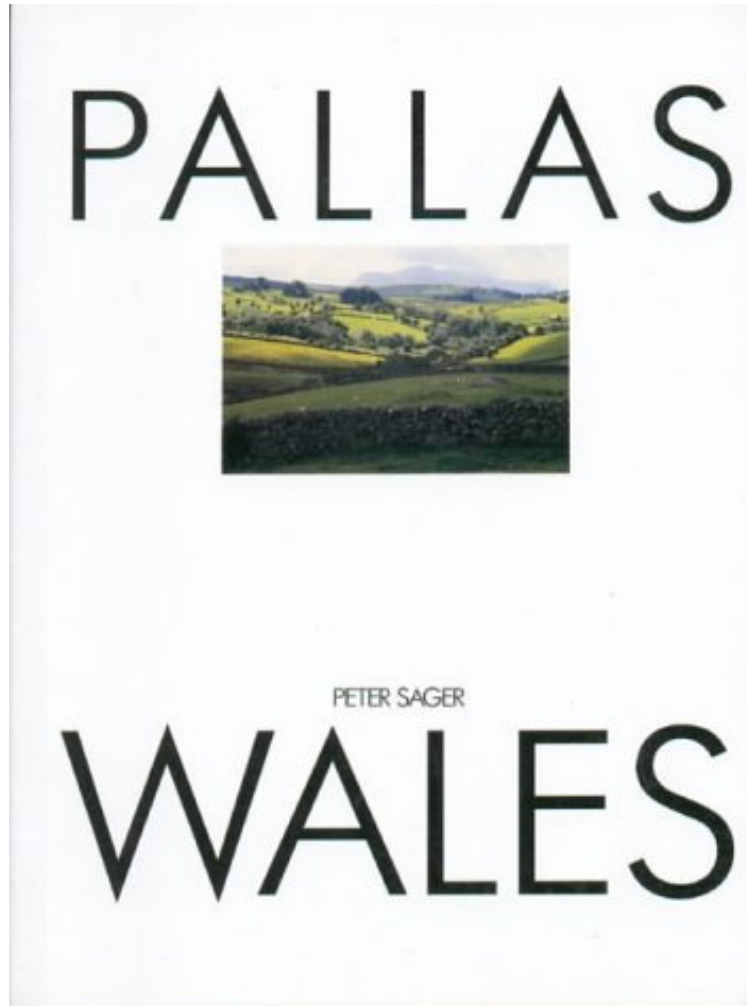


(Free pdf) Wales (Pallas Guides)

## Wales (Pallas Guides)

*Peter Sager*

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**Peter Sager : Wales (Pallas Guides)** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Wales (Pallas Guides):

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Historical Wales By Rosemary Martin Wales was the home of one line of ancestry, so this book has fulfilled and more the hopes I had of learning of places, the history and something of the culture of different areas of Wales. It has stories, photos and illustrations of people, places and culturally important sites, views, and more. It is filled with facts and stories ranging from within my memory to way back in history. It is passionate in the language, and all embracing in the compass of the contents. 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Ideal armchair traveller's companion By John L Murphy Very well-written, considering that this German critic (I see that he's also prepared Pallas guides to Southwest England, East Anglia, and the West Country as well as Oxford Cambridge and, in German, "Schotsland.") has David Henry Wilson's solid (or transparent?) translation to filter his

