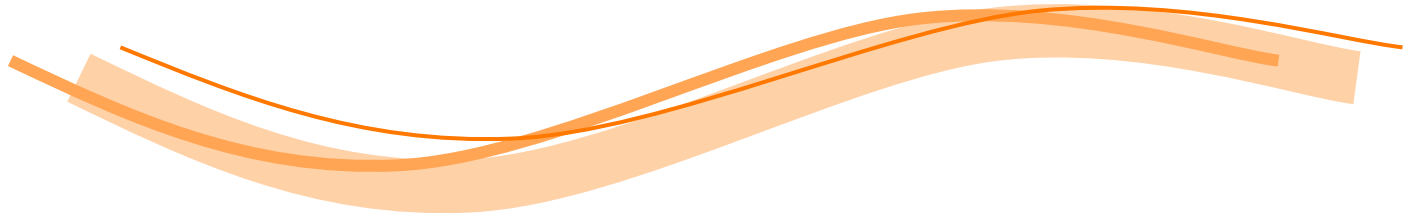




WALES





WALES

Just a two-hour train ride from London, England you can find yourself in a whole new country - Wales. A country that will soon charm you with the warmth of its welcome and amaze you with the richness and depth of its culture.

In fact, the Welsh culture is one of the oldest in the world – Cardiff, the capital city, has well over 2000 years of history. Wales has 641 castles – more per square kilometer than any other European country – a testament to its fascinating and turbulent past. The castles of Wales are open to visitors: climb towers, walk ancient walls and explore dungeons. This is the land of magic, myth and dragons!

Welsh is the oldest living language in Europe and the most widely spoken Celtic language. This land resonates with literature and song and is bursting with creativity in both its official languages. The beautiful landscapes of Wales inspired Lewis Carroll to write Alice in Wonderland and Beatrix Potter to write her Peter Rabbit books. Many film makers have used the stunning Welsh scenery as a backdrop to their movies. Harry Potter, Robin Hood and Snow White and the Huntsman were filmed in Wales, just to name a few.

Wales recently celebrated the 100th anniversary of the birth of Dylan Thomas – so you could add Fishguard in Pembrokeshire to your film locations list. The famous 1972 version of Thomas' Under Milkwood (starring Welshman Richard Burton and Elizabeth Taylor) was filmed there.

The stunning Welsh scenery goes way beyond the film set. Wales is officially beautiful! Over 25% of the land is designated as either a National Park or an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. In fact, Wales has 3 National Parks in a small country that is only the size of Massachusetts!

In Snowdonia National Park you can climb Mt. Snowdon - the tallest mountain in England and Wales - or take a historic steam railway to the summit for the spectacular views. The Pembrokeshire Coast National Park takes in sandy coves, fishing villages, cliff-top walks and the rich nesting grounds for millions of seabirds. In the distance, spot dolphins in Cardigan Bay, or seals basking in the sun. And get outdoors in the Brecon Beacons National Park – where you can explore on horseback, bicycle or on foot to really be at one with the enchanting landscape.

Wales will also surprise you with 43 Blue Flag Beaches. In fact, Wales has 1200 kms of coastline with breathtaking scenery – it is the only

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	<p>country in the world to have its entire coastline as one continuous coastal pathway. And even if you can only take a short coastal walk - the views from this hiking trail are an essential part of any Welsh experience.</p> <p>After all that hiking you will be hungry – and Wales is increasingly achieving a excellent reputation for its gastronomy. Produce served in Wales is FRESH! Here you will find a real culture of farm to table and organically produced food. The seafood is excellent, and the oysters are superb as there is little to no fertilizer run off. Head to Machynlleth in Mid Wales to dine like a king or queen at Ynyshir Hall. It was once owned by Queen Victoria and is now a fine dining restaurant and luxury hotel.</p> <p>And this isn't the only hotel with Royal connections in Wales! For instance, Plas Dinas Country House, a few kilometres outside Caernarfon in North Wales, has been in the possession of the Armstrong-Jones family since the 19th century, and was once home to HRH Princess Margaret. Equally you can stay in small hotels, vacation cottages, cozy inns and Bed and Breakfasts in charming towns and villages throughout the country.</p> <p>2018 is the Year of the Sea in Wales. They're celebrating Wales' outstanding coastline and inviting you to discover epic experiences all around their shores. Start with the 1,400km Wales Coast Path which passes all manner of seascapes – thrilling, perfect zen, and everything in between. You'll pass hundreds of beaches, harbours, inlets and islands – while watching porpoises play and bottlenose dolphins dance in the distance. Try a new coastal activity – like kayaking, paddle-boarding or coasteering. Or follow the rivers upstream and explore the inland shores of the lakes and reservoirs. With a unique culture, warm Welsh welcome and the finest food and drink, Wales offers some of the UK's most exciting coastal experiences of 2018.</p> <p>See the Special Feature on the Year of the Sea at the end of these notes.</p> <p>And getting to Wales is easy with excellent train connections from the rest of the UK. So, with the added incentive of the Year of the Sea in Wales in 2018 - this is the year to visit Wales!</p>
<p>Location</p>	<p>Wales is the friendly green hilly bit on the western side of Britain. More geographically, Wales is one of the four constituent countries of</p>

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	the United Kingdom. It is located in the south-west of Great Britain and is bordered by England to the east, the Bristol Channel to the south and the Irish Sea to the west and north, and also by the estuary of the River Dee in the north-east.
Geography	The facts and figures might lead you to believe that Wales is small – it covers an area of around 20,800 square kilometres. But if you could roll it out flat, it would be almost bigger than Texas! Snowdon at 1085 m (3,560 ft), is the highest peak in England and Wales.
Name	The English name for Wales originates from the Germanic word Walha, meaning "stranger" The Welsh called themselves Cymry, "compatriots", and named their country Cymru (pronounced kəmri), which is thought to have meant "Land of the Compatriots" in Old Welsh Welsh.
Population	Around 3 million in Wales; Cardiff has 300,000
Language	The Welsh language is one of the oldest in Europe, spoken fluently by about one in five of the population. Although everyone speaks English as well, Welsh is a thriving mainstay of the Welsh way of life.
Currency	UK Pounds; currently (May 2018) one Pound = 1.75 Canadian Dollars
Tipping	As in Canada
Government	The National Assembly for Wales was formed in 1999, with powers to amend primary legislation from the U.K. Parliament. These powers were widened by the Government of Wales Act 2006, which will take effect after the 2007 Welsh Assembly election. The Welsh Assembly Government will be reformed from a committee within the Assembly to a separate Welsh Government executive body, with a role similar to that of the Scottish Executive. The UK is made up of Great Britain (England, Scotland and Wales) and Northern Ireland, and is one of the 25 member states of the European Union (EU). The UK is a constitutional monarchy that is a representative democracy, where Queen Elizabeth II is recognised as the head of state, and the elected Prime Minister is the head of government. By early 2019, Wales as part of the UK, is scheduled to leave the European Community.
Documentation	On arrival in the United Kingdom, you must show a valid national passport or other equivalent official document that establishes your identity and nationality.
Time zone	Five hours ahead of EST
Health	You are advised to take out adequate insurance before travelling to Britain. Your travel agent will be able to suggest a suitable policy. If you become ill while visiting Britain, you are eligible for free emergency treatment in the Accident and Emergency departments of National Health Service hospitals. However, if you are admitted to hospital as an in-patient, even from the accident and emergency department, or

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	referred to an out-patient clinic, you will be asked to pay.
Safety tips	By international standards, Britain is a safe country with low rates of street crime and violence.

CLIMATE	
General climate	Wales has a fairly temperate climate and can sometimes be overcast. However, Wales enjoys long summer evenings due to its relatively northerly latitude and periods of fine weather can happen in all seasons. The weather can vary greatly from day to day, but generally summer (June-August) is a hot 14-30 °C, and winter (December-February) is a cool 1-5 °C.
Today's weather	18 degrees Centigrade and mostly sunny (19 May 2018)
Best time to visit	All year round!

GETTING THERE	
Flying time	Flying time is 7 hours to London Heathrow. The capital city of Wales, Cardiff, is just two hours by train from London.
Cities	<p>Wales' capital city is Cardiff. The Romans had a fortress here in the first Century AD, but Cardiff's a lively youngster really. It was officially designated as capital in 1955.</p> <p>Cardiff Castle Situated in Cardiff's city centre, Cardiff Castle offers a packed programme of events that provide a glimpse into 2000 years of history. In its fascinating life, Cardiff Castle has been a Roman Garrison, a Norman Stronghold, a Gothic Fantasy with lavish Victorian design... and it harboured Wartime Tunnels during the Second World War....</p> <p>National Museum The National Museum Cardiff brings together art, archaeology, natural history and geology, all for free! That's right – there is no entrance fee to this fascinating museum! Starting with our ancestors, the Neanderthals, a quarter of a million years ago - everyday objects and beautiful artefacts tell the story of the people of Wales. Plus, it explains the forces that created the dramatic Welsh landscapes.</p> <p>The Art collection at the new National Museum of Art, within the same building, is one of Europe's finest. See five hundred years of magnificent paintings, drawings, sculpture, silver and ceramics from Wales and across the world, including one of Europe's best collections of Impressionist works.</p> <p>Millennium Centre and Millennium Stadium A testament to the renaissance of Cardiff as a modern city, and its world</p>

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class architecture, and are the two Millennium project buildings.

