

Digital Editions

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We do hope you like using this version of the *Country Living* rural guide and that it helps you enjoy exploring the wonderful Isle of Man. We are always interested in receiving comments on places covered (or not covered) in our guides so please do not hesitate to give us your considered comments by e-mailing us on info@travelpublishing.co.uk.

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Guide to Rural England

ISLE OF MAN



WHERE TO GO | WHAT TO SEE | WHAT TO DO
WHERE TO STAY | WHERE TO EAT | WHERE TO BUY
Fully illustrated with detailed directions and maps

Isle of Man



Towns and Villages

Please click on any of the towns and villages listed below for information on that location.

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One of the six Celtic Nations, (the others are Cornwall, Wales, Ireland, Scotland and Brittany), the Isle of Man cherishes its Gaelic heritage and independence. It is, for example, not part of the United Kingdom, but a Crown Protectorate with the Queen as Lord of Mann represented on the island by the Lieutenant Governor. Its Parliament, the Tynwald, dates back more than 1000 years to AD979 and is the oldest continuous parliament in the world. It does not exact capital gains or inheritance tax, and personal tax allowances and reliefs are much more generous than in the UK itself. The island issues its own stamps, coins and notes with the currency having an equivalent value to that of the UK. Recently issued coins include ones to commemorate the 2007/8 Tutankhamun exhibition at the O2 Arena, a crown coin marking the Chinese Year of the Horse, 2002, and, each year, a limited number of 50p coins featuring the Tourist

Trophy (TT) races. The island is perhaps best known for these annual TT motorcycle races, along with its tailless cat, Manx kippers, and as a tax haven for the wealthy.

Although only 33 miles long and 13 miles wide, the island contains a rich diversity of scenery and heritage and, perhaps best of all, exudes a sense of peacefulness epitomised by the Manx Gaelic saying: traa-dy-liooar – “Time enough”.

This magical place became an island around 10,000 years ago when the melt water of the Ice Age raised the sea level. Soon afterwards, the first settlers arrived, working and developing the island into the landscape seen today. The distinctive influences of the various cultures who have lived here still remain, leaving a land with a unique and colourful heritage.

Among the first arrivals were the Vikings. Evidence of their era abounds throughout the island. Against the skyline on the seaward side of the road between Ballaugh and Bride are some ancient hilltop Viking burial mounds and, at the ancient castle in Peel, an archaeological dig revealed many hidden Viking treasures, which are now on display at the Manx Museum in Douglas.

Despite their reputation for plunder, rape and pillage, the Vikings also made some positive contributions to life on the island, not least of which was the establishment of the Manx governmental system, known as Tynwald. The Manx name for Tynwald Hill is Cronk Keeill Eoin, the hill of St

John's Church. Although there is no evidence to confirm the story that it contains earth from all of the 17 parish churches here, it is not unlikely that token portions of soil were added to the mound in accordance with Norse tradition.

The Tynwald ceremony continues still with an annual meeting of the island's governors on Midsummer's Day at the ancient parliament field at St John's, where Manx citizens can also petition parliament.

The island's famous three-legged symbol seems to have been adopted in the 13th century as the armorial bearings of the native kings of the Isle of Man, whose dominion also included the Hebridean islands. After 1266, when the native dynasty ended and control of the island passed briefly to the Crown of Scotland and then permanently to the Crown of England, the emblem was retained. Among the earliest surviving representations are those on the Manx Sword of State, thought to have been made in 1300. The Three Legs also appeared on Manx coinage from the 17th to the 19th century, and are still seen in the form of the official Manx flag.



Douglas

-  Douglas Bay Horse Tramway
-  Manx Electric Railway  Steam Railway
-  The Heritage Trail  Manx cat
-  Manx Museum  Sayle Art Gallery
-  Tower of Refuge  TT races
-  Great Union Camera Obscura
-  Home of Rest for Old Horses

The island's capital, Douglas is also a lively resort with a sweeping sandy beach and a two-mile long promenade, the focus of the island's nightlife. There's excellent shopping around Strand Street, a fine park - Noble's Park - on the edge of town with facilities for tennis, bowls, putting, crazy golf and a children's play area. Other attractions include the magnificently restored Victorian Gaiety

Theatre, the Manx Superbowl, a casino, the Summerland sport and leisure centre, which hosts live entertainment during the summer, a cinema complex, an Aquadrome and the Villa Marina entertainment complex.

Sadly, the town's traditional Victorian pier is no longer here. Built in 1869, the year Douglas became the island's capital, it was a thousand feet long, but was dismantled in 1896 and reconstructed at Rhos-on-Sea, near Colwyn Bay in North Wales.

From dawn to dusk, visitors can take a leisurely ride along the wonderful promenade aboard the **Douglas Bay Horse Tramway**, a remarkable and beautiful reminder of a bygone era and the only surviving horse tramway in Britain. It was the brainchild of a civil engineer, Thomas Lightfoot, who retired to the island and, seeing the need for a public

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transport system along this elegant promenade, designed in 1876 the system still in use today. That the Douglas Tramway has survived into the 21st century is remarkable especially since, in the early 1900s, attempts were made to electrify the line and extend the Manx electric railway along the promenade.

