Tour Code
CH10

ADVENTURESABROAD

THE CHANNEL ISLANDS & ISLE OF MAN

Britain's Crown Dependencies & Hidden Kingdoms

17 days

Created on: 29 Nov, 2026

Day 1 Arrive in London (Heathrow Airport)

Today we arrive in London and transfer to our hotel; the balance of your day is free for you to enjoy London.*

* As we do not include any London area sightseeing on this program, tonight's accommodation will be in the vicinity of Heathrow Airport, which is convenient for tomorrow's journey to Portsmouth.

Overnight in London (Heathrow).

Included Meal(s): Dinner

Day 2 London - Portsmouth - Ferry to Isle of Wight

This morning we travel from London to Portsmouth before embarking on our ferry to the Isle of Wight. The industrial town of Portsmouth, situated on the "island" of Portsea, owes its importance to its magnificent natural harbour. For centuries, from the time of the Armada onwards, it was the principal base of the Royal Navy, while in more recent times, Portsmouth has also become the most important naval port in Great Britain.

The Romans built a fort here, recognizing the strategic importance of this site on the Channel. Situated on a promontory just west of Portsmouth, this is the only Roman fort in Britain or northern Europe that was never destroyed (though frequently captured). The Normans took over the Roman fortress, and Henry II later strengthened it. Richard II had the site extended and built a fortified palace adjoining the keep. In 1415 Henry V assembled his troops here before setting sail for France. In the Second World War Portsmouth's strategic importance as a naval base led to large parts of the town being destroyed.

This afternoon we will visit HMS Victory, Lord Nelson's flagship at the battle of Trafalgar. The Victory was built in 1765 and is almost 60m (197 feet) long with five decks and 104 cannons. The ship was lifted from the sea in 1921 and restored to its present condition. We also view Henry VIII's flagship, the Mary Rose. After our visit in Portsmouth we will take the short ferry ride (45 minutes) across to the Isle of Wight.

With over half its land mass designated an 'Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty', and with a naturally mild climate, the Isle of Wight has been a popular holiday destination since Victorian times. The stretch of water between the mainland and the Isle of Wight is known as the Solent; a vitally important commercial waterway.

Overnight on the Isle of Wight.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 3 Isle of Wight: Ventnor Botanic Gardens, The Needles & Godshill

Our island touring today begins with a visit to Ventnor Botanic Gardens. Nestling in the microclimate of The Undercliff, these botanical gardens have a subtropical and exotic plant collection unrivalled elsewhere in the UK. Plants, which would normally be found in protected glasshouses, thrive and naturalize in geographical plantings based on the Mediterranean zones of the world.

This afternoon we travel to one of the Isle of Wight's most iconic landmarks - The Needles. These dramatic white chalk stacks rise majestically from the sea at the island's western tip, creating one of Britain's most recognizable coastal formations. We'll have the opportunity to take the chairlift down to Alum Bay, famous for its multi-colored sand cliffs that display nature's palette in brilliant stripes of red, yellow, and purple. The views from the clifftop are spectacular, stretching across the Solent toward the Dorset coast.

We also visit Godshill, this small well-kept village with thatched stone houses, traditional tearooms, and interesting small shops. The medieval All Saints Church dominates the village and is visible for miles around - one of the most visited country churches in England.

Overnight on the Isle of Wight.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 4 Isle of Wight: Quarr Abbey, Carisbrooke Castle, Osborne House

This morning we begin with a visit to Quarr Abbey, a working Benedictine monastery set in beautiful and peaceful surroundings near Ryde. This Grade I listed abbey, home to a small group of monks who dedicate their lives to prayer and contemplation, offers visitors a chance to discover the peace, beauty and tranquillity of monastic life. We'll explore the striking red brick abbey buildings and serene grounds, with time to visit the abbey's tea shop.

We continue to Carisbrooke Castle, the island's only medieval castle. It is said that 'he who held Carisbrooke held the Isle of Wight'. King Charles I was even imprisoned here before being taken to Whitehall for his trial and execution. Set on a sweeping ridge, Carisbrooke commands a perfect military location with majestic views over the surrounding countryside. During our time here we will visit the castle's beautiful chapel and the 800 year-old Great Hall with its fascinating museum. Don't miss the famous donkeys who still work the medieval well, continuing a tradition that spans centuries.

