

GREAT BRITAIN- WALES



Country Dialling Code (Tel/Fax): ++44

Wales Tourist Board/Bwrdd Croeso Cymru: First and Tenth Floors, Brunel House, 2 Fitzalan Road, Cardiff CF24 0UY, UK Tel: (02920) 499 909 Fax: (02920) 485 031 E-mail: info@tourism.wales.gov.uk Website: www.visitwales.com

Capital: Cardiff Time: GMT+1

Background:

Location: Wales, country and principality, part of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

Map References: United Kingdom

Area: The total area of Wales is 20,760 sq km (8,015 sq mi).

Population: In 1999 the population of Wales was about 2,937,000, giving an average population density of approximately 141 people per sq km (366 per sq mi). About three quarters of the population is concentrated in the industrialized south, where population densities are highest. Cardiff county, for example, has a density of 2,172 people per sq km (5,592 per sq mi), while Rhondda Cynon Taff county borough in the Welsh valleys has a population density of 561 people per sq km (1,841 per sq mi). Powys in the mountainous centre of Wales has a population density of 23 per sq km (60 per sq mi), which is low for Britain. Caernarfonshire and Merionethshire, in the north-west, has 72 people per sq km (186 per sq mi), and Pembrokeshire, in the south-west, has about 45 people per sq km (118 per sq mi).

Nationality: Welsh.

Ethnic Groups: The vast majority of people born in Wales of Welsh parents consider themselves to be of Celtic ancestry. However, the population of the main cities is as ethnically mixed as anywhere else in Britain. During its long history, Celtic-speaking peoples, Romans, Anglo-Saxons, Vikings, the English, and people from other countries of the Commonwealth of Nations have all moved to Wales, and contributed to the ethnic make-up of its population.

Religions: The Church of England was the established Protestant religion of Wales, as the Church of Wales and England, until 1920, when it was disestablished in Wales and replaced by the Church in Wales, which has around 94,000 members. Nonconformist Churches have the greatest number of adherents; their popularity is largely a legacy of the 18th century when Nonconformism became associated with Welsh nationalism and with the rapidly expanding industrial communities. The chapel no longer plays the central part in Welsh life that it once did, when 80 per cent of the population belonged to a Nonconformist Church, but many thousands of Welsh people still belong to the Methodist Church, the Baptist Union, the Presbyterian (or Calvinist Methodist) Church of Wales, and the Union of Welsh Independents.

Languages: Both English and Welsh are official languages.

Economy: Recent decades have seen fundamental changes in the basis of the Welsh economy. Coal mining and traditional heavy industries like shipbuilding, which were the backbone of the economy from the 19th century, have almost died out. In contrast, the service sector, notably tourism and financial services, has expanded hugely, and there has been an influx of new, generally light, industries, such as electronics, which have diversified the manufacturing base.

Government support to help in the rebuilding of the most depressed of the old industrial areas is channelled through the Welsh Development Agency; help for rural areas comes through the Development Board for Rural Wales. The main programme for economic and urban regeneration has focused on the former mining villages and towns of the south Wales valleys. Helped by improvements to road and rail links, such government initiatives, combined with active local efforts to bring in new jobs, have made Wales particularly successful in attracting investment from overseas, especially from Japanese and other East Asian companies. In recent years, the country has received about 20 per cent of all overseas inward investment in the United Kingdom. Together with domestic private investment, this has led to the creation of thousands of new jobs (including 24,000 in the south Wales valleys) with many more in the pipeline.

Even so, unemployment remains above the UK average (about 9 per cent in the mid-1990s) in many areas. Long-term male unemployment is a particular problem in the former mining valleys, where a large number of the new jobs created have gone to women.

Industries:

Currency: 1 British pound = 100 pence

Visa: see Visa in UK section.

Railways: Having a length of over 65,000 km (4,000 mi).

Ports and Harbors: Cardiff is the principal seaport of Wales.

Airports: Cardiff-Wales International Airport at Rhoose, 20 km (12 mi) to the west.

Duty Free: see Duty Free in UK section.

Health: see Health in UK section

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THE BRECON CASTLE HOTEL, Castle Square, Brecon, LD3 9DB, Tel. +44 (0) 1874 624611, Fax. +44 (0) 1874 623737, <http://www.breconcastle.co.uk>

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CARDIFF

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RHS SPRING FLOWER SHOW, Bute Park, Cardiff, Wales, Tel. +44 (0) 2076 491885

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HISTORICAL SITES

GWYNEDD

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