

Directory

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ACCOMMODATION

Where accommodation listings in this book are broken down by price, we have used the following breakdown, based on two people sharing a double room: budget (less than £25 per person); midrange (£25 to £50 per person); and top-end (more than £50 per person).

Budget accommodation includes camp sites, bunkhouses and hostels as well as cheaper B&Bs and guesthouses without private bathrooms or with limited facilities. Mid-range options include costlier B&Bs, hotels, pubs, inns and university accommodation. Here visitors receive a private bathroom, tea-and-coffee-making facilities, TV and phone.

PRACTICALITIES

- Wales uses the metric system for weights and measures. However, speed and distance are measured in miles, and pubs still pull pints.
- Wales uses the PAL video system (incompatible with both the French SECAM system and the North American and Japanese NTSC system).
- Recharge your mobile with a three-pin (square) adaptor plugged into the 240V AC, 50Hz electricity supply.
- Flick through the popular *Daily Post* or the *Western Mail*, Wales' only national English-language daily newspaper.
- For the low-down on what's happening around the country, try the magazines *Cambria*, *Planet*, or *Golwg* (Vision).
- Tune in to BBC Radio Wales (103.9FM) for English-language news and features, or BBC Radio Cymru (a range of frequencies between 103.5FM and 105FM) for the Welsh-language version.
- Sianel Pedwar Cymru (S4C) is the national Welsh-language broadcaster.

Top-end listings, many of them converted castles and mansions, include Wales' best hotels. In these places the service and facilities should be exemplary. The worst-value accommodation tends to be in big towns, and cheap B&Bs are rare in city centres. Single rooms seem to be in short supply everywhere.

Grading

VisitWales (www.visitwales.com), the national tourist board, operates a grading system based on facilities and quality of service. Participating hostels, hotels, guesthouses, B&Bs and camp sites usually display their star-rating. In practice, however, there's variability within each classification, and some one-star guesthouses are better than the three-star hotel around the block.

Some excellent B&Bs don't participate in the system at all because they have to pay to do

BOOK ACCOMMODATION ONLINE

For more accommodation reviews and recommendations by Lonely Planet authors, check out the online booking service at www.lonelyplanet.com. You'll find the true, insider lowdown on the best places to stay. Reviews are thorough and independent. Best of all, you can book online.

so. Tourist offices rarely mention good non-participating places, or may simply dismiss them as 'not approved'. In the end, actually seeing a place and talking to the owner will give the best clue as to what to expect.

It's worth ordering a copy of *VisitWales'* annually updated accommodation guide through its website. Although listed establishments are *VisitWales*-approved it's worth keeping in mind that the descriptions are actually provided by the proprietors.

For online information about accommodation, try www.stayinwales.co.uk or www.walesdirectory.co.uk.

Reservations

It is essential to book ahead for Easter and Christmas, and for the peak season (mid-May to mid-September), especially July and August, which are the busiest months. Outside peak season room rates are often reduced and special offers may be available – it's always worth asking. In most city hotels rates are reduced at weekends, when there are no business people to fill the rooms.

Most tourist offices will book accommodation for you for a £2 fee plus a 10% deposit (the latter is then deducted from your accommodation bill). For the same charge, most can also book your next two nights' accommodation anywhere in the UK, under the Book-A-Bed-Ahead (BABA) scheme. Outside opening hours, many tourist offices put up a list of local places with beds available as of closing time.

B&Bs & Guesthouses

Almost anywhere you go in Wales you'll find reasonably priced, comfortable B&Bs – essentially just private houses with bedrooms to let, with prices from around £20 to £40 per person. Outside Cardiff, Swansea and Snowdonia, you're unlikely to have to pay more than £30, even in high season. Some of the finest and most family-friendly B&Bs are in rural

farmhouses, used to the muddy boots and appetites of walkers, cyclists and climbers.

Guesthouses, which are often just large converted houses with half a dozen rooms, are an extension of the B&B idea. Prices are a little higher than at B&Bs and in general they're less personal and more like small hotels, but without the same level of service.

Both B&Bs and guesthouses usually have central heating, TV, tea-and-coffee-making facilities and a wash basin. Better places have at least some rooms with private bathrooms. Double rooms will often have twin beds, so you don't have to be too familiar to share. Breakfast generally offers a choice between an artery-clogging concoction of fried eggs, bacon, sausages and tomatoes – enough to fill you for most of the day – or a healthier alternative of cereal, fruit and yoghurt.

Camping & Caravan Parks

Free camping is rarely possible in Wales but there are plenty of camp sites around the country, concentrated in the national parks and along the coast. Most camp sites have reasonable facilities, though quality can vary widely and some can be tricky to reach without your own transport.

Local tourist offices will have information on nearby sites, as well as free catalogues of camp sites all around their region. *VisitWales* lists approved caravan and camp sites in their accommodation guide *Where to Stay*, which you can order online. Other useful references are the website of the **Royal Automobile Club** (RAC; www.rac.co.uk) and its publication *Camping and Caravanning in Britain*.

Expect to pay between £8 and £15 a night for two people plus a tent, although on some basic sites prices may be lower, especially in the off season. Most sites are only open from March or April to October, so phone before going out of your way at other times.

For more information, try the following organisations' websites:

Camping & Caravanning Club (☎ 0845 130 7632;

www.campingandcaravanningclub.co.uk) The annual membership fee of £33 is good value for campers. The club runs many of its own sites and has a guide to several thousand others across Europe where members can get discounts.

Campsites (www.campsites.co.uk) Provides listings and links to websites where you can make online bookings for camp sites.

Forestry Commission (☎ 0845 130 8223; www.forest.holidays.co.uk) Information on camping in forest sites.

Freedom Park Holidays (www.freedom-hols.co.uk) Lists all VisitWales-approved sites.

Home Swaps

An economical accommodation option is swapping houses. Agencies specialising in organising a house swap typically charge anywhere between £30 and £115 to join and advertise your property. For more information, try www.homebase-hols.com, or www.homelink.org.uk.

Hostels

Wales has a great variety of youth hostels, both independent and affiliated with the International Youth Hostel Federation (IYHF), and you don't have to be young or single to use them.

Youth Hostel Association (YHA; ☎ 0870 770 8868; www.yha.org.uk) hostels tend to be in rural areas, or in town suburbs, have daytime lockouts and 11pm curfews. Independent hostels are generally much more relaxed about these matters and are usually close to the city centre. A few even have small licensed bars.

Nightly rates for a dorm bed range from about £10 to £18 for adults; for under-18s YHA hostels charge around 70% of the adult rate. Holders of Wales Flexipass travel passes (see p326) get a £1 discount at YHA hostels. Bed linen is generally included in the price.

You'll need a Hostelling International (HI) card to stay at YHA hostels; you can purchase one on the YHA website, or over the phone if you're in a hurry. If you don't get a card before you leave home, you can join through a system of 'welcome stamps', available at most hostels: a £2 stamp is purchased at each of your first six hostels, after which you become a member.

In general, it's a good idea to call ahead and check availability at hostels, and it's essential at peak holiday times.

For more information, pick up a copy of the *Independent Hostel Guide* at tourist offices or bookshops and try the websites of **Hostels Wales** (www.hostelswales.com) and **Hostels of Europe** (www.hostelseurope.com).

Hotels

The term 'hotel' is used with abandon in Wales, and may refer to anything from a pub to a castle. In general, hotels tend to have a reception desk, room service and other extras such as a licensed bar. Many offer weekend-break and other promotional rates, so if you're booking ahead, ask if they offer any discounts.

The very best hotels are magnificent places, often with restaurants to match. In rural areas you'll find country-house hotels set in vast grounds, and castles complete with crenellated battlements, grand staircases, oak paneling and the obligatory rows of stags' heads. For such places you can pay from £75 to more than £120 per person.

A new breed of boutique hotel has also emerged, offering individually styled designer rooms, clublike bars filled with leather sofas, top-quality restaurants and a range of spa treatments.

Three websites with select lists of atmospheric accommodation are **Wales in Style** (www.walesinstyle.com), **Great Little Places** (www.wales.little-places.co.uk) and **Welsh Rarebits** (www.welsh.rarebits.co.uk).

Pubs & Inns

Many country pubs offer midrange accommodation, though they vary widely in quality. Staying in a pub or inn can be good fun as it places you at the hub of the community, but they can be noisy; they aren't always ideal for solo women travellers, as they are often a male-dominated environment, where a single woman might attract unwanted attention. They usually have a lounge where

RESTAURANTS WITH ROOMS

A burgeoning new concept in Wales is the **restaurant with rooms** (www.restaurantswithrooms.net). It's a unique combination of gourmet food and a small number of lovingly decorated rooms, generally overseen by an owner/chef who's dedicated to the cause of bringing good food to the discerning. With accommodation only a staircase away you can sit back, relax and really enjoy your meal – without the need of a designated driver.

cheap meals are served; some also have decent restaurants.

Slightly more upscale from pubs are former coaching inns, offering what Brits like to call an 'olde-worlde atmosphere'. But the atmosphere at such places tends to inflate the prices, and you're best to check out the room no matter how elegant the front desk looks.

Rental Accommodation

There's plenty of rental accommodation around Wales, much of it of a high standard; a cottage for four can cost as little as £400 per week. Outside weekends and July and August, it's not essential to book a long way ahead, in which case the nearest tourist office can often help you find a place. The variety of cottages on offer means there's something to suit most visitors – traditional stone farmhouses, tiny quaint cottages, cleverly converted farm buildings, gracious manor houses and seaside hideaways. Quality and service are on the up, and you can even arrange an upmarket package with helicopter transfers, catering and someone to unpack for you at your smart, designer property.

For something special the **National Trust** (NT; ☎ 0870 458 4422; www.nationaltrustcottages.co.uk) has some really splendid rural properties that are let as holiday cottages. Similarly stunning rentals are offered by the **Landmark Trust** (☎ 01628-825925; www.landmarktrust.co.uk), an architectural charity that rescues unique old buildings, often in conjunction with the NT, and supports the work by renting them out.

For other properties, check out the following websites:

www.breconcottages.com For the Brecon Beacons area.
www.coastalcottages.co.uk Pembrokeshire options.
www.qualitycottages.co.uk Covers all of Wales.

www.ruralretreats.co.uk Properties in the three Welsh national parks and the rest of the UK.
www.sts-holidays.co.uk Sea and mountain cottages in Snowdonia.
www.wales-holidays.co.uk Covers all of Wales.

Resorts

Wales' attempts at resorts are rather low-key by international standards. Llandudno in the north and Tenby in the south are as close as Wales comes to palm trees and promenades. At both, development is understated and there are no vast condo complexes or international hotels. It's more Victoriana and blue rinse than tequilas and casinos, and many are blighted by vast windswept caravan parks. Llandudno is popular year-round and has a graceful air and some great beaches. Tenby is slightly trendier and attracts a young surfing crowd as well as the bus tours. For more information, see www.britishresorts.co.uk.

University Accommodation

Many University of Wales campuses offer student rooms to visitors during the holidays usually for three weeks over Easter and Christmas and from late June to late September. Rooms tend to be comfortable, functional singles, and many come with private bathrooms. Aberystwyth and Swansea have the greatest choice of rooms. Full-board, half-board, B&B and self-catering options are available. A B&B option normally costs from £22 to £28 per person.

For more information, contact **Venuemasters** (☎ 0114-249 3090; www.venuemasters.co.uk).

ACTIVITIES

Despite the weather, Wales is a great place for outdoor pursuits. Check the Outdoor Activities chapter (p58) for details.

THE END OF DRY SUNDAY

'Dry Sunday', the prohibition against drinking alcohol on the Sabbath, dates back more than two centuries to the time of religious revivals. Regular campaigns were mounted in the 20th century that called for an end to the tradition, but the first Welsh districts to vote for an end to the practice only did so in the 1970s. It was 1995 before the last of them, Dwyfor (essentially all of the Llŷn), went 'wet'.

CAMPING BARNs & BUNKHOUSES

Camping barns and their more comfortable brothers, bunkhouses, primarily cater to walkers and are often in spectacular settings but with little public-transport access and few places close by to go for a bite or a beer. Bunkhouses generally have dormitory accommodation, hot showers, drying rooms, stoves for heating and cooking, and usually a social area of some sort. You're expected to bring your own sleeping bag and food supplies, and to generally look after yourself. The majority of those in Wales are in or around the Brecon Beacons National Park. Bunkhouses tend to get block-booked by groups in summer, but can usually accommodate individuals during the week and outside peak season. Expect to pay about £10 to £15 in the best places. For a listing of Welsh bunkhouses, check out www.hostelswales.com.

BUSINESS HOURS

Offices are generally open from 9am to 5pm weekdays, and banks from 9.30am to 4.30pm. Shops generally stay open until 5.30pm or 6pm and most open all day on Saturday. An increasing number of shops also open on Sunday, from 11am to 4pm. Late-night shopping (to 8pm) is usually on Thursday or Friday.