The Millennium Centre is an Arts Centre with 6 performance spaces and a year-round programme of music, opera, theatre and dance. The BBC National Orchestra of Wales, The Welsh National Opera and the National Dance Company of Wales all have their home at the Millennium Centre.

The Millennium Stadium is one of the most impressive icons of modern Wales. Join a guided tour to visit highlights such as the Press Conference Suite, and an official VIP hospitality suite. Discover the 2012 Olympic football dressing room and experience the atmosphere before a match in the “Dragon’s Lair” – the dressing room of the Wales’ rugby team. Hear the roar of 74,500 fans as you walk down the players’ tunnel towards the hallowed turf and lift the trophy to the skies like a sports star in the President’s Box, an area normally reserved for royalty.

Victorian Arcades

Cardiff boasts six historic arcades, which in total stretch to a length of 797m! The beautiful arcades still retain many of their original features and are home to dozens of unique stores as well as some of Cardiff’s most interesting cafés and delicatessens. You’ll find vegetarian and organic cuisine as well as great delicatessens for foodies looking to stock-up. One of Cardiff’s most famous shops, Spillers Records (the oldest vinyl record store in the world) is based in Morgan Arcade – its 3rd home since opening in 1894.

Cardiff Bay

The city of Cardiff thrived as a port in the days when Welsh slate was proudly covering rooftops around the world. Now the old Cardiff docklands have been redeveloped over the last decade to create Cardiff Bay. This is home to a large freshwater lake for sailing and water sports, the stylish five-star St David’s Hotel and Spa, and Mermaid Quay – a restaurant hotspot with everything from Caribbean to Turkish cuisine. Cardiff Bay is also home to exciting attractions and hosts events throughout the year.

On the Trail of Dr Who

Cardiff is indisputably the home of Doctor Who. The series is filmed on location in and around the city as well as at the new BBC Studios in Cardiff Bay. Just next door, the Doctor Who Experience has brought the Doctor back to his roots, making a stop in Cardiff the perfect choice for Doctor Who fans of any age.

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Distances	Wales is about 2 hours west of London by rail or by road. Cardiff is about 170 km from London.
Ferries	Regular ferry service to Ireland leave from various Welsh ports such as Swansea Holyhead, Pembroke and Fishguard
Trains	<p>The National Rail network covers the entire country, leaving from central London locations and spanning out to the remotest parts of the UK.</p> <p>There are also 14 narrow gauge and steam railways such as Ffestiniog railway 24km; Snowdon Mountain Railway; Brecon Mountain Railway</p> <p>For frequent train journeys, a Britrail Flexipass allows travel for up to 15 days in two months; a Classic Pass allows travel on a certain number of consecutive days up to one month.</p> <p>Take the mountain train up Snowdon</p> <p>Snowdon or Yr Wyddfa, as it's known in the native Welsh, is the highest mountain in Wales at 1,085 metres. The Snowdon Mountain Railway is a spectacular way to arrive at the 'rooftop' of Wales, where you'll be greeted with breathtaking views and the highest visitor centre in Britain.</p> <p>www.snowdonrailway.co.uk</p>
Car Rental	All major car rental companies are available in Wales. You may wish to specify an automatic car rather than stick shift. And remember that you will be driving on the left!
Buses	The Tourist Trail Pass will give you unlimited travel on all coach services in England and Wales for a choice of 2, 5, 7 or 14 days.
Passes	<p>The best way to save money (and skip the lines!) at all the National Trust and CADW - Welsh Historic Monuments properties is to get a Great British Heritage Pass. The passes are only available to non-UK residents.</p> <p>The Cardiff and Capital Region Discount Card is on sale in Cardiff Tourist Information Office. The card offers free admission for ten top attractions, including Cardiff Castle, Techniquet and the Millennium Stadium tour. Card holders will also receive discount vouchers with savings for shops, tours and restaurants in Cardiff.</p>

ACCOMMODATION TYPES	<p>You'll find your ideal accommodation in Wales.</p> <p>Hotels range from luxurious country houses to friendly places beside the sea. Guest houses have moved with the times and now offer standards that rival many hotels, while farmhouse accommodation is something of a Welsh speciality (and a great introduction to country life).</p> <p>On the self-catering front, Wales boasts possibly the finest choice in Britain, with everything from seafront apartments to deluxe country properties. And Wales's caravan and camping parks are second to none.</p>
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TARGET GROUPS	
Kids	History, sports, fishing, steam trains...so many options!
Teens	Soft adventure opportunities abound throughout Wales
Romance	The Welsh lovespoon is a wooden spoon carved by a young man and presented to his sweetheart as a token of affection
Honeymoons & Weddings	What could be more perfect than a few days in a stately house hotel in the beautiful Welsh countryside?
Genealogy	<p>As the years go by, do you feel a yearning to re-discover your roots? You may have heard your parents and grandparents talk of their Welsh ancestry and would like to find out more about them and their communities.</p> <p>There has never been a better time start looking for your family. The powers of the Internet provide you with valuable information to set you on your way, but to get the very most out of your research, you will need to visit Wales. The National Library of Wales, county record offices and libraries can provide invaluable information to enable you to piece together your family history.</p> <p>Start your search by visiting www.visitwales.com</p>
Zoomers	There are many discounts on transport and attractions offered to Seniors traveling in Wales

UNIQUES	<p>Canal holidays are an ideal way to see Wales if you are looking for a relaxing trip. Travelling at no more than 4 miles an hour you can take in some of Wales' best scenery and experience little villages and quaint pubs that are rarely visited when travelling by car or bus. Canal boating is easy. A number of companies offer boat hire packages with full tuition provided on your departure day. If that's not for you or time is limited, shorter guided trips are available. Pontcysyllte Aqueduct on the Llangollen Canal is 128 feet high!</p> <p>Famous sons and daughters of Wales you will have heard of include Richard Burton, Sir Tom Jones, Sir Anthony Hopkins and Catherine Zeta-Jones. And lots of other people have been tracing their Welsh ancestry recently - including Tom Cruise, Susan Sarandon, Russell Crowe and Kylie Minogue.</p>
Surprising – Gold Mining	<p>2,000 years ago, the powerful Romans left behind a glimpse of gold-mining methods. The harsh mining environment continued in the 19th and 20th centuries, ending in 1938. Guided tours take you back to experience the conditions of the Roman, Victorian and 1930s underground workings.</p> <p>See and hear the 1930s mine and mine machinery. Have a go at gold panning and take the opportunity to experience the frustrations of searching for real gold. Underground tours involve steep slopes, so</p>

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	<p>stout footwear is essential. Experience the thrill of an underground guided tour; try gold panning in the sifting troughs. Enjoy the walks around this beautiful upland estate and the over-ground mine tours of Roman adits.</p>
<p>History</p>	<p>The Romans mined for gold here, the Normans built castles here and the Tudor dynasty was founded here. Each of the major periods of history has left its mark and the sense of continuity can still be felt all around Wales.</p> <p>Wales's Celtic roots stretch back as far as 1000 BC. That's a lot of time to cover, but here's a short chronology to get you started:</p> <p>1000 BC - the Iron Age dawns. Welsh people group themselves into large hill forts, practice farming, and work extensive copper mines.</p> <p>500-100 BC – the Celts arrive. Despite their fierceness in battle, their lack of political unity leads to their eventual defeat by more disciplined Roman armies.</p> <p>784 – The King of Mercia builds Offa's Dyke, the first permanent boundary between the Welsh and the English people.</p> <p>844 – Rhodri ap Merfyn becomes king of a small area called Gwynedd. By the time of his death in 877, all of Wales is united under his rule.</p> <p>1066-77 – The Normans establish the Marcher Lordships on the borders of Wales. They are reluctant to venture into Wales itself.</p> <p>1400 – Charismatic (but tyrannical) national hero Owain Glyndŵr begins his rebellion against King Henry IV. By 1404, he had summoned a parliament in Machynlleth, and crowned himself Prince of Wales. By 1408, Owain's ambitious plans ran out of steam, and this last real uprising against the English Crown was over.</p> <p>1485 - Henry Tudor returns to Wales, landing at Milford Haven. He defeats King Richard at the Battle of Bosworth Field and goes on to become King Henry VII of England.</p> <p>1768 - The copper industry is now using Welsh ore mined at Parys Mountain, the beginning of an industry that would control half the world's production by the end of the century.</p> <p>1839 – Bute Dock is built at Cardiff, supplying vast amounts of coal to the world's new navies, and causing Cardiff's rapid expansion into the largest and most important city in Wales.</p> <p>1905 – Cardiff is elevated to city status. It has experienced a seven-fold population increase in less than 50 years.</p> <p>1916 - David Lloyd George becomes the first Welshman in British history to achieve the position of Prime Minister.</p> <p>1932 - The weekly Welsh-language newspaper is founded.</p> <p>1935 – The first radio broadcast in Welsh is made.</p> <p>1946 - Welshmen James Griffiths and Aneurin Bevan produce the National Insurance Act of 1946, setting up the UK's welfare state.</p> <p>1953 – Dylan Thomas dies in New York City.</p>

