

A guide for your business.

#FindYourEpic

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# 2020: Wales' Year of Outdoors.



2020 is our invitation to visitors and Wales' residents to celebrate the greatest outdoors. We're asking people to check in to our hotels; our campsites and our cottages. Then to open their door and discover attractions, activities, landscapes and coastlines they haven't yet experienced. We're encouraging visits to different corners of the country throughout the year, as feeling good has no season.

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2020's Year of Outdoors will reinforce and run on naturally from our four themes to date (Adventure, Legends, Sea, Discovery) providing continuity for the industry, but enough change to inspire the market and media. We already have some competitive advantage as a great place for adventure, outdoor activity and scenery — and have the potential to stand out further: considering the improving quality of our environment; our ethos of sustainable living; and the creative but careful use we make of our natural environment.

Outdoor experiences have always been at the heart of global travel. Today, more than ever, we're developing an awareness of the connections between our experience of travel, the landscape and our sense of place. Whether we're thinking about interior design, health and wellness or food, we're 'letting the outdoors in'. In doing so, we're gaining a better understanding of our mental and physical wellbeing, and of the benefits of a strong connection to nature and the outdoors.

In Wales, there has always been an inherent relationship between people and the outdoors. It's not just that our landscapes are awe-inspiring; they are steeped in the living history of an ancient language and culture. The stirring emotions evoked by the Welsh outdoors have inspired our poets, writers and artists for centuries. **In 2020, we will celebrate Wales — the greatest outdoors.**

 Welcome to the  
greatest outdoors.



The outdoors isn't just for the summer. Here are some ideas on how you can work with the outdoors, whatever the season. We've given some more specific examples in italics to help illustrate the ideas.



## Year round activity.

Because feeling good has no season.



### Activities and adventure.

Embrace what the seasons throw at you; just change your location or gear.

*A surf school offers season-specific wetsuits, advice on the best nearby spots to catch waves safely and a changing area that can be cooled with fans or warmed with heaters.*

*Golfers play come rain or shine and Wales has some of the best courses in the world, open all year round. Find out which golf clubs are in your area and introduce your business to them: be it a place to stay or something else for golfers to do while on their golf break.*

Foraging sustainably on walks throughout the year.

*A rambling group runs special sessions to educate participants on what plants are abundant and edible, so that they can forage sustainably on their future walks.*

Keep your itinerary flexible so you can react to the weather.

*A Swansea-based tour operator takes visitors on day trips to the Gower Peninsula or Afan Forest Park on sunny days and to Dan Yr Ogof Caves or Penderyn Brewery on rainy days.*

### Food and drink.

Use seasonal ingredients in menu staples for taste, cost and sustainability.

*A pub rotates the potatoes it uses in the Sunday roast, with minted Pembrokeshire new potatoes in the summer and roasted Rudolph potatoes in the winter.*

Run specials that reflect the seasons.

*An ice cream cafe creates a beach-inspired golden fudge and sea salt sundae for the summer and a toasted marshmallow ice cream sandwich for the autumn.*

Add hints of the outdoors into your eating spaces with changeable styling.

*A coffee shop puts a little vase of seasonal flowers or foliage on each table — think daffodils in March and holly sprigs in December.*



For more information on introducing quality seasonal food and local ingredients visit [gov.wales/foodanddrinkwales](http://gov.wales/foodanddrinkwales)

Year round activity — because feeling good has no season:

### Heritage and attractions.

Reinvent your offering by using your physical space differently each season.

*A steam train operator runs Christmas trains to Santa's workshop (a lodge with elves, mince pies and mulled wine) and Easter trains to the Bunny's house (the same lodge decorated differently, with an egg hunt for children).*

Tie history and the seasons together by considering what our ancestors did.

*A Roman museum uses its storytelling sessions to share seasonal comparisons between the ages, such as how soldiers 2,000 years ago celebrated Saturnalia instead of Christmas.*

Host tours that incorporate the outdoors.

*A castle with grounds gives sunset tours in March and torchlit tours in November.*

Use school holidays as a chance to experiment with seasonal events.

*An art gallery puts on creative craft sessions and children-friendly tours over half terms and the summer holidays, focusing on its pieces of art that link to the current season walking routes and places to visit each fortnight.*

Using Welsh with your visitors.

*Feature Welsh words for visitors to learn relevant to your business or season. Change them daily and get your staff to use them.*

### Accommodation.

Think about the temperatures of guests' rooms.

*A family hotel adds quick-cool fans and iced water to bedrooms during warm months and puts Welsh woollen blankets and hot water bottles on the beds in colder months.*

Match your breakfast to the season.

*A bed and breakfast serves yoghurt with summer fruits and granola in spring and summer then swaps it for cinnamon-spiced porridge with berries in autumn and winter.*

Pick up the seasons' colours in swappable style accessories.

*A boutique hotel dresses rooms with vases and ornaments in colours inspired by nature — pastel tones in spring, bold pops of brights in summer, reds in autumn and deep tones in winter.*

Make seasonal activity suggestions on a notice board.

*A Pembrokeshire holiday village uses an interchangeable display to recommend the best beaches, walking routes and places to visit each fortnight.*



For support on introducing Welsh in your business visit [businesswales.gov.wales/welsh-in-your-business](https://businesswales.gov.wales/welsh-in-your-business).

If you need help translating, then talk to Helo Blod who can provide up to 500 words of free Welsh translation (each month) for your business. [gov.wales/heloblod](https://gov.wales/heloblod)



Wales has many areas of truly dark skies. They are quite rare around the world due to light pollution, even more reason for us to treasure them. Our dark skies are a real asset. Here, we offer some information and advice on what they are and how you can make them part of your business.



## The outdoors at night.

### What is a 'dark sky'?

The concept of a 'dark sky' is very subjective. For instance, a person who lives in a city would find a night sky in a semi-rural location significantly darker than one in the city. However, the true definition of a dark sky is one that is free from any artificial light pollution.

### What dark sky areas do we have in Wales?

There are several protected areas in Wales. Snowdonia National Park and the Brecon Beacons National Park are Dark Sky Reserves, of which there are only 16 in the world, and Elan Valley is a recognised Dark Sky Park. There are also special areas recognised for darkness, such as the Dark Sky Discovery Sites located all across Wales, including in semi-rural areas.

### Why do dark skies matter to Wales?

The Milky Way is seldom seen by people living in urban and semi-rural locations, so protected dark sky areas offer them something different. They make it possible for the Milky Way, the Andromeda galaxy and countless other objects to be easily seen with a guide. There is a significant socioeconomic impact from dark skies, with astro-tourism growing considerably over the last few years as people seek experiences and opportunities to explore their place in the world.

Q&A:  
**Allan Trow**  
**Dark Sky Wales**

The founder of Dark Sky Wales tells us about the impact and value that dark skies have on his business and elsewhere in the tourism industry.



**When and why did you start Dark Sky Wales?**

In 2010, I worked as a lecturer in the University of Glamorgan (now University of South Wales). I received frequent requests to take people into the dark areas of Wales to show them the wonders of our universe. Since those early days of taking a handful of people into the wilds of Wales on weekends, I now have my own business where we spend the entire week delivering activities far and wide under the wonderful Welsh sky.

