

# Big Pit National Coal Museum





## Background information

Big Pit opened as a museum in 1983, and operated independently until it became a national museum, part of Amgueddfa Cymru – National Museum Wales, in 2001.

In 2006 a £7.1 million redevelopment and improvement programme was completed, and Big Pit won the Gulbenkian Prize for UK Museum of the Year.





## What will I find there?

Big Pit tells the story of coal mining and the way it shaped modern Wales.

The underground tour, which lasts 50 minutes and is guided by an ex-miner, gives visitors the opportunity to see the places where people worked. The miner guide tells the story of Welsh mining and also relates information from his personal experience of working underground.

The original colliery buildings include the winding engine house, blacksmith's shop, fan house and surface stables, and the original function of these buildings is interpreted within each.

The pithead baths building houses the Museum's main exhibitions.

The Mining Galleries give visitors the opportunity to see large mining machinery in context by taking a tour through a simulated underground setting with a virtual miner.

## What story do we tell?

Big Pit shows how technology and social life in the mining areas of Wales changed and improved from the early nineteenth century to the late twentieth century.

The Mining Galleries and pithead baths exhibitions illustrate how coal cutting changed from one man working with a mandrel (pickaxe) to million-pound hydraulic equipment.





## The Pithead Baths exhibitions:

The Pithead Baths exhibitions show how:

- health and safety for miners changed from cloth cap and 'muffer over the mouth' to high-vis clothing and technologically advanced dust control.
- developments in mine safety lessened the likelihood of hundreds of men being killed in a single explosion.
- the development of pithead baths transformed the lives of miners' wives by eliminating the drudgery involved in preparing baths and drying clothing in the home.
- the 'profit before people' approach of the old mine owners was replaced when the industry was nationalised in 1947, and the technological advances associated with this.
- collective action – trade unionism – improved pay and conditions in the coal industry.

For more information please follow this link  
[www.museumwales.ac.uk/bigpit/learning](http://www.museumwales.ac.uk/bigpit/learning)

