

**Destination UK: Wales****Student A: Wales**

Wales is a land of rugby, singing and beautiful scenery situated on the western side of the UK. Its population is just over three million which is about 5% of the total UK population. The main cities are Cardiff, the capital city, Swansea and Newport.

Wales was ruled directly from London until 1999 when the first elections to the Welsh National Assembly were held. The Assembly has some powers specific to people in Wales and can make decisions on areas such as education and health. Wales remains part of the UK and Members of Parliament (MPs) from Welsh constituencies continue to have seats in the UK Parliament at Westminster. Laws passed by Parliament in Westminster still apply to Wales.

**Student B: Language**

The Welsh language is probably the most important thing that distinguishes Wales from the rest of the UK. Welsh (or Cymraeg) is one of Europe's oldest languages and is spoken by approximately 30% of the population. The language is very much alive among young people.

Road signs and other signs are in both English and Welsh. The language is at its strongest along the Llyn Peninsula in North-West Wales, where 75 per cent of the population speak Welsh.

Towns, villages and cities in Wales often have both a Welsh and an English name and Wales is home to one of the longest place names in the world -

Llanfairpwllgwyngyllgogerychwyrndrobwlllantysiliogogoch which means St Mary's (Church) by the white aspen over the whirlpool, and St Tysilio's (Church) by the red cave!

**Student C: Sport and culture**

Wales is also known for its 'Eisteddfodau' which are festivals celebrating Welsh language, art, culture and heritage and which include an eclectic mix of music, dance, drama, debate and cultural competitions. Most people know of the annual National Eisteddfod which is held alternately in North and South Wales and the International Eisteddfod which is held in Llangollen, but there are Eisteddfodau of varying sizes held in towns and villages throughout the land.

The national sport is very much rugby union and the national team are sometimes known as the Dragons as a red dragon appears on the national flag of Wales. Their home ground is the Principality Stadium at Cardiff Arms Park in Cardiff.