**How is business going for Dark Sky Wales?**

Business is going from strength to strength. There has been a considerable growth in interest over the last 5 years. On average, we've had a 35 per cent increase in turnover year on year with approximately 15,000 individuals participating in astronomy related activities. These have included stargazing in the normal sense through to astronomical talks and planetarium visits.

2020 will be another busy year. We have a full order book of guests to entertain and educate. We're also working in partnership with the Welsh Government and International Dark Sky Association to acquire the first Dark Sky Nation status for our country.

**Do you have any plans to expand on what you offer?**

Yes — they include plans to create a dedicated base or hub in Mid Wales. It would allow us to capitalise on the large interest in our business and provide additional employment opportunities. Stats show that we need a hub that allows us to provide accommodation. Around 75 per cent of direct sales from our website and 92 per cent of sales through our online experience retail partners are by visitors outside Wales, most requiring overnight stays.

**Why do you think people love stargazing?**

There are a million reasons why people enjoy the night sky. The loss of dark skies across the country hides the wonders of the universe, which makes people want to discover more. For this reason they visit us and the dark skies of Wales. People are more aware of the environment around them through TV programmes and the news, which in turn leads to a sense of wonder and inspires people to book educational experiences.

**What tips would you give to businesses wanting to include stargazing as part of their offering?**

Small things will help you be dark sky aware. Make sure that all external lighting is kept minimal. Ensure that guests know they can return at a late hour or after dark. Offer guests a hot drink to take with them. Have some simple and free astronomical literature around (there's plenty of material on the internet). If you do want to go a little further, purchase a simple pair of 10x50 binoculars, which would be easier to operate than a telescope.

**Where is your favourite spot in Wales to go stargazing?**

There are so many! Wales is blessed with wonderful skies, be it in the day or at night. I do have a soft spot for Mid Wales, though. It has so many easily accessible dark places there for you to stop in and look up.

The outdoors at night:

How your business can make the most of nights in Wales' outdoors.

**If you run accommodation in an area of low light pollution, an AONB or a Dark Sky Discovery Site, you have your own free theatrical show taking place in the sky above you most nights.** Make the most of this privilege by providing your customers with access to telescopes, star maps or information about what they might be able to see with the naked eye. You could have themed add-ons to your accommodation packages too, such as stargazing sessions with a local enthusiast or guided binocular or telescope observation classes.

**Run nighttime activity workshops to get people engaging with your business after normal opening hours.** For example, if you run a cafe, you could stay open late once a month through the colder seasons and hold evenings that consist of a guided wintery walk or a nocturnal nature ramble followed by warming food. It's a great way to engage with the local environment and community, plus it'll raise the profile of your establishment.

**Share the mystery and magic of the darker months.** If you run accommodation with grounds, you could provide visitors with torches or light the paths so they can explore the wonders of the outdoors after hours. When the temperature drops, you could have hand warmers, hats and hot water bottles on standby for guests to borrow. Or, if your building has an air of history or heritage, you could hold spooky story evenings, ghost walks or Halloween events.

## Interview: Elizabeth Daniel Brecon Beacons Holiday Cottages

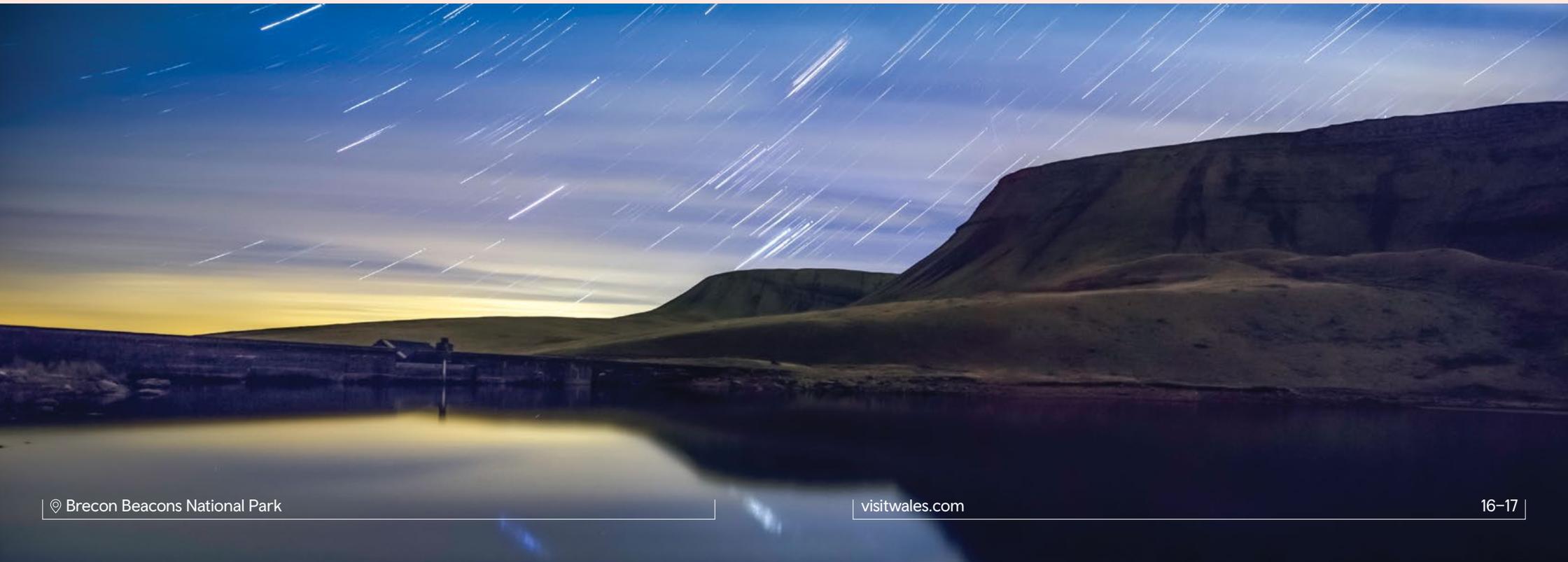
Blessed with a beautiful National Park and Dark Sky Reserve as their home turf, Brecon Beacons Holiday Cottages has incorporated the nighttime into its offering. Elizabeth Daniel, founder of the business, shares some examples of how they use the perks of the area to add value and encourage visitors to embrace the outdoors at night.

There's something about being beside water which makes you feel closer to nature. Buckland Mill is on the banks of one of the most picturesque stretches of the River Usk, close to Llangynidr, so guests enjoy fishing along the 200m of river bank. To keep them feeling close to nature in the evening, we've got a wood burning stove in the living room so they can toast their toes while watching the river from a comfy armchair.

Our farm-based locations are always popular with families as they allow kids to get closer to rural life. Rhianydds Barn and Stable is kitted out to keep things fun for grown-ups, too. The hot tub is a big draw after hours; people love feeling the warm water around them when the air is nippy.