This afternoon we tour Osborne House, the country retreat of Queen Victoria and her beloved Prince Albert. We will tour the Royal Apartments and the intimate family rooms, including Queen Victoria's bedroom. You will marvel at the awe-inspiring Indian décor and exquisite gifts in the Durbar Room, and take a peek at life 'below stairs' in the Table Deckers' Rooms. We will have time to walk in the spectacular grounds with their stunning views across the eastern Solent. Nearby is the Victorian Walled Garden with flowers, triumphal arches of Victoria plums and hot houses full of exotic plants.

Overnight on the Isle of Wight.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 5 Isle of Wight - Ferry to Bournemouth

The morning ferry from Yarmouth carries us across the Solent's historic waters, where Viking longships once prowled and warships assembled for D-Day. As the Isle of Wight's gentle hills fade behind us, we dock at Lymington in Hampshire's ancient New Forest territory, beginning our journey toward Dorset's celebrated coast.

Our route takes us through Christchurch, where we discover one of England's most remarkable ecclesiastical treasures. The Priory Church, stretching an impressive 98 metres (321 feet), claims the title of England's longest parish church. Though the present Norman structure dates to 1094, Saxon foundations reveal continuous worship here since 800 AD. The adjacent castle ruins, built by the Normans to guard this strategic river crossing, remind us of medieval England's constant vigilance against invasion.
We explore the Red House Museum, originally constructed as a parish workhouse in 1764. This Georgian building now houses fascinating collections that illuminate centuries of local life, from smuggling tales to Victorian social reform. The contrast between its harsh original purpose and today's welcoming galleries reflects society's evolution toward compassion.

Arriving in Bournemouth, we encounter Victorian England's most successful planned resort. Unlike ancient towns that grew organically, Bournemouth was deliberately crafted as a "city in a garden," its pine-scented valleys and clifftop promenades designed to rival continental spas. The town's distinctive chines—narrow, fern-filled ravines carved by streams—create natural gardens that tumble toward golden beaches. Tonight we rest in this flower-filled resort, where Victorian ambition created lasting beauty.

Overnight Bournemouth.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 6 Bournemouth, England - Ferry to St Peter Port, Guernsey: Castle Cornet & Hauteville House

The fast ferry cuts through English Channel waters that have witnessed a thousand years of island history. These are not truly "Channel Islands" at all, but fragments of the ancient Duchy of Normandy scattered along France's Cotentin Peninsula. As British Crown Dependencies, they maintain their own parliaments and laws while owing allegiance to the Crown—a unique constitutional arrangement

born from medieval politics.

Approaching St Peter Port, Guernsey's capital reveals itself as one of Europe's most picturesque harbours. Regency terraces climb steeply from the waterfront, their elegant facades reflecting centuries of prosperity built on privateering, wine trade, and later, finance.

On arrival we tour Castle Cornet, commanding the harbour entrance from tidal rocks, its massive walls witnessing eight centuries of conflict. Built in 1150, this fortress survived French sieges, Civil War bombardments, and World War II occupation. Museums within chronicle the Royal Guernsey Militia, maritime adventures, and wartime resistance.

Later this afternoon we visit Hauteville House, where Victor Hugo transformed political exile into literary triumph. Expelled from France following Napoleon III's 1851 coup, Hugo fled first to Jersey, then Guernsey, completing "Les Miserables" and other masterworks here between 1856 and 1870. His house reflects his theatrical personality--rooms decorated with carved furniture salvaged from island privateers, walls covered with his artwork, and a rooftop study where he wrote while gazing toward France.

Overnight on Guernsey.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 7 Guernsey: Excursion to Herm

The twenty-minute ferry crosses waters where woolly mammoths roamed during the Ice Age, when rising seas isolated these granite outcrops into sanctuaries where time seems suspended. Car-free Herm preserves Britain's most pristine island experience on its tiny 2.4-kilometre (1.5-mile) length.

Stepping ashore, we enter a world where tractors replace automobiles and footpaths follow routes walked for millennia. Every field holds archaeological treasures: Neolithic burial chambers, Bronze Age settlements, and medieval foundations. The island's scale preserved it from development, creating perfect refuge close to civilization yet remote enough for contemplation.

We visit the 11th-century chapel, its ancient stones warmed by modern stained glass commissioned by recent tenants Peter and Jenny Wood. This continuity typifies Herm's character—where Neolithic farmers cleared fields still grazed today, where medieval monks established peaceful traditions modern visitors rediscover.