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	<p>1955 – Cardiff is chosen as the nation’s capital. 1977 – Radio Cymru and Radio Wales are established. 2000 – First Welsh Assembly is formed.</p>
Books	<p>The best guide book in my opinion is Lonely Planet’s Wales, available also as an e-book: https://shop.lonelyplanet.com/products/wales-travel-guide-6?via=Z2IkOi8vbG9uZWx5LXBsYW5ldC9Xb3JrYXJlYTo6Q2F0YWxvZzo6Q2F0ZWdvcnkvNTlIZTQ5YmJmOTJlYU0MTg2MDU4NjI1 Look out for Jan Morris’ books on her native land of Wales</p>
1000 Places to see before you die	<p>Caernarfon Castle Bodnant Garden, Snowdonia Snowdonia National Park International Musical Eisteddfod Portmeirion village Hay-on-Wye Festival Dylan Thomas’ Boathouse, Laugharne Tintern Abbey St. David’s Cathedral</p>
Must Sees	<p>Wales has three UNESCO World Heritage Sites: - The castles and town walls built by King Edward - Blaenavon Industrial Landscape - The Blaenavon area, in the Gwent Valleys of south east Wales, has been moulded by the coal and iron industries. Its ironworks - which have been carefully preserved - were built in 1789 and were followed by the development of the mining industry. - Pontcysyllte Aqueduct on the Llangollen Canal</p>
SPORTS ACTIVITIES	<p>The Millennium Stadium sees more than its fair share of nail-biting football games: the FA Cup, the Worthington Cup, Nationwide League play-off finals. And there's golf, with Wales boasting some of the best golf in Britain and Europe.</p>
Volvo Ocean Race 2017/18	<p>The Volvo boat race by Gilles Martin-Raget/Team Alvimed In 2018, sailing takes centre stage in Cardiff as the ultimate sailing marathon stops in the UK for the first time in over a decade. Cardiff may have hosted its fair share of water sports events, but this will be the first time for Wales to host the Volvo Ocean Race. A former industrial port, Cardiff Bay has witnessed a phoenix-like transformation from industrial heartland to cosmopolitan hub.</p> <p>What is Volvo Ocean Race? Since 1973, the Volvo Ocean Race has been the epitome of maritime adventure and a true test of human endurance and teamwork at sea. The race’s concept is simple: it’s a round-the-clock pursuit, the ultimate ocean-based marathon, pitting the sport’s best sailors against each</p>

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other across the world's toughest waters. Over eight months, seven teams race each other around the globe, aiming to be the fastest to reach the final destination and pushing to break speed records throughout each leg of the event. It's often described as the toughest and longest professional sporting event in the world, and there's no doubt it's the most difficult team challenge in sailing. It's an epic test of strength, endurance and skill for the competitors – and many have spent decades trying to win the race.

Beating the clock - in a boat

Volvo Ocean Race 2017-18 will take the teams 45,000 nautical miles around the world, across four oceans, touching six continents and twelve landmark host cities: Alicante, Lisbon, Cape Town, Melbourne, Hong Kong, Guangzhou, Auckland, Itajaí, Newport (USA), Cardiff, Gothenburg, and The Hague.

Each team has an on board reporter who will document the relentless, round-the-clock action. And make no mistake, the competition is fierce: each team races using the same boat – a Volvo Ocean 65 – so the only way to win is to sail harder and smarter than your competitors. It's tough, it's gritty, and there is no mercy for the crew.

Volvo Ocean Race 2017 – 18: what to expect in Cardiff

The Cardiff Race Village will be open for two weeks in Cardiff Bay, from 27 May to 10 June. Expect a carnival-like atmosphere and a warm Welsh welcome as the teams head in to port. Fans can get a first-hand taste of the race with a new “pit lane” experience, and the chance to get up-close with the sailors and their vessels.

The In-Port Race, which takes place in Cardiff on 8 June, is always a big draw. The In-Port Races are scored separately from the ocean legs, but the series is used as a tie-breaker in the final points tally, so it's serious business. These races are short and action packed, and held as close as possible to land. They're a great way to witness the excitement first-hand (while staying dry on the shore with a drink in hand, perhaps?).

The racing fleet will arrive in Cardiff from Newport (Rhode Island rather than Newport in Gwent) after a gruelling eight days at sea. Back in 2006 when the race was following a similar route (heading for Portsmouth), a sailor was lost overboard and a boat sunk in separate incidents during this stage.

The transatlantic leg is known to be one of the most difficult for the sailors, and in 2018 will have the added drama of a new scoring system,

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	<p>rewarding the team that puts in the strongest performance.</p> <p>This leg of the race is usually one of the fastest, thanks to the fierce conditions: there's the possibility that this leg could break the 24-hour speed record. Now that's an epic journey across open seas!</p> <p>Cardiff - a sporting capital You can find yachting competitions, jet ski displays, stand up paddleboarding, water polo tournaments and a variety of sailing and rowing courses on the coast around the city. The area is also home to Cardiff International White Water Centre, an on demand white water rafting venue with variable river flow, so adventurers at all levels can enjoy the thrill of white water as well as the indoor wave machine and the Air Trail zip wire. And although Cardiff's nightlife is renowned, we recommend you limit your celebrations the night before any of these activities. It can be choppy out there!</p> <p>Back on dry land, Cardiff is probably best known for its national stadium. The Principality Stadium (previously known as the Millennium Stadium) is an easily accessible, 74,000 seater - the only city stadium in Europe that's just half a mile from a central train station. It features the UK's largest retractable roof, which takes 20 minutes to open or close, and is the second largest covered stadium in the world, after the Cowboys Stadium in Texas.</p>
Golf	<p>Wales has a very well-established golfing tradition. An 18-hole course was in existence as early as 1885, and the Welsh Golfing Union was founded in 1895. Since then Wales has produced such golfing greats as Dai Rees, Brian Huggett and Ian Woosnam.</p> <p>There's a wide range of courses in Wales, from testing links courses to parkland courses like Celtic Manor.</p> <p>For more information, visit www.golf.visitwales.com</p>
Fishing	<p>If your passion is game angling, then Wales is for you. It has a wealth of rivers and lakes in a variety of stunning scenarios, choosing where to fish is often more difficult than actually catching your fish.</p> <p>Welsh rivers account for more than half the sea trout caught in England and Wales, couple this with the number of large seatrout caught every year and the availability of fishing, it makes for a very special destination.</p> <p>Wild brown trout are abundant, whether you fish the famous rivers or intimate brooks; the stunning lowland lakes or the majestic highland lakes, the challenge is the same. These trout are truly wild, and the angler must use all his skill to catch them.</p> <p>The reservoirs of Wales are set in such scenery that you would be forgiven for thinking they had always existed, these, together with small</p>

