



Walk

Capital runners

Discover Cardiff's civic pride
and sporting heritage

Time: 90 mins

Distance: 2 ½ miles

Landscape: urban

Cardiff was awarded city status in 1905 and 50 years later it became the Welsh capital. In that time it became the home of many famous sports teams.

This walk visits impressive buildings and sports venues to explore how Cardiff became a civic and sporting centre. Along the way, discover Cardiff's role in the Commonwealth Games, Rugby World Cup and Ashes cricket series.

Also look out for daffodils, dragons and even a giant anteater!

Location:

Cardiff, south Wales

Start:

Cardiff Castle, CF10 3RB

Finish:

Principality Stadium, CF10 1NS

Grid reference:

ST 18102 76485

Keep an eye out for:

How many creatures can you spot on the Animal Wall?

Directions



The walk begins at the main entrance gate to Cardiff Castle on Castle Street. The Castle is about 10 minutes walk from both Cardiff Central and Queen Street railway stations and is accessible from Cardiff High Street or Bute Park.



Route and stopping points



- | | |
|------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 1 Cardiff Castle main entrance | 9 North Road |
| 2 View of Cardiff Castle keep | 10 View of SSE SWALEC Stadium |
| 3 Cardiff City Hall | 11 Sports Wales National Centre |
| 4 Gorsedd Gardens | 12 River Taff |
| 5 Stuttgarter Strasse | 13 Bute Park Arboretum |
| 6 Alexandra Gardens | 14 Cardiff Castle Animal Wall |
| 7 Cardiff University Main Building | 15 Cardiff Arms Park |
| 8 Welsh National Temple of Peace | 16 Principality Stadium |

01 Cardiff Castle wall, Castle Street

As the Welsh capital city, Cardiff is home to a range of national organisations and headquarters. These range from law and education to culture and sport. This walk explores them in two areas of the city.

The civic quarter was laid out from 1905, when Cardiff was awarded city status by royal charter. Called Cathays Park, this area is home to grand buildings, gardens and monuments. Fifty years later, Bute Park and the riverside were given to the people of Cardiff when the city became Welsh capital. This area is now home to a variety of sporting venues.

Most of this walk is about modern Cardiff in the century since it became a city. The Welsh capital has a much longer history though, so we begin at the oldest building. Cardiff Castle is over 2,000 years old and can trace its history back to the Roman era.

The Roman conquest of Wales began in the north in 48 AD. They extended their campaign to South Wales to counter the resistance of the Silures, a tribe led by Caractacus (or Caradog in Welsh). Caractacus took the fight to the Romans but was defeated and taken to Rome as a prisoner.

By 75 AD the whole of Wales was under Roman control. Before then, the Romans had already built a fort here. The first were wooden, with a stone one built in 250 AD. The Romans used Cardiff Castle as a naval base to protect against raiders from the sea.

Cardiff remained an important Roman outpost until their legions withdrew from Britain in the fifth century. Look in the wall along Castle Street. In the bottom half, highlighted by coloured bricks, the older-looking stones are parts of the original Roman fort.

Directions

Continue along Castle Street towards the opposite corner of the castle from the one with the ornate tower. Stop where the main road bends round to the left.

02 Cardiff Castle, Castle Street

After the Romans, Britain's next major invaders were the Normans. The Normans came from France in 1066 and won the English crown at the Battle of Hastings. But the Norman Conquest of England did not automatically lead to the subjugation of Wales.

England's new Norman king William I (or William the Conqueror), considered the English crown to be his birth right. William didn't have a claim to any of the Welsh titles and he planned to leave Wales alone. The Welsh tribes had other ideas though and crossed the border to attack the Normans.

The Norman response against the Welsh was quite half-hearted until 1081. At that point, the Normans became more committed. Using the shell of the old Roman fort, they constructed a motte and bailey castle here which survives today as Cardiff Castle Keep.

By 1094 most of Wales was under Norman rule, though there were constant battles with the Welsh tribes. Cardiff Castle remained a Norman stronghold through successive dynasties, including the De Clares and le Despencers. These very French names can still be seen in nearby streets.