The **Manx Electric Railway** (see panel below), completed in 1899, is the longest narrow-gauge vintage line in the British Isles and operates the oldest working trams in the world. The 18-mile journey departs from the northern end of Douglas promenade, stops at Laxey, terminus of the Snaefell

Mountain Railway, and then continues to Ramsey.

Another delightful means of travel is the narrow-gauge Victorian **Steam Railway** that runs between Douglas and Port Erin. Following the line of the cliff tops, the memorable journey also travels through bluebell woods and steep-sided rocky cuttings. This section of line is all that remains of a railway that once served the whole of the island. Many miles of the old railway network have been developed as footpaths. One of them, **The Heritage Trail**, starts from Quarterbridge in Douglas and for 10.5-miles

THE WYNDHAM HOTEL

1 Church Road Marina, Douglas, Isle of Man IM1 2HQ

Tel: 01624 676913

e-mail: calvertronnie@manx.net

website: www.alphamanagementservices.co.uk

The **Wyndham Hotel** offers practical, comfortable accommodation just a few yards from the promenade and an easy walk from Douglas town centre. Owned and run by Ronnie and Tony Calvert (Ronnie is also a tax consultant), it has 17 bedrooms, six with en suite facilities, that are available for short or long stay letting at all times of the year. Dating from 1846, the hotel occupies one of a large number of terraced houses that were built at a time when the Isle of Man was becoming a popular place to reside or to visit. The tariff is on a Bed & Breakfast basis, but an evening meal is available with a little notice. There's a full on-licence for residents, and the hotel has plenty of off-road parking.



The Wyndham is a very pleasant and convenient base for a business visit or for discovering all that Douglas has to offer – a favourite introduction for the tourist is a leisurely ride along the promenade on the Douglas Bay Horse Tramway. It's also an ideal start point for a tour of the Island, which has a wealth of scenic, historic and sporting attractions to enjoy. Cash and cheque only.

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Manx Electric Railway

Douglas, Isle of Man IM3 1DZ

Tel: 01624 663366

website: www.iomguide.com/electricrailway.php

The 3 feet track gauge railway was first opened in 1893. The original line ran from Douglas to Laxey and in 1899 the line was extended to include Ramsey. The Manx Electric Railway holds to being the longest narrow gauge vintage railway in the British Isles. Over seventeen miles of line border the coastline between Douglas and Ramsey. All the operational trams are original, with the newest dating back as far as 1906. Trams 1 and 2 are the oldest dating back to 1893 earning them a place in the record books as the oldest regularly operated tram cars in the world. Sadly many trams were destroyed by a fire in 1930 at Laxey Depot. The mid 1970's almost saw the closure of the line, but opposition kept the trams running.

The Manx Electric Railway started out as public transport mainly for tourists, but also saw its lines used for the transportation of goods and animals. It became a part of island transport which managed to stand the tests of time and progress.

For the best coastal views there is no better way to travel than the Manx Electric Railway. It weaves its way up and down along the eastern side of the island. The sea is clearly visible for most of the way. The trams pass through countryside, glens and villages. It is a truly wonderful journey taking about 45 minutes to ride from Douglas to Laxey and then another 45 minutes from Laxey to Ramsey. There are many interesting stops along the way, but most are by request and the conductor will need to be informed when he checks your ticket. There are often two options for seating, outside or inside. The inside seats are nice if it is cold or wet, but if you really want to take in the scenery then sit outside.



CHAPTERS

14 Victoria Street, Douglas, Isle of Man IM1 2LH

Tel: 01624 663662

e-mail: info@chaptersdouglas.com

website: www.chaptersdouglas.com

Located in the heart of Douglas, **Chapters** offers not just one but a choice of 3 dining experiences. The basement lounge is your retro retreat from everything and anything you want. Featuring a fully-equipped bar for after-dinner drinks (Chapters only have a restaurant licence) with a wide selection of hot and cold beverages, this is a place to relax and unwind. Or, you might fancy hooking up to the complimentary wi-fi while the staff take care of your every need. On the ground floor is a Coffee Shop & Bistro, the island's newest all-day dining destination.

The menu is designed for those with time to spare as much as for those where time is of the essence. Serving freshly-ground Segafredo coffees, a wide range of alcohol is also available to our diners and the coffee shop is open from early until late. Good food is what Chapters is all about, and there's nowhere better to enjoy the finest the island has to offer than in the first floor restaurant. Discreet, yet attentive, 5-star service, a menu featuring a wide selection of both contemporary and classical dishes with a twist, coupled with a comprehensive wine list is sure to have your taste-buds dancing.

**THE WELBECK HOTEL**

Mona Drive, off Central Promenade, Douglas, Isle of Man IM2 4LF

Tel: 01624 675663 Fax: 01624 661545

e-mail: mail@welbeckhotel.com

website: www.welbeckhotel.com

Michael and Irene are at the head of the family who have owned and run **The Welbeck Hotel** for well over 30 years and the reputation for hospitality they have built over the years is second to none. Up the hill just off the main promenade, the location is fairly quiet but at the same time convenient for all that Douglas has to offer. The main accommodation comprises 27 en suite rooms, some with sea views, all with central heating, safe, fridge, digital TV, free Wi-Fi, direct dial telephone, iron, trouser press and hot beverage tray. The Welbeck also has seven excellent self-catering apartments - six one-bedroom, one with 2 bedrooms and all with bathroom, lounge/diner and partitioned kitchen area. Guests in these apartments have full use of the hotel's amenities.

