

# Bring me Sunshine...

**Darren Calpin** discovers Cardiff lives up to the mantra ‘Daw pethau da mewn pecynnau bach’ or ‘Good things come in small packages’

Caerphilly Castle is just a 20-minute hop from the centre of Cardiff

Plan your trip the region at [visitsouthernwales.org](http://visitsouthernwales.org)

**W**ALES' COMPACT CAPITAL is cool and attractive and powered entirely by male voice choirs. Okay, that may not be entirely true but one thing which is gospel is that, for such a relatively small city, Cardiff packs one hell of a punch. Indeed, it's hard to think of any other city in Europe that's managed to squeeze so many fine museums, historic landmarks, friendly boozers, iconic sporting stadia, excellent shopping venues and top-notch entertainment options into just 30 square miles. As they say in this part of the world: 'Daw pethau da mewn pecynnau bach' – 'Good things come in small packages'.

## SEE THE SIGHTS

### BUTE PARK

Extending from the castle grounds and running right by the River Taff, this large and leafy park is often described as the lungs of the city. With its vibrant (and very well-tended) flower beds, plethora of tree species and cameo appearances from local wildlife, it's an eminently agreeable place to kick back and enjoy a change of pace. Visit in Autumn to take in the spectacular kaleidoscopic show of leaf colours. Two quaint cafes, the Pettigrew Tea Rooms and The Secret Garden both do a very nice line in nibbles and drinks.

### NATIONAL MUSEUM CARDIFF

Set within the ornate neo-classical Civic Centre (a collection of grand municipal buildings including City Hall and the Crown Court), the National Museum Cardiff is home to Wales' finest national art, geology and natural history collections.

World class by any standard, the museum boasts one of the finest collections of Impressionist paintings in Europe with Monet, Renoir, Rodin, Cézanne, Turner, Degas and Magritte all on the roster. Elsewhere you'll find meteorites and a piece of moon rock as well as fossils, dinosaur skeletons and

woolly mammoths. Entry is free.

### CARDIFF CASTLE

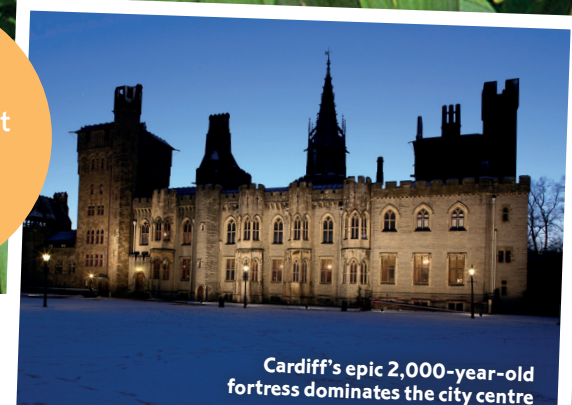
Dominating the city centre, Cardiff's epic 2,000-year-old fortress is – in the very best way – unavoidable. Don't let the souvenir postcards trick you into thinking the fairy tale-style exteriors, photogenic Animal Wall and stunning views from the top of the keep are all there is to see here. The interiors were given a lavish makeover in the 19th-century by William Burges, a visionary architect who was given license by the supremely ambitious (and vastly wealthy) 3rd Marquess of Bute to create

designs "the most magnificent that the gothic revival ever achieved". Expect to be bowled over again and again by the resulting ornateness, richness and ambition during your hour-long tour. The Arab Room – a veritable fantasy of decadent design – will leave you open-mouthed.

### CARDIFF BAY

Once known as Tiger Bay, this former gritty port area is now a gleaming commercial area of restaurants, bars, leisure venues and cultural attractions. It's a handsome setting alright and, with such lovely views over the water,

it's a fine place to eat, drink and play when the weather's playing ball. Standout sights include the Wetlands Reserve area of natural beauty, and the modest Norwegian Church, a Scandinavian place of worship where revered children's author Roald Dahl (born in Cardiff) was baptised. Two of Cardiff's most visually arresting buildings: the Wales Millennium Centre (a large arts centre) and the Senedd (HQ of the Welsh National Assembly) are also nearby. »







Bute Park is home to the Gorsedd Stones – groups of standing stones constructed for the National Eisteddfod of Wales that can be found as commemorative structures throughout Wales

## EAT, DRINK & BE MERRY

### FOODIES REJOICE

With no fewer than 16 restaurants mentioned in the prestigious 2019 Michelin Guide, the capital's culinary scene is anything but provincial. While you'll find no shortage of laverbread, bara brith and Welsh rarebit doing the rounds, you'll be battered by the variety, imagination and (re)invention on show.

While Cardiff Bay's impressive array of restaurants, cafes, and pop-up eateries does a consistently good job of enticing diners in from far and wide, it is Caroline Street – known locally as 'Chippy Lane' – which holds the honour of being the capital's #1 food destination. Wedged between the nightlife hotspots of Mill Lane and St Mary's Street, this landmark thoroughfare of fish & chip shops, kebab houses, pizza outlets and burger joints is a Cardiff institution. It's an easy place to find: just follow the students in the week and listen out for the sports fans at the weekend!

### TIME FOR A PINT

Suffice to say, finding a decent place to enjoy a pint in Cardiff is a bit like looking for a waiter to be rude to you in Paris. Thankfully, drinking is a genuinely convivial pastime here and as such

## Go explore...

- ▀ Cardiff's compact size and pedestrianised centre makes it an easy and very enjoyable city to explore on foot. In fact, you'll be quite unlikely to spend more than 15-20 minutes pounding the pavement at any one time, even when heading across town and/or to Cardiff Bay. G
- ▀ Get clued up on some of the handy local short-cuts, such as going from Canton and Pontcanna through to Cathays and Roath via Bute Park and you'll shave even more time off your strolling.
- ▀ Flat as a pancake, Cardiff is just as easy to cycle around as it is to walk. Clearly, this is something encouraged locally as there are loads of bike racks dotted around the city

centre, as well as raft of cycle paths and traffic-free routes. The Taff Trail, a stunningly scenic route running some 55 miles from Cardiff Bay to Brecon, is an absolute belter!

▀ If perpetual walking or cycling isn't an option then try City Centre Mobility Assistance, a smart electric vehicle service that can transport up to three passengers at a time around the city centre on a flexible route. Wave your arm when you see one to grab a lift or, if you're well organised, book ahead by calling 029 2087 3888.

▀ It's worth noting too that there's a regular bendy bus service running between the city centre and Cardiff Bay.

you're likely to find an agreeable watering hole within five minutes of deciding your whistle needs wetting. The City Arms, one of Cardiff's oldest city centre pubs, is well worth a visit, especially when there's an international rugby match on as its setting opposite the Millennium Stadium makes it Ground Zero for the day's festivities.

If you're a footy fan then pop your head around the door at Elevens, local lad-turned-Real Madrid megastar Gareth Bale's very own sports bar and restaurant. It's right opposite the castle.

### THEATRE SCENE

Entertainment is another area where Cardiff punches well above its weight, with top-class theatre and live music venues waiting to welcome you most nights of the week. Highlights abound but it would be a shame not to check out one of the city's superb music and arts venues, such as the Tramshed in Riverside or the Chapter Arts Centre in Canton while you're in town. Get yourself down to one of Cardiff Castle's legendary evening banquets if mead drinking, merry-making and riotous singing are your thing. [CTW](#)