



Cardiff

POP 346,000

Includes ➔

Sights.....	45
Activities.....	57
Tours.....	57
Festivals & Events.....	57
Sleeping.....	58
Eating.....	62
Drinking & Nightlife.....	65
Entertainment.....	66
Shopping.....	68
Vale of Glamorgan.....	73
Penarth.....	73
Barry (Y Barri).....	75

Best Places to Eat

- ➔ Purple Poppadom (p64)
- ➔ Fish at 85 (p64)
- ➔ Mint & Mustard (p65)
- ➔ Oz Urfa (p65)
- ➔ Riverside Market (p64)

Best Places to Sleep

- ➔ Number 62 (p61)
- ➔ Lincoln House (p61)
- ➔ Park Plaza (p61)
- ➔ River House (p62)
- ➔ Safehouse (p60)

Why Go?

The capital of Wales since only 1955, Cardiff has embraced the role with vigour, emerging in the new millennium as one of Britain's leading urban centres. Caught between an ancient fort and an ultramodern waterfront, compact Cardiff seems to have surprised even itself with how interesting it has become.

The city has entered the 21st century pumped up on steroids, flexing its recently acquired architectural muscles as if it's still astonished to have them. This newfound confidence is infectious, and these days it's not just the rugby that draws crowds into the city. Come the weekend, a buzz reverberates through the streets as swarms of shoppers hit the Hayes, followed by waves of revellers descending on the capital's thriving pubs, bars and live-music venues.

Cardiff makes an excellent base for day trips to the surrounding valleys and coast, where you'll find castles, beaches, interesting industrial sites and ancient monuments.

When to Go

- ➔ January and February are the coldest months, although Wales' home matches in the Six Nations Rugby Championship warm spirits in February and March.
- ➔ June is the driest month but many of the big festivals hold out until July, including the Cardiff International Food & Drink Festival, the Everyman Open Air Theatre Festival and the Welsh Proms. In August, the warmest month, knights storm the castle, classic motor boats converge and gay pride takes over the streets.
- ➔ Making the most of the December chill, Cardiff's Winter Wonderland brings ice skating and Santa's grotto to the Civic Centre.

History

In AD 75 the Romans built a fort where Cardiff Castle now stands. The name Cardiff probably derives from *Caer Tâf* (Fort on the River Taff) or *Caer Didi* (Didius' Fort), referring to Roman general Aulus Didius. After the Romans left Britain the site remained unoccupied until the Norman Conquest. In 1093 a Norman knight named Robert Fitzhamon (conqueror of Glamorgan and later earl of Gloucester) built himself a castle within the Roman walls and a small town grew up around it. Both were damaged in a Welsh revolt in 1183 and the town was sacked in 1404 by Owain Glyndŵr during his ill-fated rebellion against English domination.

The first of the Tudor Acts of Union in 1536 put the English stamp on Cardiff and brought some stability. But despite its importance as a port, market town and bishopric, only 1000 people were living here in 1801.

The city owes its present stature to iron and coal mining in the valleys to the north. Coal was first exported from Cardiff on a small scale as early as 1600. In 1794 the Bute family, which owned much of the land from which Welsh coal was mined, built the Glamorganshire Canal for shipping iron from Merthyr Tydfil down to Cardiff. In 1840 this was supplanted by the new Taff Vale Railway.

A year earlier the second marquess of Bute had completed the first docks at Butetown, just south of Cardiff, getting the jump on other South Wales ports. By the time it dawned on everyone what immense reserves of coal there were in the valleys – setting off a kind of black gold rush – the Butes were in a position to insist that it be shipped from Butetown. Cardiff was off and running.

The docklands expanded rapidly, the Butes grew staggeringly rich and the city boomed, its population mushrooming to 170,000 by the end of the 19th century and to 227,000 by 1931. A large, multiracial workers' community known as Tiger Bay grew up in the harbourside area of Butetown. In 1905 Cardiff was officially designated a city, and a year later its elegant Civic Centre was inaugurated. In 1913 Cardiff became the world's top coal port, exporting some 13 million tonnes of the stuff.

The post-WWI slump in the coal trade and the Great Depression of the 1930s slowed this expansion. The city was badly damaged by WWII bombing, which claimed over 350 lives. Shortly afterwards the coal industry was nationalised, which led to the

Butes packing their bags and leaving town in 1947, donating the castle and a large chunk of land to the city.

Wales had no official capital and the need for one was seen as an important focus for Welsh nationhood. Cardiff had the advantage of being Wales' biggest city and boasting the architectural riches of the Civic Centre. It was proclaimed the first capital of Wales in 1955, chosen via a ballot of the members of the Welsh authorities. Cardiff received 36 votes to Caernarfon's 11 and Aberystwyth's four.



Sights



City Centre



National Museum Cardiff

MUSEUM

(Map p50; ☎ 0300 111 2 333; www.museum.wales.ac.uk; Gorsedd Gardens Rd; ☀ 10am-4pm Tue-Sun) **FREE** Devoted mainly to natural history and art, this grand neoclassical building is the centrepiece of the seven institutions dotted around the country that together form the Welsh National Museum. It's one of Britain's best museums; you'll need at least three hours to do it justice, but it could easily consume the best part of a rainy day.

The Evolution of Wales exhibit whizzes onlookers through 4600 million years of geological history, its rollicking multimedia display placing Wales into a global context. Films of volcanic eruptions and aerial footage of the Welsh landscape explain how its scenery was formed, while model dinosaurs and woolly mammoths help keep the kids interested.

The natural-history displays range from brightly coloured insects to the 9m-long skeleton of a humpback whale that washed up near Aberthaw in 1982. The world's largest turtle (2.88m by 2.74m), a leatherback that was found on Harlech beach, is also here, suspended on wires from the ceiling.

The excellent art collection's treasures include a trio of Monet's *Water Lilies*, alongside his scenes of London, Rouen and Venice; Sisley's *The Cliff at Penarth* (the artist was married in Cardiff); Renoir's shimmering *La Parisienne*; a cast of Rodin's *The Kiss*; and Van Gogh's anguished *Rain: Auvers*. Welsh artists such as Gwen and Augustus John, Richard Wilson, Thomas Jones, David Jones and Ceri Richards are well represented, along with famous names from across the border such as Francis Bacon, David Hockney and Rachel Whiteread.