In the conservatory Restaurant, open to residents and non-residents, the chefs prepare a fine selection of dishes of world-wide inspiration, all based on quality local ingredients. The hotel also boasts a wonderful bar where guests can relax and enjoy a refreshment or two. The owners and staff are ready with advice on all the island's places of interest and can arrange booking for golf and riding.



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follows the former railway route that cuts across the island to Peel on the west coast. It's a scenic but undemanding trail that passes close to historic Tynwald Hill. Picnic sites and useful information boards are sited along the way.

The Isle of Man's most famous export is probably the **Manx Cat**, notable for having no tail. There are several stories of how the cat lost its tail but one, in particular, is delightful. At the time that Noah was building the Ark there were two Manx cats, complete with tails. Noah sent for all the animals to come to the Ark, two by two, but the Manx cats replied that there was plenty of time and continued to play outside. Finally, when the cats did decide to board the Ark, Noah was just slamming the door and the cats lost their tails. A variation on this tale is that one of the cats reached the Ark safely, the other had its tail chopped off by the closing doors. The tailless cat went on to become the Manx cat and the one who managed to keep its tail became the ever grinning Cheshire cat.

No trip to the island is complete without a visit to the **Manx Museum** where the award-winning *Story of Mann* audio-visual presentation uncovers 10,000 years of the island's history. The Manx Museum complex also contains the superb National Art Gallery, the National Library & Archives, and a Natural History Gallery, as well as exhibits portraying many other aspects of life on the island, including the famous TT races. A recent addition to the displays is the Viking and Medieval Gallery.

More art is on display at the **Sayle Art Gallery**, which moved to Douglas from St Johns in 2009. It is named after the popular Manx artist Norman Sayle

and specialises in the work of Manx artists and craftspeople.

One of the Isle of Man's most famous landmarks, the **Tower of Refuge**, stands on a rock in Douglas Bay. Sir William Hilary, founder of the Royal National Lifeboat Institution, lived in a mansion overlooking the bay and, following a near disaster in 1830 when the Royal Mail Steam Packet *St George* was driven on to rocks in high seas, Hilary launched the Douglas lifeboat. Miraculously, all the crew of the *St George* were saved without the loss of one lifeboat man despite the extremely treacherous conditions. It was following this incident that Hilary decided that a form of refuge should be built for shipwrecked mariners to shelter in and so, with Hilary laying the foundation stone in 1832, the Tower of Refuge was built on Conister Rock out in the bay. The tower was kept well stocked with fresh water and bread, ready to provide shelter from the weather and sea.

Noble's Park leads to the Grandstand that is the control centre for the **TT races**, rightly billed as the greatest motorcycle show on earth in the road racing capital of the world. Road racing started on the island as a practice for a race to be run in France for the Gordon



JAK'S BAR & STEAKHOUSE

43 Loch Promenade, Douglas,
Isle of Man IM1 2LZ
Tel: 01624 663786
Fax: 01624 677859
e-mail: darren@jakspub.com
website: www.jakspub.com

Jaks Bar & Steakhouse is one of the busiest pubs and restaurants on the Isle of Man and has just re-opened after extensive refurbishment. It is located right at the heart of Douglas night life and the friendly, relaxed atmosphere is popular with customers of all ages. Jaks was established in 1990 and still under the same owners

Jaks has an extensive, award-winning food menu at competitive prices. Customers can eat in the spacious bar area or can dine downstairs where there is a separate family restaurant with a private bar. At lunchtime 12 - 5pm the menu offers a good selection of old favourites such as a traditional roast, along with a range of other main meals, baguettes and Jak's jacket potatoes. In the evening, Jak's lives up to its name, adding an excellent choice of steaks and char-grilled selection to the menu. Food is served from 5pm to 10pm, Monday to Saturday, and all day on Sunday from 12noon to 10pm; booking is strongly advised. To accompany your meal, there's a well-chosen wine list featuring wines from around the world or, if you prefer beer, choose from one of the largest selections of draught beers on the island. The restaurant is also available for private parties and functions.

Jak's is very popular with sports fans and all live sports are shown on a number of TV screens, one of which, a 10ft Full HD Wide Screen, is the largest on the island! Jak's proudly boasts that they can show up to 7 different football matches at the same time! There are also three 20" LCD Screens providing live football results. Jak's is also Wi-Fi enabled free of charge for all customers and more high technology is evident in the MP3 Music System with the best of classic dance/R&B at weekends and classic music during the week with live bands every Friday and Saturday.

Jaks is open seven days a week: from 11am to midnight, Monday to Thursday; 11am to 1am, Friday and Saturday; and from 12 noon until midnight on Sunday. All major credit/debit cards and luncheon vouchers are accepted and the main bar has a cash machine. There is ample parking available on the main promenade and there are stops directly outside the door for bus and horse tram services, as well as a taxi rank.