The north end reveals beautiful beaches backed by common land where prehistoric settlements lie buried beneath windblown sand. Archaeological excavations uncovered 12,000 years of continuous habitation. We discover Neolithic dolmens whose massive stones captured seasonal light, demonstrating sophisticated astronomical knowledge among Stone Age communities.

Walking coastal paths, we understand why smugglers chose these shores and Prussian royalty walked these cliffs in exile. As afternoon light streams across white sand beaches and crystal waters, we experience the timeless peace that draws visitors back across generations.

Overnight on Guernsey.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 8 Guernsey: Rocquaine Bay

Rocquaine Bay stretches over three kilometres at low tide, revealing vast expanses of golden sand that disappear twice daily beneath advancing waters. This western shore faces France across treacherous currents that have claimed countless vessels over centuries, earning these waters the grim title of "ship's graveyard."

Fort Grey squats against the rocky shore like a granite mushroom, one of fifteen Martello towers built to repel Napoleonic invasion. Erected in 1804 during the height of fear over French conquest, these circular fortresses represented cutting-edge military engineering—their thick walls and minimal openings designed to withstand cannon bombardment while providing 360-degree defensive fire.

The fort stands upon earlier foundations, replacing Château de Rocquaine, a medieval stronghold that guarded this vulnerable coastline from the 17th century onward. Each generation recognised this bay's strategic importance and vulnerability, building successive layers of defence against seaborne threats. Today's peaceful waters belie centuries of conflict and constant vigilance.

The surrounding waters tell stories of maritime disaster and heroism. The notorious rocks of Les Hanois, visible at low tide, have wrecked ships from Roman galleys to modern vessels. Local lifeboats launched from this bay have saved thousands of lives, their crews displaying courage that earned international recognition. Memorial plaques along the coastal path commemorate both victims and heroes of the sea.

We explore the Shipwreck Museum within Fort Grey, where artifacts recovered from wrecked vessels reveal the bay's dangerous history. Charts show currents and hidden rocks that trapped unwary mariners, while photographs document rescue operations that became legendary. The contrast between today's tourist paradise and yesterday's maritime nightmare illustrates how perspective transforms with time and technology.

Overnight on Guernsey.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 9 Guernsey & Sark

The approach to Sark reveals towering granite cliffs crowned by sloping common land called cotils, where seabirds wheel above pristine waters. In late spring, passengers sometimes spot puffins bobbing on the surface while dolphins play in the ferry's wake. This dramatic arrival hints at Sark's extraordinary character--Europe's last feudal state and the world's first International Dark Sky Island.

Landing at the tiny harbour, we board tractor-drawn "buses" for the steep climb to the village, following the only mechanised transport allowed on car-free Sark. With just 600 residents scattered across 5.4 square kilometres (2.1 square miles), the island maintains traditions lost elsewhere. No street lights dim the stellar display that earned Dark Sky status; no traffic disturbs the profound quiet that city dwellers find almost supernatural.

Our horse-drawn carriage tour follows narrow lanes between high hedgerows that have guided travellers for centuries. The pace encourages contemplation of landscapes unchanged since medieval times, when Sark's feudal system was established. Today's Seigneur still holds the island through ancient charter, owing homage to the Crown while maintaining judicial and administrative powers that make Sark unique in the modern world.

We journey to La Coupee, the dramatic knife-edge ridge connecting Big and Little Sark. This natural causeway, barely 3 metres (10 feet) wide with sheer drops on both sides, was once so treacherous that children crawled across on hands and knees during storms. The concrete path and handrails installed in 1945 made crossing safer, but the crossing remains breathtaking.

The views from Sark's coastal headlands encompass the entire Channel Island archipelago, from Jersey's distant outline to Alderney's northern cliffs. These waters, contested by Britain and France for a millennium, now host pleasure craft and fishing boats in peaceful coexistence.

Late in the afternoon we return to Guernsey for our overnight.

Overnight on Guernsey.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 10 St Peter Port, Guernsey - Ferry to St Helier, Jersey: Town Tour

The inter-island ferry crosses waters where Norman vessels once carried William the Conqueror's knights toward English conquest. These islands remained loyal to the English Crown when King John lost Normandy in 1204, beginning their unique constitutional journey as Crown Dependencies--neither fully independent nor entirely British, but something distinctly their own.