Cafés tend to be open from 9am to 5pm Monday to Saturday, while restaurants generally open from noon to 2pm and also 6pm to 10pm. Pubs and bars usually open at around 11am and close at 11pm (10.30pm on Sunday). Many pubs in larger towns have late licences and stay open until 2am from Thursday to Saturday.

Many businesses in small and country towns have a weekly early-closing day – it's different in each region of the country, but is usually Tuesday, Wednesday or Thursday afternoon – though not all shops honour it. Early-closing is more common in winter.

If someone tells you a place (eg a shop, café or restaurant) opens daily, they almost always mean 'daily except Sunday'.

See also Post (p316) and Tourist Information (p317).

CHILDREN

Forward planning and a bit of research generally make for a much smoother ride when travelling with children.

In Wales most hotels, B&Bs and restaurants offer a warm welcome to families, but to avoid hassle confirm this when you book. Also pick up a copy of VisitWales' free brochure, *A View of Wales*, which gives plenty of helpful tips and ideas for family holidays and activities.

Wales presents no major health risks for children, other than cold, wet mountains and the occasional hot and sunny beach. For more general and wide-ranging suggestions for keeping children healthy and entertained, pick up Lonely Planet's *Travel with Children*, and talk to fellow travellers with kids for the best up-to-the-minute advice.

Practicalities

Generally, cafés and middle- and lower-bracket restaurants are quite tolerant of children and have highchairs. Many pubs have gardens with playgrounds and children's menus and most hotels and B&Bs can rustle up a baby cot or heat a bottle.

Baby-changing facilities are available in most supermarkets, bigger train stations,

motorway service stations and at major attractions. Some trains also offer separate family carriages, where you needn't cringe when your tots enjoy themselves at high volume. If you're hiring a car and need a baby or booster seat, specify this at the time of booking.

Sights & Activities

Preschool children usually get into museums and other sights for free, and those aged up to about 16 get in for one-half to two-thirds of the adult price.

There are lots of friendly farm parks and zoos where children can help with feeding and get to know the animals, as well as loads of coastal amusements, and hundreds of fascinating castles and ruins worth exploring.

For older children, multiactivity centres, horse-riding schools and some excellent interactive museums should provide ample entertainment without boring you to tears. In the Cardiff area in particular you can go mad on museums, which have some excellent programmes for children. Heritage parks and industrial sights can also be real winners, and they offer the chance to go into mines, pan for gold and explore workers cottages. The Centre for Alternative Technology (p234) is also worth a detour for its sheer joy of discovery.

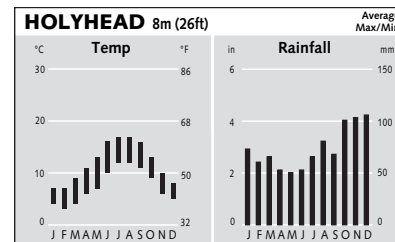
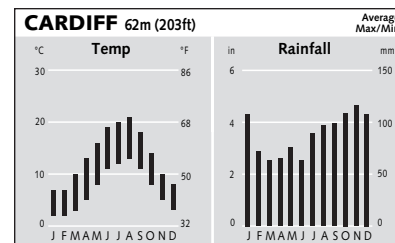
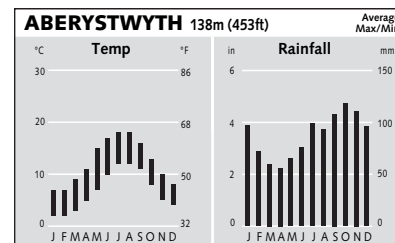
Wales also has some great natural attractions for children, including massive caves in the Brecon Beacons; incredible beaches along the coast, most of which have plenty of fun activities and adventure sports for children; and resorts with plenty of distractions in Rhyll, Llandudno (p292) and Tenby (p165).

If you fancy seeing animals in the wild, the best bet is going on a boat tour from the Pembrokeshire coast, where you can spot seals, dolphins and whales. Also worth considering is a trip through stunning scenery on one of the country's many preserved steam railways.

For more information on activities for kids, take a look at our Wales for Kids itinerary (p27), or visit the Wales page of www.travelforkids.com.

CLIMATE CHARTS

No-one goes to Wales looking for a tan, but it's not all rain clouds and gloomy days. October to January are the wettest months and although it can rain at any time of year, summers are generally mild and fresh with average temperatures just below 20°C. In general, the coast is the driest part of the country and



the mountains the wettest. Mt Snowdon gets several weeks of the white stuff per year, while the Cambrian Mountains and Brecon Beacons get about half that amount.

The weather in Wales is unpredictable, and conditions can change within a matter of hours, so if you're out and about, be prepared!

For more information, see p18.

COURSES Welsh Language

The obvious subject for courses in Wales – and one you'd be hard-pressed to study anywhere else – is the Welsh language. Courses are taught throughout the country from March to September, including three- and four-day family courses, weekend and week-long intensives, and residential courses for those prepared to spend one to six weeks immersed in the language. Most immersion courses are based on a programme called *Wlpan* (*ool-pahn*), an

adopted Hebrew word for the Hebrew-language programme on which they're based.

Major centres include the **University of Wales** (www.wales.ac.uk) campuses at **Abergystwyth** (www.aber.ac.uk), **Bangor** (www.bangor.ac.uk), **Cardiff** (www.cf.ac.uk) and **Swansea** (www.swan.ac.uk); there are other educational centres at Abergavenny, Builth Wells, Conwy, Dolgellau, Fishguard, Harlech, Mold, Newport and Pontypridd.

The **Welsh Language Board** (BwrddYrIaithGymraeg; % 029-2087 8000; www.bwrdd-yr-iaith.org.uk) publishes a leaflet with details of summer and residential courses available. The year-round **Welsh Language and Heritage Centre** (Nant Gwrtheyrn; % 01758-750334; www.nantgwr.com), in the Welsh-speaking heartland of the Llŷn, caters for all levels and is ideal for families and individuals who are looking to spend time in Snowdonia. Typical prices at the Welsh Language and Heritage Centre for a five-day course range from £275 (for nonresidential) to £395 (includes full board). A one-week taster course through **Cardiff University** (% 029-2087 4710; www.caerdydd.ac.uk/cymraeg/canolan) will cost you £10 to £22.

For those keen to plug into the language before arriving, there are online beginners' courses available through **Cardiff University** (www.cs.cf.ac.uk/fun/welsh). And if you're really keen and you live in North America you can take a course at home with the **Welsh Studies Institute of North America** (www.madog.org).

Other Courses

For courses dealing with the outdoors, see the Outdoor Activities chapter (p58). Check out the following websites for a range of different courses:

- www.aberystwythartscentre.co.uk Residential courses in stone carving and ceramics at Abergystwyth.
- www.bucklandhall.co.uk Holistic lifestyle workshops and courses in the Brecon Beacons.
- www.cat.org.uk Wide range of residential courses, from eco-renovation to the art of composting, at the Centre for Alternative Technology.
- www.eryri-npa.gov.uk Offers various autumn and winter courses in Snowdonia, including art, history, folklore, photography and jewellery-making.
- www.orient.org.uk Arts-related courses, from watercolours to glass-making, at the Llŷn Peninsula.
- www.shamanism.co.uk Residential courses on shamanism, which take place at a wilderness camp.
- www.tynnewydd.org Creative writing courses in a communal setting near Cricieth.
- www.uksurvivalschool.co.uk Learn survival skills during a wild weekend in the Brecon Beacons.

CUSTOMS Duty-Free Goods

Travellers arriving in the UK from the EU can bring into the country up to 3200 cigarettes (only 200 cigarettes if arriving from the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia or Slovenia), 400 cigarillos, 200 cigars, 3kg of smoking tobacco, 10L of spirits, 20L of fortified wine (eg port or sherry), 90L of wine and 110L of beer, provided the goods are for personal use only.

Travellers arriving from outside the EU can bring in, duty-free, a maximum of 200 cigarettes or 100 cigarillos or 50 cigars or 250g of tobacco; 2L of still table wine; 1L of spirits or 2L of fortified wine, sparkling wine or liqueurs; 60mL of perfume; 250mL of eau de toilette; and £145 worth of all other goods (including gifts and souvenirs). Anything over this limit must be declared to customs officers. People under 17 do not get the alcohol and tobacco allowances.

For details of prohibited and restricted goods (such as meat, milk and other animal products), and quarantine regulations, see the website of **HM Customs & Excise** (www.hmrc.gov.uk).

Pets

The UK has draconian pet-quarantine policies to protect its rabies-free status. The Pet Travel Scheme (PETS) allows dogs and cats from a number of European countries to travel to the UK without going into quarantine. The animals must not have been outside those countries in the previous six months; they must also have an identity microchip implanted, and must have various vaccinations, tests and certifications. Other animals and all animals from outside these countries must be placed in quarantine for six months.

For more information on bringing your pet to the UK, contact your nearest UK embassy or consulate or check out the website www.defra.gov.uk/animalh/quarantine/index.htm.

DANGERS & ANNOYANCES

Wales is a pretty safe place to travel, but use your common sense when it comes to hitching, or walking in city centres at night. If you're unlucky enough to encounter a brawl outside a pub at closing time, just give it a wide berth. In general you'll receive a warm welcome all across Wales, but outside the main cities the population is overwhelmingly white and, although racists are a small minority, there have been some reports of unpleasant incidents.

The obvious things to guard are your passport, travel documents, tickets and money, and it's a good idea to bring a padlock for hostel lockers. Don't leave valuables lying around in your hotel or B&B room and never leave valuables in a car, especially overnight, even in rural locations. Look for secure parking near tourist offices and national-park visitor centres, otherwise while you're discovering the countryside someone else may be exploring the contents of your glove compartment. Report thefts to the police and ask for a statement otherwise your travel-insurance company won't pay out.

In Wales never assume that just because it's midsummer it will be warm and dry. The general wetness aside, it's even more important to treat the Brecon Beacons and Snowdonia National Parks with respect. Mist can drop with a startling suddenness, leaving you dangerously chilled and disoriented.

Never venture onto the heights without checking the weather forecast and without being sensibly clad and equipped, and always make sure someone knows where you're heading. For more information, see Hypothermia (p332) and Walking (p62).

DISCOUNT CARDS Heritage Passes

Several passes offer good value to anyone keen to see a number of the castles, stately homes, ruined abbeys and other properties owned by Wales' heritage trusts, Cadw and the NT. See p318 for details.

Hostel Cards

If you're travelling on a budget, YHA or Hostelling International (HI) membership is a must. Membership costs £15.95/22.95 for an individual/family. There are around 40 hostels in Wales, and members are also eligible for all sorts of discounts on travel, attractions and purchases. See p306 for more information about hostelling in Wales.

Senior Cards

Travellers aged 60 and over get 50% off standard National Express bus fares with a routesixty card (www.nationalexpress.com), and 30% off most rail fares with a **Senior Railcard** (www.railcard.co.uk; £20).

Many attractions have lower admission prices for those aged over 60 or 65 (sometimes as low as 55 for women); it's always worth asking even if it's not posted.

Student & Youth Cards

The most useful of these is the **International Student Identity Card** (ISIC; www.isicard.com; £7), issued to full-time students aged 12 years and over. It provides cheap or free admission to museums and sights, inexpensive meals in some student restaurants and discounts on many forms of transport.

If you're aged under 26 but not a student, you can apply for an **International Youth Travel Card** (IYTC/G025/Euro26; www.euro26.org), which gives much the same discounts as the ISIC.

Student unions, hostelling organisations and student travel agencies issue both cards.

Travel Cards

If you plan to do a lot of travelling by bus or train, Wales offers some good-value travel passes, especially those marketed under the name Flexipass (see p326). Most local bus operators also offer day and family passes.

EMBASSIES & CONSULATES UK Embassies Abroad

Overseas embassies and high commissions represent the UK, of which Wales is a part. Some are listed below; if you need the details of others, consult the website of the Foreign & Commonwealth Office (www.fco.gov.uk).

Australia (High Commission; % 02-6270 6666; www.britaus.net; Commonwealth Ave, Yarralumla, Canberra, ACT 2600)

Canada (High Commission; % 613-237 1530; www.britaincanada.org; 80 Elgin St, Ottawa, Ontario K1P 5K7)

France (Embassy; % 01 44 51 31 00; www.amb-grande-bretagne.fr; 35 rue du Faubourg St Honoré, 75383 Paris)

Germany (Embassy; % 030-20457-0; www.britisch ebotschaft.de; Wilhelmstrasse 70, 10117 Berlin)

Ireland (Embassy; % 01 205 3700; www.britishembassy.ie; 29 Merrion Rd, Ballsbridge, Dublin 4)

Japan (Embassy; % 03-5211 1100; www.uknow.or.jp; 1 Ichiban-cho, Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo 102-8381)

Netherlands (Embassy; % 070-4270 427; www.britain.nl; Lange Voorhout 10, 2514 ED, The Hague)

New Zealand (High Commission; % 04-924 2888; www.britain.org.nz; 44 Hill St, Wellington)

South Africa (High Commission; % 012 421 7500; www.britain.org.za; 255 Hill St, Arcadia, 0002 Pretoria)

USA (Embassy; % 202-588 7800; www.britainusa.com; 3100 Massachusetts Ave NW, Washington DC 20008)

Embassies & Consulates in the UK

It's important to realise what your own embassy (ie the embassy of the country of which you are a citizen) can and can't do to help you if you get into trouble.

