

A Year in Wales



Celebrated dates in the Welsh calendar

There's a lot going on in Wales, no matter the time of year. We like nothing more than a gathering and an excuse to celebrate. Whether you're visiting or you've recently settled here you'll find it easy to join in, meet new people and have fun. Here are just a few dates that tend to feature on the nation's calendars.

A St Dwynwen's Day

January

Maybe it's the views of soaring mountains that do it, but we're a romantic bunch here! We even have our own patron saint of lovers. Forget Valentine's Day, 25 January is the most romantic day of the year in Wales. We give romantic gifts to loved ones to remember St Dwynwen a lovestruck lass who became a nun after being forbidden by her father from marrying the man she loved. Ahh.



Illustration of St Dwynwen and mountains

Ⓑ Six Nations Rugby

February/March

We're just a bit obsessed with rugby in Wales. The annual Six Nations tournament clash between Wales and England at Cardiff's Principality Stadium, the home of Welsh rugby, is the high point of the rugby calendar. With over 70,000 people cheering on the national team.





Six Nations rugby at the Principality Stadium, Cardiff

© St David's Day

March

Our national day on 1 March is a huge celebration of our patron saint, St David.

Saint David (Welsh: Dewi Sant; c. 500 – c. 589) was a Welsh bishop of Mynyw (now St Davids) during the 6th century.

Across the country there are street parades that are great fun for everyone with lots of Welsh flags flying. Many people pin a daffodil or leek - Wales' national emblems - to their clothes and some, especially children, wear Welsh national costume, national team rugby shirts, or dress up as leeks, daffodils or even dragons.



St David's Parade, St David's

D International Dylan Thomas Day

May

If there's one writer people associate with Wales more than anyone it's the lyrical, romantic, hellraiser poet and raconteur Dylan Thomas. Dylan was born in Swansea and wrote most of his famous works here in Wales. Dylan Day is celebrated on 14 May - both in Wales and many other places. It's the date his most famous work Under Milk Wood was first read on stage in New York in 1953. Bet you didn't know children's author Roald Dahl was also a Welshman?



Dylan Thomas' writing shed, Laugharne, Carmarthenshire

E Royal Welsh Show

July

This isn't just Wales' biggest agricultural show, it's Great Britain's. Along with showcasing the very best in Welsh livestock and agriculture there are all kinds of other activities like motocross displays, vintage aircraft flypasts and performances by the Regimental Band of the Royal Welsh. Builth Wells in mid-Wales is where it happens and it runs for four whole days.



The Royal Welsh Show, Llanellwedd, near Builth Wells, in Powys

F Green Man Festival

August

Wales is home to a dazzling array of unusual music festivals, many attracting loyal followings with fans coming back year after year. Green Man festival is a great example. Since it began in 2003, Green Man has grown into a four-day event with 20,000 revellers enjoying folk-focused live music along with alternative film, comedy, theatre and poetry.



Green Man festival

G National Eisteddfod

August

An eisteddfod is a festival celebrating Welsh literature, music and performance. They've been happening all over Wales since the 12th century. The biggest is our annual National

Eisteddfod which takes place in a different part of the country each year. It's all about celebrating and promoting our unique language and culture. Lasting a week, it attracts around 150,000 visitors with an eclectic mix of music, dance, drama and workshops with events for all the family.



National Eisteddfod 2018, Cardiff Bay

(H) World Alternative Games

August

The town of Llanwrtyd Wells in mid-Wales has a big reputation for madcap sporting events. Competitions like Man v. Horse and the Real Ale Wobble take place at various times during the year, but the big one is the World Alternative Games in late August. It features wife carrying, gravy wrestling, backward running and worm charming. But the most famous event is bog snorkelling. No idea what it is? Only one way to find out...



Bogsnorkelling championships in Llanwrtyd Wells, Mid Wales

(I) Welsh Rarebit Day

September

Just don't call it cheese on toast, OK? Welsh rarebit is a far more refined mouthful: lashings of melted cheese mixed with mustard and ale and poured over toasted bread. No one knows its origins, but it's thought rarebit is a corruption of the word rabbit (if that

helps?). It's a staple on menus across the land, but we love it so much we have an annual Rarebit Day on 3 September.



Welsh Rarebit

ⓐ Calan Gaeaf

October

Others celebrate Halloween on 31 October, but in Wales it's Calan Gaeaf, the first day of winter. Our Celtic ancestors believed that on this day, the door between their world and the next was open. So they paid tribute to the dead, with dancing around the village fire. It was a sombre occasion and people wore masks to ward off evil spirits. Don't worry these days it's more light hearted! Just as elsewhere, people dress as spooky creatures and kids go trick-or-treating.

ⓑ Mari Lwyd

December/January

Mari Lwyd means Grey Mare and it's an ancient pagan tradition that's still going strong in parts of South Wales. A horse's skull on a pole is decorated with bells and colourful ribbons and carried through the streets. At each house the Mari and her followers chant rhymes at the door. The homeowners chant back. Eventually the Mari is allowed inside as it brings good luck for the coming year. Mari Lwyd is usually seen in December but can be in January too, including in Chepstow.

L Festive Season Swims

December

With over 800 miles of pristine coastline we're pretty partial to the sea at all times of year. You'll even find hundreds of us jumping during the Christmas break, from Boxing Day to New Year's Day. What better way to shrug of the calorie-laden lethargy of the festive season than a swim in the bracing waves? In fancy dress, obviously. Tenby is one of the oldest, but there are swims at Abersoch, Porthcawl Llandudno, Barry Island, Newport, Saundersfoot and many more.



Choose the correct option

1) There are other activities apart from showcasing Welsh livestock and agriculture.

C ☐ E ☐ G ☐

2) Toasted bread is topped with melted cheese mixed with mustard and ale.

H ☐ B ☐ I ☐

3) The Welsh pay tribute to a lady who wasn't allowed to marry the man she loved.

A ☐ K ☐ D ☐

4) There is chanting and expectations of good luck for the coming year.

D ☐ L ☐ K ☐

5) Many people wear traditional costumes.

C ☐ E ☐ G ☐

6) It is held in late August and features unusual competitions.

I L H

7) It honours his most famous work, first read on stage in New York in 1953.

D B G

8) It lasts for a week and changes venue every year.

A G F

9) People swim in fancy dress.

L B J

10) In its origins, Celts paid tribute to the dead and wore masks to keep evil spirits away.

F J I

11) Over 70,000 fans attend this tournament.

B F H

12) It began in 2003 and has grown into a four-day event.

A J F