own personality and perspective through. Pallas Guides apparently are British, so this is the first one I've seen. They're tinged with the Blue Guides cultural sophistication, but with less local color re: the natural resources, architecture, and the historical nuts-and-bolts of the edifices. Instead, this book's laid out going from the southeastern border at Monmouth to go up the coast along Cardiff and Swansea with byways into the mining valleys, industrial archeology, fortified and later eccentric castles (Cardiff again!) and Roman ruins. Sager then follows the coast up to "Little England" at the tip of the peninsula, ending the half-loop around Fishguard. Then, he circles within Mid-Wales and the Marches before starting again at the border to re-enter Wales along the Northern coast, gradually and thoughtfully considering the debate over jobs vs. scenery in Snowdonia, admiring the Menai bridge, explaining carefully the controversy over holiday homes vs. waiting lists for council homes in such former Welsh-speaking enclaves as Anglesey and Lleyn, and then concluding powerfully with R.S. Thomas' poem "Reservoirs" and the last fight against the tide of anglicization and tourism in the mountains. Throughout, Sager knows well the contradictions as a German travel writer celebrating this compromised Principality (and he tells us precisely why the English designated it as such-- a fact I as an American had never understood before) within a kingdom. He fairly presents the demands of those wanting increased autonomy: economist Leopold Kohr, folksinger Dafydd Iwan, and Hay-on-Wye's bookseller Richard Booth among them. He also counters with an understanding of the appeal of rural Wales for incomers and visitors. He highlights in self-contained essays on such topics as the language debate, slate mining, Lord Bute and William Burgess' medievalism, the Romantic vogue for the picturesque, the Ladies of Llangollen, the demise of the chapels, Aberfan's disaster, and "The Manor House of Servants" at Erddig Park many lesser-known subjects (compared to most tour guides) deserving attention. Blaenau and Ffestiniog are treated as two daughters, one grey, one golden, competing for a suitor's eye. Paintings and décor gain as much scrutiny, if not more, than Eryri and Cader Idris. One example of his scope: he considers "yr hen iaith," the ancient language, deftly. Sager suggests that the "problem has solidified into a kind of national monument: for some it is an ancient pedestal without a statue, and for others a statue looking for a base." (66) He wryly notes but three pages into his text that the dragon's tongue stands as the emblem of the Welsh Language Society (Cymdeithas yr Iaith Gymraeg). "The amputated tongue is as much a symbol of amputation as it is of language." (12) Sager's rather pessimistic about the viability of the tongue, and his own guidebook, as he well knows, contributes to the tension of Welsh heritage. It brings tourism, it creates jobs, it lures incomers. A few come to Nant Gwrtheyrn on Lleyn to learn Welsh; but they learn it in a village that lost all of its original, Welsh-speaking, families after the last granite quarry closed in the 1950s. Many more flood since then into the Lleyn peninsula for brief or permanent escape from English cities. (A sign of anglicization: I cannot include the proper Welsh circumflexion vowel mark for Lleyn into this review format!) Somehow, Sager manages to move you along the Welsh itinerary steadily while pausing to share interviews and contexts without making it all sound like potted history or rambling erudition. Dylan Thomas, Saunders Lewis, the painter Richard Wilson, John Cowper Powys, Adelina Patti, Robert Owen, William Morgan, Gwen John, Mary Elizabeth Thompson, Eric Gill, Gwynfor Evans, George Borrow, and Arthur Clough all come alive in these pages. You may not know them all beforehand, but you will be interested in each one after you read his short but inviting introductions. He integrates further material into his the first sixty pages, taking on such icons as the Eisteddfod, the proliferation of castles, and rugby to illustrate deftly his own knowledge of how such items enrich our understanding of Welsh culture. With Sager, you travel from your armchair. His simple but appropriate photo inserts enhance the presentation, and a supplement (I refer to the 3rd ed. 1998 rather than the latest 4th ed. 2002) specifies holidays, gives a short reading list, a small excursus on various tourist topics, and a small list of places to shop, sleep, drink, and sightsee. I do note no other than the two general road maps. This is one drawback; the visitor will need a much more detailed map, as the text like the maps remains largely "general" about exactly how to get to most of the places mentioned. This guide might best be employed in preliminary planning a trip, researching a place, or using it as I have, simply to get the sense of Wales-- albeit from afar. I close with an example (p. 75) of how efficiently yet skillfully constructed are Sager's entries. This is the very first town he describes. He combines the necessary detail with a narrative command of his subject, combined with a personal touch that expresses his interest in whatever he shows you. "Like an inverted funnel Monnow Street leads uphill from the bridge to the town centre: broad and roomy down below, where the markets were always held, but increasingly narrow as it climbs upward to where St Stephen's Gate used to stand. It's a perfectly normal street, with its old houses, shops and pubs, and all the usual small-town bustle-- but then suddenly it broadens out into an unexpected square that echoes with a distant heroism: Agincourt Square. And here our little town takes on a new and unforeseen greatness. A cue for the entrance of Harry Monmouth."

Wales is the land of Owain Glendower and of Lloyd George, of Neil Kinnock and Laura Ashley, of unpronounceable names, of choirs, chapels and narrow gauge railways, of lonely beaches, castles, and ancient mountains. It's also a nation, different from its neighbor over the last 2,000 years and still defiant. Peter Sager explores the whole Principality in a journey that takes us up over the top of Snowdon and down under Milk Wood. Every traveller to Wales should find this guide a practical, informative, lyrical, penetrating, witty, and altogether indispensable companion.

“Indispensable cultural and historical companions.” -- TRAVELLER  
From the Publisher  
These handsomely designed travel guides provide invaluable introductions to countries and regions in Europe and Britain, offering not only practical travel details but also a wealth of information on culture and history. Literate, amusing, colorful, and informative, the Pallas Guides are rich and rewarding companions for all travelers, whether on the road or in the armchair.