Talybont on Usk is a hub for outdoor enthusiasts, with Beacons trails, a reservoir, waterfalls, a canal and plenty of pubs. The Gilestone Glamping lodges we have there were recently awarded the GOLD Star Glamping Award from Visit Wales. They are beautifully decorated and well equipped; each has a private hot tub, wood burning stove and fire pit to turn up the heat and encourage relaxation time outdoors.

At Pond Cottage, close to Hay on Wye, we have a private observatory for optimum stargazing. It also has a little Shepherd's Hut with a wood burning stove, ideal for all-season picnics overlooking a meadow with chickens and alpacas.





# Let the outdoors in.

Using the outdoors to create a sense of place.

The components of a sense of place can be a thousand and one things. It's the sensation you get when visiting somewhere for the first time — the first impression, the look, the feel, the atmosphere, the people. Sense of place embraces the distinctive sights, sounds and experiences that are rooted in a country, those unique and memorable qualities that resonate with local people and visitors alike.

Visitors to Wales love to discover what it is to be Welsh and what makes Wales distinctive and special. In other words, they are hungry to experience its sense of place. You can improve your business' sense of place by embracing Welshness and the Welsh language, developing your knowledge of your area and promoting it effectively to your visitors.



*For more information on introducing a sense of place into your business: [businesswales.gov.wales/tourism/other-useful-links](https://businesswales.gov.wales/tourism/other-useful-links)*

Interview:  
**Nancy Durham**  
**FARMERS' Welsh Lavender Ltd**

Sense of place is really important to FARMERS' Welsh Lavender Ltd, a company that grows lavender and produces body care products in Builth Wells.



Wales wasn't known for its lavender until this farm began in 2003; owners Bill Newton-Smith and Nancy Durham had just acquired six acres of land around their farm house and wondered what else might thrive on the ground besides sheep. The company now produces lavender products for all around the world and has many hundreds of visitors each year who want to capture a piece of the Welsh landscape.

Our lavender farm has a real sense of place. We are situated at 1,100ft, surrounded by beautiful scenery. When visitors see the farm and its views, their jaws drop. It's a terrific backdrop, with our hillside of lavender rolling out across the former sheep farm. July and August are particularly stunning as the lavender is at its richest blue colour, but we are open and producing things all year round. Our hilltop farm buildings are used for special events and seasonal markets, too; people can't resist the location.

Before us, lavender wasn't recognised by the government as an agricultural crop in Wales. We planted our first lavender crop in 2003 using a grant from the EU and Welsh Government that supported farmers wanting to diversify. We are always trying to work with the environment here. For instance, when we plant new lavenders we add grit and sand to improve drainage because our heavy soil is too rich for lavender.

We run pre-booked group visits for a minimum of ten people. Tours last about 90 minutes. We lead people around the lavender fields, the distillery, the pond (where people sometimes like to go wild swimming) and then serve coffee, tea and lavender cake in our informal cafe.

Alternatively, people can visit as individuals or smaller groups and take a free self-guided tour of everything using our farm notes. We now offer overnight accommodation too, in the form of a cosy, upcycled renovated truck. Either way, visitors get to soak up the lovely smells and sights of our part of Wales.

In our gift shop, we have an array of our lavender products for people to sample, including chocolate and body care creams. Most are made in North Wales by our partner Helen Lowe. She sends us product and we fill, label and dispatch from our site to shops around the UK and a few abroad. We just opened in the Monocle Shop at Hong Kong International Airport. It gives visitors a chance to buy something to remember the place by and take their experiences home with them.

We are truly inspired by the farmers we see nearby who work at all hours of the day. They spur us forward by embracing the landscape and outdoor life. Having such a strong sense of place and opening up our agricultural business to visitors helps ensure that farming traditions and an appreciation of the Welsh landscape continue to prosper.

The Welsh outdoors is a place that everyone can enjoy, regardless of each person's abilities. The outdoors can provide its own challenges around access, but with a bit of thought and careful consideration your business can help everybody — and all bodies — to enjoy our beautiful land.



## Enabling accessibility in the outdoors.

### How to make the outdoors more accessible. *Written with help from Disability Wales members.*

#### **Think: everybody outdoors.**

When you're planning something outdoors, be mindful of making it accessible to disabled people. If you're using a table or chart to plan the activities or areas, add a column for any considerations you will need to make to keep everything accessible. Customers who come away happy are more likely to recommend you to others.

#### **Hire and train for specialist activities.**

Your staff are the face of your business, but they are also your customers' first port of call when they need something. If you're running an activity outdoors, such as rock climbing, hire specialist staff who are used to running the activity with disabled people to either assist at the event or to train your existing staff.

#### **Create helpful communication.**

There are many ways to communicate information outdoors. Think about how you can meet the requirements of disabled people by using things like large print, Easy Read, Braille and audio where you'd otherwise use standard signs. Waymark paths, light dark areas and signpost important places so everyone can find their way when exploring outside.

#### **Go the extra mile.**

Consider the little things you can do to ease the strain on disabled people and their carers. For example, you could have a few all-terrain wheelchairs that disabled people can borrow while they're with you or install as many benches or seating areas as you can along routes without spoiling the landscape.



*Useful resources:*  
*Disability Wales ([disabilitywales.org](http://disabilitywales.org))*  
*Welsh Government: Equality ([gov.wales/equality](http://gov.wales/equality))*

*You can find information on definitions, language and terminology on the Disability Wales website. The Building Regulations 2010 Part M can be easily found through search engines.*

Q&A:  
**Cleopatra Browne**  
**Founder**  
**Celtic Quest Coasteering**

**Celtic Quest Coasteering are adventure specialists offering experiences on the Pembrokeshire coast.**

**What is your business?**

Coasteering is often described as everything you're told not to do at the beach as a child! It involves moving along a stretch of coastline at the point where the sea meets land. Kitted out in a winter wetsuit, buoyancy aid and helmet, participants are given the opportunity to try wild swimming, sea level traversing, cliff jumping, sea caving and taking a spin or flush in the white water features.

**Who can take part?**

Every adventure is tailored to suit the expectations and abilities of each adventurer. The Celtic Quest team believe that adventure should be accessible to all at their own level and pace. Everyone has their own perception of adventure. For some, reaching the top of Mount Everest is their level; for others it may be just floating unassisted in the open ocean. If it is practically possible, Celtic Quest can tailor an adventure for just about anyone.

**What actions have you undertaken to become more accessible?**

The Celtic Quest team received additional training in order to welcome folks with all sorts of disabilities. We've had to think about manual handling and access, too. Take cliff jumping, for example. Jumping in the sea is the relatively easy bit — getting up to the jump height is not always so easy.

**How do you assess whether someone can do something?**

An adventure is made of up a chain of elements, such as jumping, climbing, swimming and flushing. We look at which elements each participant or group can manage, rather than focussing on what's not possible. That way we focus on what can be achieved, adapting along the way and being positive

During pre-season training, our team heads out for an 'accessible inaccessible adventure'. We simulate various disabilities to give the guides a much clearer idea of how to make their adventures more accessible. This could include jumping from a cliff blindfolded, being flushed and spun in the washing machine (a swell of water) without the use of your legs or climbing out of the water without using your arms.

