



## Central College Study Abroad Bangor, Wales Student Survival Guide

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# Introduction

This handbook describes as completely as possible the Wales program and anticipates questions you may have about studying abroad. It is important you understand how the program is designed, what opportunities it offers and how it can all be integrated with your personal goals. You should know that the information here is the result of years of experience in Wales and has been modified and adjusted each year by students, directors, and the staff of the Central College Study Abroad department. There are many significant changes in the program from previous years, and it should not be assumed that what you have heard from returning students continues to be the case. This is one of the reasons why it is extremely important for you to read and understand the student survival guide. Some of the material will be important to you immediately because you will have to make important educational plans, not to mention travel plans. Other parts of the book may be more pertinent once you arrive in Wales, **but read the whole student survival guide and be sure to bring it with you to Wales**. The better prepared you are before you leave for Wales, the easier the integration and adaptation to the culture.

The student survival guide's most important purpose is to help you understand the goals of Central College Study Abroad programs: to acquire a broader perspective of the world and an understanding of another culture by living in another country; to learn how to cope with different sets of attitudes, values and beliefs; to study formally and informally the history and culture of another people; and to come to terms with essential differences.

We are here to offer advice and help with your pre-departure plans. Please do not hesitate to call, e-mail or write to The Central College Study Abroad department if you have any questions.

We wish you the best of luck!

## MAIN OFFICE

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# Required Travel Documents

## *Passports/Visas*

A valid US passport is required for travel to your program and possibly a visa. Your passport should be valid for up to six months past you anticipated departure date. Application for a passport should be made at least *three months before departure*. If you don't already have a passport, you should apply for one immediately. To obtain a passport application and to review all of the requirements for obtaining a passport, please check online at [www.travel.state.gov](http://www.travel.state.gov). If you require a visa, more information on obtaining one can be found in your online acceptance packet.

## *What if your passport is lost or stolen abroad?*

Should your passport be lost or stolen abroad, report the loss immediately to the local police and to the nearest U.S. embassy or consulate. If you can provide the consular officer with the information contained in your passport, it will facilitate issuance of a new one. Therefore, keep a photocopy of the issue page of your passport in a safe place. Leave a second copy of the passport with a relative or friend at home.

**For the most recent updates on the travel documents and visas please check the U.S. Department of State's travel website at [www.travel.state.gov](http://www.travel.state.gov).**

# Flight Arrangements

One of the early considerations in planning your time abroad is to make travel arrangements. **Please consult the Program Calendar in your online account before scheduling flight arrangements.** Check with several airlines, travel agents and websites – it's a good idea to shop around for the best deal! Do not assume that the first price you hear is the best — fares may vary by several hundred dollars. For more information check out the 'What to Know Before You Go' sheet in your online acceptance packet.

# Wales Program Information

The program in Wales has several dimensions. To begin, it serves as a contrast to the kind of European study program, including the several operated by Central College, which has as its focus a great capital city such as London, Paris or Vienna. It is a program of the countryside, yet it is not provincial since Wales is not a region of England but an ancient nation in its own right. Welsh culture antedates that of England by a thousand years. That culture, despite the inroads of industrialism in the 20th century, remains at the deepest level agrarian in traditions and values. Though the program is very much in and of Wales, it is, in a few important ways, larger than Wales as well. It offers a fresh and unusual perspective from which to view the larger panorama of Britain and Europe. To the young American who may have ancestral roots in Wales, Ireland or Scotland, it offers a chance for the discovery and exploration of Celtic origins. London, York, Stratford-on-Avon, Bath, Stonehenge and other places of interest in England are all within reach for weekend excursions as are Edinburgh and the Highlands of Scotland. Of course, the whole of the British Isles and the continent of Europe may be visited at more leisure during the extended vacation periods.

The program in Wales should prove attractive to the student who enjoys outdoor life. Whether or not you take advantage of the many Outdoor Pursuits opportunities, you are going to be in a country and in an area – the

Snowdonia National Park – where a variety of outdoor recreational activity is available. The Student Union of Bangor University sponsors a number of outdoor clubs and societies which organize frequent weekend activities and you are required to join at least one of these organizations. The Wales program offers the opportunity for study in a European country that is completely English speaking yet at the same time speaks Welsh, the oldest living tongue in Europe. It is hoped that through understanding Wales as a small nation struggling to maintain its identity, American students can look back upon their own “American” experience with a fresh insight.

