are popular tourist destinations.
14. **Climate:** Wales has a maritime climate with mild temperatures and relatively high rainfall throughout the year. The coastal areas are generally milder, while the mountainous regions can experience more extreme weather conditions. These features contribute to Wales' rich natural heritage and make it a popular destination for outdoor activities like hiking, biking, and water sports.
15. **Historic Sites:** Wales has a rich history and is known for its many medieval castles, including Caernarfon Castle, Conwy Castle, and Pembroke Castle, which attract tourists from around the world.
16. **Sport: Rugby union** is a major sport in Wales. The Welsh national team has a strong record in international competitions. The game of rugby was invented in England, but Wales has produced many legendary players and is known for its rugby culture. The Welsh national team is one of the most successful in the history of the sport. It has achieved significant success in international competitions, including the Six Nations Championship and the Rugby World Cup.
17. **Football (Soccer):** Football is also highly popular in Wales, with the national team participating in UEFA competitions and international tournaments. The domestic league system includes clubs like Swansea City, Cardiff City, and Wrexham, with a vibrant fan culture.
18. **The Millennium Stadium**, known since 2016 as the **Principality Stadium** for sponsorship reasons, is the national stadium of Wales. Located in Cardiff, it is the home of the Wales national rugby union team and has also held Wales national football team games.

Fun trivia facts about Wales:

1. **Longest Place Name:** One of the longest place names in Europe is in Wales: Llanfairpwllgwyngyllgogerychwyrndrobwllllantysiliogogoch (the name consists of 58 letters). It translates to "St. Mary's church in the hollow of the white hazel near a rapid whirlpool and the church of St. Tysilio by the red cave."
2. **Castles Galore:** Wales is known as the "Land of Castles." It boasts over 600 castles, more per square mile than any other country in the world.
3. **Anglesey:** the largest island which lies off the north-west coast of the Welsh mainland.
4. **Snowdon** (Yr Wyddfa) is the highest mountain in Eryri National Park rising to **1,085 m**.
5. **The Brecon Beacons** in South Wales is another significant mountain range, known for its scenic landscapes and several peaks over 800 meters
6. **Ogof Ffynnon Ddu:** the deepest cave in the United Kingdom and is located in the county of Powys. The cave is 308 m deep and 48 km long.
7. **World's First National Park:** Snowdonia National Park, established in 1951, is not only the first national park in Wales but also in all of the UK.

8. **UNESCO World Heritage Sites:** Several sites in Wales are recognized as UNESCO World Heritage Sites, including the Castles and Town Walls of King Edward in Gwynedd and the Industrial Landscape of Blaenavon.
9. **Welsh Rarebit:** A traditional Welsh dish, Welsh rarebit, is made from a savory sauce of melted cheese, typically served over toasted bread.
10. **The Red Dragon:** The red dragon (Y Ddraig Goch) is a prominent symbol of Wales and appears on the national flag. It represents strength and endurance.
11. **Celtic Connections:** Wales has strong Celtic roots, and it shares cultural and linguistic ties with other Celtic nations like Scotland, Ireland, and Brittany in France.
12. **Land of Song:** Wales is often referred to as the "Land of Song" due to its rich musical tradition and many choirs, especially male voice choirs.
13. **Bilingual Road Signs:** In Wales, road signs and public information are often in both Welsh and English, reflecting the country's dual language heritage.
14. **Conwy:** A historic town with a well-preserved medieval castle and city walls, Conwy offers a glimpse into Wales' rich past.
15. **Caernarfon:** Famous for Caernarfon Castle, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, this town is a significant symbol of Welsh heritage and history.

The most important facts and events in the history of Wales:

Prehistoric Wales: Evidence of human presence in Wales dates back to the Paleolithic era. Neolithic monuments like the burial chambers in Gower (e.g., Parc le Breos) testify to early agricultural societies.

Roman Era: The Romans invaded Wales around AD 48. They built roads, forts, and towns, such as Caerleon (Isca Augusta) and Cardiff (Caerdydd). The influence of Roman culture can still be seen in some modern Welsh towns.

Post-Roman Period: After the Roman withdrawal in the early 5th century, Wales became divided into several kingdoms (e.g., Gwynedd, Powys, Deheubarth), each ruled by local kings. This period saw the rise of early Welsh Christianity and the establishment of monastic sites.

The Age of the Princes: From the 9th to the 13th centuries, Welsh princes, such as Llywelyn the Great and Llywelyn the Last, sought to unify Wales and resist English expansion. This era is significant for the development of Welsh identity and culture.

Edward I's Conquest: In 1282, Edward I of England conquered Wales, leading to the Statute of Rhuddlan in 1284, which annexed Wales to the English Crown. Edward built several castles, including Caernarfon and Conwy, to establish English control.

Acts of Union (1536-1542): The Laws in Wales Acts integrated Wales more closely with England, abolishing Welsh law and transforming Wales into shires governed by English law. This marked a significant shift in Welsh governance and identity.