Over the following centuries Cardiff Castle belonged to many noble families. In 1766 it passed by marriage to the Crichton-Stuarts, the Marquesses of Bute. It was John, the Second Marquess of Bute who turned Cardiff into the world's greatest port for exporting coal.

The Bute fortune - and Cardiff Castle - passed to his son the Third Marquess, also named John Crichton-Stuart. By the 1860s the Third Marquess was reputed to be the richest man in the world. He used some of his wealth to restore the castle and added new features, including the Gothic Revival style clock tower. Much of the Castle's design today dates from his ownership.

Directions

From the corner of the castle, go along Kingsway with the wall on your left. Pass the bus stops and at the next corner of the castle, go down the ramp and through the pedestrian underpass. At the top of the ramp on the other side, turn left. Pass the first grand building. Stop outside the second building with the clock tower.

03 Cardiff City Hall

At the last stop we heard about the Third Marquess of Bute who restored the Castle. In 1898 he also sold 59 acres of his land to the town. It was used to create a new civic centre called Cathays Park. It's still regarded as one of the most impressive civic centres in the world.

Cardiff was granted city status in 1905. Cardiff's natural location, safely nestled on the south Wales coast beside the Bristol Channel, helped a huge port to develop. By the nineteenth century Cardiff's exports of coal, steel and iron created immense wealth.

This trio of buildings – the Crown Court, City Hall and the National Museum Cardiff – reflect that wealth and newly granted city status. Take time to look at the detailing on all three of them.

Opened in 1906, the City Hall and Crown Court were important early examples of an architectural style called Edwardian Baroque. Baroque buildings were inspired by Sir Christopher Wren's seventeenth-century designs and the architecture of eighteenth century France. In the Edwardian era (1901-1910), many public buildings were built in this style across the British Empire.

The City Hall in the centre features a distinctive clock tower and domed roof. Both buildings also have impressive groups of sculptures. 'Science and Education' and 'Commerce and Industry' appear on the Crown Court, while 'Music and Poetry' and 'Unity and Patriotism' are on the City Hall.

The National Museum Cardiff meanwhile opened in 1927. On the outside, note the Museum's impressive columns. It was built in a style that recalls American Beaux-Arts. Named after the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris, this style drew from ancient Greek and Roman architecture, and the Italian Renaissance.

So these buildings celebrate and showcase Cardiff by drawing inspiration from around the world.

Directions

Opposite the front of City Hall and the National Museum is a garden. Among the various pieces of public art are four statues. Stop when you have a good view of all four.

04 Gorsedd Gardens

The three buildings that we have just seen were symbols of Cardiff's wealth and grandeur. Here in Gorsedd Gardens, the city shows off some of its most acclaimed residents.

The man with a clenched fist is David Lloyd George, a Liberal politician and statesman. From 1915 to

1922 he was Britain's Prime Minister and remains the only Welshman to have held the role. During his time in office he guided the British Empire forces to the culmination of the First World War and presided over the creation of Northern Ireland, after the Irish Republic had been declared.

The man holding a pair of binoculars is Lord Ninian, Edward Crichton-Stuart. He was the second son of Cardiff's benefactor, the Third Marquess of Bute. Lord Ninian was Cardiff's MP from 1910 but was soon called away on war duties, where he was killed in France in 1915. His name lives on in Ninian Park, which until 2009 was the home ground of Cardiff City Football Club.

The man on horseback is Godfrey Morgan, First Viscount Tredegar. A British Army officer and politician, he commanded a section of the Light Brigade at the Battle of Balaclava during the Crimean War in 1854.

The man holding a Bible and a hat is John Cory. He was one of the sons in the company Richard Cory and Sons. This firm were ship brokers and merchants that exported coal. John and his brother Richard purchased several collieries in the South Wales valleys. By 1908 they had 118 agencies and depots on all the major shipping routes. Their name lives on in Cory Brothers and Cory Logistics, which specialise in international shipping and transport.

Directions

Go towards the corner of Gorsedd Gardens where there is a busy road junction with traffic lights. Stand in a safe place at the junction.

