

EXPERIENCING SOUTH WALES



Experiencing South Wales: 7 Day Tour

Tywi Valley, Llandeilo, National Botanical Garden for Wales, Castell Henllys, North Pembrokeshire, Aberglasney Gardens, Pilgrims Church - Nevern, St Fagans on the outskirts of Cardiff, Blaenafon, St. David's Cathedral, Swansea - Llancaiach Fawr Manor, National Museum of the Woolen Industry, Dylan Thomas Centre, Laugharne.

Day 1:

Afternoon: Arrive at Swansea Hotel for our six night stay.

Evening: Dinner followed by welcome and short introductory talk.

Day 2:

Morning: We spend today visiting the famous gardens in the Tywi Valley near Llandeilo. We begin by visiting the National Botanic Garden for Wales that covers 568 acres that were formerly the landscape grounds of a large estate. The focal point is the award winning massive glasshouse full of exotic and rare plants from many parts of the world. The Botanic Garden is a marvellous place to spend time examining the wide range of plant species and animal and bird habitats. There will be time to explore these delightful gardens full of plant species from many parts of the world.

Afternoon: Our next garden is Aberglasney which is really a story of inspiration and vision. After being abandoned for fifty years the garden has been restored to their former glory including a very old yew tunnel and parapets and cloisters. Inside the partly restored house is the Ninfarium, a unique indoor garden. Our final stop is the glorious landscape of Dinefwr on the outskirts of Llandeilo. In the care of the National Trust this glorious landscape has associations with the Prince of Wales and Launcelot 'Capability' Brown.

Evening: Dinner followed by a talk on the area.

Day 3:

Morning: This day we travel to the far west of Wales. Our first stop is at Castell Henllys in North Pembrokeshire. Here the National Park Authority have recreated an Iron Age settlement in all its detail on the site of an excavated fort. With the detailed explanation provided by the site guide who is an archaeologist, the life and hierarchy of Iron Age Society comes alive.

Afternoon: After lunch we visit the Pilgrims church at Nevern. Dedicated to the Celtic monk St Brynach this is a place that resonates with history. Alongside the church is one of the best examples of a carved Celtic cross with its intricate, interlocking pattern of knots and links. Inside and outside the church are the famous Ogham stones with their Latin and runic inscriptions. Our final stop is the tiny city of St. Davids with its cathedral dedicated to the patron saint of Wales. This is an extraordinary place with its rich history and superb architecture. There is so much to see here including the Choir ceiling and the decorated misericords - seating for the clergy during long services.

Evening: Dinner.

Day 4:

Morning: The morning will be spent on a guided tour of the internationally acclaimed museum of National History at St. Fagans on the outskirts of Cardiff. Here, in the form of preserved buildings and other collections the story of the people of Wales is told. Buildings from all parts of Wales have been re-erected here and this is an opportunity to find out more how people lived in the past.

Afternoon: After lunch the afternoon is free in the capital city with its outstanding Victorian and Edwardian architecture and to visit the National Museum of Wales. The network of covered shopping arcades is one of the many qualities of this busy cosmopolitan city. We offer an optional (no charge) walking tour of the city that will last approximately 1.5 hours. This is a good way to find out where to go and what to see before finding out more for yourselves.

Evening: Dinner followed by an evening of Welsh harp music and singing.

Day 5:

Morning: The morning will be spent at the award-winning museum at Big Pit, Blaenafon located in the middle of a World Heritage Landscape. This was once a working coal mine and we will descend deep below ground to explore the former workings. There is so much to see above and below ground at the museum and there will be time for you to travel across this amazing landscape of former quarries and coal and iron workings.

Afternoon: On our way back to Swansea is Llancaiach Fawr Manor where we will step back in time to 1645 when the Civil War in Britain was happening. The house is populated by actors who re-create life at the time through their speech and explanations of their forebears work and lifestyles. Crossing the threshold is like entering a time machine.

Evening: Dinner followed by a talk on the origins of the Welsh language as well as its colourful culture.

Day 6:

Morning: Deep in the heartland of rural Carmarthenshire is the National Museum of the Woolen Industry where the story of textiles is told in an engaging and informative way. There is a working mill and shop right in the complex.

Afternoon: The afternoon we spend in the historic, estuary located in the town of Laugharne. It is full of delightful Georgian and Victorian architecture, a fascinating Norman castle that was later converted into a manor house in the 16th Century. Laugharne was the home of Dylan Thomas, the famous 20th century Welsh writer and partly inspired his famous play Under Milk Wood. We will explore the town on foot discovering much about its history and traditions - every three years they celebrate the 'beating of the bounds' walking about 20 miles to mark the town and borough boundaries. An event that demands plenty of refreshment stops courtesy of the local brewery.

Evening: We stay in Laugharne for our supper, taken in a local pub where there is a chance to meet the locals before being entertained by a locally based mixed choir in the Nonconformist chapel.

Day 7:

Morning: Our final day we spend the morning exploring the city described by Dylan Thomas as "smug-suburbed by the side of a long and splendid-curving shore." Our walk ends at the Dylan Thomas Centre.

Afternoon: After a leisurely lunch we wish you goodbye and 'bon voyage'.