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	<p>fisheries of quality; provides the angler with plenty of choice. Wales has always had quality grayling fishing, but the choice of rivers is now expanding, the rivers of South Wales are gaining a high reputation for the quality of their grayling.</p> <p>I spent many wonderful days in my childhood on the banks of the River Cothi in Southwest Wales, where my mother and father fished for salmon. I was never interested in fishing myself, but the landscapes and villages of that part of Wales are a cherished youthful memory.</p>
Horse riding	<p>Galloping on a beach is one of the things that most riders dream of. In Wales, you will find plenty of riding centres which can make your beach riding dream come true.</p> <p>There is also fantastic mountain and forest riding, for beginner or experienced riders, with or without guides.</p>
Hiking	<p>The biggest challenge for hikers in Wales is choosing where to walk. You can opt for Anglesey, North Wales Coast, the Llŷn Peninsula, Snowdonia, Ceredigion, Gower, The Brecon Beacons, the Black Mountains, Wye Valley and the Vale of Usk, Carmarthenshire, Glamorgan or the Clarydian Hills.</p> <p>Alternatively, you could strike out on a long-distance walk on any of three National Trails - Offa's Dyke on the Wales Border, the Pembrokeshire Coastal Path and Glyndwr's Way.</p> <p>For more information, visit www.walking.visitwales.com</p>
Cycling	<p>There is no better way to see Wales than from a bicycle.</p> <p>Lôn Las Cymru is a route on the National Cycle Network that offers spectacular views. Running the length of Wales from north to south, it crosses three mountain ranges and goes through many remote and beautiful parts of Wales that no car driver will ever see.</p> <p>The Celtic Trail crosses Wales in the other direction, at its widest point. This route runs from the Pembrokeshire coast in the west to Chepstow in the east, and includes dramatic coastline, forest tracks climbing to 2000 ft, canal towpaths and country parks.</p>
Adventure	<p>The high-adrenaline activities available in Wales will take your breath away. Mountains and sea cliffs provide unsurpassable rock climbing, abseiling and coasteering. Or if you want to go down instead of up, Ogof Draenen in South Wales is one of the world's top caving sites with over 65 kilometres of tunnels and passages.</p> <p>With surfable coastline on three sides of the country, it's no surprise that Welsh surfers have always been amongst the best in Europe. Windsurfers and kite-surfers will also find excellent conditions.</p> <p>Wales offers some of the best diving and snorkelling in Britain, and some of the finest sea kayaking in Europe. There's also white-water rafting, paragliding, land-yachting, rally trails, trail riding, 4x4 action, quad-biking, jet-skiing, wakeboarding and waterskiing.</p> <p>For more information, visit www.adventure.visitwales.com</p>

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CULTURE	
Arts	<p>Time your visit to attend the National Eisteddfod of Wales: 3-11 August 2018 in Cardiff.</p> <p>Held during the first week of August every year, the National Eisteddfod is a celebration of the culture and language in Wales. The festival travels from place to place, alternating between north and south Wales, attracting around 150,000 visitors and over 250 tradestands and stalls.</p> <p>The history of the Eisteddfod in Wales can be traced back to 1176, with the modern history of the organisation dating back to 1861. The festival has been held every year, other than 1914, when the outbreak of the First World War saw it postponed for a year.</p> <p>Traditionally a competition-based festival, attracting over 6,000 competitors every year, the festival has developed and evolved over recent years, and whilst the competitions form the central focus for the week, the Maes (site) itself has grown and developed into a vibrant festival with hundreds of events and activities for the whole family. The Eisteddfod is the natural showcase for music, dance, visual arts, literature, original performances and much more.</p> <p>Encompassing all aspects of the arts and culture in Wales, it is an inclusive and welcoming festival, which attracts thousands of Welsh learners and those who do not speak the language as well as Welsh speakers every year. Translation services are available in the Pavilion and bilingual information is available.</p> <p>Described as Wales' leading mobile regeneration project, Eisteddfod week is the highlight of a two year community project, bringing together people of all ages and backgrounds from a different part of Wales every year.</p> <p>With a mix of outreach work, lifelong learning and volunteering opportunities, the community project steers the preparations for the festival, giving local people a chance to make their mark on our national festival.</p> <p>Most of Wales' leading writers, musicians and poets have competed at the Eisteddfod, with many performers appearing on a national stage for the first time during the festival.</p> <p>Tickets available from 1 April every year.</p> <p>Full programme on-line from May: https://eisteddfod.wales/</p>
Music	<p>The music scene here has never been richer in talent, diversity and originality. Familiar bands like the Manic Street Preachers, Super Furry Animals along with the perennial favourites, Sir Tom Jones and Shirley Bassey, have a worldwide following. And for jazz fans, there's a choice of clubs and festivals - Brecon Jazz is one of the best in Europe.</p>

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	<p>Classical music aficionados are also well served. Catching a performance by the Welsh National Opera in their new home the Wales Millennium Centre is a special experience, and Cardiff's St David's Hall has a world class programme of concerts every year.</p> <p>Folk music has always been at the heart of both entertainment and political protest in Wales. For a great snapshot of what's going on, you can't beat a visit to an event like the Fishguard Folk Festival.</p> <p>And don't forget the National Eisteddfod - apart from the traditional events there's always a very lively programme of alternative nights.</p>
Films	Cardiff is home to a large concentration of media and creative types, turning out award- winning productions like the current incarnation of the legendary Dr Who series and now home to the Dr. Who Experience.
Museums	National Museum of Wales in Cardiff covers all aspects of Welsh history and is home to one of the largest collections of French Impressionism art outside of France
Festivals	<p>One of my favourites is the Hay Festival in May. Hay-on-Wye is famous for one thing – second-hand books. There are millions of them and they are everywhere. But festival time is special - Bill Clinton calls it the "Woodstock of the mind".</p> <p>Royal Welsh Show, 2018 Royal Welsh Show 23-26 July 2018 The pinnacle event in the British agricultural calendar, the Royal Welsh Show, will be held on 23 - 26 July 2018 at the showground in Llanellwedd.</p> <p>Along with an exciting four-days of livestock competitions, with entries travelling from far and wide to compete, the show has something to interest everyone through its wide range of activities including forestry, horticulture, crafts, countryside sports, shopping, food and drink and a 12-hour programme each day of exciting entertainment, attractions and displays. http://www.rwas.wales/royal-welsh-show/</p>

ATTRACTIONS	<p>Visit The Seven Wonders of Wales: It's a list in doggerel verse of seven geographic and cultural landmarks in Wales probably composed in the late eighteenth century. All the 'wonders' are in north Wales:</p> <p>Snowdon (the highest mountain), the Gresford bells (the peal of bells in the mediaeval church of All Saints at Gresford), the Llangollen bridge (built in 1347 over the River Dee, Afon Dyfrdwy), St Winefride's Well (a pilgrimage site at Holywell, Treffynnon in Flintshire) the Wrexham steeple (16th century tower of St. Giles Church in Wrexham), the Overton yew trees (ancient yew trees in the churchyard of St Mary's at Overton-on-Dee)</p>
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	<p>and Pistyll Rhaeadr (Wales' tallest waterfall, at 240 ft or 75 m). The wonders are part of the rhyme: Pistyll Rhaeadr and Wrexham steeple, Snowdon's mountain without its people, Overton yew trees, St Winefride wells, Llangollen bridge and Gresford bells.</p>
Beaches	<p>Wales has 1,200 kms of coastline, including Oxwich Bay on the Gower Peninsula, near Swansea, has been named the most beautiful beach in the UK by The Travel Magazine</p>
Wildlife	<p>Dolphins, puffins, seals, red kite, buzzard and more</p>
Parks	<p>Wales boasts 3 National Parks and 5 Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty</p>
Gardens	<p>There is a wonderful array of gardens all over Wales; here is my pick of some of the best in South Wales:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - National Botanic Garden The National Botanic Garden of Wales in the Vale of Tywi near Carmarthen is a hugely significant horticultural landmark. This ambitious enterprise, covering almost 240 hectares/600 acres, springs surprises around almost every corner. The largest single-span glasshouse in the world is here. - Colby Woodland Garden This charming National Trust property on the Pembrokeshire coast near Tenby is full of interest from spring to autumn. Set in a tranquil, secluded valley, it is noted for its fine displays of rhododendrons and azaleas, walks through woodland and meadow, and a colourful Walled Garden. - Clyne Gardens Clyne, a mile or so west of Swansea city centre on the road to Mumbles and Gower, is one of Wales's finest gardens. It is internationally recognised for its superb collections of rhododendrons, pieris and enkianthus. - Aberglasney Aberglasney, in the Vale of Tywi near Llandeilo, is an exciting and highly significant garden restoration. Set within 3.5 hectares/9 acres are six different garden spaces including three walled gardens. - Picton Castle These beautiful gardens accompany Picton Castle, an elegant Pembrokeshire mansion with a history spanning 750 years. Picton is particularly noted for its rhododendrons, some of which are unique to this site.
Castles/Forts	<p>There are 641 castles in Wales including UNESCO World Heritage Sites The castles and town walls built by King Edward I in the 13th Century to suppress Welsh independence in Gwynedd were listed in 1986. They</p>

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	include the castles of Beaumaris, Harlech, Conwy and Caernarfon.
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OTHER ACTIVITIES	
Shopping	There are great shopping opportunities throughout Wales. Consider lovespoons, honey, wool clothing, rugby shirts, crafts.
Markets	Plan on catching a sheep market in one of the hill villages if possible
Nightlife	The Welsh, perhaps more than most, do enjoy a drink or three. In Cardiff city centre you will find the greatest concentration of pubs in all of Wales.