05 Boulevard de Nantes / Stuttgarter Strasse

This busy road has two unusual names. Look to one side of the junction and you will see that it is called Boulevard de Nantes. On the other side it is called Stuttgarter Strasse. The road is named after two of Cardiff's twin towns, Nantes in France and Stuttgart in Germany.

Town twinning is often based on something shared, such as a common industry, a similar geographical feature, or a sporting connection. Twinning is a way to create economic and social links with other countries. It also helps to promote international relations at a local level, particularly through business partnerships and school exchange visits.

Cardiff has been twinned with Stuttgart since 1955 and Nantes since 1963. Cardiff is also twinned with Lugansk in the Ukraine, Bergen in Norway, Xiamen in China and Pernik in Bulgaria. Many of these links recall Cardiff's international connections through its port and migrant communities. Why not find out if where you live is twinned with places overseas – you might be surprised what you find!

Directions

Retrace your steps through Gorsedd Gardens. Between the City Hall and National Museum is Museum Avenue. Go along Museum Avenue and then turn left round the back of the City Hall. Turn right into the public gardens. Stop at the centre of the gardens at the circular memorial with a ring of columns.

06 Welsh National War Memorial, Alexandra Gardens

The civic quarter is not all about impressive buildings. This public garden is not just a place for office workers to come to eat their lunch; this is a place of remembrance to the people of Cardiff and Wales

who died in conflicts. It is called Alexandra Gardens after Alexandra of Denmark, the wife of King Edward VII – the king who granted Cardiff city status.

At the centre is the Welsh National War Memorial, which records Welsh servicemen who died in both world wars. At the base three figures - a soldier, a sailor and an airman - represent the Army, Navy and Air Force. The memorial was designed by Sir Ninian Comper and was inspired by his two visits to North Africa, particularly Tunisia, where he saw memorials created by the Roman emperor Hadrian.

Take time to explore the gardens and the other memorials. One is dedicated to the men from the International Brigades who fought in the Spanish Civil War (1936 to 1939). The International Brigades were made up of volunteers from different countries, including Wales, who travelled to Spain to fight for the Republicans.

Another memorial commemorates the servicemen of Cardiff who fought against Argentina in the Falklands War in 1982. Nearby – between the Law Courts and City Hall – is a South Africa memorial dedicated to Welshmen who died during the Boer War.

Also see if you can find the memorial tree dedicated to Raoul Wallenberg. He was Sweden's special envoy in Budapest in Hungary during the Second World War. Hungary was occupied by Nazi Germany but Sweden was a neutral territory. In 1944 Wallenberg saved the lives of tens of thousands of Hungarian Jews by sheltering them in Swedish territory buildings and issuing them protective passports.

Directions

Leave Alexandra Gardens by the side gate back onto Museum Avenue. On the opposite side of the road is a large building with a semi-circular driveway. Stop on the pavement outside.

07 Cardiff University Main Building

As part of Cardiff's civic quarter a new university was established here. Until the 1880s there was only one university in Wales, at Aberystwyth in the centre of the country. South Wales was an ideal place for a new seat of learning and in 1883 the University College of South Wales and Monmouthshire was formed here in Cardiff.

From the outset Cardiff was one of the first British universities open to female students. Cardiff also employed the first female professor in Britain. Millicent Mackenzie was appointed Associate Professor in 1904 and Professor of Education (Women) in 1910. Eight years later, she campaigned for office in the General Election. She was the only female candidate in the whole of Wales.

Today Cardiff University has about 28,000 students. This is the Main Building which opened in 1909. It was designed by William Douglas Caroe and is now Grade II listed. Inside is a grand staircase lined with local Penarth alabaster. By the Science Library is an ancient Greek inscription - 'Phrontidos telesphoron selas' or 'The flame of thought which brings fulfilment'.

Directions

Continue along Museum Avenue. Turn left at the next junction onto College Road. Continue past the front of the National Assembly Building and at the next junction, cross over and stop outside the imposing building on the right.

08 Welsh National Temple of Peace

The Welsh National Temple of Peace and Health, commonly known as the Temple of Peace, opened in 1938.

