

Below is the proposed itinerary for the trip. As is true on any adventure travel trip, plans for any specific day may be modified due to weather considerations, unforeseen circumstances, new opportunities, and group interests.

## DAY 1

### Arrive Cardiff, Welcome and Introductions

Arrive Cardiff any time before 4 p.m. today. We'll gather at our hotel at 4:30 p.m. for welcome and introductions, followed by a trip orientation. Our Welsh guide will then take us on a brief walking tour of Cardiff on our way to dinner. Those of us who just arrived will undoubtedly be jetlagged, so we'll make sure we get to bed early. Overnight: Cardiff. (D)

## DAY 2

### Transfer to Brecon Beacons National Park, Hike along Monmouthshire Canal

From Cardiff, we will drive for about an hour through the South Wales Valleys. This area once fueled the Industrial Revolution with her coal, leaving behind only scars in the mountainside and the faded glory of the architecture to remind us. Leaving the coal valleys behind, we enter Brecon Beacons National Park, the first of 3 National Park on our adventure. Our first walk will be along the tranquil Brecon and Monmouthshire canal. In the past, horses pulled the barges and we will follow their trail along the ancient towpath. By its very nature this is level walking and a superb walk for our first day. The pace is slow, allowing us to ease into the rhythms of rural Wales and enjoy our first lunch in a cozy pub.

Hiking: Distance 8 miles. Elevation 200 feet. Overnight: The Old Rectory Hotel, Llangattock (2 nights) or similar. (B, L, D)

## DAY 3

### Hike Offa's Dyke footpath to Hay Bluff, visit Llananthony Abbey Ruins

Now that we've recovered from jet lag, we're ready for some more serious hiking. After picking up a picnic lunch from the local bakery, we set off from our hotel along the Offa's Dyke footpath. This is one of Wales' National trails. Offa was a 9th century Saxon king who built a stone and earth barrier to delineate his kingdom from that of the troublesome Celts in the west. Our walk will take us from the lush Wye valley up onto the wild and windswept tops of the Black mountains, where we climb to the top of Hay Bluff (2,220 feet). This is border country; the views here stretch out over and beyond Wales, to the English counties of Herford and Gloucestershire. Our bus will pick us up at Gospel pass and drive us down to the romantic ruins of Llananthony Abbey. Rebuilt in the 13th century, what stands today are the picturesque remains.

Hiking: 8 miles. Elevation gain: 1,000 feet. Overnight: The Old Rectory Hotel, Llangattock (2 nights) or similar. (B, L, D)

## DAY 4

### Hike and visit Carreg Cennen Castle, drive to Tenby along the Pembrokeshire Coast

Our scenic drive will take us over the north side of the Brecon Beacons National Park, west toward Pembrokeshire. We will stop briefly in the ancient and old-fashioned Drover town of Landover, home to a memorial to the Welsh drovers. Our hike today is an undulating circuit following footpaths around and up to Carreg Cennen Castle, a striking 12th century fortress that changed hands many times between the English and Welsh and is arguably the most romantic castle in Wales. Whether or not you agree, a visit to this dramatic fortress is a must and the climb up to it is well worth it. Finishing our hike, we continue the last leg of our journey to the brightly colored seaside town of Tenby and our beautifully located family-run hotel, an older but classic 'by the seaside' lodging with that great historic Wales atmosphere.

mosphere.

Hiking: 4.75 miles. Elevation gain: 650 feet. Overnight: The Gower Hotel, Saundersfoot (3 nights) or similar. (B, L D)

## DAY 5

### Hike on All Wales Coast Path to Bosherton Lakes

National Geographic magazine called Pembrokeshire the world's second-best coastal destination. We'll hike today on the All Wales Coast Path, with spectacular cliff top views. We'll keep our eyes open for gannets fishing and playful choughs catching the updrafts. Barafundle Bay is surely one of the loveliest beaches in the world and an inviting place for a swim. You might think coastal paths are flat and easy hiking, but you would be wrong, and a break at the Boat House tearoom at Stack pole quay to sample the local wares will be most welcome.

We then continue onwards to the freshwater Bosherton Lakes, famous for their lilies and resident otters. This landscape, designed by the Cawdor family as a setting for their country house, is a lovely contrast to the dramatic clifftops. Today the main house is gone, but the estate is an internationally important nature reserve and a listed designed landscape. Our coach will then take us back to Tenby for dinner.

