



First class

Not only is the Welsh capital a top destination, CLs in the area are outstanding too, says **John Bateman**

FOR A small country, Wales packs a powerful punch. With 1,700 miles of coastline encircling hefty mountain ranges, three national parks and enough green valleys to keep countless lambs frisking happily, it is not surprising that thousands of us flock westwards every year.

Most caravanners, I guess, head for the rural beauty spots and fine beaches that Wales specialises in, and for years my policy has been to steer clear of the crowded bits.

The downside of that is, until last summer, I had no idea how Cardiff's regeneration in recent decades has resulted in a package of architectural eye-openers, bay-side developments and leisure activities that will please even straw-nibbling country hicks like me.

Cardiff makes an appealing tourist goal, providing diverse offerings built on 2,000 years of history, and some decent CLs dotted around the city serve as handy bases.

South Lodge, Coedardhydyglyn, St Nicholas (listed under Cardiff) is a good site, combining rural peace and panoramic views. The lodge and CL (where level, hardstanding pitches are set into a slightly-sloping lawned plot) form part of Rhodri and Annabelle Traherne's 300-acre farm estate.

Bordered on one flank by mature trees, the all-year site looks out beyond ranch fencing to mountain views in one direction, while Cardiff shapes the horizon to the east.

The outline of the Millennium Stadium can be easily identified and a quick scan

with the binoculars picks out both Severn bridges and much more. One of the big attractions of South Lodge is that you can hop on a bus 400 yards from the site and spend a full day in the capital.

Keen followers of the *Doctor Who* TV series can score another identification hit here as some of David Tennant and Billie Piper's time-travel escapades were filmed in Rhodri and Annabelle's home.

The Vale of Glamorgan has much to offer, with the coastal resort of Barry Island and Whitmore Bay's sands fewer than 10 miles from Cardiff. The refined offerings of Cowbridge and its tasteful eateries and shops are also on hand in the Vale.

Listed under this pleasant little town in the Vale of Glamorgan section is a CL I've



Ordnance Survey
Landranger Maps 170, 171

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Friendly neighbours
at Garn Farm CL



INFORMATION

SITES

Details of the CLs featured can be found on p528 and p555 of the *Sites Directory & Handbook 2011/2012*