Despite its name it is a non-religious civic building and was a gift to the Welsh people from the politician and statesman Lord David Davies.

Lord Davies was a campaigner for international relations who had fought in the trenches during the First World War. Afterwards he was actively involved in the search for international stability, through the League of Nations and the League of Nations Union.

Davies wanted the building to be a memorial to all soldiers killed in the First World War. In the crypt is a Book of Remembrance with the names of 35,000 Welsh men and women who lost their lives. As most died on Belgian or French soil, the bronze used on the glass casing is French and the marble pedestal it rests on is from Belgium.

The building is now the home of the Welsh Centre for International Affairs and is used as a meeting place by other cultural and social organisations. Lectures and conferences on international issues are held here featuring speakers from all over the world. The building's design includes materials from various countries to emphasise the international nature of the work carried on inside.

Behind the building is a small garden with several memorials and plaques dedicated to the international peace movement. The centrepiece is a flagpole built on a mosaic of the United Nations flag.

Directions

Go round to the car park at the rear of the building and you will find the garden. Take time to look the memorials and plaques. When you are ready, go back to College Road. Continue ahead a short distance to the main road, North Road. Use the pedestrian crossing opposite the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama and turn right past the College's main entrance. At the end of the building is a gateway into the park on the left hand side. Stop by the information board.

09 North Road

We have already seen many of the civic institutions at the heart of Cardiff and Wales. For the second half of the walk we will look at sites that are important to the city and country in a different way. This busy road is the dividing line between Cardiff's civic quarter and Bute Park. It is also where our walk crosses from civic to sporting pride.

Though built to carry traffic, on one day every year tens of thousands of people make their way along North Road. We are now on part of the route of the Cardiff Half Marathon. The thirteen-mile course takes in the scenery of Bute Park, Cardiff Castle and the regenerated Cardiff Bay.

Most of Cardiff is flat which makes it perfect for runners of all abilities. When the event was first held in 2003, there were fewer than 1,500 runners but now there are over 22,000. The number of runners makes the event the largest road race in Wales and the second-busiest half marathon in Britain.

Many competitors run for charity (the race is Wales' largest multiple charity fundraising event) but others are professional athletes. Famous figures who have taken part include Team GB Olympic athletes Mo Farah and Dame Tanni Grey-Thompson, and explorer Sir Ranulph Fiennes.

The fastest times for completing the race were set in 2017 by two Kenyan runners. The Men's winner was John Lotiang, who completed the course in 1 hour and 42 seconds. The Women's winner was Edith Chelimo who finished in 1 hour 5 minutes and 52 seconds.

Directions

Enter Bute Park through the gate by the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama. Follow the path down into the park and over the bridge. At the first junction, turn right along a wide tarmac path. At the next crossroads of paths, turn left, signposted for a cafe and toilets. Follow this path with a wall on your right hand side. When you reach the river, stop by the picnic benches.

10 View of SSE SWALEC Stadium, Bute Park

Bute Park is the green heart of Cardiff city centre. Between 1873 and 1903 this was a private pleasure garden for the Bute family. Then in 1949 the Fifth Marquess of Bute presented the land to the people of Cardiff. It is now a public park that everyone can enjoy.

As we continue through Bute Park, watch for sports people using this space for training or making their way to an event. The park is surrounded by several sports centres and venues. We will explore some as we go.

Directly across the river the SSE SWALEC cricket stadium. It opened in 1967 and was originally known as Sophia Gardens, after Lady Sophia the wife of the Second Marquess of Bute. It is now known as the SSE SWALEC Stadium after its sponsor SWALEC, the South Wales Electricity Company.

The stadium is home to Glamorgan County Cricket Club. Currently there is no official Welsh national cricket team – Welsh players play internationally with England – but the headquarters of Cricket Wales, the governing body for recreational cricket, is here at the stadium.

In 2008 the stadium was redeveloped and its capacity was increased to 16,000. This made it suitable for international matches. The first was a one-day international between England and South Africa. When the SWALEC hosted the first match of the 2009 Ashes series between England and Australia, the stadium achieved two landmarks. It became the first Ashes venue in Wales and the 100th venue worldwide to host an international Test match.

