

Capital city itinerary: what made Cardiff?

There are many must-see historic sites in and around Wales's capital, which bring to life the country's magnificent history. Located in the heart of the capital is National Museum Cardiff, which has an outstanding collection of art and natural science displays. Just 15 minutes drive from the centre is St Fagans National History Museum, one of Europe's leading open-air museums, telling the story of the people of Wales. Also within a 20 minutes drive from the centre lies Caerphilly Castle, which has a tower that leans more than Pisa's, and was restored by the marquess of Bute in the 19th century. Nearby Castell Coch, the fairytale castle with its dazzling ceilings and furnishings, which was a rural retreat of the marquess of Bute, is also well worth a visit, located within a 15 minutes drive from the city centre!

Pierre-Auguste Renoir, La Parisienne, 1874



1 National Museum Cardiff

Visitors to **National Museum Cardiff**, which is situated in the heart of Cardiff's elegant civic centre, can discover art, natural history and the geological evolution of Wales. Visitors can take in the spectacular art and natural sciences collections from Wales and across the world, including dinosaurs

and woolly mammoths. The art collections include the world-renowned Impressionist collection of works by Monet, Cézanne, Manet, Renoir, Van Gogh and Rodin, as well as the largest space in Wales dedicated to the display of modern and contemporary art. With a busy programme of major touring and temporary exhibitions and events, there is something to amaze everyone, whatever their interest. Admission is free.



2 St Fagans National History Museum

St Fagans National History Museum stands in the grounds of the magnificent St Fagans Castle and gardens, a late 16th-century manor house donated to the people of Wales by the Earl of Plymouth. Well loved by the people of Wales and tourists from all over the world, visitors can explore and enjoy over 2,000 years of Welsh history in over forty original historic buildings that have been collected from all over Wales. The buildings show how the people of Wales have lived, worked, played and spent their leisure time through the ages. St Fagans has just embarked on a major re-development programme to transform it into a flagship National History Museum for Wales, but will remain open to visitors throughout the project. In 2012, it was voted Britain's 'most-loved museum' by readers of the popular consumer magazine Which? Admission is free.



3 Caerphilly Castle

Caerphilly Castle is the biggest castle in Wales. The iconic fortress is mighty impressive, surrounded by a series of moats and watery islands. The castle is the brainchild of Gilbert 'the Red' de Clare, a redheaded nobleman of Norman descent, who's early attempts at building the castle were thwarted by Llywelyn ap Gruffydd. Gilbert eventually succeeded to build a mammoth stronghold using the concentric 'walls within walls' system of defence. Visitors can climb to the rooftop of the massive east gatehouse, and from here the rings of stone and water defences that made Caerphilly such a stronghold can be seen. Dark passages known as the Braose Gallery can be explored, and the south-east tower — which out leans Pisa's famous tower is hard to miss, and the mighty siege engines and special firing events are worth seeing. The castle is a favourite backdrop for TV and films including Dr Who.

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On the other side of Caerphilly mountain, less than 15 minutes away, stands **Castell Coch** hidden in the trees. Castell Coch, a Welsh name meaning 'Red Castle' rests on the medieval foundations of an earlier castle built by de Clare. However the current structure is relatively modern, and is the by-product of a vivid Victorian imagination. William Burges was given free rein by the third marquis of Bute to create a rural retreat to complement the opulence of his main residence, Cardiff Castle. Multi-sensory resources allow easy exploration of this Victorian Gothic-style castle, which was a romantic vision of the Middle Ages, using touch-screen technology.

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The journey time from Cardiff to St Fagans and Castell Coch is approx. 15 minutes and 20 minutes to Caerphilly.