CUISINE	
Food	<p>With a 1,200 kms coastline, and hundreds of sparklingly clean lakes and rivers, Wales boasts a superb variety of seafood. Oyster, mussel and scallop beds are to be found around the Welsh coast; young lobsters have been re-introduced into the Menai Strait; there's an abundance of 'sewin' - sea trout; and of course, you can't forget the seaweed! Laverbread, made from a lettuce-leaf type of seaweed, is often mixed with oatmeal, and served at breakfast with bacon and eggs. Inland, the glory of Wales lies in its numerous valleys and mountains. Welsh Lamb and Welsh Beef are geared to the fine modern taste - lean and naturally free of additives.</p> <p>Wales produces its own milk and butter and, perhaps most exciting of all, more than 50 farmhouse cheeses, all distinctly different, with regional variations and a wonderful range of flavours and textures. You can usually buy them from market stalls, local shops and larger supermarkets. And you may also be tempted by traditional baked products such as Bara Brith (fruit loaf) or Welshcakes (griddle scones).</p>
Wine	<p>Welsh wines are growing in quantity and reputation and are increasingly becoming the beverage of choice at receptions and events across the globe.</p> <p>Several vineyards are open to visitors, such as Sugar Loaf Vineyard in Abergavenny, Monmouthshire (www.sugarloafvineyards.co.uk) which has self-guided tours and wine tasting daily</p>
Restaurants	<p>Whether you're out to impress a date or simply looking for a quick bite to eat, Cardiff is jam packed with some fantastic restaurants. Thai, Italian, Japanese, Turkish...whatever your preference there are restaurants to suit all tastes in Cardiff.</p> <p>Dine by the fire in a cozy Welsh Pub</p> <p>Wales is the place to go for food – after all, it's home to one of the world's best food festivals in Abergavenny every September (foodies, book in now). There are hundreds of pubs ready to offer you a warm welcome, with a cozy fire to sit beside in winter or a pretty garden in the summer. Try the Felin Fach Griffin, which was named Dining Pub of the</p>

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	<p>Year for the fourth time this year, thanks to delicious food made with local produce. It's a former roadside coaching inn, and you can still stay the night – right on the edge of the Brecon Beacons National Park, you're in for a good night's sleep in the middle of the countryside.</p> <p>www.eatdrinksleep.ltd.uk</p>
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MORE INFO	
Contacts	<p>Website: www.americas.visitwales.com</p> <p>Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/visitwales</p> <p>Twitter: https://twitter.com/visitwales</p> <p>YouTube: https://www.youtube.com/user/visitWales</p> <p>Instagram: https://www.instagram.com/visitwales/</p>

PERSONAL EXPERIENCES	<p>My wife was bought up in Pembrokeshire and I spent many childhood summers with my parents fishing on the River Cothi in Carmarthenshire. In February 2014 we broadcast the Travel Show on location on The Dylan Thomas Trail – Cardiff, Swansea and Laugharne.</p> <p>March 2007: South Wales; Ty Castell B&B, Nantgaredig, Carmarthenshire</p> <p>June 2005: North Wales, Brecon Beacons, Carleon Roman Amphitheatre</p> <p>Previously: Anglesey, the castles, Snowdon summit, Tintern Abbey, St. David's, St Gowan's Chapel, Pembrokeshire Coastal Path, Swansea, Cardiff, Hay-on-Wye, Roman Gold Mines, Cilgerran Castle above Teifi River.</p> <p>You can share my last trip to Wales on my Pinterest board of images and stories: https://www.pinterest.ca/TravelShow/wales/</p>
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SPECIAL FEATURE: 2018 THE YEAR OF THE SEA	<p>Wales has more Blue Flag beaches – the international standard of excellence – per mile than anywhere in Britain. There are classic harbour towns, modern marinas, ancient castles and elegant Victorian and Edwardian resorts with promenades and piers. Pembrokeshire has Britain's only coastal National Park, while the Gower Peninsula was Britain's first Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty – an award that's since been given to other coastal gems on Anglesey and the Llŷn Peninsula.</p> <p>In 2018, sailing will take centre stage in Cardiff as the Volvo Ocean</p>
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	<p>Race stops in the UK for the first time in over a decade. Cardiff may have hosted its fair share of watersports events, but this will be the first time for Wales to host this race, which is the ultimate marathon of sailing. A former industrial port, Cardiff Bay has witnessed a phoenix-like transformation from industrial heartland to cosmopolitan Hub.</p> <p>This is also the year the Wales Way is being launched: a family of national touring routes that lead you along the coast, across castle country, and through our mountainous heartland. Each one is designed to be the backbone of your trip, so you can go off-piste and discover hidden gems in the lands around you. In Welsh, we call this going igam ogam – or zig-zagging – and discovering your own secret places: a journey that’s entirely about you and can be different every time. If you prefer your adventures on foot, this is the perfect opportunity to re-explore the Wales Coast Path. This stretch was the first continuous coastal path of any country in the world. It runs the whole length of our coastline and passes through wild seascapes, towering cliffs and hundreds of harbours, inlets and islands (see ‘Escape to the islands’), not to mention around 250 beaches. Walking the path is your chance to get up close and personal with some of Wales’ most adorable wildlife: prepare for seal pup and puffling-induced cute overload.</p> <p>Wherever you are in Wales, you’re never far from the water. So, wherever you stay – rural cottage or boutique hotel, yurt or medieval castle – there’ll be an epic shore nearby (see some of the best in ‘11 unique sleeps for the Year of the Sea’). With a language and culture that’s the oldest in Britain, a warm Welsh welcome, and food and drink made with skill by passionate people, this is the greatest coastal experience of 2018. These shores are epic.</p>
<p>Coastal Castles</p>	<p>Anyone that built a fortress in the 13th century knew that a clear vista of the sea was an essential factor in castle location, since all manner of attacks might come your way from the coast. Situated in North East Wales, Flint Castle was the first of English king Edward I’s ‘Iron Ring’ of fortresses, designed to subdue the Welsh. Not as impeccably preserved as his other creations, Flint nevertheless boasts oodles of atmosphere and a rich history – it famously features in Shakespeare’s Richard II, as the setting of Richard II’s capture.</p> <p>http://cadw.gov.wales/daysout/flintcastle</p> <p>Continuing around the coast of North Wales takes in a quartet of Edward I-built castles, maintained by Cadw: Conwy, Beaumaris, Caernarfon and Harlech which, together with Conwy Town Walls, form a UNESCO World Heritage Site.</p> <p>All four are imposing, mighty, ‘proper’ castles – the kinds replicated in</p>

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	<p>Lego when you were a kid, with concentric towers and ‘walls within walls’ structures; indeed, Beaumaris is often referred to as the ‘most technically perfect’ castle in Britain. All four are open to visitors and regular events are held at each. http://cadw.gov.wales</p> <p>Another North Wales gem is Criccieth Castle, one of the most sought-after and fought-after fortresses in the country. Llywelyn the Great originally built it, then Edward I got a piece of the action and added a few home improvements – special tower for stone-throwing engines, anyone? – before Owain Glyndŵr captured and burnt much of the property in the early 15th century, in what was the last major Welsh rebellion against the English. It’s not hard to see why it was so desirable – Criccieth is situated on a headland between two beaches, surrounded by water. Visit for spectacular sea views. http://cadw.gov.wales/daysout/criccieth-castle</p> <p>Pembrokeshire is home to everything from early motte-and-bailey castles to grand bishop’s fortified palaces. Manorbier is one of the best by the sea – described by medieval writer Gerald of Wales as ‘the pleasantest spot in Wales’. The Norman baronial residence is perched overlooking a beautiful beach and has numerous stairs, towers and battlements you can explore, plus gorgeous and tranquil walled gardens. http://manorbiercastle.co.uk</p> <p>Another castle to have changed hands between the Normans and the Welsh is Llansteffan in Carmarthenshire, whose spot overlooking the sand-flats and mouth of the River Twyi is as picturesque as they come. This one began as an earth-and timber creation, becoming a powerful masonry castle that was also briefly held by Owain Glyndŵr’s supporters in 1405-06. http://cadw.gov.wales/daysout/llansteffancastle</p>
Historic Houses by the Sea	<p>On the shores of the Menai Strait is National Trust property Plas Newydd, famed for its Rex Whistler association and featuring an impressive mural by the artist and exhibition of his works. This was a mansion built with an eye for views – across the Menai Strait are the atmospheric mountains of Snowdonia. There’s a woodland walk, an Australasian arboretum, rhododendrons in the summer and hydrangeas in the autumn – this is a house for all seasons. http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/plas-newyddcountry-house-and-gardens</p> <p>Heading southwards on the Llŷn Peninsula is enchanting Plas yn Rhiw, also looked after by the National Trust. The house has a charming history; rescued from neglect by the three Keating sisters in 1938, it was lovingly restored and is peppered with artworks by its</p>

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former residents and their guests, with architectural features inspired by Sir Clough Williams-Ellis (of Portmeirion fame). The gardens give way to jaw-dropping views over the Llŷn, with many romantic nooks and crannies to enjoy a picnic or quiet moment.