**How has improving your accessibility enhanced your business?**

Celtic Quest Coasteering are able to make every participant feel awesome! Taking a detailed look at the 'how' of their adventures from an accessibility perspective has improved the overall service to all visitors, including non-disabled people.

I'm keenly aware of how businesses often charge disabled people more than non-disabled people when it comes to participating in adventure activities, and I disagree with it. Our pricing is standard regardless of age, gender or ability. Facilitating an adventure for someone who is disabled can often require two or more guides. This has an impact to the business' bottom line, but there are ways we can absorb the slight loss in favour of providing an unforgettable experience. These include finding quieter times to carry out these experiences so we have the staff numbers to facilitate them.

**What advice do you have for business owners that want to make their offering more accessible?**

Take a detailed look at your current offering. How can it be tweaked to be more inclusive? It doesn't need to be a ground-breaking change. In fact, it's surprising how the little things can make a world of difference. For example, we add simple crotch straps to our buoyancy aids for disabled users, which keeps the buoyancy aid in place without being restrictively tight. Clients find it easier to float in this comfortable position, which in turn means they need less physical help from guides.

Perhaps try the simulated experience. Blindfold yourself or your staff and see what it's like. We found this activity to be invaluable as it lets us experience things like partial or total sight loss rather than trying to imagine them.

Focus on what is possible, not on the limitations that someone will face when trying to participate. They can slide down something, so work out how to get them up to it. They can float unaided, so work out how to get them to the water.

Break things down into smaller elements as this creates individual achievements. Getting into a wetsuit, getting to the water's edge, getting in the water, being comfortable in flat water, propelling yourself or being aided in water, experiencing levels of white water, trying jumps and slides, coming face to face with a seal in the water... most of these could be broken down further. Many folks find the things we take for granted to be an insurmountable challenge, so enable them to conquer some of those challenges — or at least have a lot of fun while trying!

Opening up our outdoor spaces to visitors can have great outcomes for all involved. We can look at Cadw's Open Doors festival for an example of how opening up spaces can lead to good things. Every year in September, Cadw's festival lets thousands of visitors access over 200 Welsh landmarks and historic attractions for free. It increases footfall at sites and, in turn, boosts takings at both the sites themselves and other nearby businesses.



## Being part of the community and outdoor groups.

### How to work with existing groups and develop your own community.

**If your business has a private outdoor space, consider opening it up to the public for one-off events or renting it out to local community groups.**

It'll increase your presence in the local community and create a conversation around your business.

**Even if your business doesn't have an outdoor space, you could think about inviting outside community groups into your indoor space.**

Offer tea and relaxation to ramblers post-walk, provide space for knitting clubs to knit and natter or see if orienteering clubs want to use your space while they plan their walks. It could be an opportunity to show off your location, give the community something positive to associate you with and help word to get around, all of which could lead to more business from the individuals within the group following their visit.

**If you're lucky enough to be based near our beautiful coastline, the countryside or a patch of greenery that locals flock to, you could look at how your business can attract the visitors of the nearby outdoor spaces.**

Increase your signage around visitor hotspots to waypoint people towards your business or try similar methods of raising awareness to draw in visitors. If you have registered as a Refill Cymru business you will feature on the Refill Cymru App so anyone looking to fill their bottles with water will find your business. See page 39 of this guide for more information.

**Alternatively, if you run an outdoor-based community group, think about who you allow to take part in your activities.**

Do you have to be a member's only group, or can you allow drop-ins too? Widening your audience would make it possible for visitors to enjoy the perks of your group and give them a positive experience to remember, plus it could bring in extra money on an ad-hoc basis depending on how many non-members turn up. Think about the many cycling, swimming and running groups around Wales that invite visitors to join them.

**As well as inviting the community into your business, you can try taking your business out into the community.**

For example, you could sponsor local events, take part in community activities such as beach cleans or litter picks, run a stall at your town or village fair or go to community business meet-ups.

## Eye on: The Bluetits Chill Swimmers

Sian Richardson — founder of the open water swimming group “without unnecessary rules” — shares the story of her community group, how important community is to her and the group members. Between splashing in the waves while making friends they take pit stops at local businesses to refuel and relax — something that the businesses and the swimmers benefit from.



### Creating the Bluetits community.

After partaking in competitive sports for many years, I became weary of the sheer amount of kit that was seemingly needed to get to the finish line. Sometimes I didn't fit in — I was deemed too old, too fat, too slow, too relaxed about my timings — but overall I enjoyed taking my body beyond what I perceived its limit to be.

I began to swim in only a swimsuit to move away from the pressure of feeling I had to conform to some standard. In the first winter of swimming outdoors, people in overcoats and scarves approached me and asked me what on earth I was doing. Most suggested I had lost the plot, but some were intrigued enough to come and join me. That's when The Bluetits Chill Swimmers began.

### Everyone is welcome.

The Bluetits swim in open water all year round. Most of us wear swimsuits but everyone is welcome to wear whatever makes them comfortable in the water. We have people from all walks of life, in all shapes and sizes and with different swimming abilities. Everyone is capable of much more than they think they are; sometimes they just need a little help and encouragement within a friendly non-judgmental environment.

You don't have to be a strong swimmer or have the perfect stroke. We have the brave, the noisy, the timid, the caring, those who can swim a marathon and those who don't like to go out of their depth. When we all come together to swim, we use these differing attributes to benefit each other. No-one gets left behind and no-one judges.

### The impact of community.

By always welcoming new people into our midst, the experience each person brings makes the groups stronger and more interesting. There is always someone who is willing to help you or listen to you, encourage or support you. I love how after plucking up the courage to become a Bluetit, many of us have found the strength to do other things in our lives that initially seemed scary.

When we go exploring to find new beaches to swim on, we often include a walk along the Wales Coast Path and stop off at a local cafe or pub. We anticipate the adventure, never really knowing what we will find.

### Taking the al fresco plunge.

Being outdoors around the Pembrokeshire coast, you get to absorb its beauty throughout the changing seasons. Combine this stress-reducing scenery with the anticipation of doing something that is a little extreme and you get an amazing adrenaline rush.

I'm really proud that so many people have taken up swimming for the sheer joy of it because of The Bluetits, and that they have discovered the inner strength they always had but couldn't grasp. I love how when we meet as a group there are those who like to just bob around in the water, those who happily swim together and those who like to compete. There is never an agenda other than to simply swim.



# Walking in the great outdoors.

One of the best ways to get close to nature in Wales is to ditch the car and go exploring on foot. Not only is it free, planet-friendly and good for you, walking lets you fully connect with the outdoors; walk in any of our forests and you'll feel its textures underfoot, smell its grassiness in the air and see its rich, seasonal colours all around you.

The positive effects of walking on both physical and mental health have long been recognised. Whether you take a quick stroll or a longer hike, it's an excellent way to align with nature, put your busy life in perspective, recharge and gain a positive outlook.