Jersey's silhouette grows larger as we approach, revealing the largest Channel Island with nearly 100,000 residents. St Helier spreads around the wide embrace of St Aubin's Bay, its modern developments climbing hillsides where medieval settlements first took root. The town commemorates Saint Helerius, a 6th-century Belgian hermit who sought solitude on these shores and found martyrdom instead.

This afternoon we explore St Helier on a walking tour through the lanes, streets and squares that reveal the capital's history. We sample Jersey specialties in the Victorian Markets—traditional fudge, Jersey cream, and local produce—while discovering the bustling atmosphere that has animated these Victorian halls since 1882. The Royal Square houses the island's Government Buildings, where the States of Jersey assembly continues parliamentary traditions established under Norman rule. Our walk also reveals how modern St Helier occupies buildings

that once housed German administrative offices during the five-year wartime occupation—the contrast between today's prosperity and those dark years demonstrating the resilience of communities that endured unprecedented hardship.

As evening settles over St Aubin's Bay, we observe tidal ranges that can exceed 12 metres (40 feet), among the highest in the world. These dramatic tides shape daily life on Jersey, exposing vast beaches at low water and transforming harbours at high tide.

Overnight on Jersey.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 11 Jersey: Elizabeth Castle, War Tunnels & Atlantic Wall Defences

This morning we visit the Jersey War Tunnels, the German Underground Hospital carved from solid rock by prisoners of war and forced labourers from across occupied Europe. What began as artillery storage evolved into a vast medical complex built to treat casualties from Hitler's Atlantic Wall. Operating theatres, recovery wards, and morgues remain exactly as abandoned in 1945, an eerie time capsule of Jersey's five years under occupation.

Free time for lunch in St Helier.

This afternoon we visit Elizabeth Castle, Jersey's magnificent 16th-century fortress guarding St Aubin's Bay. We meet our guide in Liberation Square for a stroll around the harbours to the Castle Ferry, where an amphibious vehicle carries us a mile offshore to this dramatic fortress on its tidal island. Built between 1594 and 1601 to protect the island from Spanish invasion, the castle later withstood a fifty-day Civil War siege and housed the exiled Charles II before his restoration to the English throne.

Returning shoreside, we continue along Jersey's dramatic western coast to Batterie Lothringen at Noirmont Point, its concrete bunkers and gun emplacements part of the Atlantic Wall built by forced labour from across occupied Europe. Time permitting, we pause at St Brelade's Bay before continuing to La Corbière Lighthouse, Jersey's iconic sentinel on its rocky outcrop, returning to St Helier via scenic St Ouen's Bay.

Overnight on Jersey.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 12 Jersey: Samares Manor, La Hougue Bie & Mont Orgueil

This morning we visit Samares Manor, where Norman feudal traditions persist into modern times. We tour the manor house with its French walnut panelling and specially woven carpets, explore the botanical gardens, and visit the working farm. The current Dame still attends L'Assize d'Heritage, Europe's oldest continuous court ceremony, where feudal tenants affirm loyalty to the Crown.

We continue to La Hougue Bie, an earthen mound concealing one of Europe's finest Neolithic monuments. Built around 3800 BC, this passage grave predates Stonehenge and Egyptian pyramids. We enter the burial chamber through its narrow passage, experiencing profound silence that has endured nearly 6,000 years. Massive granite capstones, some weighing over 20 tonnes, were positioned with mathematical precision to align with celestial events, demonstrating sophisticated Stone Age astronomical knowledge.

Two medieval chapels crown the summit: Notre Dame de Clarté and the 12th-century Jerusalem Chapel, showing how sacred sites maintained religious significance across millennia.

This afternoon we visit Mont Orgueil Castle, commanding the eastern heights above Gorey harbour. Founded in 1204 when King John lost Normandy, the fortress served as Jersey's primary defence for four centuries. We explore chambers where political prisoners endured harsh captivity, including William Prynne, whose Puritan writings earned Charles I's wrath and resulted in brutal punishment—ears severed, face branded with "seditious libeller."

From the castle's highest tower, panoramic views encompass the French coast just 22 kilometres distant. Following our tour, we enjoy a gentle stroll down to picturesque Gorey harbour.