TOURISM

■ **CardiffTIC** – call 029 2087 3573 or see visitcardiff.com



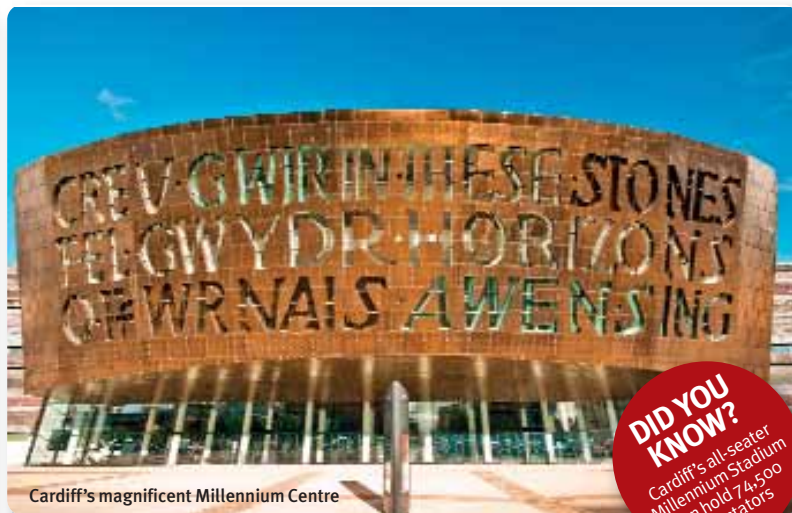
Pitch room with a view –
South Lodge CL



Cardiff Castle

ATTRACTIONS

- **Cardiff Castle** – call 029 2087 8100 or see cardiffcastle.com
- **Cardiff International White Water** – rafting, canoeing and more. Call 029 2082 9970 or see ciww.com
- **Millennium Stadium** – call 029 2082 2228 or see millenniumstadium.com
- **St Fagans National History Museum** – call 029 2057 3500 or see museumwales.ac.uk
- **Wales Millennium Centre** – for arts, shopping etc. Call 029 2063 6464 or see wmc.org.uk
- **Cardiff Bay Tours** – call 029 2070 7882 or see cardiffbaytours.com
- **Flat Holm Island** – a Site of Special Scientific Interest and Local Nature Reserve five miles from Cardiff. Call 029 2087 7912 or see flatholmisland.com
- **Technique** – interactive science centre. Call 029 2047 5475 or see technique.org



Cardiff's magnificent Millennium Centre

DID YOU KNOW?
Cardiff's all-seater Millennium Stadium can hold 74,500 spectators

“ You won't be drumming your fingers, wondering what to do around this part of Wales... ”

always liked. Isycoed Farm, Llansannor, City is home to Keith Watkins, and his half-acre lawned site sits alongside the farmhouse, looking out over undulating countryside in all shades of green.

It's a lovely spot and the compact, partly-sloping site is immaculately maintained and well equipped. There are hook-ups, picnic tables and a neat building that houses separate toilets, a shower and washing-up amenities.

The 'City' element of the address no doubt has some logic behind it, but Isycoed Farm is a genuine rural retreat and a flower-pot man does sterling service as toilet-block attendant to reinforce the point.

Back in the real city, it is perhaps the regeneration of Cardiff's dockland that is most compelling. Where once 'black gold', fresh from the South Wales mines, poured into the holds of merchant ships, destined for the furnaces and fireplaces of countries throughout the world, now a waterfront of style and quality reigns.

With the Wales Millennium Centre, the Senedd (National Assembly for Wales) and the cosmopolitan offerings of Mermaid Quay among the attractions, Cardiff Bay now rightly claims to be more than just a good day out. In addition to its bay, Cardiff has a second heartbeat – the city centre, offering the sort of entertainment, shopping and international cuisine options you would expect in a major conurbation. The castle, Millennium Stadium and National Museum top the tourism treats, and a free bus shuttle around Cardiff's perimeter can save a lot of walking.

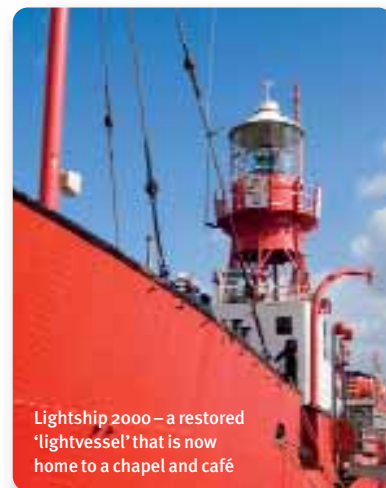
There is plenty of greenery stretching out from the city to the castle walls, but for

real rural relaxation head back to a CL base. One not far from Barry is Garn Farm, Wenvoe, which has been on the Club's network for more than 20 years.

Owner Marion Lakin has more than a few site 'regulars' and I met some who annually enjoy the easy access to Cardiff for events such as the British Speedway Grand Prix at the Millennium Stadium.

The site is a part-sloping, ¾-acre meadow behind the house. Pitches are sheltered by hedging along two sides and there is an open outlook towards the far boundary adjoining a horse paddock. Facilities here include electrics and a toilet in a small outbuilding beside the site.

You won't be drumming your fingers, wondering what to do around this part of Wales – heritage coastline, Penarth, St Fagans National History Museum – they are all on the doorstep of these CLs. But try Cardiff first; it's a capital city to visit. ■



Lightship 2000 – a restored 'lightvessel' that is now home to a chapel and café