*Are you part of the Visit Wales Cyclists and Walkers Welcome Scheme? Visit [businesswales.gov.wales/tourism/star-quality-grading](https://businesswales.gov.wales/tourism/star-quality-grading) or email [quality.tourism@gov.wales](mailto:quality.tourism@gov.wales) for more information.*

Here are some ways you can make a great impression by helping your customers discover Wales on foot:

**Research walks in the area.**

Find some walks that people can do from where you are based, then share the details of them on a handy print-out or online. Depending on your location, you could consider:

Sections of the Wales Coast Path.

Parts of Offa's Dyke Path, Glyndŵr's Way or The Cambrian Walking route.

Designated paths in our Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs).

Routes that follow rivers from source to sea, with stops at amenities along the way.

Walks that connect local points of historical interest.

Dedicated paths through Woodland Trust sites and RSPB nature reserves.

Regional footpaths into the countryside or along canals.

**Invite walkers in.**

If you want to see more walkers in your establishment, you could invite some of the local walking or rambling groups to host their meetups there. Word spreads, so if one walker enjoys the pre- or post-walk experience that you offer, they are bound to tell another.



**Take people closer.**

One thing that can get in the way of walking is the need for transport to get to the start point or to return. Help your customers overcome this hurdle by highlighting local bus services (public transport and also particular services that may be available in your area e.g. The Sherpa Shuttle in Snowdonia and Coastal Bus routes in Pembrokeshire) or provide the telephone numbers for reliable local taxi companies. NB: It's helpful to remind guests that they may require cash for taxis and coins for parking meters; many small or rural places don't take card.

If your visitors *are* driving, please always try and encourage use of park and ride facilities where they exist and stress the importance of designated parking areas, particularly in popular locations.

**Set up regular guided walks.**

Depending on its location, you could use your business as a meeting point for a local guided walk. Team up with a nearby guide who can lead the way and advertise the walk online and locally. Using your business in this way will help to (quite literally) put it on the map.

**Highlight interesting things in your grounds.**

If you have outdoor space, such as gardens or grounds for people to explore, use signposting to make visitors aware of it. Then, add labels or notes around the outdoor space to point out any features, such as the types of flowers in the beds, the names of the mountain you can see in the distance or the reasons behind the way you designed the gardens.

**Accessible walks for disabled people and families with pushchairs.**

There are lots of places that are ideal walks for people with mobility issues or pushchairs. It's good to be able to recommend local accessible walks to customers. There might be more than you originally think. Consider the following:

Piers and promenades often have flat and wide areas to walk along.

The Wales Coast Path has plenty of easy routes.

Natural Resources Wales have a round-up online of accessible woodlands and parks.



*Stuck for ideas on local walks? Visit the Ramblers Cymru website ([ramblers.org.uk/wales](http://ramblers.org.uk/wales)) or [visitwales.com](http://visitwales.com) to find options near you.*

Case study:  
**Jo Nugent**  
Sales and Marketing Manager  
The Angel Hotel

This Abergavenny gem is the Good Hotel Guide's  
Welsh Hotel of the Year 2020.

We're very lucky to be located at the gateway to the Brecon Beacons National Park. Many of our guests stay with us because they love to spend time outdoors, and it's hugely important for us to offer a variety of experiences that enable visitors to enjoy Wales' beautiful natural landscapes.

Walking maps and suggested routes are available from reception, and we offer a shoeshine service to guests who have been out exploring. For those who are interested in something a little different, there's the Twizy; it's our very own electric car that guests can use to explore the Beacons, recharging at a variety of local charging points as part of the local Eco Travel Network.

We are always thinking about new packages and outdoor experiences based around current tourism trends. In 2019, we created some special 'Year of Discovery' breaks that had a great response. Our 'gourmet gardener' and 'foraging fun' breaks saw us team up with local experts to take advantage of the growing interest in organic gardening and cookery.

We also launched a 'leaf peeping' package which offers guests the chance to watch the autumn leaves changing colour. As part of the package we provided a copy of local author Rob Penn's 'Escape to the Woods', as well as our own recommendations for the best local autumn walks.





# Responsible tourism.

In Wales, the beautiful landscapes and coastlines of the outdoors are the foundation of tourism. This means that tourism in Wales relies upon the integrity of the natural environment. As such, we must all play a part in practicing and encouraging responsible tourism. Tourists are acting with their feet on the issue of sustainability; 45 per cent of people say sustainability is an important element when booking a holiday, choosing to visit places and partake in activities run by those who take responsibility for their impact on the environment.<sup>1</sup>

To be sustainable and to take responsibility for our impact on our environment, all of us within the tourism industry need to consider our efforts in:

Meeting the needs and quality of life of our local communities.

Enhancing and respecting our culture and local traditions.

Contributing to local economic prosperity.

Minimising damage to the environment.

We are aware of major issues that are taking their toll globally, such as excessive carbon emissions and high levels of marine litter creating unclean and polluted environments. By focusing on local sustainability while keeping an eye on the global picture, we can do our bit to create a better future for Wales and the world.

Businesses that practice sustainable and responsible tourism tend to benefit from their actions in multiple ways. They often find that they save money, improve the quality of their products and increase their marketing opportunities.

For example, imagine a cafe in Mid Wales that currently orders its fruit, vegetables, eggs, bread and milk from across Europe. By sourcing their ingredients from local producers and businesses instead, they might be able to save money that they would otherwise spend on transporting ingredients from mainland Europe. They might be able to serve food that is fresher and they could increase their local network and prominence.

<sup>1</sup> ABTA Consumer Trends survey 2018, Arkenford

## Small things your business can do to be more sustainable.

### Source things locally wherever possible.

This will help to reduce your carbon footprint while supporting the local community and economy.

### Do a waste audit.

Look at what waste you accumulate as a business and check to see where it goes (including once it's left your premises). Try to recycle as much as possible and be proud of your efforts.

### Check you are using sustainable energy.

You can now find green energy deals that are genuinely cost effective for your business. Search online for 'green energy for businesses' or speak to your current energy provider to see if they have a more environmentally friendly deal to offer you.

### Re-use items wherever possible.

Get creative with items you think you're finished with. For example, if you have unwanted non-confidential papers, you could shred them to make packing material for your products. Consider buying nearly new or upcycled furniture and fittings.

### Encourage and enable customers to act sustainably.

It's easier to be responsible for your impact on the environment when you have the means to do something about it, so try to think of things that would help customers. For example, if you run a hotel, ask guests to leave recycling next to the waste bin in their room when they leave and provide in-room water in reusable or recyclable bottles.

### Join the Refill Cymru scheme.

Reduce plastics and encourage others to do the same by joining Refill Cymru. Wales is aiming to become the world's first Refill Nation through the scheme; by adding businesses as Refill Stations, with all their locations mapped in a handy app. Joining the scheme will encourage people to visit your business when they need to refill their water bottles, which could lead to increased sales and brand awareness.