Directions

Remain in the same place for Stop 11.

11 Sport Wales National Centre

To the left of the SWALEC Stadium we should make out a large building behind the trees. Opened in 1971 as the National Sports Centre for Wales it is now called the Sport Wales National Centre.

The Centre administrates Welsh sport and houses eleven sports governing bodies, including Welsh Basketball and the Welsh Judo Association. Other organisations based at the centre include Federation of Disability Sport Wales as well as a sports science team who work alongside Wales' aspiring athletes.

The Centre also provides training and competition facilities for the national badminton, netball and gymnastics teams. Various international sports tournaments have taken place here, including the annual International Badminton Welsh Open. Held in Wales since 1928, it is one of the oldest badminton tournaments in the world.

Badminton originated in India when British Army officers revived an ancient game called battledore that used bats and shuttlecocks. It arrived in Britain when the officers returned. In 1873 some of them played a match at the Duke of Beaufort's home in Gloucestershire. The building was called Badminton House, hence the sport's name today.

Directions

Follow the footpath through the park with the river on your right hand side. Stop by the footbridge. Feel free to go onto the bridge for a better view of the river.

12 River Taff

Almost every town and city on Earth developed beside a river. Water is essential for drinking, cooking, washing, and many types of work. We have now arrived at the River Taff, the river that Cardiff developed around and gave the eventual city its name.

Cardiff's name in Welsh is 'Caerdydd', which evolved from an earlier form 'Caerdyf'. Caerdyf originated from the post-Roman words 'caer' which means 'fort' and 'dyf' - a form of 'Taff'. So Cardiff is in effect "the fort of the Taff".

Today the people of Cardiff still use the Taff in many ways, including the sports of rowing and fishing. Every March the river is used for the Head of the Taff rowing race. The event is organised by Welsh Rowing, the governing body for the sport in Wales.

Welsh Rowing promotes the sport and organises other national events, such as the Welsh Open Rowing Championships. Formerly known as the Welsh Amateur Rowing Association, the organisation is based in Cardiff and helps Welsh rowers progress into national and international squads.

Another sport the River Taff is used for is angling. Many types of fish can be found in the river including chub, barbel and eels. The Taff has also become known for trout in recent years and its cleaner waters have attracted a few migratory species such as Atlantic salmon.

As we continue, watch for rowing boats and anglers enjoying the water.

Directions

Continue on the main path through the park with the river on your right hand side. At the next junction of paths is a large stone on the left hand side. Stop by the stone.

13 Bute Park arboretum

We've already explored quite a few international sport events in Cardiff. But here we have a different example of Cardiff's connections to the wider world. This stone records the official unveiling of Bute Park's arboretum.

An arboretum is a botanic garden where trees are collected and grown for scientific study. As a result many of the trees in Bute Park have links with countries overseas. Throughout the park, you will probably have seen trees and plants in a great variety of colours and shapes.

Examples to find here include the Manchurian cherry tree. These trees are native to Korea and northern China. Their botanical name is *Prunus maackii* after the naturalist Richard Maack who discovered them.

Another tree in Bute Park native to China is the Foxglove. In China and Japan the wood of these trees is used to make carved sculptures and musical instruments.

Despite their name, Indian Bean Trees originate from the southern United States. In late summer they are recognisable for their long hanging bean pods.

Maple trees meanwhile originate in Asia and have pointed leaves that are brightly coloured in autumn. Maples are the national plant of Canada and appear on the Canadian flag.

Lime trees are widespread throughout Europe and Asia but have a special place in Polish, Czech, Slovakian and Slovenian mythology where they are considered sacred.

Why not see how many trees you can identify in the park?

Directions

Follow the main path a short distance further to the West Lodge Gate. Leave the park and turn left along the pavement. After about 20 metres (just before the traffic lights), look up on the wall for a stone sculpture of a pelican. Stop here.