Overnight on Jersey.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 13 Jersey, Channel Islands - Fly to Douglas, Isle of Man

Today is given over to travel. The routing from Jersey to the Isle of Man runs via London Gatwick — not a quick hop across the water but a pretty full day in transit.

Douglas, however, makes the effort worthwhile. The town spreads along the curve of its bay, the Victorian promenade stretching two miles along the waterfront — a reminder that this was once one of Britain's most popular holiday destinations, summer steamers arriving from Liverpool, Glasgow, and Belfast. The Tower of Refuge sits on its offshore rock; the hills rise steeply behind the town.

We settle in this evening with four days on the island ahead.

Overnight in Douglas.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 14 Isle of Man Excursion: Tynwald Hill & Peel

Tynwald Hill at St John's is not impressive in the conventional sense — a low artificial mound in a field, connected by a processional path to a small parish church. What it represents is another matter. This is where the Manx parliament has assembled continuously for over a thousand years, making it one of the oldest legislative bodies in the world. Each midsummer, laws passed during the year are proclaimed here in both Manx and English — the ceremony conducted on a mound built from soil taken from each of the island's seventeen parishes, a physical expression of democratic principle older than most of the constitutions that followed it.

Peel occupies the island's western coast, its harbour sheltered by a tidal island whose red sandstone ruins are those of a medieval cathedral and castle. St Patrick's Isle has been occupied since the Iron Age; what stands today was built by bishops who understood the strategic value of ground the sea defended twice daily. The ruins are extensive and atmospheric, the sandstone warming in afternoon light to something close to amber.

The House of Manannan at the harbour uses the island's mythology and archaeology to tell the story of a culture that survived successive arrivals — Celtic, Viking, Christian — by absorbing rather than simply resisting them. The sea god Manannan, who cloaked the island in protective mist, is perhaps its most fitting founding figure.

Overnight in Douglas.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 15 Isle of Man Excursion: Castletown & Cregneash Village

Castletown was the Isle of Man's capital for six hundred years, a distinction it owed entirely to Castle Rushen, which the Norse kings built above the harbour and successive rulers expanded. The castle is among the most complete medieval fortifications in the British Isles -- its walls, towers, and Great Hall largely intact, a clock mechanism installed in the gatehouse in 1597 still keeping time. The town beneath it has reached a comfortable accommodation with its former importance: quiet streets, a working harbour, the castle dominating without overwhelming.

The Old House of Keys takes its name from "Kiare as Feed" -- Manx for "four and twenty," the traditional number of elected members who debated island legislation in this chamber before the parliament moved to Douglas. The room survives intact; the debates are now re-enacted rather than conducted, the arguments no less pointed for being scripted.

Cregneash, at the island's southern tip, preserves traditional Manx rural life through thatched farmhouses, working crofts, and the particular quietness of a place that did not change quickly. The Manx language, which came close to extinction in the 20th century, has been actively revived — spoken here through interpretation programs and, beyond the village, taught again in schools and in daily use.

The return to Douglas by heritage steam railway -- the narrow-gauge line running since 1873 -- closes a day that has moved through a considerable range of Manx time.

Overnight in Douglas.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 16 Isle of Man: Excursion on the Snaefell Mountain Railway

The Snaefell Mountain Railway has been running since 1895, its electric tramcars little changed from the originals, a centre rail keeping them on track in wet weather by the same solution the Victorian engineers first devised. The line climbs six miles from Laxey through open moorland, the landscape emptying as the summit approaches. At 621 m, Snaefell is the island's only mountain, and the view from the top makes good on what is claimed for it: on a clear day you can see England, Scotland, Ireland, and Wales — four kingdoms from a single point, the Isle of Man spread below as the fifth, and the sky, by long Manx tradition, as the sixth.

The Great Laxey Wheel stands on the hillside above the village, 22 m in diameter — the largest working waterwheel in the world. Built in 1854 and named Lady Isabella after the lieutenant governor's wife, it was constructed to pump water from the lead mines beneath the valley, a problem of real engineering complexity solved with a confidence that the result entirely justifies. The mines closed long ago; the wheel still turns.

The Douglas horse-drawn trams have been running along the promenade since 1876, the route unchanged, the pace unhurried, the bay spread out alongside.

Overnight in Douglas.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 17 Departure

After breakfast, we say our farewells and depart Douglas. Several daily flights connect to London Gatwick, Heathrow, and City Airport.

Bon voyage!

Included Meal(s): Breakfast