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Bennett Cup, presented by James Gordon Bennett, owner of the *New York Herald*. An Act of Parliament outlawed racing on public highways in Britain, but at a special session of the Tynwald in 1904, a bill entitled 'The Highways (Light Locomotive) Act' gave permission for limited racing on the roads of the island on a few days a year. Interest in racing, both cars and motorcycles, swiftly grew, and in 1907 the first TT (Tourist Trophy) race was run over a short course based around St John's. Twenty five machines started, 10 finished, and the winner was CR (Charlie) Collier, who achieved an average speed of 38mph on his single-cylinder Matchless. In 1911, the mountain course was adopted and has remained more or less unchanged since. The course covers 37.7 miles, has 220 corners to negotiate and rises to 1400 feet near Snaefell. Drivers can reach up to 190mph and the record average lap speed is an astonishing 130mph.

Perched on a headland overlooking Douglas Bay is a camera obscura known as the **Great Union Camera Obscura**. In the camera, the natural daylight is focused on to a white panel through a simple system of lenses and angled mirrors and so provides a living image of the scene outside. At first apparently still, as with a photograph, viewers soon become fascinated



as the 'picture' begins to move.

The Isle of Man was ruled for several centuries by the Stanley family, one of whom became Earl Derby. This notable gentleman organised the first Derby horse race, predating the Epsom Derby by many years. The main point of starting horse racing on the island was to encourage the breeding of good horses. Fifty horses and donkeys who have retired or fallen on hard times are kept at the **Home of Rest for Old Horses**, set in 92 acres of open countryside just outside Douglas, on the A5 Castletown road.

North of Douglas

LAXEY

5 miles N of Douglas on the A2

- Laxey Glen Great Laxey Wheel
- Great Laxey Mine Railway Laxey Woollen Mills
- Ballalheanagh Gardens Snaefell
- Snaefell Mountain Railway

Set in a deep, wooded valley, this village is one of interesting contrasts. Following the river up from its mouth at the small tidal harbour leads the walker into **Laxey Glen**, one of the island's 17 National Glens that are preserved and maintained by the government's Forestry Department.

Further up the glen is one of the island's most famous sights, the **Great Laxey Wheel** that marks the site of a once thriving mine where huge quantities of lead, zinc and copper ore were extracted. Known as the Lady Isabella Wheel, with a circumference of 228 feet, a diameter of 72 feet, and a top platform some 72 feet off the ground, it is the largest working waterwheel in the world.



Great Laxey Wheel, Laxey

It was Robert Casement, an engineer at the mines, who constructed this mechanical wonder in 1854 and designed it to pump 250 gallons of water a minute from a depth of 200 fathoms. Officially opened in 1854, it was named the *Lady Isabella* after the wife of the then Lieutenant Governor of the Isle of Man. After considerable repair and reconstruction work, the wheel now operates just as it did when it first opened and it stands as a monument to Victorian engineering as well as the island's industrial heritage.

Since 2004, visitors have been able to travel in a tiny carriage on the original tramway used to transport the ores from the mine. Complete with working replicas of the 19-inch gauge steam locomotives built in 1877, the **Great Laxey Mine Railway** travels through the island's longest railway tunnel to a picnic site and footpath just a five minute walk from the Great Wheel.

Also working in traditional style are the machines at **Laxey Woollen Mills** where genuine Manx tweed is woven on double-width and power looms: the finished products are on sale in the shop.

Situated above Laxey, in a beautiful natural glen, are the magnificent

Ballalheanagh Gardens. The steep-sided valley with winding paths and a crystal clear stream running through the bottom, is packed with rhododendrons, shrubs, bulbs and ferns.

From Laxey station, the **Snaefell Mountain Railway** carries visitors on a five-mile route to the top of the island's only mountain. Built in 1895, the six original tram cars still climb the steep gradients to **Snaefell's** 2036 feet summit. Those reaching the top are rewarded with outstanding views of the whole island

and out across the sea to Ireland, Scotland and England. There is also a café at the summit offering refreshments.

ONCHAN

2 miles NE of Douglas on the A2

Captain Bligh Peter Heywood

Virtually a suburb of Douglas, Onchan is the location of the Lieutenant Governor's residence. An entry in the Onchan parish register records the marriage in 1781 of William Bligh RN to Miss Elizabeth (Betty) Betham, the daughter of the island's customs officer. In 1787, **Captain Bligh** took command of *HMS Bounty*, later the scene of the famous mutiny. The island has another connection with the *Bounty*. **Peter Heywood**, son of a deemster (member of the Tynwald parliament), was born on the island in 1773, joined the Navy at the age of 13 and was 14 at the time of the mutiny. Though he was confined to his quarters when the mutiny took place, he was arrested in Tahiti and brought back to England in the frigate *Pandora*. On the way home, the *Pandora* was wrecked in a storm and several of the crew and prisoners drowned. Heywood survived and eventually arrived in England in June 1792. He was

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immediately put on trial, convicted of not endeavouring to suppress the mutiny and condemned to death. He appealed successfully and resumed his career in the Navy, eventually rising to the rank of captain.

PORT GROUDLE

3 miles NE of Douglas on the A11

Groudle Glen Groudle Glen Railway

Close to Port Groudle lies **Groudle Glen**, a deep and, in places rocky, valley with a bubbling stream running through its length. Excellent specimens of beech grow in the upper sections of the glen while, lower down, pines and larches are abundant. There is also a small waterwheel in the lower half of the glen. Railway enthusiasts will be delighted to learn that on certain days in the summer the **Groudle Glen Railway** operates. Running on a track just two feet wide for three-quarters of a mile along the cliffs, the railway's lovingly restored carriages are pulled by *Sea Lion* and *Annie*, the original 1896 steam engines, as well as diesel and battery-powered locomotives. Trains run from Lhen Coan to the rebuilt station building at Sea Lion Rocks, where light refreshments are available.