Finally, because of its affiliation with a Welsh institution, and because of the closely-knit nature of the Welsh national community, the program offers the American student a chance for a sense of genuine integration into overlapping entities of college, town, countryside and nation; a chance to realize what the Scottish poet Hugh MacDiarmid meant when he said of Wales, “a great nation is not necessarily large.”

The individual American student will be interested in coming to Wales for a variety of reasons. It is our belief that one of those reasons should always be a genuine desire to learn about Wales and the Welsh, in both an academic and an experiential way.

## Wales Program Academic Information

The Central College Study Abroad program in Wales is intended to give you the opportunity to learn about the country while experiencing Welsh life and culture. The program offers many different course options, including the Central College Outdoor Pursuits class, direct enrollment at the Bangor University.

### *Required Course*

All students are required to take: Introduction to the History and Culture of Wales (3 SH). This class is taught and arranged by the program director, and the course is designed to help you study Wales from a cross-curricular perspective, encompassing such areas as history, politics, geography, environment, cultural identity, nationalism and literature. You are encouraged to draw from your own academic background in contributing to the course, which makes the relevant to all disciplines. The various fieldtrips and excursions within Wales during the semester complement material discussed in class. Full year students must take this requirement in their first semester.

### *Required Readings*

Students are strongly advised to read the following publications as they will help considerably in relation to the required class and will help the students gain knowledge about Wales, which is, after all, the reason why students come to Wales. You can find these books at very reasonable prices on Amazon

Julie Brake and Christine Jones, **Teach Yourself World Cultures: Wales**  
Published by Contemporary Books/McGraw Hill, 2004  
For order enquiries contact McGraw Hill Customer Services, PO Box 545,  
Blacklick, OH 43004-0545.  
Tel: 1-800-722-4726.

Jan Morris, **Wales**, Penguin Books, 1999.

Jan Morris, **A Writer's House in Wales**. Published by the National Geographic Society, Washington 2002. ISBN 0792265238.

**Insight Guide: Wales**  
APA Publications. ISBN 9624214700

Outdoor Pursuits is one of the more attractive options for the Wales program. Not only do you get to have some adventure, you get to explore the amazing Welsh region.

## *Outdoor Pursuits*

Outdoors Pursuits (EXSC 620W) is an outdoor adventure class which combines practical and theoretical aspects of the field. The class will be all day, one day per week and will consist of different outdoor activities each week. The class is only offered to students on the Central College program and is worth 3 semester hours of credit. Activities covered may include rock climbing, river and sea kayaking, sailing, ropes and mountaineering (summer and winter conditions). Some activities may not be offered in both semesters. A staff-student ratio of 1:10 ensures the best standards of instruction and safety. An additional fee of approximately £180, payable on site after you have registered in the class, is required to cover the extra cost of accommodation, transportation and staffing for field trips.

## *Bangor University Undergraduate Courses*

All students will enroll in courses at Bangor University. All classes at Bangor University are worth 3 American credits, but please note there will be a translation between the Welsh and American credit system (see next page for translation formula). You will receive more information about this from your program adviser. Please consult your program adviser or the program director with questions.

Bangor University offers classes in nearly 30 different departments. You can view all of the course options online at this link: <https://www.bangor.ac.uk/ar/gazettes/>

## *Registration Procedures*

Prior to departure, you will complete a Pre-Registration Form in which you will choose a college to "enroll". **Please read the guidelines for completing this form. For example, if you plan to take a Psychology course while at Bangor University, you may choose the "School of Psychology"**. While Bangor is able to provide over the internet a course listing well in advance of the arrival date for the program, class times will be available a couple of months before you arrive in Wales. There might be time clashes between chosen classes, and if this is the case, you can opt to take other classes after arrival. We attempt to schedule the required class so it doesn't conflict with undergraduate courses.

Once you are on site in Bangor, you will visit each of the departments in which your courses are taught to obtain signatures approving enrollment in each particular class. Once this is done, the registration process is complete. You will be advised of the registration process during the program orientation. At this you will have a chance to listen to and ask questions of Bangor University international office staff and be guided by them and the program director.

### *Independent Studies*

Opportunities abound in Wales for students to pursue independent study in other languages, the arts and many other fields. In most cases, Central College cannot supervise or give credit for independent study. Consequently, if you want academic credit and grades, you should make an individual arrangement with your adviser at your home institution. Normally, this means you will regularly correspond with your adviser and provide evidence to bring back to your home campus for evaluation.

