

Where's Wales? Is Welsh similar to English? And is Wales a good place to visit? Read and find out!

Wales is one of the countries in Britain and the United Kingdom. It's a small country with England to the east. Wales has got a continuous coastline, around 1,300km long, which means there are a lot of beaches! It has some of the most beautiful beaches in the UK and is a popular destination for holidaymakers and water sports fans. As well as beaches, there are a lot of mountains and also three national parks, including Snowdonia. It is in north Wales and its highest mountain, Snowdon, is 1,085m.

The population of Wales is just over three million people, around five per cent of the total UK population. Most Welsh people live in south Wales in the capital city, Cardiff, and two other big cities: Swansea and Newport. In Cardiff you can go shopping, visit the castle, go to the museum or go to a concert or sports match at the famous Millennium Stadium.

Language

The official languages of Wales are English and Welsh and 'Wenglish' is a Welsh-English dialect. Everyone speaks English, but if you go to school in Wales you have to learn Welsh until you are 16. Street signs are written in Welsh and English, and villages, towns and cities have an English name and a Welsh name. For example, the capital city is Cardiff or Caerdydd. One of the longest place names in the world is a village in Wales called Llanfairpwllgwyngyllgogerychwyrndrobwllllandysiliogogoch.

The Welsh language is an old, Celtic language which is very different from English. For example, the Welsh name for 'Wales' is 'Cymru', 'Good morning' is 'Bore da' and 'How are you?' is 'Sut mae?'. It is one of the oldest languages in Europe and around 20 per cent of people in Wales speak Welsh.

Music

The Welsh people love music and there are a lot of singing festivals and competitions in Wales. One of the largest cultural festivals in Europe is the National Eisteddfod of Wales, which is in a different town or city every year. All the events are in Welsh and include literature, singing, art, exhibitions, dance and theatre. Famous singers and groups from Wales include Duffy, Stereophonics and Catatonia.

Sport

The Welsh enjoy watching and playing sport, especially rugby union and football. Wales has its own football league and famous Welsh footballers include Ryan Giggs and Gareth Bale. The modern Millennium Stadium in Cardiff can hold 74,500 spectators and is where you go if you want to watch a football or rugby match or even a pop concert. In 2014 Cardiff was the European Capital of Sport.

Water sports are popular in Wales. You can go surfing, wakeboarding (a combination of waterskiing, snowboarding and surfing) or coasteering (climbing up rocks and jumping into the sea).

If you like unusual sports, visit the small town of Llanwrtyd Wells. Every year in this town there is a man versus horse marathon and a bog snorkelling competition. Bog snorkelling is similar to swimming in extremely dirty water.

Food

There are lots of sheep in Wales, so people eat a lot of lamb. Typical Welsh dishes include 'cawl' which is lamb stew, Glamorgan sausages and 'rarebit' which is a type of cheese on toast. There are also Welsh cakes, which are small, sweet, round cakes with dried raisins inside.

Symbols

If you ever go to Wales, you will see dragons everywhere! Not real ones, of course, but a red dragon appears on the national flag of Wales. The patron saint of Wales is St David, who is celebrated on 1 March. Other symbols of Wales include the leek (a long, green vegetable) and the daffodil (a white or yellow flower).