Generally speaking, it won't be much help if the trouble you're in is remotely your own fault; remember that you're bound by the laws of the country you're in. Your embassy will not be sympathetic if you end up in jail after committing a crime locally, even if such actions are legal in your own country.

In genuine emergencies you might get some assistance, but only if other channels have been exhausted. For example, if you need to get home urgently, a free ticket home is exceedingly unlikely – the embassy would expect you to have insurance. If you have all of your money and documents stolen, the embassy might assist with getting a new passport, but a loan for onward travel is generally out of the question.

There are a handful of foreign consular offices in Cardiff, including the following:

Canada (% 2044 9635; c/o St John Cymru Wales, Beignon Close, Ocean Way, Cardiff CF24 5PB)

Ireland (% 029-2066 2000; Brunel House, 2 Fitzalan Rd, Cardiff CF24 0EB)

Italy (% 029-2034 1757; 1st fl, 14 Museum Pl, Cardiff CF10 3BH)

Netherlands (% 0871 226 0180; c/o Sam Smith Travel, 55 High St, Cowbridge, Cardiff CF71 7AE)

For the embassies or high commissions of most other countries, you'll have to go to London. Some foreign missions in London include the following:

Australia (% 020-7379 4334; www.australia.org.uk; Australia House, Strand, WC2B 4LA)

Canada (% 020-7258 6600; www.dfait-maeci.gc.ca/canadaeuropa/united_kingdom; 1 Grosvenor Sq, W1K 4AB)

France (% 020-7073 1000; www.ambafrance-uk.org; 58 Knightsbridge, SW1X 7JT)

Germany (% 020-7824 1300; www.london-diplo.de; 23 Belgrave Sq, SW1X 8PZ)

Ireland (% 020-7235 2171; fax 7245 6961; 17 Grosvenor Pl, SW1X 7HR)

Netherlands (% 020-7590 3200; www.netherlands-embassy.org.uk; 38 Hyde Park Gate, SW7 5DP)

New Zealand (% 020-7930 8422; www.nzembassy.com; New Zealand House, 80 Haymarket, SW1Y 4TQ)

South Africa (% 020-7451 7299; www.southafrica house.com; South Africa House, Trafalgar Sq, WC2N 5DP)

USA (% 020-7499 9000; www.usembassy.org.uk; 24 Grosvenor Sq, W1A 1AE)

FESTIVALS & EVENTS

Wales' biggest annual cultural events are its *eisteddfodau* (gatherings; singular *eisteddfod*), described on p47. They range from little

village songfests to vast annual gatherings, of which there are three:

International Musical Eisteddfod (www.international-eisteddfod.co.uk)

Royal National Eisteddfod of Wales (www.eisteddfod.org.uk)

Urdd Eisteddfod (www.urdd.org)

Other events to look out for include summer theatre performances at many of the castles and other properties managed by **Cadw** (www.cadw.wales.gov.uk), and ecofriendly **Festival of the Countryside** (www.foc.org.uk, www.thingstodo.org.uk) events – including fairs, art workshops and exhibitions, guided walks and wildlife watching – all promoting environmentally sensitive tourism in Wales.

There are hundreds of events in Wales throughout the year. The following list details some of the larger events; see the regional chapters for information on local celebrations.

March

Six Nations Rugby Championship (Millennium Stadium, Cardiff) The highlight of the Welsh rugby calendar. Match dates vary.

St David's Day Celebrations on 1 March all over the country in honour of the patron saint of Wales.

May

Urdd Eisteddfod (Youth Eisteddfod; www.urdd.org; changing venues) The largest youth festival of performing arts in Europe held over six days late in May or early June.

St David's Cathedral Festival (www.stdavids cathedral.org.uk; St David's) Festival of classical music with a grandiose backdrop held on the Spring Bank Holiday weekend.

Hay Festival (www.hayfestival.co.uk; Hay-on-Wye) Bookworms break for this one-week festival of literature.

June

Man vs Horse Marathon (Llanwrtyd Wells) Two legs versus four legs in this lunatic cross-country dash to win £25,000; a two-legged runner won for the first time in 2004. First Saturday in June.

Cardiff Singer of the World (www.bbc.co.uk/cardiff singer) International songsters compete in Cardiff. Takes place in odd-numbered years only.

July

International Musical Eisteddfod (www.international-eisteddfod.co.uk, www.llangollenfringe.co.uk; Llangollen) Swinging international music fest with an eclectic fringe held for six days in early July.

Morris in the Forest (Llanwrtyd Wells) Offbeat festival of morris dancing, ceilidhs, walks and workshops. Three-day weekend in early July.

Sesiwn Fawr Festival (www.sesiwnfawr.com; Dolgellau) Free Celtic folk festival. Third weekend in July.

Ras yr Wyddfa (www.snowdonrace.com; Llanberis) This one-day race up Snowdon is only for the truly hardy. Late July.

Royal Welsh Show (www.rwas.co.uk; Builth Wells) Sniff out the prize bullocks at Wales' biggest farm and livestock show. One week, late July.

Fishguard International Music Festival (www.fishguardfestival.org.uk; Fishguard) From chamber and orchestral to choirs and jazz. One week, late July.

Big Cheese (www.caerphilly.gov.uk/bigcheese; Caerphilly) Street theatre, folk dancing, medieval costumes and food – including some smelly cheeses. Last weekend in July.

August

Cardiff Festival (www.cardiff-festival.com; Cardiff) Europe's biggest free arts festival, with street theatre and music around the city. Two weeks culminating on the first weekend in August.

Royal National Eisteddfod (www.eisteddfod.org.uk; changing venues) The largest and oldest celebration of Welsh culture, with a fabulous fringe. Eight days in early August.

Brecon Jazz Festival (www.breconjazz.co.uk; Brecon) Smoky sounds at one of Europe's leading jazz festivals. One weekend in mid-August.

Race the Train (www.racethetrain.co.uk; Tywyn) Quirky all-terrain race pitting man against steam train. Saturday in mid-August.

Victorian Festival (www.victorianfestival.co.uk; Llandrindod Wells) Family fun and Victorian dress-ups at this week-long festival. Mid-to-late August.

World Bog Snorkelling Championships (www.worldbogsnork.com; Llanwrtyd Wells) Competitors submerge themselves in the murky bog waters for a 110m swim and their five minutes of fame. You can also try it on a mountain bike... Summer Bank Holiday Monday.

Faenol Festival (www.brynfest.com; near Bangor) An unlikely world-class mix of rock, pop and opera. Three days in late August.

September

North Wales Hot Air Balloon Festival (Llangollen) Hot air hits the skies in this blow-up bonanza. First weekend in September.

Tenby Arts Festival (www.tenbyartsfest.co.uk; Tenby) Street theatre, samba bands, classical and pop concerts. Nine days in late September.

Abergavenny Food Festival (www.abergavenny foodfestival.com; Abergavenny) All the ingredients to satisfy any gourmet – or just a sweet tooth. One weekend towards the end of September.

October

Swansea Festival (www.swanseaabayfestival.net; Swansea) Drama, opera, film, ballet, jazz and classical music. Three weeks.

November

Mid-Wales Beer Festival (Llanwrtyd Wells) Scores of real ale in the town's pubs, plus beer-fuelled off-road foot and cycle races, including the Real Ale Wobble. One and a half weeks.

International Film Festival of Wales (www.iffw.co.uk; Cardiff) Art-house, indie and blockbuster films go head to head in the capital's cinemas. One week.

FOOD

Where eating listings in this book have been subdivided on price, we have used three categories based on the price of a main course at dinner: budget (mostly cafés and cheaper restaurants where main courses cost less than £7); midrange (from £7 to £15); top-end (more than £15).

For more information on the culinary delights of Wales, see p70.

GAY & LESBIAN TRAVELLERS

In general, Wales is tolerant of homosexuality; certainly it's possible for people to acknowledge their homosexuality in a way that would have been unthinkable 20 years ago. But tolerance only goes so far, as a glance at any tabloid newspaper will confirm. The age of consent for homosexual sex is 16.

Cardiff and Swansea both have active gay and lesbian scenes, and there are small above-the-parapet gay communities in Newport and in the university towns of Aberystwyth and Bangor, although overt displays of affection may not be wise beyond acknowledged venues. These two University of Wales campuses also have limited but regular social events for gay and lesbian students (and visitors) and have lesbian/gay/bisexual student officers who can be contacted for information and help. Aberystwyth also has a gay and bisexual hotline. See under those towns for further information.

Wales' biggest gay/lesbian/bisexual bash is the extravagant Cardiff Mardi Gras festival held in late August or early September (p93).

For more general information try the following sites.

Border Women (www.borderwomen.org.uk) Information, support and events for lesbians on the English–Welsh border.

Divva (www.divamag.co.uk) British lesbian magazine.

Gay Times (www.gaytimes.co.uk) British gay periodical.

Gay Wales (www.gaywales.co.uk) The best Wales-specific resource, with news, events, listings and helplines.

Lesbian & Gay Switchboard (☎ 020-7837 7324; www.ligs.org.uk; 12hr) London resource that can help with most inquiries.

Pink UK (www.pinkuk.com) UK-wide gay and lesbian resource.

HOLIDAYS

Public Holidays

Most banks, businesses, a few museums and other places of interest are closed on public holidays. A 'bank holiday' is a weekday closure that is defined generically (eg the first Monday of May) rather than associated with a particular calendar date or religious festival.

Wales' official public holidays are:

New Year's Day 1 January

Good Friday March/April

Easter Monday March/April

May Day Bank Holiday First Monday in May

Spring Bank Holiday Last Monday in May

Summer Bank Holiday Last Monday in August

Christmas Day 25 December

Boxing Day/St Stephen's Day 26 December

If New Year's Day, Christmas Day or Boxing Day falls on a weekend, the following Monday is also a bank holiday. Most museums and attractions in Wales close on Christmas and Boxing Day but stay open for the other holidays. Exceptions are those that normally close on Sunday. Some smaller museums close on Monday and/or Tuesday.

School Holidays

Peak holiday times in Wales coincide with the school holidays, notably Christmas and New Year, Easter, six weeks in July and August and two one-week mid-term breaks (one in April and one in October). During these times it's essential to book accommodation in advance and be prepared for crowds at most attractions.

INSURANCE

However you're travelling, make sure you take out a comprehensive travel insurance policy that covers you for medical expenses, luggage theft or loss and for cancellation of (or delays in) your travel arrangements. When choosing a policy, check whether the insurance company will make payments directly to providers or reimburse you later for overseas health expenditures.

The international travel policies handled by STA Travel and other student travel organisations are usually good value. Some policies offer lower and higher medical-expense options; unless you're eligible for free NHS treatment (see p331), go for as much as you can afford.

Paying for your ticket with a credit card often provides limited travel-accident insurance (ie it covers accidental death, loss of limbs or permanent total disablement). You may be able to reclaim the payment if the operator doesn't deliver.

It's a good idea to photocopy all your important documents (including your travel insurance policy) before you leave home. Leave one copy with someone at home and keep another with you, separate from the originals.

INTERNET ACCESS

If you're travelling in Wales with a laptop, you should be able to connect to the internet via a hotel-room phone socket for the cost of a local call by registering with an internet roaming service such as **MaGlobe** (www.maglobe.com). Many upmarket hotels offer in-room internet connections via RJ-11 Ethernet sockets or wi-fi. For help and information on getting online from hotel rooms, see www.kropla.com.

There is an ever-increasing number of wi-fi hot spots around Wales where you can access the internet with a wi-fi-enabled laptop, including McDonald's restaurants, Starbucks coffee shops, and anywhere within 50m of blue-topped BT internet payphones; you can search for wi-fi hot spots on www.jiwire.com.

If you don't have a laptop, the best places to check email and surf the internet in Wales are public libraries – almost every town and village in the country has at least a couple of computer terminals devoted to the internet, and they are mostly free to use.

Internet cafés also exist in the cities and larger towns and generally charge around £2 to £5 per hour. Always check the minimum charge, though, before you settle in – it's sometimes not worth the 10 minutes it takes to check your emails.

Remember that many of the larger tourist offices across the country have internet access too.