### How do I get my business signed up and showing on the Refill app?

*If you're a business with a publicly accessible tap, then all you need to do to get involved is download the app, sign in and add your details to the form and pin your location on the map. Remember to add a photo of the outside of your business and some information of what people need to do to refill their bottles. Once your station is live, you'll be ready to welcome thirsty refillers!*

*Take a look at the digital toolkit for everything you need to join Refill online. From Facebook to Instagram, we've got plenty of branded content for you to use across your social media accounts. [refill.org.uk/help/marketing-assets](https://refill.org.uk/help/marketing-assets) [refill.org.uk/refill-cymru](https://refill.org.uk/refill-cymru)*

*And don't forget to tag us in your posts and use the hashtags #RefillRevolution #ChwylldroAilLenwi.*



*If just one in ten in the UK refilled once a week, we'd have 340 million less plastic bottles a year in circulation.*

## Safety in the outdoors.

The outdoors can provide so many opportunities for exploration, excitement and adrenaline-fuelled activity, but as a business operator you have a responsibility to encourage safety at all times. This doesn't mean sapping the fun out of your visitors' itineraries, though.

Here are some helpful tips from AdventureSmart UK and the RNLI on how to go about promoting safety in a friendly, audience-appropriate way.

### Ask customers or guests where they plan to go.

This opens up the conversation and gives you the opportunity to suggest that they bear safety in mind.

### Provide grab-and-go day packs.

Charge a small fee for a day pack containing seasonally appropriate safety items, such as sun cream, an energy bar, bottled water, a torch, a map of the area and emergency contact numbers.

### Display safety information.

Update a blackboard daily to show tide times, weather information, safety notices and sunrise / sunset times, or put up some of AdventureSmart UK's helpful posters that have key messages on.

### Add safety information to your content or website.

If you're promoting outdoor activity, include a line or two about how to stay safe while doing it.

### Use safety messaging in your social media posts.

For example, a coastal hotel could share this to promote its offering but also encourage safe exploration:

*"Fancy exploring our wonderful coastline? Maybe sea kayaking is for you! Stay with us this weekend and let the experts @outdooractivitybusiness show you the way #BeAdventureSmart".*



### Choose photographs and videos that promote safe adventures.

You can still share amazing action shots; just make sure the people featured are being responsible, are appropriately dressed, have safety gear, are considering their environment and are not alone.

### Be positive and helpful to prevent accidents without preventing fun.

The outdoors can be a wonderful place to spend time, so offer advice and polite safety reminders rather than inciting fear or negativity.



**ADVENTURE  
SMART.uk**

### About AdventureSmart UK

AdventureSmart UK, a rollout of the safety campaign AdventureSmartWales, aims to reduce the number of avoidable incidents that rescue and emergency services deal with. It has established a comprehensive set of safety messages with experts from leading safety and sporting organisations for the outdoor sector to promote. They provide all the essential information needed for people to get outdoors and feel confident about their safety and have a really useful Business Toolkit to help people promote the outdoors safely.

More info:  
[adventuresmart.uk](http://adventuresmart.uk)

### About RNLI

The Royal National Lifeboat Institution is a registered charity that saves lives at sea. It provides a 24-hour on-call service to cover search and rescue requirements out to 100 nautical miles from the coast of the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland, as well as a seasonal beach lifeguard service. It is currently running a Respect the Water campaign, which exists to teach people what to do if they fall into water — that is, to fight against instinct and float to live.

More info:  
[rnli.org](http://rnli.org)  
[respectthewater.com](http://respectthewater.com)

For a relatively small country, Wales has so much wildlife within its borders. There are around 500 lakes, over 1,000 ponds, nearly 50 significant river systems, 870 miles of coastline, over 4,000sq km of National Park, millions of creatures great and small and so many designated 'special' sites of interest (they make up around 30 per cent of Wales' land).

It is a real asset, something that people will travel miles to see, and it can become an asset to your business too. Spread the word about the wonderful wildlife on your doorstep, tie it in with events your business is holding or partner up with nearby wildlife charities to keep nature thriving.



# Our cohabitants.

The wildlife of Wales.

## Spotlight on some of Wales' incredible wildlife.

*Guidance by James Byrne, Wildlife Trusts Wales and Gina Gavigan, The Wildlife Trust of South and West Wales.*

### Red kite.

Around 2,000 of these magnificent birds patrol the skies throughout Wales, performing amazing acrobatics all year round. They can be seen in Powys, either flying overhead or at nature reserves such as the Wildlife Trust's Gilfach or feeding centres at Gigrin Farm.

### Osprey.

These beautiful birds travel from Africa to Wales to breed at the Wildlife Trust's Cors Dyfi Nature Reserve near Machynlleth and Glaslyn near Porthmadog.

### Manx Shearwater and Puffins.

The Wildlife Trust of South and West Wales' beautiful Pembrokeshire Islands of Skomer and Skokholm are of international importance for their seabird colonies. Skomer is home to the world's largest Manx Shearwater colony with approximately 350,000 breeding pairs. Over 89,000 breeding pairs take up residency on the sister island of Skokholm. Skomer also has the largest colony of Puffins in southern Britain.



### Bottlenose Dolphins.

New Quay on Cardigan Bay is home to approximately 300 semi resident Bottlenose Dolphins making this one of Europe's best places to see these amazing marine mammals. You can take a wildlife boat cruise, or simply sit on the harbour wall and keep an eye on the waves. Check out the Wildlife Trust's Cardigan Bay Marine Wildlife Centre for marine events, activities, sightings and wildlife information.

### Atlantic Grey Seals.

April is a great time to see Atlantic Grey Seals on the Wildlife Trust's Skomer Island. Up to 200 seals come to North Haven beach to moult during the spring. Autumn is the best time to see seal pups, notably on the island wildlife sanctuaries of Bardsey Island, the Anglesey coast, RSPB's Ramsey Island and the Wildlife Trust's Skomer and Skokholm islands.

### Terns.

The lagoon at the Wildlife Trust's Cemlyn Nature Reserve is home to breeding common and Arctic terns. It has one of the UK's largest nesting populations of Sandwich terns.

### Otters.

Wales has the best otter-watching opportunities in Europe. The Wildlife Trust's Teifi Marshes Nature Reserve and The National Trust's Bosherton Lakes are famous for their resident otters. The best time to see otters at Gilfach is from October to December when otters come to the waterfalls to chase the leaping salmon.

### Wading Birds.

Internationally important populations of wading birds use our estuaries as wintering feeding stations. The best places to see them are the Severn, the Dee, the Traeth Lafan and the Dyfi estuaries.

### Wildflower meadows.

Wales has some of the largest remaining areas of flower-rich grassland. Thousands of orchids can be seen at the Wildlife Trust's Pentwyn Farm and the National Trust's Berthlwyd Farm.

### Rare plants.

There are thousands of rare plants in Wales. You'll find more species of ferns and their fern-allies in the uplands of mid-Gwynedd than in any equivalent area of the UK. Yellow Whitlow Grass, a yellow wildflower that occurs only in Wales, is confined to the cliffs of Gower, Swansea. Kenfig dunes, part of the largest active sand dunes system in Europe, holds 90 per cent of the UK population of fen orchid.