Groudle Glen Railway, Port Groudle



Ramsey

Mooragh Park Yn Chruinnaght
 Albert Tower Millennium Way
 The Grove Manx Electric Railway Museum

The second largest town on the island, Ramsey occupies a scenic location at the foot of North Barrule. This northernmost resort on the island has a busy working harbour, a long stretch of beach and a wide promenade. A popular amenity is **Mooragh Park**, a 40-acre expanse of gardens and recreational facilities with a 12-acre boating lake and lakeside café. During the summer months there's live musical entertainment in the park, and around the third week of July each year the park is one of several venues hosting events during **Yn Chruinnaght**, an inter-Celtic festival of music, dance and literature.

Other major crowd-pullers are the Round the Island Yacht Race, held each summer and starting and finishing in Ramsey, and the Ramsey Motorcycle Sprint, part of the TT festival, when bikers show off their skills along Mooragh Promenade.

In the mid-1800s the town assumed the title of Royal Ramsey following an unscheduled visit by Queen Victoria and Prince Albert in 1847. The royal yacht anchored in Ramsey Bay following a stormy crossing from Scotland so that the seasick Queen could recover. While Her Majesty recuperated on board, Prince Albert walked to the top of Lhergy Frissel and was much impressed by the view. A few years later the 45ft-high **Albert Tower** was erected to commemorate the Prince Consort's visit.

BALLAJORA ARTISTS

Cheu Grianagh, Ballajora Hill, Ramsey, Isle of Man IM7 1AZ

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e-mail: daphne@iom.com

website: www.ballajoraartists.co.uk

Daphne MacOwan has a love for arts and crafts, and she has created an informal art gallery, **Ballajora Artists**, at her home in Ballajora. The gallery offers a beautiful range of different art and crafts, all created locally on the island. You will find original paintings, framed prints, greetings cards and notelets, and craftwork including miniature wooden jigsaw puzzles, coasters, mouse mats and much more. The gallery is open Wed - Sun between 2pm and 5pm, (although occasionally closed at weekends) and Daphne will happily open out of normal hours by request.



Just to the north of the town is **The Grove**, a pleasantly proportioned Victorian house that was built as a summer retreat for Duncan Gibb, a wealthy Victorian shipping merchant from Liverpool, and his family. The rooms have all been restored to their Victorian splendour with sumptuous original furnishings, costumes and a wealth of accumulated possessions. The outbuildings have not been neglected and they contain an interesting collection of vehicles and agricultural instruments that were seen on Manx farms in the late 19th century. There's also a conservatory restaurant and a shop.

Ramsey is the northern terminus of the Manx Electric Railway, built in 1899. The **Manx Electric Railway Museum** tells the fascinating story of this world-famous Victorian transport system. From Ramsey the railway follows a scenic route southwards to Douglas, accompanied most of the way by the equally delightful coastal road, the A15/A2.

For serious walkers, there's the **Millennium Way**, which starts about a mile from Parliament Square in Ramsey. Established in 1979 to mark the millennium year of the Tynwald

parliament, the 26-mile long path passes through some magnificent countryside, picturesque towns and villages, before ending at the island's former capital, Castletown.

Around Ramsey

POINT OF AYRE

7 miles N of Ramsey on the A16

 The Ayres

This is the northernmost tip of the island and, not surprisingly, there is a lighthouse situated here. The area around the point is known as **The Ayres** and, at the Ayres Visitor Centre, a



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whole wealth of information can be found about this fascinating part of the island. Amongst the inland heath moorland, a variety of species of birds can be found nesting while, on the pebbled beaches, can be seen terns. The offshore sandbanks provide a plentiful supply of food for both the diving gannets and the basking grey seals.

SULBY

5 miles W of Ramsey on the A3

 Sulby Glen  Tholt-y-Will Glen

Situated in the heart of the island, the village lies on the famous TT course, a circular route on the island's roads that takes in Douglas, Ramsey, Kirk Michael and St John's. There are several scenic and picturesque walks from the village, which take in **Sulby Glen** and **Tholt-y-Will Glen**, both of which are renowned beauty spots. Bird-watchers particularly will enjoy the walks over the higher ground as it provides the opportunity to see hen harriers, kestrels, peregrines and curlews.

BALLAUGH

7 miles W of Ramsey on the A3

 Curraghs Wildlife Park

The village, which also lies on the TT race course, is close to the island's most extensive area of marshland, the perfect habitat for a range of birds, including woodcock and grasshopper warbler, as well as being the largest roost for hen harriers in Western Europe.

Situated on the edge of the Ballaugh Curraghs, **Curraghs Wildlife Park** is home to a wide variety of wetland wildlife that come from all over the world. Curraghs is the Manx word for the wet, boggy, willow woodland that is typical of this part of the island and the site, which was opened in 1965, gives visitors the opportunity to see the

animals in their natural environment. This world-renowned wildlife park has been divided into several different habitats, including The Pampas, The Swamp, The Marsh and the Flooded Forest, and here endangered animals from around the world, such as Canadian otters, spider monkeys, rhea and muntjac deer, live as they would in the wild.