### *The Educational System in Wales*

The academic system at Bangor University, which is typical of a British college, in some ways resembles American institutions. Your courses will consist of smaller lecture groups, which meet one to two times each week, depending on the credit value of the course. Typically, these groups will range in size from 20-35 students, although in a few courses there may be lecture groups as large as 60-70.

You may find, however, that the professors approach the curriculum in a manner slightly different from what you are used to at home. Less emphasis may be placed on following a strict syllabus. A more topical lecture approach may be used by many of the faculty. For example, a course may have a core reading list of five books, but these will not necessarily be covered in sequence or directly referred to in the lectures. Students may not be tested on outside reading, but familiarity with the text should be apparent in their class discussion and written work.

At times Americans may feel that there is a lack of urgency in the week-to-week attitudes of both British students and instructors. This should not be interpreted as a sign of a more lax academic standard. The British work under a different philosophy and timetable. If you have difficulty functioning in less than a rigidly structured academic environment, you may want to give this matter thorough consideration. Keep an open mind. Most students adapt to the British system with little or no difficulty.

The typical course at Bangor University involves writing several essays and taking a final examination. Students must complete all written work to get credit for a course. Whatever your grade is at the time, professors expect students to complete each essay. If you neglect an essay, you may fail an integral section of the course. Students who do not complete a final examination may fail the course.

You will receive grades at Bangor University on a numerical scale. A mark of 38 is the minimum passing grade, and a mark of 70 or above is considered a distinction; it would be equivalent to an American system where 70 is the minimum pass and 100 is the top grade. Students who have completed all written course work and attended class regularly will not receive a grade that is lower than their weighted average. The director will translate your marks at the end of each term, as follows:

65+	A	51-52	C+
63-64	A-	43-50	C
61-62	B+	40-42	C-

55-60	B	38-39	D
53-54	B	< 38	F

traveling in the fall or spring, you will

Remember to which  
country you are  
traveling! If you are  
not need many light  
summer clothes in  
the UK.

## Packing

### Clothing

There is limited storage space for clothing, and many students find that they have brought far more than necessary.

Pack clothing that is easy to care for and can easily be mix and matched or layered. A few basic items include:

- A good pair of walking shoes. It is best if they are waterproof.
- One or two dressier outfits for internships, special occasions or a night out. Nice trousers, button down shirts, ties and a jacket for men. Nice trousers, button down shirts, dresses or skirts for women.
- Generally, students at Bangor University dress much like students on an American campus.
- Depending on where you are from, you may find life in Bangor a bit more “outdoorsy” than you are used to. Bring a warm, waterproof jacket with a hood and warm headgear.
- Bring along a good pair of hiking boots/walking shoes. They are cheaper to buy in the U.S., and even if you don’t take Outdoor Pursuits, you’ll need boots for excursions and the tour of Wales.
- Pack some summer-weight clothing as it is warm the first month of fall semester, and there could be some nice balmy weather in late May and during June. By that we mean that temperatures can get well into the 70s – which in Britain is a heat wave.
- If you cannot get everything in your luggage, you can send the surplus by surface mail. Pack it in cardboard cartons, mark it USED CLOTHING and ship it well in advance. This system is not expensive but will usually take six to 10 weeks. Ask the Program Director for the address to which such packages can be sent. Do not try to ship a trunk. It is expensive (\$200 and up), slow and tiresome, particularly when you find out how difficult it is to pick up.
- Flip flops or shower shoes are a great thing to have when traveling.
- Swimming suit. Even if you’re not studying in a warm destination, Don’t forget your you never know where you may travel! umbrella! It rains much
- A few well-selected pieces of jewelry will suffice for the year. Leave more frequently in expensive jewelry at home!
- Bring an extra sweatshirt or t-shirt with your home college logo; you Wales than in most can do some trading of items like these with new friends. parts of the U.S.

- Keep in mind that you might consider traveling during the winter or spring breaks to countries where the climate will be either colder or warmer, and pack accordingly.

## *Linens*

You will need towels and wash cloths as Bangor University will not provide you with these. They are available cheaply in Bangor. Bedding and pillows are provided in the dorms and will include a comforter, cover sheet, bedsheet, pillow and pillow case.