### Rainforest.

We've got some of the best examples of Atlantic oak woodland in Europe, otherwise known as temperate forest. These woods date back an astonishing 10,000 years and are home to rare plants, birds, bats and otters. Examples include the Meirionnydd Oakwoods in the Vale of Ffestiniog and RSPB's Ynys Hir near Machynlleth.

### Promoting wildlife preservation.

When promoting or experiencing wildlife in all its glory, make sure you also promote the Countryside Code. You can find the full version online, but here is a brief overview of the things to bear in mind:

#### Respect other people:

Consider the local community and other people enjoying the outdoors.

Leave gates and property as you find them.

Follow paths unless wider access is available.

#### Protect the natural environment:

Adhere to biosecurity rules when visiting The Wildlife Trust islands of Skomer and Skokholm.

Leave no trace of your visit and take your litter home.

Keep dogs under effective control.





# Visit Wales approach.

Time to 'Check in'.

Our overarching concept for the Year of Outdoors campaign positions Wales as a country that offers a welcome without walls. Inviting people to check in to our hotels; our campsites; our cottages. Then throw open the doors to let the outside in. Discovering attractions and activities and new corners of the country.

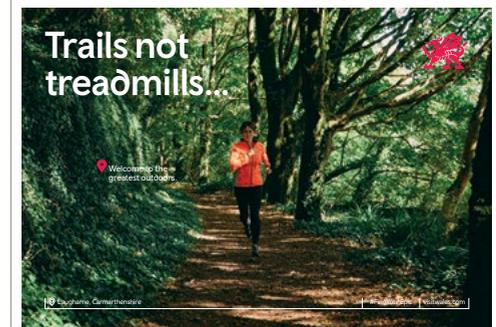
Using 'Check in' in our marketing messages also gives us endless possibilities for social media usage with people checking in to accommodation, products, activities and landscapes whilst they are in Wales.

We're also concentrating on messages that encourage visits throughout the year (as feeling good has no season) and to explore new areas, rather than simply visiting the better known parts of the country, thereby spreading the benefits of visits and offering alternative suggestions that will relieve the pressure at busy locations at certain times of the year. Importantly, we need to take every opportunity to help visitors find out how to enjoy the outdoors safely and responsibly.

When people are here we want them to experience our sense of community as well as the stunning landscapes of our outdoors. That could be by joining a group for a park run, a swim, walk or cycle or taking part in an organised walk or attending an event.

We want visitors to 'Check in' to the real Wales.

Here are some examples of what you will see in 2020:



### The content and messaging.

The messaging will be translated to meet our key markets as below and our ever popular and well recognised hashtag #FindYourEpic will remain.

#### UK / International:

This is Wales.  
Check in.

#FindYourEpic  
#ThisIsWales

#### Welsh:

Dyma Gymru.  
Dyma Groeso.

#GwladGwlad  
#FyNghymru

#### German:

Das ist Wales.  
Willkommen

#### Irish:

Seo an Bhreatain Bheag.  
Céad míle Failte.

For more inspiration here are some ways you can ensure your guests have a pleasant check-in when they arrive at your accommodation. If your business is not an accommodation provider, think about how you could adapt the tips to suit what you do.

#### Physical check-in.

The first five minutes after a guest arrives at your accommodation are crucial in forming their overall opinion of the place. Use this to your advantage by making sure they are made to feel very welcome. Have everything looking, feeling and smelling great in time for when your check-in window opens, from the bedrooms to the entrance area. Add pot plants or bunches of seasonal flowers to communal areas to bring the outside in and soften the atmosphere.

#### Digital check-in.

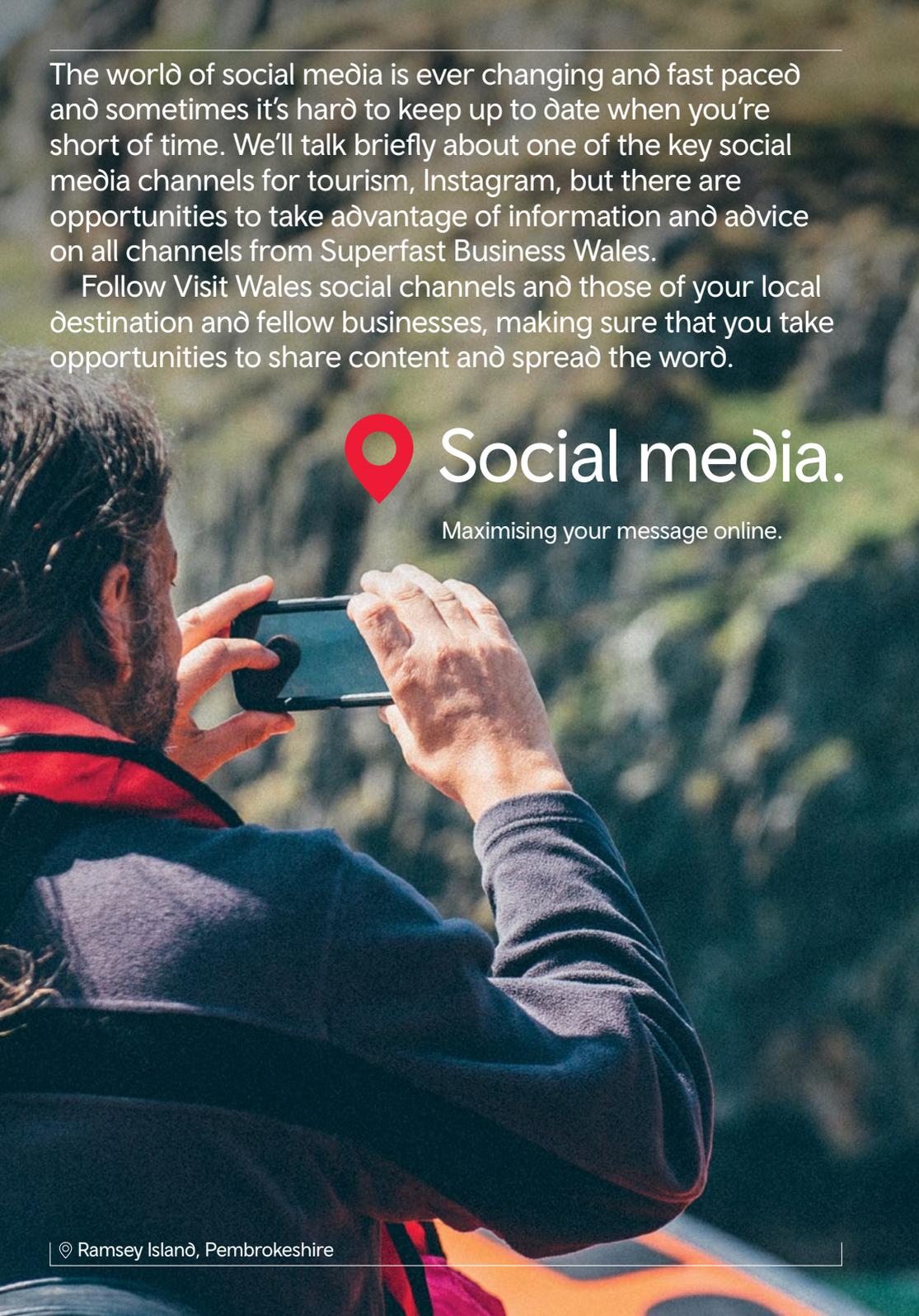
The key to getting digital check-ins is to have fast, free wifi throughout your hotel. Make it password protected to keep people from outside the accommodation logging on and using bandwidth. Include your social media handles on any printed literature you produce, such as in-room menus or card key holders, just as you would include your business' name. If guests share photos of the accommodation on Instagram, Twitter or Facebook, you can comment on the photos to thank them for sharing and share them if they're happy for you to do so.