LEGAL MATTERS

Police have the power to detain anyone suspected of having committed an offence punishable by imprisonment (including drugs

LEGAL AGE

Legal age requirements in Wales are the same as those for the rest of the UK.

- Buying alcohol – 18
- Buying tobacco – 16
- Driving – 17 (16 for a moped)
- Heterosexual and homosexual sex – 16
- Marriage – 16
- Voting – 18

offences) for up to six hours. They can search you, take photographs and fingerprints, and question you. You are legally required to provide your correct name and address – not doing so, or giving false details, is an offence – but you are not obliged to answer any other questions. After six hours, the police must either formally charge you or let you go. If you are detained and/or arrested, you have the right to inform a lawyer and one other person, though you have no right to actually see the lawyer or to make a telephone call. If you don't know a lawyer, the police will inform the duty solicitor for you.

In the wake of September 11, the UK parliament passed the *Anti-Terrorism, Crime and Security Act 2001*. The legislation makes it possible for the government to detain foreigners suspected of terrorist activities, without trial. Since the London Underground and bus bombings in July 2005, further laws are being considered.

Possession of a small amount of cannabis is an offence punishable by a fine, but possession of a larger amount of cannabis, or any amount of harder drugs, is much more serious, with a sentence of up to 14 years in prison. Police have the right to search anyone they suspect of possessing drugs.

You're allowed to have a maximum blood-alcohol level of 35mg/100mL when driving. Traffic offences (illegal parking, speeding etc) often incur a fine for which you're usually allowed 30 to 60 days to pay.

MAPS

Two useful countrywide maps, updated annually by VisitWales, are available at nearly every tourist office. The *Wales Tourist Map* presents all major roads and major sights, national parks, towns with tourist offices (and a list of those open in winter), several town plans, and suggested car tours. The free *Wales Bus, Rail*

and *Tourist Map and Guide* manages to map just about every bus and train route in Wales that has more than about three services per week, plus the essentials of bus, train and ferry connections into Wales, as well as tables of frequencies and information numbers.

Free regional transport booklets, with complete maps and timetables, are also available at tourist offices, and train stations stock free timetables provided by each train operator.

For walkers and cyclists, it's essential to have a good map before setting off on any trip. Most tourist offices and local bookshops stock maps produced by the UK's national mapping agency, the **Ordnance Survey** (OS; www.ordnancesurvey.co.uk), which cover their regions, including the useful 1:50,000 Landranger series and the excruciatingly detailed 1:25,000 Explorer series. OS Pathfinder Walking Guides cover short walks in popular areas, and Outdoor Leisure maps cover the national parks, both at 1:25,000.

For motoring, look for the OS Routemaster series at 1:250,000. A to Z publishes 1:200,000 *North Wales* and *South Wales* road maps, with useful detailed town indexes.

Maps can be ordered online at the OS website or from www.amazon.co.uk.

MONEY

Wales uses the pound sterling (£), and the same major banks as the rest of the UK. There are 1p, 2p, 5p, 10p, 20p, 50p, £1 and £2 coins and £5, £10, £20 and £50 notes.

Most banks and larger post offices can change foreign currency; US dollars and euros are the easiest currencies to change and will get the best rates. For exchange rates, see the inside front cover.

Whichever way you decide to carry your money, it makes sense to keep most of it in a money belt and an emergency stash somewhere else.

ATMs

Nearly all banks in Wales have ATMs linked to international systems such as Cirrus, Maestro or Plus. An increasing number of ATMs, especially ones you find in shops, make a charge for withdrawal (at least £1.50).

Credit Cards

Various cards including Visa, MasterCard, American Express (Amex) and Diners Club are widely accepted in Wales, although small businesses such as B&Bs prefer cash. If your

credit card is lost or stolen contact the relevant provider.

Amex (% 01273-696933)

Diners Club (% 0870 190 0011)

MasterCard (% 0800 964767)

Visa (% 0800 891725)

Tippling

In general, when you eat in a restaurant you should leave a tip of at least 10% unless the service was unsatisfactory. Waiting staff are often paid derisory wages on the assumption that the money will be supplemented by tips. If the bill already includes a service charge (usually 10%), you needn't add a further tip. Tippling in bars is not customary.

Taxis in Wales are expensive, and drivers rarely expect a tip unless they have gone out of their way to help you.

Travellers Cheques

Travellers cheques issued by Amex, Thomas Cook and Visa are widely recognised. Euro-cheques are not commonly used in the UK and many places refuse to accept them. Keep a record of the numbers of your cheques and which cheques you have cashed, so if they're lost or stolen you'll be able to tell the issuing agency which cheques have gone. Keep this list separate from the cheques themselves. If they are lost or stolen contact the relevant issuer.

Amex (% 0800 521313)

Thomas Cook (% 0800 622101)

Visa (% 0800 895078)

PHOTOGRAPHY & VIDEO

Print film is available just about everywhere, but for slide film you'll have to go to a specialist photo shop. With dull, overcast conditions common, high-speed film (ISO 200 or ISO 400) is useful. Try to get out in the early morning or just before sunset for the gentlest light.

You can buy Mini-DV cassettes and memory cards for digital cameras at branches of Currys Digital, Dixons, Jessops, and specialist photography shops.

For expert guidance pick up a copy of *Lonely Planet's Travel Photography: A Guide to Taking Better Pictures*, by Richard I'Anson.

Get some practice with your video camera before recording that holiday of a lifetime. Be particularly careful to assess the effect of background noise on the soundtrack.

Many tourist attractions charge for taking photos or prohibit photography altogether.

Use of a flash is frequently forbidden in order to protect delicate pictures and fabrics. Video cameras are often disallowed because of the inconvenience they can cause to other visitors.

POST

Mail sent within the UK can go either 1st or 2nd class. First-class mail is faster (normally next-day delivery) and more expensive (32p for a letter up to 100g) than 2nd-class mail (23p); rates depend on the size as well as weight of the letter or packet.

Airmail postcards/letters (60g) to European countries cost 44/83p; to South Africa, the USA and Canada 50p/£1.51; and Australia and New Zealand 50p/£1.66. An airmail letter generally takes five days to get to the USA or Canada and a week to Australia or New Zealand.

If you don't have a permanent address, mail can be sent to *poste restante* in the town or city where you're staying. Amex offices also hold card-holders' mail for free.

Post office hours vary, but most open from 9am to 5.30pm on weekdays and 9am to 12.30pm on Saturday.

SHOPPING

Crafts

The recent revival of craft industries in centres all over Wales has provided plentiful shopping fodder for visitors with a yen for anything from carved-wood dressers to ceramics, knitwear, tartan and lace. As well as the craft boom there's hardly a visitor attraction left now that doesn't have its own shop selling commemorative T-shirts, pencils, stationery, books, key rings, flags and souvenir fudge. Even the industrial sites have got in on the act, hawking repro miner's lamps and coal sculptures. Prices are often high, and quality variable, but among the furry red dragons you may just spot that ideal souvenir or gift.

VAT Refunds

Value-added tax (VAT) is a 17.5% sales tax that is levied on all goods and services in the UK except fresh food, books, newspapers and children's clothes. Non-EU citizens can claim a refund of VAT paid on most goods bought within the EU, which can make for a considerable saving.

The VAT Retail Export Scheme is voluntary and not all shops participate; look for a blue Tax-Free Shopping sign in the window. Different shops may have different

minimum-purchase conditions (normally around £40).

On purchase of goods and presentation of your passport, participating shops will give you a special form called VAT 407. This form must be presented at customs, along with the goods and sales receipts, when you depart the country (VAT-free goods can't be posted or shipped home). After customs has stamped the form, you can hand it in to a refund desk (several companies offer a centralised refund service, and have desks at major UK airports) for an immediate cash refund, or mail it back to the shop for a refund by cheque (an administration fee may be charged). Alternatively, if you use a credit card for the purchases, you can ask to have your VAT refund credited to your credit-card account.

For further details, check out the website of **HM Revenue & Customs** (www.hmrc.gov.uk), call the **National Advice Centre** (☎ 0845 010 9000) or pick up the leaflet *Notice 704 – VAT Retail Exports*, available from all customs arrival points throughout the UK. For examples of centralised refund services, see www.globalrefund.com and www.premiertaxfree.com.

TELEPHONE

Wales' country code (☎ 44) is the same as that of the rest of the UK; to call from abroad, dial your country's international access code, then 44, then the area code (dropping the initial 0) followed by the phone number. To dial out of the UK, phone 00 before the country code.

Public Phones

You'll see two types of phone booth in Wales: one takes money (and doesn't give change), while the other uses prepaid phone cards and credit cards. Some phones accept both coins and cards. The minimum charge is 20p.

All phones come with reasonably clear instructions in several languages. British Telecom (BT) offers phonecards for £3, £5, £10 and £20; they're widely available from retailers, including post offices and newsagents.

Mobile Phones

Codes for mobile phones usually begin with ☎ 07. The UK uses the GSM 900/1800 network, which covers the rest of Europe, Australia and New Zealand, but isn't compatible with the North American GSM 1900 (though some North Americans have GSM 1900/900

SPECIAL-RATE UK PHONE CODES

☎ 0500	toll-free
☎ 0800	toll-free
☎ 0808	toll-free
☎ 07	mobile phone (far more expensive to call than a landline)
☎ 0845	local-call rate applies
☎ 0870	national-call rate applies
☎ 09	premium-rate numbers (60p to £1 per minute)
☎ 00	international access code

phones that work in the UK). If you have a GSM phone, check with your service provider about using it in the UK, and beware of calls being routed internationally (very expensive for a 'local' call). You can also rent a mobile phone – ask a tourist office for details – or buy a 'pay-as-you-go' UK SIM card for as little as £10.

TIME

All of the UK is on GMT/UTC in winter and GMT/UTC plus one hour during summer. Clocks are set forward by an hour on the last Sunday in March and set back on the last Sunday in October.

See the time-zone world map (p350) for information on time differences in other parts of the world.

TOURIST INFORMATION

The national tourist board, **VisitWales** (☎ 029-2049 9909; www.visitwales.co.uk; Brunel House, 2 Fitzalan Rd, Cardiff CF24 4QZ), deals with postal, telephone and email inquiries only.

Every town of any size in Wales has its own tourist office, usually run by the local council. In towns in and around one of Wales' three national parks, the tourist office may be run by the park.

You can book accommodation anywhere in Wales using the Book-A-Bed-Ahead (BABA) scheme; you'll have to pay a £2 fee and a 10% deposit, which is then deducted from the cost of your accommodation.

TRAVELLERS WITH DISABILITIES

For many disabled travellers, Wales is a strange mix of user-friendliness and unfriendliness. Most new buildings are accessible to wheelchair users, so large new hotels and modern tourist attractions are usually fine.

However, most B&Bs and guesthouses are in hard-to-adapt older buildings. This means that travellers with mobility problems may pay more for accommodation than their able-bodied fellows.

It's a similar story with public transport. Newer buses sometimes have steps that lower for easier access, as do trains, but it's always wise to check before setting out. Most tourist offices, tourist attractions and public buildings reserve parking spaces for the disabled near the entrance. Most tourist offices in Wales are wheelchair accessible, have counter sections at wheelchair height and have information on accessibility in their particular area.

Many ticket offices and banks are fitted with hearing loops to assist the hearing impaired; look for the ear logo.

VisitWales publishes useful information on accommodation for people with disabilities in its *Where to Stay* guide, which is available at tourist offices and online at www.visitwales.co.uk.

The NT has its own *Access Guide* (downloadable as a pdf file from www.nationaltrust.org.uk) and offers free admission at all sites for companions of the disabled. Cadw, the Welsh historic monument agency, allows wheelchair users and the visually impaired (and their companions) free entry to all monuments.

For more detailed information contact the following organisations:

Disability Wales (☎ 029-2088 7352; www.disabilitywales.org) The national association of disability groups in Wales is a good source of information.

Holiday Care Service (☎ 0845 124 9971; www.holidaycare.org.uk) Publishes a wide range of regional accommodation guides, and can offer general advice.

Royal Association for Disability & Rehabilitation (Radar; ☎ 020-7250 3222; www.radar.org.uk) Publishes an annually updated survey, *Holidays in Britain & Ireland: A Guide for Disabled People*.

Royal National Institute for the Blind (RNIB; ☎ 0845 766 9999; www.rnib.org.uk) RNIB's holiday service provides general and more detailed information for the visually impaired. It also produces a guidebook of hotels recommended by visually impaired people, which is available in large print, Braille, on tape and on disc.

Shopmobility (☎ 08456 444 442; www.justmobility.co.uk/shop) UK-wide scheme under which wheelchairs and electric scooters are available in some towns at central points for access to shopping areas. The scheme is run as a charity in Cardiff; in other Welsh towns – including Swansea, Newport, Merthyr Tydfil and Wrexham – it's council-run, with modest rental fees.