<http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/plas-yn-rhiw>

Heading further south still, don't miss Llanerchaeron, yet another National Trust gem close to the coast. Llanerchaeron is a fantastic example of the early work of architect John Nash, who went on to design parts of Buckingham Palace. Designed in the 18th century, the villa was unaltered for 200 years and has its own service courtyard with dairy, laundry, brewery and salting house, giving a fascinating 'upstairs, downstairs' experience. The walled gardens are a dreamy place for a wander. <http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/llanerchaeron>

Continuing south-west to Pembrokeshire is a far more historic 'historic home': Castell Henllys Iron Age Fort. Archaeologists have been excavating here for two decades, leading to the reconstruction of thatched Iron Age buildings on their original foundations. Set in thirty acres of woodland and picturesque river meadows, Castell Henllys is a fabulous diversion ten minutes' drive from the coast, with sculpture trails and Iron Age pigs (!) to admire, not to mention the 'Old Roundhouse', the longest standing reconstructed Iron Age roundhouse in Britain.

<http://www.castellhenllys.com>

Living history

Like to get up and close with heritage – enjoying choral music in a centuries-old cathedral or even partying at an architectural landmark village? Luckily for you, in Wales, you can! There has been a church on the site of St David's Cathedral in Pembrokeshire since the sixth century and prayers and worship have been a part of this venue for 1500 or more years <http://www.stdavids cathedral.org.uk> . Located in Britain's smallest city, St Davids, the Cathedral was so important in the 12th century that the then Pope declared that two pilgrimages to St Davids were equivalent to one pilgrimage to Rome – and three were equivalent to one to Jerusalem! Today, the Cathedral remains open to visitors and worshippers, as well as lovers of music when, for ten days in May and June, the fantastic St David's Cathedral Festival brings classical and contemporary music to the heart of West Wales.

<http://stdavids cathedral festival.co.uk>

Another festival in a noteworthy location is Festival No. 6 (<http://festivalnumber6.com>), which takes place at the magical village of Portmeirion in North Wales (<http://www.portmeirion-village.com>). Sir

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	<p>Clough Williams- Ellis spent 50 years lovingly creating this vision of an Italianate village in coastal North Wales, and the resulting estate is extraordinary. The hotel opened in 1931 and went on to host artists, royalty, politicians and tycoons, as well as noted authors and playwrights including H. G. Wells, George Bernard Shaw and Noël Coward. The village hosts Festival No. 6 every September and brings a carnival atmosphere to its colourful streets and quirky venues.</p> <p>Back to the sixth century – and sites of religious interest: St Trillo’s Chapel, which sits on the foreshore at Rhos-on-Sea, dates back around 1500 years and has room for about six worshippers, but is still in use today. Britain’s smallest chapel, it is on the site of a pre-Christian, sacred holy well, over which the altar is built – and whose water has been used in baptisms in the parish.</p> <p>Interested in Wales' fascinating slate-mining heritage? Head inland from the busy harbor town of Porthmadog aboard the historic Ffestiniog Railway (http://www.festrail.co.uk) to Blaenau Ffestiniog (http://www.zipworld.co.uk/location/detail/blaenau-ffestiniog), and explore the Llechwedd Slate Caverns (http://www.llechwedd-slate-caverns.co.uk), which tell the living history of Welsh slate mining throughout the 1800s via a Deep Mine Tour, an exciting ‘Quarry Explorer’ off-road adventure and hands-on slate workshops.</p> <p>Fancy something completely different? Zip World Caverns and Bounce Below are adrenalin-pumping adventures that have seen the slate mines repurposed for thrilling zip-line and trampolining experiences! https://www.zipworld.co.uk/</p>
<p>Legends and Stories</p>	<p>All historical landmarks have a story behind them, but some have entered into the realm of ‘legend’. St Govan’s Chapel is one such example; the splendidly-sited hermit’s cell, built into a cliff near Bosherton in Pembrokeshire, is reached by a set of very steep steps. Legend has it that if you count the number of steps going down, it will never be the same as the number going up again!</p> <p>If swashbuckling adventure tales are your thing, you’ll be delighted to find out that many of the most notorious pirates in history are of Welsh origin. The most successful pirate of all time hailed from Pembrokeshire too – Little Newcastle, near Fishguard, to be precise. Bartholomew Rogers, aka ‘Black Bart’, who was known for his distinctive scarlet coat, wasn’t your stereotypical swashbuckler – he held church services aboard his ship and drank tea rather than rum. Bart plundered more than 400 vessels in his lifetime, but the coat was</p>

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	<p>his eventual undoing – being an easy target, Bart was shot, realising his own prediction: ‘A merry life and a short one shall be my motto.’ His most enduring legacy was designing the skull and crossbones flag: an immediate signifier telling you that ‘here be pirates!’</p> <p>The famed Captain Henry Morgan, who inspired a well-known brand of rum, was another intrepid Welsh pirate. Gather your hearties and check out the South Wales Pirate Festival, an annual re-enactment event that sees colourful pirate characters brought to life, battles waged and refreshments served from a 1700s-era tavern!</p> <p>If motoring legends inspire you, head to Pendine Sands in Carmarthenshire where multiple land-speed records have been made and broken on one of Wales’ longest beaches. It was here that, in 1925, motor-racing daredevil Sir Malcolm Campbell set a land speed record of 150mph, which he himself broke twice more at the beach. Welshman J. G. Parry-Thomas also broke the record, but sadly died in his last attempt to do so in his vehicle ‘Babs’; take a look at Babs – restored to her original glory – at the Museum of Speed. http://www.carmarthenshire.gov.wales/home/residents/theatresartsmuseums/museums/museum-of-speed.aspx</p>
<p>Coastal Communities</p>	<p>Always wanted to live beside the seaside? Hire a cottage in one of these welcoming coastal villages and towns and make like a local. Discover fantastic independent restaurants, cosy cafés and unique attractions – and lose yourself in endless harbours, seafronts, and streetscapes.</p> <p>Mumbles, South Wales</p> <p>Just a few miles from Swansea is Mumbles, an ideal place to explore for a few hours or to make your home for a few days. The action centres around the Swansea Bay waterfront, fringed with a footpath that takes in sweeping panoramas of the distant city on one side and Mumbles Lighthouse and clifftops on the other. You’re spoiled for choice for ice-cream, with Ripples, Joe’s (http://www.joes-icecream.com/Mumbles-Parlour.html), and Verdi’s (http://www.verdiscafe.co.uk) all superbly located for ambling along the waterfront with a sweet treat. The promenade recently underwent a facelift in the form of new development Oyster Wharf (http://oysterwharfumbles.com), whose restaurants have fantastic views, but for a truly special meal head just off the Bay-path and dine at Patrick’s (http://www.patrickswithrooms.com), an upmarket institution serving seasonal bounties of land and sea. Fancy something more informal? Pick up delicious fried whitebait or dressed crab from newly-opened Gower Seafood Hut</p>

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(<http://www.facebook.com/goworseafoodhut>), right on the water. For independent shopping, mosey up Newton Road where you'll find boutiques, plus the excellent Olives & Oils (<http://olivesandoils.co.uk>) and Cheers (www.cheerswinemerchants.co.uk) adjacent to one another; the former sells fantastic cheeses and the latter all manner of booze: ideal for a self-catering night in or seaside picnic!

Laugharne, South West Wales

Laugharne (pronounced 'Larn') has become synonymous with the author Dylan Thomas, who dubbed it 'the strangest town in Wales'. It might not seem like it but he was speaking with great fondness for the place. He lived in the town for the last four years of his life, writing Under Milk Wood from his quaint writing hut perched over the Taf Estuary, and he and his wife Caitlin lie buried in the churchyard of medieval St Martin's Church. The Dylan Thomas Boathouse (<http://www.dylanthomasboathouse.com>), where the family lived, is well worth a visit to investigate his life and works, and Laugharne Castle (<http://cadw.gov.wales/daysout/laugharnecastle>) is a tranquil place for a wander; Thomas was inspired to write in its garden summerhouse. In Dylan Thomas style, come evening-time stop for a bevvie or two at Brown's Hotel (<http://www.browns.wales>), where the writer spent many an afternoon and which has been graced by Mick Jagger, President Carter, Elizabeth Taylor and Richard Burton. Following restoration, it reopened as a boutique hotel decorated in a 1950s style. For dinner, it's hard to beat The Cors (<http://www.thecors.co.uk>), which serves delightful brasserie/bistro food most weekends and private dining for ten people or more. The service is quirky and by candlelight, and there is a gorgeous garden surrounding the residence. Visit the town during the Laugharne Weekend (<http://www.thelaugharneweekend.com>) for a literary festival with a wonderfully casual vibe, where the authors hang out in the town's pubs after talks and parties tend to go through the night...

