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Q: I plan to spend six months in Wales. Any suggestions on home rentals or swaps?

A: To rent or house-swap in Wales, you'll have to make some tough decisions: coast or countryside, historic or contemporary, castle or cottage. "Wales is a great place for a home exchange because it's off the beaten track," says Ed Kushins, president of HomeExchange.com (1-800-877-8723, www.homeexchange.com), an international house-swapping company. "If you do a home-exchange stay in someone's house, you invariably live like a local."

Before selecting a property, pick a location. For cliffs and beaches, Alexandra Marr, a spokesman for Visit Wales (800-462-2748, www.travelwales.org), recommends the Pembrokeshire area on the southwestern coast. To escape to "the middle of nowhere," Marr suggests Lleyn Peninsula, a gathering spot for seals and National Trust trekkers. For a mix of country and civilization, Brecon is near the Brecon Beacons National Park, the urban attractions of Cardiff and the train depot at Abergavenny, a 2 1/2-hour ride to London.

Visit Wales' website features self-catering companies vetted by the tourism office. In addition, Marr said, the Wales office will spot-check the property for travelers who are uncertain about a particular rental.

For a home exchange, you'll need a pleasant pad to swap, plus you must make a match with a Welsh homeowner. Kushins recommends sending up to 10 inquiries to see if anyone bites. (To become a home swapper or swappee, you must create a profile of your home and pay a membership fee; HomeExchange charges \$60 a year).

For Wales, the site currently has about 20 properties, including a two-bedroom near Snowdonia National Park whose owners are interested in visiting the States in 2007. Also check HomeLink International (www.uk.homelinkint.org), Green Theme International Home Exchange Travel (011-44-15-3956-8707, www.gti-home-exchange.com) and Home Base Holidays (011-44-20-8886-8752, www.homebase-hols.com).

YESTERDAY'S MOST E-MAILED STORIES

- Cards gather at Busch to mourn Hancock's death
- Cubs: No Tinker. No Evers. No chance.
- A former cable company call center rep says: "We lie" to customers who ask when installer will arrive
- The cable company St. Louis loves to hate
- Hospital fundraiser opens on a light note
- Baby boomers drive age bias suits
- Face it, Cardinals fans: We're in for rough ride
- Geologists discover world's largest fossil forest in the ceiling of an Illinois coal mine
- DeSmet's boys lacrosse coach dies after suffering apparent heart attack
- Take a tour this spring [Last 7 Days]

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