Проект

Wales and the Welsh

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**General information**

The country of Wales is part of the United Kingdom along with [England](https://www.theschoolrun.com/homework-help/england), [Scotland](https://www.theschoolrun.com/homework-help/scotland) and [Northern Ireland](https://www.theschoolrun.com/homework-help/northern-ireland). Cymru, the Welsh name for the country, is bordered by England to the east, the Irish Sea to the north, St George’s Channel to the west and the Bristol Channel to the south. Wales is roughly 20,800 square km in area.

Population of Wales is 3.1 million people and it is 4.8% of the UK population and there are nearly three times as many sheep and lambs in Wales as there are people. The population is heavily concentrated in the metropolitan areas around Swansea, Cardiff and Newport, the South Wales Valleys and the north-eastern corner of Wales. The currency in Wales is Pound Sterling the same as in England. The dragon, daffodil and leek are three of a number of national symbols.

There is devolved Government with a First Minister, Cabinet and elected Parliament who meet in the [Senedd building](https://senedd.wales/visit/our-estate/senedd/" \t "_blank) in Cardiff Bay in Wales. There are currently six cities in Wales. Cardiff (Caerdydd in Welsh) the capital city of Wales has a population of around 363,000 and is located on the South East coast. To the east lies Newport (Casnewydd) and to the west is Swansea (Abertawe). Bangor – on the Menai Strait – overlooks the island of Anglesey, in North West Wales. St Davids in Pembrokeshire has a population of under 2000 and is the smallest city in the UK.

Wales is well-connected to the rest of the UK, Ireland and mainland Europe via road, rail, sea and air. Cardiff is around 2 hours from London travelling by road or train.

**Flag**

Although an integral part of the United Kingdom, Wales is not represented on the national flag, or [Union Flag](https://www.historic-uk.com/HistoryUK/HistoryofBritain/The-Act-of-Union/), more popularly known as the Union Jack. The proud and ancient battle standard of the Welsh is The Red Dragon (*Y Ddraig Goch*) and consists of a red dragon, passant (standing with one foot raised), on a green and white background. As with any ancient symbol, the appearance of the dragon has been adapted and changed over the years, and hence several different variations exist.

The current flag was officially adopted in 1959, and is based on an old royal badge used by [British kings and queens](https://www.historic-uk.com/HistoryUK/KingsQueensofBritain/) since Tudor times. The red dragon itself has been associated with Wales for centuries, and as such, the flag is claimed to be the oldest national flag still in use.

During [Henry VIII’s](https://www.historic-uk.com/HistoryUK/HistoryofEngland/Henry-VIII/) reign the red dragon on a green and white background became a favorite emblem on Royal Navy ships. As the national flag of Wales, the red dragon appears to have regained popularity in the early part of the twentieth century, when it was used for the 1911 Caernarfon Investiture of Edward, Prince of Wales. It wasn’t until 1959 however, that it became officially recognised as the national flag of the country.

The Red Dragon now flies proudly over public and private buildings throughout Wales, and thousands still cross the border into England every other year, when the two nations meet for their ‘historic struggle’ on the [rugby](https://www.historic-uk.com/CultureUK/History-of-Rugby-Football/) battlefield known as Twickenham. Welshmen, women and children carrying the dragon as a symbol of pride in their history and culture.

**Castles**

This is a little known fact that Wales has more castles per square mile than any other country in Europe. Wales' history has left a landscape scattered with Iron Age hill forts, Roman ruins and castles from Medieval Welsh princes and English kings. With some estimates suggesting in the medieval period there was one castle for every 12 square miles, it's even been said Wales is the most castellated land on Earth.

The reasons why may seem obvious. From the Norman invasion in the late 11th Century up until Owain Glyndwr's uprising against England between 1400 and 1415, the Welsh endured three and a half centuries of sporadic conflict with the English.

There is no way of telling for sure how many castles have ever been built in Wales. Best estimates put the number of Anglo-Norman castles alone about the 600 mark, with many hundreds of older structures such as the Roman fort at Caerleon and native Welsh castles such as Dolwyddelan near Festiniog.

The great period of castle warfare lasted from the medieval period to the 17th Century - the English civil war in the 1640s was effectively the last conflict where castles played a significant role. Their stone walls and battlements, which had held out against medieval weapons were all too vulnerable to attack from cannons and gunpowder and there were sieges at castles including Harlech, Raglan and Laugharne, when they were taken by Parliamentary forces. Towards the end of the 19th Century interest began to rise again in castles as curiosities and in many cases - visitor attractions.