#### Mindful check-in.

To help guests feel settled, set up a quiet and inviting communal room where they can help themselves to complimentary tea and coffee. Dot the day's newspapers and a couple of relevant magazines around the room, as well as any brochures you have about the local area. You could play relaxing music at a low volume to bring about a sense of calm or install a wood burner to create warmth.

The world of social media is ever changing and fast paced and sometimes it's hard to keep up to date when you're short of time. We'll talk briefly about one of the key social media channels for tourism, Instagram, but there are opportunities to take advantage of information and advice on all channels from Superfast Business Wales.

Follow Visit Wales social channels and those of your local destination and fellow businesses, making sure that you take opportunities to share content and spread the word.



## Social media.

Maximising your message online.

### Instagram for tourism businesses and destinations.

The idiom 'a picture says a thousand words' sums up why Instagram is so powerful for brand storytelling. As a highly visual platform where images are the primary focus, it can be used to quickly showcase places, products, adventures and activities to audiences around the world.

It has better engagement rates than Facebook and Twitter, probably because of the speed at which you can view and interact with content.

Through sharing photographs, videos and stories, you can instantly spread brand awareness to both existing and potential

customers, connect with various target markets and get people looking at the great things you are doing, making and helping people to experience.

Over 70 per cent of users make purchases after seeing products and experiences on Instagram, showing how much it can influence users' spending habits — both in terms of the physical objects they buy and the places they pay to visit. If your business ignores Instagram, it could be missing out on increased footfall, improved online presence, potential press coverage and new fans.

#### What works well on Visit Wales' social media?

At Visit Wales, we post original content to social media. We also share posts that promote the best of Wales in a realistic way. Here, Justin Lewis from Visit Wales' digital marketing team gives us an insight into what works well on our social media accounts.

#### On Facebook and Twitter:

Simple and authentic content tends to work best on our accounts. Short videos of things such as beaches, rivers, waterfalls and wildlife have worked really well. These videos are easy and cheap to produce. They can be captured on smartphones and simply trimmed at the start and end. Generally, they outperform professionally edited videos on the accounts.

#### On Instagram:

We concentrate on authentic images of Wales. These tend to be reposts from professional or keen amateur photographers, although we do share some images from trade accounts. We don't share posts that are very local in nature (such as any about low-key local events) or things like special offers and competitions.



*Free social media / digital training and advice for tourism and hospitality SMEs is available across Wales — find out more at [businesswales.gov.wales/superfastbusinesswales](https://businesswales.gov.wales/superfastbusinesswales)*

## Case study: Sian Tucker fforest

Sian Tucker, co-owner of fforest, the Ceredigion-based outdoor accommodation, shares an insight into how she runs the business' Instagram account successfully.



“Sometimes, people will see one of our photos from the area, such as a picture taken on a beautiful beach around here or in the nearby woods, and it'll trigger happy memories for them.”

We use Instagram to give an essence of what we have at fforest and what's in this part of west Wales. Our main target audience on Instagram loves to experience the outdoors, so we try to appeal to them. We also try to show others that fforest is a great place to get close to nature while having everything you'd need for a comfortable and relaxing stay.

I think it's hugely important to use good photographs, but also to consider how the grid looks as a whole on our profile page. I take care to stick to certain colour palettes or themes. I like to post a distanced shot then share a close-up next for visual variation — for example, a view from outside followed by an inside one.

Some people use rigid templates to plan when they'll post to their business' Instagram, but I tend to take a more sporadic approach. I don't usually have a set time to post each day. Instead, I try to post a couple of days each week and to continually engage with followers and people who've tagged @fforest in photos.

Authenticity and honesty is very important to us. We want people to arrive at fforest having a good idea of what it looks and what it may feel like. I like to vary the pictures to give an all-round impression. For the accommodation, I photograph things like the tiny details on vases of flowers, the wooden furniture's natural textures and the cosy blankets to snuggle under.

As for our communal areas, I like to capture how people gather for fireside drinks and to share stories in our little pub, how people use our larger dining barns for events and, of course, the wonderful big outdoors.

For the captions, I try to be factual and straightforward — being descriptive, but not emotive or imparting an opinion. I want people to see the photos and experience fforest, then make their own decisions as to how it makes them feel. Equally, I don't share any personal photos as I don't think that's what our business account should be used for. A few hashtags I commonly use are #fforest, #visitwales and #stayplaydream.

Community is important for us. I like to share photos taken by guests, partly because we love the different viewpoints they give and because we want them to know that we're grateful for their custom and companionship. Similarly, we share photos of things in the area to show some of the fun things you can see, do and eat nearby.

Sometimes, people will see one of our photos from the area, such as a picture taken on a beautiful beach around here or in the nearby woods, and it'll trigger happy memories for them. It's a lovely thing to be able to do, and from a business perspective it can lead to nostalgia-inspired bookings.

Let's work together to make the 2020 Year of Outdoors a true celebration of Wales; a success for industry and an outstanding experience for our visitors.

#### Social Media.

Follow, like, and post on the Visit Wales social media accounts:  
Visit Wales Facebook  
Visit Wales Instagram  
Visit Wales Twitter  
Visit Wales Pinterest

Don't forget to tag us using the hashtags:  
#FindYourEpic  
#ThisIsMyWales

#### visitwales.com

To update your product information on visitwales.com go to:  
visitwales.com/  
working-with-us

#### Images.

Register with our new Digital Asset Library to access free high quality images:  
assets.wales.com

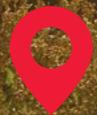
#### Visit Wales industry updates.

Subscribe to the Visit Wales Industry e-newsletter:  
businesswales.gov.wales/  
tourism

Follow the visitwales industry twitter account @VisitWalesBiz to keep up to date on what's happening in the industry in Wales.

#### Share your news.

Let us know about new or inspiring products, experiences and events  
productnews@gov.wales



Check in and  
keep in touch.



For more information about funding schemes, grading and working with Visit Wales please see the tourism industry information pages:  
businesswales.gov.wales/tourism

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2020: Wales' Year of Outdoors is published by Visit Wales, the Tourism and Marketing division of the Welsh Government.  
Print ISBN: 978-1-83933-909-7  
Digital ISBN: 978-1-83933-907-3

Visit Wales, Welsh Government, QED Centre, Main Avenue,  
Treforest Industrial Estate, Treforest, Pontypridd CF37 5YR.

Photography: © Crown copyright (2020) Visit Wales.  
Design: Departures®. Content production and editing: Amy Pay.  
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