14 Animal Wall, Cardiff Castle

At the beginning of this walk we heard about Cardiff Castle's restoration in the Victorian era. During the process this unusual wall was built in 1890. It originally stood directly in front of the Castle and featured nine animal sculptures – a hyena, a wolf, a pair of apes, a seal, a bear, a lynx, a lioness, and two different lions.

Due to road widening, the wall was moved here in 1922 and six more sculptures were added – this pelican, a racoon, a leopard, a beaver, a vulture and a giant anteater. Sadly the Animal Wall fell into disrepair over time. More than once the anteater lost its nose! In 2010, however, the Wall was cleaned and restored, allowing visitors to enjoy the menagerie once more.

None of the fifteen animals depicted are native to Britain - but continuing the theme of this walk, can you think of sports teams which use these animals in their name, nickname or emblem?

An obvious example is the football team Wolverhampton Wanderers, nicknamed Wolves. Clubs with lions on their badges meanwhile include Chelsea, Aston Villa, Middlesbrough, Sunderland and Glasgow Rangers. More examples can be found worldwide.

Other lions include the Chandigarh Lions cricket team in India and the Ponce Lions basketball team in Puerto Rico. South Africa's Schotsche Kloof Hyenas play rugby, as do the Vauxhall Vultures from Jamaica. Hockey fans in Iceland may be familiar with the Lahti Pelicans, while the Bennigsen Beavers play baseball and softball in Germany.

What other teams can you think of?

Directions

When you have finished looking at the Animal Wall, use the pedestrian crossing by the beaver sculpture. Stop outside the gates into Cardiff Arms Park.

15 Cardiff Arms Park

We have seen a number of new sports venues in Cardiff but here is one of the older ones. Cardiff Arms Park has hosted sports events since the 1840s. Today its best known as a rugby union ground but all kinds of sports have been played here including cricket, football, tennis, bowling, baseball, boxing and greyhound racing.

Cardiff Arms Park was home to the Cardiff Blues professional rugby team until 2009 and is still the home of the semi-professional Cardiff RFC team. Until 1969 both rugby union and cricket were played here. Then the cricket ground was demolished to make way for the rugby ground that we see today and a stadium next to it called the National Stadium.

The ground has also been used for music concerts, plus the opening ceremony and athletics events of the Commonwealth Games. In 1958 Cardiff was the British Empire and Commonwealth Games host city. Some 35 nations took part, many for the first time - including Brunei, the Dominican Republic and Malta.

Directions

With your back to the entrance of Cardiff Arms Park, turn left along the pavement. Immediately before the river bridge, turn left onto the riverside walk. Along the side of the stadium are a row of flags. Beside each country flag is a matching mosaic in the floor. Stop by these mosaics. (Note: the riverside walk is closed on match days and at night).

16 Principality Stadium

We are now by the side of Cardiff's biggest sporting venue – the 74,500-seater Principality Stadium. Opened as the Millennium Stadium, it was completed in time for Wales to host the 1999 Rugby World Cup. In the ground here we can see mosaics celebrating the countries that took part. The stadium was used for all Wales' matches, plus the final between Australia and France.

Besides the Wales rugby team, the Wales football team plays here. The stadium hosted eleven football matches during the 2012 Olympics and before then it was used for English Football Association competitions, including the FA Cup Finals from 2001 and 2006, while Wembley Stadium was being rebuilt. The Principality Stadium has also been used for concerts, boxing matches and even car racing.

This impressive site, in the centre of the city and beside the River Taff is a fitting place to end our exploration of Cardiff. On our journey through the Welsh capital, we heard how the city was created by the Bute family and Royal charter. We saw impressive public buildings created from the wealth of coal and historic venues, from the River Taff and Castle grounds.

Along the way we have looked at two adjacent but contrasting themes – Cardiff's civic status and sports prowess. The impressive Principality Stadium is not only a world-famous sports venue but a source of civic pride. This modern landmark therefore captures both stories of our walk and unites two of the threads that run through this proud capital city.

Directions

To return to central Cardiff continue along the riverside pathway. Turn left at the end of the stadium onto Wood Street. Cardiff Central station is on the right hand side and the shopping area is straight ahead.

 **Walk complete – we hope you have enjoyed it!**