USEFUL ORGANISATIONS

Membership of Cadw (pronounced *ka-doo*; Welsh for 'to preserve'), which is the Welsh historic monuments agency, and/or the National Trust (NT) is worth considering, especially if you're going to be in Wales for a while. Both care for hundreds of spectacular sites, and membership allows you to visit for free. You can join at any staffed Cadw or NT site, by post or phone, or online.

In this book, a Cadw or NT property is indicated using one of these names in parenthesis, preceding the telephone number.

Cadw (☎ 0800 074 3121; www.cadw.wales.gov.uk; Freepost CF1142/9, Cardiff CF24 5G2) A year's membership costs £32 for individuals, and £55 for a family (two adults plus all children under 16). Wheelchair users and the visually impaired, together with their assisting companion, are admitted free of charge to all Cadw monuments.

National Trust (☎ 0870 458 4000; www.nationaltrust.org.uk; PO Box 39, Warrington WA5 7WD) A year's membership costs £40.50 for an individual, and £73 for a family.

For visitors who are unlikely to be in the country for more than a few weeks, Cadw sells a three-/seven-day Explorer Pass for £10.50/17 per person, £17.50/28 for two people or £25/35 for a family, which entitles you to free entry to all Cadw attractions. Typical admission fees are around £2.50 to £3.50, so you'd have to plan on visiting four or more sites to make the three-day pass worthwhile.

The **Great British Heritage Pass** (www.gbheritagepass.com) gives free access to almost 600 properties under the care of Cadw, NT (and NT Scotland), Historic Scotland and English Heritage. A four-/seven-/15-/30-day pass costs £28/39/52/70 irrespective of age, but it's available only to non-British citizens. You can buy the pass online, and in the UK at many international airports and seaports (though none in Wales), from VisitBritain's Visitor Information Centre in London, and from Cardiff and Caernarfon tourist offices.

VISAS

No visas are required if you arrive in Wales from within the UK. If you arrive directly from any other country, British regulations apply.

At present, citizens of Australia, Canada, New Zealand, South Africa and the USA are given 'leave to enter' the UK at their point of arrival for up to six months, but are prohibited from working. If you're a citizen of the EU, you don't need a visa to enter the country and may

live and work freely. Visa regulations are always subject to change, however; so check with your local British embassy, high commission or consulate before leaving home. For more information, see www.ukvisas.gov.uk.

To extend your stay in the UK, contact the **Home Office, Immigration & Nationality Directorate** (☎ 0870 606 7766; www.ind.homeoffice.gov.uk; Lunar House, 40 Wellesley Rd, Croydon, London CR9 2BY) *before* your existing permit expires. You'll need to send your passport with your application.

WOMEN TRAVELLERS

Women will find Wales to be a fairly enlightened place. In 2003 the Welsh National Assembly became the first legislative body in the world to have equal numbers of men and women and, although the country has a particularly strong patriarchal tradition, things are gradually beginning to change on the domestic front as well.

Gender roles were deeply ingrained in the Welsh psyche for many years; men were the breadwinners who put in long, hard days at the mine or on the land, while women stayed at home and looked after the children and the house.

The decline in agriculture and the closure of the pits has meant that there's been a very gradual process of change; however, liberated attitudes to independent women arrived later and took longer to take hold in Wales than in most other European countries. Women in Wales have now taken over most of the jobs in light manufacturing and in call centres, and traditional opinions about the role of women have all but died out.

Women travellers shouldn't encounter any problems in Wales, though they should use common sense in larger cities, especially at night. There's nothing to stop women going into pubs alone, although not everyone likes doing this. It may cause a few curious glances or a brief conversation but in general it's very rarely a problem.

Should you suffer an attack, Rape Crisis Centres can offer support. There are two in Wales:

New Pathways Rape and Sexual Abuse Support Service (☎ 01685 350099; www.newpathways.co.uk; Willow House, 57-58 Lower Thomas Street, Merthyr Tydfil CF47 0DA)

Rape & Sexual Abuse Support Centre North Wales (☎ 01286 669266; PO Box 87, Caernarfon, Gwynedd LL55 9AA)

WORK Finding Work

Unemployment levels in Wales are hovering at around 5%, though there are some pockets of higher unemployment around the country. If you're prepared to work at menial jobs for long hours and relatively low pay, you should have little problem finding work, but you'll have a hard time saving anything on the minimum wage of £5.05 per hour (£4.25 for those aged 18 to 21), and if you're working 'under the table' no-one's obliged to pay you even that.

Low-paid seasonal work is available in the tourist industry, usually in restaurants and pubs. This was once the domain of Australian, South African and New Zealand travellers but the 2004 enlargement of the EU has seen many of these jobs taken up by young people arriving from Eastern Europe.

Professionals stand a higher chance of finding better-paid work. Check the job boards at the following websites before you leave home and register with several recruitment agencies when you arrive. It may also help to regularly check the government-operated Jobcentres in most large towns.

For details on all aspects of short-term work, pick up *Work Your Way Around the World*, by Susan Griffith.

Good job-search websites include www.fish4jobs.co.uk; www.gojobsite.co.uk; www.jobsearch.co.uk; and www.monsterwales.com.

Work Permits

EU nationals don't need a permit to work in the UK, but everyone else does. If you're not a EU national and the main purpose of your visit is to work, you must be sponsored by a British company.

If you're a citizen of a Commonwealth country and aged 17 to 30, however, you can apply for entry to the UK under the Working Holidaymaker Scheme, which allows you to spend up to two years in the UK and take work that is 'incidental' to a holiday. Work-

ing holiday entry certificates are not granted on arrival in the UK – you must apply to the nearest UK mission overseas – and you cannot switch from being a visitor to a working holiday-maker. When you apply you must satisfy the authorities that you have the means to pay for a return or onward journey and that you will be able to maintain yourself without recourse to public funds. After 12 months on the scheme you can switch to work-permit employment if you can find a sponsor. See www.ukvisas.gov.uk for full details.

US citizens aged 18 to 25 and full-time students at US universities (who have a green card) can get a six-month work permit through **British Universities North America Club** (www.bunac.org).

If you have any queries once you're in the UK, contact the **Immigration & Nationality Directorate** (☎ 0870 606 7766; www.ind.homeoffice.gov.uk; Lunar House, 40 Wellesley Rd, Croydon CR2 2BY).

Volunteer Work

There's plenty of opportunity to do volunteer work in Wales and it can be a great way to meet people and get to know some locals. For more information, contact the following organisations:

Centre for Alternative Technology (www.cat.org.uk) Long-term volunteer opportunities at Europe's premiere ecocentre.

European Youth Programme (www.britishcouncil.org/education) Runs a similar system to the International Voluntary Service.

International Voluntary Service (www.ivs-gb.org.uk) Runs short- and long-term projects that change annually. There may be some in Wales at the time of your visit.

National Trust (www.nationaltrust.org.uk) 'Working holidays' of two to 10 days include archaeological work, dry-stone walling and construction work on historic properties.

Willing Workers on Organic Farms (www.woof.org.uk) Free board and lodging in return for work on organic farms.

Youth Hostel Association (www.yha.org.uk) Volunteer to be a warden at a youth hostel.

Transport

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TRANSPORT

GETTING THERE & AWAY

ENTERING THE COUNTRY

Passports must be valid for at least three months after your UK trip. Citizens of EU countries *might* only require an identity card.

Wales has an international airport at Cardiff, but the vast bulk of international connections (and the best bargains) come through London. International seaports at Swansea, Pembroke Dock, Fishguard and Holyhead have regular passenger services to and from the Republic of Ireland; otherwise, sea connections from continental Europe go through English ports.

There are no border controls between England and Wales; however if you're driving to South Wales on the M4 motorway you'll have to pay a toll as you enter the country over the Severn Bridge (to the amusement of many, it's free to leave). See p318 for details of visas.

AIR Airports & Airlines

Wales' main international airport is **Cardiff International Airport** (☎ 01446-711111; www.cwlfly.com). There are scheduled flights into Cardiff from Canada, a handful of European cities, and several cities in England, Scotland and Ireland, plus loads of charter flights from European, Middle Eastern, North African and Caribbean destinations.

THINGS CHANGE...

The information in this chapter is particularly vulnerable to change. Check directly with the airline or a travel agent to make sure you understand how a fare (and ticket you may buy) works and be aware of the security requirements for international travel. Shop carefully. The details given in this chapter should be regarded as pointers and are not a substitute for your own careful, up-to-date research.

Just over the border in England (some 45 miles from Cardiff) is **Bristol International Airport** (☎ 0870 121 2747; www.bristolairport.co.uk), which serves a variety of UK domestic routes and also has flights to European destinations. Manchester and Birmingham also have international connections and are convenient for quick access to Mid- or North Wales.

Most of the world's major airlines fly to Heathrow and Gatwick airports in London. Many flights from European centres go to London City, Stansted or Luton airports. It's easiest to travel overland to Wales from Heathrow and Gatwick (see p322).

For flights to Cardiff (and Bristol) from European destinations, the main scheduled airlines serving Cardiff International Airport are the best source if you're looking for cheap fares. The airlines and their phone numbers in the UK are listed below.

Aer Arann (☎ 0800 587 2324; www.aerarann.com)

Air Southwest (☎ 0870 241 8202; www.air.southwest.com)

bmibaby (☎ 0870 264 2229; www.bmibaby.com)

Eastern Airways (☎ 08703 669 100; www.easternairways.com)

Excel (☎ 0870 169 0169; www.xl.com)

KLM UK (☎ 0870 507 4074; www.klmuk.com)

Thomsonfly (☎ 0870 1900 737; www.thomsonfly.com)

Zoom (☎ 0870 240 0055; www.flyzoom.com)

Many of the low-cost airlines send an email notification to members when there is a promotional fare available on certain routes, so

CLIMATE CHANGE & TRAVEL

Climate change is a serious threat to the ecosystems that humans rely upon, and air travel is the fastest-growing contributor to the problem. Lonely Planet regards travel, overall, as a global benefit, but believes we all have a responsibility to limit our personal impact on global warming.

Flying & Climate Change

Pretty much every form of motor transport generates CO₂ (the main cause of human-induced climate change) but planes are far and away the worst offenders, not just because of the sheer distances they allow us to travel, but because they release greenhouse gases high into the atmosphere. The statistics are frightening: two people taking a return flight between Europe and the US will contribute as much to climate change as an average household's gas and electricity consumption over a whole year.

Carbon Offset Schemes

Climatecare.org and other websites use 'carbon calculators' that allow travellers to offset the greenhouse gases they are responsible for with contributions to energy-saving projects and other climate-friendly initiatives in the developing world – including projects in India, Honduras, Kazakhstan and Uganda.

Lonely Planet, together with Rough Guides and other concerned partners in the travel industry, supports the carbon offset scheme run by climatecare.org. Lonely Planet offsets all of its staff and author travel.

For more information check out our website: www.lonelyplanet.com.

it may be worth registering as a member in advance of your trip. The following websites are best for finding flights to London.

- www.bestfares.com
- www.cheaptickets.com
- www.ebookers.com
- www.expedia.com
- www.flycheap.com
- www.opodo.com
- www.priceline.com
- www.skyscanner.net

Australia & New Zealand

Many airlines compete on flights between Australia and New Zealand and the UK and there is a wide range of fares. Round-the-World (RTW) tickets are often real bargains and can sometimes work out cheaper than a straightforward return ticket.

Expect to pay anything from A\$2000 to A\$3000. It's also possible to fly into Amsterdam; adding a connecting flight from there to Cardiff should only add around A\$100 to the cost of the ticket.

STA Travel (☎ 1300 733 035; www.statravel.com.au) has offices in all major cities and on many university campuses. **Flight Centre** (☎ 131 133 Australiawide; www.flightcentre.com.au) has dozens of offices throughout Australia and New Zealand.

Canada & the USA

Zoom Airlines has two flights a week direct from Toronto to Cardiff. There are no direct scheduled flights from the USA to Wales, but KLM offers a connection via Amsterdam, and Aer Arann via Dublin.

Also, a limited number of charter flights operate during the summer season; your travel agent will be the best place to inquire. Heavy competition on transatlantic routes into London makes it cheapest to fly there and then continue to Wales by bus or train, but there are also scheduled flights to Manchester and Birmingham.

Fares from the East Coast can cost as low as US\$350; fares from the West Coast are about US\$100 to US\$150 higher. Travel time from New York is approximately seven hours.

In the USA there are discount-travel agencies (known as consolidators) that sell cut-price tickets on scheduled carriers; they can be found by looking in the *Yellow Pages* or in major newspapers. The Sunday travel sections of the *New York Times*, *San Francisco Chronicle-Examiner*, *Los Angeles Times* or the *Chicago Tribune* list cheap fares, as do the travel sections of the *Globe and Mail*, *Toronto Star*, *Montreal Gazette* and *Vancouver Sun*.