The Curraghs Wildlife Park also has an enviable breeding record and, as many of the species are becoming rare in the wild, this is a very important aspect of the Park's work. Not only have they successfully bred bald ibis, one of the most endangered birds in the world, but tapirs, lechwe antelope and many others also flourish in this environment. Not all the animals and birds are exotic – there are a great number of native species to be seen here, too.

There is also an adventure play area for young children and, during the summer, a miniature railway runs around the park. The lakeside café is open during the day for refreshments and, during the main summer season when the park is open until 9pm, barbecues are held here.

The Park was responsible for a rather unusual addition to the Isle of Man's wildlife. A few years ago some wallabies managed to escape from the park and now frequent the northern plain around Ballaugh.

ANDREAS

5 miles NW of Ramsey on the A17

Andreas was originally a Viking settlement and the village church contains intricately carved crosses dating back to the days of those early residents. The church tower's mutilated spire goes back to the 1940s when part of it was removed in case it proved to be a danger to aircraft from the nearby wartime airfields.



Peel Castle

Peel

- Peel Castle Moore's Kipper House
- The House of Mananan Three-wheel 'Peel' car
- Manx Transportation Museum Leece Museum

Located on the western side of the island, Peel is renowned for its stunning sunsets and the town is generally regarded as best typifying the unique character and atmosphere of the Isle of Man. Traditionally the centre of the Manx fishing industry, including delicious oak-smoked kippers and fresh shellfish, Peel has managed to avoid any large-scale

developments. Its narrow winding streets exude history and draw the visitor unfailingly down to the busy harbour, sweeping sandy beach, and magnificent castle of local red sandstone.

Peel Castle, one of the Isle of Man's principal historic monuments, occupies the important site of St Patrick's Isle. The imposing curtain wall encircles many ruined buildings, including St Patrick's Church, the 11th-century Round Tower and

the 13th-century Cathedral of St Germans – the cathedral of Sodor and Mann, which was the very first diocese established in the British Isles, pre-dating even Canterbury. The great curtain wall also encloses the later apartments of the Lords of Mann. In the 11th century the castle became the ruling seat of the Norse Kingdom of Man and the Isles, first united by Godred Crovan – the King Orry of Manx folklore. Today, the castle provides a dramatic backdrop for a variety of plays and musical events during the summer.

Recent archaeological excavations have discovered exciting new evidence relating to

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the long history of the site. One of the most dramatic finds was the Norse grave of a lady of high social status buried in pagan splendour. The jewellery and effects found with her can be seen on display, with other excavation finds, at the Manx Museum in Douglas. The castle is also said to be haunted by the Black Dog, or Mauthe Dhoo. On dark windy nights, it can be heard howling in the castle's dungeons.

The House of Manannan is a state-of-the-art heritage attraction celebrating Manannan, the mythological sea god who is graciously present to guide visitors through the island's rich Celtic, Viking and maritime past. There are full-size reconstructions of a Manx Celtic roundhouse and a Viking longhouse. The specially built Odin's Raven Viking longship was actually sailed from Norway to Mann as part of the Millennium of Tynwald celebrations.

Connoisseurs of kippers speak highly of the tasty Manx oak-smoked kipper. At **Moore's Kipper Factory** you can watch a kipper-curing process that has remained unchanged since the late 1700s. This is the only place kippers are cured in traditional Manx style and the guided tours take visitors through the whole process. The final products are on sale in the adjacent shop.

Close to the Kipper Factory and the harbour, the **Manx Transportation Museum** houses many models, photos, exhibits and collectibles from different forms of transport around the island.

For those researching their family history, The **Leece Museum** on the Quay of Peel's harbour has an archive of documents and photographs of the town along with a varied display of artefacts connected with the life of a busy fishing port.

Peel gave its name to the only production car ever made on the island. The **three-wheel 'Peel'**, produced between 1962 and 1966, was one of the tiniest cars ever made – the first model was only 4½ feet long and was powered by a 49cc DKW engine. The claim that it could carry a driver and a shopping bag was disputed by some who thought that it was a question of one or the other!

Around Peel

KIRK MICHAEL

6 miles N of Peel on the A3

Glen Wyllin Raad ny Foillan

Close to the village lies **Glen Wyllin**, another of the island's 17 National Glens. The varied woodland contains elm, ash, sycamore, alder, beech, lime, holm oak and chestnut, and in spring the woodland floor is carpeted with bluebell, primrose, wood anemone and wild garlic. Kirk Michael also lies on a 16-mile footpath that follows the route of an old railway line from Peel to Ramsey. After following the coast, and part of the **Raad ny Foillan** (road of the Gull), the footpath branches off through pastoral countryside before reaching the port of Ramsey on the other side of the island.

