

## Introduction

### Contacts

Swansea Marina tel 01792 470310 VHF #80

Swansea Barrage VHF #18 c/s Towe Lock (pronounced "Towee Lock")

Swansea Yacht Club tel 01792 469084 (0900 to 1400) [www.sysac.org.uk/](http://www.sysac.org.uk/)

The City of Swansea is established at the junction of the River Tawe and Swansea Bay. This junction has now been sealed with a Barrage (through which you must lock), and Swansea Marina is set in a former commercial dock which lies on your port hand side as you enter the River Tawe, after passing through the barrage lock. The Marina has its own lock through which you must pass and this maintains the water levels within at 1 m above the impounded level past the barrage.

Nevertheless in a similar manner to Cardiff, the water in the River Tawe is maintained at all states of the tide, never drying out.

Swansea Harbour handles plenty of commercial shipping in separate docks, has a dredged approach channel, and is easy to enter even in bad weather. It is considered a harbour of refuge.

The only problem could be that the barrage lock has fixed hours (details later), and cannot operate at dead low water springs.

The maritime quarter around Swansea has been developed with plenty of new buildings and services, and is an attractive stop between Milford Haven and Cardiff. Most Marine services can be found nearby, while cafes restaurants and pubs abound around the regenerated docksides. To complete the picture there is a beach just outside.

## Approach

If approaching from the South East pass outside of Nash Sand and

..... Scarweather Sands, and in particular give the Nash Sands and their buoyage a good offing as there are currents and overfalls (Southerly Cardinal Mid Nash (Q(6)+LFI15s) and Westerly Cardinal West Nash (VQ(9)10s)).

A generally WNW course made good from here will take you past the South Scar southerly Cardinal buoy (Q(6)+LFI.15s) and the West Scar westerly Cardinal buoy (Q(9)15s) on your starboard side. At this point it is safe to shape up a course directly for the Swansea entrance channel which lies to the north with a touch of West. Watch out for the tide setting you towards Scarweather Sands after you make your turn northwards if it is flooding. The intrepid yachtsman or motorboater can cut inside the Nash Sands and the Scarweather Sands in the right tidal conditions with good visibility, but this is not recommended for newcomers and it is not proposed to describe that passage here either.

Further Pilotage Directions...

Any approach from the West will involve rounding Mumbles Head at a good offing to avoid the Mixon Shoal, as marked by the red can buoy Mixon (Fl.(2)R.5s). Next make good a NE course and locate the southerly Cardinal buoy SW Inner Green Grounds (Q(6)+LFI.15s) which marks the entrance to the dredged channel approaching Swansea. Off Mumbles Head the tidal stream runs westwards from high water Swansea, and turns eastwards at low water Swansea.

There is an anti clockwise tidal flow around Swansea Bay from 3 1/2 hours before high water Swansea to 6 hours after high water Swansea. In these conditions a tidal race may develop off Mumbles Head. From low water Swansea to about 3 1/2 hours before high water Swansea this flow reverses and the tide sets towards Swansea from Mumbles Head.

The approach channel to Swansea's breakwaters is dredged and well marked by lateral buoyage, and carries 4 m plus depths all the way up to the commercial docks. Other than at the lowest of LWS there is no need for small craft to use this channel at all. It can be paralleled on either side (preferably the west side). In fact at dead LWS the barrage lock will not operate... it needs a minimum of 1 m over CD, so in these conditions there is no point in approaching. For a first approach it would be wise to stick fairly close to the buoyage as Swansea presents a long grey vista in which it can be difficult to identify the entrance channel until quite close. In the nineties the end of the Eastern breakwater was painted red (which was very confusing the first time I saw it) but it is not known if that is still the case.

In more suitable tidal conditions make your approach, keeping a sharp eye out for shipping emerging from the docks or coming up behind you in the channel. Swansea Docks Radio operates on VHF channel 14, it would be wise to listen out.

A holding area outside of the channel for small craft waiting for permission to enter is designated as to the south west of the west Pier. From here you will be able to observe the traffic signals shown from within the breakwaters (clearly marked on the chart). These consist of three rows of vertically arranged lights, and the only one of interest to small craft is the middle light of the left hand column.

When this particular light shows red, small craft have to keep out of the approach channel and port. When this particular light shows green, then you can make your way to the barrage lock. If you have been kept lurking around for a long while, and there is no sign of any traffic, but the appropriate light is still showing red... they've probably forgotten to change it. In these circumstances it would be worth calling Swansea Docks Radio on VHF channel 14 to clarify.

Once you have clearance to enter pass centrally between the two piers, then fork off to port for the barrage lock. You will see some holding buoys (if you need to wait for a lock), leave these to starboard if passing. It is not viable to use these at LWS as you may well ground. The barrage lock keeper works on VHF channel 18 callsign Tawe (pronounced "Towee") Lock, and it can hold around 25 yachts.