TRANSPORT

AIRPORT CONNECTIONS TO WALES

Each London airport has shuttle services into London for onward connections to Wales. To catch a bus to Mid- and North Wales, first get yourself to Victoria station; there are direct trains to Victoria from Gatwick, while flightline buses go there from Stansted and bus 757 goes from Luton. **National Express** (☎ 0870 580 8080; www.nationalexpress.co.uk) has regular bus services throughout the day and night from both Heathrow and Gatwick direct to South Wales (including Newport, Cardiff and Swansea). Heathrow–Cardiff (3½ hours) costs £35 one way, and Gatwick–Cardiff (4½ hours) is £39.

To catch a train to Wales from London you'll need to get to either Paddington station (for South Wales) or Euston station (for Mid- and North Wales). Trains from Heathrow run direct to Paddington. From Gatwick you can also catch a train west to Reading (which has easy train connections to South Wales).

All other international airports in the UK have shuttle services of some kind into the city centre. For more on long-distance buses and trains into Wales, see p325 and p328.

RECOMMENDED TRAVEL AGENCIES

Canada

Canadian Affair (☎ 1877 8FLY2UK; www.canadianaffair.com) This agency sells cheap one-way fares to British cities.

Skylink (☎ 1800 759 5465)

STA Travel (☎ 1888 427 5639)

Travel Cuts (☎ 1866-246 9762; www.travelcuts.com)

US

Skylink (☎ 1800 247 6659; www.skylinkus.com)

STA Travel (☎ 1800 781 4040; www.statravel.com)

Worldtrek Travel (☎ 1800 243 1723; www.worldtrek.com)

Continental Europe

Cardiff has direct scheduled flights from the following European cities: Prague, Lorient, Amsterdam and Geneva.

For Bristol, **Easyjet** (www.easyjet.com) flies from Prague, Rome, Venice, Faro, Alicante, Barcelona, Valencia, Malaga and Palma, Nice, Paris, Toulouse, Berlin, Hamburg, Amsterdam and Krakow.

There are also flights to Bristol from Brussels and Frankfurt. Alternatively, there are connections to London from all over Europe.

RECOMMENDED TRAVEL AGENCIES

France

Go Voyages (☎ 08 92 89 18 32; www.govoyages.com)

Nouvelles Frontières (☎ 08 25 00 07 47; www.nouvelles-frontieres.fr)

OTU Voyages (☎ 01 55 82 32 32; www.otu.fr)

Voyageurs du Monde (☎ 08 92 23 56 56; www.vdm.com)

Germany

Just Travel (☎ 089-747 3330; www.justtravel.de)

STA Travel (☎ 069-743 032 92; www.statravel.de)

Italy

CTS Viaggi (☎ 199-501 150; www.cts.it)

Travel Price (☎ 199-400 466; www.travelprice.it)

Netherlands

Air Fair (☎ 0900-7 717 717; www.airfair.nl)

NBBS Reizen (☎ 0900-10 20 300; www.nbbs.nl)

UK & Ireland

No-frills air carriers offer reduced-price tickets on flights from Wales to other parts of the UK and to Ireland. The carrier bmibaby flies to Belfast, Edinburgh and Glasgow; Air Southwest flies to Manchester; Eastern Airways to Newcastle; and Aer Arann to Dublin, Galway and Cork.

Prices on all these flights vary considerably depending on the day and even time of day you fly, so it's worth checking the websites (p320) regularly.

Discount air travel is big business in London. If you are looking for a cheap ticket from the UK, note that cheap international fares often appear in the weekend broadsheet papers and, in London, in the *Evening Standard*, *Time Out* and the free *TNT* magazine. Bargain ticket agencies for tickets include the following: **Flight Centre** (☎ 0870 499 0040; www.flightcentre.co.uk)

Saga (☎ 0800 414 525; www.saga.co.uk) Air-fare bargains for the over-50s.

STA Travel (☎ 0871 2 300 040; www.statravel.co.uk)

Trailfinders (☎ 0845 054 6060; www.trailfinders.com)

Travel Bag (☎ 0800 082 5000; www.travelbag.co.uk)

LAND England & Scotland BUS

Compared to trains, buses are slower but cheaper, and serve a greater variety of destinations.

National Express (☎ 0870 580 8080; www.nationalexpress.co.uk) is the largest national network and has frequent services between most major cities.

Megabus (☎ 0900 160 0900; www.megabus.com) has one-way fares from London to Cardiff from as little as £6.

The table below shows some direct bus routes to Wales from England and Scotland, with approximate one-way fares.

BUSES TO WALES

Journey	Fare	Duration	Frequency (Mon-Sat)
Birmingham-Aberystwyth	£22	4hr	1/day
Birmingham-Cardiff	£21	2½hr	8/day
Bristol-Cardiff	£7	1¼hr	7/day
Edinburgh-Wrexham	£34	11½hr	1/day
London-Aberystwyth	£27	7hr	2/day
London-Cardiff	£19	3¼hr	10/day
Manchester-Llandudno	£13	4hr	1/day
Shrewsbury-Aberystwyth	£16	2¼hr	1/day

TRAIN

Fast train services run to Cardiff from London (Paddington), Bristol, Birmingham, York and Newcastle. You can also take the train to Mid-Wales (including Welshpool and Machynlleth) or North Wales (including Llandudno, Bangor and Holyhead; or Porthmadog and Pwllheli) from London (Euston) via Birmingham.

Trains in the UK are privatised and expensive in comparison to the rest of Europe. The fare structure is bewildering but in general the cheapest tickets are those bought well in advance of the date of travel.

Train timetables and fares are available from **National Rail** (☎ 08457 48 49 50; www.nationalrail.co.uk, www.thetrainline.com).

The following table shows some sample routes with standard one-way fares.

TRAINS TO WALES

Journey	Fare	Duration	Frequency (Mon-Sat)
Birmingham-Aberystwyth	£19	3hr	7/day
Birmingham-Cardiff	£29	2hr	15/day
Bristol-Cardiff	£10	40min	4/hr
London (Paddington)-Cardiff	£68	2hr	2/hr
London (Euston)-Aberystwyth	£87	4¾hr	7/day
London-Llandudno	£94	3¾hr	2/day
Newcastle-Cardiff	£86	5¼hr	2/hr

Continental Europe BUS

Travelling by bus from Europe can be a slow, painful process and with so many cheap flights available it isn't always cost effective either. You can book a bus ticket right through to Wales via London with **Eurolines** (www.eurolines.com), Europe's largest international bus network.

Another possibility is **Busabout** (www.busabout.com), a hop-on, hop-off network linking some 70 European cities. Buses run from April to October, but the only UK stop is in London.

TRAIN

All rail connections from continental Europe to Wales will pass through London. The high-speed passenger service **Eurostar** (☎ 08705 186 186 in the UK, ☎ 0892 35 35 39 in France; www.eurostar.com) links London (Waterloo) with Paris (Gare du Nord) or Brussels. From November 2007, Eurostar trains will use the new St Pancras International rail terminal.

Cheaper rail connections involve a Channel crossing by ferry or SeaCat (see p324).

SEAPORT CONNECTIONS TO WALES

Nearly all seaports in southeast England have shuttle services into London or other transport centres for onward connections to Wales. See opposite or p328 for details on getting to Wales from London.

Dover Shuttle bus to Dover Priory train station; from there train to London's Charing Cross station.

Folkestone Taxi to Folkestone Central train station; from there train to London's Charing Cross station.

Harwich Adjacent to Harwich Parkeston Quay train station, with services to London's Liverpool Street station.

Newhaven Train to London's Victoria station.

Plymouth Taxi to Plymouth train station; from there direct trains to Newport and Cardiff.

Poole Shuttle bus to Poole train station; from there train to Southampton and direct trains to Newport and Cardiff.

Portsmouth Shuttle bus to Portsmouth Harbour train station; and from there direct trains to Newport and Cardiff, or taxi to Portsmouth coach station with connections to London's Victoria coach station.

Other international seaports in the UK have shuttle services or taxis into the city centre.

SEA

All direct ferry crossings to Wales are from Ireland. There are four routes: Dublin and Dun Laoghaire to Holyhead (1½ to 3¼ hours); Rosslare to Pembroke Dock (four hours); Rosslare to Fishguard (two to 3½ hours); and Cork to Swansea (10 hours).

Fares vary considerably (depending on the season, day, time and length of stay) and some return fares don't cost much more than a one-way ticket.

It's worth keeping an eye out for promotional fares that can reduce the cost considerably. International Student Identity Card (ISIC) holders and HI members qualify for a discount on the normal fare.

The following companies operate ferries between Ireland and Wales:

Irish Ferries (% 08705 17 17 17; www.irishferries.com)

Ferry and fast-boat services from Dublin to Holyhead, and ferry services from Rosslare to Pembroke Dock.

Stena Line (% 08705 70 70 70; www.stenaline.com)

Ferry services from Dublin to Holyhead and fast-boat services from Dun Laoghaire to Holyhead and Rosslare to Fishguard.

Swansea Cork Ferries (Swansea % 01792-456116,

Cork % 021-483 6000; www.swansea-corkferries.com)

Ferry services from Swansea to Cork.

Typical one-way fares for a peak-season crossing are in the region of €30 to €50 for a foot passenger, and €150 to €200 for a car and driver, plus €22 per extra passenger.

Ferries to England

There's a bewildering array of ferry services to England from continental Europe, including services from Denmark, Germany and the Netherlands to Harwich; a service from

Belgium to Dover; and a service from France to Dover, Newhaven, Poole, Portsmouth and Plymouth. Check out www.directferries.co.uk or www.ferrybooker.com.

GETTING AROUND

It's worth considering car hire for at least part of your trip to Wales, as getting around the country by public transport can be a bit of a challenge. Regional coordination of transport services is limited, nonstop bus services are almost nonexistent and many remote areas are not served by any transport at all. But if you aren't in a hurry, you can patch together an odyssey by taking public transport and perhaps the odd taxi ride, Postbus trip, walk or bicycle journey.

Buses are nearly always the cheapest way to get around but you may be able to snare a bargain on the trains if you're lucky. For information on services your best bet is the local tourist office, where you'll be able to pick up maps, timetables, and a copy of the free and indispensable *Wales Bus, Rail and Tourist Map and Guide*.

For up-to-date information on public transport throughout Wales call **Traveline** (% 0870 608 2608; www.traveline.org.uk).

BICYCLE

Rural Wales is a great place for cycling enthusiasts; traffic on back roads is limited, there are loads of multiuse trails and three long-distance cycling routes as part of Sustrans' National Cycle Network. Distances are generally short. For long-distance travel around Wales,

though, the hilly and often mountainous terrain is mostly for experienced cycle tourists.

In the larger towns and cities, there are few cycle lanes and there is also a general disrespect for cyclists by motorists. Bike theft can also be a major problem in urban areas; try to keep your bike in a secure area (many guest houses and hotels offer secure bicycle storage).

For more information on cycling around Wales, see p59.

Purchase & Hire

All large towns have bicycle shops where you can buy a bike on arrival; you may even be able to negotiate a deal for the shop to buy the bike back later.

Most sizable or tourist towns in Wales have at least one shop where you can hire bikes for around £10 to £15 per day for a tourer and between £17 and £25 for a full-suspension mountain bike. Many hire outfits will require you to make a deposit of about £50 for a tourer and up to £100 for a top-of-the-line mean machine.

Transporting Your Bicycle

Bikes can be taken on most trains, although there is limited space for them. On most train services in Wales it's compulsory to make a reservation for your bike at least 24 hours in advance; there is a small charge for this on some routes. On others, bikes are carried free as long as there is space available; if not, you're stuck. Timetables usually have an 'R' symbol above each service on which a reservation is necessary.

Arriva Trains Wales (www.arrivatrainswales.co.uk), which operates most rail services in Wales, publishes an annual guide called *Cycling by Train*. It's also available for download from the website.

BUS

Long-distance bus services are thin on the ground in Wales, but half-a-dozen longer routes (run by a range of operators) have been gathered under the banner of the **TrawsCambria** (www.traws-cambria.info) network. The routes on this network include Bangor to Aberystwyth, Aberystwyth to Cardiff, Aberystwyth to Cardigan and Brecon to Newtown.

However, most longer bus journeys have to be cobbled together from a web of routes operated by some 70 private bus companies across

the country. **Traveline Cymru** (% 0870 608 2608; www.traveline-cymru.org.uk) is the one-stop shop for all bus route and timetable information.

The biggest bus operators in Wales:

Arriva Cymru (% 08701 201 088; www.arrivabus.co.uk) Services in North and West Wales.

First Cymru (% 01792-572255; www.firstcymru.co.uk) Services in southwest Wales.

National Express (% 0870 580 8080; www.national-express.com) UK-wide services.