ST JOHN'S

3 miles E of Peel on the A1

Tynwald Day Ceremony Tynwald Arboretum
 Tynwald Mills

Roads from all over the island converge at the village of St John's because this is the site of the ancient **Tynwald Day Ceremony**, held on 5 July which is a public holiday throughout the island. This grand open-air event takes place

MANX SEA QUEST

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Operating out of Peel Harbour, the **Manx Sea Quest** is a powerful pleasure craft manned by a highly experienced crew, all of whom possess all the relevant safety qualifications. A variety of sea-trips are available and they usually last for around an hour, taking in some truly breath-taking scenery that can only be appreciated from the sea. When the conditions are right, you will see a wide variety of marine life, including the island's famous basking sharks which are impressive in size but completely harmless. Peel itself is a particularly attractive location with an impressive cathedral, a spectacular castle, and a host of visitor attractions.



on the terraced Tynwald Hill just north of the village. Here the Tynwald Court – a parliament that can trace its origins to the 10th century – assembles and the new laws of the land are proclaimed in both Manx and English. The serious business over, the rest of the day is devoted to various celebrations and activities culminating in a firework display.

Adjoining Tynwald Hill, the 25-acre **Tynwald Arboretum** was established in 1979 to mark the millennium of the island's parliament.

Just outside the town is the island's largest shopping mall, **Tynwald Mills**, with more than 20 shops, two caf  s and a children's playground.

GLENMAYE

3 miles S of Peel on the A27

A spectacular bridged gorge and a waterfall dominate this glen, which is one of the most picturesque on the island. Comprising over 11 acres, its beautiful sheltered woodland includes some relics of the ancient forests that once covered much of the Isle of Man. Another feature of this glen is the Mona Erin, one of the many waterwheels that once produced power for the Manx lead mines.

DALBY

4 miles S of Peel on the A27

Niarbyl Bay

Just southwest of Dalby village, **Niarbyl Bay** takes its name from the Manx Gaelic, Yn Arbyl, meaning the tail, so named because of the long reef that curves out from the shoreline. There are stunning views to the north and south, and the grandeur of the southwestern coast is seen at its best from this typically Manx setting. The beach here is an ideal place for picnics, relaxing and enjoying the tranquillity of the setting.

Castletown

World Tin Bath Championship Castle Rushen

Old House of the Keys Nautical Museum

Old Grammar School

Manx Aviation and Military Museum

Museum of the Manx Regiment

The original capital of the island, Castletown is full of character and charm, especially around the harbour area. Here, in August, is held the **World Tin Bath Championship**, one of the sporting world's more unusual contests, as well as snake racing and many other aquatic events.

The harbour lies beneath the imposing battlements of **Castle Rushen**, once home to the Kings and Lords of Mann. One of Europe's best preserved medieval castles, the present building was mostly constructed between 1340 and 1350. It has been restored to provide today's visitors with a vivid impression of what life was like in the fortress many years ago, by presenting in authentic detail the sights, sounds and smells of its heyday. Among the many points of interest is a unique one-fingered clock that was presented to the castle by Elizabeth I in 1597 and which still keeps perfect time.

The castle is still used as a courthouse for the swearing-in of new governors, and for civil weddings. During the summer months there are regular spectacular displays re-enacting scenes from the castle's history, especially the events of 1651 when Royalists were forced to surrender Castle Rushen to Cromwell's parliamentary troops.

Like Peel Castle, Rushen too is said to be haunted. The ghost, known as the White Lady, is believed to be that of Lady Jane Gray who travelled to the island from Scotland with her

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Castle Rushen, Castletown

family. The spectre has been seen walking the battlements at night and occasionally passing straight through the castle's closed main gate during the day.

Recently restored to its 19th-century state of grace, the **Old House of the Keys** was the seat of the Manx parliament until it moved to Douglas in 1874. In the rather cosy former debating chamber, visitors become members of the House and can vote on various issues that the parliament faced in the past, and some they may face in the future.

Castletown is also home to the island's **Nautical Museum** where the displays centre around the 1791 armed yacht *Peggy*, which sits in her own contemporary boathouse. Part of the original building is constructed as a cabin room from the time of the Battle of Trafalgar and there are many other artefacts on display, all with a maritime theme.

The **Old Grammar School** was originally built as the first town church around 1200. It changed its role in 1570 to become the Grammar School and continued to educate the children of the town for more than 350 years, finally closing in 1930. Inside, rows of bench desks with ink wells are reminders of early Victorian school days.

A mile or so northeast of Castletown is Ronaldsay, the island's principal airport. Adjacent to the airport and open weekends, race weeks and bank holidays only, the **Manx Aviation and Military Museum** (free) presents the story of the island's wartime and civil aviation history in the 20th century. On the same site, the **Museum of the Manx Regiment** celebrates the history of the 15th (Isle of Man) Light

Anti-Aircraft Regiment that saw active service throughout World War Two. More than 100 of the Regiment's men were captured on the island of Crete in 1941. A special display recounts the four years they spent in German prisoner-of-war camps and features a secret radio they built and kept hidden in a hollow log.

Around Castletown

BALLASALLA

2 miles N of Castletown on the A5

Rushen Abbey Fairy Bridge

Rushen Abbey is the most substantial medieval religious site in the Isle of Man. This ancient Cistercian monastery now has an interpretive centre that explains the abbey's past importance and illustrates the daily life of the monks. There is an interactive viewing room where visitors can follow live archaeological digs, a Heritage Shop, garden walkways and a picnic area.

