

# National Roman Legion Museum





## Background information

The National Roman Legion Museum is set within the Roman Empire's furthest outpost.

In AD 75 the Romans built a fortress at Caerleon that stood guard over the region for over 200 years. The National Roman Legion Museum stands within what remains of this ancient Roman fortress.

Caerleon was one of only 3 permanent fortresses built in Roman Britain and was home to over 5,000 soldiers, living in barracks within the fortress. The remains of these barracks can be seen today, along with an amphitheatre and roman baths.

A museum was first built here in 1850, making it one of the oldest museums in Britain. Today at Caerleon you can learn what made the Romans a formidable force and how life wouldn't be the same without them.

## What will I find there?

The National Roman Legion Museum tells the story of the Roman conquest and occupation of south-east Wales. The galleries tell the story of what daily life would have been like for the soldiers stationed at Caerleon as well as other people in the region.

The galleries are filled with artefacts that show how people would have lived, fought, worshipped and died around 2,000 years ago. Alongside the galleries you can also enjoy the sights, sounds and smells of the Museum's beautiful Roman Garden.

A replica full-sized barrack room gives visitors the opportunity to step back in time to experience life as a soldier by trying on replica armour.

Outside the Museum there are also a number of Cadw sites in Caerleon, including an amphitheatre, Roman baths and the only Legionary barracks on show in Europe.

## What story do we tell?

The National Roman Legion Museum tells the story of the Roman conquest and occupation of south-east Wales and the daily life of the people living in the area at this time.





### Daily life:

The display of artefacts in the galleries show what life would have been like during the Roman occupation of the area. Artefacts such as frying pans and amphorae (pottery vessels) give us clues as to what food and drink was consumed. Wine, olive oil and fish sauce were transported from all over the Roman Empire to Caerleon.

Objects such as cleaning kits and dice also offer a glimpse into Roman life. The Roman Baths would have been a very popular place, not just for getting yourself clean, but also for playing games with friends.

### Military life:

Roman soldiers were stationed at Caerleon for almost 200 years between AD 75 and AD 287. At its peak 5,000 soldiers lived in the barracks at Caerleon.

Take a close look at the life-sized models of Roman soldiers, complete with their armour and weapons. Examples of some weapons are found in the display cases in the galleries. These include caltrops, a weapon used to pierce the feet of advancing enemies and their horses.

Weapons and armour were very important to the Roman army. Without their excellent armour and weaponry they would not have been as successful in creating the Roman Empire.

A reconstructed life-sized barrack room can also be found to give an idea of what life as a Roman soldier stationed at Caerleon was like.



## Religion and Burial:

Roman religion was very different to many of the religions around today. The Romans honoured many gods and looked to them for protection. On display at the Museum is an altar stone to the Roman Goddess Salus, the goddess of health, but there were also gods dedicated to war, love, wealth and many other things.

Romans who died at Caerleon were buried outside the fortress. Some were buried with objects inside their coffins, with the belief that they would take these objects into the next world. In the Museum you can take a look at a coffin complete with the skeleton of a man from the 2nd/early 3rd century.

## The Garden:

The Museum includes a Roman Garden. Romans planted fruit, vegetables and herbs for both food and medicine. Many plants were also used for religious purposes.

Romans were also among the first people to use gardens for decorative purposes and as places to relax and unwind. The Roman Garden at Caerleon includes a triclinium – an outdoor dining area.



## Cadw sites:

A visit to Caerleon wouldn't be complete without visiting some of the other Roman remains in the village. These include the most complete Roman amphitheatre in Britain, the only remains of Roman barracks in Europe and the Roman baths.

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