The signal lights for this lock (same for the Marina lock) are:

2 Red Lights = Lock closed do not proceed.

1 Red Light = Wait

1 Green Light = Enter lock with caution

Red and Green shown together = Free flow operating, proceed with caution.

The hours of operation are 7 AM to 7 PM (10 PM at weekends) during the winter months, and from 7 AM to 10 PM during the summer daily. The last lockout is 30 minutes before closing time, and the Marina lock works the same hours.

Swansea Marina and it's lock work on VHF channel 80, (telephone 01792 470310), we provide a link to their website below:

<http://www.swanseamarina.org.uk/>

**The lock entrance to the Marina is immediately on your port side as you pass through the barrage lock. Do not be confused by the pontoons and yachts dead ahead as you leave the Barrage (Tawe) Lock; they belong to the Swansea Yacht Club and they are not permitted to welcome visitors (ie compete with the Marina)**

## Berthing

Follow directions from the Marina staff, who will run through

.... procedures with you and direct you to a berth. In 2021 they are charging £2.83 per metre per night; that includes VAT and charges for the use of the Tawe Lock. There is a minimum charge of £17.28. Shore power is charged for separately.

The marina website can be found at [www.swanseamarina.org.uk/](http://www.swanseamarina.org.uk/) and they have a handbook on line at [Handbook \(swanseamarina.org.uk\)](#)

## Facilities

All normal Marina facilities are available including water and electricity (by card) on the pontoons, 24-hour toilets and showers (free) ashore (pumping Marine heads is forbidden in the Marina). Laundry facilities are available here too.

Diesel pumps are located on either side of the Marina Lock; diesel and gas bottles are available from 7.00a.m until half an hour before the office is closed. Getting petrol will involve a hike to Sainsburys - about 15 minutes so your shore trolley would be advisable unless you have a crew of humpers!!

Full boatyard facilities are available with a 25 tonne travel lift, a crane for masts and engines etc, and various on-site specialists. Hull repairs to fibreglass and wood, plus engineering and electrical repairs are available.

Various brokers, and other businesses of use to the yachtsman are congregated around the Marina... see the directory.

The Force Four Chandlery has closed and the nearest one is now at Cardiff

All town facilities are virtually on top of the Marina, including the choice of two large supermarkets, a shopping centre, banks, cashpoints etc. The railway station is nearby with connections to Cardiff Central (for connections to England and beyond, Newport and London Paddington to the East).

Apart from local services the nearby bus station has a National Express service operating eastbound to Heathrow Airport, Gatwick Airport, London, Birmingham, Cardiff and Bristol, and westbound to Llanelli, Carmarthen and Haverfordwest.

Various museums, a leisure centre, cinema and theatre complete the local picture.

For trailer sailers, the nearest slipways are at Mumbles to the west of Swansea.

## What To Do

### General amenities

On the Waterfront, Swansea Bay has a five mile sweep of coastline which features a beach, promenade, children's lido, leisure pool, marina and maritime quarter featuring the newest and oldest museums in Wales - the National

Waterfront Museum and Swansea Museum. Also situated in the maritime quarter is the Dylan Thomas Centre which celebrates the life and work of the author with its permanent exhibition 'Dylan Thomas - Man and Myth'. The centre is also the focal point for the annual Dylan Thomas Festival (27 October - 9 November).

The SA1 Waterfront area is the latest development for living, dining and leisure.

Swansea Bay, Mumbles and Gower are home to various parks and gardens and almost 20 nature reserves. Clyne Gardens is home to a collection of plants set in parkland and host to 'Clyne in Bloom' in May. Singleton Park has acres of parkland, a botanical garden, a boating lake with pedal boats, and crazy golf. Plantasia is a tropical hothouse pyramid featuring three climatic zones, housing a variety of unusual plants, including several species which are extinct in the wild, and monkeys, reptiles, fish and a butterfly house. Other parks include Cwmdonkin Park, where Dylan Thomas played as a child, and Victoria Park which is close to the promenade on the seafront.

### Around the Marina

The Marina is close to the centre of Swansea, and in the immediate area around the Waterside there are at least two pubs and two restaurants.

Otherwise, a short exploratory wander (Try Wind St), will bring you to a plethora of cafes, restaurants and pubs.

### Nightlife

Swansea has a range of public houses, bars, clubs, restaurants and two casinos. The majority of city centre bars are situated on Wind Street, with various chains represented including Revolution, Varsity, Yates's and Walkabout. Most clubs, including Oceana, are located on the Kingsway. Some venues feature live music. The Mumbles Mile, described by the BBC as "one of Wales' best-known pub crawls" has declined in recent years with a number of local pubs being converted into flats or restaurants.