Hiking: 8 - 10 miles. Overnight: The Gower Hotel, Saundersfoot (3 nights) or similar. (B, L, D)

## DAY 6

### Visit Saint David's Cathedral, hike more of the All Wales Coast Path

Today we are heading to the spiritual center of Wales and the birthplace of its patron saint, Saint David. According to tradition, David was born in a lightning storm on the headland, less than a mile away from where the village's cathedral stands today. Tucked away on a river and out of sight from marauding Vikings, the cathedral became one of the most important shrines of medieval Christendom, when two pilgrimages to Saint David's was equal to one to Rome. Inside we will see Saint David's shrine, as well as the sarcophagus of Edmund Tudor, Henry VII's father. After lunch on your own with some time to explore the village, in the afternoon we'll walk another section of the Wales Coast Path. We'll go from Saint David's to Saint Non's Bay, where David was born, and then to Porthclais before returning to Saint David on another path. Before driving back to Tenby, we might call in at Solva Woollen Mill, Pembrokeshire's oldest working woolen mill.

Hiking: 2.5 miles. Overnight: The Gower Hotel, Saundersfoot (3 nights) or similar. (B, D)

## DAY 7

### Drive to Snowdonia National Park

We get an early start today as we bid farewell to Tenby and head towards North Wales. This will be our longest drive (about 5 - 6 hours of driving) and we'll break our journey along the way. We'll then continue to Snowdonia National Park. This was Wales' first National Park and home to its highest mountain and largest lake. Its rugged landscape is a complete contrast with everything we've seen previously.

Overnight: Hotel Glan Aber, Betws-y-Coed (4 nights), or similar. (B, L, D)

## DAY 8

### Loop hike from Beddgelert

The village of Beddgelert is blessed: it lies on the confluence of two mountain rivers and is surrounded by wooded hills in the heart of the Snowdonia National Park. The



quarrymen's cottages that make up the village are prettily decorated with window boxes, and the village often wins prizes for its joyful floral displays. We set off on the banks of the river Glaslyn. Our first stop is at 'Gelert's Grave'. Gelert was a brave legendary dog, from which the village takes its name. Wales is a land of myth and legend, and there are still a few to tell today.

The river gathers speed as it narrows into a gorge, and we will negotiate the fisherman's path. We will soon turn up into a secret valley, with contrasting landscape. The mountain views will be amazing today (weather permitting): Cnicht (The Welsh Matterhorn), Snowdon, and Dinas Emrys, where legend has it the Welsh Red Dragon fought the English White Dragon and reigned supreme. Dinner is on your own tonight, so you'll have time to explore the town.

Hiking: 6 miles. Elevation gain: 1,233 feet. Overnight: Hotel Glan Aber, Betws-y-Coed (4 nights), or similar. (B, L)

**DAY 9**

**Hike/train up Mount Snowdon**

In just a fifteen-minute drive to Llanberis we are at the foot of Snowdon. Snowdon, or Yr Wyddfa in Welsh, is the highest mountain south of the Scottish Highlands. At 3,560 feet, it is not high in terms of mountains of the world, but it is still one cracker of a mountain. Shaped by glaciers, this majestic mountain is reminiscent of a starfish from above, with magnificent ridges radiating from the central pyramidal peak. We have several choices today: you may choose to ride up and back to the summit on the historic Snowdon mountain railway; ride up and then walk back down; or, if you're looking for a challenge, hike to the summit and back. In addition to your energy level, the weather is also an important factor. Whatever option you decide on, we will all undoubtedly have earned a pint-sized mug of tea at the famous climber's cafe, Pete's Eats. Or perhaps a pint of something stronger at The Heights pub!

Hiking: 4-6 miles. Overnight: Hotel Glan Aber, Betws-y-Coed (4 nights), or similar. (B, L, D)

**DAY 10**

**Tour Conwy Castle, Hike from Llanafairfechan, Farewell Dinner**

After our hearty Scottish breakfast, we drive to the magnificent seaside town of Conwy, known for its UNESCO designated medieval castles and churches and particularly for Conwy Castle. We'll have a guided tour of it, and then head to the village of LLanafairfechan for the start of our hike. On our hike we will stop for lunch at the mountain farm of Rhian Jones, known for her artistic Blacksmith work. As well as stunning coastal scenery and perhaps even views of the Isle of Man on a clear day, this upland hike over heathery moorlands offers up a wealth of archaeology, from stone circles to Iron Age forts. Hiking 10 miles, 960 feet elevation gain

Tonight we share one final farewell dinner at the charming Royal Welsh Yacht Club, in the heart of Caernarfon. It's a fitting end to our time in this most amazing country.

Hiking: 4 miles. Elevation gain: 984 feet. Overnight: Hotel Glan Aber, Betws-y-Coed (4 nights), or similar. (B, L, D)

**DAY 11**

**Depart for Bangor Train Station and Manchester Airport**

After breakfast, it's unfortunately time to leave. We'll arrive first at the Bangor railway station at 9:30 a.m. and then continue on to Manchester airport, arriving approximately 11:30 a.m. for flights or connections to other trains. Hwyl fawr! (B)