Industrial Revolution: The 18th and 19th centuries saw rapid industrialization in Wales, particularly in coal mining and metallurgy. The South Wales coalfields became pivotal to the British economy, leading to urban growth and significant social changes.

Cultural Revival: The 20th century experienced a revival of Welsh culture and language, particularly through the establishment of the **Eisteddfod**, a festival celebrating Welsh literature and music. This culminated in a greater emphasis on Welsh identity.

Devolution: In 1997, a referendum led to the creation of the National Assembly for Wales (now Senedd Cymru/Welsh Parliament) in 1999, devolving certain powers from the UK Parliament. This was a significant step in recognizing Welsh self-governance.

Current Issues: Today, Wales continues to grapple with challenges regarding language preservation, economic inequality, and relationships within the UK, especially post-Brexit.

Famous people:

Dylan Thomas: One of the most celebrated poets of the 20th century, known for works like "Do Not Go Gentle into That Good Night."

Roald Dahl: Famous for his children's books such as "Charlie and the Chocolate Factory" and "Matilda."

Tom Jones: An iconic singer known for hits like "It's Not Unusual" and "Delilah."

Shirley Bassey: A renowned singer known for her powerful voice and hits like "Goldfinger" and "Diamonds Are Forever."

Manic Street Preachers: A rock band that has achieved significant success both in the UK and internationally.

Anthony Hopkins: An Academy Award-winning actor best known for his role in "The Silence of the Lambs."

Benedict Cumberbatch: While not born in Wales, he has Welsh heritage and has starred in films such as "Sherlock" and "Doctor Strange."

Gareth Bale: A professional footballer known for his time with clubs like Real Madrid and the Welsh national team.

Ryan Giggs: A former professional footballer and manager, known for his long career with Manchester United.

Charlotte Church: A singer and television presenter who gained fame as a child prodigy and has since diversified her career.

David Lloyd George: A prominent political figure who served as Prime Minister of the United Kingdom from 1916 to 1922.

Carwyn Jones: The First Minister of Wales from 2009 to 2018, known for his role in Welsh politics.

Alun Wyn Jones: a Welsh former rugby union player who played as a lock. He played most of his career for Ospreys and for the Wales national team. He is the world's most-capped rugby union player, with 158 caps for Wales and 13 for the British & Irish Lions, and also holds the records for the most Wales caps and the second-most Wales caps as captain. He retired from rugby in 2023.

Some of the most important places to visit in Wales:

Pembrokeshire Coast National Park: Known for its dramatic coastlines and pristine beaches, this national park is a haven for outdoor enthusiasts and those looking to explore nature.

Llangollen: This picturesque town is famous for the Llangollen International Musical Eisteddfod and beautiful natural surroundings, including the historic Pontcysyllte Aqueduct.

Brecon Beacons National Park: Renowned for its rolling hills, waterfalls, and scenic beauty, this park is ideal for hiking and exploring Welsh nature.

Swansea: A vibrant coastal city known for its beaches, cultural venues like the Swansea Museum, and proximity to the Gower Peninsula, which was the UK's first Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

Brecon: A historic market town that serves as a gateway to the Brecon Beacons, known for its rich history and beautiful scenery.

Aberystwyth: A historic seaside town with a university, and known for its pier, promenade, and the National Library of Wales.

Tintern Abbey: A stunning ruin located in the Wye Valley, this abbey is a significant example of Gothic architecture and an iconic site in Welsh history.

Wrexham: Notable for its historic buildings and as a center for local industry, Wrexham has a rich heritage and is close to the UNESCO-listed Pontcysyllte Aqueduct.

Traditional Welsh food:

Cawl: A hearty stew typically made with meat (such as lamb or beef) and various vegetables, including potatoes, carrots, and leeks. It is often considered the national dish of Wales.

Welsh Rarebit: A savory dish made with a sauce of melted cheese, often mixed with beer, mustard, and spices, poured over toasted bread.

Bara Brith: A traditional fruit loaf made with tea, typically containing dried fruits and often spiced. It is usually enjoyed sliced and buttered.

Laverbread: A type of edible seaweed, laver is often cooked down to a purée and served with bacon or included in dishes like cawl. It's also a key ingredient in the traditional dish of laverbread cakes.

Potato Cakes: In Wales, you might find variations of potato cakes, often made from leftover mashed potatoes, mixed with flour, and fried until crispy.

Pork and Leek Sausages: Known as "Welshtown sausages," these locally crafted sausages often feature pork and leeks and are beloved throughout Wales.

Sgidiau (Welsh cakes): These are a traditional treat made with flour, sugar, butter, currants, and spices, cooked on a griddle. They are often served with tea.

Faggots: A dish made from meat off-cuts, traditionally wrapped in bacon or made into balls, often served with gravy and mashed potatoes.