As usual we will leave you with a couple of links for your perusal:

### Pubs

<http://www.beerinevening.com/pubs/results.shtml/el/Swansea%3BWest%20Glamorgan/>

### Restaurants

[Restaurants & Places to Eat in Swansea 2022- Tripadvisor](#)

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## History

Swansea is a city and county in Wales. Swansea is in the historic county boundaries of Glamorgan. Situated on the sandy South West Wales coast, the county area includes the Gower peninsula and the Lliw uplands. Swansea is the second most populous city in Wales after Cardiff and the third most populous county in Wales after Cardiff and Rhondda Cynon Taff. During its 19th century industrial heyday, Swansea was one of the key centres of the world copper industry, earning the nickname 'Copperopolis'.

Swansea's port grew, dealing in wines, hides, wool, cloth and, increasingly, coal. As the Industrial Revolution reached Wales, the combination of port, local coal, and trading links with the West Country, Cornwall and Devon, meant that Swansea was the logical place to site copper smelting works. Smelters were operating by 1720 and proliferated. Following this, more coal mines (everywhere from north-east Gower to Clyne and Llangyfelach) were opened and smelters (mostly along the Tawe valley) were opened and flourished. Over the next century and a half, works were established to process arsenic, zinc and tin and to create tinplate and pottery.

From the late 17th century to 1801, Swansea's population grew by 500%—the first official census (in 1841) indicated that, with 6,099 inhabitants, Swansea had become significantly larger than Glamorgan's county town, Cardiff, and was the second most populous town in Wales behind Merthyr Tydfil (which had a population of 7,705). However, the census understated Swansea's true size, as much of the built-up area lay outside the contemporary boundaries of the borough; the total population was actually 10,117. Swansea's population was later overtaken by Merthyr in 1821 and by Cardiff in 1881, although in the latter year Swansea once again surpassed Merthyr. Much of Swansea's growth was due to migration from within and beyond Wales—in 1881, more than a third of the borough's population had been born outside Swansea and Glamorgan, and just under a quarter outside Wales.

Through the 20th century, heavy industries in the town declined, leaving the Lower Swansea Valley filled with derelict works and mounds of waste products from them. The Lower Swansea Valley Scheme (which still continues) reclaimed much of the land. The present Enterprise Zone was the result and, of the many original docks, only those outside the city continue to work as docks; North Dock is now Parc Tawe and South Dock became the Marina.

Little city-centre evidence, beyond parts of the road layout, remains from medieval Swansea; its industrial importance made it the target of bombing, known as the Blitz in World War II, and the centre was flattened completely. The city has three Grade One listed buildings, these being the Guildhall, Swansea Castle and the Morrision Tabernacle.

Whilst the city itself has a long history, many of the city centre buildings are post-war as much of the original centre was destroyed by World War II bombing on the 19th, 20th and 21st of February 1941 (the 'Three Nights Blitz').] Within the city centre are the ruins of the castle, the Marina, the Glynn Vivian Art Gallery, Swansea Museum, the Dylan Thomas Centre, the Environmental Centre, and the Market, which is the largest covered market in Wales. It backs onto the Quadrant shopping centre which opened in 1978 and the adjoining St David's Centre opened in 1982. Other notable modern buildings are the BT Tower (formerly the GPO tower) built around 1970, Alexandra House built in 1976, County Hall built in 1982. Swansea Leisure Centre opened in 1977; it has undergone extensive refurbishment which retained elements of the original structure and re-opened in March 2008. Behind it stands the National Waterfront Museum, opened in October 2005.

On 27 June 1906, one of the strongest earthquakes ever recorded in the UK during the twentieth century struck Swansea with a strength of 5.2 on the Richter Scale. Earthquakes in the UK very rarely cause any structural damage as most occur away from heavily populated areas but, with the earthquake centred on Swansea, many taller buildings were damaged.

Swansea was granted city status in 1969, to mark Prince Charles's investiture as the Prince of Wales. The announcement was made by the prince on 3 July 1969, during a tour of Wales. It obtained the further right to have a lord mayor in 1982.

The population of the Swansea urban area within the unitary authority boundaries in 2001 was about 169,880. The other urban area within the unitary authority, centred on Gorseinon, had a population of 19,273 in 2001. However, the wider urban area including most of Swansea Bay has a total population of 270,506 (making it the 25th largest urban area in England and Wales).

At the sea front, The Tower, Meridian Quay is now Wales's tallest building at a height of over 80 metres (260 ft); upon completion in 2009 it is planned to be 107 metres (350 ft) in height with a restaurant on the top (29th) floor. It is still under construction adjacent Swansea Marina.

Swansea Marina to the south of the city centre has berths for 410 leisure boats. An addition 200 berths for leisure boats are located near the mouth of the River Tawe. Further leisure boating berths are being constructed at the Prince of Wales Dock in the Swansea Docks complex. The Swansea Docks complex is owned and operated by Associated British Ports and is used to handle a range of cargo ranging from agribulks and coal to timber and steel. Swansea Docks consists of three floating docks and a ferry terminal.

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