A couple of miles further along the A5 towards Douglas, look out for the **Fairy Bridge**. For centuries, Manx people have taken no chances when it comes to the little

people and it is still customary to wish the fairies who live under the bridge a “Good Morning” when crossing.

CREGNEASH

6 miles SW of Castletown on the A31

 National Folk Museum  Harry Kelly's Cottage

Perched close to the southwestern tip of the island this village is now a living museum. **National Folk Museum at Cregneash** offers a unique insight into Manx traditional life within a 19th-century crofting community. By combining small scale farming with other occupations, a small settlement of Manx men and women successfully prospered here from the mid-1600s. Its isolated position led the village to become one of the last strongholds of the island's ancient skills and customs, all is beautifully preserved today. Visitors can watch fields being worked with horse-drawn equipment, the processing of Manx loghtan wool, and wood-turning in the Turner's Shed.

In the carefully restored buildings, they can see the conditions in which people lived and how they managed to sustain life in this rugged landscape.

The centrepiece of Cregneash is **Harry Kelly's Cottage**. Henry, who died in 1934, was a renowned Cregneash crofter and the last known person to speak the Manx language. Opened to the public in 1938, his cottage, still filled with his furniture, is an excellent starting point for any tour of the village. There are various other buildings of interest, including a smithy and the Karran Farm.

The village is also one of the few remaining places where visitors get a chance to view the unusual Manx Loghtan four-

horned sheep, a breed which, thanks to Manx National Heritage and other interest groups, now has a secure future.

CALF OF MAN

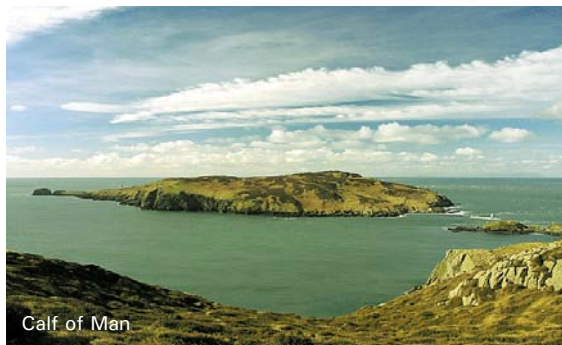
7 miles SW of Castletown

 Calf Sound

This small island, situated just off the southwestern tip of the island, is now a bird sanctuary owned by the National Trust. The puffins should be grateful – one of the previous owners, the Duke of Athol, requested that his tenants living on the Calf pickled the nesting puffins. In 1777, a stone was found on the isle in the garden of Jane's Cottage, though in those days it was called The Mansion. Known as the Calf Crucifixion Cross, the stone is believed to date from the 8th century and it is one of the earliest Christian finds in Europe. The cross can be seen in the Manx Museum in Douglas.

In 2002, a new Visitor Centre was opened at the southernmost tip of the island. The scenic four-acre site also has a shop, café and car park, and provides grand views of Spanish Head, the Calf of Man and the Irish Mountains of Mourne.

Calf Sound, the stretch of water between the island and the Isle of Man has seen many



Calf of Man

ships pass through and it was here that the largest armada of Viking longships ever assembled in the British Isles congregated before setting off to invade Ireland. Centuries later, men from nearby Port St Mary were awarded a gallantry medal by Napoleon when they came to the rescue of the crew of the *St Charles* a schooner from France that had foundered in the sound. It is thought to be the only such medal he presented to British subjects.

PORT ERIN

4 miles W of Castletown on the A5

 Isle of Man Steam Railway

 Mananan International Festival of Music & the Arts

Situated between magnificent headlands, Port Erin's beach is certainly a safe haven. It is also a place of soft sands cleaned daily by the tide, with rock pools to one side and a quay to the other. A long promenade above the sheltered sandy beach has a number of cafés, and other amenities include bowls, tennis, putting, nearby Rowany golf course and some superb walks along coastal paths out to Bradda Head. Port Erin is also the southern terminus of the **Isle of Man Steam Railway**, which runs from here to Douglas, a 15-mile journey through unspoilt countryside.

The town has its own Erin Arts Centre, which, since 1975, has hosted the annual **Mananan International Festival of Music and the Arts**, now recognised as one the island's most prestigious cultural events. The two-week long festival takes place from mid to late-June and the eclectic programme ranges through classical music, opera and ballet, jazz and theatre, to films, Indian music and art exhibitions, as well as special events for children.

Port Erin is one of several coastal towns on

the island offering boat trips with the hope of seeing basking sharks - the world's second longest fish - whales and dolphins. If you're very lucky you might even see a leatherback turtle. They swim to these waters from the Caribbean just to feed on large white jellyfish.

PORT ST MARY

4 miles W of Castletown off the A31

 Raad ny Foillan  The Chasms

This delightful little working port has both an inner and outer harbour, two piers, and excellent anchorage for visiting yachts. The beach, reached by a scenic walkway from the harbour, is no more than two miles from the beach at Port Erin, but it faces in almost the opposite direction and lies in the most sheltered part of the island.

One of the finest walks on the Isle of Man is the cliff-top route from Port St Mary to Port Erin along the **Raad ny Foillan** - the road of the gull - a long-distance footpath that follows the coastline right around the island. From Port St Mary, the first part of the walk takes in **The Chasms**, gigantic vertical rifts that, in some places, descend the full 400 feet of the cliffs.

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