

## EXPERIENCING WALES



### Experiencing Wales

#### 10 Day Tour

Betws-y-coed, Bodnant Gardens, Snowdonia, Conwy, Llandudno, Blaenau Ffestiniog, Porthmadog, Caernarfon, Llanberis, Snowdon, Museum of Slate, Dinorwig Quarries, Portmeirion, National Library of Wales Aberystwyth, Cardiff, National History Museum St Fagans, National Museum of Wales, Caerleon, Big Pit - Blaenafon, Llancaiach Fawr, Rhondda Valleys, Cardiff Castle, Cardiff to London, Wye Valley - Tintern Abbey, Lunch in London.

#### 10 day tour Itinerary

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##### Day 1:

Afternoon: Arrive at Manchester Hotel for our overnight stay.

Evening: Dinner followed by welcome and short introductory talk.

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##### Day 2:

Morning: Transfer to Betws-y-coed. We begin our tour with a visit to Bodnant Gardens in the care of the National Trust. There will be time to explore these delightful gardens full of plant species from many parts of the world. This is a wonderful landscape that is enhanced by its location overlooking the mountains of Snowdonia.

Afternoon: The medieval town of Conwy with its superb castle and complete town walls. The castle was one of the ring of fortifications built by Edward 1 in the late 13th century as part of his invasion into Wales. We will spend time in the castle and walking the complete ring of the town walls. From the towers there are good views of the town and the surrounding countryside including the estuary of the River Conwy spanned by two spectacular bridges. We will also explore the narrow streets of

the town and visit St Mary's Church with its fascinating graveyard memorials. There will be free time to wander at leisure through the town.

Evening: Arrive at our hotel at Betws-y-coed. Dinner followed by a talk introducing Wales.

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Day 3:

Morning: Free morning in Betws-y-coed. There will be an optional (no extra charge) walking tour of the town lasting about 1.5 hours.

Afternoon: Travel to the elegant seaside town of Llandudno. High above the town is a massive outcrop of limestone called the Great Orme. We climb via a funicular tramway to visit the Bronze Age Copper Mines where we will walk through the passages and chambers excavated by hand using rocks and animal bones over 5,500 years ago. This is a fascinating insight into the way our ancestors exploited the copper and manufactured highly sophisticated bronze axes.

Evening: Dinner

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Day 4:

Morning: This day we find out about the story of slate. Before departure from our hotel there will be a talk on the history of the industry thence to Blaenau Ffestiniog to catch the famous narrow gauge steam powered railway to Porthmadog.

Afternoon: We travel via the historic town of Caernarfon to walk around the outside of the great castle before moving on to Llanberis located at the foot of Snowdon on the highest mountain in Wales and England. The town is now a thriving tourist area and was once also famous for its huge slate quarries. We will be visiting the Museum of Slate that is run by the National Museum of Wales. In the preserved workshops of the great Dinorwig Quarries we will see how massive slabs of slate rock were split and dressed to produce the high quality roofing material.

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

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Day 5:

Morning: Today we transfer from our hotel in North Wales to travel across Wales to Cardiff, the capital city. Our journey is broken by a visit to the fairytale Italianate village of Portmeirion that was the location for the 1960's cult television series The Prisoner.

Afternoon: Lunch will be taken in the National Library of Wales at Aberystwyth and followed by a tour of the library to view some of the treasures of Wales including ancient books and a superb collection of paintings.

Evening: Arrive at our hotel in Cardiff in plenty of time before dinner which will be followed by a short introductory talk on the area.

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## Day 6:

**Morning:** The morning will be spent in 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.

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## Day 7:

**Morning:** Today we experience a breadth of history beginning with a visit to the Roman amphitheatre and barracks at Caerleon. Excavations have revealed this to be one of the most important Roman bases in Britain.

**Afternoon:** This afternoon will be spent at the award-winning museum at Big Pit, Blaenafon located in the middle of a World Heritage Landscape. This was once working coal mines and we will descend deep below the ground to explore the former workings. There is 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.

**Evening:** Our evening meal will be followed by a visit to hear an authentic Male Voice Choir practising.

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## Day 8:

**Morning:** A short distance from Cardiff is Llancaiach Fawr where we will step back in time to 1645 when the Civil War in Britain was happening. The house is populated by actors who recreate life at the time through their speech, work and lifestyles. Crossing the threshold is like entering a time machine.

**Afternoon:** We spend the afternoon exploring the valleys (including the famous Rhondda Valleys) of south Wales looking at their explosive growth in the 19th and 20th centuries. We will be stopping and finding out more about the landscapes past and present.

**Evening:** Our final evening in Cardiff is spent at the extraordinary, flamboyant Victorian Cardiff Castle built by one of the richest men in Britain in the 19th Century. We will be entertained during a medieval banquet complete with singers, musicians and typical food for this period in time.

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## Day 9:

Morning: Today we transfer from Cardiff to London travelling via the romantic Cistercian Tintern Abbey in the heart of the lovely Wye Valley. It was here that people like J.M.W. Turner and William Wordsworth were inspired to create their enduring visual and written images of the buildings and the landscape.

Afternoon: After a leisurely lunch we travel to London for our final overnight stay.

Evening: Dinner.