**Natural attractions**

In the UK, national parks are areas of exceptional natural beauty which benefit from special protection and management, with great opportunities for everyone to enjoy the outdoors. There are 14 national parks in the UK, three of which are in Wales: the Brecon Beacons, Snowdonia and the Pembrokeshire Coast.

Snowdonia National Park

Mountains, castles and coast – there’s plenty of adventure to be found in Snowdonia, the oldest and biggest of our three National Parks. Snowdon is the highest point in Wales (and England, for that matter), topping out at 1,085m. [Snowdonia](https://www.visitwales.com/destinations/north-wales/snowdonia) is the adventure capital of the UK, thanks to the imagination of local entrepreneurs. Some of the attractions are wildly improbable, like the world’s fastest zip wires at [Zip World](https://www.visitwales.com/product/1446056), the trippy underground experience of [Bounce Below](https://www.zipworld.co.uk/adventure/bounce-below), and the 1km-long sled ride at [Forest Coaster](https://www.zipworld.co.uk/adventure/fforest-coaster). [Adventure Park Snowdonia](https://adventureparcsnowdonia.com/) features [surfing](https://adventureparcsnowdonia.com/surf-snowdonia/), [Adrenaline Indoors](https://adventureparcsnowdonia.com/shop-category/adrenaline-indoors/) and a range of [outdoor activities](https://adventureparcsnowdonia.com/explore-outdoors/). Recent additions include the [Wave Garden Spa](https://www.visitwales.com/product/2169161) with an indoor and outdoor thermal journey, [Pump Track and Skate Bowl](https://www.adventureparcsnowdonia.com/outdoor-adventures/pump-track-mini-wheels-pump-track-carver-skate-bowl/), daily open water swimming sessions on the surf lagoon and e-bike and mountain bike hire.

Brecon Beacons National Park

Most of visitors come here to enjoy the stunning scenery. It’s both beautiful and diverse, with rolling countryside and valleys, wide open hillsides and wildly beautiful forests, lakes, waterfalls and caves. Flora and fauna are remarkable the park is one of the last outposts for Welsh mountain ponies. It may be thougth that the landscape of the Brecon Beacons is unspoilt and natural, but in fact people have shaped and changed it over many thousands of years. Without them, it would not be the beautiful, diverse place it is today. We can see the legacy that past peoples have left to us in our rich archaeological heritage and our historic buildings and settlements. Within the National Park are over 250 ancient monuments including prehistoric and Roman sites including stone circles, burial chambers, hillforts and camps. The hills and villages are also dotted with medieval castles, ancient churches and reminders of our industrial heritage.

**Welsh language**

Wales is a proudly bilingual country. If you go to Wales you’ll notice the road signs are in English and Welsh, and you’re likely to hear Welsh out and about although Welsh speakers are still in the minority. However, looking back at the history of the language, it’s a wonder it survived at all.

Cymraeg, or Welsh as its known in English, is, according to the last count, spoken by 23% of the population. Up until 1850, 90% of the population spoke Welsh, but it has since faced a great many challenges which at times almost led to its extinction. Potentially up to 4,000 years old, Welsh is one of the oldest living languages in Europe. Welsh originates from the Celtic language spoken by the ancient Britons. Before the Roman invasion Celtic languages were spoken across Europe as far as Turkey. Celtic language came to Britain around 600BC, with one version evolving into Brythonic which formed the basis of Welsh, Cornish and Breton.

With English sovereignty over Wales made official with Henry VIII’s Act of Union in 1536, use of Welsh was largely banned and laws were passed which removed the official status of the Welsh language. This meant people had to speak English to get work and progress. The suppression of the language extended to education too.

A further challenge to the preservation of Welsh came with the influx of English speakers into the country in the eighteenth century, largely brought about by the effects of the Industrial Revolution. This was an era of great mass migration and within no time at all the English language began to swamp the workplace as well as the streets of Wales, quickly becoming the common language spoken by everyone.

In the nineteenth century, the Welsh language still did not benefit from the increasing literacy levels amongst the general public. English was still the dominant language as it represented administration and business in an era of imperial expansion.

In the twentieth century, there was a growing recognition that the Welsh language and Welsh speakers were being discriminated against, for example, in 1942 the Welsh Courts Act formally addressed the issue of defendants and plaintiffs being forced to speak in English and ushered in a new law allowing Welsh to be used in the courts. In 1992, the Welsh Language Bill gave Welsh equal status with English in all public bodies and drives to boost the language continue to this day.

In some parts of Wales it is people’s first language, Welsh school children study Welsh up to the age of 16, Welsh language schools are common and there are Welsh TV channels, festivals, films and more. Last year an ambitious target was announced: to double the number of Welsh speakers to one million by 2050.

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