



Discovering Wales

June 8 - 17, 2006

A Journey into the Ancient Celtic Kingdom

Castle ruins, meandering medieval streets, and a magnificent Celtic heritage bring the beauty of Wales to life against a backdrop of rolling green hills and dramatic sea cliffs. Past and present coexist in this distinctive part of the world—the Romans mined for gold, the Tudors founded a dynasty, and the Normans built castles whose ancient remains are scattered along windy hilltops throughout the countryside. Along the way, Wales’ ancient Celtic heritage was memorialized in a stunning collection of literature and artwork.

From the magnificence of Caernarvon and the romantic appeal of Tintern Abbey, to our own accommodations in Ruthin Castle, to breathtaking vistas on peaceful St. David’s Peninsula, we’ll explore the places, personalities, and sweep of history that constitute the haunting beauty of Wales. We’ll also step in and out of ancient market towns like Llangollen and Carmarthen, supposed birthplace of Merlin, located in “the garden of Wales;” visit beautiful villages like Hereford and Shrewsbury, with more than 500 listed buildings and narrow medieval alleyways; and experience the natural splendor of Snowdonia, with the highest mountain peaks in the country, and the Wye Valley, rich in ancient woodlands, wildlife, and historic towns.

Join Discover Europe as we journey into the heart and history of ancient Wales, where the magic of this Celtic kingdom comes to life in *Discovering Wales*.



Castle ruins, South Wales



Lake Padern, Snowdonia

The cost of this itinerary, per person, double occupancy is:

Land only (no airfare included): **\$2540**
Single supplement: **\$440**

Airfares are available from many other U.S. cities. Please call for details.

The following services are included:

Hotels: 8 nights accommodation in first-class hotels.
All hotel taxes and service charges included.
Coaching: All ground transportation as detailed in the itinerary.
Meals: Full breakfast daily; 5 table d’hote dinners.
Guides: Discover Europe tour director throughout.
Expenses: Portorage of one large suitcase per person.
Entrances: Entrance fees to all sites included in the itinerary.
Insurance: Complete travel insurance including cancellation coverage





Thursday, June 8. Evening departure from U.S. for your overnight flight to Manchester. **(D)**

Friday, June 9. Upon arrival you will be transferred to our accommodations at Ruthin Castle. The ancient remains of the town’s castle, begun in 1277, are some of the oldest in Wales, predating the great fortresses of Conwy and Caernarvon. Today, it is a luxury hotel, where you will have time to unpack and explore before we gather for a relaxing welcome dinner. **(D)**

Overnight: Ruthin

Saturday, June 10. This morning we embark on a full day’s excursion to Caernarvon and Anglesey. Of the four castles in northern Wales built by Edward I, Caernarvon is the most magnificent, and has survived remarkably intact for almost seven centuries. An awesome and powerful sight, its vast structure overshadows the town, sitting defiantly on the banks of the River Seiont and providing a magical place for exploration with its labyrinth of covered passageways and wall walks. Then on to Anglesey, an island reached by bridge over the Menai Straits, and the location of Beaumaris, the largest castle planned by Edward; begun in 1295, it was never finished. We’ll return to Ruthin for dinner. **(B, D) Overnight: Ruthin**

Sunday, June 11. A full day to explore the beauty of Snowdonia, from the diverse landscape of its national park (the second largest in Great Britain, with some of the highest peaks in the country) to its well-preserved medieval castles. We’ll also visit the pastel-colored village of Portmeirion, built by Welsh architect Sir Clough Williams-Ellis from 1925 to 1975 off the coast of Snowdonia. Here, Renaissance Italy rubs shoulders with 18th-century England in a joyful jumble of architectural styles; it’s also where the cult classic TV program *The Prisoner*, starring Patrick McGoochan, was filmed. Finally, we’ll stop at Harlech Castle, linked in Welsh myth with the tragic heroine of Branwen, of the Mabinogion, and set against a spectacular sea and mountain panorama. You’ll have a free evening in Ruthin to dine out. **(B) Overnight: Ruthin**



Hereford Cathedral

Monday, June 12. Leaving Ruthin, we head to Llangollen, an ancient market town steeped in Arthurian references and situated on the beautiful River Dee under the watchful gaze of Dinas Bran Castle. History is everywhere here, from the Iron Age, to medieval times (and the spectacular Valle Crucis Abbey), to the Victorian period. The town’s superb shops offer an activity all their own. Then on through rolling, unspoiled countryside to the bustling

market town of Welshpool, with its impressive 13th century Powis Castle and beautiful terraced gardens. With a stop in Llangurig, we then finish our day traveling through Carmarthenshire, “the Garden of Wales,” to the medieval town of Carmarthen, reputedly the birthplace of Merlin, and dominated by a glorious Norman castle overlooking the River Twyi. You’ll have time to unpack before we meet for dinner. **(B, D) Overnight: Carmarthen**



Portmeirion

Tuesday, June 13. The haunting coastline and overpowering sense of the past on St. David’s Peninsula evoke ancient Wales. With a full day to explore, we head off to the birthplace of Wales’ patron saint in the 6th century, a deeply Celtic corner of Wales that retains an uncommon sense of peace. Quite apart from the purple-stone Cathedral and ruins of Bishop’s Palace at St. David’s, the little peninsula is dotted with sites that possess a profundity and sanctity precisely because they have been ignored by the passing centuries. We return to Carmarthen for a free evening. **(B) Overnight: Carmarthen**

Wednesday, June 14. Leaving Carmarthen, we meander through the Rhondda Valley in south Wales, toward Hereford. An ancient city with a rich heritage on the banks of the River Wye, Hereford offers historic buildings that house modern shops and modern buildings that hold historic treasures such as the priceless, 13th century Mappa Mundi. We’ll check in to our hotel, with time to relax before dinner. **(B, D) Overnight: Hereford**

Thursday, June 15. A full day to explore the Wye Valley, rich in ancient woodlands, wildlife, and historic towns. The lower Wye Valley was effectively the first “tourist attraction” in Britain, inspiring the Picturesque movement, which attracted writers and artists of the day, including Pope, Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Turner. We’ll visit Symonds Yat, world famous for its river scenery and magnificent views, and spend time at Tintern Abbey and Chepstow Castle. The evening is free to sample a local restaurant. **(B) Overnight: Hereford**



Tintern Abbey

Friday, June 16. Leaving Hereford we head to Ludlow, described by *Country Life* as “the most vibrant small town in the country,” with over 500 listed buildings. In Shrewsbury, a stunning historic town with over 660 listed buildings, including a Norman abbey dating to 1083, we’ll explore the town’s Shuts and Passages, a unique maze of narrow medieval alleys. Finally, we’ll stop at one of Europe’s top heritage cities, Chester, whose walls date to Roman times. We’ll end our stay in Knutsford, a delightful medieval town where we’ll have our farewell dinner. **(B, D) Overnight: Knutsford**

Saturday, June 17. Morning transfer to Manchester airport for returning flights to the U.S. **(B)**