## *Toiletries*

Generally speaking, you do not need to bring an excess of toiletries. Bangor has excellent downtown shopping, and you can buy anything you need in the way of toiletries. However, if you have a particular brand of shampoo or toothpaste that you cannot do without, you may want to bring some, as you cannot be guaranteed of getting the same brands in Wales.

For more information on packing, check out the 'What to Know Before You Go' sheet in your online acceptance packet.

# Housing

The program director arranges all housing in Bangor University dormitories in advance. The program director has no direct control over dormitory rules or policies. Students should also be aware that the quality of the experience of future generations of American students depends on maintaining a good relationship between the program and the Bangor University.

All students on the program will be housed at the Ffriddoedd campus housing site in Upper Bangor in self catering accommodation which means meals will be prepared on your own. The accommodation consists of a single room with private bathroom facilities, single bed, desk, chair and internet access. The rooms are part of an apartment style accommodation which consists of 8 rooms on each floor and a well-appointed kitchen with the regular kitchen facilities. You are responsible for buying your own kitchen utensils, and these can be bought very cheaply in downtown stores. There are quite a few Pound Stores which are the equivalent of the American Dollar Stores.

Students can view the type of accommodation on this Bangor University website:

<http://www.bangor.ac.uk/accommodation/halls/info.php.en>. Students will be in different halls and the Halls Office will designate each student to a particular dorm. Only one program student will usually be based in individual flats. All residents are subject to the rules and procedures of the residence and agree to accept the consequences of failure to observe and follow them. The program director has the right to dismiss students from the residence.

# Arrival

All students on the program should fly into Manchester International Airport in Manchester, England. Normally, flights from the U.S. leave for Manchester in the evening around 7 or 8 p.m. Bangor is six hours ahead of Central Standard Time.



On arriving at the airport, you will need to allow yourself **at least** an hour to go through customs and immigration and collect your luggage. The program director will meet incoming students at Terminal 2 (arrivals) of Manchester

International Airport. We use this terminal because it is where the bus parking lot is located. As you enter Terminal 2, there is a “meeting point” area to your left where you should situate yourself and wait for the director to arrive. This is not clearly marked but it is where all the seating is located. Most flights from the United States arrive between 7 a.m. and 10

a.m., and the director should be at the terminal no later than about 10:15 a.m. If you arrive at any other terminal, you will have to catch a courtesy shuttle bus or walk over to the arrivals hall at Terminal 2 and go to the meeting area. We will not be picking students up from any other terminal.

A charter bus, for which there will be a charge of approximately 15 British pounds, will be provided to take the entire group to Bangor. This will save you approximately 25 pounds over the cost of the train or bus on your own, in addition to the headaches of figuring out schedules, changing trains, etc. The bus will leave Manchester International Airport at approximately 11:00 a.m. The bus will NOT be able to pick up students after this time. **However, if all the flights arrive early, the group will leave the airport approximately 90 minutes after the last student flight arrives.** Try to get a flight that arrives before 9.30am so that you will have plenty of time.

### *Early Arrival*

While you can travel to Bangor early if you want to, you will not be able to take up your room on campus until the allocated day. Students are advised to stay in Manchester and have a look around the city before they come to Bangor.

### By Train:

You can travel directly from the train station at Manchester International Airport to Bangor, and this usually involves one change at Manchester Piccadilly station. The train takes about 3 hours and a single/one way ticket will cost about £30 or \$39. Just follow the signs at the airport to the railway station and ask the agent which would be cheaper, a single (one way) ticket to Bangor or a “day return” ticket. Do not buy a first-class ticket. The difference in comfort is not worth the price.

### By Bus:

You may want to consider coming by bus. The cost is about half, but it is less comfortable and will take you much longer. If you want to take the bus, look for the National Express ticket booth at the airport and tell them you want to take the bus to Bangor. A one-way fare will cost about £15 or \$25.

### *Once in Bangor :*

If you arrive in Bangor by train, you will find taxis waiting outside the station in Bangor. **Tell the driver you would like to go to the security lodge on the Ffriddoedd accommodation site in Upper Bangor.** The porter on duty will show you to your room.

There may or may not be taxis available at the bus “station,” which is situated in the centre of town. There will be no one there meeting buses, as we have no way of predicting which bus you might be on. If you are traveling to Bangor on your own and plan to take the bus, make sure to let the program director know

the date and time you plan to arrive. Once your bus reaches Bangor, call the program director's cell phone from a public telephone and the director will come and pick you up at the station.