Tenby, South West Wales

Step into a postcard in Tenby, the Pembrokeshire town perched on a headland surrounded by sandy beaches, and where the streets are lined with pretty pastel-coloured houses. The Normans left their mark on Tenby; the medieval castle walls built to fortify the town from Welsh rebellion still stand intact today. In terms of attractions, there's Wales' oldest independent museum, the fabulous Tenby Museum (<http://www.tenbymuseum.org.uk>) and Art Gallery plus National Trust property the Tudor Merchant's House (<http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/tudor-merchantshouse>). One of the chief pleasures here is less formalised: get lost in the maze

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	<p>of cobbled streets and discover ice-cream parlours, cafés, and artist studios. If you're a brew-fan, make sure to visit the state-of-the-art Tenby Harbour Brewery (http://harbwr.wales), housed in a converted 18th century warehouse, which offers the 'Hops & Hwyl' experience, involving a tour and, of course, tastings. Find these and more local beers at pubs like The Hope & Anchor and The Buccaneer (http://www.facebook.com/TheBuccaneerInn). For an atmospheric lunch stop, coffee break or ice-cream, don't miss The Stowaway (http://www.facebook.com/thestowawaytenbyharbour), which is tucked into an arch overlooking the harbour at the charmingly-named address '2 Penniless Cove'. The crab sandwiches here satisfy a savoury craving, while the hot chocolates are ideal on a blustery day. The Plantagenet House (http://www.plantagenettenby.co.uk) offers a truly unique dining experience, where you can eat fresh fish and seafood in the oldest building in town. From Tenby, it's an easy boat trip to Caldey Island (http://www.caldey-island.co.uk/) and its community of Cistercian monks, who make and sell luxurious soaps and perfumes using the island's wild herbs. The island is great for nature lovers, as it's often surrounded by seals and seabirds.</p> <p>Cardigan, West Wales</p> <p>The town of Cardigan has a revitalized feel, with new businesses opening and thriving and an energetic hub in the form of Cardigan Castle (http://www.cardigancastle.com). The castle won Channel 4's 'Restoration of the Year' and today you can discover 900 years of history there, enjoy art trails, hear music, see exhibitions or tuck into a tasty meal or afternoon tea at its restaurant, 1176 (http://www.cardigancastle.com/dining).</p> <p>For art lovers, Pendre Art Gallery (http://www.facebook.com/PendreArtGC) is a great place to admire and purchase paintings, photography, jewellery, pottery, woodwork and more from over 100 local artists. It also houses a fabulous café and hosts fun cocktail evenings and quiz nights. A relatively new addition to Cardigan's dining scene, but one that's popular with locals and visitors, is the Pizza Tipi (http://www.pizzatipi.co.uk). Set up by the people behind Fforest (https://www.coldatnight.co.uk/) – who operate a fantastic selection of quirky accommodation options in the area), the Pizza Tipi is run by four brothers and their band of merry friends, and serves delicious wood-fired beauties overlooking the River Teifi.</p>
<p>Wales Coastal Path</p>	<p>There's no better time than our Year of the Sea to explore the Wales Coast Path: the first path in the world to follow a country's coastline in its entirety. Dip in anywhere along its 1,400 kms and delight in jaw-dropping views, contemporary cultural hotspots, unforgettable encounters with nature, and thousands of years of history. Look out for</p>

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these highlights along the way.

South Wales Coast and Severn Estuary

Of course, it all begins with a castle. Chepstow (<http://cadw.gov.wales/daysout/chepstowcastle>) is home to a beautifully-preserved fortress and is where the Wales Coast Path begins (or ends, depending on where you start) and where it connects to Offa's Dyke, the path that runs along the Anglo-Welsh border. Heading west, the path takes an exciting urban turn, passing through Wales' buzzing capital city. At Cardiff Bay, take a tour around the Senedd (<http://www.assembly.wales> – home to the National Assembly for Wales). Then take in a show at iconic international performance venue, the Wales Millennium Centre (<http://www.wmc.org.uk>), before finishing up in one of the area's lively restaurants or bars. If you're feeling more energetic, head for the rapids at Cardiff International White Water Centre (<http://www.ciww.com>). Find beautiful beaches and more along the Glamorgan Heritage Coast between Aberthaw and Porthcawl, where you can stop in at Wales' longest continually inhabited castle, St Donats, whose grounds shelter contemporary cultural gem St Donats Arts Centre (<http://www.stdonats.com>).

Gower and Swansea Bay

Gower was the UK's first designated Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, and it's not hard to see why. Rhossili Bay (<http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/rhossili-andsouth-gower-coast>) was recently named best beach in the UK on TripAdvisor, and nearby Three Cliffs Bay can easily claim to have the best campsite views anywhere in Britain, with majestic vistas across sand dunes, limestone cliffs and salt marshes. From Rhossili, check tide times before venturing onto Worm's Head, a lush tidal island where author Dylan Thomas once got stranded! Surf-lovers can catch waves at Caswell and Llangland beaches, while stand up paddleboards can be hired at 360 Beach and Watersports (<http://360swansea.co.uk>). The path winds through the city of Swansea to Swansea Marina, an attractive pocket of al fresco cafés, bars and the free National Waterfront Museum (<https://museum.wales/swansea>). Don't miss The Mumbles, a charming fishing village with outstanding ice-cream parlours and attractive bay views from new waterfront development, Oyster Wharf (<http://oysterwharf-mumbles.com>).

Carmarthenshire

Run free on Cefn Sidan and Pendine Sands, two of Wales' longest beaches. World land-speed records were set and broken at Pendine in the early 20th century, and you can find out all about it at the Museum

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of Speed (<http://www.discovercarmarthenshire.com>), which overlooks the beach. Today, adrenalin seekers can get their thrills kite-bugging, land-yachting and Blokarting, while families will love Pembrey Country Park (<http://www.pembreycountrypark.wales>). The park backs onto Cefn Sidan and offers plenty of activities for little ones, plus a riding centre if galloping on the beach is a must. Grab an ice cream and hire a bike at the striking and contemporary Millennium Coastal Park Discovery Centre <http://visit.carmarthenshire.gov.uk/millennium-coastal-park/index.html>. And don't miss Laugharne, the coastal town that charmed Dylan Thomas. Visit The Boathouse <http://www.dylanthomasboathouse.com>, where he lived and loved, and stop in Browns his favourite pub and watering hole.

Pembrokeshire

Pembrokeshire is home to 58 beaches, 14 harbours, and the world's second-best long distance path, according to National Geographic. The Wales Coast Path here follows the stunning National Trail, the Pembrokeshire Coast Path; along these 300 kms you'll encounter the UK's smallest city, St Davids, home to a splendid Cathedral (<http://www.stdavidscathedral.org.uk>) and a brooding Bishop's Palace (<http://cadw.gov.wales/daysout/stdavidsbishopspalace>). Of the many beaches, Freshwater West and Marloes Sands caught the eye of film-makers and have featured in dramatic scenes in Harry Potter, Robin Hood and Snow White and the Huntsman. If you're hungry, Coast (<http://coastsauandersfoot.co.uk/>) in Saundersfoot offers a blissful sea-inspired menu located right on the shoreline. Pembrokeshire is a fantastic place to fling yourself off the coast path and into the water, and we do mean this literally: the addictive adrenalin sport coasteering was pioneered here, and the Blue Lagoon has hosted Red Bull's Cliff Diving World Series multiple times.

Ceredigion

Pick any west-facing beach on the Ceredigion stretch of the Wales Coast Path at sunset and settle in for a spectacular sight as the sea lights up with the day's last rays. Spot dolphins and seals from Mwnt's (<http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/mwnt>) spiritual and secluded beach, or head on a dedicated boat trip with A Bay to Remember (www.baytoremember.co.uk) from Cardigan. Further north is Aberaeron, a pretty town with rainbow and pastel-hued seafront houses. For culture close to the sea, Cardigan's intimate Theatr Mwldan (<http://www.mwldan.co.uk>) is well worth a visit, or head to lively Aberystwyth for the striking Aberystwyth Arts Centre (<http://www.aberystwythartscentre.co.uk>). Aberystwyth Cliff Railway

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(<http://www.aberystwythcliff railway.co.uk>) takes you up a funicular to the summit of Constitution Hill, for beautiful coastal views.