Stagecoach (www.stagecoachbus.com/southwales) Services in southeast Wales.

Bus Passes

Apart from the combined bus and rail Flexi-passes (see p326), there are lots of regional and local one-day and one-week passes, but many are only worthwhile if you're planning to do a lot of travelling.

For example, the FirstWeek South & West Wales pass (adult/child £22/10) gives unlimited travel for seven days on all First bus services in South and West Wales. The First-Day Swansea Bay pass (adult/child £3.60/2) gives unlimited travel for a day (on the day of purchase only) on First and Pullman buses in Swansea and the Gower Peninsula. You can buy these passes in Swansea bus station, or from the driver on any First bus.

The West Wales Rover pass (adult/child £6/4) allows unlimited travel for one day on most local bus services in Carmarthenshire, Pembrokeshire and Ceredigion. The Red Rover (adult/child £4.95/2.45) is valid for one

BUSES WITHIN WALES

Route	Fare	Duration	Frequency (Mon-Sat)
Bangor-Caernarfon	£3	25min	2/hr
Barmouth-Wrexham	£5	2½hr	1/hr
Cardiff-Abergavenny	£4	1½hr	1/hr
Cardigan-Aberystwyth	£4	½hr	3/day
Swansea-Brecon	£4	1½hr	3/day
Swansea-Haverfordwest	£8	2¼hr	3/day
Welshpool-Aberystwyth	£11	1¾hr	1/day

ROAD RULES

A copy of the Highway Code can be bought in most bookshops or can be read online at www.highwaycode.gov.uk.

The most basic rules are listed below.

- Drive on the left, overtake to the right.
- When entering a roundabout, give way to the right.
- Safety belts must be worn by the driver and all passengers.
- Motorcyclists and their passengers must wear helmets.
- Speed limits are 70mph (112km/h) on motorways and dual carriageways, 60mph (96km/h) on other roads, and 30mph (48km/h) or as signposted in built-up areas.
- The legal alcohol limit is 80mg of alcohol per 100ml of blood or 35mg on the breath.
- It is illegal to use a mobile phone while driving a car unless you have a hands-free kit installed.

UK, third-party insurance is a minimum requirement. If you're renting a car, check the fine print – policies can vary widely and the cheapest hire rates often include an excess (for which you are liable in the event of an accident) of up to £800.

HITCHING

Hitching is never entirely safe anywhere, and we don't recommend it. Travellers who hitch should understand that they are taking a small but potentially serious risk. Travel in pairs and let someone know where you are planning to go. Women hitching on their own should be extremely careful when choosing lifts – if in doubt, don't get in.

It's against the law to hitch on motorways or the immediate slip roads (access ramps); make a sign and use approach roads, roundabouts, or service stations instead.

TOURS

Scores of local and regional outfits offer walking, cycling and multiactivity tours. Many are mentioned in Outdoor Activities (p58) and more appear in the destination chapters.

For a fun way to see Wales and to meet new people, several companies offer minibus tours of the country, in which there are a variety of possible routes and activities on offer.

For more information try the following organisations.

Bus Wales (☎ 0800 328 0284; www.buswales.co.uk)

Offers three-day tours, including Snowdonia, Brecon Beacons, Wye Valley and Gower Surf and Beach. Aimed at independent travellers, backpackers and students.

Bushwackers (☎ 01874-636552; www.bushwackers.co.uk) Weekend horse riding and canoeing adventure trips to Wales by minibus; mostly for the under-35s.

Dragon Tours (☎ 01874-658124; www.dragonbackpackertours.co.uk) Tours to off-the-beaten-track destinations. Aimed at under-35s.

Shaggy Sheep (☎ 01267-281202; www.shaggysheep.com) Jump-on, jump-off tours of the Brecon Beacons, Pembrokeshire coast and Snowdonia, as well as surfing and other activity weekends. Aimed at young backpackers.

The following international companies offer UK tours or packages with a Wales component.

British Travel International (www.britishtravel.com) Aimed at travellers over 50.

Contiki (www.contiki.com) Mostly for the under-35s.

Haggis Tours (www.radicaltravel.com) Aimed at the youth market.

Home at First (www.homeatfirst.com) Tours suited to over-50s.

Insight (www.insightvacations.com) Caters for the over-50s market.

Roadtrip (www.roadtrip.co.uk) Tours will appeal to under-35s.

Saga Holidays (www.saga.co.uk) Holidays for the over-50s.

Wales Countryside Holidays (www.holidays-in-wales.com) Tours for all age groups.

TRAIN

Like the rest of the UK, the Welsh rail network has been privatised; almost all train services in Wales are run by **Arriva** (www.arrivatrainswales.co.uk), except for the London (Paddington)–Cardiff–Swansea route (operated by First Great Western) and the London (Euston)–Chester–Holyhead route (Virgin Trains).

The **National Rail Enquiry Service** (☎ 08457 484950; www.nationalrail.co.uk) provides centralised timetable information for all train operators in the UK, and allows you to buy tickets and make reservations by phone using a credit card. You can buy tickets online through www.thetrainline.com, though you'll need a UK address to register with the site.

To a large extent, trains along Wales' north and south coasts serve to link the English rail network with seaports at Swansea, Pembroke Dock, Fishguard and Holyhead. But there are some fine rail journeys across the middle of the country, and an amazing number of 'heritage' railways (mainly steam and narrow-gauge), survivors of an earlier era.

Wales' most beautiful railway journeys fan out from Shrewsbury in England: the Heart of Wales line through southern Mid-Wales, the Cambrian line across northern Mid-Wales to Aberystwyth, and its spectacular branch line up the coast and along the Llŷn. Another gem is the Conwy Valley line down through Snowdonia. Each trip is worth the fare just for the scenery and the hypnotic, clickety-clack pace.

TRAIN ROUTES



Classes

There are two classes of rail travel in the UK: 1st class and what is referred to as 'standard' class. First class costs about 30% to 50% more than standard and, except on very crowded trains, simply isn't worth the extra money.

Costs

You can just roll up to a station and buy a standard single (one-way) or return ticket any time, but this is often the most expensive way to go. Each train-operating company sets its own fares and has its own discount schemes, and passengers can only use their tickets on services operated by the company that issued the ticket.

You might find that the same journey will have a different fare depending on whether you buy it at the station, over the phone or on the internet. The system is so bizarre that in some cases two singles are cheaper than a return ticket, and even a one-way journey can be cheaper if you split it into two (ie if you're going from A to C, it can be cheaper to buy a single from A to B, and another single from B to C; go figure). If you have the time, it's worth playing around with various combinations on www.thetrainline.com.

The cheapest fares have advance-purchase and minimum-stay requirements, as well as limited availability. Children under five travel free; those aged between five and 15 pay half-price for most tickets. However, when travelling with children it is almost always worth buying a Family Railcard (right). See table below for approximate one-way fares for various train journeys:

TRAINS WITHIN WALES

Journey	Fare	Duration	Frequency (Mon-Sat)
Swansea-Llandrindod Wells	£8	1¼hr	4/day
Cardiff-Haverfordwest	£16	2½hr	7/day
Welshpool-Aberystwyth	£9	1½hr	7/day
Machynlleth-Pwllheli	£10	2¼hr	6/day
Llandudno-Blaenau Ffestiniog	£6	1¼hr	5/day

The main fare classifications include:

Apex For outward and return journeys not on the same day, but at fixed times and dates; it's the cheapest long-term return ticket, but must be booked well in advance and has limited availability.

Cheap Day Return For outward and return journeys on the same day, with restricted outward travel time (eg only

after 9.30am); often costs barely more than a single. A great deal for day-trippers.

Open Return For outward travel on a stated day and return on any day within a month.

Saver Open return but with no travel allowed during weekday peak-traffic periods.

SuperSaver Open return but with no travel allowed during weekday peak-traffic periods, nor on Friday at any time, nor on certain other high-traffic days (eg during the Christmas and Easter holidays).

Train Passes

BritRail passes are not cost effective for travel in Wales unless you plan to make a very fleeting visit. They're available only to non-Brits and must be bought overseas. Most larger overseas travel agencies will have details. The following local passes will be more useful. See also p326.

These passes allow unlimited one-day rail travel on weekdays after 9am and on all weekends and holidays:

Cambrian Coaster Day Ranger (£7) Pwllheli–Machynlleth–Aberystwyth.

Heart of Wales Two Day Rover (£20) Shrewsbury–Llandrindod Wells–Swansea.

North & Mid-Wales Day Ranger (£20) Anywhere within circle formed by Aberystwyth–Shrewsbury–Prestatyn–Holyhead–Pwllheli–Aberystwyth.

RAILCARDS

Railcards are valid for one year and entitle the holder to discounts of up to 30% on most rail (and some ferry) fares in the UK. Most train stations have application forms or you can apply online at www.railcard.co.uk; note that processing for some cards can take up to two weeks. Railcards are accepted by all operating companies.

Disabled Person's Railcard (£18) Applies to its holder and one person accompanying them.

Family Railcard (£20) A great bargain – it allows discounts for up to four adults travelling together (only one needs to hold a card), and a 60% discount on children's fares.

Senior Railcard (£20) For anyone aged over 60.

Young Person's Railcard (£20) For those aged between 16 and 25, or a full-time UK student of any age.

Health

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Travel health largely depends on predeparture preparations, day-to-day health care while travelling and how you handle any medical problem or emergency that does develop. Wales is a healthy place to travel. Hygiene standards are high and there are no unusual diseases to worry about.

Stomach upsets are the most likely travel health problem (between 30% and 50% of travellers in a two-week stay experience this), but the majority of these upsets will be relatively minor.

BEFORE YOU GO

Make sure you're healthy before you start travelling. If you are going on a long trip make sure your teeth are OK and if you wear glasses take your prescription.

If you require medication, you should take along the packaging that shows its generic name, rather than the brand, which will make getting replacements easier and cheaper. To avoid any problems, it's also wise to have a legible prescription or doctor's letter to show that you legally use the medication.

INSURANCE

Make sure you have adequate health insurance. Find out in advance if your insurance plan will make payments directly to providers or reimburse you later for overseas health costs. The former is generally preferable, as it doesn't require you to pay out of pocket. See right for details of who is eligible for free health services.

RECOMMENDED VACCINATIONS

Although no immunisations are required, it's recommended that everyone keep up to date with diphtheria, tetanus and polio vaccinations.

IN WALES

AVAILABILITY & COST OF HEALTH CARE

Reciprocal arrangements with the UK allow residents of Australia, New Zealand and several other countries to receive free emergency medical treatment and subsidised dental care through the National Health Service (NHS); they can use hospital emergency departments, general practitioners (GPs) and dentists. Long-term visitors from Australia, New Zealand and certain other countries who have the proper documentation will receive care under the NHS by registering with a specific practice near where they live. EU nationals can obtain free emergency treatment on presentation of a European Health Insurance Card (EHIC).

Travel insurance, however, is advisable as it offers greater flexibility in where and how you're treated, and covers expenses for an ambulance and repatriation that won't be picked up by the NHS. Regardless of nationality, anyone with a medical emergency that requires a doctor's attention will not be refused treatment.

All blood donations in the UK are screened.

Chemists

Chemists (pharmacies) can advise on minor ailments such as sore throats, coughs and earache. There's always one local chemist open somewhere at any hour; other chemists should display details in their window or doorway (or you can look in a local newspaper). All standard medications are readily available either over the counter or on prescription.

ENVIRONMENTAL HAZARDS Diarrhoea

A change of water, food or climate can cause the runs; diarrhoea caused by contaminated food or water is more serious. Dehydration is

the main danger with any diarrhoea, particularly in children or the elderly, and it can occur quite quickly. Fluid replacement (at least equal to the volume being lost) is the most important thing to remember. Weak black tea with a little sugar, soda water, or soft drinks allowed to go flat and diluted 50% with clean water are all good. With severe diarrhoea, a rehydrating solution is preferable to replace minerals and salts lost. Keep drinking small amounts often and stick to a bland diet as you recover.

Heat Exhaustion

Wales may not seem like a place to worry about heat exhaustion, but it's not entirely unknown. Dehydration or salt deficiency can cause heat exhaustion. If you're in hot conditions and/or exerting yourself make sure you drink sufficient nonalcoholic liquids. Salt deficiency is characterised by fatigue, lethargy, headaches, giddiness and muscle cramps.

Hypothermia

Too much cold can be just as dangerous as too much heat. In much of Wales you should always be prepared for cold, wet or windy conditions, even if you're just out walking or hitching. Every year people set out for walks and end up in trouble when the weather suddenly changes.

To help prevent hypothermia dress in layers; silk, wool and some of the new artificial fibres are all good insulating materials. A hat is important as much heat is lost through the head. A strong, waterproof outer layer is essential, and a space blanket is wise for emergencies. Carry basic supplies, including fluid to drink and food containing simple sugars to generate heat quickly.