## Local Transportation

### *Taxis*

These are freely available in Bangor, and you might want to use a taxi when you have heavy luggage to carry. Bangor is a small town, and it is not far to walk from one end of town to the other. There are many taxi firms in town, and you will be given a list in your orientation packet after you arrive.

### *Buses*

There is a central bus station in downtown Bangor, and this provides the cheapest option for short distance local traveling. Bangor is surrounded by many outlying villages, and there are many bus routes and bus companies that operate services on a local level.

On a national level, Bangor is served by the National Express coach service, and this operates between Bangor and many larger cities. Traveling by national bus is cheaper than traveling by train, but it takes a much longer. It is possible to buy a student discount card for traveling on National Express. You will also be advised of bus travel during orientation.

### *Trains*

There is a mainline railway station in Bangor which connects with all mainline stations throughout mainland U.K. It is by far the easiest way to get about and to travel to the airports. In your orientation packet, you will be given an application form for a student discount card, the **16-25 Railcard**. This costs around £30, and you will get a 33% discount on all railway journeys that you make within the U.K.. It is well worthwhile to buy these cards.

Some students may purchase Britrail passes in the States before they come over, and past students have found this to be useful. The pass will give you a limited number of train journeys free, and it would be useful for those coming in the fall semester when there is no long break and during the spring for the two week Easter break. Eurorail passes are convenient for students who are contemplating traveling for about a week or two weeks in Europe by rail which is the easiest way to travel. These Eurorail passes can only be bought in the U.S.

### *Ferries*

Traveling to Dublin, Ireland is easy from Bangor by train and ferry. Ferries leave up to four times a day from the ferry port of Holyhead – about 25 minutes by train from Bangor. The ferry will take passengers directly to Dublin. Students can also purchase travel tickets directly to Dublin from Bangor railway station, and the train from Bangor will meet the ferry. Once in Ireland students can travel to all parts, including Northern Ireland and Belfast. You can also purchase train tickets to all train destinations in Ireland at Bangor railway station. The program director will advise you about traveling by ferry during orientation.

As a foreign student, many people will be interested in your opinions. Be prepared to discuss anything from sports to politics.

# Communication

## *Mail*

Regular airmail generally takes five to 10 days to travel between Europe and the United States. When you address letters to the United States, remember to write “U.S.A.” on the letter as well as “airmail” or use an airmail sticker. Lightweight airmail writing paper and envelopes, which are available at stationary stores, will help keep your postage costs lower.

## *E-mail*

All students will be given an IT account on arrival at Bangor University and can access the internet immediately. As all students live on campus, access is relatively convenient, but most students prefer to continue using their existing e-mail accounts from home. Wifi is available in each dorm room, and there are also several computer labs on campus.

## *Skype and Facetime*

Students with family and friends back at home via *Skype* or *Facetime*. It is a very affordable way to speak to friends and family via the internet. Visit [www.skype.com](http://www.skype.com) to set up a free Skype account and to learn about using the program.

## *Good Communication Management*

Communication with your friends and family at home is easy and accessible through the internet and cell phones, but this can be both a blessing and a curse. While these lines of communication allow you to stay in touch, they can also interfere with your adaptation to the local culture and give you an easy out when you're feeling homesick. Below is a basic list of Dos and Don'ts for managing your communication home:

- Do call your family to assure them you have arrived safely at the program site.
- Do remember to factor in the time difference so you're not calling Mom at 3 a.m.
- Do remember to call or answer for all pre-arranged phone calls.
- Do use the internet to stay in touch by email or start blogs to share with those at home.
- Don't use the phone as your first line of defense for problem solving. First think, make a plan and solve your own problem. This is a great step toward independence!
- Don't make calls from hotel phones. There is usually an expensive surcharge.
- If you do call a friend or family member when you are feeling down or during a problem, be sure to call them back to let them know you are feeling better or the problem is solved.
- Limit your time on the internet. Don't use the internet as a way to avoid your new surroundings. Spend your time developing friendships with those around you!

For more information on communication, check out the 'What to Know Before You Go' sheet in your online acceptance packet.

In case of an emergency, call the program director first! Do not call someone in the U.S. first in case of emergency.

# Maps

It's good to know as much about your host country as possible before you go abroad. Here are a few maps to familiarize you with the area.