Menai, Llŷn and Meirionnydd

Enjoy old-school seaside charm at Aberdovey and Barmouth; just outside the latter, find trendy new eatery Norbar (“North of Barmouth” – <http://www.facebook.com/thenorbar>), a sleekly designed bar and restaurant that’s ideal for a pitstop. Between Fairbourne and Barmouth is a particularly beautiful stretch of the path, with views of the Mawddach Estuary plus Cadair Idris and the Snowdonia National Park looming inland. A trio of commanding coastal castles (<http://cadw.gov.wales/daysout/stdavidsbishops palace>) at Harlech, Criccieth and Caernarfon will wow you, while magical Portmeirion (<http://www.portmeirion-village.com>) delights with its whimsical architecture and riotous floral displays. The Llŷn Peninsula is one of Wales' least explored but most rewarding areas, where the coast path has a wild, romantic feel. Climb to the headland from Aberdaron and feel like you’re at the edge of Britain – and completely at one with nature.

The Isle of Anglesey

Most of Anglesey’s coastal zone is a designated Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Enjoy sea, mountain, and forest views as you walk to Llanddwyn Island along the beach. Once there, breathe in the tranquility of this spiritual site, which is the home and resting place of Wales' patron saint of lovers, St Dwynwen. At the isle’s western edge is Holyhead, and perched right out to sea is South Stack Lighthouse – a dream location for every photographer. Back towards the mainland don’t miss Beaumaris Castle (<http://cadw.gov.wales/daysout/beaumaris-castle>), considered the most technically perfect castle in Britain. Fancy seeing Anglesey from another angle? Then hop on board an exhilarating RIB ride (<http://www.ribride.co.uk>), zooming under the impressive bridges that span the Menai Strait. On the trip out to Puffin Island you’ll see the adorable seabirds, as well as seals, cormorants, and old shipwrecks.

North Wales and the Dee Estuary

Historic Conwy Castle (<http://cadw.gov.wales/daysout/conwycastle>) and its walls form part of a UNESCO World Heritage Site with impeccably preserved buildings and a truly magnificent castle – all just a stone’s throw from the coast. Synonymous with Lewis Carroll and Alice’s many adventures, Llandudno is a classic seaside town with the glorious Great Orme at its tip. Steep summit trails take in incredible coastal views and there’s even

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a tram or cable car available for tired legs. Stroll out on Wales' longest pier at Llandudno – measuring 2,295 feet (700m) – and get a culture fix at stylish waterfront arts complex Venue Cymru (<https://venuecymru.co.uk>). Spot wildlife at Colwyn Bay and enjoy Prestatyn's beaches before rounding off the coast path with – of course – another castle! Flint's (<http://cadw.gov.wales/daysout/flintcastle>) 13th century castle was the first Welsh castle to be built during King Edward I's invasion. And since it is the Year of the Sea, be sure to stop off at the imposing Talacre Lighthouse (<http://www.visitalacre.com/>), on the coastal path route between Prestatyn and Flint.

SPECIAL FEATURE - DYLAN THOMAS

Dylan Marlais Thomas was born on 27 October 1914 in Swansea, Wales and died in New York in 1953 at the age of just 39. He has left behind a lasting legacy as one of Wales' best-known poets, writers and broadcasters.

Some of Dylan Thomas's most popular works include the poems "Do not go gentle into that good night" and "And death shall have no dominion", the play for voices, "Under Milk Wood", and stories and radio broadcasts such as "A Child's Christmas in Wales" and "Portrait of the Artist as a Young Dog".

Although Thomas was appreciated as a poet in his lifetime, he found earning a living as a writer difficult - so he augmented his income with reading tours and broadcasts. His radio recordings for the BBC during the latter half of the 1940s allow us still to enjoy his beautiful voice – however no known moving footage of the poet remains.

While living in London, Thomas met Caitlin Macnamara, whom he married in 1937. Their relationship was turbulent and marred by alcoholism. In the early part of his marriage, Thomas and his family lived hand-to-mouth, finally settling in the Welsh fishing village of Laugharne.

In the last few years of his life Thomas travelled to America, where his readings brought him a level of fame - though his erratic behaviour and drinking worsened, and he had a reputation as somewhat of a drunken and doomed poet. During his fourth trip to New York in 1953, Thomas became gravely ill and fell into a coma from which he did not recover. His body was returned to Wales where he was buried at the village churchyard in Laugharne.

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	<p>Wales celebrated the 100th anniversary of the birth of Dylan Thomas in 2014 with a yearlong countrywide cultural festival and there are sites related to the poet that are part of the Welsh landscape and heritage and you can visit them any time.</p>
<p>Swansea and Laugharne</p>	<p>Dylan Thomas was born in Swansea, south Wales (an hour's drive from the capital Cardiff) and there are Thomas landmarks all over the city from Wind Street where he drank with colleagues while working as a journalist, to Castle Street where he met other writers and artists such as Vernon Watkins and Alfred Janes, to the statue of Captain Cat. Dylan Thomas settled in Laugharne, south-west Wales, between 1938-1940, and again in 1949 until his death. During these periods he moved house several times before settling with his wife, Caitlin, and children at the Boathouse, now a small museum. His writing shed can still be seen looking out over the shimmering estuary of the Taf. For further information visit www.literaturewales.org</p> <p>The site www.americas.visitwales.com is a resource for planning your Dylan-themed trip to Wales.</p>
<p>The Dylan Thomas Centre</p>	<p>The Dylan Thomas Centre is a beautiful building in the Maritime Quarter of Swansea. It has a permanent exhibition on Dylan Thomas and his life and is also home to many literary events throughout the year - including the annual Dylan Thomas Festival during October and November. This is the ideal starting place on a quest for Dylan Thomas as the exhibition places the poet's life and works in an historical context.</p>
<p>Dylan Thomas House, Swansea</p>	<p>The poet was born in Number 5 Cwmdonkin Drive in the Uplands suburb of Swansea. The Thomas family bought it in 1914 as a new house and Dylan was born in the front bedroom of the house that very year. He continued to live at Number 5 until his parents moved out in 1937.</p> <p>The Dylan Thomas House has been restored and recreates exactly how the Thomas family would have seen it in 1914. Imagine standing in the bedroom where one of the most iconic figures in Welsh literature was born! Or drinking in the atmosphere of the writing room where the greatest poet and writer of the 20th century first put pen to paper.... If you plan far enough ahead you can actually sleep under Dylan Thomas' roof. You can rent the whole house or maybe stay on a bed and breakfast basis if all the rooms aren't filled.</p>
<p>The Boat House, Laugharne</p>	<p>Dylan Thomas wrote Under Milk Wood in 1954 as a radio drama. It was later adapted as a stage play and the 1972 film version starring Richard Burton is still a landmark movie. Under Milkwood is centred around characters in a fictional small Welsh fishing village called Llareggub. Typical of Thomas - Llareggub is "bugger all" spelt backwards. The actual geographical inspiration for the town has generated much curiosity.</p>

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	<p>In 1938 Dylan Thomas moved his family to Laugharne, a town in Carmarthenshire with spectacular views of the estuary of the River Taf. Their house was called 'Sea View'. This town was probably the inspiration for the people of Llareggub, although the topography of the town is thought to be based on New Quay, where Thomas was staying when he started writing the play seriously in 1944.</p> <p>In 1949 Dylan and Caitlin moved back to Laugharne and he lived at The Boat House. Dylan Thomas chose the garden shed as his writing place. The Boat House terrace offers wonderful views over the Taf estuary to the Gower beyond – it's a haven for egrets, lapwings, herons, oystercatchers, seals and otters with fishermen and cocklers continuing the ancient traditions. Today Laugharne is also a stop for hikers on the Wales Coast Path.</p> <p>The Boat House houses a small museum and a tearoom with a locally sourced, home-cooked menu.</p>
<p>The Birthday Walk</p>	<p>You can also follow Dylan Thomas' footsteps on the "Dylan Thomas Birthday Walk". In 1944, Dylan wrote "Poem in October" about his birthday walk to the shoulder of Sir John's hill. The poem is simply about his love of Laugharne and getting older. The poem was set on the 27th of October, 1944; his 30th Birthday. The sounds of the estuary and the memory of the herons awaiting the tide were on his mind...</p> <p>The walk is approximately 3.2 kilometres in length and will take you uphill to enjoy the magnificent views of the estuary, Dylan's boathouse, the Gower, north Devon, Caldey Island and Tenby. I took this walk a few years ago when we recorded the Travel Show down here – it was a marvelous hike and you can see some images on my Pinterest board here: https://www.pinterest.ca/TravelShow/wales/</p>

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