Symptoms of hypothermia are exhaustion, numb skin (particularly toes and fingers), shivering, slurred speech, irrational or violent behaviour, lethargy, stumbling, dizzy spells, muscle cramps and violent bursts of energy. Irrationality may take the form of sufferers claiming they are warm and trying to take off their clothes.

To treat mild hypothermia, first get the person out of the wind and/or rain, remove their clothing if it's wet and replace it with dry, warm clothing. Give them hot liquids – not alcohol – and some high-kilojoule, easily digestible food. Do not rub victims; instead, allow them to slowly warm themselves. The early recognition and treatment of mild

hypothermia is the only way to prevent severe hypothermia, which is a critical condition.

Motion Sickness

Eating lightly before and during a trip will reduce the chances of motion sickness. If you're prone to motion sickness, try to find a place that minimises disturbance – near the wing on aircraft, close to midships on boats, near the centre on buses. Fresh air usually helps; reading and cigarette smoke don't. Commercial motion-sickness preparations, which can cause drowsiness, have to be taken before the trip commences; when you're feeling sick it's too late. Ginger (available in capsule form) and peppermint (including mint-flavoured sweets) are effective natural preventatives.

Insect Bites & Stings

Bee and wasp stings are usually painful rather than dangerous. However, in people who are allergic to them, severe breathing difficulties may occur and require urgent medical care. Calamine lotion or Stingose spray will give relief, and ice packs will reduce the pain and swelling.

Midges – small blood-sucking flies – and clegs (horseflies) can be a problem during summer, especially in North Wales. Bring mosquito repellent, some antihistamine tablets and a head net. Always check all over your body if you've been walking through a potentially tick-infested area as ticks can cause skin infections and other more serious diseases. To remove a tick, press down around the tick's head with tweezers, grab the head and gently pull upwards.

Sunburn

Even in Wales, including when there's cloud cover, it's possible to get sunburned surprisingly quickly – especially if you're on water, snow or ice. Use 15-plus sunscreen, wear a hat, and cover up with a long-sleeved shirt and trousers.

Water

Tap water is always safe unless there's a sign to the contrary (eg on trains). Don't drink straight from a stream – you can never be certain there are no people or cattle upstream.

TRAVELLING WITH CHILDREN

Make sure the children are up-to-date with routine vaccinations, and discuss possible travel vaccines well before departure as some

vaccines are not suitable for children under a year. See also Lonely Planet's *Travel with Children*, by Cathy Lanigan.

WOMEN'S HEALTH

In the UK, the contraceptive pill is only available on prescription. Emergency contraception

(the morning-after pill; actually effective for up to 72 hours after unprotected sex) is now available over the counter in many chemists, but it's expensive at around £20. It's also free on prescription. Most big towns have a Well Woman Clinic that can advise on general health issues.

Language

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You can get by almost anywhere in Wales these days without speaking Welsh (although that probably won't be the case in a generation!). Nevertheless, anyone who's serious about getting to grips with Welsh people and their culture will find the ability to speak basic Welsh immeasurably valuable right now.

Beginners will find lots of resources on the Welsh language, including videotapes, teach-yourself books and CD-ROMs; you can even learn Welsh on the internet. For information on courses – including learning by correspondence – see p309.

The Welsh language belongs to the Celtic branch of the Indo-European language family. Closely related to Breton and Cornish, and more distantly to Irish, Scottish and Manx, it's the strongest Celtic language both in terms of numbers of speakers (over 500,000) and place in society.

PRONUNCIATION

All letters in Welsh are pronounced and the stress is usually on the second-last syllable. Letters are pronounced as in English, except for those listed below.

Vowels

Vowels can be long or short. Those marked with a circumflex (eg ê) are always long and those with a grave accent (eg è) short.

a	short as in 'map'; long as in 'farm'
e	short as in 'pen'; long as in 'there'
i	short as in 'bit'; long as in 'police'
o	short as in 'box'; long as in 'bore'
u	as i (short and long)
w	short as the 'oo' in 'book'; long as the 'oo' in 'spook'

y as i (short or long); sometimes as the 'a' in 'about', especially in common one-syllable words like *y, yr, fy, dy* and *yn*

In words of one syllable, vowels followed by two consonants are short – eg *corff* (body). If a one-syllable word ends in **p, t, c, m** or **ng**, the vowel is short – eg *llong* (ship). If it ends in **b, d, g, f, dd, ff, th, ch, or s**, the vowel is long – eg *bad* (boat) – as is any vowel at the end of a one-syllable word, such as *pla* (plague).

In words of more than one syllable, all unstressed vowels are short, such as in the first and final vowels of *cariadon* (lovers). Stressed vowels can be long or short and in general follow the rules for vowels in monosyllables.

Diphthongs

ae/ai/au	as the 'y' in 'my'
aw	as the 'ow' in 'cow'
ei/eu/ey	as the 'ay' in 'day'
ew	as a short 'e' followed by 'oo'
iw/uw/yw	as the 'ew' in 'few'
oe/oi	as 'oy' in 'boy'
ow	as the 'ow' in 'tow'
wy	sometimes as 'uey' (as in 'chop suey'); sometimes as the 'wi' in 'wing' (especially after g)

Consonants

The combinations **ch, dd, ff, ng, ll, ph, rh** and **th** count as single consonants in Welsh.

c	always as 'k'
ch	as the 'ch' in Scottish loch
dd	as the 'th' in 'this'
ff	as the 'f' in 'fork'
g	always as the 'g' in 'garden', not as in 'gentle'
ng	as the 'ng' in 'sing'
ll	as 'hl' (put the tongue in the position for 'l' and breathe out)
ph	as 'f'
r	rolled, as in Spanish or Italian
rh	pronounced as 'hr'
s	always as in 'so', never as in 'rose'
si	as the 'sh' in 'shop'
th	always as the 'th' in 'thin'

CONVERSATION & ESSENTIALS

Hello.

Sut mae. sit mai

Good morning.

Bore da. bo-rre dah

Good afternoon.

Prynhawn da. pruhn-hown dah

Good evening.

Noswaith dda. noss-waith thah

Goodnight.

Nos da. nohs dah

See you (later).

Wela i chi (wedyn). wel-ah ee khee (we-din)

Goodbye.

Hwyl fawr. hueyl vowrr

Please.

Os gwelwch in dda. os gwel-ookh uhn thah

Thank you (very much).

Diolch (in fawr iawn). dee-olkh (uhn vowrr yown)

You're welcome.

Croeso. kroy-ssoh

Excuse me.

Esgusodwch fi. ess-gi-so-dookh vee

Sorry/Excuse me/Forgive me.

Mae'n ddrwg gyda fi. main throog guh-da vee

Don't mention it.

Peidiwch â sôn. payd-yookh ah sohn

Yes.

Oes. oyss

No.

Nac oes. nag oyss

How are you?

Sut ydych chi? sit uh-deekh khee?

(Very) well.

(Da) iawn. (dah) yown

What's your name?

Beth yw eich enw chi? beth yu uhch en-oo khee?

My name's...

Fy enw i yw... ne-noo ee yu...

Where are you from?

O ble ydych chi'n dod? oh ble uh-deekh kheen dohd?

I'm from...

Dw i'n dod o... doo een dohd oh...

LANGUAGE DIFFICULTIES

I don't understand.

Dw i ddim in deall. doo ee thim uhn deh-ahhl

How do you say...?

Sut mae dweud...?

sit mai dwayd...?

What's this called in Welsh?

Beth yw hwn in Gymraeg?

beth yu hoon uhn guhm-raig?

PLACE NAMES

Welsh place names are often based on words that describe a landmark or a feature of the countryside.

aber	ab-berr	estuary
afon	a-von	river
bach	bahkh	small
bro	broh	vale
bryn	brin	hill
caer	kairr	fort
capel	ka-pl	chapel
carreg	karr-ek	stone
clwn	kloon	meadow
coed	koyd	wood/forest
cwm	koom	valley
dinas	dee-nass	hill fortress
eglwys	egluweys	church
fach	vahkh	small
fawr	vowrr	big
ffordd	forth	road
glan	glahn	shore
glyn	gliin	valley
isa (f)	issa	lower
llan	hlan	church/enclosure
llyn	hlin	lake
maes	maiss	field
mawr	mowrr	big
mynydd	muhneeth	mountain
nant	nahnt	valley/stream
ogof	o-gov	cave
pen	pen	head/top/end
plas	plahss	hall/mansion
pont	pont	bridge
rhos	hross	moor/marsh
twr	toorr	tower
tŷ	tee	house
uchaf	ikhav	upper
ynys	uh-niss	island/holm

DAYS & MONTHS

Monday	<i>dydd Llun</i>	deeth hleen
Tuesday	<i>dydd Mawrth</i>	deeth mowrrth
Wednesday	<i>dydd Mercher</i>	deeth merr-kherr
Thursday	<i>dydd Iau</i>	deeth yigh
Friday	<i>dydd Gwener</i>	deeth gwen-err
Saturday	<i>dydd Sadwrn</i>	deeth sad-oorrn
Sunday	<i>dydd Sul</i>	deeth seel

Some names for months are borrowed from Latin; others are native Welsh.

January	<i>Ionawr</i>	yon-owrr
February	<i>Chwefror</i>	khwe-vrrohrr
March	<i>Mawrth</i>	mowrrth

April	<i>Ebrill</i>	eh-brihl
May	<i>Mai</i>	mai
June	<i>Mehafin</i>	me-he-vin (lit: the middle of summer)
July	<i>Gorffennaf</i>	gor-fen-ahv (lit: the end of summer)
August	<i>Awst</i>	owst
September	<i>Medi</i>	med-dee (lit: reaping)
October	<i>Hydref</i>	huh-drev (the rutting season, lit: stag roaring)
November	<i>Tachwedd</i>	tahkh-weth (the time for slaughtering animals before winter, lit: slaughter)

December	<i>Rhagfyr</i>	hrag-virr (the shortest day, lit: before short)
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NUMBERS

0	<i>dim</i>	dim
1	<i>un</i>	een
2	<i>dau/dwy</i> (f)	dy/duey
3	<i>tri/tair</i> (f)	tree/tairr
4	<i>pedwar/pedair</i> (f)	ped-wahrr/ped-airr
5	<i>pump</i>	pimp
6	<i>chwech</i>	khwekh
7	<i>saith</i>	saith
8	<i>wyth</i>	ueyth
9	<i>naw</i>	now
10	<i>deg</i>	dehg



Also available from Lonely Planet:
British Language & Culture

Glossary

For some additional, specifically Welsh, words and roots, see Place Names, p335, and p73.

AONB – Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

BABA – Book-A-Bed-Ahead scheme

bitter – beer

bridleway – path that can be used by walkers, horse riders and cyclists

BTA – British Tourist Authority

cadair – stronghold or chair (Welsh)

Cadw – Welsh historic monuments agency (Welsh)

castell – castle (Welsh)

coasteering – making your way around the coastline by climbing, jumping, swimming and scrambling

cromlech – burial chamber (Welsh)

cwm – valley (Welsh)

Cymraeg – Welsh (language, not person) (Welsh)

Cymraes – Welsh female (Welsh)

Cymro – Welsh male (Welsh)

Cymru – Wales (Welsh)

din – fort (Welsh)

dolmen – chambered tomb

EH – English Heritage

eisteddfod – session; festival in which competitions are held in music, poetry, drama and the fine arts (Welsh); plural eisteddfodau

Gymraeg – Welsh (Welsh)

HI – Hostelling International

hotel – accommodation with food and bar, not always open to passing trade

inn – pub with accommodation

lager – light-bodied beer

Landsker line – boundary between Welsh-speaking and English-speaking areas in southwest Wales

laver bread – boiled seaweed mixed with oatmeal

merthyr – burial place of a saint (Welsh)

midge – a tiny, biting fly

National Assembly – National (Welsh) Assembly; devolved regional government of Wales, in power since 1999

newydd – new (Welsh)

NMGW – National Museums and Galleries of Wales

NT – National Trust

OS – Ordnance Survey

pint – measure (of beer)

pistyll – waterfall (Welsh)

postbus – minibus, operated by the Royal Mail, which follows postal delivery routes

pwll – pool (Welsh)

rhiw – slope (Welsh)

RSPB – Royal Society for the Protection of Birds

sarnie – sandwich

sewin – sea trout

SSSI – Site of Special Scientific Interest

Sustrans – sustainable-transport charity encouraging people to walk, cycle and use public transport

tafern – pub (Welsh)

towpath – a path running beside a river or canal

tre – town (Welsh)

urdd – youth (Welsh)

VAT – value-added tax, levied on most goods and services; currently 17.5%

way – long-distance trail

WTB – Wales Tourist Board

y, yr – the, of the (Welsh)

YHA – Youth Hostels Association

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